

# VISIONS OF A “MUSICAL AMERICA” IN THE RADIO AGE

by

**Stephen R. Greene**

B. Mus., Westminster Choir College, 1976

M. Mus., University of Oklahoma, 1990

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This dissertation was presented

by

Stephen R. Greene

It was defended on

April 30, 2008

and approved by

Don O. Franklin, Ph.D., Professor of Music

Mary S. Lewis, Ph.D., Professor of Music

Bell Yung, Ph.D., Professor of Music

Ronald J. Zboray, Ph.D., Professor of Communication

Dissertation Advisor: Deane L. Root, Ph.D., Professor of Music

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Stephen R. Greene, Ph.D.

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In the United States during the 1920s and 1930s a loose-knit group of activists promoting what they called *good music* encountered the rise of commercial radio. Recognizing a tremendous resource, they sought to enlist radio in their cause, and in many ways were successful. However, commercial radio also transformed the activists, subverting an important part of their vision of a musical America: widespread preference for good music in the public at large. Instead, good music became the premium product line of commercial radio and the activists became more nearly realistic about their role in society.

Charles Seeger offered a scholarly history of this effort in his 1957 paper, “Music and Class Structure in the United States.” This dissertation uses the model of cultural formation from Seeger’s essay as a guide to the transformation of those he calls “‘make-America-musical’ missionaries,” between 1918 and 1935. In addition this study uses theories on community presented by Thomas Bender in *Community and Social Change in America*, and theories on democracy presented by Robert H. Wiebe in *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*, to further illuminate Seeger’s model.

Views expressed by representatives of the National Federation of Music Clubs, described by Karen J. Blair as “the largest and most influential organization uniting women’s musical societies,” and by conductor Walter Damrosch, who served on the NBC Advisory Panel, occupy central places in this study, as does the publication *Musical America*, an omnibus music

periodical founded in 1898 by British émigré John C. Freund for the stated purpose of “development of music in America.” Reports in *Musical America*, together with proceedings of the federation and of Music Teachers National Conference, and a series of books published under the auspices of the federation from 1924-29 to train music club members, function as core sources.

These reveal the transformation of these activists from their expansive speculation in the years following the Great War, through a period of resistance to trends in the larger culture that peaks in the middle of the 1920s, to their accommodation and enthusiastic acceptance of commercial radio as a home for good music.

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## PREFACE

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## CHAPTER 1: THE “‘MAKE-AMERICA-MUSICAL’ MOVEMENT”<sup>1</sup> AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

In the United States during the 1920s and 1930s a loosely-knit group of activists promoting what they called *good music*, representatives of a line of similar advocates stretching back nearly a century, encountered commercial radio, the rise of which constituted a major event affecting the culture of the United States. Recognizing a tremendous resource, these activists sought to enlist radio in the service of their cause, and in many ways radio became a partner in their effort to spread good music. However, as the radio industry matured and transformed the society, it transformed them as well, subverting an important part of their long-held vision of a *musical America*: the goal of widespread preference for good music in the public at large. Instead, good music became the premium product line in the entertainment merchandise offered by the nascent communications industry. Although radio increased the exposure and availability of good music and enhanced the sophistication of its adherents, it also led to the relinquishment of the progressive and equalitarian, if somewhat paternalistic, vision that had been cherished for many years.

In this dissertation I will examine the transformation of the goals of those activists, who sought to spread the love of good music.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," *American Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1957): 286.

## Overview of This Study

This dissertation had its origins on the streets of Kyoto, Japan, well over a decade ago. An editorial I had read in the *International Herald Tribune* by sociologist Richard Sennett argued, “America is Better Off Without a National Identity.” Sennett maintained that “the very notion of an American identity is a sweeping stereotype, and the manipulation of such generalizations lies at the very heart of nationalism.<sup>2</sup>” Yet on the streets of Kyoto I found that, more often than not, I could identify Americans—not just Westerners—who were walking more than a block away, by the way they carried themselves. This reinforced my sense that Sennett’s argument presented a false choice. There seemed no need to ponder whether or not Americans should have a national identity; that one already existed seemed obvious to me as an expatriate. This created in me the desire to examine the source of the national identity we seemed already to share, despite the pluralistic nature of our society: “e pluribus unum.” The object of my interest was less the nature of that identity, than the forces involved in its creation.

With the encouragement of musicologist John Spitzer, then at Peabody, my initial inclination to pursue graduate studies in history was transformed into the pursuit of a degree in musicology with a focus on American music. My first exploration of the issues and period covered by this dissertation was in a short paper written for a seminar in historiography that examined the contrasting views of the National Federation of Music Clubs with regard to jazz, and alternately, the music of Stephen Foster, using articles in *Etude* magazines from 1918 and 1927. As part of this effort I also encountered the way that *Etude* magazine itself

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Sennett, "America is Better Off Without A 'National Identity'," *International Herald Tribune* (January 31, 1994): 6.

represented music both “as an art and a business,”<sup>3</sup> a theme I would later find discussed in another magazine of the day, *Musical America*.

An unpublished thesis forms the core of this project. It started as a much broader survey of views expressed within the publication *Musical America* that sampled periods before, during, and at the end of the decade of the 1920s, and sought to identify issues of importance to those who seemed to present themselves as passionately involved in the endeavor of forming a common national musical life. It included all articles and significant advertisements in issues of *Musical America* from 1918-19, 1924-25, 1929-30, as well as from a portion of 1927. The survey utilized a database with 24 fields containing information on over 2300 articles and advertisements selected from among those surveyed, organized primarily through some 175 keywords assigned variously to individual articles. These keywords included topics such as jazz, pedagogy, and what I called the Dialogue of the Divas, and I used them to sort the articles into groups that could be evaluated in terms of change over time.

By the end of a rather long process of gathering information I was left with a large amount of seemingly unrelated information that had required a large amount of time yet remained stubbornly unwieldy in terms of producing useful results. At this point I encountered a description of Charles Seeger’s article, “Music and Class Structure in the United States” in Ann Pescatello’s biography of Seeger.<sup>4</sup> Her description intrigued me, so I obtained a copy, and with the encouragement of my advisor, Deane Root, I began to apply Seeger’s theoretical framework to the relatively small portion of time within its scope that my study examined.

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<sup>3</sup> "Music as An Art and a Business," *Musical America* 43, no. 1 (October 24, 1925): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ann M. Pescatello, *Charles Seeger: a Life in American Music* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 194-95, 224-26.



My current project has had the goal of extending the time frame of that study into the 1930s, when the successful emergence of commercial radio was confirmed by the Communications Act of 1934. For this dissertation I have broadened the sources used as evidence, deepened the theoretical base, and narrowed the scope to an understanding of the transformation of one of two groups within Seeger's model, to use Seeger's terms, the "make-America-musical missionaries," individuals intent on instilling widespread appreciation of so-called "good music" in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

### **Description of Theoretical Resources Used**

Charles Seeger presented his sociological history of the "make America musical movement"<sup>6</sup> in a paper presented to a gathering of American Studies specialists at the Library of Congress and published in 1957, titled, "Music and Class Structure in the United States."<sup>7</sup> This dissertation will use Seeger's historical model of that movement and the forces with which it interacted, illuminated by the writings of Thomas Bender and Robert H. Wiebe, as a guide to understanding the nature of the movement to "make America musical," to understand the context within which it arose, and the meaning of the transformation it underwent in response to the rise of radio.

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<sup>5</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## Charles Seeger's Theories on Music and Class Structure

Seeger believed that sociologists, including those he would be addressing with his paper, normally equated American music solely with folk music.<sup>8</sup> In order to create a sociological framework encompassing all of American music, not merely folk music, and thereby expand the scope of the broader historiographical dialogue, he broadly sketched the full panorama of music in the United States from colonial times to his own.<sup>9</sup>

Seeger's model provides a tool for conceptualizing the complex societal process of citizens from different countries of origin and backgrounds coming together to form a new society, by isolating and identifying important forces at work within that process. These forces can be understood metaphorically as cultural vectors acting upon the direction of the nation's musical life. They include directly opposing forces such as acculturation and resistance to it, which Seeger terms "contra-acculturation"; and as well, the interaction of influences such as urban and rural sensibilities, which at times align with each other and at other times are in opposition. By positioning these and other prominent forces in relation to each other, Seeger creates an ordered view of the complex, century-long cultural process he is examining without eliminating the teeming nature of its progress.

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<sup>8</sup> Ann Pescatello explains, "Concerned that U.S. scholars always put themselves in an inferior position vis-à-vis European scholars, he was determined to show that U.S. thinking was not stymied by tradition. Seeger carefully noted that by referring to 'American' music or studies, he was not equating them exclusively with folk traditions. Indeed, American folk music was only one element of American music; he was specifying all American cultural idioms." Pescatello, *Charles Seeger: a Life in American Music*, 194-95.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Seeger et al., *Reminiscences of an American Musicologist* (1972), pt. 2, 366. Seeger describes the article "Music and Class Structure" and the experience of writing and presenting it in part 2 of *Reminiscences of an American Musicologist*. After describing the long moments of silence after the conclusion of his reading of this paper at a meeting of American studies specialists convened in Library of Congress, he continued, "Still there was nothing said. Finally, I spoke even more urgently, and one man said rather nicely, 'It sounds as if it were written by a sociologist.'" Seeger et al., *Reminiscences of an American Musicologist*, pt. 2, 365-67 and 82-85.

Seeger excludes “tribal” musics from consideration, saying that “survivals of Amerindian tribal traditions have been negligible, though thriving still in some Indian reservations....” However, he notes that “African traditions, though not apparently surviving in tribal form, may be regarded as substantial acculturative components.”<sup>10</sup> These “African traditions” thus become an integral part of American music in Seeger’s model.

Rather than focusing on the acculturation taking place because of the interaction of differing cultures combining in the New World, Seeger’s focus is on the “inter-class and inter-idiom relationships” within that acculturation, a process he refers to as “sub-acculturation.” As Seeger says, “acculturation”<sup>11</sup> focuses on changes resulting from the “prolonged contact of *masses* of individuals carrying different music-cultural traditions, or musics.” What he terms “sub-acculturation” refers instead to changes arising from “the prolonged contact of these same individuals, but in their roles as members of social *classes* carrying different music-social traditions, or music idioms....” (281).

Seeger contended that the unique relationship that had developed between the classes of music in American culture might prove to be the distinguishing characteristic of its music (282).

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<sup>10</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 281-82. Seeger describes the interaction of “three continental musics – Amerindian, European and Africa,” which resulted in an “effective hegemony of neo-European music traditions” during the colonial era.

<sup>11</sup> Seeger uses the term “acculturation” extensively in his paper, along with the terms “sub-acculturation” and “contra-acculturation.” In Seeger’s usage these terms do not automatically imply specific location within power relationships related to the dominance of one class, ethnicity or culture, although the hegemony of the culture which has European roots is assumed. However, Seeger uses the terms somewhat more broadly to describe the acceptance or appropriation of the musical styles or content of any group, and the resistance to that process, by any other group in the culture. Describing the term “acculturation,” Seeger wrote: “In its simplest terms, acculturation envisages individual donors and receivers of traditions, who come into continuous, close contact. Donation may vary between the extremes of imposition by force and mere offering; reception, similarly, between grudging acceptance and enthusiastic appropriation. Charles Seeger, "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions in the Americas," in *Report of the Eighth Congress of the International Musicological Society* (New York: IMS, 1961), 206. “With regard to the borrowing and re-borrowing between different ‘classes,’” Seeger notes, “a general rule in the sub-acculturation of music idioms seems to be that the receiving (or taking) class must add something of its own to the products of the donor (or taken from) class before the process of ‘giving back’ has gone very far.” Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 290.

By alluding to the tremendous mix of countries of origins that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the population of the nation at the beginning of his essay, he seems consciously to imply that this is a cultural component against which the mixing of the classes of music is compared in his evaluation (281).

The seminal element in Seeger's model of American cultural development is a suspension of the normal relationships between different "classes" of music that was brought about by the dispersal of the population of the nation over a vast area for many years, a situation unique to the historical development of the United States. He specified three musical "idioms" that were part of this interaction: "(1) a folk art, mainly oral in transmission; (2) a fine art, mainly written in transmission; (3) a popular art, hybrid of the first two, about equally oral and written in transmission" (282).

This geographical dispersal came about as a result of the opportunities presented individuals by the continuing Westward expansion of the United States. This led to unique social structures, but also directly impacted musical development. Describing this impact, Seeger says,

The traumatic character of our cultural life in general has been and still is evident in our use of music, for conditions of pioneer life shattered the traditions of European music brought to the New World. These were of a music highly diversified in itself and in its social functions.... The folk art seems to have survived in the colonies upon a broad basis of general social use, both urban and rural.... The fine and popular arts, on the other hand, could not be given the professional cultivation and patronage, the

material plant and equipment that had serviced them in the mother countries. Training in the various disciplines was impossible. Elite and general audiences did not exist. Consequently, these idioms did not flourish in the colonies for the first century of their history or very widely during the second... (282-83).

In contrast with Europe, where there had been centuries of interaction between different classes of music, during the colonial era and the first century and a half of life in the United States, this was disrupted, and the result was a grossly altered relationship between musics of different classes:

European traditions of music in the United States suffered, then, not only the wounds of social, political and religious protest and of geographical transplantation, but also of three centuries' deprivation of the traditional inter-class and inter-idiom relationships through which art flourished normally in Europe (283).

Both of these types of "acculturative" tendencies—that occurring because of interaction between transplanted cultures and that occurring because of interaction between the various classes within those transplanted cultures—result in the absorption of elements from the cultural pool and with it, transformation of all participants. Both processes—acculturation and subacculturation—are offset, at times, by resistance to such mixing, something Seeger calls "contra-acculturation." He explains: "Every fresh wave of immigration brought additional impulses to invention of the new or to survival or revival of the old. Thus, acculturation was constantly offset by contra-acculturation" (282).

However, Seeger explains, in the midst of this “Euro-American” mix (282), in the early part of the nineteenth century the “urban upper classes...began to yearn for cultivation of such fine arts as were customarily approved by royal, noble, clerical and wealthy classes on the other side of the Atlantic” (284). This led to an effort to establish an alternative musical culture that Seeger terms “neo-European.”<sup>12</sup>

The resulting movement would eventually involve rural activists as well as urban ones, and would encounter cross-currents of nationalism in various forms, both from those resisting the elite nature of fine art music, and those who desired an American form of it that somehow would stand apart from the European art music that inspired it.

Seeger notes that the efforts of this group of activists were aided by the rise of the music business during the nineteenth century, which greatly aided their efforts but at times was at cross-purposes with some of their more idealistic notions. Seeger’s model, then, involves two central groups, the “make-America-musical missionaries” and the “sell America music businessmen,”<sup>13</sup> working to establish musical traditions in a dynamic cultural setting in which the coming together of people of different national origins combines with a unique mixing of people of different classes.

The pair of musical realms at the center of Seeger’s study—folk art and fine art—are not unrelated spheres of activity within Charles Seeger’s life, but instead are core elements in a cultural conflict that touched Seeger both personally and professionally. Among the wide range of topics he explored, the realm of folk music and its place in American music looms large.

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<sup>12</sup> Seeger first uses the terms “neo-European” and “Euro-American” in the 1957 essay on page 282. Further understanding of Seeger’s use of the terms “neo-European” and “Euro-American” may be found by reading their usage in “Music and Society: Some New World Evidence of Their Relationship.” Charles Seeger, “Music and Society: Some New World Evidence of Their Relationship,” in *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1977* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977): 187.

<sup>13</sup> Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” 286-88.

However, what some might describe as good music—an idiom Seeger encountered most intensely in its experimental form as a composer and a teacher, and returned to later through analyses and extended theoretical explorations—played a highly important role as well. Indeed, in his essay “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” Seeger admits,

having spent the first half of his professional life as an active member of the missionary group and taken part, in the early 1930's, in this transformation, it is understandably difficult for the present writer to regard with objectivity factors that only now in the 1950's begin to be seen in perspective.<sup>14</sup>

Seeger’s essay combines his gift for analysis and description with the insights of an insider. It examines music as a cultural or social artifact, rather than as an aesthetic one: music as an article of faith, as hard currency in cultural negotiations, and as a commodity in an expanding economy. In keeping with the venue for which Seeger was writing, music could thus become a tool with which to study the culture of the United States as a whole, to examine such issues as equalitarianism and class mobility, and to illuminate the role of commerce in shaping the society.

### **Thomas Bender and Transformations in the Nature of Community**

The unique geographical dispersion that took place within the United States during the nineteenth century and the social relationships and democratic structures it produced are integral to the process of acculturation, sub-acculturation, and contra-acculturation Seeger describes, and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.: 288.

therefore a critical factor in the transformation of the goals of good music activists during the twentieth century. One consequence of the westward expansion that maintained this dispersion, and an important part of Seeger's model, was the ability of individual citizens to choose to forgo the relative stability of working for another person, and choose to move and start a new life somewhere farther west, where they might be able to work for themselves. This freedom, and a certain level of freedom of association that accompanied it, provides the context for the interaction between different "classes" of music Seeger describes.

As an aid to understanding the processes resulting from this expansion, and the dynamics they produced, this study will utilize two studies examining the histories of community and of democracy in the United States: Thomas Bender's 1978 book, *Community and Social Change in America*, and Robert H. Wiebe's 1995 book, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*.<sup>15</sup>

Thomas Bender's *Community and Social Change in America* was written in order to reexamine existing theories on the changing nature of community, and to suggest ways in which sociological and historical models on community might be updated in order to conform more accurately to the historical record and to existing sociological studies. Bender examines two models commonly in use: "urbanism" and a later model called "modernization theory." Both of these models were linear, and posited that the process of urbanization had been accompanied by an increase in impersonal relationships and a corresponding decline in more personal ones. They

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978); Robert H. Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



also had produced indexes of “modernity” that judged the progress of a society by evaluating the complexity of their different social systems.<sup>16</sup>

In his book Bender returns to the nineteenth century ideas from which these two theories were developed, and re-works them to restore some of the subtlety that has been eliminated. For this he uses terms originated by Ferdinand Tönnies, “a young German scholar who was seeking to develop sociological concepts that would explain the changes in social relations that were associated with capitalism and the urbanization of society” (17).

Tönnies identifies two types of social interaction, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which Bender translates “roughly as ‘community’ and ‘society.’” Tönnies’ definition of *Gemeinschaft*, Bender says, corresponds in a way “to the historical and popular notion of community”; offering “family, kinship groups, friendship networks, and neighborhoods as examples of *Gemeinschaft* patterns of group solidarity.”

Bender says Tönnies identified *Gesellschaft* with the city,

an “artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings,” characterized by competition and impersonality. Summing up the difference between these two forms of social relationships, he observed that in *Gemeinschaft*, people “remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors” (17).

Bender re-defines *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*<sup>17</sup> in ways that are at variance with the usage favored by historians of his own time, for whom, he says, change was “not only

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<sup>16</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 24.

<sup>17</sup> This dissertation adopts Bender’s typographical practice with regard to the words *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, which reflects their common usage within his field as English language terms, reserving the use of italics and

directional, but...usually treated as unilinear, with all urban and modern societies converging as a single societal type where *gemeinschaft* is replaced by *gesellschaft*” within a “zero-sum equation” in which “any growth in *gesellschaft* requires an equivalent diminution of *gemeinschaft*...” (29).

However, Bender says, while Tönnies referred to his own age as a “period of *Gesellschaft*,” Tönnies had recognized the co-existence of two patterns of social relations that “coexisted in everyone’s social experience.” In his description of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Bender says that Tönnies was delineating and clarifying a distinction of which his contemporaries were “intensely aware,” in order to come to an understanding of the new, industrialized society in which he lived.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Bender says, a shift in the balance between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, in favor of the latter, occurred in the United States as American society became more urban in nature. However, despite this shift, both patterns persisted; they were simply different modes of interpersonal interaction. As we mature as individuals, we each learn about the different sorts of relationships we will encounter and the social behavior appropriate to each situation. Thus, using an example he attributes to Parsons, Bender observes that a person comports oneself differently “when greeting one’s mother at a holiday reunion” than one would “when introducing oneself at the Internal Revenue Service during a tax audit.” Both modes of interaction are valid and important; one did not totally displace the other. However, with the decline of the

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capitalization for instances when they represent work originally done in the German, such as in discussions of Tönnies’ theories.

<sup>18</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 33-34. In his Chapter Two, “Social Theory and the Problem of Community,” Bender discusses Louis Wirth’s “urbanism” (1938, pp. 19-21) and Talcott Parsons’ “modernization theory” (1951, pp. 21-23) and subsequent sociological field research that contradicted those theories, but which did not stimulate revisions of the theories prior to Bender’s own attempt. ———, *Community and Social Change in America*, 15-43.

importance of small town social structures in the life of the nation and the increase in urban living, the relative predominance of *gesellschaft* behavior increased.<sup>19</sup>

In his book Bender examines the transformation of social structures over the nineteenth century as the nation's economy developed. His work helps us understand the important role played by precursors of good music activists during the twentieth century.

### **Robert H. Wiebe and Transformations in the Nature of Democracy**

The transformation of the goals of those Seeger calls musical *missionaries*, brought about in the end by the rise of commercial radio, was part of a societal shift that included both a realignment of class boundaries and a democratic transformation, each of which was central to the development of twentieth-century sensibilities in the United States. This increase in “democracy” was similar to what had happened earlier with the phonograph, but it was much larger in scale due to the larger impact of the later technology; both contributed to the larger shift of society from the “genteel” culture of the nineteenth century to that of the twentieth century. The increased anonymity in the selection and use of music that resulted from the introduction of these innovations in technology and business had the effect of greatly reducing cultural mediation by the elite classes. That Seeger understands this is evident in the title of his essay—which refers to “music and class structure”—taken together with statements within the essay, such as his assertion that big business had, “so far-at least, in music-more of a democratizing than an authoritarian agent.”<sup>20</sup> Seeger apparently modified his views somewhat with regard to this particular point in the essay by the time he edited it for re-publication in *Studies in*

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<sup>19</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 288.

*Musicology*.<sup>21</sup> This change and other differences between the two versions of the essay are discussed in Appendix A, together with other essays by Seeger that explore the ideas presented in “Music and Class Structure in the United States.”

Seeger frames the historical moment within which commercial radio came into being—broadly locating it as the key event in the development of a consumer society—as the interaction of two competing interests, one deliberately aimed at transforming the culture; the other more indirect in intention, but ultimately dominant. The first interest is identified by Seeger’s observation that during the gilded age, a critical juncture, forces of elitism were seeking to establish a class structure that included an upper class; and that this was reflected in the music of the United States:

the critical point in the evolution of these cross-currents of changing traditions and of the groups carrying them came around 1900. About that time, a socio-economic music class structure, reverting more and more toward the European model, was close to crystallization.<sup>22</sup>

The second interest is identified by Seeger’s summary of the transformation that defeated this attempt, which came about not from deliberate resistance to the rise of an upper class, but rather, through the action of self-interested commercial forces in the marketplace: the emerging, commercial mass media. Seeger summarizes the result with his assertion,

it seems to me that it was the sell-America-music group, composed of manufacturers, merchants, bankers and engineers, that by large-

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<sup>21</sup> Charles Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” in *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, ed. Charles Seeger (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977): 229. For a discussion of this see Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup> Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” 287.

scale exploitation of the new means of mass communication served as the catalytic agent in bringing together not only the art and the industry but the three principle musics I have distinguished and the classes consuming them, and gave, in musical terms at least, a setback to the nearly successful drive to create a purely neo-European music class structure in the United States. Big business has been so far—at least, in music—more of a democratizing than an authoritarian agent.<sup>23</sup>

The attempt of wealthy Americans to set themselves apart as an upper class at around the end of the nineteenth century is both confirmed and given context by Robert H. Wiebe in his book *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*, which he describes as a “cultural history of democracy in its country of origin.”<sup>24</sup> Wiebe’s book is sweeping in its scope, and is particularly useful to this study in that it contributes to an understanding of the societal transformation from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, which involved a weakening of the role of groups in the democratic process, and in increase in the role of the individual. In musical terms this resulted in stylistic intermingling, the ramifications of which are still unfolding.<sup>25</sup> *Self-Rule* also illustrates the depth of Charles Seeger’s thinking in this area by analyzing in greater depth the societal forces to which Seeger alludes in his essay.<sup>26</sup>

Wiebe’s book addresses the nature of democracy in the United States, explains the seminal nature of its development in global terms, and details the ways in which it evolved over

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: 288.

<sup>24</sup> Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*, 139.

<sup>25</sup> In his chapter 8, “The Individual,” Wiebe discusses the emergence of what he calls “a new individualism.” Ibid., 185-201.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

time. As a point of departure he confronts “a confusion of definitions” of “democracy” that compete for our attention. Wiebe says that over “sixty-odd” core studies of democracy have been undertaken in recent years, each offering their own take on the meaning of the term.

Wiebe say that all writers on the topic do agree on one thing: simply, that democracy is a process of self-government including elections. Beyond that, a riot of meanings compete in conversations that seem to occur in isolation from each other, within three separate communities of theorists Wiebe groups using the labels “publicists,” “philosophers,” and “social scientists.” A common thread runs through them all that seems to form a counter-melody to that upon which they do agree: the sense that, despite the importance of elections, “democracy” is a concept that requires more than the simple process of elections. As Wiebe says,

By itself, voting is not enough. All kinds of governments hold elections. To make political participation effective, citizens need the information and the possibilities for association that give them access to the political system, and they need governmental officials who respond to popular decisions. In addition...democracy also needs adequate scope. Though it can tolerate some undemocratic institutions inside its own boundaries, it cannot function within a larger hostile system. A town meeting in an 18<sup>th</sup> century monarchy does not qualify: the sovereign power must be the democratic one (8-9).

However, because it is “America’s most distinguishing characteristic and its most significant contribution to world history,” the intense interest in the nature of democracy demonstrated by the large number of studies on the topic is appropriate and desirable (1).

Although democracy, as Wiebe says, is “too important not to define,” to define it is not simple and he seems to offer his entire book as a definition rather than attempting to distill it to its essence.

As a point of departure that underscores the importance of the topic, Wiebe’s notes:

Something profoundly important occurred in early nineteenth century America that acquired the name democracy. Once out, its influence spread worldwide. Since then hundreds of millions of people have operated on the assumption that democracy exists, and definitions of democracy need to be sensitive to that fact (6).

Wiebe’s assertion underscores the importance Seeger accords the musical democracy that grew from the unique interaction of acculturation and “sub-acculturation” in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

A clue to Wiebe’s understanding can be drawn from the chronology evident in this quotation. Rather than any of the events associated with the establishment of country in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Wiebe begins his account of the history of democracy in the United States in the nineteenth century. This is because American democracy is a dynamic entity: not a machine set in motion some two hundred-odd years ago, but a process involving constant transformation. Negotiation has occurred at fundamental levels rather than theoretical ones: how free individuals are to make choices about where they work, how much money they can earn, whether they can own a home, and of course, what kind of government they have and the nature of their relationship to it. Commonly known landmarks of suffrage mark the larger features of this transformation: emancipation of slaves, woman suffrage; civil rights legislation, and other major junctures might be cited. Other changes to process of democracy in the United States happened

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<sup>27</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 291.

more gradually, with many changes taking place while it evolved from a non-partisan beginning, through the creation of party politics, the group-oriented politics of the nineteenth century, through the era of back-room, highly indirect representation, to today's political process, however that is characterized.

The essential importance of this dynamic element to the functioning of democracy in America, and the fundamental internal conflict that drives it, are described by Max Lerner in his 1957 book, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today*. Lerner says that the ongoing process of American democracy consists of two phases,<sup>28</sup> each of which is required for the success of the society. He begins with a quotation, which he then explains:

“I love liberty,” John Randolph of Roanoke once exclaimed, “and I hate equality.” American is a democracy, but the inner tension that has always existed between the two poles of the democratic idea was never more passionately described than in Randolph's sentence.

Lerner goes on to explain that there are

two major meanings—or better a double aspect of meaning—of the idea of democracy. In one aspect it is free or constitutional government, a going system for assuring the safeguards within which the will of the people can express itself. In this phase—set off the more sharply because of the rise of the new totalitarianisms—the emphasis is on the natural rights of the

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<sup>28</sup> Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 537.



individual and the limited powers of government, on the separation of powers, on civil liberties, on the rule of law, and the protection of freedom and property against the arbitrary encroachments of the state.

In its second aspect the democratic idea is egalitarian. In this phase it emphasizes the rule of the majority. It presents the spectacle of a demos unbound, a whole people striving however imperfectly to make social equality a premise of government. It shifts the emphasis from the narrowly political—from the ballot and the constitutional guarantees—to the economy and the class system. It stresses the conditions for putting within reach of the ordinary man the opportunities of education and the making of a living....<sup>29</sup>

Writing in 1957, Lerner notes, “recent American experiences...have made it clear that in neither of these phases can democracy stand by itself.”<sup>30</sup>

The tension between liberty and equality exemplified in Randolph’s statement, which manifests itself within the larger society in a sensibility Lerner calls the “religion of equality,” is at the heart the democratic process in the United States. It is not a social reality but an ideal that manifests itself in certain real if sometimes veiled limits; as Lerner says: “not equality of reward or social standing but of access.”<sup>31</sup> It is the reality of class in a society that envisions itself as

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 536.

classless; the juxtaposition of individual choice, action, wealth and influence against the will of the people.

Accordingly, although Robert H. Wiebe's book is about democracy, much of it addresses the issue of class. The reason for this is made clear by understanding what "class" is, in Wiebe's terms, who explains,

class is a way of connecting people's circumstances and social power—power in their range of life chances and in their ability to affect or control one another. Long-term conflicts over these issues generate classes, which in turn set frameworks of opportunity and power around people's lives....<sup>32</sup>

Class, then, is a tool used by one group within the society to maintain their ascendancy over another, or other, groups in the society. As Wiebe says, "the chief beneficiaries in the distribution of society's rewards develop class ideologies to justify their good fortune. Otherwise, a patently unequal division would be robbery...."<sup>33</sup> This is an important point to remember as we consider the title of Seeger's essay and the incongruities inherent in an orchestrated campaign to bring good music to the masses. Yet ultimately, the story of the good music campaign is one of the triumph of democracy, and this illustrates another aspect of class in the United States.

Because class is a dynamic force, class boundaries are permeable. As Wiebe explains, "It is the dynamic quality of class that distinguishes it from caste. Caste is a box; class is pressure" (114). When class boundaries have hardened into caste in the United States, as they did, in

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<sup>32</sup> Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*, 114.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

effect, during the Reconstruction era in the South, they stimulated the northward migration of those Black citizens whom they sought to restrain.<sup>34</sup> The extent of class dynamism in the United States has been unusual:

White men's prospects for self-directed manual work in an expansive commercial-agrarian economy confounded European class schemes. Karl Marx, for one, threw up his hands and waxed mystical about a United States where classes "continually change and interchange their elements in constant flux" (117-18).

The uniqueness of class structures in the United States was the result of the availability of land to people in a wide range of economic circumstances, and this historical anomaly is at the center of Seeger's model. It led to the development of a two-class system in the nineteenth century, which was, Wiebe says,

as distinctive as the democracy that thrived alongside it. Three characteristics set it apart: the absence of an aristocracy, the general acceptability of manual labor, and above all else the broad base of white men's self-directed work. By broad consensus if not by logic, the more privileged of the two classes was known as the middle class. The crucial line of division ran through the ranks of what Europeans called the working class (117).

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<sup>34</sup> Wiebe alludes to this indirectly by discussing the ways mobility of blacks during the Jim Crow era led to a different situation than that under slavery. *Ibid.*, 125.

This line of division was access to credit, which divided those who were able to establish themselves as independent and self-directed, often working with their hands on a farm during the nineteenth century; from those whose toil was for someone else in exchange for wages.

The concentration of population that occurred over the course of the nineteenth century in conjunction with America's economic development brought a change to this structure. As Wiebe explains:

With what was customarily called industrialization came hierarchies that sharpened invidious distinctions, especially by differentiating people's work, and sought out ways to regiment subordination, sometimes through government and sometimes outside of it: more differences to measure, more rules to issue, more rules to follow. Everybody belonged, everybody had a place. Whose rules determined whose prospects in these hierarchies expressed the broadest of all changes accompanying industrialization: changes in class structure.

The contested nature of these interactions is essential to the class: "what never changes is the dynamic quality of these relations, a perpetual shifting..." (114).

Wiebe says that attempts to form an upper class in the late nineteenth century failed for lack of a critical mass of those truly able to live a life of leisure. Instead, what he calls a "national class" formed from the upper levels of the middle class, peeling off from the local, middle class, and leading to a three-class system that existed throughout the twentieth century. In this system the identities of those in the national class were defined not by their geographical

roots, although those roots might be of importance to them; but rather, by the their roles in the larger society,

roles that could be played out just as well in hundreds of alternative locations: public commentator, CPA, physical chemist, movie star, labor economist, roles that only made sense as interrelated sets of skills in a rationalized society...by and large the members of the new national class were urban, both because they their skills fit neatly into city life and because they took America's urban future for granted (142).

While during the nineteenth century, “the middle class justified itself with concepts of Character,” Wiebe explains, “In the twentieth, the national class used concepts of Knowledge. Experts—and behind the experts, science—carried the burden of knowledge for a new era...” (143). In response to this “dramatically different scheme of national-class values,” he says, “the local middle class declared itself the one authentically American voice in a cacophony of competitors” (144).

In Seeger's model we see this national / local split playing out within the community of good music advocates, roughly parallel to the division between urban and rural activists. It was a fundamental divide, but one still emerging near the end of the nineteenth century, as the movement assumed the form in which it would encounter the rise of radio.

This study, then, adopts Wiebe's capacious view of democracy, in which the process of class construction underway at the turn of the twentieth century was defeated by larger forces of democratic change facilitated by the emergence of the electronic media, an event that had a direct impact on the musical culture of the country. In this process, the forces of business might

be understood to have been either complicit or innocent with regard to their intentions regarding the promotion of more democratic approaches to music. Seeger attributes “a surprising amount of idealism” and at least “partially sincere slogans of social service” to the musical business community, and this study will not seek to pursue the issue beyond that point. Either way, the effect is the same.

### **Historically Locating the Transformation of the Movement**

The events this dissertation addresses relate very directly to the transformation of the societal roles of women that began during the nineteenth century: their emergence from the home to the public arena. It is evident that women maintained a continuing interest in, and sense of responsibility for the development and maintenance of culture, a role they had carried out along with other home-based roles such as they came into the public arena in the nineteenth century. There was no reason for this interest to disappear as their role, and therefore their influence in the society increased.

However, as has already been noted, another major cultural shift occurred somewhere around the turn of the twentieth century that conflicted with some of the goals of the most ardent of these good music activists. The social role they attempted to assume in the middle-1920s had faded away with this cultural shift, and because of this their efforts were inappropriate for the age in which they lived, and it was inevitable they would fail.

Understanding that the role they sought to assume was a survival of important nineteenth century social structures helps counter the impulse simply to dismiss their efforts as wholly misguided. While the level of control to which they aspired was inappropriate for their own time, similar efforts on the local level had played an important part in social structures of an

earlier era, and so contributed in a fundamental way to the success of national expansion. This, in turn, was integral to the creation of the unique form of democracy that exists in the United States, and with it, the unique relationships between the music of different classes, which Seeger celebrates as possibly leading to an “American” musical style.

My research revealed a progression of thought that I have sought to demonstrate using a combination of published and archival sources. During the period from 1918 to about the middle of the nineteen-twenties, the resolve of good music activists to undertake a major campaign in order to broaden the success of music education efforts strengthened. Much had already been accomplished, but results were uneven in different parts of the country. In the middle period from about 1924 to 1931, the emergence of commercial radio increased the exposure for good music, but also created a new source for the public to hear all sorts of what these advocates considered “bad” music. Among these other offerings the increasing popularity of jazz was particularly vexing. Good music activists resisted this and lobbied stations and networks to play less of what they thought was bad and more of what they thought was good. During this same period the networks worked to lesson unreasonable expectations for radio and to convince groups such as good music activists that while radio could be very effective at exposing the public to a wide range of ideas and culture, including music, it could not actually teach in the way a classroom teacher did; and radio networks also asserted the inappropriateness of their serving any one interest group such as the good music activists.

During the period from 1932 to 1935, perhaps sensing that their attempts to discourage the growth in popularity of music such as jazz were not having the desired effect, these advocates moved to a more positive stance in which calls from censorship ended and they began to promote the radio music, and by that point, the movies of which they approved. During this

period, the quality and frequency of what these advocates considered good music increased, while the most ambitious effort at social control in the history of the country—prohibition—failed spectacularly with the ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment near the end of 1933. Passage of the Communications Act of 1934 was another critical event helping to complete their transformation.

## Use of Terms

The use of the word “community” to describe participants in the effort to make America musical assumes simple definition of the term offered by Thomas Bender in his book, *Community and Social Change in America*. Bender conceptualizes the term in a way that takes into account the changes in usage it has experienced, writing, “Community, which has taken many structural forms in the past, is best defined as a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds.”<sup>35</sup> Community may occur within the context of a particular physical location or, as happens more and more frequently today, it can occur in ways that span distance. As Bender says, “community...can be defined better as an experience than as a place.”<sup>36</sup>

In its use of the term “democracy,” this study invokes the broad usage of Robert H. Wiebe in his book, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy*. Put simply, it is assumed that the term “democracy” represents something larger than a mere process of political selection confined to a particular date and occurring in particular locations. Keeping in mind that Wiebe’s entire book is devoted to explaining the reach of the concept, and borrowing his

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<sup>35</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



terminology, democracy may be understood as encompassing the entire process of self-rule as it has evolved over the history of the country. With this sense in mind, democracy must be understood as touching upon issues of social and economic equality, as well as education; everything that impact the ability of individual citizens to have a voice in the choices made by the society.

The contested nature of “class” in the United States makes the term an apt point of entry into the incongruity of the notion of *good music*. From Wiebe we learn that “class” is a tool used by one group within the society to maintain the ascendancy of their group, and that cultural artifacts including music function as markers that delineate class boundaries. Yet good music activists saw their music as a superior aesthetic entity that could, and should, be separated from its class of origin and offered freely to all people.

However, this vision automatically excluded certain types of music that the activists considered unworthy. This was a fatal flaw in terms of their appeal to the larger society, and one that demonstrates their lack of understanding about the relationship of music with identity. With the aid of the marketplace, their idealized vision of good music was swallowed up by a democratic mass that refused to heed its restrictions, and who transformed it, before regurgitating the notion as a commercial entity that somehow retained aspects of its previous nature. The term itself remained for subsequent generations, but its meaning had been modified.

### **Definition of the Scope of This Project**

This dissertation examines the impact of the rise of commercial radio on a community of activists who sought to change American musical tastes by promoting what they called *good*

*music*. These activists were exponents of the maintenance of cultural standards in an era in which public opinion was shifting inexorably toward a less restrictive, more individualistic approach to cultural norms and personal conduct. As such, they can be seen as a bellwether for the movement of society as a whole away from a time when the notion that there could be something called good music was at least tolerated if not widely accepted, toward a time when Duke Ellington's well-known adage, "when it sounds good, it is good," would better represent public opinion. In a sense, the good music activists were themselves survivors, relics from an earlier age, at least in this aspect of their views; an example of what sociologist William Ogburn, a contemporary, called "cultural lag."<sup>37</sup>

The study covers the period from 1918 through 1935. These years encompass the full transition from naïve optimism about good music during the Great War and the postwar echo of progressivism; through the birth of radio, when expectations were high for its potential use as a tool to propagate the love of good music; to the point when commercial radio's regulatory structure, and business and programming practices had solidified, with good music as a one of radio's high end products.

### **Identifying Markers of Musical "Missionary" Involvement**

Before studying the transformation of activists working to make-America-musical, it is first necessary to establish their identity more clearly. Who constituted this group of good music activists by the early twentieth century? Seeger apparently describes the group as it existed during the nineteenth century when he refers to them as "deliberate and concerted, though

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<sup>37</sup> William Fielding Ogburn, *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1922), 200.

outwardly unorganized.”<sup>38</sup> Referring to this group in the twentieth century, Seeger says their transformation, together with that of the musical businessmen, was one of “two events of prime importance” occurring “during the first half of the twentieth century,”<sup>39</sup> saying: “From a musically esoteric, idealistic, contra-acculturative set of missionaries, the make-America-musical fraternity became a more nearly realistic, acculturative segment of the population.”<sup>40</sup>

In Seeger’s terms, then, the identifying characteristics of these activists during the nineteen-twenties and –thirties included the strength of their contra-acculturative instincts, the fervor with which they evangelized for good music, and their idealism; and if with these clues we correctly identify the group to which Seeger refers, we should see that they experienced a significant transformation in their goals.

Searches of periodical literature from the first part of the twentieth century point to one group in particular that seems to conform closely to Seeger’s description: the National Federation of Music Clubs. As this dissertation will show, they were dedicated to the goals Seeger portrays, and they experienced the transition he describes as well. Although the Music Teachers National Association held views similar to those of the federation, the federation’s size, and especially its goals of expanding and evangelizing for good music place it in a different class. Together with particular individuals whose actions and word indicate their interest in the promotion of good music, the federation will serve as the central example of the “make-America-musical missionaries” of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>38</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 285.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

## Primary Sources

In her book *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, Karen J. Blair describes the National Federation of Music Clubs as “the largest and most influential organization uniting women’s musical societies.” Their impressive size, their status as a formal, nationally constituted organization with national conferences and publications, and the extent to which their mission was directly in line with the goals of the good music activists as described by Seeger make them an excellent subject for study of the changes to the goals of the movement.

The federation had a historian operating during the years under study in order to document their efforts on behalf of music in the United States. However, as of this writing the archive developed for this purpose is not available to researchers.

Despite this, many of the federation’s views were published in contemporaneous press accounts, in publications such as the proceedings of their meetings, and in a series of study guides developed under their auspices for the purpose of teaching their members about music. This study draws upon those publications of the federation and press accounts of their actions as its primary source.

The Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) is an important entity in its own right, but it also served as the birthplace of The National Federation of Music Clubs, which was formed at the 1898 meeting of the MTNA in New York City by twenty of its members, who had

been inspired by a meeting called by Rose Fay Thomas at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.<sup>41</sup> Proceedings of the MTNA also contribute significantly to this study.

The omnibus music periodical *Musical America* is a rich source of information about musical activities during the first decades of the twentieth century and plays a major role in this dissertation.

Walter Damrosch's contributions to the development of fine art music in the United States were considerable. Among his many contributions was his service on the NBC's advisory board during commercial radio's formative period. Damrosch's annual reports to the chairman of this board make a significant contribution to this study.

## **Chapter Overview**

Chapter Two examines changing economic and social conditions over the course of the long nineteenth century, along with some of the more important aspects of musical growth during that period, in order to understand the beliefs and conditions inherited by twentieth-century activists for a musical America. In Chapter Three, I discuss the plans of music activists to consolidate and expand improvements already under way in music education, and to harness the power of the marketplace in the cause of promoting good music and limiting the influence of "bad music" such as jazz. The continuity of their views with prior generations of activists with regard to good music is also explained, along with the roles of the National Federation of Music Clubs and other specific members of the movement. Chapter Four describes the rise of radio and

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<sup>41</sup> Ruth Haller Ottaway, "Music Clubs, A Significant Factor in National Development," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers' National Association, 1930): 120-26.

the response of good music activists to its emergence and to the increasing exposure given to jazz, as well as the response of radio executives to good music activists. Chapter Five describes the transformation of the activists as they began to understand better the democratic and commercial processes that were taking place. Relishing their association with the increasingly sophisticated musical fare produced by competing radio networks, at the same time they relinquished their long-held goal of universal acceptance of good music. For their part, radio executives began to align themselves with the effort to raise the level of musical taste in the country as Congress neared approval of legislation in 1934 solidifying the commercial nature of American radio.

### **Contribution of This Project**

The cultural changes that occurred in the United States from the end of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth were profound. The transformation of the goals of good music activists and the accompanying accommodation by the commercial radio industry that Seeger describes were important events within that cultural change and for that reason are worthy of study. They also were important factors in the emergence of the media culture that endures today.

These events also provide an important means of testing the model of musical development Seeger presented in his essay, in which commercial interests and advocates for the deliberate cultivation of idealized social attitudes about music interact in the presence of complex acculturation and contra-acculturation.

This dissertation, then, seeks to study the transformation of the goals of activists seeking to build a love of good music in the United States during the period when commercial radio was being developed. The study of this small but critical aspect of Seeger's essay is undertaken in order to contribute to an understanding of this period in American cultural and musical history, and to determine if Seeger's theories retain their usefulness fifty years or more after they were conceived and written, and if so, to contribute to their understanding by considering them in light of the work of later social scientists.

To present knowledge, to use a favorite Seeger phrase, no musicological study has tested Seeger's thesis in this way, although research in a number of fields including musicology have examined some of the cultural transformations Seeger discusses in his essay. Other important studies of this era have focused on the actions of commercial radio corporations, and on individual advocates for particular types of music who used the radio, as did Louis E. Carlat in his dissertation, "Sound Values: Radio Broadcasts of Symphonic Music and American Culture, 1922-1939." Carlat describes efforts to create a "middlebrow" culture by two opposing groups: proponents such as Paul Whiteman, who sought to "make a lady of jazz"; and activists such as Walter Damrosch, who sought to make symphonic music popular with the wider public. This study, in contrast, seeks to give some form to the transformation of a broader group of good music activists testified to by the evolution in the viewpoints expressed by its leadership.

## CHAPTER 2: THE RISE OF THE GOOD MUSIC MOVEMENT

Changes in American education, demographics, the economy, technology brought about changes in musical culture that good music activists did not foresee. How those changes affected the leaders of the movement, and the way in which the various constituencies of the movement responded, are topics for succeeding chapters; our task in Chapter 2 is to identify the principal factors that caused the changes.

When seeking to establish an understanding of events such as the transformation of these activists during a period that included the decade of the 1920s, it is useful to recall the cautionary words of historian Henry F. May in his pivotal 1956 article, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," who noted that even before the decade had ended, several groups who played important roles in the events of the decade had already offered differing versions of what had transpired, and that "the cultural battles of the twenties have been fought again and again."<sup>42</sup>

From today's perspective in the early twenty-first century, closing in on the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the Great War, the task seems much easier than it must have seemed to May, who had to contend with the differing opinions and critiques of people who had actually participated in the events he was chronicling. However, to the presumably beneficial perspective of time elapsed, we must add decades of historiography and legend, that took root in the culture and politics of the intervening years, through which we view the decade. Our sense of the 1920s

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<sup>42</sup> Henry F. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (1956): 405.



has accumulated its own mix of preconceptions, and we would do well to remember Roderick Nash's admonition that "the decade has proven a particularly fertile field for mythmakers."<sup>43</sup>

American society changed tremendously from the end of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century, change that was driven by transformative growth in the country's industries. During the 1920s and 1930s members of the National Federation of Music Clubs sensed the potential power of the developing commercial radio industry and watched it intently. They correctly recognized the emerging giant for the cultural juggernaut it would become, but misread the direction it would take.

A complete understanding of the complex interweaving of factors contributing to changes in the campaign for good music during the first part of the emerging century is well beyond the scope of this study and has been carefully examined elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> However, an understanding of

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<sup>43</sup> Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1990), 5.

<sup>44</sup> For example, see the following sources: for the generational change which occurred during the transition from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, see Henry Farnham May, *The End of American Innocence: a Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*, [1st ed.] ed. (New York: Knopf, 1959).; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 1st ed. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).; and Henry F. May, "The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917," *American Quarterly* 8 (1956).; for perspective on the historiography of the 1920s, see May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's.;" and Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*.; for an understanding of the growth of art music in nineteenth century America and also the role of women in its development, see Joseph A. Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation; a Social History of Music in America, 1870-1900* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971).; Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).; and Ralph P. Locke, and Cyrilla Barr, *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists Since 1860* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997).; for an understanding of beliefs regarding music and meliorism see James H. Stone, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," *Musical Quarterly* 43 (1957).; and Gavin James. Campbell, "'A Higher Mission Than Merely to Please the Ear': Music and Social Reform in America, 1900-1925," *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2000).; for a discussion of sacralization of music in the United States, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).; to learn about contemporaneous views of music in America during the 1920s, see Mary Herron DuPree, "The Failure of American Music: the Critical View from the 1920s," *The Journal of Musicology* 2, no. 3 (1983).; for discussions of the evolution of community and democracy in the history of the United States, see Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*.; and Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*., respectfully; for a discussion of the development of the radio industry, see Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).; and Clifford John Doerksen, *American Babel: Rogue Radio Broadcasters of the Jazz Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

certain aspects of that historical tapestry is essential to a perceptive reading of the transformation of the campaign.

### **Westward Expansion and America's Rise in the World**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the United States was still an experiment, and one with an uncertain future. Over the next one hundred years tremendous changes would continue to redefine central aspects of its character. Among these, changes resulting from its massive westward physical expansion were among the most significant, because in addition to enlarging the physical area of the country, westward expansion fundamentally altered social structures and democratic practices. As Seeger notes, westward expansion also continued conditions that had resulted in the “deprivation of the traditional inter-class and inter-idiom relationships” in music, “through which the art flourished normally in Europe.”<sup>45</sup>

The conclusion of this stage of growth, in and of itself, would prove to be a watershed event having great significance and tremendous psychological impact on the nation. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” delivered to a special gathering of the American Historical Association at the Columbia World Exposition in Chicago, drew attention to this transition and the potential challenges it posed, theorizing, as the late Robert H. Wiebe summarized in his book, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, that the challenge of conquering “successive frontiers” up to that point “had continually rejuvenated the nation through infusions of individualism, daring, and democracy.” Turner

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<sup>45</sup> Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” 283.

suggested that the loss of the frontier posed a major challenge to the American psyche, because a major contributor to “the unique qualities of the American character” passed from the scene.<sup>46</sup> Echoes of Turner’s analysis would be heard for decades. The closing of the frontier indeed marked a major change, but it was one of many confronting the country at the end of the nineteenth century.

As the frontier closed, the nation seemed to turn to the outside world in a new way and assert itself as a rising world power, engaging in the Spanish-American War with the resulting acquisition of the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico. This period around the turn of the twentieth century also saw the founding of many of the nation’s premier symphony orchestras and opera companies, and the building of major concert halls.

### **Transformations in American Society during the Nineteenth Century**

Initially, public lands in the West were sold in large chunks that could be purchased only by wealthy individuals. However, incremental policy changes reduced the minimum size of the plots of public land offered for sale, from 640 acres in 1796, to 40 by 1832. Westward expansion surged after the War of 1812, and again as indentured servitude was effectively abolished by court rulings that declined to enforce it during the 1820s. The implications of these developments for the character of the nation were immense.

Wiebe notes that,

By the 1830s, America offered the astonishing spectacle of  
a society that had relinquished almost all claims to organizing

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<sup>46</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 66.

white men's work, indeed that lacked almost all of the powers to try. Stretching westward and multiplying little dots of enterprise far beyond the capacity of a spindly government to oversee them, white men took control over their work with them, investing everyday decisions about it in the hands of those actually doing the work.<sup>47</sup>

In musical terms, the westward movement continued the process that had accompanied colonization; a dual effort, as Seeger says, "on the one hand, unconscious and immediate, to transplant a culture; on the other, conscious and ultimate, to form a new social order."<sup>48</sup> As the "hegemony of neo-European music traditions" extended across the continent, the remaining culture of Native Americans was largely obliterated as they were displaced to reservations. The music of Black America, by contrast, would grow in influence with the passing of time and with mass migration.

Settlers moved west in order to create something new, but they sought to take some of the old with them as well. Mixing with other settlers from different backgrounds in newly formed communities, they encountered cultures that were new to them and created new cultural mixes. As Seeger says, in this process musical acculturation was "constantly" being "offset" by contra-acculturation.<sup>49</sup>

Additional federal policy changes further encouraged westward expansion, resulting in unprecedented levels of land ownership by working class white men by the middle of the

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<sup>47</sup> ———, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 282.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> This was a singular event, producing a result that had not been foreordained. As Wiebe notes, it required the confluence and alignment of a large and unlikely constellation of factors:

an abundance of cheap land, a general collapse of unfree labor arrangements, a fluidity in the status of wage earners, a relentless decentralization of everyday decision-making, a remarkable expansion of small-scale credits for farmers. In the course of the nineteenth century, one element after another in this critical cluster dropped away....By seizing the moment at the beginning of the nineteenth century, white men were able not just to expand control over their working lives but to fix that control as a basic American right.<sup>51</sup>

Among these factors, the extension of personal credit to individual farmers and small businessmen during the nineteenth century—a process integrally tied to the social structure—is of particular importance to our understanding the good music activists of the twentieth century. Such extensions of credit made possible the emergence of the middle class, a crucial development in terms of the campaign for good music. However the system for extending credit is important by itself, for by understanding how it worked we can see the position in society from which the good music activists of the twentieth century descended, and with that knowledge see them not merely as advocates out of step with their own time, but instead, as citizens attempting

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<sup>50</sup> Citing William J. Cooper, Jr., Wiebe reports that “even in the southern states where the adverse effects of slavery reputedly weighed down poor whites, at midcentury ‘between 80 and 90 percent of the small farmers owned their land.’” Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*, 26.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

to fulfill a role from another one, a role that had been essential in the creation of democratic structures unique to the United States. They were survivors, in sociological terms.

Long term credit allowed the aspiring farmer to purchase land, and thus it was critical in the emancipation of white workers, who became a growing middle class. Shorter term credit allowed him to purchase seeds for planting and to weather a bad season. For a person starting or operating a small business or store, or for a mechanic seeking to establish himself providing services to a community, credit allowed him to set up the business and to resupply it with needed stocks, which generated profit and also served the community. Just as twentieth century banking laws made it possible for a broad range of people to purchase a home, who otherwise might have labored their entire lives without accumulating enough money for such a purchase, so in the nineteenth century individual credit made possible the very existence as entrepreneurs of these new citizens of the West.

The banks, which underwrote western development with loans to purchase land, to establish businesses, and to respond to seasonal needs, eagerly cultivated these new markets and the business of the individuals whose decisions created them. However, nineteenth century bankers relied on the social structures that developed in these new communities in order to mitigate the risks these extensions of credit presented.

Each of these communities had its own “pattern of local values...typically in the custodianship of the local elite,” which could “vary significantly from town to town.”<sup>52</sup> These elite groups constituted the same class of individuals who would advocate for cultural

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<sup>52</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 89.

improvements, the forbears, at least in spiritual terms, of the good music activists whom Seeger called “self-appointed do-gooders.”<sup>53</sup>

Apparently there were two principal classes of people in these small towns: those who were successful at integrating into the community, and others who were unsuccessful at setting down roots. We know little about those who moved on; perhaps they established themselves in another community. Certain groups, however, were excluded from the broad middle class that emerged, and thus from creditworthiness. Wiebe tells us, “Disreputability...came wrapped in ethnic, gender, and racial biases that held most Catholics, most white women on their own, and almost all African Americans, American Indians, East Asians, and Latins in the lower class.”<sup>54</sup>

In this setting, small town social structures had the function of providing what might be described in today’s terms as a credit checks and repayment enforcement for the nineteenth-century credit industry. Without them, the broad extension of small amounts of credit to individual farmers, mechanics, and small businessmen would have been unsustainable, and as a result the growth of these communities would have become stunted. In this way, small town social structures contributed an essential element that helped facilitate the entire process of western expansion in the United States, an enormous enterprise that required millions of individuals to decide to begin their lives over in a new place, creating new towns and cities, which in turn developed institutions of commerce, governance, education, and culture, and social structures that were uniquely American.

As part of this, over the course of the nineteenth century a “culture of respectability” emerged in towns and small cities across America. Individuals could relocate freely from town to town, but in order to thrive financially they needed to become integrated into local life and to

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<sup>53</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286.

<sup>54</sup> Wiebe, *Self-Rule: a Cultural History of American Democracy*, 119.

gain the acceptance of the local elite. Not everyone was welcome to borrow money; for that, a level of trust had to be established. Until about 1870 this took place in geographically delineated areas, communities surrounding particular towns or small cities.<sup>55</sup>

Over the course of the nineteenth century these social structures waxed and then waned as the country grew. The railroads played a large role in this, first making the communities viable, and then transforming them as commercial patterns changed. “Between about 1820 and 1870,” Bender tells us, “society was remarkably decentralized” (89).

The music industry grew along with the country. James H. Stone notes there was a “remarkable growth in musical activity” during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, with touring companies reaching out across the mountains from their bases on the Eastern seaboard. During this period, Stone says, “energy and ambition were more prevalent than talent and taste”; nonetheless, “the expansion of musical activity between 1825 and the Civil War was spectacular...compared to that of earlier periods.”<sup>56</sup>

Changes in community structure that came about during the last third of the century would affect musical life. Starting in the 1870s, social patterns began to change as towns near larger cities were “drawn into the metropolitan orbit.” This came about because, in addition to bringing in a growing number of nationally branded products, railroads fostered regional trade and made it easier for people to move between towns and cities, both for purposes of purchasing goods, and to obtain work or business opportunities. As outside opportunities increased, the power of local communities over individuals diminished. Social structures in the towns

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<sup>55</sup> In this section the ideas of Thomas Bender and Robert F. Wiebe are freely intermingled; see especially Bender, *Community and Social Change*, pp. 61, 89, 92-93, and 98-100; and Wiebe, *Self-Rule*, pp. 118-121. For a somewhat broader discussion of the importance of credit and of the dynamics involved in granting it, also see Wiebe’s *Self-Rule* on pp. 26-27, and Bender’s discussion of “The Mid-nineteenth Century” in *Community and Social Change in America*, pp. 86-100.

<sup>56</sup> Stone, “Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music,” 38.



gradually became less cohesive and tended to segment into subgroups. As this happened, those in positions of authority lost some of their status.<sup>57</sup> Bender quotes a contemporaneous description of the change by New York minister Henry W. Bellows:

Thousands of American towns, with an independent life of their own, isolated, trusting to themselves, in need of knowing and honoring native ability and skill in local affairs—each with its first-rate man of business, its able lawyer, its skilled physician, its honored representative, its truly *select-men*—have been pierced to the heart by the railroad which they helped to build to aggrandize their importance. It has gone through them in a double sense—stringing them like beads on a thread, to hang around the neck of some proud city. It has annihilated their old importance; broken up the dependence of their farmers upon the home traders; removed the necessity for any first-rate professional men in the village; ...destroyed local business and taken out of town the enterprising young men, besides exciting the ambition of those once content with a local importance, to seek larger spheres of life.<sup>58</sup>

The changing role of these individuals, from one in which they made decisions for their communities on matters of taste and were the determiners of social norms, to one in which their power was greatly diminished, was one aspect of the social transformation that resulted from the transition from a premodern to a modern economy in the United States.<sup>59</sup> By mid-nineteenth

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<sup>57</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 89, 109-10.

<sup>58</sup> Henry W. Bellows, "The Townward Tendency," *The City*, 1872, p. 38, quoted by Bender. *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-14.

century, merchants in New York City might still act in part out of a sense of their obligation to a social role. As the century progressed their motivation for economic decisions became more completely commercial. This was accompanied by changes in the balance between the differing nature of relationships people experienced in the disparate spheres of their lives, differences between their relationships with family, friends, and community, and those that characterized commercial and possibly professional interactions.

While these social roles diminished in importance within communities, the growth of good music continued on a different trajectory, spurred on by the creation of musical institutions and by the growth in education that accompanied industrialization near the turn of the century, and by societal changes that accompanied the ever increasing pace of industrial growth itself.

### **The Development of the Advertising Industry, Economic Growth in the Nineteenth Century, and the Beginnings of Mass Marketing**

Advertising played a major role in the transformation of the goals of good music activists in the twentieth century, because it was through music's transformation into a consumer commodity that millions of individuals came to have more control over their access to the music they heard; and advertising, of course, played a central role in the development of the consumer culture. James D. Norris's portrayal of the creation of today's consumer world in *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920* begins with a description of the driving of the golden spike that marked the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Point, Utah. As Norris notes, the completion of the rail link did not create the national market, which would facilitate the emergence of today's advertising industry and the

consumer culture it helped to create during the twentieth century, but it was an important and critical step in that it made possible the distribution of products on a national basis.

However, the creation of the “commodity self,” and the consumer society within which it emerged would require the country to undergo substantial change, only one aspect of which was the creation of transportation infrastructure. Each of these changes would be remarkable in its own right as succeeding changes unfolded in the next few decades. First, the population density of the country needed to increase sufficiently to where it could support national distribution of branded products; next, manufacturers sensing the potential of these national markets had to learn to exploit them, by using new approaches to selling and new forms of advertising to sell existing brands and to create new products. In addition, the success of this type of marketing required the growth of the middle class in order to spur it on; and finally, the emergence of the commodity self required the rise of the twentieth century automobile industry and its manufacturing, marketing and financing innovations to transform the entire process of consuming.<sup>60</sup>

During the remaining years of the nineteenth century, three additional transcontinental rail lines were established and a network of subsidiary railroads grew throughout the nation. This growth was particularly marked in the Western states and territories, which saw a six fold increase in railroad mileage between 1860 and the end of the century. By 1920 the nation had over 250,000 miles of railroad tracks, providing an inexpensive transportation system for goods and people, which extended to almost every hamlet in the country.<sup>61</sup> Shipping costs for a ton of goods fell dramatically with the introduction of the railroad, from twenty cents per ton in 1820 to

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<sup>60</sup> For an extended explanation, see James D. Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 1-69, passim.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

one cent per ton in 1860, while service improved dramatically, so that “the goods arrived five to ten times faster.”<sup>62</sup>

The increase in the population of the United States during this period was extraordinary. In the fifty years that followed the end of the Civil War it tripled, beginning with a surge of nearly 27 percent in the decade following 1860. Although the percentage of increase relative to the overall population fell as years passed and the country grew in size, the actual number of citizens rose steadily each decade through the beginning of the twentieth century, from an increase of almost 40 million in the decade ending in 1870 to over 106 million in the decade preceding 1920. This growth ebbed and flowed with progress or contraction in the economy, with about a fifth of the increase attributable to immigration.<sup>63</sup>

The Civil War boosted the advertising industry and the growth of consumerism. The increase in industrial production associated with war logistics and the increasing number of women working outside the home because men were at war led to both an increase in the availability of canned goods and a reduction in the amount of time women had to make items such as soap at home. Consumption of manufactured goods rose as a result. In addition, the use of an advertising agent by the federal government to market war bonds and to advertise for volunteers for the army demonstrated the utility of advertising to industry.<sup>64</sup>

As industrialization proceeded, literacy in the country increased from 80 percent in 1870 to 94 percent in 1920. This increase included gains in Black literacy, which rose from 20 percent to 80 percent during that time. During the same period, supporting the population growth, the

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<sup>62</sup> Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Belmont, California and others: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 14.

<sup>63</sup> Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Sivulka, *Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, 17, 19-20.

average age in the country rose from 20 to 25, reflecting the increasing longevity of Americans.<sup>65</sup>

As these changes were taking place, major internal migrations were under way from the newly impoverished South and from rural areas, to Northern cities where industrial growth was occurring. Migration of black Americans from the south to the north, particularly in the twentieth century, would have a tremendous impact on musical culture. Urban population increased from 26 percent of the total population in 1870 to 51 percent in 1920, even as agricultural output increased by 400 percent and per capita income doubled, from \$201 to \$413 in constant dollars at the 1926 level.<sup>66</sup> At the beginning of this period of growth, advertising was primarily confined to small, simple advertisements in newspapers, and tended to tout the quality of a particular store's goods and the general reliability of their supply of goods. For the most part these tended to be grouped together in the first page of each newspaper edition, with few illustrations and little mention of national brands.<sup>67</sup>

Following the Civil War, as the railroads increased the dependability of shipping to small cities and towns, advertisements for national brands began to shift the consumer market away from generic products toward brand names, and merchants noted an increasing demand on the part of their customers that they maintain their stocks of advertised brands. In the last three decades of the century, large firms came into being that made the lion's share of their profits from catalog sales. These were entirely dependent upon national advertising for their business.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 9.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-12.

<sup>67</sup> Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 16, 23-25.

<sup>68</sup> These included Montgomery Ward & Co., Spiegel, May, Stern, National Bellus Hess, and later, Sears, Roebuck and Company. Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, pp. 13-15.

The growth in the population and in per capita income created a tremendous increase in the opportunity to market national products, and advertising revenues grew accordingly, doubling as a portion of gross national product between 1880 and 1919, with an estimated increase from \$104 million to \$1.4 billion during that period.<sup>69</sup> Manufacturers discovered that increases in advertising budget generally brought corresponding increases in sales, and the sense developed that advertising actually could create demand for a product that was independent of its quality. Musical instruments were among the most frequently advertised products in magazines and periodicals during this period, and pianos, organs, and phonographs especially benefitted from this advertising, because of their relatively high cost. Marketing to a national audience allowed manufacturers to reach a sufficient number of consumers with the means to purchase such luxury items.<sup>70</sup>

The Civil War accelerated business growth in northern cities that continued steadily after the war, despite the challenges posed by economic depression from the early 1870s through the first half of the 1890s. As Seeger notes, the consolidation of wealth that resulted from this finally provided sufficient support for the “professional cultivation and patronage, the material plant and equipment” needed for the musical fine arts, and allowed them to emerge, at long last, as a viable constituent element of the culture of the United States.<sup>71</sup> The increased immigration and massive internal migration stimulated by the increase in American industry led both to burgeoning urban growth and to an anti-immigrant backlash that culminated in the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. Unprecedented urban growth also created new cultural markets, and separately,

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<sup>69</sup> Norris derived this figure from Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1983): 23, 26. *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>71</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 283.

festering social problems, to which the energies of emerging women's organizations responded in a myriad of ways.

The most successfully marketed products were soaps and other inexpensive goods that could be branded and sold in large numbers with small unit profits. Innovations such as a sifter top on a can of cleanser grabbed market share from the competition. Creative marketing was just as successful, though, and much easier to implement. Sewing machines and agricultural machinery sold in smaller numbers, but were in widespread demand and also benefited from advertising.<sup>72</sup> Responding to this new sales environment, Singer instituted installment buying for its sewing machines in order to make their product affordable to more families.<sup>73</sup>

Patent medicines such as "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People" were some of the first products to be advertised nationally, and by the late 1880s they provided the lion's share of revenue to advertising firms such as N. W. Ayer & Son. However, as national advertising spread to other products, patent medicines grew less essential to the advertising industry, and eventually they came to be viewed as having the potential to undermine the credibility of all advertising. Starting in 1905 advertising firms began to refuse to accept ads for the products, and patent medicines eventually disappeared from the marketplace.<sup>74</sup>

Advertising for cigarettes, on the other hand, transformed the nature of the tobacco industry and saved its profitability and their use would continue. Faced with an oversupply of tobacco products early in the century, the tobacco industry transformed itself between 1900 and 1921 by shifting consumption from large cigars, which required use of a large amount of the product, to cigarettes, which used far less tobacco per unit sold and could be manufactured with

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<sup>72</sup> Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 28.

<sup>73</sup> Sivulka, *Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 49-50.

machines, providing enormous savings in labor costs. Overall consumption of tobacco increased slightly during this period, which saw a slight decrease in the consumption of large cigars and chewing tobacco and a slight increase in the consumption of small cigars, but an enormous increase in the consumption of cigarettes. Although the campaign seemed to target existing tobacco users with their “emulation” approach, it proved even more successful at garnering new customers. Cigarette sales increased over 1300 per cent between 1900 and 1921.<sup>75</sup> Through each of these experiences the advertising industry grew in sophistication and enlarged their ability to manipulate the public.

The years between about 1895 and 1905 witnessed a large increase in the circulation of magazines, an increased concentration of businesses, and the move away from owner-managed business toward professional management. During the same period there was a change in the role of advertising agencies, from mere placers of advertisements to more creative involvement, whereby they began to see themselves as “innovators and agents of modernity.”<sup>76</sup>

However, the most fundamental transformation in the scale of advertising’s effect on the culture was brought about by growth in the automobile industry. Although the industry profited greatly from the free publicity it received from competition among rival companies, through news reports of road races intended to demonstrate the reliability and speed of the products to potential customers, it also spent freely on advertising, routinely purchasing quarter, half, and full page ads in magazines. Auto manufacturers developed an acute sense of the effect that seemingly minor changes in the advertising copy could have on sales. Including the name of the company owner increased sales; claiming to be “the best” actually detracted, apparently because it reduced credibility with customers. Advertisements that were simple and specific and kept

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 127-32.

<sup>76</sup> Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing*, 6.



technical details to a minimum were best. Ford's introduction of standardized, mass production in 1913 and the accompanying plunge in the cost of an automobile, making it available to the broader public, combined with its successful advertising campaign, created the belief on the part of the public that the automobile was an essential part of the "good life." This amply demonstrated the opportunity advertising offered to businesses in the twentieth century: with an investment in advertising as well as in manufacturing, businesses could reasonably expect to create not only products, but demand for those products that would ensure their profitability.<sup>77</sup>

The music business grew along with the economy. Like the automobile, instrument manufacturing benefited from improved techniques, but instruments also competed with automobiles, phonographs, radios and other products for the dollars of consumers as well as for their limited leisure time. While the number of pianos manufactured remained at a healthy rate well into the nineteen-twenties, it is interesting to note that the number of pianos manufactured declined after around 1909, even as Ford began slashing the price for its Model T automobile in order to spur a higher volume of sales. Piano teachers would later include the automobile in their reasons for the declining interest of students in learning to play piano.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 144-66.

<sup>78</sup> The price of a Model T was \$950 in 1909 and \$780 in 1910, and continued declining as mass production was instituted in 1913, to only \$360 in 1916. The number of pianos manufactured fell from 364,545 in 1909 to 326,264 in 1914, eventually declining to 130,012 in 1929 after a decade of ups and downs. W. Otto Miessner, "What is Happening to the Piano?," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 183; Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 164; Osbourne McConathy, "The Public School and the Private Music Teacher," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 63.

## **Transformation of Business and the Economy from the Late Nineteenth Century through the 1920s**

American exceptionalism assumed a new tone when combined with industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and with successful assertion of American power in the Spanish American War and the Great War. Writing in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1927, as the United States raced unknowingly toward its sobering encounter with the Great Depression, Bertrand Russell noted a dislike of the United States he perceived on the part of the English and the French. He attributed this to their jealousy of recent American success, and asserted, “we have taken the lead...in applying the modern industrial philosophy.”

Russell explained, “the dominating belief of what may be called the industrial philosophy is the belief that man is the master of his fate and need not submit tamely to the evils which the niggardliness of inanimate nature or the follies of human nature have hitherto inflicted Man...fear of starvation, fear of pestilence, fear of defeat in war, fear of murder by private enemies.”<sup>79</sup>

While the specifics of Russell’s views cannot be taken as representative of most Americans, the spirit of possibility they illustrate is readily seen in much of the writing of the era, which is large in its ambition to solve the problems of society and to build an alternative to the perceived failures of European society.

Much of this confidence derived from the remarkable growth the United States had experienced over preceding decades. That growth and the consumer society it produced owed a

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<sup>79</sup> Bertrand Russell, "The New Life That is America's," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 22 1927, 1.

great deal to the field of advertising, which had grown to its maturity together with the rest of American industry.<sup>80</sup>

During the years bracketed by the climax and conclusion of the Great War and the onset of the Great Depression, idealism of the sort that had inspired collective activism during the time of the greatest Progressive gains continued to be heralded as an important principle, but it seemed to take a back seat to business interests.<sup>81</sup> These business interests remained dominant until the chasm of waning prosperity during the Depression years swallowed them. During the nineteen-twenties, the entire culture reflected that fact it was the era of big business, with America ascendant on the world stage.

The economy faltered briefly immediately following the armistice, as industries shifted away from wartime production.<sup>82</sup> However, by 1922 a boom had started that transformed the country in unprecedented ways. The sense of possibility present in the business community of the United States by 1925 is illustrated by the assertion that year by Harvard professor of political economy Thomas Nixon Carver, that an “economic revolution” was underway, producing changes that were “significant in their relation to the whole history of Western Civilization—as significant perhaps as the Industrial Revolution in England at the close of the eighteenth century.” That this was taking place first in the United States was due in large part, he said, to “our democratic traditions that gave every man a fair chance, that placed no handicaps

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<sup>80</sup> James D. Norris discusses both the transformation of the economy of the United States and of advertising between the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and the period prior to the First World War in his chapter 1, “The American Economy in Transition.” Norris, *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920*, 1-26.

<sup>81</sup> Arthur S. Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920’s?,” *The American Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (1959): 833-34.

<sup>82</sup> Preston W. Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1930), 164.

upon success, that permitted every one to rise as high in business, in profession, and in politics, as his abilities would justify.”<sup>83</sup>

Writing in 1930, University of Michigan historian Preston William Slosson invoked Carver’s earlier assessment, and sketched the range of the changes that had overtaken the country since the war. This included not only an increase in average wealth, including significant increases in workers’ wages, but more fundamental changes: a transformation in the way wealth was created and distributed; the adoption of unified standards and efficiencies that contributed to striking increases in productivity; issuance of stock by large corporations to average employees; greatly increased spending on philanthropy and education; and greater access by average citizens to labor saving appliances and automobiles.<sup>84</sup>

The advertising industry experienced fundamental change during this period as well moving from the mere advertising of competing brand names to the manufacture of demand on the part of the public. This would impact the emerging radio industry tremendously and reduce its responsiveness to the demands of good music advocates.

### **Social, Demographic and Political Changes from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries**

The success of the United States in the Great War and the reality of the growing interconnectedness of world commerce and culture pulled the country in the direction of internationalism. However, longstanding and widely held beliefs by Americans in the fundamental corruption of Old World systems, along with disgust over the conduct of the

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Nixon Carver, *The Present Economic Revolution in the United States* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1925), vii.

<sup>84</sup> Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928*, 162-89.

European powers in the wake of the “war to end all wars,” reinforced longstanding tendencies toward isolation. This tension between an international posture and isolationism has been present throughout American history, but it was especially prevalent in the period between the two world wars.

A similar tension may be seen in conflicting reactions to the internal changes resulting from the rapid population growth, which had accompanied the massive and rapid industrialization occurring during the period extending from the last two decades of the nineteenth into the early 1920s. The cities were transformed by the arrival of large numbers of workers, which included large numbers of black Americans migrating from the South to Northern cities as well as immigrants from abroad. Writing in July 1916, Randolph Bourne concluded that there had been a “failure of the ‘melting pot,’” and he described the persistence of what he called “diverse nationalistic feelings among our great alien population.” Instead, Bourne hailed what he called a new, “Trans-National America.”<sup>85</sup> Prevailing public opinion of the era, however, disagreed with Bourne, and only eight years later in 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act slammed the door on most immigration. Meanwhile, the intolerance of white America for black Americans and their culture persisted, demonstrated in acts ranging from persistent segregation to lynchings, continuing to deny black Americans full membership in the larger culture.<sup>86</sup>

A somewhat similar dynamic of conflicting tendencies can be seen within the concert music community in the aftermath of the Great War. Propaganda directed against “the Hun” during the war had led to the mass firing of German musicians, creating immediate opportunities for American musicians. Yet, after the war European musicians returned to prominent positions

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<sup>85</sup> Randolph S. Bourne, “Trans-National America,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1916, 118, No. 1, pp. 86-97, excerpt reprinted in Jul/Aug 2006, 58.

<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of Bourne’s article and reaction to it, see Thomas Bender, “Negotiating Public Culture,” *Liberal Education* 78, no. 2 (1992): 10.

of leadership in the United States; Europe returned to its preeminence as a place of study for American composers, with Paris becoming a major center for study; and Austro-German repertoire also regained its position at the heart of concert music in America. Tensions persisted, however, and in 1936 under the added pressures brought on by the Depression, Congress would consider legislation known as the “Dickstein Bill,” which proposed to protect American performers from excessive competition.<sup>87</sup>

### **Progressive Political Changes in American Society**

Progressive Era political reforms imposed major changes on American society, and these reforms, along with the increasing relative importance of urban populations in politics that resulted from the population shift of recent decades, permanently altered the political landscape in the United States.

Most important among these reforms, of course, was the approximate doubling of the voting population that occurred in 1920 with the ratification of the nineteenth amendment. However, along with women's suffrage, Progressive Era reforms also included the direct election of United States senators, the enactment of secret balloting, the development of ballot initiatives, and the newfound ability of voters to recall elected officials. These changes more widely distributed political power, and moved the society further away from nineteenth-century approaches to governance and the social interactions that accompanied it.

The Progressive movement was the culmination of many changes taking place within the society. It grew from the gradual emancipation of women that had been taking place over the

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<sup>87</sup> Leo Fischer, "The Dickstein Bill," in *Volume of proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Music Teachers' National Association., 1936): 68-73.

nineteenth century; it was a reaction to the excesses of the gilded age growing from the abhorrence many felt when viewing the conditions in which the urban poor lived; it was the natural result of increasing expectations on the part of many individuals who had seen their own sense of autonomy grow over the century; it was a remarkable effort on the part of the agricultural lobby to seek legislative changes favorable to its own interests; and it was a concerted effort by a wide range of businessmen with a variety of particular interests, who shared a desire for good government that would protect the interests of the middle-class business community from those with enormous amounts of money and power: the “monopolists.” Progressive Era changes were brought about by a dynamic coalition of groups and individuals, each of which brought its own priorities and agendas to the movement. These groups coalesced for a relatively short period in order to accomplish what they could agree on, and thereafter continued to seek their own ends; it was never a cohesive whole. Although the years 1900-1917 are widely considered the “Progressive Era,” efforts by many of its constituent groups continued into the 1920s and beyond. Its effect on music education would be felt until the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Origins of the Good Music Campaign and the Growth of Musical Commerce**

Writing about sentiments in the country during the first part of the nineteenth century, when the effort to promote good music began, Seeger tells us that, “to the masses of the population by then

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<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of the Progressive coalition and what became of it, and of Progressivism and music education, see Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920’s?,” 833-51; and for an account of Progressivism’s effect on music education, see Thomas W. Miller, “The Influence of Progressivism on Music Education, 1917-1947,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 14, no. 1 (1966): 3-16.

confident in their belief in an American way of life that excluded music, the arts appeared as something foreign—a luxury of the idle rich, an affected and unnatural waste of time.”<sup>89</sup> This created a dilemma for those wanting to hear good music. While they believe in its intrinsic value and considered it superior to other types of music, they also understood that the cultivation of good music in the United States would be impossible without sufficiently broad public support, because of the economic requirements of maintaining a community of professional musicians sufficient to the needs of the growing country. Such support could only be built if they avoided creating perceptions of elitism. This would prove to be an enduring challenge, but it was one they met with some success.

### **The Era of the Common Man and the Cult of Amateurism**

The years during which Andrew Jackson was president are known as the Era of the Common Man.<sup>90</sup> It was during this period, when many Americans were opting to move west in order to gain freedom of action and self-determination, that activists chose to begin their effort to raise up good music. The strategies they chose reflected this reality. By focusing on using public education to train members of the community at large, they remained within the limits required by the equalitarian tone of the era. Breadth and universality thus became both a major component of the movement’s goals and the means by which they hoped to attain them.

Public sentiments during this period served as a tether capable of reining in any latent elitist sensibilities that might emerge among those who craved the sort of fine arts favored by the

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<sup>89</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 285.

<sup>90</sup> James Roger Sharp, "Jacksonian Democracy," in *Encyclopedia of American Political History: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York: Scribner, 1984).



European upper crust as the campaign for good music took form. At mid-century, the journal *Early Bird* would express the belief, by then widely shared, that “Art must, like Nature, be essentially democratic...,” and that, in particular, ““Music...belongs democratically to all who desire it, or are moved by it.’ There is ‘no aristocracy of hearing or seeing.’”<sup>91</sup>

Advocates for musical growth, including those seeking to tap this democratic spirit for profit, avoided eighteenth-century notions that music should be, as James H. Stone writes, “an exhibit of civilized refinement,” instead modifying “the individualistic and idealistic esthetic theories of Romanticism to fit the case of an equalitarian and practical American society.” This further encouraged beliefs in “the values of popular, secular, and even amateurish musical forms,”<sup>92</sup> and contributed to the growth of musical practice. Native hymnody was another area of musical growth. “Democratic and equalitarian,” it had become popular during the Revolutionary War period, when British hymns in particular had fallen from favor with the public, and it continued to grow in popularity in rural areas, spurred on by the religious revivals of the nineteenth century, serving in those areas as a protest against the worldliness and wickedness of the cities. However, as Seeger notes, these American hymns were “disdained by the urban churches,” and this difference of opinion contributed to what Seeger calls “a century of socio-musical conflict between poor man's and rich man's musics that has been resolved only in the mid-twentieth century.”<sup>93</sup>

Emphasis on the common man led to what Stone calls a “cult of amateurism” by the middle of the nineteenth century, in which “not the uniquely fitted, not the highly trained individual, but Everyman was said to be the source of a musical culture.” Belief was widespread

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<sup>91</sup> *Message Bird* (New York), III (1852), 145; quoted by Stone, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," 39.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*: 38.

<sup>93</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 284.

that “the arts were most significant when they were most widely distributed in society,” and “that the talent for musical expression was latent in all men,” and that “the capacity to learn the skills that would release potential musical ability...was naturally present everywhere.”<sup>94</sup>

These beliefs played an important role in securing support for teaching music in the schools. They would take a slightly different form in the goals of activists working to create a musical America in the early twentieth century, as they sought to enlist the broader public in the appreciation of, if not the creation of good music. During the 1850s, critic John Sullivan Dwight, in many ways a spiritual forbearer of the more conservative elements in the good music community of the 1920s, offered a then-contrarian view that “natural talents were rare and difficult to cultivate.”<sup>95</sup>

However, despite increasing appreciation of the critical role played by uniquely talented virtuosi, the importance accorded the amateur creation of music persisted well into the twentieth century, when good music advocates would lament its decline,<sup>96</sup> which seemed to be shown by an apparent drop in the number of pianos in homes, and a decline in the number of families choosing to provide private lessons for their children. They would associate it with the growing popularity of radios and phonographs.

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<sup>94</sup> Stone, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," 42-43.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*: 42.

<sup>96</sup> "The Decline of the Amateur," *Musical America* 30, no. 3 (May 17, 1919): 24.

## The Origins of the Movement to “Make America Musical”

In his sociological history of the movement, Seeger locates the beginning of efforts to build a “new-European” musical culture in the United States at the beginning of the fourth decade of the nineteenth century:

From about 1830, a small vanguard of private citizens, allied with European musicians who had emigrated to the New World, set themselves with almost religious zeal to “make America musical” in the exact image of contemporary Europe as they saw it. This deliberate and concerted, though outwardly unorganized, effort...took two directions.... On the one hand, it sought to create large orchestras and choral organizations, chamber music ensembles and audiences for famous European virtuosi; on the other to increase the music listening capacities of the population through music education in the public schools. The movement was thus democratic in aim but demagogic in manner of attaining that aim.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 285. An ironic contrast between the means and the ends of this paternalistic campaign can be found in the contrasting relationships between classes and between music idioms that existed in the United States, as opposed to that found in Europe. European musics of different classes may have been “well-integrated” with each other within each region, and with the social class structures in general, but the class structures themselves were much more rigid in Europe than in the United States. In the United States, where class barriers were commonly believed to be permeable, as Seeger says, the very notion “that social classes had ever existed in the United States” (287) was anathema to the popular mind. However, clashes over music of different classes threatened to expose the hidden fault lines of supposedly non-existent class conflict. Thus the different idioms, or classes of musics in the equalitarian United States enjoyed a more tenuous and volatile relationship with each other than did their counterparts in the more class-conscious mother countries of Europe. Seeger contemporary Max Lerner also discusses American beliefs in a supposedly “Open-Class Society” in the United States. See Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today*, 467-75.

The movement for a musical America was not limited to the cities. Seeger tells us:

Realization was general in small towns as well as in large cities and their fringe communities, that deprivation of the “finer things in life” had occurred and should be remedied. Church and school groups, German singing societies, and even the literary clubs that came in to being in the small towns were active in a similar way. Assemblies such as the Chautauqua and numerous lecture bureau circuits flourished. Second-rate Italian opera troupes were occasionally heard in most cities.<sup>98</sup>

Good music activists in large and small cities and in rural areas shared a single cause as they encouraged the creation and the appreciation of what they each considered good music in order to alleviate this sense of “deprivation,” while discouraging what they considered “bad.” However, while they shared these abstract goals, the musical experiences of each group provided radically differing points of reference:

Like their more sophisticate big-city cousins, the small-town, semi-rural groups saw their job as both constructive and destructive. But comparatively ignorant of the fine art, they fostered mainly the only other they knew—the popular art that had taken firm root among the middle and lower classes of the cities. To the urban missionaries this was anathema. Along with the singing school and its spawn of shape-note hymns, they fought it as “bad” music. Thus the two elite groups were at loggerheads

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<sup>98</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286.

with respect to what was good, but in agreement upon one thing that was bad, the folk art with its repertory of the Anglo-American ballad, love song, game song and fiddle tune, a style of performance employing the “natural” voice and devoid of exhibitory stage techniques (286).

### **The Emergence and Growth of the Music Business**

Despite such disagreements, the make-America-musical movement continued their efforts and made steady progress in developing good music over the nineteenth century. During this period, as Seeger informs us, the activists acquired allies to their cause:

Scarcely noticed by these self-appointed “do-gooders,” a powerful group of allies...gradually formed among the music publishers, instrument-makers and concert-managers that we have come to call the “music industry.” Its birth and growth were concurrent with the make-America-musical movement. It had no slogan. It was undoubtedly directed by men interested in music and often by amateur musicians of ability. But its main reason for being was to make money (286).

Seeger dubs these allies the “‘sell-America-music’ group.” The relationship of these two groups to each other and to the public, and the transformations of those relationships, is the central narrative of his essay and one of the principle elements in Seeger’s model for the molding of American musical culture: two “pressure groups”; on one side the group of idealists promoting good music; on the other, businessmen seeking profit from music of all kinds,

including so-called good music but also many other kinds. Although their interests at times diverged from those of the good music activists, these businessmen would prove to be powerful allies (285-86).

In practice the two groups of players—the activists and the “businessmen”—overlapped at times, and within each group, as might be expected, there were different sensibilities, beliefs, and strategies. However, the basic purpose for each group was quite distinct and held in common by its respective members. Good music activists, recognizing that Americans held a wide variety of opinions on what was good in music, sought to draw the public toward an ideal. The businessmen, recognizing the same reality, were prepared to meet the public wherever they were, or perhaps even run after them, in order to sell to them and make a profit.

Throughout their interaction, the music industry served as a moderating influence, because commercial opportunity beckoned back and forth across the various cultural boundaries, eventually helping to break what Seeger calls the “dike” separating folk music, which predominated in the country, from popular music and good music, which for some time had been marketed in urban centers. Seeger explains that “the rural population that carried the folk tradition was large. But owing to its seclusion in the vast reaches of the countryside, it was not, during the nineteenth century, extensively subjected either to being converted to ‘good’ music or being sold the ‘bad’” (288).

Time and the incentive provided by growing markets would be required, but music businessmen would participate in ending this segregation. Seeger explains, “The first break in the dike that walled off the folk from the fine and popular arts was discovery of the Negro spiritual, hailed from the 1870s by the missionary group, the general public and, eventually, by

the music industry, as 'America's only folk music.'"<sup>99</sup> However, this transformation occurred only after

the sheer magnitude of commercial operations began to require the know-how and experience in formalities of platform art possessed alone by professional musicians. And these, in turn, began to cast covetous eyes upon the possibilities of the new gadgets as they approached ever greater technological perfection and their employment became fantastically lucrative. With a little compromise on both sides and to mutual satisfaction, both financial and artistic, individual members of the make-America-musical group entered the large corporations. These, in turn, gave more and more time and space to the "good" and "classical" which eventually acquired the preposterous designation of "serious" music.<sup>100</sup>

During this "tug of war between the development of a neo-European class structure and cultivation of a classless, Euro-American, equalitarian society," events within each movement responded to larger conditions in the country. The "extension of the geographical frontier" favored the equalitarian model, while Seeger says the "extension of trade and industry...favored" the formation of a neo-European class structure and the culture that accompanied it.

The closing of the frontier near the end of the nineteenth century coincided with changes in industry and transportation, and related changes in the importance of cities and towns in the

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<sup>99</sup> Seeger, Charles "Music and Class Structure in the United States." In *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, edited by Charles Seeger. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977: 228. In the original essay a word is missing from this quotation due to an apparent printing error.

<sup>100</sup> Seeger, Charles "Music and Class Structure in the United States." *American Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1957): 289.

national culture, which until that point had been overwhelmingly rural. Seeger says that at this point the neo-European class structure was “close to crystallization” (287). In response to this closing of the geographical frontier and the increase in contact with the urban elite, who were attempting to assert a form of class dominance by asserting the superiority of their music, rural residents simply turned their backs. The “continental frontier” gave way “to a new type of frontier determined by social depth in which distance from elite urban and small-town influences was a dominating factor” (287).

At about the same point in time the interests of the “missionary” group seemed to come into conflict with those of some of the musical business community, as the new recording industry began to exploit markets made available by the growth of new media. These included the reproducing piano, which was introduced starting in the 1860s, later joined by the phonograph;<sup>101</sup> radio followed suit in the twentieth century. Each technology built on and expanded the markets of earlier ones.

Seeger notes that the music business was interested in only one kind of music: that which would sell. This, of course, intersected with the notion of good music only partially. “Large-scale production and distribution” of this wide variety of salable fare undermined the efforts of good music devotees, who hoped to train the masses to listen only to one kind of music. The antipathy this produced between some of the activists and their counterparts in business would grow and fester into the nineteen-thirties (289).

Also during this period, the Music Supervisor’s National Conference contributed to what would eventually prove to be a mutual accommodation dominated by business, when they

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<sup>101</sup> Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume, “Player Piano,” *Grove Music Online*, 7 July 2008 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21928>>; Desmond Shawe-Taylor, “Recording,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, July 7, 2008 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O011552>>.



decided to invite music publishers to their meetings, starting with their initial meeting in 1907.

With this decision, as Seeger explains, the teachers

formally abandoned authoritarian leadership of the make-America-musical group for the more democratic opportunism of the sell-America-music group. Instead of offering school administrators an upper-class, intellectual, divine, quasi-European art, the Conference tried to find out what the administrators would buy and pay for in the way of music. This turned out to be the somewhat old-fashioned, middle-class popular music of the day (290).

In time, this decision by music educators proved to be of inestimable value to the growth of good music in the country as a whole:

By giving them this in quantity and at the same time allowing the "good music boys" to work within such a frame as best they could, a revitalization of music education in the schools took place, the magnitude and quality of whose effect upon the use of music in the United States can scarcely yet be estimated (290).

In time the music industry discovered "a market in the backwoods and great open spaces," where "the rural population and its "old-time" folk songs and dance tunes" had been "despised if not ignored by the make-America musical group, by most of the music industry and by the schools." In order to exploit this commercial opportunity, the music business "first sold phonographs," and "by the 1920's it was putting favorite folk and folk-popular songs and dances, both white and Negro, on discs. The process was repeated with radios and radio programs in the 1930's" (290).

However, resistance to the acceptance of the folk idiom remained among good music activists and other urban groups, and Seeger explains, “it was not until the 1940’s that the folklorists, the WPA and the Library of Congress were able to persuade the urban music intellectuals to accept the native Anglo-American folk music” (290).

Even as it cultivated the market for “classical” or “serious” music to commercial advantage, the music industry provided the larger public the variety of music it wanted, through sheet music and songsters, and later with increasing consequence, through sound reproducing and sound projecting products. Music teachers numbered among the taste makers, opting for music of interest to their parents and students, music for which their school boards would pay. Thus at the same moment the culture seemed to be solidifying into class stratification, technology and its utilization was opening the door to other models of class in the marketplace. First with player pianos and phonograph records, and later with even greater consequence, through radio, commercial interests made available to the public whatever it wanted in terms of music, “anything that would sell, from Caruso to Doc Boggs, from Verdi to Gershwin” (289).

The ultimate resolution of the conflict between the two groups was preceded by a period of mutual accommodation during which in Seeger’s words, “the make-America-musical fraternity” was transformed “from a musically esoteric, idealistic, contra-acculturative set of missionaries” into “a more nearly realistic, acculturative segment of the population”; and the “sell-America-music group” was transformed as well, leaving behind the “narrow commercial opportunism...” that had characterized their group, and instead began displaying “a surprising amount of idealism, with many partially sincere slogans of social service, and with a degree of group consciousness” (288). In the end it was the overwhelming power of the emerging commercial radio industry that proved decisive, at last lending its full weight to the forces of the

increasingly free market for music. With this any lingering doubts about the degree to which musical taste would at last be emancipated from those intending to be its guardian were erased.

Several paradoxes lay at the heart of the movement for good music. The most central, of course, proceeded directly from the very notion that *good music* existed at all, at least in a universal and objective sense. Maintaining this idea smacked of class pretensions, something manifestly unwelcome in the United States during the Era of the Common Man, and certainly not the stuff of a campaign aimed at the American population at large. As Seeger explains, during the nineteenth century, volatile issues of class took on complex overtones that those seeking to promote good music had to accommodate:

such was its hold upon the verbal consciousness of the bulk of the population that it became imprudent to propose in a serious way that social classes ever existed in the United States. The very concept of social class was “un-American” and could only be entertained by a foreigner or by one under domination of foreign, hence dangerous, ideas. Mass attitudes involving this myth had long been enhanced, as we all know, by its almost equally widely expressed contradiction, as, for example, in the “society and fashion” pages of the newspapers, by the prominence given to news of royalty and nobility, wealth and status, and in contacts between individuals of different social classes, when hair-trigger reactions of superiority-inferiority could be expected, ranging from “I’m as good as you” to “You’re as good as I”—rationalizations of the existence but undesirability of classes (287).

The equalitarian response of those promoting good music had been to attempt to separate the music from its class, and treat the music as if it were a natural resource rather than a class marker, something which could and should be shared among all. They believed that good music was superior, and they lacked the understanding required to know the meaning that other types of music held for their fellow citizens. Still, recognizing that the appreciation of their own music was, at least to a certain extent, an acquired taste, they sought to impose it, in effect, through the schools and, initially, through appeals to the owners of mass media to regulate their content in order to serve what they believed to be the public good.

Although tailoring their view of music to accommodate both the reality of the democratic nature of the society and the elite nature of the music they believed to be singularly “good,” in order to gain its acceptance by the broad public, in their own campaign activities the activists tended to be undemocratic, according to Seeger. In yet another paradoxical twist, as he explains, “the make-America-musical movement,” which had equalitarian aims, was “composed...of members of the well-to-do classes, or candidates for these,” and it was “highly authoritarian in its operation.”

In addition, in seeking to create what they thought of as a new American reality, what was truly “American” was pushed aside. As Seeger explains:

To this almost religious brotherhood, music was of only one kind: "good" music, which was to say, monuments of the European fine art or well-meant imitations of them. In this sense, music (meaning "good" music) was not a class good for a few, but a universal good for all mankind. Before the altar of the concert stage all men were equal and all music divine. But face any of

these protagonists with folk or popular music! If it were European it might pass. But if it were American, it was not music at all! Thus European and neo-European urban fashions in the written fine art were authoritatively pitted, in the name of democracy, against the truly democratic, but unwritten (or badly written), Euro-American and emerging American folk and folk-popular idioms.<sup>102</sup>

Understanding their natural disadvantage in numbers, the adherents of the make-America” became highly organized and very aggressive.<sup>103</sup>

Yet another irony may be found by contrasting the situation in Europe, to which the good music advocates looked for a model with regard to music and class, with that in the United States. In Europe, as Seeger explains, musics of different classes had been “well-integrated” with each other within each region, and with the social class structures in general, for centuries. However, the class structures themselves were much more rigid in than in the United States. By contrast, class barriers in the United States were commonly believed to be permeable, yet, clashes over music threatened to expose the hidden fault lines of supposedly non-existent class conflict. Thus the different idioms, or classes of musics in the equalitarian United States enjoyed a more tenuous and volatile relationship with each other than did their counterparts in the more class-conscious mother countries of Europe.

Progress in cultivating “the fine and popular arts” during the nineteenth century can be seen in the growth in musical commerce and the emergence of musical institutions, or as Seeger referred to them, “the professional cultivation and patronage, the material plant and equipment

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<sup>102</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 287.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.: 287-88.

that had serviced them in the mother countries.” In addition, the formation of conservatories was required.

Overcoming this was a cyclical problem requiring, at once, the creation of conservatories to train the musicians, and sufficient demand to employ the graduates of such institutions. This process took many decades. Yet, successfully mastering this challenge was necessary to solve yet another, for if music education was to serve its purpose educating the larger public about good music, that good music needed to be provided by musicians with proper training.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, as music education made slow progress, the music business was growing as well. Concerts given for purely financial motives contributed to a growing tradition of public performances. On a broader scale, over time the commercial music world that was emerging would play a larger and larger part in establishing the context with which Americans experienced their music, which in turn affected the activities of good music activists.

Gilbert Chase notes that “two of the most prominent English ballad composers and singers...” of the late 1830s, “Mr. Joseph Knight and Mr. Henry Russell...were bent on elevating the musical taste of Americans, much to the benefit of their bank accounts,” and notes that in addition, “they had plenty of competition.”<sup>104</sup> Over the course of the century performances by touring artists and a growing number of local entertainment entrepreneurs would contribute both to a growth in the public’s taste for musical performance, and to the growth of the music industry. Seeger notes the importance of the success of the minstrel

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<sup>104</sup> Gilbert Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*, Rev. 3rd ed., Music in American life. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 147.

business in the 1840s to the growth of the “sell-America-music” group.<sup>105</sup> As time passed, more and more native, American talent joined the roster of successful performers on the circuit.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps the most impressive example of concert promotion of the entire century was the 1850-52 tour of Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, engineered by impresario P. T. Barnum, who lured the reluctant Lind to undertake the tour, with an advance payment to her of what was then an astronomical price, \$187,000. Barnum then created tremendous anticipation for Lind’s tour through a carefully executed promotional campaign that skillfully manipulated public expectations. A crowd of thirty thousand greeted her ship in New York when it arrived, and the concert tour that followed elicited similar enthusiasm by the public. Lind enhanced the commercial success of the venture by endorsing products ranging from sheet music and pianos to gloves and stoves. By the end of the tour, Barnum had netted a profit of more than \$500,000, and the country had fallen for a foreign diva.<sup>107</sup>

The music business grew along with the rest of commerce, and during the second half of the nineteenth century, as the American labor movement began to organize. John Spitzer summarizes,

American musicians’ unions began in the 1860s and grew rapidly. By the 1890s there was a union in every large American city except for Boston and in many smaller ones. By far the majority of American orchestras were unionized – opera orchestras, concert orchestras, theater orchestras, touring orchestras, all sorts of

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<sup>105</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286. Gilbert Chase provides one account of this in his Chapter 13, “The Ethiopian Business.” Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*, 232-47.

<sup>106</sup> For one account see, “Chapter 9. The Genteel Tradition.” Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*, 147-69.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: a History*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2001), 186-90.

temporary and casual orchestras. The three outstanding features of musicians' unions were the closed shop, the price list, and the membership of leaders and conductors in the union.<sup>108</sup>

Union membership was mandatory; even conductors Patrick Gilmore, Theodore Thomas, and Walter Damrosch belonged to the union.<sup>109</sup> This growth in the organization of musicians reflects the growing strength of the music business. Initially the local unions operated fairly independently of the national organizations that arose, first the Musicians' Protective Association of the United States (1871-75) and later, the National League of Musicians (1886-1903). Growth in railway transportation increased opportunity and also competition, and in 1896 several unions broke away from the league and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, creating the American Federation of Musicians, which displaced the National League of Musicians and led to its dissolution in 1903.<sup>110</sup>

Orchestras were a business as well, and although orchestras in residence in one location proved repeatedly that they could not operate without a subsidy, a number of touring orchestras were able to find financial success. Such orchestras were typically conducted by Europeans at first, such as Frenchman Louis Antoine Jullien, and they proved to be good sources of training for American players and conductors.<sup>111</sup> Theodore Thomas, who would tour extensively with a highly successful orchestra bearing his name and became the founding conductor of the Chicago

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<sup>108</sup> John Spitzer, "American Musicians' Unions in the 19th Century," in *Conference on the 19th-Century American Orchestra* (New York, January 17-19, 2008: Forthcoming), 7.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>111</sup> For one account of Jullien's career, see H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 3rd ed., Prentice Hall History of Music Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 91.



Symphony, received critical formative experiences by playing for Jullien in 1853. Thomas had emigrated from Germany as a child but grown up in the United States.<sup>112</sup>

Thomas created the Theodore Thomas Orchestra in 1864 and was commercially successful, in part because of his skill at designing programs. They would begin and end with accessible, crowd-pleasing works, but typically included more challenging ones in the middle of the program, often movements of German symphonic music. Thomas's skills as an impresario enabled him to maintain engagements for his orchestra that in turn allowed him to retain his players full-time during tours and outdoor summer concerts series in New York, from 1869 to 1878. Because of this he was able to require that his musicians attend rehearsals, and thereby inaugurate "the modern symphonic ideal, according to which dozens of players submit through careful rehearsal to the rigorous, not to say autocratic, direction of a conductor in the interests of polished perfection."<sup>113</sup> Members of the New York Philharmonic, a directorship he assumed in 1877, were only paid part time. As such, they considered rehearsals expendable:

Since the Philharmonic could not guarantee full-time work, if an orchestra member had another engagement he would go to it rather than to the rehearsal. "A clarinet or oboe part would be played on a violin, or a bassoon part on the 'cello, etc.," Thomas reported. "The conductor therefore could not rehearse as he ought, and the audience talked at pleasure.... Such conditions debarred all progress."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> John Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 237.

<sup>113</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 91-93.

<sup>114</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 113-16.

Except for a brief stint as head of the Cincinnati College of Music, Thomas remained the conductor of the New York Philharmonic until 1891, when he became conductor of the newly formed Chicago Symphony Orchestra, lured by the promise of full time employment to its musicians.<sup>115</sup>

Thomas was a major force in musical development during the nineteenth century because of his success in raising the level of quality of the performances. This had a transformative effect on professional musicians and on orchestras throughout the country. In addition, he challenged audiences by his memorable demands for “decorum and order”<sup>116</sup> during concerts, and also by his programming. Although Thomas was a “Wagnerian advocate,” his taste in programming was broad and he exposed a tremendous number of listeners to composers they had never before experienced, particularly through his tours with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra.<sup>117</sup>

## **Wind Bands**

During the nineteenth century wind bands became very popular and developed an increasing importance in the musical life of the country. Like concerts mounted by entrepreneurs, band music enriched the musical life of the country and contributed to a growing taste for public musical performance. In addition, it also contributed to the development of musical skills in the public at large.

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<sup>115</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 91-93.

<sup>116</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 187.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

The band movement started “in the 1700s with local militia bands.”<sup>118</sup> During the nineteenth century, they became “the most popular and ubiquitous instrumental organization in nineteenth-century America...over 3,000 of which, containing more than 60,000 musicians, existed on the eve of the civil war.”<sup>119</sup> During the Civil War bands “blossomed...into a national patriotic movement, and continued as an amateur pastime even after an elite professional strain of wind band performance emerged. The professional band, led in the postwar years by Patrick S. Gilmore and John Philip Sousa, brought polished performances to the ears of more Americans than any other ensemble.”<sup>120</sup>

Some of the accomplishments of the wind band movement contributed to making America musical; in particular, it developed music reading and playing skills, and promoted the playing of instruments by the general populace. However, despite this they had different ultimate goals than did good music activists, and understanding the ways in which the two groups differed helps us understand the goals of the more conservative advocates for good music.

John Philip Sousa, the consummate band conductor, delineated this contrast in his autobiography. Sousa described himself “as a highly skilled and tasteful purveyor of entertainment...not concerned with elevating his audience but with pleasing it.”<sup>121</sup> He contrasted his approach with that of orchestral conductor Theodore Thomas in his 1928 book *Marching Along*, reflecting on an afternoon the two conductors had spent together: “Thomas had a highly organized symphony orchestra..., I a highly organized wind band.... Each of us was

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<sup>118</sup> Crawford, *America's Musical Life: a History*, 453-55. Crawford deals extensively with the history of band music in the United States throughout his book.

<sup>119</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 104.

<sup>120</sup> Crawford, *America's Musical Life: a History*, 455.

<sup>121</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 129.

reaching an end, but through different methods. He gave Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky, in the belief that he was educating his public; I gave Wagner, Liszt, and Tchaikowsky with the hope that I was entertaining my public.”<sup>122</sup>

As Sousa intimated, the difference between the two approaches was one of intent: those whom Seeger called “make-America-musical missionaries” hoped to *convert* people to the love of music—*good music*—while Sousa’s goal was to entertain, and to do it well.

### **The Emergence of Symphony Orchestras and Major Opera Companies, and the Beginning of Musical Study in Conservatories and Universities**

Growing interest in music within the society is reflected in the increasingly vibrant musical activity seen over the course of the nineteenth century. The combined efforts of both amateur and professional performers, financial underwriters, journalists, and members of the public willing to support their efforts through their ticket purchase and attendance, made possible the creation of musical institutions such as symphony orchestras and opera companies in the major cities of the country. The timing for this varied widely from region to region. As New York grew, the richness of its commerce and the abundant variety of its citizenry spawned a particularly rich and varied cultural life. Among its products was the New York Philharmonic, founded in 1842. Although its musicians were only “part-time,” it was the first “permanent” symphony orchestra in the United States.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> John Philip Sousa, *Marching Along: Recollections of Men, Women and Music* (Boston: Hale, Cushman & Flint, 1928), 359. Cited in Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 130.

<sup>123</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 91-93.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century, more of America's flagship symphony orchestras were created, starting with the Boston Symphony in 1881 and the Chicago Symphony in 1891. By 1910, they had been joined by major orchestras in St. Louis, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh.<sup>124</sup> In addition to orchestras, first class auditoriums were built as venues for the symphony orchestras, notably Cincinnati's Music Hall (1878), Carnegie Hall in New York (1891), and Symphony Hall in Boston (1900).<sup>125</sup>

The wealthy elite in major cities who underwrote this symphonic expansion frequently did so with great purpose and with a public-minded spirit. Describing the motivations of some involved with the founding of the Boston Symphony, Irving Sablosky notes that for such good music supporters,

...music was no frivolous diversion; it had to do, as the Puritans would have it, with the nourishment of the mind and spirit. To foster it was to foster morality. To propagate music among the people was to lift them up spiritually, and "uplift" was a theme of the times.<sup>126</sup>

At times their support was at the behest of gifted conductors such as Walter Damrosch, who actively sought their assistance with the argument that, "in a Republic...the citizens and not the Government in any form should do such work and bear such burdens. To the more fortunate

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<sup>124</sup> Irving Sablosky, *American Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 94-95.

<sup>125</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 142.

<sup>126</sup> Sablosky, *American Music*, 94-95.

people of our land belongs the privilege of providing the higher branches of education and art.”<sup>127</sup>

An accounting of the origins of the Boston Symphony illustrates the extended efforts that were often required to bring a major orchestra into existence, but also illustrated autocratic tendencies that sometimes characterized the actions of individuals within the good music movement. The Boston Symphony’s success was aided by orchestral precursors discussed by Mary Wallace Davidson in a paper delivered at the “The Nineteenth-Century American Orchestra” Symposium in New York City in January, 2008: “John Sullivan Dwight & the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?”<sup>128</sup> The first of these precursors was called the Musical Fund Society, a cooperative venture of over fifty players formed in 1847, in which the members shared the profits from performances. Davidson tells us “they attempted to play the ‘best’ music, the symphonies of Pleyel, Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven.” Fire destroyed all of the organization’s instruments in 1855, and it went out of existence.<sup>129</sup>

Another important precursor was the Germania Musical Society, an ensemble that came to the United States in 1848 in order to tour. It performed frequently in Boston between highly successful tours, and its members chose to settle in Boston in the autumn of 1851.<sup>130</sup> Their programs “offered Americans first and repeat hearings of works by numerous European composers, including Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Schumann, and Wagner,”<sup>131</sup> but their

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Mary Wallace Davidson, "John Sullivan Dwight and the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?," in *Conference on the 19th-Century American Orchestra* (New York, January 17-19, 2008: Forthcoming).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.: 3.

<sup>130</sup> Nancy Newman, "Good Music for a Free People: The Germania Musical Society and Transatlantic Musical Culture of the Mid-Nineteenth Century" (dissertation, Brown University, 2002), 51.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 10.

programs contained a mixture of musical styles, and also included polkas and light opera. The ensemble's high level of orchestral playing set "a new standard" for the orchestras in the United States, and for this reason had a significant long-term impact.<sup>132</sup> Within only a few years after the society settled in Boston, a number of individual members moved away to seek their own fortunes and the orchestra was disbanded in 1854.<sup>133</sup>

Music critic and journalist John Sullivan Dwight would play an important role in the creation of the Boston Symphony, but he was also a central figure in an earlier organization, the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra, the third orchestral precursor to the Boston Symphony mentioned in Davidson's paper. Dwight was a founder of the orchestra, and touted it in his publication, the influential *Dwight's Journal of Music*.<sup>134</sup>

Dwight's many years as a critic and in support of orchestral music in Boston reflect his belief that "pure" music could "actually *create* a cultured society."<sup>135</sup> Dwight's actions reflect a particular sensibility also seen in Henry Lee Higginson's later approach to the Boston Symphony; and in the work of the Boston Watch and Ward Society, which exercised a censorship role in Boston from "at least as early as 1878"<sup>136</sup> through the middle of the twentieth century. Each tended to hold closely the power over decisions affecting the public at large, in particular, to retain for themselves decisions regarding matters of taste.

Dwight held a B.A. from Harvard as well as a degree from Harvard Divinity School, for which he wrote a dissertation titled, "The Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Davidson, "John Sullivan Dwight and the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?," 3.

<sup>134</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 142.

<sup>135</sup> Davidson, "John Sullivan Dwight and the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?," 2. Davidson's emphasis.

<sup>136</sup> Paul S. Boyer, "Boston Book Censorship in the Twenties," *American Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1963): 4.

Worship.”<sup>137</sup> He spent two apparently unsuccessful years as a minister, after which he moved to the utopian, transcendentalist community, Brook Farm, where he lived for six years until the community closed in 1847.

In April of 1865, members of the Harvard Musical Association, noting that Boston still lacked an orchestra equivalent to those in New York, London, Leipzig, and Paris, resolved to create one. A committee was appointed that included Dwight, and \$2,000 was set aside from the funds of the association in order to facilitate the creation of an orchestra that would begin performances later than year, in December 1865. All concert programs followed an inflexible format devised by Dwight, which remained in place for the duration of the orchestra and may have contributed to its eventual demise: an opening overture followed by the featured work, possibly a concerto, formed the first half of the program. The second half opened with another overture, followed by shorter works performed by the featured soloist, often with piano accompaniment. A symphony always closed the program.<sup>138</sup>

Critics overlooked flaws in the quality of the orchestra’s performances for first seven seasons, but an increased level of expectation led to sharper criticism of the orchestra starting in the 1872-73 season, fueled in part by comparisons to the Theodore Thomas Orchestra, which had started appearing in Boston in February of 1869. The quality of Thomas’s performances reflected the daily practice by his orchestra, and Thomas’s varied programming highlighted the inflexibility of Dwight’s approach. Attendance at Harvard Musical Association Orchestra concerts was also hurt by the time of the association’s concerts: always 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on

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<sup>137</sup> Davidson indicates that the dissertation was published that year as "On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," *Christian Examiner and General Review* 21, no. 2 (Nov., 1836): 254-63; reprinted on microfilm in the *American Periodical Series* (University Microfilms International), and in APS Online (ProQuest). in the *Christian Examiner* 21, no. 2 (Nov 1836): 254-263.

<sup>138</sup> Davidson, "John Sullivan Dwight and the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?," 4-6.



Thursdays. The Harvard Musical Association Orchestra operated for seventeen seasons but its finances became unsustainable due to declining subscriptions, and it ceased operations in 1882.<sup>139</sup>

Hoping to see a first class orchestra established in Boston, Dwight had issued a call in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, in 1880, asking, "Can our moneyed men, our merchant princes and millionaires, be got to give their money, and give it freely for this object?" After not receiving a response to that call, Dwight raised the topic again in 1881, asserting that a great orchestra "could not live on... 'gate money'; it must 'rest upon a *foundation*, in every sense of the term.'" Dwight insisted that to establish a permanent, full-time orchestra "devoted to the standard works of the great composers," it was necessary to have underwriting.<sup>140</sup>

Henry Lee Higginson, a Boston stockbroker and a fellow member of the Harvard Musical Association,<sup>141</sup> responded to Dwight's 1881 call, pledging to provide the necessary financing, and "if need be, sustain large losses in the enterprise, in which artistic excellence, completeness, and the elevation of public taste are evidently or more account to him than any saving of expense, pecuniary profit being wholly out of the question."<sup>142</sup> Higginson became heavily involved and ran the symphony "for nearly four decades, hiring and firing conductors and players—all under personal contract to him—and collecting the receipts, making up deficits out of his own pocket."<sup>143</sup>

The Boston Symphony owed its origins, then, partly to a critic, and especially to a wealthy individual, each of whom acted in response to what they believed to be the needs of their

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.: 6, 11-16.

<sup>140</sup> *Dwight's Journal of Music*, September 11, 1880, 150; quoted in Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 122.

<sup>141</sup> Davidson, "John Sullivan Dwight and the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra: A Help or a Hindrance?," 16.

<sup>142</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 122.

<sup>143</sup> Crawford, *America's Musical Life: a History*, 311.

community; but also, to the increasing desire to hear orchestral music by a growing public that whetted its appetite over the years on the lesser fare provided by the symphony's precursors.

The Chicago Symphony was started in 1891 using an ostensibly different model, but, as Mark Clague explained in another recent paper, "Building the American Orchestra: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of Twenty-First Century Musical Institutions," there were similarities between Chicago's origins and those of the Boston Symphony.<sup>144</sup>

At its inception the Chicago Symphony was made possible by fifty-one wealthy individuals who created an Orchestral Association—partners acting in concert for what they saw as the community good, each of whom pledged \$1,000 in order to underwrite the first three years of the orchestra's existence. They were enlisted in the association by an individual, businessman Charles Norman Fay, who, like Higginson in Boston, took it upon himself to see that a symphony was created in his city. At the beginning Fay, too, would single-handedly conduct the business end of the Chicago Symphony "over lunch at the Chicago Club," with a single colleague who endorsed his decisions.<sup>145</sup> However, part of the process of enlisting the financial support to create the Chicago Symphony was tied to Fay's negotiations with Theodore Thomas, which lured Thomas away from New York. Unlike in Boston, it can be safely assumed that Fay did not involve himself in programming issues in the same way as Higginson.

Fay had initially thought to create the orchestra with the help of only nine others, each pledging \$5,000, but he was encouraged by another businessman whom he approached for support, Ferdinand Peck, to expand the base to fifty supporters. In subsequent years the size of the group of core supporters would be enlarged two more times from the initial core of fifty-one:

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<sup>144</sup> Mark Clague, "Building the American Orchestra: the Nineteenth-Century Roots of Twenty-First Century Musical Institutions," in *Conference on the 19th-Century American Orchestra* (New York, January 17-19, 2008: Forthcoming).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*: 14.

first to a group of donors giving at least \$50, and later, a group of eight thousand contributors giving as little as ten cents each. In this way the base was broadened and the organization made more stable. Chicago's organizational model would be emulated by most other symphonies around the country as they came into being.

Like Boston, the success of the Chicago Symphony was made possible, in part, by prior musical efforts in the city, which Clague explains followed one of four organizational approaches that he enumerates as: first, the club model, used by non-professional groups organized for personal fulfillment and social reasons; next, the cooperative model, in which professional musicians made decisions, took financial risks and shared profits collectively; next, the entrepreneurial model, in which a "single individual or partnership" assumed the financial risks, made decisions, and acted as the employer of the musicians; and finally, the corporate model assumed by the Chicago Symphony.<sup>146</sup>

Three different ensembles that arose between 1850 and 1860 were notable precursors to the Chicago Symphony; each of these bore the name "Chicago Philharmonic Society," but they ranged in size two as few as twenty-two players. A fourth group known as the "Great Western Band" was also important. It was a cooperative organization that took different forms over the years, and for which historical records are incomplete. In addition to these four orchestras, from time to time composers assembled groups of professionals to play their works.

During this era, as noted in another recent paper by James Deaville, "The Philharmonic Society, Hans Balatka and W.S.B. Mathews: Orchestra, Conductor, and Critic in Pre-Fire Chicago," "critical virtuosity counted for less than boosterism, and conducting excellence was

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.: 2-4.

less important than establishing a repertoire and performing standards.”<sup>147</sup> Together these organizations fed a growing appetite for musical performance and helped create the atmosphere in which the Chicago Symphony found success.

The arrival of the Vienna Ladies Orchestra in September 1871 spurred yet another important musical development in the United States, the women’s symphony orchestra movement, which lasted “well into the 1940s,” according to Anna-Lise Santella, who presented details on the movement in another recent paper, “Modeling Music: Early Social Structures of Women’s Orchestras.”<sup>148</sup> These orchestras took one of two forms, either “career” or “club,” and had to contend with inherited social constraints regarding women’s involvement in public performances, as well as broader prejudices regarding women. Santella notes the ascendancy in 1940 of Helen Kotas, a horn player for the Women’s Symphony Orchestra of Chicago, to the position of principal horn of the Chicago Symphony as an appropriate capstone to the achievements of the movement.<sup>149</sup>

The building of operatic institutions as they are currently known occurred in a way somewhat different from that of symphonies, due the added expense of staging opera performances. Scenery, costumes and lighting cost a great deal of money; in addition, extra time was needed to rehearse movement on stage by the soloists, and often by a chorus as well. Because of this the production of grand opera remained out of reach for all but the largest markets.

However, professional theatrical performances with music in the United States date back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, a period when, like theater in much of the British Empire, “the

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<sup>147</sup> James Deaville, “The Philharmonic Society, Hans Balatka and W.S.B. Mathews: Orchestra, Conductor, and Critic in Pre-Fire Chicago,” *Ibid.*: 1-2.

<sup>148</sup> Anna-Lise Santella, “Modeling Music: Early Social Structures of Women’s Orchestras,” *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*: 18.

‘American’ musical theater...was an extension of the London stage.”<sup>150</sup> Enterprising North American concert managers brought performers from England to perform plays and ballad opera on colonial stages. The theaters staging these productions continued to offer a varied fare that included English opera into the 1840s, when blackface minstrel shows began their climb to enormous popularity. In addition, during the first half of the nineteenth century Italian opera attained tremendous success, both in its original form and in adulterated versions such as William Mitchell’s *The Roofscrambler*, a spoof on Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*. The widespread popularity of opera music is attested to by sales of sheet music of popular arias. However, the financial challenges posed by full opera productions of on a regular basis doomed attempts to establish a permanent company until mid-century, even in New York and New Orleans where the genre was most popular. In the 1850s the Academy of Music in New York finally was able to establish ongoing productions that were financially sound.<sup>151</sup>

Opera was never “pure” in the sense that advocates of refined music like John Sullivan Dwight and William L. Henderson believed chamber music and symphonic were “pure,”<sup>152</sup> and during much of the nineteenth century it remained gloriously unfettered from such concepts in practice, providing a rich venue for cultural negotiation while also contributing to a growing public taste for musical performances. In his discussion of this era in his book *The American Musical Landscape*, Richard Crawford concludes: “As a theatrical form...opera struggled for a toehold on American shores. But as a frame of reference and a cornucopia of song, it provided

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<sup>150</sup> Richard Crawford cites the work of Oscar Sonneck in conjunction with this statement. Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993), 72.

<sup>151</sup> Crawford examines the growth of various forms of opera and the cultural negotiations which surrounded it in the third chapter of *The American Musical Landscape*, “Professions and Patronage II: Performing.” *Ibid.*, 70-78.

<sup>152</sup> Betty Chmaj, “Fry versus Dwight: American Music’s Debate Over Nationality,” *American Music* (1985): 69. See also W. J. Henderson, *What is Good Music? Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in Musical Art* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1898), 107.; Percy Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., New York, C.H. Ditson & Co., 1929), 217-18.; and in addition, “Good music” later in this chapter.

the American vernacular theater, and the musical scene in general, with a vitalizing force of great richness.”<sup>153</sup>

While the creation of permanent, resident companies continued to elude those interested in presenting opera, performances of European-style opera were provided by touring companies and through the visits of opera companies from larger cities like New York, after they formed. Resident companies were happy to recoup some of their production expenses with the gate money provided by such additional performances. Thus, for example, Chicago, which was a leader in the development of symphonic music performances in the United States, enjoyed grand opera in a number of venues starting in the middle of the nineteenth century, and dedicated an imposing new structure, the Auditorium, to opera in 1889; yet Chicago would not have its own permanent, resident opera company until 1910.

New York and Philadelphia were the acknowledged leaders in opera, with Boston trailing close in their wake. In the introduction to her 1994 edition of Julius Eichberg’s operetta, *The Doctor of Alcantara*, Charlotte R Kaufman attributes Boston’s third-place ranking to the chilling effects of censorship in Boston:

In the mid-nineteenth century Methodist and Baptist ministers railed against the moral offense of theater horn pulpits literally around the corner from the Boston Museum, where Eichberg's operettas were being performed. In 1876 the Baptists and Methodists, joined by the Episcopalians, formed the Boston Watch and Ward Society, which considered itself the guardian of public morality, banning books and censoring theatrical

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<sup>153</sup> Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape*, 75.

performances. This group wielded power in Boston up to World War II. The effect of this inimical attitude upon opera performance in Boston was that this major city, with a tradition of strong support for the arts, got a very late start in opera.<sup>154</sup>

Boston's Puritan heritage left a mark in its culture in a way not seen in other American cities. This affected its musical development in important ways, but it also may be seen in its literature, as Thomas Bender explains:

Literature and literary culture in Boston and New York were quite different. In Boston, there was a spiritual quality to literature that kept it above ordinary life, not all implicated in its affairs, particularly not in economic affairs. But in New York literature was a business, and the material reality of its life was overwhelming.<sup>155</sup>

In contrast to the effects of Boston's Puritanism, which slowed opera development in that city, in New York opera's rise was aided by the venality of the Vanderbilts and a number of other wealthy families, who created the Metropolitan Opera because they were unable to obtain boxes with sufficient social prominence at the Academy of Music.<sup>156</sup> Opera companies, then, like symphony orchestras, were created in response to local conditions, which varied widely. New York's Academy of Music opened in 1854, and Philadelphia's Academy of Music opened in 1857. The Metropolitan Opera opened in 1883 and eventually displaced New York's

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<sup>154</sup> Charlotte R. Kaufman, "Introduction to This Volume," in *Early Operetta in America: The Doctor of Alcantara (1879)*, ed. Charlotte R. Kaufman (New York: Garland, 1994): xiv.

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 192.

<sup>156</sup> Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History*, 216.; and John Briggs, *Requiem for a Yellow Brick Brewery; a History of the Metropolitan Opera* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 16.; cited in Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History*, 218.

Academy of Music as the premier opera house in America. The Boston Theater—a name changed to the Boston Academy of Music for a few years, and then back again—also opened in 1854. However, it did not have its own resident grand opera company until 1908.<sup>157</sup>

During this same era, when performing institutions and venues were being created, the nation's premier conservatories were founded, and music was introduced into the curricula of colleges and universities. The first conservatory to form was the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, founded in 1857, although instruction at the Peabody was delayed by Civil War and other causes until 1868. Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio was founded in 1865. During 1867, the New England Conservatory in Boston, the Cincinnati Conservatory, and the Chicago Academy of Music (name changed later to Chicago Musical College) came into being. Music entered the curricula of Vassar College, the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard in the 1870s; Yale and other institutions of higher learning would follow.<sup>158</sup>

### **Changes at the Turn of the Century and the Effect of the Great War**

Generational changes that may be broadly described as a transition from the “genteel tradition” of the nineteenth century to twentieth century sensibilities occurred at different times within different groups in the society, and for that reason it is difficult to assign specific dates to this major societal realignment. However, the events of the Great War, for which men enlisted in order to fight “the war to end all wars,” disillusioned many, helping create a decade during which “common values and common beliefs were replaced by separate and conflicting loyalties.”<sup>159</sup> In

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<sup>157</sup> Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History*, 216.; and Briggs, *Requiem for a Yellow Brick Brewery; a History of the Metropolitan Opera*, 16.; cited in Dizikes, *Opera in America: a Cultural History*, 214-22; 31-46.

<sup>158</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 141.

<sup>159</sup> May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," 425.



addition to the extravagance of its bloodletting and the industrial nature of its slaughter, the retributive nature of the armistice that closed it convinced many Americans, once again, that nothing European could lead to anything good. Americans of this “nervous generation,” as Roderick Nash describes them, were intrigued by the allure of change and by the cache of the era’s personalities, but clung to traditional values and sought comfort in dime-store novels that reinforced values such as “...optimism, confidence, courage, and keeping a stiff upper lip.”<sup>160</sup>

Although many Americans were shaken in their beliefs, others, including members of the community of good music activists, held on to the values they inherited. As Henry F. May says in his essay, “The Rebellion of the Intellectuals”: “In the twenties...beliefs and customs that still commanded the deepest loyalties of one part of the population became to another group a dead and repressive Genteel Tradition, to be ceremonially flouted whenever possible.”<sup>161</sup>

Writing in 1925, journalist Walter Lippman described what he said was the state of mind of the average American after living through both the Progressive campaigns and the Great War, in his book, *The Phantom Public*:

For when the private man has lived through the romantic age in politics and is no longer moved by the stale echoes of its hot cries, when he is sober and unimpressed, his own part in public affairs appear to him a pretentious thing.... He is a man back from a crusade to make the world something or other it did not become:

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<sup>160</sup> Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 138.

<sup>161</sup> May, "The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917," 114.

he has been tantalized too often by the foam of events, has seen the gas go out of it.<sup>162</sup>

Activists for good music lagged behind the larger culture in terms of the generational shift, but from their point of view, seeing events in the context of a campaign that had started in the 1830s, good music activists were just hitting their stride following the war. The 1920s were a period of tremendous progress in many areas of music, and anyone having an interest in fostering a growth in good music in the United States must have sensed, even at the outset of the nineteen-twenties, that it was a time filled with promise.

Between 1890 and 1910, the demands of expanding industry had forced the nation to focus on improving its education. The number of public students and teachers quadrupled during this period and had doubled again by 1920.<sup>163</sup> Thus, rather than swimming against the tide, good music advocates during the nineteen-twenties were riding a wave of public support for education. Their calls for improvements in music education coincided with huge increases in public school investment, and followed on the heels of a complete redesign of public education during the first two decades of the century.

Music club members might have taken further comfort in the appropriateness of their “missionary” zeal from the words of President Calvin Coolidge, whose well-known statement that, “The chief business of the American people is business...,” was followed by the complementary assertion by the president that, “the chief ideal of the American people is

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<sup>162</sup> This quotation from Walter Lippman, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925), 58, 15, is taken from Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippman and the American Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 215.

<sup>163</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 119.

idealism.” Coolidge insisted, “I cannot repeat too often that America is a nation of idealists. That is the only motive to which they ever give any strong and lasting reaction.”<sup>164</sup>

*Musical America*, which was pledged to the advancing of the cause of good music, was in the Coolidge camp for the next presidential election, “breaking away from all traditions of journalism,” in the words of then-editor Milton Weiss, to endorse Coolidge’s reelection with a full page advertisement in November of 1924.<sup>165</sup>

However, while they were in step with regard to some aspects of the times, good music activists would see their proscriptive approach to musical taste grow increasingly out of step with the mainstream, particularly when pronouncements about jazz by some of their members took on a shrillness that was completely out of tune with the far more tolerant sensibilities of the broader public. As Seeger notes, public school music supervisors were far more in step with the public and ahead of their more conservative allies in the music clubs. This was first demonstrated in 1907 when music supervisors decided to accept more tolerant standards of acceptable musical taste, and partnered with music publishers in the selection of music for use in the public schools.<sup>166</sup> This alliance with business took some of the pressure off of music supervisors by enlisting commercial interests in the sometimes unpleasant task of convincing school administrators to spend precious tax dollars on music purchases. Meanwhile, music club members continued to hold on to notions of musical leadership in which they preferred to, in

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<sup>164</sup> Calvin Coolidge, "Excerpts from Speech of President Calvin Coolidge to the ASNE Convention on January 17, 1925," (The American Editor Archive, American Society of Newspaper Editors).

<sup>165</sup> "Music, Politics and Prosperity," *Musical America* 41, no. 2 (November 1, 1924).

<sup>166</sup> See Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 289-90.; Music publishers were present even before the official founding of the Music Supervisors National Conference, having been invited to the meeting in Keokuk, Iowa of members of the music section of the National Education Association which led to the formation of the Conference. John W. Molnar, "The Establishment of the Music Supervisors National Conference, 1907-1910," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 3, no. 1 (1955): 42.

effect, impose an ideal literature on students regardless of whether the students liked it, because they believed they knew better what was “good.”

The decade of the 1920s, however, saw the society continuing its move toward the rejection of cultural mediation by elite groups bent on maintaining the dominance of high culture in the society. This sort of posture, in which the more educated offered guidance to the benighted masses with regard to the music they should prefer, a philosophy to which the National Federation of Music Clubs seemed to subscribe, was a relic the nineteenth-century social structures. Good music advocates would be made aware of this by the course radio took in spite of their efforts. A similar conflict took place in the literary world during the decade, highlighted by Sinclair Lewis in his famous 1930 Nobel Prize speech. In it Lewis associated the figure of novelist William Dean Howells, advocate of Realism, friend of Mark Twain, and a literary leader in his own time, with a nineteenth century sensibility that he said had remained “dominant up to 1914 and was still not completely dead in 1930.” Lewis summarized, “It was with the emergence of William Dean Howells that we first began to have something like a standard, and a very bad standard it was.”<sup>167</sup> According to Henry F. May, the “standard” Lewis was attacking “was the code of professors and universities and the National Academy of Arts and Letters.”<sup>168</sup>

Within days of Lewis’s speech, *Musical America* would express perplexity over the progress of the campaign.<sup>169</sup> A generational change had taken place at some point, but the change was hard to locate even in retrospect. As Henry F. May notes,

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<sup>167</sup> Sinclair Lewis, “The American Fear of Literature,” Accessed January 2, 2003, <http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1930/lewis-lecture.html>.

<sup>168</sup> Henry F. May For an account of this, see May, *The End of American Innocence: a Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*, 7-8.

<sup>169</sup> “This Perplexing Business of Making a Nation Musical,” *Musical America* 50, no. 19 (December 10, 1930).

Everybody knows that at some point in the twentieth century America went through a cultural revolution.... On one side of some historical boundary lies the America of Theodore Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan, of Chautauqua and Billy Sunday and municipal crusades, a world so foreign, so seemingly simple, that we sometimes tend, foolishly enough, to find it comical. On the other side of the barrier lies our own time, a time of fearful issues and drastic divisions, a time surely including the Jazz Age, the great depression, the New Deal, and the atom bomb.<sup>170</sup>

The 1920s are often associated with great societal changes. However, changes in the intellectual elite generally preceded the decade, while changes in the society happened at varying times.<sup>171</sup> The broad American public during the nineteen-twenties was far less adventurous in its taste than those whom we understand, in retrospect, to have been cultural taste-makers of consequence. As Roderick Nash suggests in *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, far from being “a time of revolution,” of “hip flasks, rumbleseats,” and “raccoon coats,” the tenor of the nineteen twenties is better seen in its popular literature. Rather than books by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, the popular books of the period tended to be “decidedly old-fashioned,” with “plots and protagonists” that

operated according to time-honored standards of competition, loyalty, and rugged individualism. Complications were few and

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<sup>170</sup> ———, *The End of American Innocence: a Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*, ix.

<sup>171</sup> ———, “The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917,” 115.; Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 24.

usually resolved, in the final pages, with an application of traditional morality. The total effect was a comforting reaffirmation of the old American faith. Such novels, to be sure, made slight contribution to serious American literature, But they were read—by millions!<sup>172</sup>

The most popular author of the first three decades was Gene (Geneva) Stratton-Porter, an author whose book sales who was cited by a 1932 survey of the best-selling novels of the century as holding the top four positions with *Freckles* (1904), *The Girl of the Limberlost* (1909), *The Harvester* (1911), and *Laddie* (1913). In addition, “Porter made the ‘top ten’ list in 1918, 1919, 1921, and 1925. Nash notes, “Most of her sales were in fifty-cent reprint editions, suggesting that her public consisted of relatively unsophisticated readers.” Porter was popular, he says, because her novels articulated values that were important to the American reading public. Chief among them were, first, “a belief in the virtue of a close association with nature,” and in addition, “cheerfulness.”<sup>173</sup> Although we know it as the jazz age, most Americans were unaware.

### **Good Music Activists and the Age of Progressivism**

The transformation of the good music movement and its goals occurred within a time of tremendous change marked by the two cataclysms, the Great War and the Great Depression; and in the wake of major societal transformations that changed the nature of society and the democracy in which they functioned. The single most prominent societal movement of their

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<sup>172</sup> Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 137.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-38.

time, of course, was the Progressive movement, a force that contributed significantly to the success of the good music campaign in the early twentieth century, as well as to growth in music education.

According to Thomas W. Miller, Progressivism's influence in music education was felt most keenly for a period of about three decades beginning after the Great War and extending through the Second World War. In his article, "The Influence of Progressivism on Music Education, 1917-1947," he characterizes the general trend of the period in music education as "a revolt against formalism in education."<sup>174</sup> Progressive changes in teaching methods combined with phenomenal growth in the scale of music education to make this a transformational time for the field.

The comfortable "fit" between the "make America musical" movement of the early twentieth century and the Progressive movement led to a sense that the movement for good music was in step with the times. As Campbell has observed, "because the ideology motivating music reformers so neatly meshed with progressivism generally, their work received unprecedented publicity and acclaim. Rather than being confined to special music journals, their views found welcome homes in countless social-work and popular journals."<sup>175</sup>

Although the national Progressive coalition unraveled by the middle of the 1920s, progressive reforms continued at the state and municipal government level.<sup>176</sup> These complemented one of the greatest achievements of the "make America musical" movement, the building of municipal and school auditoriums and the increase in school music programs. However, the time for sweeping national reforms and programs had passed.

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<sup>174</sup> Miller, "The Influence of Progressivism on Music Education, 1917-1947," 3.

<sup>175</sup> Campbell, "'A Higher Mission Than Merely to Please the Ear': Music and Social Reform in America, 1900-1925," 261.

<sup>176</sup> Link, "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920's?," 849.

Despite this, the spirit of reform that infused Progressivism animated the adherents of the “make America musical” campaign, and they believed they could remake society and redefine government through collective action. Moreover, just as women had played a major role in the Progressive movement, through groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), women were central to the campaign for a musical America as well.

The movement to “make America musical” also shared with the Progressive movement a significant division between urban and rural components. However, the nature of the division in each group was quite different. In the movement for a musical America, both the urban and rural components truly shared a common vision in the abstract but differed on its meaning in practice, due to their different backgrounds and experience. However, the split in the Progressive movement was more fundamental, and the rural and urban partners each had to set aside significant secondary goals that conflicted with those of their partners in order to combine forces for Progressive gains. After the Great War, there was a shift in power among the Progressives, with the rural elements becoming the dominant element.

The progressive “Farm Bloc” dominated Congress for much of the 1920s, achieving its greatest successes between 1921 and 1924 with the passage of major progressive legislative initiatives that benefited farmers. No doubt they were aided in this by their successful resistance to Congressional redistricting following the 1920 census, which had revealed a significant population shift from rural to urban areas, and would have resulted in a net loss of power for rural interests, if it had been used for reapportionment. Historian Andrew Sinclair describes resistance to reapportionment throughout the decade as “as a frank confession by the country



members that they wished to continue ruling the cities.”<sup>177</sup> Redistricting was first resisted because the initial response in Congress to the census results was to increase the number of representatives, something variously opposed by members for fiscal, logistical, and institutional reasons, who together with representatives from states that stood to lose Congressional representation, successfully resisted Congressional reapportionment. Another attempt at mid-decade deadlocked, leading to a tabling of action on the issue until the end of the decade, when the Congress agreed to use 1930 census information for reapportionment.<sup>178</sup>

This balance of power was reversed from that which remained in the good music community. The generally conservative members of the make-America-musical community seemed to fit well into the business-dominated decade of the 1920s, and their movement mirrored the optimism present in the business community through most of the decade: they were bullish about the prospect that they would realize their goal.

There were many ways in which movement for a musical America did not fit the Progressive model, but three stand out. The first was in their timing: despite their successes in the 1920s, the culture within the good music supporters always seemed a step or two behind the times, and this is often reflected in their actions. During its strongest years, by contrast, the progressive movement defined the times. Progressivism reached its peak in the first decade of the century and sustained its energy well into the second decade, before fading during the 1920s. Although Progressivism continued to attempt to assert itself through the 1924 presidential election, it did so outside of the dominant two-party structure. Independent presidential candidate Robert LaFollette received nearly 17 percent of the vote, a success relative to other

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<sup>177</sup> Charles W. Eagles, *Democracy Delayed: Congressional Reapportionment and Urban-Rural Conflict in the 1920s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), x.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 3 in Eagles, “The Controversy in the 1920s,” *Ibid.*, 32-84.

independent candidacies over the years, but an electoral loss nonetheless. What remained of the Progressive coalition splintered; the movement had peaked and made its greatest gains the prior decade.

By contrast, the cause of good music saw tremendous gains during the decade of the 1920s. However, the activists' attempts to manipulate the sort of music made available to people via the radio, which reached a peak at the beginning of the 1930s, were ill-timed and out of step with the direction of the society at large.

The second point of dissonance involved an extremely important part of the good music coalition, the industrialists and bankers who had underwritten the building of the musical infrastructure. Despite misgivings by many within the good music coalition that they did not share the equalitarian goals of the rest of the movement, these moneyed individuals were an indispensable part of the coalition for good music. They made possible the symphony orchestras, opera companies, choruses, opera houses and symphonic auditoriums, which were essential to the vision of a musical America. Good music activists also looked to business leaders to provide moral leadership in the operation of their business, but this, too, was ill-timed. Businesses were evolving in the direction of dispersed ownership and professional management; the type of leadership the supporters of good music sought belonged to an earlier time when individuals owned and managed their own businesses.

Finally, one important cultural legacy of the Progressive era was antithetical to the aims of good music advocates, and it would contribute to the movement's failure to meet its cherished goals. Progressivism accomplished a "profound revolution in the American political identity," in the words of David W. Noble, "from the ideal of a democracy of producers to that of a

democracy of consumers.”<sup>179</sup> This “democracy of consumers” was an emancipated one, and the reality of this would be demonstrated by the evolution of the entertainment industry in the 1920s and 1930s, and the musical emancipation that resulted.

Writing in the midst of these events in 1922, sociologist William Fielding Ogburn examined social change and the resistance to change and offered a number of possible reasons for such resistance, in his book *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*. His explorations of “cultural inertia” offered a range of possible reasons for such resistance. Among those that seem to most directly evoke the world of the “musical missionaries” and their resistance to relinquishing their self-proclaimed role as cultural arbiters, are what Ogburn calls “vested interests,” the “power of tradition,” and simple “anxiety or fear.”<sup>180</sup>

Ogburn observes that “the source of most modern social changes to-day is the material culture,” and says further,

These material-culture changes force changes in other parts of culture such as social organization and customs, but these latter parts of culture do not change as quickly. The lag behind the material-culture changes, hence we are living in a period of maladjustment.<sup>181</sup>

Such “cultural lag”<sup>182</sup> in the behavior of good music advocates in the first part of the twentieth century was also a misapplication of *gemeinschaft* behavior in a situation that called for a *gesellschaft* response. Like the *select-men* described by New York minister Henry W.

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<sup>179</sup> David W. Noble, “Progressivism,” in *Encyclopedia of American political history: studies of the principal movements and ideas*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York: Scribner, 1984). Also see Link, “What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920's?”

<sup>180</sup> Ogburn, *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*, 166-69, 70-73, and 90-92.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-96.

<sup>182</sup> Ogburn coined the term “cultural lag,” first using it in this book. *Ibid.*, 200.

Bellows in 1872, these musical partisans sought to retain their role as taste-makers. Their position was a relic of nineteenth century: a social role more appropriate to a smaller and less urban world, and a function that had ceased to exist. However, drawing encouragement from significant growth in music education and from the increasing availability of good music to the masses, supporters of good music continued to believe success must be just over the horizon. Because of this, they would not relinquish the role to which they aspired without resistance.

### **Nationalism and Its Effect in Music**

The campaign for good music campaign can be understood as a nationalistic campaign, in that it sought to establish a successful American musical life comparable with that found in European powers, and it envisioned an American music that could take its place next to American literature, which had developed a more fully formed American voice by that time. Seeger notes in his essay, "Music and Class Studies in the United States, that activists for good music sensed that they had been deprived "of the 'finer things of life'"<sup>183</sup> and that this sense had led to a variety of actions to create musical opportunities throughout the United States.

However, the characterization of the campaign for good music as a nationalist effort runs counter to the common perception, well-founded in many ways, that the proponents of good music privileged European composers over American ones in their selection of music. Examples reinforce this sense are plentiful, and events such as the Astor Place Riot of 1849, cited by Levine as primary evidence of a class struggle, underscore the strong element of elitism many

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<sup>183</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286.

associated with the effort to develop American cultural institutions able to compete with European ones.

Yet, advocates of good music were painfully self-conscious about American musical identity, and actively sought the cultivation of an authentic American style. As DuPree has noted,

The 1920s was a period of intense concern with the possible nature of an identifiably “American” style, of an almost desperate search for a “great American composer,” and of a persistent preoccupation with the weaknesses of institutions and, indeed, of the American character, both collective and individual, that seemed to prevent the achievement of an American music that was on a par with the quality and originality that was produced by Europe’s best composers, or, closer to home, by America’s best writers.<sup>184</sup>

This concern can also be seen in the constant preoccupation of groups such as the National Federation of Music Clubs with support of the American composer, which was accompanied by a very strong theme of American Exceptionalism. Indeed, support for American composers reached levels which prompted John Tasker Howard to suggest, in 1922, in “The American Composer: The Victim of His Friends” that a sort of affirmative action had been put in place which was hurting American composers by allowing them recognition even if their efforts were mediocre.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> DuPree, "The Failure of American Music: the Critical View from the 1920s," 305.

<sup>185</sup> John Tasker Howard, "The American Composer; the Victim of his Friends," *The Musical Quarterly* 8 (1922): 313-18.

In 1922, the New York Public Library sponsored a forum on the question “Has America a Musical Atmosphere or Must the American Student Go Abroad for It?” with such notable figures as *Musical America* editor John C. Freund, Walter Damrosch, and Charles Seeger as participants. The speakers generally felt that, although it should not be so, America still lacked the “musical atmosphere” necessary to inspire and to hone the talents of the American student, variously blaming the commercial atmosphere, the lack of leisure, and the immediate-success orientation of the student. Damrosch cited another problem:

Between music in America and in Europe there is this difference. In Europe music has sprung from the masses upward—here it is permeating downward from the classes. Innate love for music has not in the past existed among our so-called proletariat to any great extent. The exceptions are usually foreign-born.<sup>186</sup>

### **The Role of Women in the Campaign for Good Music**

Women played central roles in the development of music in the United States, and were a primary force at two critical junctures. The first was in domestic music in the nineteenth century, when women were understood to have responsibility for the cultivation of art and music, in addition to their more practical duties. The second was that connected with the musical reform associated with the Progressive Era, when women also took the lead in order to develop music

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<sup>186</sup> DuPree cites a report in *Musical America* of remarks by Russell Knerr in, “Does a Musical Atmosphere Exist in the U.S. or Must Pupils Go Abroad?” *Musical America*, 11 March 1922, pp. 1-2, 4.], cited in DuPree, “The Failure of American Music: the Critical View from the 1920s,” 309.

for the less privileged in settlement houses; and in music clubs, which were predominantly women's organizations.

In her book, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, Karen J. Blair explains the nature of this role in the United States, where, she explains, "a practical people...have never made peace with the arts," but in which, nonetheless, in "the early nineteenth century...newly prosperous middle-class men began to ape the aristocracy whom they had previously ridiculed:<sup>187</sup>

They expected their daughters and wives to assume a bit of polish, especially in the form of drawing and singing, and thereby planted the seeds of culture as woman's domain. A peculiarly American design for high culture was forged...that took into account the national pride in practicality and industriousness. Thus, these pastimes were endorsed only with particular restrictions with which a female must comply. First, she must cultivate her refinements in modest doses, never to the extent that they would divert her from her practical work of domestic responsibilities. Secondly the accomplishments must be used in the service of her home and family. In this peculiar way, a new generation of girls was bred to acquire artistic interests. To them was assigned the duty of becoming repositories of the cultural frills

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<sup>187</sup> Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, 1, 2.

that few men cared to cultivate, but now expected their households to offer.<sup>188</sup>

Women were thus expected to “be familiar with art but not sufficiently accomplished to become a professional.”<sup>189</sup>

Women were involved in a range of social reforms throughout the nineteenth century, and this involvement would increase throughout the century as they moved as a group from the domestic arena to one that included the public realm, and into their critical involvement in Progressive social reforms. During the same period, between 1890 and 1930, women’s musical clubs blossomed, leading internationally renowned pianist Harold Bauer to remark in 1924 that, “everybody knows America wouldn’t have any music if it weren’t for women.”<sup>190</sup>

The power of this movement was gathered under one roof and unified with the formation of the National Federation of Music Clubs. Blair relates the gathering of the leaders of this group, which occurred in at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893:

The largest and most influential organization uniting women’s musical societies originated in Chicago...when Rose Fay Thomas invited all forty-two known women’s amateur music associations to convene at the exposition’s Recital Hall.... The conference was chaired by Thomas, a pianist in her own right, who was president of Chicago’s only women’s amateur music club—appropriately called the Women’s Amateur Musical Club. She

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 44.



was also the wife of Chicago Symphony Orchestra conductor Theodore Thomas.<sup>191</sup>

Theodore Thomas was also music director for the Exposition. Actual formation of the federation took place at a Music Teachers National Association meeting in 1898 when twenty members of the Association decided to form the new organization, but they always credited Rose Fay Thomas for the group's inception, and she was made honorary president of the group.<sup>192</sup>

The Federation continued to be a major force in American musical development well beyond the end of what is known as the Progressive Era. Blair explains the relationship of Progressivism to the larger women's movement:

Textbooks tell us that the Progressive Era lasted about twenty years, from the turn of the century to World War I or 1920. Students of women's history, however, understand that women's organizations devoted to social change enjoyed a much longer life. Women's voluntary associations began to develop even before the 1890s and continued their reform efforts throughout much of the 1920s. This forty-year span of activity was naturally characterized by great changes in size of membership, goals of the leadership, and strategies for change. Scholars have heretofore neglected the shifts in the history of the woman's club movement, thereby missing much significant material. The clubs were unquestionably a major vehicle for the expression of women's public voices, in a

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>192</sup> Ottaway, "Music Clubs, A Significant Factor in National Development," 120.

time that was still trying to hold to the belief that woman's place was in the home. The identification of changing patterns in the clubs' history exposes changes in women's lives, changes in women's impact on society, and changes in the relationship of the women's clubs to the larger Woman Movement.<sup>193</sup>

One woman, through her individual actions, had a significant effect on the course of music education in the United States: Frances Elliott Clark, who was hired by the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1911 as director of their Educational Department. From this position Clark worked tirelessly to advance the cause of music education, and especially, the use in classrooms of "talking machines" made by Victor. Her impact was significant; an appreciation of her published by a former colleague in *Music Educator's Journal* in 1960 recalled her as a "'fighter' who would overcome all obstructions to accomplish her mission," attributes that the writer suggested Clark might have been inherited from Charlemagne, whom she claimed as an ancestor.<sup>194</sup>

Women of all sorts contributed to musical progress in the United States, and it was in this context that the National Federation of Music Clubs flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century, rising to the opportunity and challenge presented by the rise of commercial radio with a sense of proprietary responsibility.

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<sup>193</sup> Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, 29.

<sup>194</sup> James Francis Cook, "Frances Elliott Clark: A Memorial Symposium," *Music Educators Journal* 46, no. 5 (1960): 20-24.

## **American Education and Music's Place in It**

As the United States expanded during the nineteenth century, education's role was understood to be quite important. During the early 1830s, as the nation continued its struggle simply to establish itself and to take its place on the world stage, it also was contending with the challenges posed by constant geographic expansion and large numbers of immigrants. The country's westward growth was occurring at a dizzying pace that would accelerate further with the opening of the transcontinental railroad, which in turn fueled the growth of industry and invited still more immigration. At the same time, it was moving inexorably toward a fracture along existing fault lines that would culminate in the Civil War in 1861. The world waited for the unprecedented American experiment in self-government to descend into anarchy.

With this as context, Americans looked to education for more than basic skills, seeing it as a means to instill a level of civilization in its citizens in order that the society simply remain orderly and thus continue to thrive. Equalitarian social values ascendant at the time naturally played an important role in the theories and practices adopted by the nineteenth-century public school movement, and as well, by the concurrent music education movement.

### **Nineteenth Century Music Education in Public Schools**

Music was accepted into the public school curriculum because it was believed to be a uniquely effective educational tool. As James H. Stone tells us in his 1957 article, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," it was widely believed that music's "mysterious charms enlivened mind and body," yet had the power to subdue "youthful savagery

and uncouthness.”<sup>195</sup> This seemed to hold great potential to help civilize and educate the sprawling populace of the young nation.

American educators looked to Europe for ideas and examples, and were especially drawn to the experimental schools of Joseph Lancaster in England, and Johann Pestalozzi in Switzerland. Both Pestalozzi and Lancaster “approached the process of teaching young people in a humanitarian spirit, emphasizing the value of spontaneous interests as opposed to tutorial discipline, and the advantages of using pleasure rather than pain to stimulate learning. Their programs, and those of the state schools in Prussia...were given public attention in America after 1825.”<sup>196</sup> Leaders of the public school movement held that “elementary education fostered social progress, and that in a democracy, it must be equally available to all.”<sup>197</sup>

Similarly, Stone writes,

Music education enthusiasts placed major emphasis on the idea that all men should have the opportunity to participate in and appreciate the arts, and that the arts were most significant when they were most widely distributed in society. Americans were encouraged to believe that the talent for musical expression was latent in all men. Moreover, the capacity to learn the skills that would release potential musical ability likewise was naturally present everywhere. Musical experience, thus, was possible for all.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Stone, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," 40.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*: 41-42.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*: 41.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*: 42.

The most prominent figure in music education during this early period was Boston's Lowell Mason, also an important figure in the development of church music, whose work in hymnology would contribute to the urban/rural divide that saw hymns by American composers dismissed as primitive by American musical sophisticates.<sup>199</sup> In the public school setting, Mason created a positive learning atmosphere in which to teach music reading and appreciation, in order to instill moral values. Mason selected song texts for use with the children that "stressed the virtues of simplicity, of the home, of the nation and its patriots, of love and altruism..." in order to "cultivate desirable moral behavior and attitudes." Together with New Haven's William C. Woodbridge, who took a similar approach, Mason provided examples for the music education of children that were replicated throughout the country, and by 1860, public schools in cities from New York to San Francisco had adopted Boston's model of musical instruction.<sup>200</sup>

Seeger describes Mason's work with far less equanimity than Mason is typically accorded in descriptions of music education history, in his 1939 essay, "Grass Roots for American Composers," writing:

About a hundred years ago Lowell Mason and some other "enlightened" professional musicians set out to prove (1) that America was unmusical and (2) that it could be made musical. These two preposterous propositions became the creed of a cult that is still strong. Indeed, most of us still follow it. According to its thesis, German folk songs were "music." They had been sanctified by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Latterly, folk songs

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<sup>199</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 283-86; Eskew Harry and others, "Mason," *Grove Music Online*, 30 July 2008

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/17984pg1#S17984.1>>.

<sup>200</sup> Stone, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Beliefs in the Social Values of Music," 40.

of other European nations have been found to be “music”—“good music.”<sup>201</sup>

In the years after the Civil War an increasing number of school districts instituted music programs. However, whether or not a district had music depended upon local sentiments regarding its place in the curriculum, and the level of basic public education varied wildly between urban and rural areas, and from one region of the country to another. The South, hard hit by the economic repercussions of the Civil War just as education was growing nationwide, lagged particularly far behind.<sup>202</sup>

As music programs emerged, they were built on the model provided by Mason and Woodbridge, and this persisted from the last several decades of the nineteenth century into the first decades of the twentieth century. This typically included a music specialist known as a Music Supervisor, who might be responsible for the music instruction of all of the students in an entire school district. The supervisor moved from class to class, or from school to school, depending on the size of the district, tested students, and assigned material to the elementary school classroom teachers who did the actual teaching.<sup>203</sup> As a result, the teachers with primary responsibility for developing the foundational musical skills in the children—the classroom teachers—might have little or no musical ability themselves. They were generalists, hired as elementary teachers, and expected to teach music as well as math, reading, and writing.

Private music teachers also played an important and increasing role over the course of the nineteenth century, and gained an institutional voice with the founding of Music Teachers

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<sup>201</sup> Charles Seeger, "Grass Roots for American Composers," in *Studies in Musicology II, 1929-1979*, ed. Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994): 384.

<sup>202</sup> See "Chapter IX, Educational Growth and the Expansion of Music." James A. Keene, *A History of Music Education in the United States* (Hanover, London: University Press of New England, 1982), 155-86.

<sup>203</sup> Michael L. Mark and Charles L. Gary, *A History of American Music Education* (New York & Toronto: Schirmer Books; Maxwell Macmillan Canada; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992), 167.

National Association (MTNA) in 1876. MTNA would be an important advocate for musical growth, and the founders of the National Federation of Music Clubs would come from its ranks. During the twentieth century the federation would play an important role in music education by working for the expansion of music education in public schools, using their members throughout the nation to lobby for change in their own communities. Music Supervisors National Conference (later to become Music Educators National Conference), another important organization, was founded in 1907.<sup>204</sup>

### **Musical Education in the First Part of the Twentieth Century**

Among good music partisans in the first decades of the twentieth century, it was widely accepted that America's musical future depended upon the musical education of the entire populace, something only possible through the public schools.<sup>205</sup> There seems to have been widespread belief that everyone possessed musical ability, and that cultivating it served a vital role in the development of a student's character; that music should be taught on an equal basis with other more established subjects such as reading, writing and math; and that competent and comprehensive music education should be available to all students, regardless of where they lived or what their income level might be. This was a fundamental priority for activists in an age

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<sup>204</sup> Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*, 141.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, "Believes America's Musical Development Rests With Music Teachers in Smaller Cities," *Musical America* 27, no. 25 (April 20, 1918); "Declares We Can Only Become Musical Nation Through Public Schools," *Musical America* 27, no. 26 (April 27, 1918); "Educate Every Child in Music at Public Expense, Urges President of Supervisors' Association," *Musical America* 30, no. 1 (May 3, 1919); "Music Growth of Lincoln, Neb, Fostered By School System," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (November 15, 1919); "Music in the Education of the Common Man," *Musical America* 30, no. 19 (September 6, 1919); "Musical Alliance Begins Move for Wider Introduction of Music in America's Public Schools," *Musical America* 27, no. 20 (March 16, 1918); "Music's Place in Our Public Schools," *Musical America* 29, no. 11 (January 11, 1919); "Supervisors Seek to Raise Status of School Music," *Musical America* 30, no. 3 (May 17, 1919); "Urges Individual Instrumental Instruction in Public Schools," *Musical America* 28, no. 13 (1918).

when widespread disparity between school districts led some in the broader public to question whether or not music should be given serious attention as a subject. Like today, strongly held views about education were maintained by many who may have had little or no direct involvement with events in the classroom. Consequently, expectations for the schools were quite high among activists, and inevitably they were never met despite the great progress music educators achieved.

The phonograph, or “talking machine,” played an important role in the development of music education in the United States during the early years of the century. The key figure at this intersection of technology and music business with the campaign for a musical America was Frances Elliott Clark, who was born in 1860. Clark married but was widowed shortly before the birth of her son. Following this tragedy she attended college, received special training to become a music supervisor, and was hired to supervise music in Monmouth, Illinois. Clark attended the meeting at the Columbia World Exposition that led to the founding of the National Federation of Music Clubs. She later became Supervisor of Music in Milwaukee, and chaired the 1907 meeting in Keokuk, Iowa that led to the founding of Music Supervisor’s National Conference.

Because of her pioneering work in Milwaukee schools using recordings to teach music, Clark was hired as director of the Victor Talking Machine Company’s Educational Department, a position she occupied until her retirement. Her writings show contemporary beliefs about good music and its relationship to popular music, and also reveal beliefs about the role of technology and business in music education.

Frances Clark apparently left her position as a music supervisor in Milwaukee because she was convinced that the deployment of talking machines in classrooms around the country was essential to the musical education of the nation’s youth. In that capacity she gloried in



increased sales of the company's product. However, it is evident from her correspondence with colleagues in the music teaching field whom she left behind when she entered business that she considered her new role at the Victor Talking Machine Company was a related calling, but one having higher urgency; a vocation directed toward the same end she had previously served: increasing the knowledge and love of good music in school children.

A letter from Mr. R. L. Cooley, Vice President of the Peninsula Fruit Farm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is representative. Evidently Mrs. Clark asked Mr. Cooley in a prior letter about the feasibility of "using the Talking Machine in out of door work" on the school-ground. To this Mr. Cooley replied that they "had not yet had an opportunity to try the matter out as fully as we desire," but that he would "give the matter more attention" and would "report" to her again.

He continued,

The work in the schools, as well as the teachers and pupils, misses you greatly. It is a matter of large concern who comes in to take your place in the work here. I feel, however, that you can do infinitely more good where you are. The Talking Machine must be brought into the scheme of public musical education. It must become a part of the standard equipment of every school, and courses of study in music for the common schools must be so written as to require its use....<sup>206</sup>

Henry T. Finck, music critic of *The Nation* and the *New York Evening Post*, sent Clark a handwritten note from North Bethel, Maine, apparently in response to a query from Clark

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<sup>206</sup> R. L. Cooley Business letter., April 18, 1911.

requesting quotable statements showing his support for the talking machine. It began, “Dear Madam”:

I contributed a long article on the value of the talking machines to the very first number ever printed of The Circle magazine, printed by Funk and Wagnalls. Doubtless you will find some suitable paragraphs to quote in that. The Victor Co. was so pleased with it that they insisted on sending me a talking machine as a present. I am convinced that these word and music reproducing devices are an educational agent of epoch-making importance. Yours  
Sincerely, Henry T. Finck<sup>207</sup>

Charles Farwell Edson, whom Catherine Parsons Smith describes as “a singer, voice teacher, local champion of American music, and Progressive visionary of sorts,” in her book, *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular*,<sup>208</sup> wrote Clark approvingly, “I am very glad you are where you are for now we can get something done for our American music by having records made of some real songs to American poems and get them into the public schools....”<sup>209</sup>

From a letter sent by Alice C. Inskeep, music supervisor from Cedar Rapids, Iowa and another charter member of the Music Supervisors National Conference who had attended the first Keokuk, Iowa meeting, we can surmise that Clark had spoken out in favor of using Victor

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<sup>207</sup> Henry T. Finck Personal letter, June 14, 1911.

<sup>208</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 107.

<sup>209</sup> Charles Farwell Edson Personal letter, Sept. 26th, 1911, 1.

Talking Machines while still in her position as a music supervisor.<sup>210</sup> Inskeep wrote, “I was indeed surprised to learn of your resignation.... I have it on the best authority, viz. (an article written by yourself) that you are using the Victors in your schools. Am I bold...to ask a favor concerning them? I am about to place them in the schools here and am at work on a suitable list of records...have you a list of the records used in your schools....”<sup>211</sup>

Inskeep and other supervisors faced a large challenge that would eventually be met by a transition to specialized music teachers in the public schools: the responsibility of seeing to the musical education of a very large number of students, through the use of regular classroom teachers who were sometimes unequal to the task of teaching music. In addition to this, their students were encountering music of many kinds outside the classroom that the supervisors considered to be a poor influence. Clark discussed their dilemma, and what she saw as the solution in an article written in 1912, intended for publication in *The Talking Machine World*, a trade publication read by executives and sales managers in the recording industry:

We have been deluged in recent years with the cheap music of the nickel show, the musical comedy, the musical plays and so-called “Operatic” extravaganzas. The children hear this catchy, trifling music that lasts but a day, everywhere, on the street, in theaters, and alas! in many homes, and, unless taught better things, imagine that such is real music.

To combat this pernicious influence, we must fight fire with fire, and make it possible for them to hear such quantities of

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<sup>210</sup> Information on Inskeep from Keene, *A History of Music Education in the United States*, 318.; and from a web page on an Arizona State University web site page courtesy of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa school district: Barry; Shelly Cooper Kraus, Jui-Ching Wang, "MENC Founders of 1907," (Arizona State University).

<sup>211</sup> Alice C. Inskeep Business letter, April 3, 1911.

the beautiful things in music, as to effectually crowd out the desire and taste for the bad or the merely inconsequent.

It is our aim to furnish to the schools of the country the means for hearing the finest music, and to present material for teaching purposes, patriotic songs, art songs, etc. to her pupils, and will augment and embellish the work of live and wide-awake Supervisors, who move forward with the trend of the times.<sup>212</sup>

In a speech at the Sixth Annual convention of the National Association of Talking Machine Jobbers, held in Atlantic City, New Jersey on July 1 and 2, 1912, Clark described what she saw as the role for the talking machine in music education, and in the process conveyed her sense of the relative value of various types of music:

If we are ever to become a really musical nation, if our composite civilization is ever to develop into a really American type, seeking to express itself in music, it will come as the result of a more widely disseminated knowledge of music in its higher and better forms among all the people everywhere.

As I see it, "The Victor in the Schools" is, under a wise Providence, to be the most efficient means yet discovered to bring about a complete revolution of those conditions and make high

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<sup>212</sup> "Draft: Article in the Talking Machine World," Typewritten draft, 1912. Frances Elliot Clark Papers, Music Educators National Conference Historical Center, Special Collections in Performing Arts at the University of Maryland at College Park. Title from handwritten inscription at top of first page; type scripted pages from the Frances Elliott Clark papers, Music Educators National Conference Historical Center, Special Collections in Performing Arts at the University of Maryland, College Park.

school music equal in value to any other subject in the curriculum.<sup>213</sup>

Although Frances Clark was not a sales manager in the most fundamental sense, she supported the marketing of talking machines and seemed to receive great satisfaction from successful sales of the product. However, the position title assigned her on a pictorial directory for the RCA Victor Company, where her photograph is placed alongside those of General Electric luminaries such as Chairman Owen D. Young, indicated the difference in her role. Her title was “Manager of Educational Services” for the Victor Division of the company; the only woman, and a music educator, yet also a corporate leader. On the Victor Division page of the brochure, which bears the title, “The Men Who Direct the Destinies of the RCA Victor Company Inc.,” Clark is shown in the corporate inner circle, one of six persons surrounding a central photograph of H. C. Grubbs, Vice-President in Charge of Victor Division.

Clark’s career appears to have been a true blend of education and advocacy for good music, together with business. She would be venerated in a “memorial symposium” in her honor in *Music Educators Journal* in 1960, which represented her, together with Lowell Mason and Theodore Presser, as three of the most important figures “in promoting musical education in America.”<sup>214</sup>

Some views of good music activists following the Great War can be discerned from articles in *Musical America*. Because it was broadly targeted, *Musical America* did not present detailed discussions of specific classroom objectives for music educators, but it reported on developments in the field that were of interest to its readership. The exhortation by piano

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<sup>213</sup> Frances Elliot Clark, "Paper Read by Mrs. Frances E. Clark," *The Talking Machine World* 8, no. 6 (1912): 31.

<sup>214</sup> Cook, "Frances Elliott Clark: A Memorial Symposium," 20-24.

pedagogue Harold Bauer that “Every Child Born is a Musician,” in a 1919 article in *Musical America*, touched on one of the most centrally shared beliefs and offered recent technology as a means to address it. Bauer’s concern, as reported in the article, is the promotion of the Duo Art Reproducing Piano, which was said to have been featured as the soloist—the piano, not Bauer—with Walter Damrosch’s New York Symphony Orchestra. In the article Bauer “explains [the] value of the reproducing piano as an educational force,” particularly in lectures on music, which he says are delivered by “people who...are frequently inferior pianists.”<sup>215</sup> Readers undoubtedly were intrigued as well by a description of the Dalcroze method in *Musical America* in 1925 that assured, “Development of Rhythmic Sense Possible to All.”<sup>216</sup> The story contained examples of classroom activities, carefully composed photographs of students performing artistically conceived rhythmic motions, and graceful line drawings of physical movement by artist and Dalcroze teacher Paul Thévenaz. It would have inspired music teachers and also given them a sufficient sense of the approach to have allowed them to implement some of its methods.

Activists for good music believed that its superiority to other types of music would make it universally recognizable to educated individuals, because they believed musical ability to be innate. An article in *Musical America* in 1925 expresses this well, reporting, “Even Cow-Punchers Appreciate Music if Properly Given, Says Arthur Frazer.”<sup>217</sup>

As is often the case today, when education goals were not met, the schools were often blamed. Use of the music supervisor model, which dated all the way back to Lowell Mason, was still widespread, and many argued for the introduction of specialized music teachers rather than the same classroom teacher who was also responsible for reading and math. Despite the obvious

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<sup>215</sup> “Every Child Born Is a Musician, Says Harold Bauer,” *Musical America* 30, no. 4 (May 24, 1919): 3-4.

<sup>216</sup> “Development of Rhythmic Sense Possible to All,” *Musical America* 29, no. 12 (January 18, 1919).

<sup>217</sup> Ibid; “Even Cow-Punchers Appreciate Music if Properly Given, Says Arthur Frazer,” *Musical America* 42, no. 5 (May 23, 1925); “Every Child Born Is a Musician, Says Harold Bauer.”

pedagogical advantages the newer approach offered, some objected to employing specialized teachers for philosophical reasons, believing that it ran counter to the ideal of universal music education. Using specialized music teachers, they argued, would segregate music from the rest of the curriculum, and they had long been advocating its inclusion as an equal. This dispute continued throughout the decade of the 1920s.

The Superintendent of Schools in Ithaca, New York, argued against hiring more specialized music teachers in the *Journal of Education* in 1930, asserting that music specialists, at least in the first six grades, were “hindrances to progress,” “upsetters of the program,” and “interrupters of good work.” Seeking parity in staffing in exchange for parity of academic status, he argued,

the girl who can translate Wagner or Chopin is equally valuable to society as the girl who can translate Cicero and Virgil; and if the Latin student is to be educated at public expense, then by the same tokens so should the music student be.... We are trying, in a measure, to carry out this theory in the Ithaca public schools. For example, we employ no teacher in kindergarten and the first six grades who is unable to teach music as well as reading or arithmetic. And why not? It is in the curriculum as are the other two.... Few superintendents would consent to employ a teacher who is unable to teach either of the other two.... Under expert

supervision the class teacher teaches her music as well as other things.<sup>218</sup>

Others vociferously opposed this approach. In his 1926 book, *Music Education in America*, Harvard professor and Glee Club conductor Archibald T. Davison complained,

we assign to kindergartners [sic] and grade-school teachers, many of whom are unfitted for such work, the duty of establishing the fundamentals of musical knowledge and taste, which of all the tasks of music education is the most crucial; while to the expert we confide those students who survive the rigors of elementary training. The chief cause of this inverted thinking is that we are prone to consider ourselves as musical as other nations. This is certainly not the case.... If, indeed, there is to be a real American democracy of music, not an aristocracy of the gifted, we must see to it that every stage of music education is carefully and skillfully constructed, especially that part upon which the entire development rests, namely, the elementary schools.<sup>219</sup>

According to Davison, "School music-teachers devote far too much time to the technique of music and far too little to music itself." The tendency to focus on supposedly "scientific" methods that can be tested, including "the exaggeration of drill in music-reading," which has led

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<sup>218</sup> Frank D. Boynton, "Giving Music a Real Place," *Journal of Education* 111 (1930).

<sup>219</sup> Archibald T. Davison, *Music Education in America, What is Wrong with it? What Shall we Do about It?* (New York, London: Harper & brothers, 1926), 43-44.



to “musical lethargy” and “literally destroyed in multitudes of children the natural love of music, which is a common inheritance.”<sup>220</sup>

Despite all the controversy and handwringing, the musical life of the country was being transformed, and a great deal of the credit belonged to the public schools. The report of the “President’s Research Committee on Social Trends,” titled, *Recent Social Trends*, reported,

Music teaching in our public schools, long regarded—at least by musicians—as having little to do with the real musical life of the individual and the community, has become the chief possible means to that life in an increasingly large number of communities. This change is due to improvement in the quality of school music, a marked growth in quantity in many cities and towns, and also to changes in methods of instruction (for example instrumental instruction to groups), which make singing and playing more vital. With respect to each of these factors, however, there are still many schools that have not yet progressed beyond do-re-mi; and a dwindling number of others—mostly in the rural districts—that are still mute or nearly so.... The largest growth has been in the north central states, but every other section has felt the impetus of the national movement in school music.<sup>221</sup>

While elementary school children were probably the most pliable and responsive educational targets to be found, efforts with regard to music education were not limited to the

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 24-29, 47.

<sup>221</sup> Wesley C. Mitchell United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, Chairman, *Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends* (New York, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1933), vol. 2, 988. (Hereafter, *RST*).

public schools, or to primary and secondary students. The capstone of the education system was music at the college and university level. During the decade of the 1920s, many universities and colleges established music departments, and in addition, new conservatories and other specialized music schools were organized.<sup>222</sup>

Music's role in universities and colleges was not limited to the important mission of educating music teachers. Instead, music came to be seen as part of a well-rounded general curriculum. The University of Missouri, for example, established their School of Fine Arts in order that "students in general could 'have abundant opportunities to cultivate their latent art impulses, whether they intend to become professional artists or enthusiastic amateurs.'" According to *Musical America*, educators felt that placing music departments within universities and colleges, as opposed to independent conservatories, would serve a dual purpose, providing a cultural rounding out for business and science majors, while exposing future musicians and music teachers to the sensibilities of the wider world, presumably improving their effectiveness at teaching music to public.<sup>223</sup>

Focusing on the opportunity for students to participate in performance, *Recent Social Trends* reported growth in university and college glee clubs between 1904 and 1930 from 4 to "nearly 100 with a total membership of 6,000 singers," and an "advance in quality...even more impressive than...in number." However, it also reported that, "in other respects, development in college music" was "less striking" than that shown in the public schools:

There are a few strong college orchestras, but in general the high school graduate finds a sharp drop in the opportunity for orchestral participation when he enters college. On the other hand, the band

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 989-90. .

<sup>223</sup> "Making Better Audiences," *Musical America* 40, no. 14 (July 26, 1924): 16.

usually has a large part in the social and recreational life of the college.

The official attitude of the institutions toward musical performance is reflected in the fact that in 1930 more than one-third of the 594 colleges surveyed allowed some credit for singing and playing, while of the 452 which grant entrance credit in music, 359 give credit for musical performance.<sup>224</sup>

The nation's churches were an extremely important venue in the effort to raise the level of musical quality. As *Recent Social Trends* noted, "At no other time during the week can such a large part of America's population be found singing as between eleven o'clock and noon on Sunday." However, the study went on to observe, "there is...general dissatisfaction with the congregational singing in most churches. A promising step toward its improvement has been the revision of many hymn books, making both words and music more vital." The study also noted the success of another response to the problem, church choir festivals led by graduates of the recently formed Westminster Choir School.<sup>225</sup>

The effort to "make America musical" also recruited symphony orchestras in the effort to build the love of orchestral music in the young, through special children's concerts. In a discussion of the success of special symphonic programs for children, *Musical America* editor John C. Freund asserted, "the average child can readily be interested in good music. He may prefer a moving-picture, to be sure; but, persuaded to view music as a pleasure rather than a task, the normal child will be steadily drawn to this new friend." Efforts to reach an even larger new

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<sup>224</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 990.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 989-90.

public through free concerts and, of course, “pops” concerts, were also followed with great interest.<sup>226</sup>

### Good Music

Good music activists working in the first part of the twentieth century were the beneficiaries of efforts by another generation that had exerted intense effort to raise the average level of musical ability in the country, and to increase interest in concerts of art music. “Conscientious members” of what Joseph Mussulman called the “cultured generation”<sup>227</sup> in the late nineteenth century, like the good music activists of the first half of the twentieth-century, believed that music had the capacity to improve the life of individuals and to transform the society as a whole. This previous generation also had experienced a rapid growth of interest in music within the society, partly in response to their own efforts, and like their successors in the early twentieth century they too had been frustrated by their failure to enlist what they considered to be a sufficient number of their contemporaries as devotees of good music. Both generations were idealistic in their outreach to people of different classes, but both were, for the most part, white, middle class, and Protestant; a minority of activists within the society’s dominant group.

As a result of these prior efforts, twentieth century activists inherited a comprehensive body of ideas about the nature of good music and the role of music in society. These ideas

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<sup>226</sup> "American Singers Earn New Laurels," *Musical America* 28, no. 23 (October 5, 1918): 40; "Boston Symphony Starts 'Pop' Series," *Musical America* 40, no. 4 (May 17, 1924): 15; "Free Concerts are Success in Georgia," *Musical America* 40, no. 9 (June 21, 1924): 27; "A Happy Experiment," *Musical America* 39, no. 26 (April 19, 1924): 24.

<sup>227</sup> Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation; a Social History of Music in America, 1870-1900*.

served as their inspiration, but they would become points of contention within the larger culture as the century progressed.

### **The Concept of Good Music in the View of Music Critic W. J. Henderson**

It was the elite, urban view of music that held the position of greatest power in the good music community, and this view of music meshed very naturally with the image of good music as a premium product that was developed by the broadcasting industry using national, networked broadcasts of good music performed by top artists. A book written around the turn of the century on good music by William James Henderson provides a window on these views.

W. J. Henderson, as he was known, was a prolific and versatile author who worked as a major New York music critic from 1887-1924. Henderson was the chief critic for the *New York Times* in 1898 when he published a book titled, *What is Good music?: Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in the Musical Art*.<sup>228</sup> In it, he theorizes the concept of good music and presents an overview of art music that might be encountered in a concert.

In his book, Henderson lays out the basics he believes a listener needs to understand to become an “intelligent” listener, including an overview of the principal genres; describes “fundamental qualities” of music;<sup>229</sup> offers guidance for the cultivation of musical taste; and provides a structure within which the reader may evaluate the quality of the music and the performances he will encounter.

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<sup>228</sup> Ramona H. Matthews, "Henderson, William James," (2008), July 17, 2008  
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12784>>.

<sup>229</sup> Henderson, *What is Good Music? Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in Musical Art*, 10, 89.

His book was sufficiently well received to be reprinted at least once each decade after its publication in 1898, through 1935, and it will serve as a starting point in a brief overview of nature of good music in the eyes of its advocates during the period of this study.

Henderson says he offers guidance to “the person who wishes to cultivate a discriminating taste in music” and assures readers that they “may acquire the fundamental knowledge in a few short months.” “After that,” he says, “one needs only to live much in an atmosphere of good music until the acquired principles become unconsciously the moving factors underlying all attention to the art” (7).

Henderson says music is governed by “a system of laws derived from the discoveries of the great geniuses of the art,” and that “the task of the honest student of music is to learn these laws, to acquire the ability to perceive, in listening to a performance, when they are observed and when they are broken. He will thus come to listen to music intelligently” (14).

In order to learn the “laws” of good music, the student is required to listen to a great deal of it because, he says, “the power to recognize the elevation of a fine musical thought must come from continued musical high thinking. One must live with the masters and absorb the spirit of their nobility. There is no other way to learn to discern the excellence of musical ideas” (14).

However, Henderson’s goal is not merely to have his reader listen to good music or even to merely to identify it, but to learn to listen intelligently and to evaluate the music successfully: in order to understand and appreciate the music to the fullest extent possible.

Henderson holds that “no rule can be laid down for recognizing the excellence of a musical idea,” saying instead that “such recognition belongs to the intuitions of the mind.” With this statement Henderson is saying that the average mind has an inherent ability to recognize quality, endorsing a major shared belief within the community of good music activists.

However, he says, some people have had this natural ability compromised by repeated exposure to music of lower quality. Discussing this, Henderson says:

I am well aware that in saying this I contradict a general belief that people have to be educated up to a recognition of excellence in musical ideas. That, however, is only true of people who have been educated down to something else. People who have been brought up on dance music, variety-stage songs, and music-hall ditties have to be educated up to Beethoven and Wagner. So do people who have never been in the presence of any art at all, musical or pictorial. But even these people very speedily learn to perceive the superiority of Beethoven's melodic ideas to those of David Braham (120-21).

In Henderson's mind then, in addition to listening frequently to good music, the student of the musical arts must also avoid too much exposure to music of lesser quality. Similar beliefs would lead good music activists to militate against broadcasts of jazz in the twentieth century.

As a first step to learning about music in this way, the reader must be introduced to the terms that will be used, and Henderson devotes the first part of the book to an explanation of the elements of rhythm, melody and harmony, and to a description of the most common formal structures and genres his readers will encounter. Throughout this discussion he provides specific suggestions on approaches his readers may take to develop active listening skills, as well as

principles Henderson associates with excellence in musical composition and performance.<sup>230</sup> This section, titled “The Qualities of Good music” occupies about the first half of the book.

For Henderson, for a composition to be considered artistic, it must have musical form operating at many levels, for, he says, “without design there is no artistic work” (17):

As symmetry, proportion, balance and logical development are essential to the perfection of an art-work, and as these are the results of design, no composition can be truly great, no matter how notable the free beauty of its germinal ideas or how eloquent its expression of emotion unless it is built according to the fundamental laws of Form. The musical conceptions and the play of emotions must be alike governed by reason (124-25).

At the center of the process of musical composition is a tension between the creative impulse toward spiritual expression and the intellectual need to impose order. Henderson describes how this tension has been resolved in different ways over time, and notes the transition from the “Classic” period to his own “Romantic” era, and says that “the dominance of romanticism, or free emotional impulse, could come only when composers had arrived at the intellectual conviction that this impulse ought to be permitted to make its own forms according to its needs” (65).<sup>231</sup>

Over the course of the book Henderson singles out two particular compositional approaches as exemplary from a formal standpoint, contrapuntal writing, and sonata form.

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<sup>230</sup> For example, Henderson offers the following rudimentary assignment: “The listener to a fugue should identify the Subject and watch for the Answer. He should note whether it is direct or inverted, or whether it has been augmented or diminished...” Ibid., 33.

<sup>231</sup> See “Romantic Forms,” Ibid., 63-69.



Regarding contrapuntal writing, he says, “Contrapuntal writing is the most learned kind of composition, because every measure must be made in obedience to fixed laws...” (39).

Henderson admires the “serenity of the emotional atmosphere” of the Renaissance and Baroque masters of sacred choral polyphony, and seems to invoke the popular appraisal of Josquin des Prez by Martin Luther when he says, “In spite of the rigid requirements of the polyphonic laws these composers gradually acquired a power to make seemingly inflexible forms do their bidding” (39).<sup>232</sup>

For Henderson, sonata form demonstrates the ultimate in form’s potential, because, he says, “In all high classes of music, contrast and development of themes will be found” (55). He is careful to say that his readers “must not be deluded into supposing that a sonata is better than other works simply because it is a sonata” (71-72), but he suggests that the design principles that are integral to Sonata design “belong to all music which is of complex design.... In a fine sonata all of them are illustrated in the highest light, yet all of them are obeyed very often in much smaller compositions” (71-72).

Henderson lists these principles of Sonata form as follows:

1. Proposition of themes suitable for development.
2. Contrast (a) of themes, (b) of keys, (c) of movements.
3. Development (a) of themes, (b) of harmony.
4. Systematic distribution of repetitions with recurrence to first subject-matter.

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<sup>232</sup> See also, for example, Donald J. Grout’s landmark text *A History of Western Music*, which illustrates the continuing popularity of Luther’s appraisal of Josquin as “‘the best of the composers of our time,’ the ‘Father of Musicians....He is the master of the notes...They must do as he wills; as for the other composers, they have to do as the notes will.’” Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music*, Shorter ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 195.

5. Climaxes, dynamic, rhythmic, and of time.
6. Points of repose.
7. Variety of tone-coloring.
8. Correlation of parts and subordination of details = proportion.
9. Perspicuity of design (71).<sup>233</sup>

### **The Three Fundamental Forces Inherent in Music**

Having given his readers this overview, Henderson moves on to the heart of his book, a discussion of the nature of music. Were the reader to master all of the taxonomic aspects of the art he has presented so far, the reader would still be missing a great deal, because “form is not all that inheres in music.” Henderson argues that “form implies content.” Form is “essentially intellectual method” in music, according to Henderson. Although it is an extremely important part of the music and one which may be perceived and described with relative ease, other less tangible aspects of musical content are also essential. Henderson says,

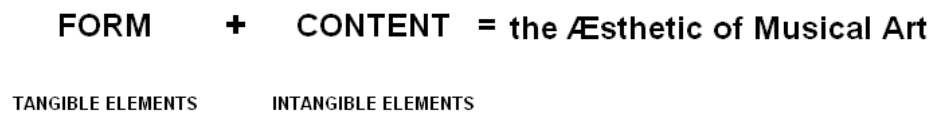
Form and Content together make the Æsthetic of Musical Art. In their action and reaction upon one another, in their individual excellence and their combined significance, they produce the ultimate Truth and Beauty which are at once the subjects and the objects of all Art (90).

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<sup>233</sup> *Numbered formatting is Henderson's.*

Without this Content, he says, “we have an empty and soulless edifice, a cathedral of Gothic grandeur which does not express man’s spiritual aspiration. He weighs in against the views of Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick who, he says, “aims to prove that music is nothing more than sounding forms, that it is incapable of emotional expression, and that its highest attributes are intellectual” (88, 101-02).

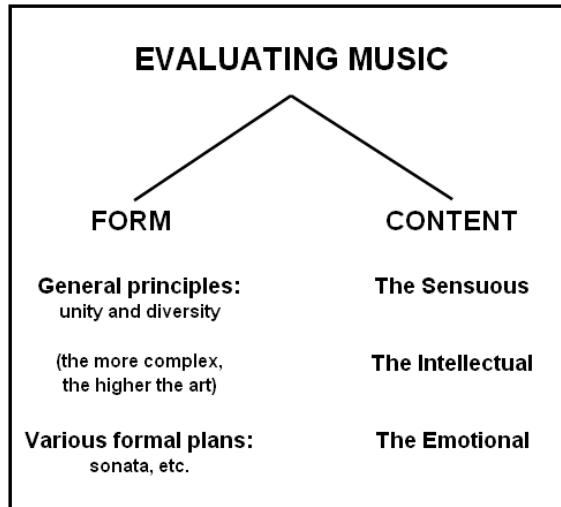
Had he drawn a graphic description of this formulation, it might have looked like this:



**Figure 1.** The  $\mathcal{A}$ esthetic of Musical Art

Henderson then outlines a tripartite model of music that includes the full scope of his understanding of the art. In this model, “Three fundamental forces or qualities are inherent in music.... These...are the Sensuous, the Intellectual, and the Emotional” (90-91).

Again, Henderson does not supply us with a graphic illustration, but it might be represented in the following way:



**Figure 2.** Illustration of Henderson’s model for evaluating music

The Sensuous in music has significant power that can either contribute to the greatness of a piece of music or distract from its lack of musical value. Henderson says,

The Sensuous [embraces that part of music which appeals solely to the physical sense of hearing. It] is that which in common parlance “tickles the ear.” It affects hearing as the flavor of food affects taste, and the enjoyment of it is analogous to the enjoyment of edibles, such as cake or candy, without consideration of the nutritive properties (91).

This direct appeal allows the Sensuous to be exploited in ways that can distract the listener from weaknesses in a mediocre composition, or contribute to the success of a masterpiece. When the Sensuous is made “the servant” of the Intellectual and the Emotional, Henderson explains, it ceases to be merely sensuous, and becomes part of something greater: to the point that, “Out of the Sensuous is great music made” (92-93). “Melody, rhythm...

harmony...even tone-color, the most absolutely sensuous factor of all," Henderson says, cease to be mere sensuousness when they are used "with an intellectual or an emotional purpose" (95).

By this point in the book Henderson has already dealt with the Intellectual in music at some length, for the Intellectual in music extends to everything that can contribute to the meaning of music in a rational way, including formal structure. However, he raises the issue of "organic unity," an essential part of the Intellectual that he says is key to the success of a composition. As he describes it:

The requirement of organic unity is that details of diverse character shall be absolutely vital parts of one organism...no accessory shall be foreign to the general design. In music it especially demands that the form shall be perfect, that the whole shall be equal to the sum of its parts, that nothing shall be subtracted without causing imperfection, and that nothing can be added to what is already complete.... It demands that [its germinal musical ideas] shall be developed to the full measure of their fruitfulness, but that there shall be no overripeness" (99).

The Emotional in music is sometimes misunderstood, Henderson says, because people do not understand what music is able to convey, and what it cannot: "Music...is an art which expresses moods, and it expresses them with definiteness, tremendous eloquence, and overwhelming influence." "Most people," he says, "have vague and unsettled ideas as to the expressive powers of music, and...in looking for something that does not exist, they fail to find that which does" (104-05).

Music “has no articulate speech,” Henderson explains, and is “compelled to express emotions in the abstract”: “The composer can say to you, ‘I am sad,’ and in saying it he can influence you to be sad with him. But he cannot say to you in music, ‘I am sad because my brother is dead.’ The materials of musical expression do not admit of such definite statement” (107-08).

Henderson criticizes program notes that spin fanciful readings of the score and assign detailed, extra-musical meanings to the music. Such attempts to assign specific causes or to read into the music “definite images” that correspond to the abstract emotions conveyed in the music, that are “contrary to the nature of the art,” Henderson says, and they mislead and ultimately disappointment the listener (111-12).

Henderson says a lack of understanding of the historical context within which earlier music was written may also lead to disappointment or misunderstanding. This could happen if the listener anticipates a level of emotional content in the music that is inappropriate to the period in which the music was written, because the “emotional schedule” of composers has widened over time. Listening must take into account that earlier composers did not attempt to create the “intensity of emotional expressiveness” found in later works. He cites Beethoven as the first composer who “definitely aimed at making emotional utterance the purpose of music,” and says that “from [Beethoven’s] time dates the development of the knowledge of the full resources of the tone art as the wordless poetry of the soul” (110-11).

For Henderson, “the means of musical expressions are not altogether arbitrary, but are founded on natural law,” and he asserts that, for example “minor keys are usually employed to express grief...because the human inflections of the human voice in expression of sorrow usually

ascend and descend through intervals closely resembling those of the minor scale” (106.)

Henderson says the Emotional in music is

not merely a part of its beauty; it is also a cause of it, for it is that which the art symbolizes. All art is symbolical, and the emotional content of music bears precisely the same relation to its beauty as the character which a portrait painter reveals in his portrait or the mood of Nature which a landscape-painter shows in a landscape does to the picture (119).

The constraints of the Intellectual restrain the Emotional and contribute to its success: “In all art...the emotion must be under the dominance of reason, or else there is no method, and art without method is inconceivable” (98).

With the conclusion of his section on musical Content, Henderson has completed his exposition of the elements and qualities of music. Before proceeding to a discussion of performance quality, Henderson devotes a mere nine pages to the “Æsthetics of music,” his closest approach to the stated topic of his book: “*What is Good music?*” Much of this section is an explication of “the utterance of the great Immanuel Kant” on the topic of beauty as applied to music, which Henderson quotes as follows: “The Beautiful is that which, through the harmony of its form with the faculty of human knowledge, awakens a disinterested, universal, and necessary satisfaction” (117).

Henderson carefully explains this quotation, word by word, and then expands upon it and upon Kant’s larger discussion of beauty. There are two types of beauty, he says: *free beauty*, which “presupposes no conception of that which the object ought to be”; and *adherent beauty*, both the conception of what the object out to be “and also the perfection of the object as

determined by comparison with the conception.”<sup>234</sup> In music, according to Henderson, free beauty is found in the “germinal conceptions” of a composition, the melodic ideas that are realized in the music itself, and which the composer subsequently manipulates using his compositional techniques. Adherent beauty, according to Henderson, is the realization of the composer’s “germinal conception” found in the music itself. This adherent beauty can be described in terms of the Sensuous and the Intellectual, and as well in terms of the Emotional, which represents symbolically the emotional content of the composer’s “germinal conception” (119).

Although Henderson says that a high degree of craftsmanship—adherence to the so-called “system of laws”—must be present in a composition for it to be considered of the first rank, and with that craftsmanship “free beauty,” “organic unity,” and “inevitability” as well; for Henderson a truly fine piece must go beyond this. Music of high quality, according to Henderson, also maintains a balance between the three “fundamental” musical “forces”: Intellectual, the Sensuous, and the Emotional. For Henderson, each of these must act as a complement to each others. He even suggests that the degree of balance between the prominence of these three elements can serve as an index to the value of the piece, saying:

all three fundamentals are constantly present in the highest class of modern music, and one who measures the æsthetic value of a composition by the relative prominence given to each will not go far astray. For instance, if it be said that the strongest claim to attention in a given composition is its merely sensuous charm, then that composition is at once placed in the lowest class (91).

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<sup>234</sup> Quoted text is Henderson’s representation of Kant’s original. Henderson, *What is Good Music? Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in Musical Art*, 118.



In the best music, according to Henderson, the Intellectual and the Emotional are in balance and working together; the Sensuous is the “servant” of the other two, “a means, not an end” (95); and the Emotional represents the emotion of the composer’s “germinal concept” in a way that is honest and convincing (119-20). Music that is weak in terms of the Intellectual element, lacking in imagination in design or development, might use an abundance of the Sensuous to distract the listener and obscure its own weakness. Invoking the visual arts, Henderson says that many “new orchestral works...seek to cover up barren melodic subjects, feeble development, and insincere emotion with Turner-esque outpours of gorgeous color” (95). Music may fail to convince us of its authenticity due to an imbalance of these elements, and so fail to convey the convincing Emotional meaning: “The purple cow or the green carnation is always an inartistic monstrosity” (96).

### **“Pure” Versus “Program” Music**

Henderson’s discussion of “The Orchestra” is fairly comprehensive; more modest sections provide overviews of “Chamber Music,” “The Piano,” “The Violin,” “The Work of a Chorus,” and “Solo Singing.”

Henderson cites Schubert and Schumann as exemplars in song composition, and briefly discusses excellence in song composition. A well-written song “reproduces perfectly the form of the poem” and “should be absolutely faithful to its spirit.” In addition it “should exhibit “simplicity of style” and “a moderate compass,” and should be supplied with an accompaniment thoroughly in sympathy with the emotional character of the work (77-78).

Although as a critic, Henderson is particularly known for his knowledge of, and commentary on, singers, in this book one learns that he considers untexted music, or “pure

music,” to be superior, writing: “I hold that the highest form of music is that in which music holds sway upon us wholly by means of her own unaided powers. Music unaccompanied by text is called absolute music, and this is surely the highest form of the art” (87). Henderson’s beliefs on this are representative of the general preference in the good music community for instrumental music, particularly chamber music and symphonies.

Henderson asserts that “the intensity and power of an orchestra...far exceeds that of any orator or singer,” and cautions that we may be misled by the good performance of a singer:

By the powerful projection through song of a singer’s personality, we are often misled into thinking that the human voice is the most expressive of instruments; but pure musical expressiveness exists in its highest degree in the orchestra, where the influence is not personal, but absolutely musical” (107).

Henderson notes that “Opera is the most popular form of musical entertainment,” but explains that this is because in opera, “the comprehension of music is made easy by means of picture and text.” However, he asserts, opera “is obviously not the highest form of music,” because in opera, “music is only a component part of the whole, and it is governed absolutely by the text.”

According to Henderson, “the only artistic opera is that which Wagner described and aimed to write, that in which music, poetry, painting, and action are united in organic unity (86-87).

Henderson believed that “any person with a musical ear” could recognize whether an orchestral performance possessed the “essential qualities” of a good performance (149). With regard to concerts by singers, he offered, “In the domain of true vocal eloquence, pure tone, perfect legato, messa di voce, correct phrasing, and distinct enunciation are, and always will be,

the reigning powers” (198). At least in this book, performance quality was not the issue, but rather, whether the music itself was of high caliber.

### **W. J. Henderson’s View of Good Music Summarized**

To summarize Henderson, then, the first requirement for a piece of good music is that it contain “free beauty”; that is, that “the melodic ideas must in and of themselves be beautiful (120). Next, the potential of this “free beauty” needs to be realized in a well-constructed composition, embracing “all the principles of design, the laws of form and development,” and Henderson tells us that “the ultimate aim” of this musical design is “organic unity” (98-99). In addition, he says that music “must possess the element of Inevitableness”; which is to say that the listener perceives that “to have written it otherwise would have weakened the structure.” This is achieved by “perfection of form” and by “absolute logic of development” (121-22). Finally, good music must convey believable emotion. It is an expression of man’s spiritual nature, and the listener will sense if the music does not ring true, and it will be unsuccessful in its ultimate purpose of conveying definite but abstract emotion (119).

Each of these qualities—“free beauty,” “organic unity,” “inevitability,” and the communication of emotion—require a subjective evaluation of the music by the listener. Henderson asserts repeatedly that that “no rule can be laid down for recognizing the excellence of a musical idea,” and that a “complete and satisfying” definition of good music cannot be given, and he never directly answers the question posed by the title of his book, “*What Is Good music?*”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, 13.

Perhaps partly in response to the vulnerability presented by the subjective nature of these central tenants, Henderson and others who write about good music often include a number of important beliefs about the nature of good music, in addition to the attributes already noted above, that function as a sort of creation myth for acolytes of good music. These trace their lineage back at least to John Sullivan Dwight in the mid-nineteenth century, and include the notion that some aspect of good music—in Henderson’s book, the modern orchestra—is the result of a progressive musical evolution (131); that “the means of musical expression” which underlie good music “are founded on natural law” (107); and, that “pure music” is superior to program music, opera, and other music with text (86-87), with symphonic music and chamber music occupying the highest place of honor (87, 151). It is understood that to acquire fully the ability to recognize and appraise good music, one must listen to that music, and preferably that music only, for a long time (14).

It is likely few contemporary supporters Henderson found his remarks controversial. Like Henderson, fellow music critic Henry Krehbiel accepted that music was “conceived,” at least by “its creators,” as a “language of emotion,” and Krehbiel quoted Richard Wagner and Moritz Hauptmann in support of music’s ability to express emotion.<sup>236</sup> Krehbiel also concurred that more abstract musical idioms were a higher art form, writing that “descriptive pieces that rest on imitation” are “the lowest form of conventional musical idiom” when compared to other types of program music, the highest class of which included “Symphonies or other composite works which have a title to indicate their general character, complemented by explanatory superscriptions for each portion.”<sup>237</sup> Henderson quoted William Henry Hadow in his own book,

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<sup>236</sup> Henry Edward Krehbiel, *How to Listen to Music: Hints and Suggestions to Untaught Lovers of the Art* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1896), 39, 41.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

and many ideas similar to Henderson's are also found in Hadow's book, *Studies in Modern Music*.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> W. H. Hadow, *Studies in Modern Music: Second Series; Frederick Chopin, Antonin Dvořák, Johannes Brahms*, 8th ed. ed. (London: Seeley and Co., 1910). See, for example: discussions of the subordination of the "sensuous" to the "intellectual" (p. 20); the importance of emotion in musical expression (pp. 26-27); inevitability in music (p. 27); importance of "unity in diversity" (p. 33); importance of beauty (p. 57, 59); the impossibility of defining inspiration (57-58); the "sensuous," the "emotional" and the "intellectual" (pp. 58-59)

### CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIES FOR GOOD MUSIC IN THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES

The decade of the 1920s would test three frequently articulated beliefs shared by advocates for good music. First was their belief that good music was superior to other types of music. Events of the decade would allow them to retain, and even enhance this view within their community, even though many in the society did not agree with them. Next, they believed everyone could benefit from listening to good music, and that good music had universal appeal, or to use Betty Chmaj's helpful construction, they agreed with John Sullivan Dwight that music's benefits "were accessible to the greatest number through the greatest music of the greatest artists."<sup>239</sup> Implicit in this second belief was a third: that all citizens had the native musical ability to appreciate good music. Because of this, at least through the first part of the decade of the 1920s, they also shared an expectation that public education could make just about everyone musically literate and lead them to an appreciation of good music. This belief in the potential of public education often led activists to blame teachers when the popularity of good music fell short of the goals they set for it.<sup>240</sup>

This dream of a musical America anticipated that success would be attained if two requirements were met: they needed to educate the public, and simultaneously find a way to

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<sup>239</sup> Chmaj, "Fry versus Dwight: American Music's Debate Over Nationality," 70.

<sup>240</sup> See "America's School Music: a Cycle of Mediocrity?," *Musical America* 50, no. 17 (November 10, 1930): 10; "Music Teachers are Accused of 'Apathy Toward Progress'," *Musical America* 30, no. 1 (May 3, 1919): 10; "Musical Alliance: How the Members of the Alliance Can Help," *Musical America* 30, no. 10 (July 5, 1919): 15; "Nebraska Teachers Shelve Licensing," *Musical America* 41, no. 19 (February 28, 1925): 143; "NYSMTA Gives First Examination," *Musical America* 30, no. 12 (July 19, 1919): 11.

provide them sufficient exposure to good music to facilitate its universal acceptance. This posed a difficult, cyclical problem, in that both the supply of good music and the demand to sustain its offering on a commercial basis had to arise at about the same time. However, tremendous progress had been made in recent decades, and the decade of the 1920s seemed to offer even more. Good music activists shared an optimistic sense that their goal was within reach at last.

### **The Context for Good Music in the Nineteen-Twenties**

American performers and composers, as well as some of the good music community, had benefitted from the wartime xenophobia. Campaigns against anything and everything German had removed the music of German and Austrian composers from concert programs, at least for a time, and had removed German conductors and instrumental performers from their positions with American orchestras, many to prison or unceremonious deportation. This by itself might have been a setback, because of the preponderance of German and Austrian music in the repertoire. However, at least in the short run, American composers and musicians benefited from the increased opportunities this produced, and for the first time, American music teachers found themselves at the pinnacle of the professional pecking order.<sup>241</sup>

Large scale application of technological innovation seemed to promise continuing improvements in the larger society, and spurred the era's imagination. Writing in 1922, Sociologist William Fielding Ogburn reported that the time was frequently described as an "age

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<sup>241</sup> "Chicago Union Acts to Crush Any Pro-Germanism in Ranks," *Musical America* 28, no. 17 (August 24, 1918): 6; "No Ban on German Masters in Either France or England," *Musical America* 27, no. 10 (January 5, 1918): 2; "The Problem of German Music," *Musical America* 28, no. 3 (May 18, 1918): 28; "Purge of 'German Influence'," *Musical America* 28, no. 24 (October 12, 1918): 17.

of change” and asserted, “Never before in the history of mankind have so many and so frequent changes occurred.<sup>242</sup> Wireless transmission of news from across the ocean had shrunk the globe in ways reminiscent of changes that would be brought about by the internet decades later: radio would increase the sense of global community, and contribute to a perception of rapid change.

As part of this, radio brought a new and unprecedented sense of far-away places directly into living rooms across the country. Initially more novelty than entertainment, radio transformed itself tremendously during its early years in order to retain and expand its audience. In the realm of music, the mechanical, or reproducing piano and the “talking machine” had led the way, establishing consumer markets for entertainment that the radio industry would pursue and creating the experience of passive home musical entertainment; the phonograph contributed to the growth of this market. After the passing of the post-war recession, the growing economy aided radio’s rapid growth. By the end of the decade, the radio industry had developed a sophisticated and extensive variety of national offerings designed to appeal to a wide variety listeners, who became more and more demanding.<sup>243</sup> Both the radio and the phonograph were boosted by constant technological improvements, most notably the electronic microphone, which transformed the process of recording orchestral music, and at the same time made possible new styles of popular performance.

In his book *The Entertainment Machine*, Robert C. Toll explains,

In the mid-1920s electrical microphones and amplifiers ended the era of direct acoustical recording. No longer was the quality of a record determined by a performer’s volume, pitch, tone, and distance from a recording horn. With sensitive

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<sup>242</sup> Ogburn, *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*, 199.

<sup>243</sup> Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928*, 390-91.



microphones to pick up all kinds of sounds and amplifiers to boost their intensity, soft-voiced crooners like Rudy Vallee...and sweet-sounding bands relying on strings and subtle arrangements could for the first time become recording stars.... A full orchestra could set up in its normal configuration, rather than being forced to cram musicians together in front of the recording horn.... The result...was a new diversity and quality of discs that the public loved.<sup>244</sup>

As the radio industry emerged, its structure was affected by an evolution in corporate governance taking place at the same time, and by fallout from seemingly unrelated national events that resulted in legislative restrictions that affected radio. Supporters of good music looked to radio managers with the expectation that they could, and would, use their ability to control radio programming to cultivate an increasing appreciation of good music. However, such attempts at the manipulation of public taste ran against the evident intentions of Congress as it moved toward solidifying in law a radio structure designed to benefit the entire public. In addition to this, radio executives stood to gain far more profit by satisfying the desires of a wider demographic.

During the twentieth century, new legislation and regulations designed to prevent business misconduct came about because of abuses that had resulted from the concentration of power in the hands of wealthy individuals. These shifted the power to manage corporate affairs

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<sup>244</sup> Robert C. Toll, *The Entertainment Machine: American Show Business in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford [Oxfordshire]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 58-59.

away from company owners, to managers.<sup>245</sup> Thus, the nineteenth-century notion that the owner or manager of an enterprise should take a paternal interest in the morality of his customers, which some good music supporters imagined could be invoked when dealing with radio network executives, not only ran counter to contemporary public sensibilities, but also clashed with evolving trends in laws regarding corporate structure. Keeping a figurative thumb on the scale of public opinion was contrary to the fiduciary obligations of professional managers whose responsibility was to create profits for the company's owners.

An even more important stricture against such intervention in matters of public taste arose from concerns over public resources, censorship, and monopoly practices, which arose in response to conservative attempts to legislative radio censorship, and in the wake of the Teapot Dome Scandal.

Immediately following 1925 broadcast of the "Scopes Monkey Trial," conservative legislators attempted "to ban from radio all 'discourses' on evolution," but this failed. Despite the strong feelings of conservatives, prevailing public opinion was strongly opposed to radio censorship of this sort. Federal rulings restricting monopoly practices, and regulations extending these restrictions to radio, also had the effect of reducing any latitude station managers might have felt inclined to exercise on behalf of any particular group.<sup>246</sup>

The Teapot Dome Scandal, which occurred during the Harding administration but which came to light during the Coolidge administration, exposed corruption at the highest levels of government, and involved the selling of public resources for private gain. This scandal over oil leasing, which led to the conviction and jailing of Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall,

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<sup>245</sup> Mark J. Roe, *Strong Managers, Weak Owners: the Political Roots of American Corporate Finance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), xiii-xv.

<sup>246</sup> Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, 195-99.

resulted in an intense desire on the part of the public that national resources be more fully protected against exploitation by individuals, and these concerns made their mark on the language of the Radio Act of 1927. This law, enacted “to maintain control of the United States over all channels,” specified that the airwaves were public property that could not be sold. Instead, radio channels were to be leased, and lease holders were required to operate in a way that served “public interest, convenience, or necessity.”

### **Ideas about Good Music in the Nineteen-Twenties**

Good music supporters in the first part of the Twentieth Century sought to use the latest technology and methods to advance their cause, but the cause itself drew upon inherited beliefs about music, its role in society, and the means by which other citizens might be convinced to develop what these activists considered to be appropriate musical taste.

Many of the ideas about good music expressed by W. L. Henderson in his book, if not the term itself, had been espoused since the first half of the nineteenth century, and elements of these beliefs continue to be held today by some. What Henderson expressed in 1898 was reiterated in 1912 by Frances Elliott Clark,<sup>247</sup> these ideas remained core tenets for good music activists in the nineteen-twenties, and views from even earlier in the nineteenth century continued to hold sway as well. John Sullivan Dwight’s views on the proper sort of support that should be shown the American composer had been handed down, along with his views on other topics and the controversy that accompanied them in his exchange with William Henry Fry in the 1850s.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> "Draft: Article in the Talking Machine World."; Clark, "Paper Read by Mrs. Frances E. Clark," 29-32.

<sup>248</sup> For an account of this, see Chmaj, "Fry versus Dwight: American Music's Debate Over Nationality."

This is demonstrated in a discussion of American composers in the final volume of a study series in music published by the National Federation of Music Clubs, author Percy Goetschius directs his readers to contemporaneous, cautionary articles by John Tasker Howard and Oscar Sonneck about the possible, undesired effect of a non-critical atmosphere upon American composers,<sup>249</sup> and in the views of good music activists regarding opera, as expressed by Henderson.

As late as 1935, John Tasker Howard would recall Henderson's statement that "no rule can be laid down for recognizing the excellence of a musical idea," when he cautioned, "we must not forget that we have yet to define *good music*."<sup>250</sup> Almost a quarter of a century after this, although not using the term "good music," Leonard B. Meyer would echo Henderson's conclusion that "complexity does have something to do with excellence" and list "certain technical criteria for excellence in a piece of music" of which Henderson would have approved:

A good piece of music must have consistency of style: that is, it must employ a unified system of expectations and probabilities; it should possess clarity of basic intent; it should have variety, unity, and all the other categories which are so easy to find after the fact.<sup>251</sup>

With sensibilities perfectly in line with those of Henderson, supporters of good music believed that opportunities for the public to hear good music frequently would lead to an increase in its appreciation, but these activists also shared Henderson's belief that exposure to the wrong

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<sup>249</sup> Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*, 360.; See Howard, "The American Composer; the Victim of his Friends."; and Oscar G. Sonneck, "The American Composer and the American Music Publisher," *The Musical Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1923).

<sup>250</sup> Henderson, *What is Good Music? Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in Musical Art*, 120; John Tasker Howard, "Changed Conditions for the American Composer," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935): 40.

<sup>251</sup> Leonard B. Meyer, "Some Remarks on Value and Greatness in Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17, no. 4 (1959): 487.

kinds of music could lessen the ability of people to appreciate good music.<sup>252</sup> This belief presented the activists with a problem, for even as the public was learning about music in school and being provided with increasing access to the right kind of music through new venues such as an increased frequency of concerts, recordings of good music via the talking machine, and even radio, the public was also being exposed to the wrong sorts of music. This seemed to threaten to undo the lessons of exposure to the best music.

### **Good Music Concepts and the National Federation of Music Clubs**

As part of an ambitious education effort aimed at increasing their membership and raising the level of understanding of music on the part of their members, the National Federation of Music Clubs oversaw the creation and publication of a “Course of Study in Music Understanding.” Nationally known music figures created materials for this course, which was published by the Oliver Ditson Company. All music clubs were urged to participate in this “epoch-making” event by Mrs. Frank A. Seiberling, a past president of the federation and national chairman of the effort, who advised club presidents that “There is no other such course printed in any language.” The Federation supplied a pamphlet, “How to Present the Study Course,” as an aid to the success of the effort.<sup>253</sup>

The “epoch” that Mrs. Seiberling suggests will be created, a time of “serious music study” by music members that presumably will lead to some transformative effect, is alluded to by author Karl Gehrken in his preface to the first volume:

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<sup>252</sup> Henderson, *What is Good Music? Suggestions to Persons Desiring to Cultivate a Taste in Musical Art*, 120-21.

<sup>253</sup> From an undated letter from Mrs. Frank A. Seiberling, a former president of the federation chairing the committee responsible for the course of study, sent to music clubs around the country for the 1924-1925 season. Mrs. Frank A. Seiberling, “Letter to music clubs from the ‘First Patron and Chairman, Course of Study,’” (undated, c. 1924-25).

The women of our music clubs through their National Federation are earnestly seeking to become intelligent appreciators of the best in music and are replacing desultory work with a program of serious study of the essentials of music culture. Music lovers everywhere are demonstrating that they are no longer content with a superficial knowledge of music, and the forward movement in music in our schools is of great significance and promises much for the musical future of America.<sup>254</sup>

This sense of moment is echoed by the fourth author in the series, Clarence G. Hamilton, who celebrated the “broad study of music” the series sought to initiate, without which, he said, “a genuine insight” into the “methods and ideals” of music could “never be fully realized.” Hamilton lauds the federation as “an organization of apparently unlimited possibilities” that was in a position to guide to a large extent the destinies of the art in America, through its control of groups of music lovers of all classes, in every corner of the country, and through the varied scope of its activities, which range from intimate study in the home to the concert action of conventions and festivals.<sup>255</sup>

Daniel Gregory Mason, author of the second book in the series, extends the American exceptionalist tone alluded to by Hamilton a bit further in his Preface, asserting that the Course of Study will have help “readers to distinguish for themselves...great masterpieces, to understand their aims and methods, and to respond to their appeal.” Mason asserts, “Only as we

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<sup>254</sup> Karl Wilson Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music* (Boston: New York, 1923), vii.

<sup>255</sup> Clarence G. Hamilton, *Epochs in Musical Progress* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., C.H. Ditson & Co., 1926), 261-62.

Americans learn to react individually to art resisting the herd opinions that are so easy and so false, can we become discriminating enough to acclaim the good and reject the bad....”<sup>256</sup>

The four original volumes included: *The Fundamentals of Music: First Year of a Study Course in Music Understanding*, by Karl Gehrken; *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, by Daniel Gregory Mason; *Musical Instruments*, by Edgar Stillman Kelley; and *Epochs in Musical Progress*, by Clarence G. Hamilton. These were all published between 1924 and 1926. An additional volume, *Masters of the Symphony*, by Percy Goetschius, not in the original plan of study, was published in 1929.<sup>257</sup>

These books repeat themes that are unremarkable in and of themselves, but significant in that they attest to the continuing currency of long-standing ideas on good music and musical quality, inherited from the nineteenth-century and expressed in William J. Henderson’s book. For example, the importance of a piece having “unity, symmetry, and coherence”<sup>258</sup> is stressed by Gehrken:

A good melody must have unity and coherence on the one hand, but originality and variety on the other. It must have both grace and strength and it must be significant, that is, it must express something. The melody of high quality does not over-emphasize any one element (like syncopation, for example) and yet it must have enough repetition to seem unified.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., New York, C.H. Ditson & Co., 1924), vi.

<sup>257</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*; Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*; Hamilton, *Epochs in Musical Progress*; Edgar Stillman Kelley, *Musical Instruments* (Boston, New York: Oliver Ditson Company, 1925); Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*.

<sup>258</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*, 132.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

Mason expresses related ideas on musical symmetry, conceding that “declamation and characterization” are important to a song, but that, “there is a subtler, less obvious, but even more important quality.... This higher quality is...beauty and balance of the whole...good proportion and freedom from exaggeration and distortion...fine reticence and restraint...”<sup>260</sup> Gehrken echoes another Henderson point, offering that, “a melody, to be considered of high quality, must have that seeming inevitableness without which no art work can long survive.”<sup>261</sup> He also stresses that in addition to being beautiful, successful music must convey emotion:

If a performer plays in such a way that no emotional response is aroused in the hearer we say that he plays without expression, that is, he has not succeeded in conveying any musical meaning to the hearer.... Above all, music must arouse in the listener a sense of beauty. It must thrill him, it must exalt him, because it is above everything else beautiful. Failing in these two things-to bring about suitable emotional states in the hearer and to arouse in him a sense of the essential beauty of the music-the interpreter has very little left to show that his effort has been worth while.<sup>262</sup>

Mason conveys agreement with the importance of conveying emotion with the music, in this criticism of impressionist music:

the music of impressionism or symbolism, aiming as it does to give us only an impression or a symbol of a mood, and avoiding all

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<sup>260</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 48-49.

<sup>261</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*, 70.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 179, 82-83.



definite musical emotion or thought, tends to neglect the deeper musical experiences...and therefore to leave us in the long run unsatisfied....<sup>263</sup>

Goetschius says, “It is not the sound of the music alone which can deeply move us—any more than the sound of the words in a poem; but the *meaning*, the true and deep significance...” and avers that, although “It is undeniably true that no amount of mental effort can fathom all the emotional depths, or wholly disclose the *spiritual* contents, of the work of genius...all such effort tends in the right direction.”<sup>264</sup>

Evolutionary images and models were popular during this period and figure prominently as a technique used by these writers to position good music, and all of Western culture, as privileged. Each of the authors of the study guides aids in this effort, and the series thus served as a bulwark against the perceived threat posed by popular music of the day, including jazz.

A good example of this in the first-year text uses pseudo-creation myths having vague scientific overtones. Gehrken attributed to Brahms (or possibly, he says, to von Bülow), the saying, “In the beginning was rhythm,”<sup>265</sup> and reports that “historians agree that the earliest manifestation of what we call music is to be traced back to the rhythm of primitive dancing”:

The study of ethnology makes clear that man's earliest musical experiments were performed in the field of rhythm.... These sounds were at first merely the monotonous—but Rhythmic—repetition of a single interval or perhaps of several intervals, but out of this crude and monotonous vocal utterance there grew the

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<sup>263</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 228-29.

<sup>264</sup> Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*, viii-ix.

<sup>265</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*, 27.

choral dance and from the seed of the choral dance sprang the stem, flower, and fruit of modern melody.<sup>266</sup>

Mason also purports to locate the historic origins of music in movement in his second year text, invoking Greek and Roman poetry and ancient Hindu Vedas, and also explaining that the dominance of duple divisions in music results from the fact that humans have two feet.<sup>267</sup>

The recurring tendency of these authors to associate the rhythmic element with what they called “primitive” music reinforces the distinction they made between popular dance music and “pure,” instrumental art music. John Sullivan Dwight had made the same distinction, saying that “the best music with the highest, or intellectual, level of human consciousness,” reinforced the supremacy of the symphonic tradition.<sup>268</sup>

Goetschius is even more direct in his fifth volume, saying in his, “there are various ways of listening to music. Some take it in with their ears only, some with their mind, some with the soul, and some, apparently, only with their feet.” His contrast of good music with more popular styles, including dance music, continues:

And so the question arises: Which class of listeners derives the greatest benefit from it?...Grandfather derives immense comfort, in a way, from “Auld lang syne”—*with the words*; and the bulk of humanity enjoys its musical experiences in something of the same fashion. But how utterly primitive is this kind of enjoyment, compared with the unspeakable experience of one who hears *and understands* (if only in part) the message of a Symphony of

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>267</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 17-19.

<sup>268</sup> Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation; a Social History of Music in America, 1870-1900*, 45.

Beethoven! Such understanding may be partly intuitive, though only in rare cases and in small proportion. It is rather the reward of study; of earnest, well-directed and patient *study*; and that is the opportunity with this book aims to provide for the student and lover of what is best and noblest in the art of music.<sup>269</sup>

Edgar Stillman Kelley provides the most elaborate positioning of good music in the introduction of his book, the third volume, invoking “laws of gravity, heat,” and “light”; “the ancient Hindus,” the “Book of Job,” “Greek philosophers,” and the “Music of the Spheres” to explain “The Beginnings Of Terrestrial Music” and the “Mystic Origin Of Musical Instruments.” His Chapter I cites anthropologists and “modern biology” in its discussion of “Primitive and Oriental Instruments of Percussion,”<sup>270</sup> and includes an “Outline of Instrumental Evolution,” in which Stillman Kelley calls attention to “the parallel existing between the development of the individual man and the evolution of the human race....” An extended quotation of this passage is required to represent the breadth of its compass:

The boy with his tendency to gratify every need and whim...resembles the savage state. The youth...may be compared to the barbarian, while the cultured man represents the people of high civilization. A corresponding analogy may be traced between the growth of musical taste in the individual and that of the

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<sup>269</sup> Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*, vii-viii. Goetschius' emphases.

<sup>270</sup> Regarding “Oriental” music, Stillman Kelley explains, “Due to their isolation from the progressive western nations the peoples of the Orient have maintained their ancient culture in many respects in the same condition as it existed thousands of years ago. For this reason it has been considered advisable...to group the inventions of the Orientals with those of the more primitive peoples, the Asiatic survivals taking their place midway between those of man's infancy and his mature methods of ‘controlling sonorous vibrations.’” Stillman Kelley, *Musical Instruments*, 8-9.

species.... Accordingly, we note that the delight of the infant in sheer noise (produced by rattles, drums, etc.) corresponds to the taste of the savages, who first fashion instruments of just this type. As a boy rejoices in whistles, fifes, etc....we find the barbarous tribes taking pleasure in the music afforded by instruments of similar nature.... In the youth, as his discernment for pleasing succession of tones (melody) is developed, he cultivates the Banjo, Guitar, Mandolin, Cornet, Flute, etc. In like manner, the semi-civilized peoples devote themselves to the tone-producing media of similar kinds—harps, lutes, dulcimers, horns and viols. Finally, on reaching maturity, the man apprehends the finer qualities of musical art and learns to appreciate combinations of melodies or voice parts...combinations of tone-groups...and combinations of instruments.... Here the individual has reached the stage representing a people who employ instruments of the highest degree of perfection, capable of expressing the ideas of the great masters.<sup>271</sup>

In his fourth volume, speaking of musical history, author Clarence G. Hamilton notes that “various stages mark of this evolutionary progress” and promises that the student “is now to be given a bird’s-eye view of the whole expanse of musical endeavor, and thus will rapidly scan the evolution of the art from the inchoate cries of savages to the present highly organized system.” (Hamilton, vii) His account of “Primitive Music” includes discussion of the involvement of “the

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

supernatural,” in the form of healing ceremonies and revelation in dreams, in “the songs of the Medicine Men,” including both “African savages” and “the Indians.” Hamilton says

This close connection between music and the supernatural is again exemplified in the songs of the southern ‘Negroes,’ most of which deal with religious experiences, and in the “spirituals” of their camp meetings their emotions are excited to an uncontrollable pitch of religious fanaticism.<sup>272</sup>

After examining these “the crude attempts of primitive peoples after musical expression,” Hamilton notes that although “Ours is a musical system capable of suggesting the most subtle shades of emotion and of satisfying the most exacting requirements of artistic perfection; yet...many of our finest intellects are apparently blunted toward this vital factor in human existence.” He concludes, “May we not hope for a millennium, in which civilized man may grow to that universal appreciation of the power and beauty of music which was apparently the natural heritage of his primitive ancestors?”<sup>273</sup>

Such fanciful positionings of good music in opposition to “Primitive music” and that of “African savages,” layered on top of views inherited from Henderson and other earlier writers, forcefully convey the racism of the era.

Evidence of the preference of good music devotes for nonprogrammatic symphonic music exists throughout the series, and is demonstrated in Daniel Gregory Mason’s volume, *From Song to Symphony*, which discusses a full range of genres but does so in a progression

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<sup>272</sup> Hamilton, *Epochs in Musical Progress*, 21.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

intended to demonstrate the “long progress from song to symphony” that has culminated, he says, in a symphonic structure in which

the symphony is no longer merely a cluster of four movements, each unified by the relations of key and of theme that we have studied, but comes through further inter-relations of the movements themselves, one organic whole. This final step in organization is achieved by making the germinal themes of the whole work appear in different movements, which thus share them in common by what is called “community of theme.” Such forms are also sometimes called “cyclic”.... Such a final step was of course inevitable.<sup>274</sup>

Mason criticizes most program music, which he says is inferior when compared to the music of Beethoven, who he says “even undertakes to tell a definite story” in his music but does it “within the frame of the classic symphony of four movements,”<sup>275</sup> Gehrken criticizes music with definite programmatic meaning and at the same time underscores the importance of interior meaning:

Some modern musicians seem to be mistaking the function of our tonal art. Let us leave concrete forms and representative color to the painter of visual pictures and let us not take away from the architect the definite delineation of towers and arches and buttresses.... Music has a much more subtle and difficult task to

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<sup>274</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 230-31.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

perform and a much more fascinating one as well. It is to convey to the individual such musical ideas that his emotion will be aroused to the point where he feels as the composer felt but applies these feelings to his own subjective joys, sorrows, and satisfactions as only he knows them.<sup>276</sup>

Mason notes approvingly that, “As chamber music is free from a vulgar virtuosity, so is it free from the specious appeals of sensationalism,”<sup>277</sup> However, he criticizes what he calls “theatrical temperament”<sup>278</sup> and complains,

too much of our “advanced” music is professional in spirit. Preoccupied with the means of execution, brought by virtuosos and by mechanical instruments to an inhuman perfection, it forgets the end which alone justifies all these means—the expression of feeling. It is as empty as it is elaborate.<sup>279</sup>

In contrast, Mason celebrates the moral and spiritual purity of musical genius he says is to be found in Brahms:

It is not Brahms’s learning, or in the last analysis any merely intellectual quality, that makes him so much greater as a symphonist than most of his contemporaries. It is a combination of intellectual with moral and spiritual qualities, of genius with character, whereby he achieves a poise, a sense of proportion, a

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<sup>276</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*, 182.

<sup>277</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 156.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

kind of sweet human sanity, that few musicians in any age possess,—perhaps none quite in the degree of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.<sup>280</sup>

This association of personal character with musical quality allows the dismissal of music associated with suspect morality, such as jazz; or for Mason, the music of Tchaikovsky, “whose *Sixth* or *Pathetic Symphony*,” Mason says, “is probably the most popular modern orchestral piece.” Comparing Tchaikovsky’s music to the “chaste and reticent nobility of sentiment” found in the music of Brahms, who Mason says is “temperamentally at the opposite pole from him,” Mason says that Tchaikovsky “is a man of far inferior emotional distinction and control,” claiming “a sort of exaggerated, vulgar, and often cloying sentimentality,” and “a neurotic melancholy” at the beginning and ending of the piece, where Brahms “would make a magnificent climax of thought as well as of sound.” Mason concludes that, “Tchaikovsky, in short, felt impulsively, was a creature of moods...and never succeeded in mediating between those moods and so in making from them an integral work of art, perhaps never even tried.”<sup>281</sup>

Mason’s scathing critiques of some of the most popular composers of the day is moderated by the following, final volume of the set by Percy Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*, which is a reiteration of the superiority of non-programmatic music, evidently a lesson that was difficult for the masses of good music denizens to master. He writes, “Probably a large majority of music lovers and students, if asked the question, would unhesitatingly point to the Opera and Oratorio as the most eminent grades of musical creation....” Explaining why this

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 216-16.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 216-18.



is an error, Goetschius says, “it is apparent that the very highest type of musical art must consist exclusively of pure, unalloyed, music”:

It is the very multiplicity of captivating and impressive qualities in the Opera, and to a lesser degree in the Oratorio, that, no matter how skillfully interwoven and balanced, impairs the *unity* and concentration absolutely essential to a work of purely artistic aim. The Opera can not reasonably be regarded as the highest type of musical creation, for the simple reason that it is not music alone.

Even chamber-music, he says, which approaches “a higher level of expressiveness and effectiveness, so far as Variety...is concerned...falls short of the purest and highest ideal.”

Goetschius concludes, “Further search for this ideal along the paths last traced leads inescapably to the orchestra, and orchestral music. Therein every *desideratum* seems supplied, every condition amply fulfilled.”<sup>282</sup>

These views are in accord with ones expressed earlier by Edgar Stillman Kelley, who explained the relative ranking of instrumental and vocal music, and the “Ultimate Import Of Musical Instruments”:

For a long period these inventions served merely to accompany the voice.... But, at length, the psychic moment arrived when these accompanying factors were able to perform independently. Then, and *then only*, was it possible for Music to rank with the sister arts—Poetry, Painting, Dancing, Sculpture and Architecture. Obviously Music could only be termed “absolute” or “abstract”

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<sup>282</sup> Goetschius, *Masters of the Symphony*, 1-5.

when it was sufficiently developed to exist entirely dissociated from the text employed in song and chorus, where the composer aims to intensify through the agency of tones the meaning of the words.<sup>283</sup>

To these arguments can be added those of Daniel Gregory Mason, who singles out Verdi and Wagner for praise but is cautionary about opera taken as a whole, the history of which, he says:

has been more chequered, fuller of strong contrasts between the facile popularity of tinsel and the struggles of genius for the true gold than any other branch of music. This is probably in part because opera audiences have always contained a large proportion of people who cared nothing for music, but who came to gratify a curiosity about personalities, a love of color, display, and excitement, or a mere desire to be effortlessly entertained. The obligation of intelligent interest is by no group of music-lovers so complacently ignored as by opera-goers.... Operatic audiences have always had the lowest standard of taste of any section of human beings calling themselves musical....<sup>284</sup>

More than the privileging of any particular style of music, it is the belief that the average American can be taught to eschew what Mason characterizes as the “mere desire to be effortlessly entertained,” and instead accept to an “obligation of intelligent interest,” and with it

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<sup>283</sup> Stillman Kelley, *Musical Instruments*, 4.

<sup>284</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 69-70.

“be willing to take the trouble to train his ears to observe,”<sup>285</sup> that is at the heart of the campaign for good music. The belief of the National Federation of Music Clubs and its allies in the campaign for good music that virtually every public school student in the land would accept such an “obligation of intelligent interest” is their fundamental error.

### **Additional Writings on Good Music by Daniel Gregory Mason**

Other writing about good music echoed themes similar to those offered earlier by Henderson and reiterated in the study guides published by the federation, although there were varying nuances of emphasis. Daniel Gregory Mason’s model for good music, reiterated in articles he also wrote, is simpler than Henderson’s, but he echoes Henderson’s point that the central purpose of music is the expression of emotion, part of what Henderson identified as “Content.” Mason also echoes Henderson’s identification of the source of musical greatness: “The difference between great and mediocre music will always be found to boil down to the matter of musical organization, crystallization, or shape.”<sup>286</sup>

In addition to his activities as a writer, Mason was a composer and served as a professor at Columbia University for nearly four decades, including a stint as head of the music department. His training included composition studies with Paine at Harvard, in addition to studies with Chadwick, Goetschius, and d’Indy. His outlook was conservative, in line with his Boston roots.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Gehrken, *The Fundamentals of Music*, 130-32.

<sup>286</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, "Folk Songs," *Outlook* (1924): 602.

<sup>287</sup> Boris and N. E. Tawa Schwarz, "Mason: (6) Daniel Gregory Mason (ii)," (Grove Music Online, 2008).

Mason apparently contributed to a lecture series at the University Settlement House on the lower East Side, the oldest settlement house in New York City. The lectures were offered by the settlement house “with the aim of helping its young men and women to form a sound musical taste.” An article in the publication *Outlook* noted that “these young people,”

coming as they do in large measure from Jewish and Italian families, have often a strong potential love of music, and need only guidance to turn it to the best account for their own permanent satisfaction and their influence in the community. On the other hand, surrounded, as every one in our modern large cities is, with the trivial, spurious, and evanescent music of commercialism, they are in peculiar danger, lacking such guidance, of losing altogether the spiritual solace and joy that real music brings.<sup>288</sup>

Good music advocates are often criticized as having narrow, Eurocentric tastes. While this indeed may have been true in practice, in their writings they frequently offered statements such as the follow one, which seem somewhat broadminded in comparison with stereotypes. In a lecture on “The Listener’s Share in Music,” Mason addressed

two commonly held views which are equally in error. One is that all music is divided into “classic” and “popular,” and that the classic is “dry” and formal, while the popular alone has interest for the ordinary mortal. This may be called the “lowbrow” fallacy. The other is precisely the reverse, that of the “highbrow,” unforgettably defined by Professor Brander Matthews as “a man

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<sup>288</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, "Making Intelligent Concert Audiences," *Outlook* (1919): 208.

educated beyond his intelligence.” It is that all “classical” music is good and all “popular” music bad. As Mr. Mason showed, the truth is, rather, that some works by classical composers are not so good as others and some popular tunes vastly superior to others, but that, on the whole classical music goes deeper and brings, therefore, a more lasting joy.<sup>289</sup>

Despite such broadminded expressions, however, it is evident that some types of music, to borrow Orwell’s construction, are understood to be “more equal” than others. An example of this is seen in an article in *Outlook* by Mason from September, 1924 titled, “The Opera,” which is essentially an excerpt from his discussion in the study guide volume, *From Song to Symphony*,<sup>290</sup> made available to a wider audience. In the article Mason makes implied comparisons of opera plots, scenery, and personalities with unspecified varieties of “pure” music, comparing the “idealism” of the Florentine Camerata with operas that followed, casting aspersions on opera audiences in the process. He quotes Sir Hubert Parry:

The problem to be solved in fitting intelligible music to intelligible drama is one of the most complicated and delicate ever undertaken by man; and the solution is made all the more difficult through the fact that the kind of public who frequent operas do not in the least care to have it solved.... They generally have a gross appetite for anything, so long as it is not intrinsically good.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 63-70.

<sup>291</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, "The Opera," *Outlook* (1924): 95.

Mason seems to continue the denigration of opera he began the prior month, in an *Outlook* article on chamber music in October, 1924 titled, "Qualities of the String Quartette," again drawing upon discussions in the chapter in his book, in this case the chapter on chamber music. In the book Mason asserts that, "If the focusing of the spot-light on the prima donna of opera or the solo star of a recital or concerto is in questionable taste, an attempt at such hero-worship for the four players of a string quartet would be palpably ridiculous."<sup>292</sup> In the excerpted article, he explains,

In chamber music there are no "stars" and no "spot-lights," as there are in opera and in recitals, to interfere with the music itself. Happily, the two violins, viola, and violincello of the string quartette are obviously equals, forming a "team" or *ensemble*. Though the first violin must lead, he is not a vulgar virtuoso, but a prince among peers. He will no more expect to "put on all the airs" ...than the captain of the baseball team expects to throw all the balls....<sup>293</sup>

Mason seems to echo some of Henderson's cautions about the potential of orchestral music to hide compositional imperfections that would be exposed in chamber music, thereby privileging chamber music as requiring a higher level of compositional art:

The orchestra may take unfair advantage of the music lover and without saying anything of the least interest overwhelm him by the brute force of its voices.... An awkward bit of melody, two badly

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<sup>292</sup> Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 155.

<sup>293</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, "Qualities of the String Quartette," *Outlook* (1924): 292.

joined harmonies, might pass muster on the rich canvas of an orchestral piece; in a string quartette they would offend like a patch on an etching by Whistler.<sup>294</sup>

In his August, 1924 essay, “Folk Songs,” also drawn from his book,<sup>295</sup> Mason echoes commonly expressed views on the value of folks songs, saying they evince sincerity and spontaneity and have the ability to introduce the novice good music listener to aesthetic principals identical to those found in more complex works, which present the listener with a greater listening challenge. He also expresses a commonly expressed viewpoint that “folk music” is stripped of its complexity by the process of oral transmission. Mason writes:

Any one who wishes to strengthen, refine, and develop his appreciation of the varied beauties of music will naturally begin his study with folk-songs.

In the sincerity and spontaneity of these songs there is something profoundly refreshing, especially to a taste jaded by luxury...too much of our “advanced” music is professional in spirit. Preoccupied with the means of execution, brought by virtuosos and by mechanical instruments to an inhuman perfection, it the end which alone justifies the means—the expression of feeling. It is as empty as it is elaborate. The ideal of folk-song is just the opposite; it tries to express as much as possible in the simplest, easiest, and most natural way. The very fact of its

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> “The Folksong” is the first chapter in his book. Mason, *From Song to Symphony: a Manual of Music Appreciation*, 1-27.

communal origin—its being passed from mouth to mouth...saves it from the arteriosclerosis of professionalism from which most of our so-called “art” music dies prematurely.

Again, even the limitations of folk-song may prove helpful to the would-be appreciator who is approaching music without much previous experience. Fortunate is it for him that folk music is primitive, that though it pursues the same kinds of beauty and expressiveness as the opera, the sonata, the string quartette, and the symphony, it pursues them under simpler conditions and on a smaller scale....<sup>296</sup>

In one section, Mason seems to provide an odd, musical echo to William Dean Howells, the pillar of literary realism that Sinclair Lewis would single out in his attack on the nineteenth century “genteel” style in his 1930 Nobel Speech. Lewis would describe Howells as having the literary code “of a pious old maid whose greatest delight was to have tea at the vicarage.” Masson’s description of the attributes of folk songs seems similarly stilted:

Folk songs, then, are fitted to strengthen our musical feeling because they are spontaneous rather than sophisticated... since they are primitive, they afford the natural beginning for a study which can lead only gradually to the more complex types of musical art.... They stick closely in their expression, for instance, to two basic, contrasting moods, which persist right through the development of music up to the Beethoven symphony and the

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<sup>296</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Folk Songs," 602.



Strauss symphonic poem, and which may suggest in such pairs of adjectives as “grave” and “gay,” “contemplative” and “active,” or “songful” and “dance-like.”<sup>297</sup>

A paper delivered over a decade later by Oscar Thompson, a critic and author from New York City, at the National Federation of Music Clubs’ 1935 meeting titled, “American Creative Art,” also discussed the role of folk music. Thompson’s approach to folk music is much simpler than Mason’s, but like Mason, Thompson identifies folk music as an important idiom and one that can contribute “lasting value” to American music. Thompson, though, suggests that folk music needs to be “redistilled” by a creative musician to be of use in an art music setting:

Those of us who feel most deeply indebted to workers in the field of American folk song, and who are most hopeful that something of lasting value will result from the rediscovery of much virtually forgotten basic material, will agree, I think, that something more than "soul" must be devoted to the utilization of this material. There must come a redistillation at the hands of the creative musician, if the folk music of America is to play the part for us that the folk music of other countries has played for them. This does not mean that folk music and the art music derived from it cannot exist side by side. To the contrary, it is the universal rule that they should. But progress in American creative art is only partly something of material; it is also something of equipment, of

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

science, of workmanship. Beyond all these, it is something of the spirit.<sup>298</sup>

### **The Publication *Musical America* and the Alliance between Music and Business**

In the pro-business atmosphere of the nineteen-twenties, it seems only natural that the conservative good music activists embraced business as a potential partner in the campaign to spread good music. These sentiments are on display in the pages of *Musical America*, a contemporaneous publication that was itself the embodiment of a marriage between good music and business.

According to Mary DuPree, *Musical America* is “the single richest source on American music and music in America” for the period 1918-1930.” Although it was published in New York and focused much of its attention there, it covered a wide range of topics, with correspondents in 138 cities in North America and coverage in venues extending to Europe, and to South and Central America.<sup>299</sup> The importance of the magazine in the eyes of good music advocates is illustrated by its inclusion as one of only two publications, along with *The Etude*, specifically mentioned by name as a source for scrapbooks of press coverage of federation activities by the official historian of the National Federation of Music Clubs in her 1935 report.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Oscar Thompson, "American Creative Art," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935): 43.

<sup>299</sup> Mary H. DuPree, "Mirror to an age: Musical America, 1918-30," *Research Chronicle* 23 (1990): 137.

<sup>300</sup> Ella Lord Gilbert, "Report of National Officers: Historian," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: National Federation of Music Clubs, Ithaca, N.Y., 1935): 107.

*Musical America* was an omnibus music periodical, founded in 1898 by British émigré John C. Freund for the stated purpose of “development of music in America.”<sup>301</sup> Because it had an agenda and pursued particular goals in support of the movement for a musical America, we may consider it a direct source of views on the topic of good music: a player in its own right, and not merely a conduit for news. Activities of the National Federation of Music Clubs were frequently reported in *Musical America*.

Freund’s efforts on behalf of a musical America extended far beyond the reportage and editorial expressions of the magazine. The editor created and directed an entity he called the “Musical Alliance of the United States”<sup>302</sup> using the bully pulpit provided by *Musical America*. The Musical Alliance was essentially a lobbying, “get-out-the-vote” group that sought to enlist businessmen and politicians on behalf of the cause of good music in America, and encouraged unity among activists for good music. *Musical America* frequently reported news of the Alliance’s activities.

According to Freund, he had been inspired to form the Alliance by his discovery that Americans spent annually “the astounding sum of over six hundred millions” on music:

That fact...was carried by the Associated Press all over the world. It excited the utmost astonishment that we Americans, hitherto believed to be wholly without culture, without any interest in music, art, drama, literature, or indeed, in any of the higher interests of life, were positively spending more money on music

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<sup>301</sup> Founding principles as restated by Milton Weil, who took over the editorship of the paper upon Freund’s death. “A Statement,” *Musical America* 40, no. 16 (August 9, 1924): 1. Cited in DuPree, “Mirror to an age: Musical America, 1918-30,” 137.

<sup>302</sup> “Musical Alliance Begins Move for Wider Introduction of Music in America’s Public Schools,” 5.

and the musical instruments than the rest of the world put together.<sup>303</sup>

In a manner that would prove typical of his use of this alliance, Freund staged a dinner of 250 notables to gather endorsements and support for a greater presence of music in public school curricula. As toastmaster he made a long speech of introduction laying out his case for the Musical Alliance, before turning the podium over to Philander P. Claxton, United States Commissioner of Education, who was the honored keynote speaker. Others present included the mayor of New York; the mayor of Baltimore, James H. Preston, whom Freund considered a “Pioneer for Municipal Music”; a retired Chief Justice, a former congressman, and a bevy of other illuminati including governmental officials, opera singers, and conductors. Freund took advantage of his role as toastmaster at the dinner and president of the Musical Alliance to report his speech as news, and describe the origins and goals of the Alliance for creating a musical America.

This was done in an exceptionally long front-page article in *Musical America* in March of 1918, under the crusading headline, “Musical Alliance Begins Move For Wider Introduction of Music in America’s Public Schools,” in which the featured guests are highlighted in framed pictures placed throughout the pages of the article.<sup>304</sup> Freund’s inspiration for founding the Alliance is presented. He explained in his speech,

Industry, commerce, finance, indeed every leading activity was being organized. Why not Music! And so the idea came to me of a great Musical Alliance, with almost nominal annual dues,

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.: 1, 5-11.

representing all workers in the field, from the man at the bench in a piano factory to the conductor of the great symphony, from the composer to the young man who plays the flute in a country band,...

all of whom would be pledged to support of the development of music in America: the Musical Alliance.<sup>305</sup>

To that end, Freund said that each member of this alliance should to be pledged:

“To demand full recognition for music and for all workers in the musical field and musical industries as vital factors in the nations, civic and home life.

“To work for the introduction of music, with the necessary musical instruments, into the public schools with proper credit for efficiency in study.

“To induce municipalities to provide funds for music for the people.

“To aid all associations, clubs, societies and individuals whose purpose is the advancement of musical culture.

“To encourage composers, singers, players, conductors and music teachers resident in the United States.

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.: 5.

“To oppose all attempts to discriminate against American music of American musicians—regardless of merit—on account of nationality.

“To favor establishment of a National Conservatory of Music.

“To urge that a Department of Fine Arts be established in the national government and a Secretary of Fine Arts be a member of the Cabinet....”<sup>306</sup>

As initiator and sustainer of this alliance, Freund was also able to appoint himself its moderator and mediator. This role was in keeping with the “founding principles” of *Musical America* from 1898, in which Freund had called for “progress and new thought to meet new conditions.”<sup>307</sup> The magazine had come into being at the inception of the progressive movement’s brightest years. The political successes of those years had demonstrated it was actually possible to effect profound change on a national scale. Like members of the Progressive Coalition, which had succeeded in enacting four constitutional reforms, Freund evidently recognized the necessity of accepting compromise in order to bring about change, and he positioned his magazine to exercise a moderating stance. He seemed to find extremism objectionable, opining at length, for example, against the “bone-dry” prohibition law and other “Cobwebs of Puritanism” as “radical” and “Calvinistic.”

In this vein, *Musical America* reported that one District Attorney was “determined to be even-handed” and had threatened to “stop playing by paid church organists,” apparently in

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. Quotation marks in original.

<sup>307</sup> Reprinted by *Musical America* in “A Statement.”

retaliation for a blue law in Pennsylvania law barring concerts on Sundays. While remaining an advocate for a musical America, the magazine would adapt to the times and make use of “new conditions” to advance the cause.<sup>308</sup>

*Musical America* also served as a sounding board for many of the anxieties of the good music activists, but it generally offset complaints and fears about technology, and the businesses associated with it, by publishing reports on achievements obtained through innovation, thereby stoking the fires of faith in progress. As part of this it reported and applauded efforts at musical progress, showcasing cities that offered particularly successful examples.<sup>309</sup>

Freund died in June of 1924 and was succeeded by his assistant, Milton Weil, who edited the magazine until 1927 (see Table 1). *Musical America* was unchanged during its time under Weil, who also continued to play a conciliatory role between musical factions. Under Deems Taylor, editor from August 1927 until July 1929, the magazine changed format and frequency of publication, adopting a more fashionable appearance and a more sophisticated tone. Metronome Corporation purchased the magazine in 1929 and installed A. Walter Kramer as editor, and with a bit of fanfare returned it to the format Freund had established.

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<sup>308</sup> Regarding prohibition, see "Cobwebs of Puritanism Must be Swept Away if American Opera Is to Come to Full Fruition," *Musical America* 29, no. 23 (April 5, 1919): 36; "Mephisto's Musings," *Musical America* 29, no. 14 (Feb. 1, 1919): 7; "Modern Calvinists and Their Pernicious Influence Upon Art \ The Calvinist In Music Who Would Prohibit Bach, Beethoven and Wagner," *Musical America* 30, no. 16 (August 16, 1919): 24-25; "Musical Alliance: Program of the Calvinistic Propaganda," *Musical America* 30, no. 16 (August 16, 1919): 17; "Protest Blue Law Ban on Paid Music in Penna. Churches," *Musical America* 40, no. 3 (May 10, 1924): 2; "The Radicals, Music Drama, and the Arts," *Musical America* 30, no. 4 (May 24, 1919): 15.

<sup>309</sup> See "Civic Music Organizations," *Musical America* 31, no. 9 (December 27, 1919): 20; "Municipal Music and the Alliance," *Musical America* 30, no. 6 (June 7, 1919): 15; "Music Growth of Lincoln, Neb, Fostered By School System.," "Music Makes Big Strides in Work of Women's Clubs," *Musical America* 40, no. 10 (June 28, 1924): 1, 4; "Unique Concert in Dunmore, Pa., Embodies Principles Urged in Addresses of John C. Freund," *Musical America* 28, no. 1 (May 4, 1918): 41.

**Table 1.** Editors of *Musical America*

| <u>Dates</u> | <u>Editor</u>    | <u>Notes</u>   |
|--------------|------------------|--|
| 1898-1924    | John C. Freund   | Founder; publication suspended June 1899-October 1905; Milton Weil assistant editor. |
| 1924-1927    | Milton Weil      | Became editor upon Freund's death in June 1924.                                      |
| 1927-1929    | Deems Taylor     | August 1927 until July 1929.   |
| 1929-1936    | A. Walter Kramer | Became editor upon purchase of magazine by Metronome Corporation.                    |

### **Summoning Support for a Business Role in the Good Music Community**

Editor John C. Freund had articulated his vision for music in America in the closing days of the war, at a time when the United States was just beginning to enjoy its newly dominant role on the world stage. In *Musical America* he called for a “declaration of musical independence,”<sup>310</sup> following upon the recently won “financial independence” of the United States, its transformation from debtor nation status to that of a creditor nation, one result of the United States’ underwriting of the allies’ successful prosecution of the war.<sup>311</sup> As with the original,

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<sup>310</sup> “Musical Alliance Begins Move for Wider Introduction of Music in America’s Public Schools,” 5.

<sup>311</sup> Education Commissioner Claxton also described the “War’s Effect” on “Industrial Growth” in the U.S. in his address, saying “We are gathered here together tonight, in this city, already the most important, indeed, in the whole world and destined to become the most important community in the world. The nation will be the leading industrial



political separation from Europe and the establishment of a new nation that the original Declaration of Independence had heralded, Freund envisioned a change to a wholly new order, one freed from what Americans considered the corruption of European models of patronage.<sup>312</sup> American music, like Henry Ford's American automobile, would become available to all, and American business would aid in this transformation.<sup>313</sup>

### **The Business Ideology**

The notion that music in the United States would come into its own through an alliance with business and, as a result, that it would become as successful as to be the envy of the world, was a musical manifestation of American Exceptionalism shared by *Musical America* and many other good music supporters. Particularly after the Great War, European institutions and power structures were held in low esteem in the United States, and the notion that the American business model would replace what Americans considered the corruption of the European musical patronage system was persistent and seemingly irresistible.

A 1919 article in *Musical America* anticipates the strength business will have as a cultural icon during the following decade, claiming "music and commerce" to be "uniquely akin." Pianist Louis Cornell, who had recently returned from service in the ambulance corps in the war,

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nation. It has been that already; the leading agricultural nation...the greatest mining country, producing more coal and iron and steel. As the greatest industrial country...we shall be the chief commercial nation of the world."

"Claxton Sees Coming of the Great National School," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (Nov. 15, 1919): 31.

<sup>312</sup> Like author William Dean Howells, John C. Freund expected America would uphold a higher standard than other nations, and as a consequence, be more successful. He likely agreed with Howells, who had expressed in a public letter, "When our country is wrong she is worse than other countries when they are wrong, because she has more light than other countries..." Henry F. May recalled Howells' letter in May, *The End of American Innocence: a Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917*, 4.

<sup>313</sup> Henry Ford had launched production of his "Model T" in 1908 with the stated goal of making the automobile, previously the plaything of the wealthy, available to all Americans. In addition to lowering the cost of the car through constantly evolving innovations in mass production, Ford paid his workers more in order that they might be able to afford to purchase the cars.

asserted, "Art and commerce have come down through the ages hand in hand, and in every cycle of history each is found related to and dependent upon the other."<sup>314</sup> Many contemporaneous articles trumpet the support of the arts by business or the success of businessmen whose venue is music.

However, as John C. Freund had explained in a slightly earlier article, enlisting the help of business required that some advance preparation be done by good music activists, because economic realities required that demand precede supply:

A community cannot be made musical by suddenly injecting a symphony orchestra into it, for which it may not be ready, then going around...with committees of two or three ladies, all dressed in their best, and swooping down on the poor unfortunate business men of the town, with carefully prepared lists of contributions, upon which the names of their competitors were of course prominently placed.

Instead, he said, the women needed to begin with the public schools, "and get the educators to realize the value of music in the world."<sup>315</sup> School administrators and the public as a whole needed to be convinced that music education should be a vital part of the education of every child.

Although good music activists were impressed by the power of market capital and eager to see its force applied to the challenge of exposing a broader public to good music, their faith at this point was less in a pure free market than in good business practices, and especially in the

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<sup>314</sup> "Music and Commerce Uniquely Akin, Declares Louis Cornell," *Musical America* 31, no. 4 (November 22, 1919): 23.

<sup>315</sup> "Musical Alliance Begins Move for Wider Introduction of Music in America's Public Schools."

sound leadership they imagined might be provided by businessmen occupying critical positions in the entertainment industry, persons of high character whom they believed such sound business practices would elevate to positions of power and authority.

Indeed, such a person would be directly involved in radio: Owen D. Young, Chairman of General Electric, involved through General Electric's subsidiary RCA with the National Broadcasting Network, the oldest radio network in the country. Among other duties, Young assumed the Chairmanship of the Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company, a council upon which conductor Walter Damrosch occupied the position of "Musical Counsel." Young was a person of exceptional ability who was widely recognized as possessing outstanding character. He would be feted in a 1932 biography as "a new type of industrial leader."<sup>316</sup>

*Musical America* shared this faith in the country's business elite, and touted the strengths of the leadership of the music business in a 1925 article, "Music as an Art and a Business," which celebrated what it said were the virtues as well as the power of the music business community in the United States. The helm of the music business in America, the magazine asserted, "is no place for the tyro, the gambler or the bungler...." Rather, the future of music in America was being worked out "by men no whit less able than the heads of great steel or oil corporations." The pairing of music with business, *Musical America* said, was the union of the most perfect expression of American civilization with the genius of its system of free enterprise.<sup>317</sup>

A fascination with business can be seen in the pages of *Musical America* throughout the decade, and *Musical America* frequently noted the support of musical efforts by local businesses. Some saw increased business acumen in the music field as the solution to its problems, even as

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<sup>316</sup> Ida M. Tarbell, *Owen D. Young: A New Type of Industrial Leader* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932).

<sup>317</sup> "Music as An Art and a Business."

other music supporters fretted about the ability of art music to support itself in the marketplace, and sought the creation of a federal government department to support the fine arts, including music. Although Freund championed such government support for music, and good music supporters would lobby for its creation throughout the decade, the momentum for such changes had faded with the passing of the peak of the Progressive Era and the goal was never realized in the form they envisioned. The magazine supported and publicized efforts of all types to build support for music and music education, to improve concert management practices and other aspects of the concert business, in order to create a successful concert life in the United States.<sup>318</sup>

Activists for good music believed that repeated exposure to good music would lead to a love of it, and conversely, that exposure to “bad music” would distract Americans, breed bad habits, and ultimately keep them from acquiring beneficial good listening habits they might otherwise cultivate. To prevent this, initially they looked to the music business, and especially to the leadership of the new radio industry, to curtail the excesses of “bad music” which the broadcast of music such as jazz would promote, while promoting good music. During the early years of radio they maintained high hopes that with such help, their beliefs would be manifested in transformed listening habits in the public at large.

Such a faith is demonstrated in a paper delivered before the assembled studio teachers of the Music Teachers National Association at MTNA’s 1924 convention in St. Louis, and in the evident reaction it received. Williams Arms Fisher reported the results of a survey of radio

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<sup>318</sup> See, "Concert-Managing as Catherine Bammen Sees It; Manager Should Avoid Acquiring the Artistic State of Mind," *Musical America* 30, no. 21 (Sept. 20, 1919): 3; "'Lift Our Art Schools Above Financial Speculation,' Urges Bodanzky; Makes Stirring Plea for Governmental Support of the Arts," *Musical America* 30, no. 20 (Sept. 13, 1919): 3; "Managerial Secrets Confided by Charles L. Wagner America's Only 'Million-Dollar-a-Year Impresario'," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (November 15, 1919): 5-6; "Musical Activities of Canton, O Reflect Local Prosperity," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (November 13, 1919): 155; "Peoria Business Men Form Association To Make Opera a Permanent Local Institution," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (Nov. 13, 1919): 141; "Sees Audiences, Not Artists, as Nation's Need," *Musical America* 41, no. 7 (December 6, 1924): 35.

station owners in a paper, titled, "The Radio and Music," which was published in the proceedings of the convention and then reprinted with several updates in 1926 in *Music Supervisor's Journal*. Fisher presented an appraisal of the role radio might play in efforts to increase the love of good music in the country that was positive to the point of being unrealistic.

An article in *Musical America* reporting the paper amplified these positive aspects even more, stripping away the slight tempering provided by the considerable length of the address to reveal the dogmatic faith in good music and in progress that lay at its core. The headline of this article announced, "Radio Audiences Seek Better Music, Is Report of William Arms Fisher." *Musical America* reported, first, on the scale of radio's potential, quoting Fisher's assertion, "It is only a question of time when the whole country will be converted into a single huge auditorium, and it is altogether possible that some day a single voice may be heard at the same moment over the entire globe."<sup>319</sup>

The article must have warmed the hearts of good music supporters, for it reported that Mr. Fisher recently had sent a questionnaire to "principal broadcasters in the United States," in order "to ascertain what kind of art the radio public wanted." The "unanimous reply was that music ranked first in popularity. Moreover, the majority reported that their listeners asked for better music and for the finer type of performance."

Under a sub-heading of "Jazz Reported Waning," the report continued:

Twice as many reported jazz as waning those who saw an increase in jazz. Many agreed that the 'more vulgar type' of jazz has 'had its day.' Its prominence was explained as due to hotel and

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<sup>319</sup> "Radio Audiences Seek Better Music, Is Report of William Arms Fisher," *Musical America* 41, no. 13 (January 17, 1925): 27. Quotation marks in *Musical America*.

dance hall orchestras clamoring so vigorously to be heard that many broadcasters took the line of least resistance.

Mr. Fisher spoke of the “mental nausea” the constant broadcasting of cheap and vulgar songs had brought about and quoted one station manager who wrote: “Radio stations have been guilty of attempting to force down the public throat even more trash than the public wanted, and the shift in sentiment on ‘popular’ music is due to a revulsion of public taste rather than to any effort of broadcasting stations in general.”

Mr. Fisher said radio would never become a household necessity until a large and intelligent section of the people became fully assured that their radio sets would bring them something more than mere triviality or the higher class music inadequately performed. He begged program managers to have more faith in the intelligence of the average American and to set apart certain evenings, or certain hours, for the adequate performance of worthy music, reserving other hours for the jazz and thus avoiding the present indiscriminate confusion. He added,

“In spite of all its shortcomings...radio is certainly helping enormously to break down indifference to music. Radio is an instrument of great public service, and its possibilities have only begun to unfold. It is the biggest single agency in American today for the popularizing of music....

“Nothing but great music splendidly performed is worthy  
of a national audience....”<sup>320</sup>

This confirmed the beliefs of good music activists in the inherent and self-evident superiority of good music, of their inevitable success, and of the utility of enlisting commercial radio in the service of their cause.

### **Arenas for Musical Change**

Believing that the superiority of good music would be evident to any properly educated person who received sufficient exposure to its charms, the education of America’s youth remained at the center of the campaign for good music. The public schools, where virtually the entire population of the country could in theory receive a uniformly calibrated regimen of training in music, retained its central position in the campaign for good music, along with the nation’s musical performance venues.

Because the campaign was not yet fully successful, activists considered it vitally important to further transform music education, which was held to be demonstrably inadequate. The first and perhaps the most delicate issue in this regard was the level of qualification of the teachers in the public schools. Music teachers often had inadequate training, and they were often poorly paid. Although they were allies with teachers in the fight for good music, many good music partisans considered music teachers to be a major part of the problem.

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

Music teachers were criticized for their apathy in not joining or supporting professional associations, and at least one writer suggested that many teachers were avoiding professional contact with other teachers in order to hide ignorance of their subject area.<sup>321</sup> In order to improve the quality of the teachers, Freund insisted that they needed to receive better pay. Writing in July of 1919, he reminded,

For several years past I have called attention not only to the hopelessness of expecting anything like fair treatment from our legislators, with regard to cultural influences, unless the members of the [arts community]...took an active interest in politics.... At the present time, as we know...music, drama and the arts [have] no representation in Washington....”

Freund then encouraged members of the Musical Alliance to lobby their legislators and congressmen to support the arts, and to work to raise teacher salaries.<sup>322</sup>

Another approach to upgrading the profession was to require the certification of teachers, a process that required testing their abilities. Teachers resisted; when the New York State Music Teachers’ Association gave its first examination for certification, the only teacher who applied to take the test was reported to have been a “Negro” vocalist.<sup>323</sup>

One recurring concern was the establishment of a “national conservatory,” the desired pinnacle of the educational structure. Such an institution was desired in order that musicians capable of attaining the highest possible performance levels receive appropriate training without

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<sup>321</sup> "Music Teachers are Accused of ‘Apathy Toward Progress.’"

<sup>322</sup> "Musical Alliance: How the Members of the Alliance Can Help."

<sup>323</sup> "NYSMTA Gives First Examination."



needing to resort to European study. Activists pursued this goal through the halls of Congress for years but it proved to be elusive.<sup>324</sup>

Good music activists hoped municipal concerts and other civic efforts to promote good music would provide a positive influence on the public and increase the opportunities to hear music provided by regular subscription concerts. Communities all over the country seemed to be joining in this aspect of building a musical America, and popular outdoor summer concerts, such as those that took place in Lewisohn Stadium in New York City during the summer, were frequently reported in the pages of *Musical America*. The summer heat helped draw people out for a relaxed encounter with good music in great numbers.<sup>325</sup>

Such successful concerts were central to the plan for a musical America. Good music activists wanted concert going to be a regular occurrence for average people, not a rare event, and they wanted the benefits of quality concerts to be available to all Americans, not just those who lived in large urban areas. Concerts of very high quality were offered in the largest cities, and, with less frequency, in cities large enough to support the concerts of touring artists.<sup>326</sup> However, such concerts were simply not available on a regular basis, if at all, in smaller cities and towns, and in rural areas. An additional problem was that tickets to concerts generally were considered too expensive for the average citizen. Both good music activists and the concert managers considered sales inadequate.

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<sup>324</sup> "National Conservatory Will Be Agency of Musical Regeneration," *Musical America* 29, no. 10 (January 4, 1919).

<sup>325</sup> For examples of representative articles, see "17,000 Persons Hear Beethoven's 'Ninth'," *Musical America* 40, no. 17 (August 16, 1924): 19; "Detroit Builds New Stand for Outdoor Series," *Musical America* 42, no. 10 (June 27, 1925): 32; "Hollywood Bowl Series Launched Before Multitude," *Musical America* 42, no. 13 (July 18, 1925): 13; "Municipal Opera Urged for Indiana; Teachers' convention Hears Pleas for High Ideals," *Musical America* 42, no. 10 (June 27, 1925); "N. Y. Commission Ratifies Site for Civic Art Center," *Musical America* 42, no. 11 (July 4, 1925): 1, 4; "Open-Air 'Aida' Draws 20,000 in N. Y.," *Musical America* 42, no. 11 (July 4, 1925): 4; "Radiations From the Stadium," *Musical America* 40, no. 15 (August 2, 1924): 18.

<sup>326</sup> "Sees Audiences, Not Artists, as Nation's Need."

Although elite members of the good music community looked down upon opera, at least in comparison to symphonic performances, great interest can be seen in efforts to offer opera at “popular prices,” as reported in the pages of *Musical America*. Tours by major opera companies, undertaken after the conclusion of their regular season with their home audience in order to recoup more of their large production costs, offered a partial solution to the challenge of bringing performances of good music to widely dispersed towns and small cities in the era that preceded national broadcasts of such works. However, there were not enough opera companies to travel to all the potential venues, and in any case, some of the locations could not support the performance costs of opera companies of the first rank.

Partly in response to this problem of scale, a network of “third class opera companies” had been proposed in 1918. It would have served as a sort of minor league supporting the major opera houses with fresh and promising talent. Such a system would have benefited the concert going public in smaller cities while providing more opportunities for young singers to develop their art. In addition, the scheme was intended to increase the size of the pool of raw, native (American) talent, and thereby increase the likelihood of world-class talent emerging from what was hoped would be a universal music education system in the public schools. One benefit of such widespread music education, it was hoped, would be to make available an extremely large number of potential performers so that a sufficient number of the most promising ones could be singled out for advanced training. This would draw upon America’s strength as a large nation, using the nation’s size to its advantage so that the best American performers could attain a level of excellence equal to, or superior to, top performers from Europe. While this particular vision of an operatic system faded, the cyclical problems associated with expanding the nation’s talent

pool and performance venues would continue to challenge the imagination of many good music activists.<sup>327</sup>

*Musical America* reported on Fortune Gallo's San Carlo Opera Company in January of 1918 under the headline, "It Is Simple, Making a Profit Giving Good Opera at Popular Prices—For Mr. Gallo."<sup>328</sup> In September the magazine editorialized approvingly on Gallo's approach and reported the following March, "Gallo Convinced America is Opera Mad."<sup>329</sup> Subsequent reports later that year and in 1925 reported Gallo's efforts to produce opera composed by native born Americans.<sup>330</sup>

A sense of excitement can be seen running through a series of articles as the publication reported plans by Oscar Hammerstein to initiate popular-priced opera at the Lexington Opera House, beginning with the 1920 season. Hammerstein, a major impresario who had been unable to produce opera for ten years because of a non-compete clause negotiated with the Metropolitan Opera, planned to sell tickets to the performances for \$2.00. *Musical America* trumpeted: "Opera For People, All The Year Round."<sup>331</sup>

*Musical America* reported Hammerstein's plans in eight news stories over a period of eighteen months, and voiced its approval in two editorials: "The Revival of Oscar Hammerstein," and a laudatory piece, "Hail, O.H.!" However, Hammerstein's plans came to an

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<sup>327</sup> See "Yeatman Griffith Wants a Nation Full of 'Third Class' Opera Companies," *Musical America* 27, no. 10 (January 5, 1918): 52. See also "Believes America's Musical Development Rests With Music Teachers in Smaller Cities.," "Hans Kindler Sees Musical Hope of U.S. in the Smaller Communities," *Musical America* 39, no. 13 (January 19, 1924): 36; "How the Teacher May Aid in Winning Communities to Music," *Musical America* 42, no. 13 (July 18, 1925): 11, 31; "Rural Population of American Hungry for Good Music, Says Frances Alda," *Musical America* 30, no. 6 (June 7, 1919): 21.

<sup>328</sup> "It Is Simple, Making a Profit Giving Good Opera at Popular Prices-For Mr. Gallo," *Musical America* 27, no. 11 (January 12, 1918): 35.

<sup>329</sup> "Congratulations Mr. Gallo," *Musical America* 28, no. 20 (September 14, 1918): 18; "Gallo Convinced America is Opera Mad," *Musical America* 29, no. 22 (March 29, 1919): 31.

<sup>330</sup> "Fortune Gallo Wants Opera by American Composer," *Musical America* 31, no. 2 (November 8, 1919): 2; "Fortune Gallo Will Give Native Opera," *Musical America* 41, no. 15 (January 31, 1925): 2.

<sup>331</sup> "Opera For People, All The Year Round, Hammerstein Plan," *Musical America* 29, no. 8 (December 21, 1918): 6.

unfortunate end with his death in August of 1919 at age 72. An October 1919 story reported that Hammerstein's widow and a former associate of Hammerstein, George Blumenthal, would carry out the plan, but apparently their efforts did not come to fruition.<sup>332</sup>

*Musical America* tracked the emergence of John Finley Williamson's Westminster Choir School in Dayton, Ohio,<sup>333</sup> and lauded the success of its concerts, which demonstrated the success of Williamson's method of training amateurs to sing with a high level of excellence.<sup>334</sup> Other successful church music offerings also received appreciative coverage,<sup>335</sup> and the magazine hailed Pope Pius's decision to return Gregorian chant to active use in the Catholic Church.<sup>336</sup> *Musical America* also applauded the inauguration of a series of annual oratorio concerts by the Church of the Ascension in New York City, which used a new chorus, the Ascension Oratorio Society, and soloists of "recognized standing," for the purpose of "promoting

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<sup>332</sup> See "Hail, O.H.!", *Musical America* 29, no. 13 (January 25, 1919): 24; "Hammerstein and Kahn Said to be in \$2 Opera Pact: Oscar Hammerstein may produce popular-priced opera at the Lexington Opera House; 3rd Opera Co in NY," *Musical America* 27, no. 18 (March 2, 1918): 1; "Hammerstein Critically Ill," *Musical America* 30, no. 14 (August 2, 1919): 1; "Hammerstein Hopes That Bequest Will Aid 'Opera for People'," *Musical America* 30, no. 10 (July 5, 1919): 8; "Mr. Hammerstein Injects Mystery Into His Return to Operatic Field," *Musical America* 29, no. 12 (January 18, 1919): 44; "Opera For People, All The Year Round, Hammerstein Plan," 6; "Oscar Hammerstein," *Musical America* 30, no. 15 (August 9, 1919): 20; "Oscar Hammerstein, World-Famous as Impresario, is Dead," *Musical America* 30, no. 15 (August 9, 1919): 1, 3-6; "The Revival of Oscar Hammerstein," *Musical America* 29, no. 8 (December 21, 1918): 24; "To Carry Out Hammerstein Opera Plan: Widow of Impresario and George Blumenthal, former Business Associate Incorporate for Purpose of Continuing Oscar's Projects," *Musical America* 30, no. 23 (October 4, 1919): 1, 2.

<sup>333</sup> *Musical America* reported the start of the school in Dayton and its subsequent move to Ithaca, New York, as well as reports of some performances. "Dayton Choir Leader Works to Establish à Capella Singing in American Churches," *Musical America* 40, no. 14 (July 26, 1924); "Plan New Home for Westminster Choir," *Musical America* 50, no. 11 (June 1, 1930).

<sup>334</sup> "Dayton's Music Week," *Musical America* 46, no. 5 (May 21, 1927); "Westminster Choir of Dayton Will Visit New York on First Eastern Tour," *Musical America* 43, no. 3 (November 7, 1925).

<sup>335</sup> For example, see "Church Choirs Play Notable Role in Musical Life of Minneapolis," *Musical America* 27, no. 24 (April 13, 1918); "Community Hymn-Singing a Feature of Cambridge Summer Course in Church Music," *Musical America* 28, no. 13 (July 27, 1918).

<sup>336</sup> "Development of Sacred Music in America," *Musical America* 30, no. 19 (September 6, 1919).

the cause of good music, of extending the cause of music for the people, of making room in the church's appeal to human nature for beauty, and for an art of the profoundest moving power."<sup>337</sup>

Emergence of American composers of the first rank was another highly important element of the vision of a musical America. The attainment of international recognition by native born composers would validate America's coming of age and provide a focal point for the further development of musical culture. During the nineteen twenties, lovers of good music anguished over the absence of such composers, as Mary Herron DuPree relates in her article, "The failure of American music: the critical view from the 1920s."<sup>338</sup> Recognition would have to come not only in the United States, but from Europe, for American music activists expected that when an American composer of the first rank appeared his abilities would be uncontested, and his genius universally recognizable. Amidst these hopes and concerns a controversy arose over whether Americans were objective in their appraisals of their own composers, and as part of that, if compositions by Americans were being given enough opportunity to be heard, or if rather, the undeserved favoring of compositions by native born composers might actually be encouraging their mediocrity. John Tasker Howard argued strongly against artificially low standards for American composers in his essay, "The American Composer: The Victim of His Friends."<sup>339</sup> In a similar vein, writing in *Musical Quarterly* in 1923, Oscar Sonneck also complained, "There appears to be a lamentable absence of waste-paper baskets in the homes of

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<sup>337</sup> *Musical America* found it "altogether proper" that "the church should assist in the extension of musical benefits." See "Church Music for the People," *Musical America* 30, no. 5 (May 31, 1919). See also "The Growth of an Ideal," *Musical America* 41, no. 22 (March 21, 1925).

<sup>338</sup> DuPree, "The Failure of American Music: the Critical View from the 1920s."

<sup>339</sup> Howard, "The American Composer; the Victim of his Friends."

composing Americans; at any rate, no conception of the blessings of hospitality dispensed by these useful receptacles."<sup>340</sup>

During the decade of the nineteen-twenties, a generation of composers that included Aaron Copland emerged that seemed to fulfill expectations for composers of the first rank, although none were universally acclaimed as a new Beethoven. Among the many factors contributing to their success, they benefitted from the spirit of nationalism during that era, which helped develop a sense of community among the composers and contributed to the launching of publications, organizations, and presses devoted to furthering the publication and performance of their work.<sup>341</sup> As these composers emerged, good music advocates may have made their own presence felt most keenly by the composers through their resistance to the use of idiomatic jazz in concert pieces.<sup>342</sup>

The decade of the 1920s is widely recognized as an era of heroes, one in which the public in the United States greatly increased their focus on celebrities. One such hero was Charles Lindberg. Another was Henry Ford, who had transformed the country when he applied production line techniques and interchangeable parts to the manufacture of cars, an innovation that completely changed the scale of their manufacture and made possible widespread ownership of vehicles, because he was able to offer them a greatly reduced price. Through this process he had also achieved enormous personal success.

Good music activists sought to emulate the success of leaders such as Ford by utilizing the latest sound-reproducing technologies in innovative ways to support their efforts to transform

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<sup>340</sup> Sonneck, "The American Composer and the American Music Publisher," 130.

<sup>341</sup> For an excellent discussion of this era, see Howard Pollack, "Beyond Nostalgia: Nationalism and the Best Years of American Music" (paper presented at the 78th Annual Meeting, National Association of Schools of Music, Reston, Virginia, July 2002): 1-11.

<sup>342</sup> See Carol J. Oja, "Gershwin and American Modernists of the 1920s," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 646-68.

the nation musically. Publications such as *Musical America* show the good music community fully engaged with the technological innovations of their time, determined to be fully modern and to utilize the opportunities these technologies created to further the appreciation of good music. This started with the talking machine and the reproducing piano and continued through the introduction of networked radio broadcasts.

As is noted earlier, the Victor Company had provided leadership, to its own benefit, when it directly targeted school districts in order to sell talking machines. Their product line of machines for use in education was designed for marketing to a variety of settings, and these were complimented by a range of standard sets of good music recordings. Using phonograph recordings, the music supervisor in the public school could enlist even the unmusical classroom teacher in effective teaching of musical classics by providing her with the records and instructions on how to use them.<sup>343</sup> This technology provided a way to illustrate examples for music appreciation, as well as proper styles and techniques for those learning to play instruments or to sing.<sup>344</sup>

Despite this utility, the technology produced misgivings among many music teachers and music activists, who feared a decline in the numbers of those willing to apply the discipline

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<sup>343</sup> The feminine pronoun used here reflects the language used in *Musical America*, and is representative of the typical division of labor in teaching during that era, when music supervisors were usually men, and classroom teachers were usually women. "Details of Management in the Modern Music Appreciation Course; Importance of Having Children Hear Good Music," *Musical America* 30, no. 4 (May 24, 1919): 16.

<sup>344</sup> Examples of these are found most frequently in advertisements. Two of the most frequently advertised include "The Ampico in Music Study: A new book to aid in the study and appreciation of music ... Sent *FREE* to teachers or advanced students," and "'The Renaud-Phone Piano Method', Inc., A 'système' of piano teaching by means of gramophone discs with a book of instructions copiously illustrated in a manner that shows the correct positions of the hands, etc." See also an interview with Emiliano Renaud on using the phonograph in piano teaching. "The Ampico 'Study and Appreciation of Music'," *Musical America* 41, no. 22 (March 21, 1925): 22; "The Phonograph As a Piano Teacher," *Musical America* 30, no. 13 (July 26, 1919): 11; "The Renaud-Phone Method," *Musical America* 31, no. 3 (November 15, 1919): 133.

needed to learn to play an instrument would occur when musical entertainment could be provided by a machine.

However, others focused on the enormous positive potential the technology offered. An advertisement in the same May, 1919 issue of *Musical America* in which Harold Bauer touting the value of the “Reproducing Piano as an Educational Force”<sup>345</sup> provides “Details of Management in the Modern Music Appreciation Course” and explains the “importance of having children hear good music” by way of phonograph records.<sup>346</sup> Pianist Rudolf Ganz also sought to reassure, claiming that “America is ‘Doing Finely’ in Music” in an article in June of 1919. Ganz felt the reproducing piano was benefitting musical growth in the United States, by increasing the exposure for pianists in the way that phonograph recordings had previously done for singers John McCormack and Amelita Galli-Curci, and violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz.<sup>347</sup> Other stories in *Musical America* also touted the benefits to musical development of technologies such as the reproducing piano and the phonograph.<sup>348</sup>

The magazine reported that according to tenor Paul Morenzo, “Talking Machines” had “Transformed America Musically,” and had revolutionized American taste. Mr. Morenzo had been asked whether he had noticed many changes in the attitude of the public toward music in the intervals between his last visits to the Western Continent. “Very many,” he had replied, energetically: “Not only in the degree of interest that the American people take in it, but in the kind of music they now like. Your people are now 'up' in classical music; they really prefer it, I believe, to the cheap, or, rather, the vulgar kind.” When asked to attribute the change to a

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<sup>345</sup> “Every Child Born Is a Musician, Says Harold Bauer,” 3-4.

<sup>346</sup> “Details of Management in the Modern Music Appreciation Course; Importance of Having Children Hear Good Music.”

<sup>347</sup> “Ganz Says America is ‘Doing Finely’ in Music,” *Musical America* 30, no. 6 (June 7, 1919): 3-4.

<sup>348</sup> See “Better Songs on Talking Machines,” *Musical America* 30, no. 20 (September 13, 1919): 18; “Champions Mechanical Music as a Real Boon to Piano Teacher,” *Musical America* 30, no. 25 (October 18, 1919): 6; “The Phonograph As a Piano Teacher.”



particular cause, Morenzo responded that he credited "the spread of the talking-machine, mostly." Morenzo asserted that "the advantages of the talking-machines are very evident in their results," which had included a democratization of good music. Whereas previously, he said, "music was for a long time...a possession of the privileged classes..." because of the talking machines, he said, "people who would not have known a note years ago are exchanging criticisms on the different ways in which singers of varying style sing the same aria..."<sup>349</sup>

Morenzo's opinions were in accord with Freund's vision of the transformational potential of the technologies and of business. *Musical America* also reported hopes that "Motion Picture Palaces" might become the "Homes of Best Music." Orchestras accompanying silent picture shows did provide employment for many musicians, but those jobs disappeared with the arrival of motion pictures having their own sound tracks. *Musical America's* optimism would carry over into the radio era, with the magazine publishing concerns about the medium while it also promoted radio's potential for aiding the growth of good music.<sup>350</sup> A sense of progress was endemic to the time.

A study presented at a 1918 convention of the Indiana Music Teachers' Association reported a declining trend in the number of piano pupils; its findings would be confirmed in 1933

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<sup>349</sup> "Talking Machines Transformed America Musically, Says Morenzo," *Musical America* 29, no. 19 (March 8, 1919): 47.

<sup>350</sup> Examples of coverage of radio issues include, "Announce Series of Radio Contests: 'Memory Trials' ", *Musical America* 41, no. 13 (January 17, 1925): 37; "Do Music-Lovers Stay at Home When Concerts Are Broadcast by Radio?," *Musical America* 39, no. 22 (March 22, 1924): 21; "England Sets An Example," *Musical America* 40, no. 4 (May 17, 1924): 26; "Famous Artists To Broadcast by Radio," *Musical America* 41, no. 10 (December 27, 1924): 2; "Hellen Keller 'Hears' Ninth Symphony by Placing Hands on Radio Receiver," *Musical America* 39, no. 18 (February 23, 1924): 11; "Leading a Scattered Chorus by Use of Radio," *Musical America* 40, no. 3 (May 10, 1924): 27; "Radio a Boon to Many Singers Who Lack Personality Demanded for Public Work," *Musical America* 41, no. 13 (January 17, 1925): 39; "Radio Audiences Seek Better Music, Is Report of William Arms Fisher," 27; "Radio Enthusiasts Support Plan to Broadcast Concerts by Music's Stars," *Musical America* 39, no. 19 (March 1, 1924): 15; "Radio Users to Hear Best Music Under New Plan of Paying Stars," *Musical America* 40, no. 18 (August 23, 1924): 1, 6; "The Robot Age Dawns in Music: Emotionalism is Decried," *Musical America* 39, no. 21 (March 15, 1924): 5, 6. With regard to early ambitions for moving pictures, see "Making Motion Picture Palaces Homes of Best Music," *Musical America* 30, no. 3 (May 17, 1919): 9.

by a federal study. For the time being, however, such results were only tentative, and optimism carried the day.<sup>351</sup> This may have been because, despite the potential for a decline in study, the new technologies were giving music a much greater presence in the society. As a result far more people seemed to be appreciating good music, at least on some level.

By the middle of the decade of the 1920s, good music supporters suggested that the new talkies might provide a new and important venue for the American composer,<sup>352</sup> and an important training ground for talented young singers—"a substitute for the provincial opera house."<sup>353</sup> This, too, did not materialize on the scale that was hoped.

Still, the novelty of ever-unfolding technological innovations continued to fascinate. At the third meeting of the Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company on January 30, 1929, arrangements were made for a special demonstration. After the council had assembled, the radio was switched on and they heard the broadcast, from a London studio, of an English pianist playing a sonata by Scarlatti. The performance came over the air with remarkable clarity. Walter Damrosch, member of the counsel and head of its music committee, reminded those assembled that the largest audience to which Scarlatti himself had played this sonata probably consisted of not more than 75.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> "Interest in Piano on Decline, Says Head of Indiana Teachers," *Musical America* 28, no. 3 (May 18, 1918): 37. *See also*, United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 990.

<sup>352</sup> "Is the Screen a Sesame to Opportunity for Our Composers?," *Musical America* 40, no. 7 (June 7, 1924): 5, 32; "Radio Enthusiasts Support Plan to Broadcast Concerts by Music's Stars." *See also*, "Making Motion Picture Palaces Homes of Best Music."; "On Motion-Picture Ideals in the Realm of Music," *Musical America* 29, no. 18 (March 1, 1919): 24.

<sup>353</sup> "The Film Theater Route to Concert and Opera," *Musical America* 40, no. 8 (June 14, 1924): 3-4.

<sup>354</sup> National Broadcasting Company, "Memorandum of Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company (Draft)," (1929): 2.

## The Concerns of Good Music Activists

Roderick Nash's characterization of "Americans from 1917 to 1930" as constituting "a *nervous* generation," groping for what certainty they could find,<sup>355</sup> is amply illustrated in writings by good music activists of the era and contemporaneous accounts of their activities.

Their visions of the possibilities that existed for the development of good music were tinged both by realism—an understanding of human nature and of the unpredictable nature of change—and by unrealistic expectations about the degree of change they would be able to produce in the musical tastes of their fellow citizens.

### Radio

Nothing seemed to generate more concerns than the radio itself, which seemed to offer tremendous potential but which lay under the control of forces seemingly just beyond their grasp. Many of these concerns grew out of their understanding of radio's potential and the role commercial forces were taking in its development. While some of these fears would prove to have been well placed after a decade had passed, the forces that were active in radio's development, and the societal changes it brought about, had enormous scale.

Radio inspired concern in the good music community because it grew at such a phenomenal rate, and because control of the national radio industry was so concentrated. Its potential was understood to be tremendous, yet the path it would follow was uncertain. The reach of radio was far greater than anything that had even been imagined previously, and its

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<sup>355</sup> Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 2. Nash's italics.

profitability placed it well beyond the level where good music activists could exercise any decisive influence. They had only indirect leverage over the radio moguls, either through consumers, who would need to be educated and enlisted as allies, or through attempts to use the press to shame the industry into supporting their cause.

Radio's rapid development led to the need for federal intervention and regulation. This was skillfully managed by the large corporations that owned the national radio networks. The period between The Radio Act of 1927 and its revision in the Communications Act of 1934 was a period of intense interaction that included the good music community and radio industry leaders, along with many other interested groups and individuals. Among their many concerns, network radio managers were intent on maintaining the support of the conservative music activists while they solidified congressional support for a commercial radio model, rather than a public model such as existed in Great Britain.

As has been noted, good music activists were concerned that the presence of radios in homes across the country would lead to a decrease in concert attendance. Network radio over the NBC "Blue" and "Red" networks began in earnest in 1927,<sup>356</sup> and by the time a decrease in concert attendance was indeed noted, the nation was in the throes of the Great Depression. For that reason, activists were divided on the cause for the decline in attendance. Some argued that it was the result of economic conditions and not the radio, but many insisted that it was the result of the increased availability of passive sources of music. A government study published in 1933 would confirm a marked decline in piano sales as well as in the study of music.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, 191.

<sup>357</sup> See, for example, "Do Music-Lovers Stay at Home When Concerts Are Broadcast by Radio?"; "McCormack and Bori in Radio Debut; Free Broadcasting Called a Menace," *Musical America* 41, no. 12 (January 10, 1925): 2; "What Is the Solution? New England Managers See Menace to Concert-Giving in Broadcasting by Radio," *Musical America* 39, no. 26 (April 19, 1924): 4; "Radio as a Factor in Nation's Musical Life: Victor Saudek of Westinghouse

Even before the decade began, studio teachers had become aware of a decline in the number of students beginning study on instruments,<sup>358</sup> attributed to recent technological innovations such as the reproducing piano and the talking machine. A 1919 editorial in *Musical America* cited a letter recently published in the *New York Sun*, in which the correspondent had “despairingly queried”: “Where are the amateurs?...Is music commercialized?”<sup>359</sup>

Responding to the suggestion that commercial forces were playing a negative role, *Musical America* concluded in the editorial that the ready availability of music from music reproducing technologies had indeed led to a decline in music-making, but that this was not entirely a negative development. Instead, *Musical America* said, “the means for the enjoyment and propagation of great music” had been “enormously increased” because of changes introduced by the mechanical piano:

It is indeed undeniable that the oldtime practice in intimate, home-grown music-making no longer exercises the vogue it once did. On the other hand, concerts and recitals have attained during the music season a number and a popularity they had not before.... There exists another explanation for the apparent decadence of amateur talent. It is the stupendous vogue of the mechanical piano and the talking machine.<sup>360</sup>

The era was one that saw tremendous changes to far more than sound-reproducing technology. Among these, the automobile was powerfully transforming the nature of the lives of

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Electric Company, Sees Radio as Boon to Performer and Composer," *Musical America* 40, no. 21 (September 13, 1924): 23.

<sup>358</sup> "Interest in Piano on Decline, Says Head of Indiana Teachers."

<sup>359</sup> "The Decline of the Amateur," 24.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

some families. *Musical America* may have seen the availability of good music by way of the reproducing piano as providing an offset to the new-found allure of the road, and that the awareness of music and the enjoyment it provided thus might have been seen as contributing to the increase in concert attendance described in the editorial. The magazine would assume a similar posture with regard to concerns over the effect of the radio as it developed. Radio presented a great opportunity for the development of good music, and its rise was inevitable. *Musical America* would help allay concerns about its misuse.

In 1924, another editorial in *Musical America* noted that according to an article by Percy A. Scholes, the radio had contributed to the growth in appreciation of “classical music” by the public in England, through radio broadcasts of performances. Scholes is quoted as saying, “‘Classical music’ is often repugnant to people unfamiliar with its structure and beauties,” and the magazine reports that “correspondence has also shown him that this aversion is gradually breaking down, and he has received many letters from people candidly admitting a change in taste.” Scholes considered the advent of broadcasting to be an event equivalent in importance to “the birth of a new Beethoven,” and predicted that, “during the next two years thousands of people will sicken of ‘slush.’ Bad music, if one hears enough of it, wears out; ‘good music’ lasts.”<sup>361</sup>

Radio’s potential to support the growth of good music was underscored by conductor Walter Damrosch in a press release accompanying the April 1928 announcement of a series of twenty-four educational broadcasts that were to be called the “RCA Music Education Hour.” These would take place on Friday mornings at 11 o’clock, beginning in October, at a time when students could gather around the radio in their classes. As David Sarnoff explained in the press

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<sup>361</sup> "England Sets An Example."

release, "For many years [Mr. Damrosch] has devoted much of his time and talent to the musical education of young people. But he could reach only a few hundred listeners at a time. Now he will have an audience of millions...."<sup>362</sup>

Damrosch estimated that his audience of school children would "probably number from twelve to fifteen million," and noted, "The so-called musical population until now has numbered about one percent in the cities, and much less than that in the country districts." However, he asserted,

Radio is now to bring music to people who never thought that this magic world of music could become part of their lives, but who are now irresistibly attracted by it. I confidently hope that the proposed educational concerts will lay the foundation for a nationwide perception and love of music among the youth of America, the like of which in its scope and importance has never been seen before.

Damrosch explained,

Recently the Radio Corporation broadcast three of my Children's and Young Peoples concerts as an experiment.... The response was electric.... What particularly gladdened my heart were the responses received from the rural districts. These children perhaps

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<sup>362</sup> Walter Damrosch, "Statement by David Sarnoff, vice-president and general manager of the Radio Corporation of America [press release including a statement by Walter Damrosch]," (April 14, 1928): 2.

are most in need of what an appreciation of music can give them, and if I could bring the ‘little red school house’ all over the country within the sphere of our activities, I should consider it the crowning arch of our building.”<sup>363</sup>

## **Commercialism**

Good music activists had long considered “commercialism” to be a powerful counter force to other, more altruistic sensibilities in the musical business community, and as radio emerged it became more and more obvious that radio had the potential to liberate “commercialism” from any remaining restraints imposed by what they understood to be common sensibilities of good musical taste. Sensing contamination of America’s youth by the newly popular music styles, particularly jazz, and by the invitation to indolence presented by such a passive form of entertainment, the more conservative portion of the “musical missionary” movement remained skeptical, and would eventually try to resist radio’s emancipating tendencies.

The word *commercialism* tended to be a loaded term in the lexicon of good music’s partisans. It could have one of two meanings: generic and neutral; or specific and negative. Although the good music activists applauded “commerce” when it supported the growth of good music, and would rely on it to help them spread the love of music, when *commercialism* was mentioned in the pages of *Musical America*, it usually referred to crass pandering to low tastes for the purpose of making money, something that good music activists imagined constantly

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid.: 3-4.



tempted those in the business community. Commercialism of this sort was a threat of the highest magnitude to good music.

Good music advocates came to believe that they could not trust radio executives to forgo the temptations of commercialism. However, they believed that in time educated listeners would outnumber those who were less enlightened, and that when this took place, the demands of the radio public would ensure that radio executives provide better quality music. Eventually this process would rescue the weaker members of society from excessive exposure to bad music.

American composers posed a different sort of problem, because if they were to grow as composers they needed to devote all their efforts to composing and, of course, this meant in turn that they needed to be able to earn a living from the music they wrote. Supporters of good music recognized that a composer could not earn much money by creating good music in the absence of a patronage system, or some other source of substantial, non-market remuneration for their efforts. The American composer was thus considered particularly vulnerable to the influence of commercialism. Tin Pan Alley seemed ready to offer cash to any composer who lacked sufficient moral rectitude.

*Musical America* noted the proliferation of what it considered “trash”—that is, mediocre music or music in poor taste; which is to say popular music—with approbation, asserting, “This watering of weeds is due partly to ignorance, partly to bad taste, partly to commercialism....” Popular music was perceived as being of lesser quality, perhaps because it did not require effort to enjoy it or aspire to convey deeper meaning, but also because of the commercial venue in which it was produced. In order to ‘rescue’ the American composer “from the Dark Pool of Commercialism,” *Musical America* suggested it was important that the American music businessman be of the highest character. Ever reassuring, *Musical America* asserted this was

already happening, and that the process of musical growth underway in the country would continue and be successful.<sup>364</sup> A lively debate on American musical identity was made even more vociferous in mid-decade, when American composers seemed to veer from use of so-called “Indian” tunes as advocated by Farwell and Afro-American spirituals as suggested by Dvorak, to the incorporation of popular idioms such as jazz.

Perhaps this contributed to the excessive reaction seen in the middle of the decade to the rise of jazz, memorably illustrated in the readings compiled by Robert Walser in his 1999 book, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*.<sup>365</sup> In jazz, good music activists saw a threat posed not only to the sensibilities of the public they were seeking to inculcate with their own musical sensibilities, but also, they saw a siren call which they feared might lure young composers onto the shoals of commercialism, before they had the opportunity to find their true, better voice, and become, perhaps, the “American Beethoven” all were awaiting.

### **Optimism and Idealism in the Good Music Community**

Genuine progress in so many arenas fueled a contagious optimism that eclipsed the fears of good music supporters, and the reality of their own inability to resist change would also quiet their protests, in time. Tremendous growth in education and the continuing increase in the number and quality of musical organizations within the United States fed a sense of well-being. The music business had become highly organized and specialized during one hundred years of

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<sup>364</sup> "A Word to Program-Makers," *Musical America* 29, no. 9 (December 28, 1918): 22. See also "Rescuing the Composer from the Dark Pool of Commercialism," *Musical America* 30, no. 4 (May 24, 1919): 46; "A Word to Program-Makers."

<sup>365</sup> Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

growth, and was increasingly successful. Radio and other technological and commercial developments were transforming the society in amazing ways, and Europe's misfortunes in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles served only to feed the sense of American Exceptionalism that lay at the center of their world view. In October of 1925 *Musical America* reported a "mammoth increase" in the number of music stores in America during the preceding year. Business was booming in America, and largely as a result of this, the business of music was good.<sup>366</sup>

Music businessmen must have been delighted, but good music activists were as well. The music business—including commercial manufacturing of instruments, commercial music publishing and printing, and other sorts of music-related ventures—was the soil into which the musical art had been planted in the United States, and good music supporters saw both American music and the industry that supported it approaching a zenith. *Musical America* was delighted that by its estimation, the business prospects remained exceptionally bright, because it understood the role business played in the drive for a musical America.<sup>367</sup>

However, although the music business was generally good, sales of printed music and recordings seemed to lag behind. Some thought this was the result of competition from radio performances, and in 1924, *Musical America* reported that concert managers in New England saw a "Menace to Concert-Giving in Broadcasting by Radio." However, in 1925 the magazine reported that concert manager "Jack" Adams had been converted from "being absolutely opposed to the idea of broadcasting at all" to "the conviction that it is possible to utilize radio

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<sup>366</sup> See "Vast Growth Seen in Nation's Music Resources in 1925," *Musical America* 43, no. 1 (October 24, 1925): 3-4. Also see United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 988-92. *Recent Social Trends* found that "from 1900 to 1930 the population of the United States increased by 65 percent, while from 1899 to 1930 the quantity volume of manufactures increased by 151 percent, with a peak in 1929 representing an increase of 208 percent from 1899. " While a good amount of this increase was in "industrial apparatus and equipment," the "...proliferation of consumers' goods...[was]...particularly marked during the 1920's."———, *RST*, vol. 2, 857.

<sup>367</sup> Countless articles, editorials, and news-briefs in the pages of *Musical America* expound upon and celebrate the marriage of music and business. In particular, see "Music as An Art and a Business."

broadcasting as a very important cooperating influence for the advancement of concert-giving throughout the United States.” Optimists also predicted that ultimately radio would build consumer demand for even more recordings and sheet music because of its enormous reach.<sup>368</sup>

Through American business, Freund said, music had been liberated from the “princely dilettanti” upon whom it had been dependent since the time of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The “commercialization” of music had “taken music out of the hands of self-interested aristocrats and placed it within the reach of every mother’s son and daughter.”<sup>369</sup> Here Freund partially anticipates an important idea in Charles Seeger’s essay: the “commercialization” of music would indeed be a democratizing process.

Good music activists can be seen to echo *Musical America*’s sense of optimism. At the 1926 MTNA National Convention, Alexander Russell of Princeton University predicted, “Radio will weed out the unfit, and force a higher standard on the survivors. It may also force a revision of many pages of dearly beloved but highly boring compositions of some of the composers of history.” Russell also celebrated the way he felt radio eliminated distractions such as the personality of the performer, allowing the listener instead to focus on the musical performance itself.<sup>370</sup> The new technologies also seemed to offer promise and they elicited enthusiastic speculation.<sup>371</sup>

The optimism of *Musical America* is powerfully in evidence when combined with its idealism in support of the symbiosis between music and business, as seen in the article, “Music

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<sup>368</sup> See “What Is the Solution? New England Managers See Menace to Concert-Giving in Broadcasting by Radio.”; “‘Jack’ Adams Fans the Radio Flame,” *Musical America* 50, no. 14 (September 1, 1930): 6; “Vast Growth Seen in Nation’s Music Resources in 1925.”

<sup>369</sup> “Music as An Art and a Business.”

<sup>370</sup> *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers’ National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1926), 71, 72.

<sup>371</sup> See, for example “Radio as a Factor in Nation’s Musical Life: Victor Saudek of Westinghouse Electric Company, Sees Radio as Boon to Performer and Composer.”; “Radio Users to Hear Best Music Under New Plan of Paying Stars.”; “Screen Music Opens New Field to Composers,” *Musical America* 43, no. 10 (December 26, 1925): 15.

As an Art and a Business,” which was announced by a banner headline on the front page of *Musical America* on October 24, 1925. The entire issue, a special extended publication produced each fall, celebrated the role of business and idealism in the music of the United States. The tone of the lead story embodies both as it describes the moment in destiny that confronted good music supporters:

It is no longer possible to speak of music solely as an art. As an art alone it could not reach these millions whose benison it is. Only because music has also become a business—substantial, far-reaching, far-seeing, and guided by the most practical idealism—has it ceased to be the plaything of coteries and of cults and become a colossal national heritage.... There is no severing the two. The universality of the one has been made possible, and continues in ever widening influence, by virtue of the other.<sup>372</sup>

*Musical America* had stressed the cyclical relationship between music and business in several editorials during 1924, and with it, the unique patronage role that business played in democratic America. This article again affirmed the relationship between business and art:

Art and commerce cannot be separated, no matter how loudly we may prate about the superiority of the former and the inferiority of the latter. Each is necessary for the other. Art cannot live, much less flourish, without the support of commerce; and

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<sup>372</sup> "Music as An Art and a Business."

commerce that is uninspired by the refreshment art provides will degenerate into a hollow machine.<sup>373</sup>

The magazine predicted that modern business methods would allow American music to attain a new level, insisting: “Only then will the art reach those ultimate heights which tower beyond the great peaks of its past, and thus achieve the destiny which the most far-seeing prophet is powerless to foretell, though it gleams with golden promise for all mankind.”<sup>374</sup>

*Musical America* believed that the marketplace had provided music in the United States with an enlightened leadership through a winnowing process effected by Darwinian market forces. Because of this ongoing process, leaders who emerged possessed “acumen of no common order,” that would guide the further growth of music. The magazine asserted,

As an art, music never has held such opportunities as today....

Standards are high—competition is staggering—mediocrity strives vainly to hold a place against genius—but success, more than ever before, attends those who have qualities or equipment beyond the usual. It is here that the business of music steps in.

What might otherwise be a chaotic welter is reduced to order.

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<sup>373</sup> "Orchestras As an Investment ", *Musical America* 40, no. 9 (June 21, 1924): 16. In another editorial, this one covering a full page, Milton Weil offered the following assertion as he endorsed the re-election of President Calvin Coolidge: “The musical activities of this country are absolutely dependent upon the prosperity of the country. Without prosperity, no matter how much people may love music; if they cannot afford to buy music; if they cannot afford to buy tickets to hear music, it is a natural conclusion that all activities in the music field must be curtailed.” See "Music, Politics and Prosperity."

<sup>374</sup> "Music as An Art and a Business."

The inevitable rule of the survival of the fittest is not to be set aside, even by the most sapient management. The dictates of supply and demand prevail. But both supply and demand are guided and in some measure controlled.

The ship has a rudder and there is a pilot at the helm.<sup>375</sup>

In the ideal corporate involvement with music most frequently portrayed by *Musical America* in mid-decade, idealism inspired the musical businessmen to resist the temptations of commercialism and thus made them an indispensable arm of the good music movement. Such idealistic businessmen would use the power of the market in support of good music, but also allow the wisdom of the marketplace to sort the musical wheat from the chaff, testing its ability to continue to impress enlightened listeners over time, thus allowing only the best music to flourish, in time leading to an elimination of mediocrity in composition. This was a version of American Exceptionalism in which the business genius frequently associated with the United States would, in time, produce music of a superior sort.

By contrast, the negative sort of market influence that which arose when businessmen acquiesced to the demands of excessive greed allowed popular forms such as jazz to flourish simply because they made money. It targeted and exploited the weaknesses of the public, seeking the greatest possible profit without regard to moral or ethical concerns. Such commercialism did not shoulder the responsibility that accompanied leadership; it did not concern itself with society's greater good.

Therefore, *Musical America* stipulated that the business of music had to have "ideals commensurate with those of the art."<sup>376</sup> Such idealism was anticipated the sentiments of

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

President Coolidge's famous speech on the "business of America" the following January, in which Coolidge asserted that America's preoccupation with business was matched by a similar preoccupation with idealism.<sup>377</sup>

Moderate, pro-business members of the "musical missionary" movement assumed that a paternalistic interest in the proper development of taste would remain at the upper levels of the music industry, and that the idealism of the musical businessman would compel him to keep his finger on the scale as the unwashed masses weighed the value of good music against all others.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm of *Musical America* for America's business leadership, the ultimate trust of many of the good music activists shifted from the businessmen themselves to the logic of the marketplace as they understood it. Knowing the enormous power of commerce and believing as well in the irresistible nature of good music, activists intended to turn the power of the market to their advantage by manipulating the forces of demand that worked upon it. They believed they could achieve this indirectly by educating their fellow citizens about good music, and they envisioned the emergence of a nation of enlightened consumers who shared their values and preferences, and who would demand to hear only the best music. If they were successful in their efforts at education, they believed, the logic of the marketplace demanded that business would follow suit.

A division between those within the "missionary" camp who trusted this model of transformation, and still others those who sought only to make good music available on a larger scale, would become more evident later in the decade.

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Coolidge, "Excerpts from Speech of President Calvin Coolidge to the ASNE Convention on January 17, 1925."



## The Beginning of the Federation's Great Crusade

A prominent story on page 7 of the same issue of *Musical America* on October 24, 1925, announced the launching of a crusade for good music. The headlines read, "Nation's Federated Music Clubs Drive Forward...[the] Great Body Of More Than 1900 Native Organizations Will Be Dedicated...to Secure [the] Greater Artistic Development of America."<sup>378</sup> [Figure 3] A photograph of the new president of the federation, Mrs. Edgar Stillman Kelley, is centered under the headline. A garland of laurels adorns her hair, and she seems to gaze with determination at some distant horizon.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> "Nation's Federated Music Clubs Drive Forward," *Musical America* 43, no. 1 (October 24, 1925): 7.

<sup>379</sup> This visual reference to the Greek imagery reflects a larger preoccupation, prevalent at the time, with the ancient civilization. Mrs. Kelly attempts to draw not only inspiration, but also pedagogy from the Greeks. In her article she notes the "stimulating influence of the ancient Greek prize contests upon art productivity, when the youthful Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and others competed and were spurred on to the contribution of some of their best masterworks, furnishes an eloquent argument in favor of adopting similar methods as incentives to refined art activity in our more practical but less artistic age." Mrs. Kelley goes on to describe how the "Department of State, District and National Young Artist and Student Contests of the National Federation of Music Clubs" was about to announce "progressive contests" modeled after this Greek ideal.

# Nation's Federated Music Clubs Drive Forward

Aims of Great Body of More Than 1900 Native Organizations Will Be Dedicated Under New President to Secure Greater Artistic Development of America— Forces That Tend to Moral Decadence to Be Combated With Program of Artistic Progress— Chief Executive of Federation Outlines Coming Years' Program in Exclusive Message

By MRS. EDGAR STILLMAN KELLEY



CERTAIN European musicians have asserted that the National Federation of Music Clubs is the most vital factor in the advancement of musical culture in the United States. This is indeed a striking tribute to the efficiency of our organization which is so thoroughly American in spirit and purport that it eagerly welcomes all true musical devotees, whether from the bustling metropolis or the quietest village.

The justification of this laudatory statement by our foreign friends may be found in the fact that the Federation, not through mere numerical force, but by virtue of the whole-hearted enthusiasm of each individual club, which, whether it be located in the largest community or the smallest settlement, constitutes a veritable



Contest for American Artists and Composers to Be Sponsored in Coming Year— Courses in Musical Appreciation Outlined for Member Clubs— Junior Activities Increase in Scope— 1927 Biennial in Chicago to Bring Big Program with Significant Events for Native Music and Musicians— More Opera Proposed for United States

hundred rural schools in which there is no music instruction given.

The course of study in "Music Understanding" was given out by the Federation under Mrs. Seiberling's supervision primarily for the building of discriminating audiences. The Federation realizes that thousands now spending their money for entertainments that degrade the art of music and at times caricature the works of the world's noblest composers, would, with more education, demand music of a higher type. By this means the purveyors of vulgar dance music and the low grade accompaniments of moving pictures, would be compelled to comply with the request for something better, as their aim is always to please the public.

#### Junior Department Thrives

When we realize the powerful impressions made upon the human mind and emotions in the formative period of life, when ideals are as yet undimmed by rebuffs and disappointments, the advisability of organizing clubs among the youth of the land is daily becoming more evident. The value of youthful enthusiasm was obvious to all guests of the Portland Biennial, who attended the High School Orchestra concert and the

Figure 3. "Nation's Federated Music Clubs Drive Forward."

From the sub-headlines and the accompanying full-page article contributed by Mrs. Kelley, we learn of her plans for this "musical army," and we receive her appraisal of the current state of affairs in America. In the coming year, "Forces That Tend to Moral Decadence" will be "Combated" with a "Program of Artistic Progress." Mrs. Kelley focuses directly on the problem of decadence and on prospects for solving it, writing, "The question is often asked if the gradual moral decline in our schools and colleges during the past few years is related to the decadent character of the music so largely employed at public functions and places of amusement. Again it is asked if the National Federation of Music Clubs can exercise any power that shall tend

towards a betterment of taste and deportment.... The answer to these queries emphatically is in the affirmative.”<sup>380</sup>

This mission of reform would require a mighty army to carry it out. The federation had thousands of members, but these would only form the core. The balance of these forces would come from the communities, where the federation planned to have “the study of music introduced into all public schools,” so all Americans would be converted to the love of good music.

However, in addition to the schools, their plan would require the passive involvement of the music industry, which they expected would respond to market force pressures, which in turn would be influenced by consumer education. Describing their intentions, Mrs. Kelley wrote,

The Federation realizes that thousands now spending their money for entertainments that degrade the art of music and at times caricature the works of the world’s noblest composers, would, with more education, demand music of a higher type. By this means the purveyors of vulgar dance music and the low grade accompaniments of moving pictures, would be compelled to comply with the request for something better, as their aim is always to please the public.”<sup>381</sup>

According to Mrs. Kelley the effect of the new electronic media on the youth of America had thus far has been deleterious. Although the federation’s plan of attack on the media—an increase in music education—was to be indirect, it would not be subtle. As they envisioned it,

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<sup>380</sup> "Nation's Federated Music Clubs Drive Forward."

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

their response would be a calculated, heavy blow at a serious menace to the moral health of the country. They hoped it would lead to an America in which consumers would demand that purveyors of entertainment only offer the best: good music. If their calculations were correct, their campaign would bring the morally loose entertainment industry to its knees.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE RISE OF RADIO AND THE RESPONSE OF THE ACTIVISTS**

Good music activists drew inspiration from impressive gains in music education during the years following the Great War. However, the same changes that radio and its sister technologies, the player piano and the phonograph, brought to the country as a whole, would in time transform good music activists as well, and with them, the campaign for good music. Commercial radio emerged over the period of about a decade starting in the early nineteen-twenties. It would take that entire period for the community of good music activists to make peace with it, and that process would change them.

Wireless communication had been brought to the attention of the entire world by the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, and by the subsequent establishment of radiotelegraphy as a means of communicating with ships. By the time the Westinghouse Corporation established KDKA radio in Pittsburgh in 1920 and created commercial broadcasting for entertainment purposes in order to have a market in which to sell their radios, the technology of radio was well established in the public mind, and speculation about its potential could begin immediately. Radio's potential power was on full display by the middle of the decade, and members of the make-America-musical community knew they had a deep interest in the direction radio would take.

## The Origins of Radio

Commercial radio developed in the United States “with the greatest rapidity and to the greatest extent,” thanks in large part to its being the child of some of the country’s largest corporations, rather than a creation of the government as it was in other countries at the time. In addition, the radio industry in the United States was relatively free from government regulation, and consumer radio purchases were not taxed as they were in other countries.<sup>382</sup> These circumstances were the result of war requirements, which led the government to enlist large corporations to develop radio for military communications.

The American military forced British Marconi, the world’s dominant maritime wireless communications company, to relinquish its American holdings by creating a new subsidiary that held the American assets for the duration of the war, an entity named American Marconi. The United States Navy then, in effect, took possession of all of these physical assets, and in addition enforced patent cooperation between Marconi and various American electronic manufacturing corporations, and supervised their interaction. This allowed technologies owned by competing companies to be combined to enhance wartime wireless communication essential for the defense of convoys against the German U-Boats. As a result, an atmosphere of cooperation between the corporations prevailed while the war continued.

After the war the American corporations who were involved in this partnership, who were among the largest in the country, were in position to lobby for their own commercial interests and produce “an American-dominated system of world communication.” They were aided in this goal by a prevailing sense of nationalism in the United States. The government of

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<sup>382</sup> Sydney W. Head, *Broadcasting in America; a Survey of Television and Radio* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), 111-16. Also, Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928*, 389-90.

the United States reacted with alarm when confronted by the possibility that British Marconi, a foreign company that still held important radio patents, might be able to expand its maritime communications business and dominate the new wireless communications industry in the United States.<sup>383</sup>

To counter Marconi, the American government engineered the creation of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) after the war. RCA was largely owned by General Electric and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Its formation involved coercive negotiations with British Marconi, which was forced to choose between selling their American operation for a reasonable rate, or facing the likelihood of being frozen out of business with a substantial client, the United States government, including its military. Marconi chose to relinquish its American business to RCA, which was immediately awarded ownership of wireless broadcast facilities in the possession of the United States Navy, and at the same time granted virtually exclusive rights to domestic and international radio telegraphy. Thus the emerging radio industry, born in the waning years of Progressivism, was dominated from the outset by some of the largest corporations in the country.

At war's end, radio technology—the “wireless”—which had undergone intensive development during the war in order to meet the needs of the military, was viewed simply as an improvement upon the telegraph, particularly useful for naval communications. During the war, both General Electric and Westinghouse had produced large numbers of radios. However, while the arrangement granting RCA exclusive rights to oceanic and transatlantic wireless communications was a windfall to General Electric and AT&T, it excluded Westinghouse from competing in what was then the only demonstrated commercial use of radio.

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<sup>383</sup> For an account of this portion of the history of the broadcast industry in America, see Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, 41-61.

Use of radios by the public at that point was confined to children and technologically inclined adult hobbyists, many of whom built their own crystal radio sets from kits. Searching desperately for a niche in radio it could exploit, Westinghouse Corporation finally hit upon the idea of providing regular, advertised broadcasts in Pittsburgh, in order to give potential customers a reason to purchase the radio sets Westinghouse wanted to make. With the widely-publicized broadcasting of the results of the presidential election of 1920 on Pittsburgh's Westinghouse-owned station KDKA, commercial broadcasting was born. General Electric and AT&T followed the lead of Westinghouse into the new market, and over the next few years the demand for radios by the public soared.<sup>384</sup>

In effect, these new radio executives had been handed an industry in 1919 when the United States government formed the Radio Corporation of America using the assets wrested from British Marconi. RCA had been theirs to profit from or to lose, and they had managed its growth into a significant new cultural and economic powerhouse. Together with CBS, formed in 1927, and a host of independent radio stations, they assumed a commanding new role in the life of the country.<sup>385</sup>

Members of the good music community played an important part in the development of early radio, which required live talent. Good music, or "conservatory music" was supplied by thousands of unpaid performers. "Potted palm music," as it was dubbed by the program director of one station, dominated radio programming through much of the nineteen-twenties and persisted into the nineteen-thirties. Eventually NBC consigned their "potted palm" offerings to the "NBC Blue Network," with more commercially successful programming slotted on "NBC-

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 57-74. Also, George H. Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1987), 1-22.

<sup>385</sup> Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, 58-61.



Red.” Sponsors preferred the red network; the blue network carried less popular programs such as talk shows and “potted palm” music, which were considered “useful ammunition vis-à-vis Washington”: evidence that could be used in the battle to convince legislators of commercial radio’s vital contribution to the nation’s cultural and civic life.<sup>386</sup>

Reports in *Musical America* included stories on economic issues, such as a developing controversy about whether royalties would be paid for music played over the radio, and the role of unions in radio. Readers’ imaginations were captured by stories such as one recounting Hellen Keller “hearing” Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony by placing her hands on a radio, and others telling of plans to broadcast performances by major stars over the radio, performers whom many readers of the publication might have heard infrequently if at all before radio. In addition, however, readers of *Musical America* also were made aware of concerns that radio performances might reduce attendance at public concerts, and warned about crass attempts by broadcasters to inject commercial advertisements into the wonderful new experience of radio broadcasting.<sup>387</sup>

### **Difficulties in the Concert Business**

During the period that commercial radio was being created the United States experienced great change, and many sectors in the society were subjected to stress as a result. In time, radio would greatly affect the concert management field. However, the business of presenting music concerts

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 125-35.

<sup>387</sup> "Publishers Unite to End Free Use of Music by the Radio Stations," *Musical America* 39, no. 13 (January 19, 1924): 1, 6; "Fees and the Radio Wave," *Musical America* 39, no. 14 (January 26, 1924): 26; "Hellen Keller 'Hears' Ninth Symphony by Placing Hands on Radio Receiver."; "Radio Enthusiasts Support Plan to Broadcast Concerts by Music's Stars."; "Unions and Radio," *Musical America* 39, no. 23 (March 29, 1924): 24; "Do Music-Lovers Stay at Home When Concerts Are Broadcast by Radio?."; "An Abuse That Must Cease," *Musical America* 39, no. 25 (April 12, 1924): 30.

had a long history in America, and as radio was just beginning to emerge, that business was having problems of its own. Some would wonder if radio contributed to those problems, but they were complex, and solutions seemed elusive. Always attuned to the business of music, *Musical America* focused on a persistent sense of unease on the part of concert managers. In an effort to spur discussion of problems that would yield solutions, the magazine published a series that ran for twenty-eight consecutive weeks, from March through September of 1924, titled “What is the Solution?” The series presented the views of concert managers from around the country about possible solutions to their problems; however, the nature of the symptoms revealing the problem was not specifically identified in the series. From the solutions offered it can be surmised, at minimum, that the industry was not running smoothly.

Part of the problem, according to many of those interviewed by *Musical America*, lay in the need of some concert managers to update their business practices. This suggestion is offered in a story titled, “What is the Best Solution of the Problem in the Concert Field?” which alleged that “bad business methods in the concert field” were throttling the “progress of music in U.S.”<sup>388</sup> In an editorial inaugurating the series, *Musical America* asserted,

The business of concert-giving in the United States is suffering from a deep-seated ailment. A great and singularly complicated “industry,” it is stifled and retarded at every step by haphazard business methods, methods at once antiquated, economically unsound, amateurish.... The existence of the problem is everywhere conceded, and its solution is recognized as

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<sup>388</sup> “What is the Best Solution of the Problem in the Concert Field?,” *Musical America* 39, no. 22 (March 22, 1924): 2, 4.

essential to the continued prosperity and expansion of concert-giving in this country.<sup>389</sup>

The problem was attributed, in part, to the practices of concert managers themselves: over-booking, high management fees, and competition rather than cooperation between managers are three prominently cited issues. To overcome these problems, managers called for better business methods, and for a national association of concert managers that would promote cooperation between different regions of the country as performers' tours were planned. These problems eventually would be addressed when the large entertainment corporations associated with radio entered the concert management field.

In addition, managers also called for the cultivation among citizens of the appreciation of the "Public Value of Music," and for music education in the public schools. From these discussions it seems evident that the perceived problem was related to some sort of inadequate response to concerts—perhaps in attendance levels or attentiveness at the concerts, or perhaps lack of civic support for expenditures on music in various communities. In any case, *Musical America* reported,

General education of the public continues to be urged by local managers and others concerned in the business of giving concerts throughout America. It is by educating the children in schools, some of them say, and thus providing for a broad musical culture in the future, that a permanent remedy can be found for

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<sup>389</sup> "What is the Solution?," *Musical America* 39, no. 21 (March 15, 1924): 24.

troubles that fetter musical production from one end of the country  
to the other.<sup>390</sup>

Concert managers thus supported improvements in public music education that had long been a focal point of the make-America-musical movement, for the public schools not only had access to the whole of the society, but they had it at a time in students' lives when an impression could be made.

### **Frustrations and Fracture of the Good Music Activists**

Reports in *Musical America* show that good music advocates were dissatisfied with the results of their efforts to spread good music in the middle of the nineteen-twenties, and that these feelings persisted into the nineteen-thirties. Their concerns were a continuation of worries that had been expressed since the war, plus new ones created by the rise of radio: yet another technology that, like the phonograph, offered great promise but brought with it unwanted risks. In the previous decade the growth of the talking machine had led to a growth in the dissemination of what these activists considered bad music: jazz, and other commercially tainted music continued to increase

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<sup>390</sup> "Failure to Reach Vast Audiences at Root of Nation's Musical Woes, Says Erskine," *Musical America* 49, no. 19 (October 10, 1929): 11, 30; "What Is the Solution? 'Cultivate Appreciation,' Is Answer Made by Concert Managers in Middle West," *Musical America* 40, no. 13 (July 19, 1924): 9, 24; "What Is the Solution? Community Must Recognize Public Value of Music, Is Opinion from Middle West," *Musical America* 40, no. 7 (June 7, 1924): 9, 33; "What Is the Solution? Concert Managers in the South Urge Public Education in Answer to Passing Questions," *Musical America* 40, no. 19 (August 30, 1924): 13, 22; "What Is the Solution? Education and Cooperation Urged as Remedies for Evils in the Concert Field," *Musical America* 39, no. 23 (March 29, 1924): 4, 6; "What Is the Solution? Managers in Eastern Centers Seek Help From Schools to Remedy Concert Troubles," *Musical America* 40, no. 20 (September 6, 1924): 15, 20; "What Is the Solution? More Education Would Aid Concert-Giving in South Is Opinion of Managers," *Musical America* 40, no. 9 (June 21, 1924): 9.

in popularity. Good music activists could see that they were nowhere close to arriving at their goal of creating a universal awareness of, and appreciation for good music.

Public school music education frequently drew criticism from good music activists. By 1925 the pro-certification point of view seemed to predominate among “missionary” insiders, but *Musical America* sought to balance this tendency to rely on testing by offering a cautionary tale. The popular weekly column, “Mephisto’s Musings,” related the story of a music teacher who apparently was qualified on paper, but manifestly uninspiring. When this teacher was “called away” for some unknown reason, a musically gifted, natural teacher took his place as a temporary substitute. This second teacher built the music program up over the period of a year and was universally praised. However, she was subsequently pushed out when the original teacher returned, because of her lack of formal qualifications. Beware the bureaucrats.<sup>391</sup>

### **Differing Views of Urban and Rural Activists Regarding Radio**

The growth of radio fed the natural differences between urban and rural good music activists. Urban activists were much more sophisticated, having had numerous opportunities over the years to expose themselves and those in their charge to live concerts of the best music. Rural activists, as Charles Seeger explains in his essay, had different ideas about what good music was, and even about the goals of the campaign.

In the same October, 1924 issue of *Musical America* that announces the great campaign of “Artistic Progress” of the National Federation of Music Clubs, a separate article presents a point of view quite different from that of the federation. Mrs. Katherine M. Cook, Chief of the

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<sup>391</sup> “Mephisto's Musings,” *Musical America* 42, no. 7 (June 6, 1925): 8-9.

Rural Division of the U.S. Bureau of Education, envisions a time of universal *access* to good music, rather than universal *love* of it. Hers is a different point of reference, one in which rural Americans have been cut off from the rest of the country for many years, isolated from good music and from many other things as well. Mrs. Cook advises readers that music-reproducing technologies, and more recently, music transmitting technologies, have brought music to the “lonely farm” in ways never before possible. Together, she says, the phonograph, player piano, and radio have facilitated access to good music in previously inaccessible areas of the country. This is a great good, because “love and appreciation of music is a universal need” and, she argues, “Music should be an every-day experience of every country child’s life at school and in the home.” She concludes, “There is evidence that a new order is at hand.”<sup>392</sup>

Mrs. Cook is aware that her voice is part of a dialogue, and she is not reticent about making a point that is at variance with that of urban activists. She is aware that some say the new technologies have brought more bad than good, but she dismisses this with a call for more effective education that begins at an earlier age, saying:

Apparently all advantages are accompanied by some disadvantages. Music has its jazz as literature has its ‘dime novels.’ The best safeguard against a depraved taste in music is cultivation in the home and school of a love for the best musical productions of our own and other lands. These institutions popularize good music for the farm population; they must begin

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<sup>392</sup> A study by the federal government, published in 1933, would concur, saying: “... residents outside of the large cities who never have seen the inside of an opera house can become familiar with the works of the masters; communities where no hall exists large enough for a symphony concert can listen to the largest orchestras of the country...” United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 215.

early in the child's life at a time when he is most impressionable  
and his mind and taste are most plastic.<sup>393</sup>

Although in many ways Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Kelley are advocating for the same thing—good music—they are on different sides of an argument that will divide the community of activists. Mrs. Kelley's group is fighting for education in the shadow of what they fear will be an overpowering and negative media influence. Mrs. Cook dismisses fear of the media, invoking the same education. To Mrs. Cook there is no way to convert the role of the new technologies from a blessing to a curse.

A letter sent by Florence Hale, Agent for Rural Education in Augusta, Maine, to Frances E. Clark in 1927, more than two years later, sees to suggest that her allegiance, as well, is with those who are bringing music to her part of the country for the first time, rather than with her urban counterparts in the campaign for good music. Most likely in response to a business letter from Mrs. Clark, she writes,

My dear Mrs. Clark:

It was very kind of you to write me such a nice letter which was all the more appreciated because I feel honestly that there is no person in the country who has done quite as much for this cause of rural school music as you have through your direction of the work undertaken by the Victor people.... I think that more thought is being given to school music than ever before and I hope it may extend rapidly into our rural schools.

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<sup>393</sup> "New Dawn Seen for Music on the Lonely Farm," *Musical America* 41, no. 5 (November 22, 1924): 19. *Recent Social Trends* also confirmed this, noting that, "... the fortunes of a Negro comedy pair can provide social talk throughout the nation ... ———, *RST*, vol. 1, 215.

Cordially yours,

(Signed) Florence Hale, Agent for Rural Education in Augusta<sup>394</sup>

As was its practice, *Musical America* remained upbeat, and highlighted areas of progress. While it reported bad news and opinions about radio along with that which supported radio developments, the magnitude of change that radio was bringing to the country, along with the magazine's natural tilt in favor of business, suggested that the best response was accommodation rather than resistance. The publication tried using humor—ridicule, really—to diffuse anxieties about the “menace” of radio. In a column in January of 1925, a weekly feature called “Mephisto's Musings,” *Musical America* ridiculed fears of the “radio menace.” “Mephisto” joked sarcastically that the theater business had been wounded so deeply by competition from radio that now there was standing room only at the theater—that is to say, business was so bad that plays were selling out:

Once it was the Yellow Peril, then it was the German  
Terror, later the country had a new visitor, the Red Danger.

One by one these strange creatures thrust their leering,  
grimacing faces before us; then they faded away like Alice's  
Cheshire Cat, leaving nothing but the grin.

And now a new horror is upon us.... The Radio Menace is  
here!

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<sup>394</sup> Florence Hale Copy of a letter, March 21, 1927.



You visit the box-office of a theater; you want to see a popular play.... "Not a seat left," you are informed...and hie yourself to the Broadway office of a ticket shark....

Finally you are able to buy a pair of seats for \$10 or more.... After the second act you leave; you just cannot stand the play, the simpering of the star, or the awful quality of the house orchestra....

As you file out of the foyer you overhear the manager mutter:... "Another bad night! This Radio Menace is certainly ruining the theatrical business!"<sup>395</sup>

A story in December of that year reported, "Berlin Critic Finds Radio Undermining Concert Attendance,"<sup>396</sup> but the inexorable tide of change seemed to wash away resistance to change for the time being. Discussions continued about the possibility of a more controlled system of broadcasting modeled after that in Great Britain, but the leadership of the National Federation of Music Clubs apparently had decided that rather than trying to resist the tidal wave of "commercialism" unleashed by radio, it should enlist the power of commercial radio on behalf of good music. This was in keeping with their faith in good music's universal appeal: belief in its self-evident superiority; and in the power of education to transform the lives of individuals and to convey that quality and its importance.

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<sup>395</sup> "Mephisto's Musings," *Musical America* 41, no. 13 (January 17, 1925): 7. See also "Mephisto's Musings: More About The Radio Menace," *Musical America* 41, no. 16 (February 7, 1925): 7; "Ask That Congress Guard Radio Music," *Musical America* 42, no. 24 (October 3, 1925): 15; "McCormack Urges Business Basis for Radio," *Musical America* 42, no. 26 (October 17, 1925): 4; "'Jack' Adams Fans the Radio Flame."

<sup>396</sup> "Berlin Critic Finds Radio Undermining Concert Attendance," *Musical America* 43, no. 10 (December 26, 1925): 17.

The good music community seemed to join in *Musical America's* optimism, and to search for augers indicating that the mass conversion of the populace it believed would follow broadcasts of high quality performances had begun. In February 1926, an updated version of the article William Arms Fisher had presented at the 1924 convention of Music Teachers National Association, "The Radio and Music," was reprinted in *Music Supervisor's Journal*. Among his updates was the following note on the British system of broadcasting:

The British Broadcasting Company, which controls all the stations, received from the Post Office Department about one and a half million dollars a year as its share of the revenue from licenses paid by the owners of receiving sets at ten shillings a set. This makes possible two things; 1<sup>st</sup>, the exclusion of all advertising; 2<sup>nd</sup>, the payment of proper fees to important artists, orchestras and choral groups, as well as great lecturers.... Especially notable was the performance on March 12<sup>th</sup> at Covent Garden Theatre of the greatest choral work America has produced, *Pilgrims Progress* by Edgar Stillman Kelley.<sup>397</sup>

In the time since he had originally delivered his paper, Fisher reported by way of additions to his original text that there had been reassuring developments with regard to the juggernaut of radio, or as he called it, the "space annihilator."<sup>398</sup> Interest in jazz was waning, as he originally had suggested, according to Fisher. This must have seemed like tremendous news to those reading his article in 1926. In one of the new paragraphs, Fisher explained,

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<sup>397</sup> William Arms Fisher, "The Radio and Music," *Music Supervisor's Journal* 12, no. 3 (1926): 71-72.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*: 12.

A few weeks ago (Feb. 17, 1925) the broadcasting manager of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company publicity stated that whereas two years ago the demand for jazz was far ahead of that for any other music, the public is now requesting a higher type of music. An analysis of the thousands upon thousands of letters received by station WEAJ (New York City) from radio fans (54,000 were received in January 1925) showed that in January, 1923, approximately 75 per cent favored jazz, a percentage that one year later, January 1924, dropped to 35 and in January, 1925, has gravitated to 5 per cent. In the meantime the demand for good music had risen from 20 to 45 per cent leading all other forms, and the demand for symphonic and orchestral music is steadily increasing.<sup>399</sup>

In order to prepare his original paper, Fisher had corresponded with radio managers across the country to obtain responses to a survey. Apparently because of this correspondence he felt knowledgeable enough with the radio industry to reassure his readers as to the direction radio would take. What he had to say would have reinforced their confidence in existing plans for developing good music:

In this country what the public hears is dependent for its quality solely upon the discretion of the individual program managers. Since free radio-telephony had its inception solely as a means of advertising and creating “goodwill,” the constant aim of

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid.: 68.

the program-makers has been to please the public – to give the public what it wants and plenty of it....<sup>400</sup>

Radio, he explained, was dependent upon music, and those who had sought to use commercialism to exploit the public with the aid of the new technology had come in for an unpleasant surprise. By Fisher's account, instead of increasing sales of what *Musical America* dismissively called "trash" through their use of radio, they had actually damaged their own prospects for continuing to exploit the public. This seemed like good news, indeed:

The Broadway publishers of popular music seized this new channel of "song-pluggin" to exploit their would-be "hits." What happened? The constant repetition of this stuff soon brought its own reaction in a mental nausea the former admirers and purchasers of "popular music" had not suspected they were capable of. To list a few titles of recent so-called "hits" will perhaps make this clear:--*Red hot Mamma, Don't blame it all on me, Since Mother bobbed her hair, She fell down on her cadenza*...not to mention the *St. Louis Blues*, or the *New Orleans Wiggle*.... The oftener normal every-day folk heard these manufactured attempts at popularity the less they liked them. The sales of "popular" music notably declined, some of its publishers became bankrupt, other dropped a losing game, and the cry went

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid.: 12, 14. The assertion that advertisers were solely interested in the "goodwill" of their listeners was a view shared by the radio industry. See "Memorandum on Advertising and the American System of Broadcasting," File copy of a memorandum, author uncertain; possibly by Owen D. Young. February 15, 1932. Box 154, Folder 299L, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.

up that broadcasting of copy-righted music was ruining music publishers....<sup>401</sup>

The credulity with which Fisher's auditors received the notion that listeners to popular music on the radio experienced mental nausea illustrates the insularity of his audience, but it also reminds us that this was a far different era, more than seven decades before the advent of the iPod. The experience of turning on a machine at any hour and hearing music was still quite new.

### **Anxieties and Cross-Currents as the End of the Decade Approaches**

Technology continued changing the world at a pace faster than good music activists were prepared to adjust. In 1929 *Musical America* reported contemporary perspectives on a problem going back to the beginning of the century, in "Shall Sally Take Lessons? The Old Problem Restated in an Age of Mechanical Music"<sup>402</sup> From France came word that American musicians were blacklisted, even as Americans struggled with their sense of nationalism, the resolution of old wounds from shameful treatment of German musicians a decade earlier, and new appreciations for music from other European countries.<sup>403</sup>

They were not yet adjusted to the radio, and the future structure of radio was still in question, when the "talkie" arrived on the scene. The excitement that good music enthusiasts had felt imagining live performances of good music on the radio several years earlier seemed to echo as they considered the possibilities of this new medium. Soon major opera stars would be on the big screen, heard by millions, some speculated. More confusion seemed to result.

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<sup>401</sup> Fisher, "The Radio and Music," 14.

<sup>402</sup> "Shall Sally Take Lessons? The Old Problem Restated in an Age of Mechanical Music," *Musical America* 49, no. 12 (May 10, 1929): 13-14.

<sup>403</sup> "U. S. Musicians Blacklisted in France," *Musical America* 49, no. 15 (June 25, 1929): 40.

*Musical America* reported hopefully about the audiences for good music that the films seemed to be creating but cautioned about the limits of the medium.<sup>404</sup>

Winds of change were blowing within the community of music lovers as well as around it, however: at least some in the younger generation found the “missionary” sensibility stifling. One such contrary view may be found in an essay by Alexander Fried, then music editor of *The San Francisco Chronicle*, dripping with sarcasm in its very title: “The Prestige of Good Music.”<sup>405</sup> Fried held both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music from Columbia University,<sup>406</sup> and his essay calls to mind Henry F. May’s words in his essay, “The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917,” describing the decade: “In the twenties...beliefs and customs that still commanded the deepest loyalties of one part of the population became to another group a dead and repressive Genteel Tradition, to be ceremonially flouted whenever possible.”<sup>407</sup>

Fried signals his intention to push back against conservative sensibilities at the beginning of “The Prestige of Good Music” by quoting George Santayana, whose words will return in the closing paragraphs and so bracket the entire essay. Santayana’s 1913 book, *Winds of Doctrine*, had drawn attention to “the unrest, the disintegration of old standards, the search for vitality and movement already under way” at that point. Here, some fifteen years later, Fried, who was then in his mid-twenties, confronts a group within the music community clinging to tradition in a similar way.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> See “Talkies Create Audiences for St. Louis,” *Musical America* 49, no. 15 (June 25, 1929): 32; “A Talk on the Talkies: What Can and Cannot Be Done in Music With the New Movies,” *Musical America* 49, no. 16 (July 10, 1929): 5-6.

<sup>405</sup> Alexander Fried, “The Prestige of Good Music,” *Modern Music* 5, no. 2 (1928): 29-32.

<sup>406</sup> “Alexander Fried, 85, California Arts Critic,” *New York Times* (May 13, 1988).

<sup>407</sup> May, “The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917,” 114.

<sup>408</sup> George Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926); May, “The Rebellion of the Intellectuals, 1912-1917,” 124.

Fried notes that, "Although society may discourage him by not offering him a living for his interest, it ordinarily does not interfere with him." Yet, he notes, musicians "believe society owes them something...or in any case," that society "owes itself good music."<sup>409</sup> As Fried explains, "The belief takes strength from tradition. In some of its most prosperous times good music was an adornment to the powerful classes of society.... They paid the expenses of their pleasures from the pockets of their subjects.... Then good music did not have to explain itself. It was in power" (29). Now, however, Fried says, "The feelings of good musicians are hurt as they see their able ministrations neglected. Or, egotistically assuming their own tastes alone to be authentic, they are zealous to refine surrounding barbarians. Hence is derived the present campaign to justify good music, and to spread it where it is not easily absorbed." This campaign is not succeeding, Fried asserts, because "the social order has changed" (29). He continues: "Because the eighteenth century nourished good music into virtual monopoly is no reason why the free-born populace should accept it exclusively now.... If the common man sees beauty in vulgar ugliness, can he honestly be chided for a lack of some sense of beauty" (30)?

With the conviction of youth he chides his elders, "The partisans of good music speak of its profound spiritual qualities. One need not repeat here that modern psychology dissolves much of the poetry of their enthusiasm into rhetorical vapor.... Propagandists of good music extol its educational value..." (30). Striking very close to home, Fried notes there is "a practical reason for the spirited promotion of good music among those who do not know it, whether they can eventually be made to welcome it or not. The fine art cannot flourish without resource, and its passing would be a fierce blow to those exceptional persons who are unconquerably disposed to train their taste in it..." (31).

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<sup>409</sup> Fried, "The Prestige of Good Music," 29.

Fried's essay appeared in *Modern Music*, the journal of the New York-based League of Composers, located at the cutting edge of the country's musical life rather than on the bulwarks of its defenses.

### **The Radio Juggernaut**

Commercial radio had grown with startling speed following its introduction. Herbert Hoover, who oversaw the birth of the radio industry as Secretary of Commerce, noted early in 1922 that during the previous year, ownership of radios had increased from about 50,000 to over 600,000, or possibly as many as one million.<sup>410</sup> Expenditures on radio equipment by the public grew throughout the decade, as follows:

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|------|------------------------------|
| 1922 | \$ 60,000,000                |
| 1923 | \$136,000,000                |
| 1924 | \$358,000,000                |
| 1925 | \$430,000,000                |
| 1926 | \$506,000,000                |
| 1927 | \$425,600,000                |
| 1928 | \$650,550,000                |
| 1929 | \$842,548,000 <sup>411</sup> |

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<sup>410</sup> Head, *Broadcasting in America; a Survey of Television and Radio*, 110.

<sup>411</sup> *Broadcasting*, 1939 *Yearbook*, 11, as quoted in Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting*, 75.



Over the decade of the 1920s, programming grew both in terms of airtime and quality, with music playing a major role. In 1924, the nominating conventions for each party were carried live on groups of radio stations linked by telephone lines.<sup>412</sup> Soon afterward, radio networks were formed, and by the end of the decade, CBS and NBC had regular, competing news broadcasts on a total of 150 stations nationwide.<sup>413</sup>

Broadcasts of musical performances grew along with the networks.<sup>414</sup> The industry evolved as it grew and formed nationwide networks, soon finding it needed to offer higher quality performances than local performers were able to provide, and as well, to provide a variety of offerings in order to maintain the largest possible audiences for its advertisers. Thus, performances of good music by local musicians were supplanted by top name concert soloists, and by ensembles such as the NBC Symphony. In addition, performances by jazz bands, comedies, news, and anything else that would sell began to fill the airwaves.<sup>415</sup>

The “musical businessmen” who ran the radio networks were non-aligned with—rather than hostile to—the cause of good music. Their need to attract and retain audiences would, in turn, expose their listeners to musical styles that good music partisans did not consider helpful to the cause of good music. However, broadcasters were simply pursuing their own economic interests, which were not dependent upon the success of the musical education movement. If the musical taste Americans developed after years of education was more attuned to Tin Pan Alley than to Carnegie Hall, electronic media marketers could accommodate the result in ways that produced handsome profits. Broadcasts by non-network radio stations, which offered a much

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 27-31; 52-67.

<sup>413</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 215.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 215; vol 2, 988.

<sup>415</sup> See discussion above in Chapter 2, p. 64, “The Emergence and Growth of the Music Business,” which quotes Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” 289.

wider range of music and entertainment and skirted the boundaries of taste established by the large radio networks, added to the pressure on the networks to offer a variety of styles of music and entertainment.<sup>416</sup>

Radio had profound effects on a range of issues far beyond such matters as musical taste, of course. According to historian Preston William Slosson,

one of the...effects...of radio was that of broadening the minds, or at any rate enlarging the contacts, of the American people. Persons who from inertia or social standing would never think of attending a mass meeting, certainly of the opposing political party, or the services of various churches or a concert of classical music, were undoubtedly led to listen when the sound was brought into their very homes.”<sup>417</sup>

The President’s Research Committee on Social Trends, commissioned by President Herbert Hoover in 1929, concurred, noting the new medium’s special influence in their 1933 report, *Recent Social Trends in the United States*: “The radio, like the newspaper, has widened the horizons of the individual, but more vitally, since it makes him an auditory participant in distant events as they transpire and communicates to him some of the emotional values that inhere in them....”<sup>418</sup>

The radio set in motion the entire country by virtue of the central paradox that was its everyday reality: an intimate experience shared by masses of people. This induced tectonic shifts felt in all corners of the society. The experience of hearing sounds from far-away places at

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<sup>416</sup> For an extended treatment of this portion of the entertainment world, see Doerksen, *American Babel: Rogue Radio Broadcasters of the Jazz Age*.

<sup>417</sup> Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928*, 392.

<sup>418</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 215.

the very moment they were produced fired the imaginations of listeners and transformed their views of the world in ways altogether different from any prior medium.

Radio seemed to be a democratizing force because it appeared to offer unmediated access in a way never before experienced. Yet it also offered the reins of a vast new power to whoever could grasp and retain them—offering not only fortune, but a level of influence previously unimagined. This power was perhaps best understood by the small group that divined its potential and shaped its form as it came into existence, as they laid the foundations of media empires. Understanding the nature and extent of radio’s potential, the Committee on Social Trends observed, “mass impression on so vast a scale has never before been possible..., and drew attention to the degree of change these impressions could bring about, cautioning, “What these modifications are to be depends entirely on those who control the agencies.”<sup>419</sup>

The commercial nature of radio raised concerns among many Americans. *Recent Social Trends* reported “public objection to advertising announcements,” noting, “the American system of supporting radio through advertising is not generally found abroad, where there is usually governmental monopoly, operation, or strict control, coupled with a tax on all sets. There are apparent advantages in both systems and it does not seem clear that either possesses unqualified superiority. The newness of broadcasting, with lack of experience upon which to base opinions, makes it difficult to evaluate the various plans of operation.”<sup>420</sup>

An editorial published in *Musical America* in April of 1924, titled “An Abuse That Must Cease,” attacked radio advertising, reporting that “A campaign to check this growing practice has been undertaken by the American Radio Association...,” and the magazine asserted,

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 214.

Once commercialism is allowed a free hand in this vast and virgin field there is no telling where it will rest content. Apart, however, from everything else is the principle involved. Radio advertising is an imposition perpetrated upon a helpless and notoriously easy-going public. It is indefensible, and it must cease.<sup>421</sup>

Obviously, it did not.

Because it was already in place and functioning, absent overwhelming evidence that the American system was inferior to the European one, the practice of using advertising to support broadcasting would continue. Business and politics in the United States would never be the same again, but many other endeavors would be transformed as well, including the movement to “make America musical.”

Certainly the supporters of good music could see and take comfort and satisfaction in the continuing progress of the nation and of their cause. There were continuing improvements in music education and municipal music, with more and more communities sponsoring concerts, building auditoriums, and founding new performing organizations. As the decade progressed more and more school districts included music in their curricula; even church music was being reformed and improved.

*Musical America* frequently reported progress in stories such as one noting “vast growth” in the “nation’s music resources” in the special fall issue of 1924; another the following year asserted, “Choral Prowess Vies With Aviation in Dayton, Airplane City.”<sup>422</sup> The periodical also reported acts of individual initiative and creativity aimed at building a musical America, such as

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<sup>421</sup> "An Abuse That Must Cease."

<sup>422</sup> "Vast Growth Seen in Nation's Music Resources in 1925."; "Choral Prowess Vies With Aviation in Dayton, Airplane City," *Musical America* 43, no. 1 (October 24, 1925): 149-50. See also "Commission Ratifies Site for Civic Art Center," *Musical America* 42, no. 11 (July 4, 1925): 1, 4.

singer Mary Josephine Weithan's avowed goals of "Bringing Music to the Uninitiated," and "Making Classic Music Intelligible," presented to the public in lecture-recitals offered:

Free of charge, a complete, comprehensive and masterly course in musical literature, equal in content to such a course in any college or conservatory, yet so simply and humanly presented, that any person with or without musical training might enjoy and profit by it.<sup>423</sup>

Solid gains were being made, and strong momentum was building for good music.

In 1927 NBC had been joined in competition by CBS, and by decade's end the commercial radio industry was well established. It broadcast a wide variety of programs over its newly created networks, operating under the regulation of the Federal Radio Commission, which had been created by the Communications Act of 1927. The Communications Act of 1934 would confirm the commercial nature of broadcasting and reorganize the industry under the governance of the newly created Federal Communications Commission. However, from 1927 to 1934, even as corporate media giants completed their creation of commercial radio, competing visions of radio's future vied for the approval of the public and for the support of the legislators who controlled radio's fate.

America's "musicians and music-lovers" had looked "enviously" to the state-owned and controlled radio network, but in an editorial in May, 1930 titled "Good Programs or Many Listeners?" *Musical America* noted problems attributed to Great Britain's British Broadcasting Corporation. According to representatives of a major American-style department store in

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<sup>423</sup> See "Bringing Music to the Uninitiated Is Task of Marie Josephine Wietham," *Musical America* 41, no. 21 (March 14, 1925): 29; "Making Music Intelligible Is Aim of Mary Josephine Wietham," *Musical America* 42, no. 6 (May 30, 1925): 34.

London, Selfridge & Co., Ltd., the BBC had “the wrong conception of its duty to the public: it is more anxious to uplift than to interest. Its programs, though lofty, are dull....” As a consequence, the editorial related, Selfridge believed that radio sets were “not selling as fast as they ought to sell.”

To support their contention that the networks was culpable for these shortfalls in commercial sales, the company noted that separate, broadcast speeches by the King and by the Prince of Wales had each led to a flurry of purchases, and contended, “there is, in other words, immediate responsiveness on the part of the public to the program offered. Let the government-supervised entertainers seek other and more frequent features to interest the public, even though they cannot all be of such significance.”

*Musical America* concluded, with chagrin,

Thus the blow is dealt again. Here in America commercialism, in order allegedly to gain the greatest public, has lowered program quality. In England, where the programs are still of the highest caliber, the public no longer replaces burnt-out tubes. To interest the greatest number of people, and do so on the highest scale, still remains a serious problem for radio’s entrepreneurs.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> "Good Programs or Many Listeners?," *Musical America* 50, no. 9 (May 10, 1930): 22.

## Resistance to Commercial Radio

1930 would prove to be a pivotal year in the transformation of the good music activists. The power of the entertainment industry had succeeded in opening up breaks in the ranks of what truly had been a musical alliance. The more conservative elements in the good music coalition had grown more and more disenchanted with the new world of electronic communication that was emerging over the course of the nineteen-twenties. However, if moderate elements in the alliance agreed with the perception that the radio was having a negative impact, evidently they felt that it was too powerful to be resisted, or that its benefits outweighed the costs, or perhaps, that worrying about such things simply was old-fashioned and peevish. Tremendous numbers of listeners were being exposed to good music through the marvel of radio: over twelve million households by 1930, including many homes in rural areas.<sup>425</sup>

Geographical and philosophical fault lines that had existed for some time undoubtedly continued to exist within the coalition, but real economic factors related to declining numbers of private music students began to play a major role as well.

The geographical split between the distinct urban and rural cultures had been present for some time: the “haves” and “have-nots” in terms of high quality, live musical performance. Rural activists naturally were more inclined than urban activists to tolerate radio’s variety of musical styles as a condition necessary for broadcasts of good music, because they lacked the easy access to performances enjoyed by many of their urban counterparts. However, in addition to this straightforward difference in physical access to musical performances, there were larger cultural differences as well. These were magnified by the wider range of musical experiences

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<sup>425</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 211-12.

available to urban activists, which contributed to a greater average level of sophistication with regard to musical styles among the urban activists. The different needs and sensibilities of these two groups had resulted in differing appraisals of the success of radio in the middle of the nineteen-twenties as we have seen, and those differences most likely persisted into the decade of the nineteen-thirties.

Philosophical fault lines undoubtedly cross-cut the geographical ones, influenced by the individual personalities involved and their inherent level of tolerance or intolerance to other points of view, and by a myriad of other factors too numerous to consider systemically. Among these, generational change and interaction with the wider public tended to moderate views that had tended toward dogmatism in ways that defied geographical boundaries. As Seeger noted, it had been the music educators, whose contact with the broader public was inherent to their work in music, who had first abandoned “authoritarian” intolerance in favor of a more “democratic” approach, starting in 1907 when they sought to accommodate public sensibilities through a partnership with music publishers.<sup>426</sup> The consequence of all these factors over time had been a weakening of what had been an intense solidarity of belief in the virtues of good music in the middle of the 1920s.

The January 10, 1930 issue of *Musical America* reported a resolution from the latest annual convention of the Music Teachers’ National Association that conveyed their unhappiness with current conditions in music. Papers presented at the December, 1929 convention had examined some of the most pressing issues of the day and their relationship with the work of the association: the crisis in the economy, societal transformation brought on by the phenomenal

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<sup>426</sup> Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” 289-90.



growth of education, and the rise of radio. After hearing all these papers, the members reportedly had reached the conclusion that radio in its present form was unacceptable.<sup>427</sup>

According to *Musical America*, the MTNA had voted to condemn radio as a “Menace to Education,” was requesting a “Federal Inquiry,” and had approved a communication to the Secretary of the Interior, to be signed by retiring president William Arms Fisher. Fisher was an advocate of a BBC-style broadcasting structure, who in 1925 had presented the optimistic but dubious report to MTNA members that claimed excessive commercial broadcasts of popular music had, by that point, had produced a “mental nausea” in listeners that was producing a backlash favoring good music.<sup>428</sup>

The letter sent to the Interior secretary was said to have stated,

The M.T.N.A....wishes to register its conviction that the present situation of radio broadcasting as related to music and music education is so full of serious danger as to demand the

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<sup>427</sup> These had included John L. Bratton, "The American Music Teacher under Changing Conditions Today," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 36-45; Ella H. Mason, "The Growth and the Significance of the Piano Class," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 46-53; Blanche E. K. Evans, "How to Conduct a Class in Piano Music," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 54-60; Alice Keith, "The Radio in Schools--its Present and Future," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 83-88; Edith Rhettts, "Six Years of Symphony Orchestra Broadcasting," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 89-94; J. C. Stobart, "School Broadcasting in England," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 95-99.

<sup>428</sup> William Arms Fisher, "The Radio and Music," in *M. T. N. A. National Convention*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (St. Louis, Missouri?: 1924); Fisher, "The Radio and Music." Although Fisher favored the British system, British reaction to his address at the Anglo-American Musicians' Conference at Lausanne in 1929 was mixed at best. An account in *The Musical Times* said of his address, in part: "Mr. William Arms Fisher, of Boston...read a paper "What is Music?" which passed in review all the definitions of music given by musicians of all kinds, scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, and others, during all the ages, without finding an adequate answer to his initial question. The paper was an eloquent piece of rhetoric. It struck a lofty note...but whether it produced much that was of practical use to hard-working teachers, is another question. Edwin Evans, "The Anglo-American Musicians' Conference at Lausanne," *The Musical Times* 70, no. 1039 (1929): 830.

careful consideration of the finest group of music educators that can be gathered in the nation. We therefore urge the appointment of an advisory council of the highest standing to study this pressing problem.”<sup>429</sup>

Striking a different note, an editorial in the same issue of *Musical America*, titled, “Playing Less, Listening More,” acknowledged that a decline in the number of private students had directly affected the livelihood of music teachers and piano manufacturers, and attributed the decline to increased listening to phonograph records and radio. However, although *Musical America* regretted the development, it maintained that it did not portend a grim future for music in the United States. Rather, it suggested, Americans had always been less inclined than their European counterparts to play or sing together. The editorial concluded,

there are obvious signs that the vanishing home piano does not mean there is less music in the home, or less interest in music generally. If we play less, we listen more. Those listeners who feel the urge to make music for themselves find greater opportunities for study.... With music being encouraged in our public schools, with conservatories endowed and flourishing, there is no danger of music-making disappearing, or falling into disrepute.<sup>430</sup>

The secretary’s report of the passing of the resolution, which is printed in the proceedings of the organization, does not confirm a cantankerous tone was at the meeting, as seems to be

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<sup>429</sup> "Music Teachers Condemn Radio," *Musical America* 50, no. 1 (January 10, 1930): 4.

<sup>430</sup> "Playing Less, Listening More," *Musical America* 50, no. 1 (January 10, 1930): 16.

suggested in the *Musical America* article, although they allow that possibility. The texts of the addresses on radio were generally upbeat, but included one describing the BBC system of radio and its involvement in education.<sup>431</sup> It is hard to determine from these printed accounts what the actual tone at the meeting was; certainly there was concern about radio and its potential effects upon education. The minutes were likely written after the article, perhaps without the influence of the retiring MTNA president Fischer, and it is difficult to know if news accounts had affected their tone. They contain the following account:

The closing session on Saturday afternoon was devoted to "Radio in Music Education"...The discussion following these presentation[s]...was lively and full of value....It was proposed by Earl Moore that a telegram be sent to Secretary of the Interior Wilbur asking that the cause of good music be carefully considered in any contemplated program of education through radio and stating the willingness of the M.T.N.A. to assist in any way possible towards the promotion of such a program. This telegram was prepared by President Fisher, read to those present for their approval, and later was made a matter of action by the Executive Committee at their final meeting....<sup>432</sup>

What can be seen throughout the proceedings is evidence that MTNA members seemed to agree that the level of interest in music in the country was on the rise and that most likely this was due to radio. However, because changes that accompanied this rise directly affected the

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<sup>431</sup> Keith, "The Radio in Schools--its Present and Future," 83-88; Rhett, "Six Years of Symphony Orchestra Broadcasting," 89-94; Stobart, "School Broadcasting in England," 95-99.

<sup>432</sup> D. M. Swarthout, "Report of the Secretary," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1929): 128-29.

livelihood of some members, many saw radio as a threat. The larger question of whether radio added to, or took away from the musical life of the country, seemed to amount to a sort of Rorschach test.

Although the National Federation of Music Clubs considered groups such as the MTNA to be crucial allies in the campaign for good music,<sup>433</sup> it was slow to follow their lead in attacking radio. Perhaps sensing that the battle had already been lost, the federation at first declined to join in the MTNA's condemnatory stance, instead striking a more positive one. The next issue of *Musical America* included "A Message from Ruth Haller Ottaway," president of the National Federation of Music Clubs, which outlined the federation's goals for fostering the growth of music and gamely promised "support of concerts in this period of readjustment caused by the marvelous and invaluable mechanical musical agencies of the present day."<sup>434</sup>

However, later in the year the federation did follow the MTNA into the culture war, issuing a statement that placed it in direct opposition to national cultural trends. An article in late November in *Musical America* reported the results of a "National Board Meeting Held in New York," where they were joined by other musical organizations that pledged their "assistance" to the federation. The article announced a range of goals that had been adopted, including a "Ban on Jazz," and announced that they were against what was described as "jazzing of the classics, particularly on the radio, and against bad arrangements for inappropriate instruments, a procedure of which," the federation claimed, "the radio is too fond." In addition they announced the goals of providing "Aid for American Composers, Recognition of Music in Colleges..." and "Better Qualifications for Teachers." However, the article provided no details about what the

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<sup>433</sup> Ottaway underscored the importance of solidarity with music teachers and other groups and individuals in her address. Ruth Haller Ottaway, "Music Clubs, A Significant Factor in National Development," *Ibid.* (Music Teachers' National Association, 1930): 120.

<sup>434</sup> "A Message from Ruth Haller Ottaway," *Musical America* 50, no. 2 (January 25, 1930): 68.

organization was actually contemplating with regard to such a ban, although the length of the article, which continued on to another full page, would have permitted such elaboration.<sup>435</sup>

Although the federation would continue to embrace the radio industry, their action and that of the Music Teachers' National Association the prior year seem to signal that they no longer believed that the entertainment industry, and especially its management, could be expected to embody appropriate "ideals" in the way discussed in *Musical America* five years earlier.<sup>436</sup> Taken together, the news report and the MTNA proceedings from 1929 and 1930 also highlight growing fragmentation within the community of good music activists.

The proceedings from the meeting of the MTNA in December of 1930 reveal much of the spirit of the time, both within the membership of the Music Teachers' National Association and within the larger musical community, and suggest a possible divergence in beliefs between the music teachers' association and the federation. The resolution produced by the prior year's program condemning radio had seemed to suggest that MTNA members were united in opposition to radio, but the roster of speakers presenting at the 1930 convention presents a much more complex picture. It is apparent that association members disagree even on whether conditions are improving or declining, and that it is difficult if not impossible for them to assign blame for the changes.

By the time of the 1930 convention, the events of the Great Depression have combined with developments in technology, consumer culture, education, and a host of other factors to create a confusing environment of change within which the music community is operating in an atmosphere of turmoil and confusion. An increase in the quality of church music draws

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<sup>435</sup> "Federation of Music Clubs Plans Cooperation With Other Groups," *Musical America* 50, no. 18 (November 25, 1930): 3, 4.

<sup>436</sup> See "Music as An Art and a Business."

praise.<sup>437</sup> Almost all other areas of interest or concern elicit mixed assessments. The benefits of technology are acknowledged by various speakers at the conference, but technology also continues to be seen as contributing to difficult times for music professionals, an assessment that is evident in the report of the Committee on American Music, which concludes, “mechanical music and hard times have brought about a serious situation for professional performers and touring artists, who must look to the new year for a solution of their problems.”<sup>438</sup>

Public school music has increased in quantity and quality and in stature in the community, as the government study *Recent Social Trends* will note.<sup>439</sup> Private music teachers view this with a mixture of gratitude and unease, with some suspecting that there might be a relationship between the rise of public school music and school music teachers and the perceived decline in their own fortunes. In a paper titled, "The Public School and the Private Music Teacher,"<sup>440</sup> Osbourne McConathy seeks to answer the question, “just what is happening to the private teacher?” He reports responses to a questionnaire sent to music dealers in different parts of the country about the condition of the music business in their area. Most respondents indicated there had been a reduction in the number of piano students, but others disagreed and suggested instead that the actual number of students had not gone down, but rather, that there had been a decline relative to the growing population. Opinions were split with regard to whether a growth in public school class piano had contributed to the situation. While “some saw the tremendous growth in the number of piano classes in public schools as a threat...others asserted

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<sup>437</sup> Peter W. Dykema, "Report of the Committee on Community Music," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 239-41.

<sup>438</sup> Charles S. Skilton, "Report of Committee on American Music," *Ibid.* (Hartford, Conn.): 227.

<sup>439</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 988.

<sup>440</sup> McConathy, "The Public School and the Private Music Teacher," 61.

that it was “the salvation of music.” McConathy also notes widespread disagreement about the causes of a decline in private study, reporting:

Question 2 reads: “Where teachers report serious losses of pupils, what do they give as principal reasons?” One dealer wrote, “The financial stringency is, I think, the largest factor at the present time in the decline of sales of sheet music....” Ten other dealers agree with him. Three dealers blame public school piano classes; six the parents’ lack of interest; nine loss of interest due to radio; four, the moving pictures; two, sports; and five loss of interest due to automobiles, though one adds the saving clause, “only in the summer time....”<sup>441</sup>

Although they may not be able to agree upon the cause, there can be no doubt that there has been a decline in the piano industry. A well-documented report by Otto Miessner titled, “What is Happening to the Piano?” documents a precipitous decline in the number of pianos manufactured annually. Piano manufacturing declined precipitously from about 348,000 in 1923, to about 307,000 in 1925 and 218,000 in 1927. By 1929 only about 130,000 pianos had been manufactured, a decline of more than 62 percent in only six years, during the same period that had seen radio’s rise; but also, the onset of the Depression.

It is no wonder that studio piano teachers sensed changes during these years, that they understood these were not to their personal benefit, and that they thought it might be associated with the advent of radio. Miessner documented similar declines in the number of wind, string,

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid.: 63; 62-63. See also, Joseph E. Maddy, “Report of the Committee on Piano Classes,” in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers’ National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrrens (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 260-63.

and percussion instruments manufactured. In what may be another sign of the time, Miessner's figures show that almost ten times as many saxophones as violins were sold in 1929.<sup>442</sup>

However, the 1930 convention program presented a mixture of views with regard to radio, quite well-rounded in light of the resolution passed at the prior convention and the concerns reported in *Musical America*. Alice Keith of the "American School of the Air," a CBS program, had spoken at the 1929 convention on the topic, "The Radio in Schools—its Present and Future." The resolution condemning radio the prior year, in the least, must have been a disappointment to her. In 1930 she again spoke, this time addressing the question, "Is Radio a Curse or a Blessing?" In it she sought to allay the many lingering fears of those listening and to present networked radio offerings in a positive light.<sup>443</sup> Frances Elliott Clark, the pioneering music educator long involved with promoting the use of phonographs in the classroom, also spoke about the radio. Clark sought to put the rise of radio in a larger perspective and to underscore the fundamental nature of the cultural transformation confronting music educators:

Music in and of itself has long been recognized as an integral part of education, but the advent of radio has brought a new problem to educators and musicians alike....

Twenty years ago there came into school music a new problem, a new point of view, a new objective, and a new phase of music education. It became possible to *listen* to fine music, songs, known and unknown, which became patterns, but also—wonder of

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<sup>442</sup> Miessner, "What is Happening to the Piano?," 183-85.

<sup>443</sup> Alice Keith, "Is Radio a Curse or a Blessing," *Ibid.*: 145-50.



wonders—for the first time it became possible to hear instrumental music....<sup>444</sup>

The incorporation of phonographs into the teaching of music had required the development of new teaching methods by music teachers, she says, and also had led to changes in some of their educational goals. However, the growth of the public's taste for music, both from phonograph recordings and from the radio, had produced a cultural transformation that could not be ignored: "Regardless of the general apathy of musicians and educators, music has become a major subject.... The entrance of radio into daily life has metamorphosed the whole scheme."<sup>445</sup>

Yet despite this change, Clark says that music departments in most colleges remain "devoted to an intensive study of theory and applied music for an infinitesimally small per cent of the enrollment, while the rank and file of the general student body are left without the broadening educational service of real music in general intelligence...."<sup>446</sup>

Clark grows almost rhapsodic in her appraisal of the present cultural moment and its meaning in terms of the development of a American music:

Something has happened that demands a complete about-face, an awakening to the necessity of using music in education as a necessary part of the life that now is. The *radio*, thing of wonder, of necromancy, uncanny "Mercury" of the air flashing to us news, messages, voices, songs, from the uttermost parts of the earth.... The telephone, telegraph, and wireless have brought the world to our homes and schools, but the radio has annihilated

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<sup>444</sup> Frances Elliott Clark, "Education Through the Air," *Ibid.*: 200.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*: 201.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*: 200-01.

distance and space. We turn the dial and hear the news of a revolution this morning, its settlement before night.... We almost sit in the British Parliament, skim over the snow with Byrd at the Antarctic,...and fly with Lindbergh...from coast to coast with a single sun—marvelous, miraculous. We have been called an unmusical people...and yet, when the Ohio School of the Air sent out a questionnaire to determine what the hearers most desired to hear, Lo! Like Abou Ben Adhem,<sup>447</sup> music led all the rest.... Why this astonishing demand for music now that it can be heard by simply tuning in? We shall not go far wrong if we say that our American people have become musically conscious, are musically hungry and increasingly musically intelligent.<sup>448</sup>

Peter Dykema presents another point of view with regard to radio in his report for the Committee on Community Music. He sounds a familiar note of disapproval with regard to the “great increase in music to which everyone can listen in accordance with his taste...,” and notes that “apparently there is greater and greater demand for a continuance of this variety of material.”<sup>449</sup> In a survey conducted by the National Music Week Committee, radio had been credited both with increasing the overall appetite for music, and for decreasing the level of its study. Dykema notes,

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<sup>447</sup> Abou Ben Adhem was a Sufi mystic made popular in the West in a poem by English poet James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859). "Leigh Hunt ", *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2008), 15 July 2008 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9041557>>.

<sup>448</sup> ———, "Education Through the Air," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 201.

<sup>449</sup> Peter W. Dykema, "Report of the Committee on Community Music," *Ibid.*: 233.

Along with the praise for the radio, it received blame for a change for the worse in one village of 500 inhabitants, as follows: “Before its arrival we depended a great deal on home talent for our musical entertainment. But now it is hard to produce a program in competition with the radio.”

Dykema cited “a terse opinion” that demonstrated the confusion about what was happening and why, a single answer in which the respondent attributed “the causes of a decline” to be, variously, “Probably radio, cars, jazz, pictures. Too much interest in playing around. Youngsters unable to concentrate.”<sup>450</sup>

Joseph Weber, President of the American Federation of Musicians, also addressed the convention and described the devastating loss of sixty percent of the jobs of his membership within only two years, caused by the advent of “mechanized sound” in the movies. The musicians’ union had launched a “Music Defense League” and mounted a campaign that Weber claimed had “done a public service in re-awakening the interest in living music.” As a result, he said, “the peak of the production of ‘canned’ music” had passed, and the situation would be improving.

Full-paged advertisements placed by the musicians’ union as part of this campaign can be seen in *Musical America*. They include colorful titles such as “Nothing Bashful About the Robot,” “Is the Robot Fooling You?” “Is Art to Have a Tyrant?” and “The Robot’s Lullaby.”<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.: 233-34.

<sup>451</sup> American Federation of Musicians, “Nothing Bashful About the Robot,” *Modern Music* 49, no. 22 (November 25, 1929): 19; ———, “Is the Robot Fooling You?,” *Musical America* 50, no. 9 (May 10, 1930): 9; American Federation of Musicians Music Defense League, “Is Art to Have a Tyrant?,” *Modern Music* 50, no. 15 (October 10, 1930): Inside back cover; American Federation of Musician’s Music Defense League, “The Robot’s Lullaby,” *Musical America* 50, no. 17 (November 10, 1930): 17.

One such appeal to join the “Music Defense League” appears in a full-page advertisement the January 25, 1930 issue of the magazine. It reads, in part:

Mothers, the world over, strive valiantly to give their children happiness—wholesome happiness, a chance to enjoy the richest, fullest lives. Contrary forces forever oppose mother’s hopes. Today, change—speed—unrest work to thwart her yearning for contentment—family affection—morality. Humanizing culture is spurned. Children are overwise and blasé. Adolescents mock marriage. Crime is luring youth to ruin. Men and women whiz through life to the clatter of the eternal machine—the Machine, a splendid servant, but a soulless master. Brutalizing forces of decadence threaten the heritage mothers would bequeath to their children.

*Is this, then, the time to strike a blow at music, the art which beyond all others sways the gentler nature of Man? No!*

*But it will be a blow at music if Machine-made Sound is permitted to drive Living Music from the Theatre! Musical taste corrupted! Musical education discouraged! Mothers have the right to a voice in this issue. They will not want their children to grow up in a world devoid of Living Music and all that it means to humanity....*

The advertisement included a tear-off form to be completed and mailed in so that the reader could enroll in the “Music Defense League as one who is opposed to the elimination of Living Music from the theatres.”<sup>452</sup>

The president of the National Federation of Music Clubs, Ruth Haller Ottaway, spoke twice at the convention. She first introduced a section of the program on the topic, “Present Day Social Aspects of Music,” announcing:

The social aspects of music are more varied and confusing in the present era than at any other period in the history of this country.... Music has become ubiquitous—for good or ill. Our problem is to bring the attention of the greatest number of people to the best music as a normal part of life, and a necessary part of education.

Ghandi says that the future of our western civilization depends upon our intelligent use of the radio. Another philosopher says that Americans are the most progressive of all peoples but the most stupid in their use of leisure time. President Hoover says, “We have organized for the production of leisure. We must now organize for its intelligent consumption.”

The papers three papers that followed included examinations of “the new problem of leisure” and “the amateur in music,” and a one on “Music in Settlement and Community Houses and in Settlement Music Schools.”<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> American Federation of Musicians, “American Federation of Musicians,” *Musical America* 50, no. 2 (January 25, 1930): 43. Italics in original.

Ottaway gave a separate address closing the program section titled, "Music Clubs: A Significant Factor in National Development." This second speech, taken together with the federation's reaction during the preceding year to the MTNA resolution with regard to radio, seems to reveal the strains between the two bodies.<sup>454</sup>

Music club members shared many values and beliefs with MTNA members, but not all. They were advocates for the sort of private music study that provided many MTNA members with their livelihood, but their support of public school music programs, of which some MTNA members were wary, was central to their plan to create a musical America. Perhaps most centrally, despite the suspected connection between declining private music study and the increasing popularity of listening to music on the radio, the National Federation of Music Clubs would continue to give more and more emphasis to intelligent listening to music by the broader public in lieu of such study. In addition, the federation appears to have been less inclined to militate against the interests of the corporate media, who were providing so many across the country with access to good music for the first time through their broadcasts.

Ottaway's address on music clubs asserts the coequal nature of the federation's role in the nation's continuing musical development. Although the music teachers of the MTNA are truly on the front lines in the battle for good music, she seems to say, the federation is playing an integral part as well. That Ottaway would need to make such an assertion the topic of a

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<sup>453</sup> Ruth Haller Ottaway, "Present Day Social Aspects of Music," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers' National Association, 1930): 97-99; Peter W. Dykema, "Music in the New Problem of Leisure," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 100-09; Martha M. Cruikshank, "Music in Settlement and Community Houses and in Settlement Music Schools," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 110-14; Burnet Corwin Tuthill, "The Amateur in Music," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1930): 115-19.

<sup>454</sup> Ottaway, "Music Clubs, A Significant Factor in National Development."

convention address, by itself, suggests some distance between the positions of the two organizations. Her opening words seem designed to bridge this gap, and to reestablish the kinship of the two organizations:

The National Federation of Music Clubs enters the sanctum of the Music Teachers' National Association as a child returning to its mother, for in 1898 twenty musical leaders in attendance at the Music Teachers' National Association meeting in New York City organized the National Federation of Music Clubs.... The child has waxed strong, and, like the modern human child, has gone its own way with too little attention from its mother—a state of affairs which is always dangerous.<sup>455</sup>

Ottaway goes on to describe the power of the federation and the range of the “ministrations,...carried on by eight departments and fifty sub-committees....” Although the music studio is a front line in the battle for good music, she seems to say, it is not the only important one. She says it is the business of the federation

to carry music into actual life as it is being lived today. Consequently we are concerned with the school, home, church, theatre.—all education institutions; and with sponsorship of American students, artists and composers, and with legislation advancing the cause of music for the people and by the people.

Invoking American exceptionalism, she continues,

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.: 120.

An English music critic bewailed recently the fact that only the *élite*, the same few, attend concerts and support music generally year after year. He averred that if only those *élite* few cared for the “education of the masses,” which phrase he feared was a sophism, there might be a change for the better, since, after all, whatever tends to raise the standards of a people is eminently worth while. Sitting in a London hotel and reading this lament, it was gratifying to be able to project thoughts across the sea to the National Federation of Music Clubs which is fulfilling in some degree what this critic designated as a “dream too beautiful to come true.”<sup>456</sup>

Ottaway went on to detail the federation’s activities in the many venues they were addressing, including public school music, home music, church music, theater music, college music, and the support of American composers and young performing artists.<sup>457</sup>

### **Inexorable Change**

As their fortunes grew, the radio moguls moved to maximize the earning potential of the good music portion of their broadcasting fare by securing the best “classical” talent available, and by

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid.: 121.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.: 121-25.



consolidating as much control of the market as they could, expanding into related areas that offered promise.<sup>458</sup>

In 1929 Walter Damrosch retired as conductor of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony in order to devote himself to conducting radio broadcasts. By that point, top-tier singers had been appearing on radio for some time, and were increasingly being drawn to roles on the silver screen, in new “sound films.” These are advertised in *Musical America* to what must have been a receptive public, including, for instance, Mary Garden in a “jazz opera” in November of 1929, and in the Christmas day issue the following year, Metropolitan Opera soprano Grace Moore, in her “triumphant” screen debut as “Jenny Lind.”<sup>459</sup>

Both the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) formed concert management agencies that handled the cream of the entertainment world—all facets of it. CBS’s Columbia Concerts Corporation was formed by merging five of the top existing management firms: Concert Management Arthur Judson, the Wolfsohn Bureau, the Metropolitan Musical Bureau, Haensel & Jones, and Evans & Salter.<sup>460</sup> As if responding to earlier calls from *Musical America*, NBC also promised a “nationwide concert plan” with its new Artists’ Service, and in addition, sponsored an expansion of the “Civic Concert Service” of Chicago to “include the entire nation in its scope.”<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> *Recent Social Trends* explains, “The early rapid and unplanned growth of broadcasting in the United States produced chaotic conditions which prevailed until 1927, changes in station ownership were taking place.... But even prior to 1927, changes in station ownership were taking place. Many of the first stations were adjuncts of radio shops, the electrical business and service companies.... Gradually commercial broadcasting companies came into prominence. In 1930 more than one-third of the 612 stations in the country were operated by them...” United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 212-13.

<sup>459</sup> “Mary Garden to Star in Jazz Opera - Sound Film,” *Musical America* 49, no. 22 (November 25, 1929): 32;

“Grace Moore: Screen Debut as Jenny Lind,” *Musical America* 50, no. 20 (December 25, 1930): Inside back cover.

<sup>460</sup> “Seven Musical Bureaus merged in Columbia Concerts Corporation,” *Musical America* 50, no. 20 (December 25, 1930): 4.

<sup>461</sup> “New NBC Artist's Service Founded,” *Musical America* 50, no. 4 (February 25, 1930): 6.

Coordinated, national concert planning on this scale had been advocated by *Musical America* in 1918 when it had encouraged the formation of the national association by music managers, and again in a number of articles in the series, "What is the Solution," in 1924, when the magazine had called for cooperation among managers on a national scale.<sup>462</sup> At long last, using the enormity of scale made possible by the resources of the electronic media corporations, national concert management had finally arrived, apparently the long-sought solution to a perennial vexation, provided by an entity some considered to be a foe.

True to the form of the new entertainment industry, however, the artists represented by this new agency were not only purveyors of good music, but instead represented a wide variety of styles: "more than 200 artists...whose activities include appearances in radio, talking pictures, vaudeville and concert."<sup>463</sup> Between themselves, NBC and CBS had established a buyers' market which, by fiat, could be eclectic. Good music would have a major role in radio, but would not dominate it.

Throughout 1930 *Musical America* reported events that seem to form landmarks of cultural change, and reported exchanges of opinions on the transformations. The January 10 issue contained the article reporting MTNA's condemnation of radio and the editorial "Playing Less, Listening More," which touted progress and argued that Americans were benefitting from radio, even if fewer were choosing to study instruments.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> See "What Is the Solution? National Alliance of Managers Is Seen as Remedy for Concert Difficulties in West," *Musical America* 40, no. 5 (May 24, 1924): 9; "What Is the Solution? Managers in Middle West Say Uniting of All Forces Would Better Concert Business," *Musical America* 40, no. 15 (August 2, 1924): 9, 24; "What Is the Solution? Education and Cooperation Urged as Remedies for Evils in the Concert Field."; "What Is the Solution? Core Cooperation Advocated by Western Managers to Improve Concert Business," *Musical America* 40, no. 8 (June 14, 1924): 9; "What Is the Solution? 'Cultivate Appreciation,' Is Answer Made by Concert Managers in Middle West."

<sup>463</sup> "New NBC Artist's Service Founded," 6.

<sup>464</sup> "Playing Less, Listening More," 16.

The next issue of the magazine contained a feature-length commentary by the editor, A. Walter Kramer, which filled two pages. Under a banner headline reading, “The American Musical Scene,” it underscored assertions made in the prior issue’s editorial. Claims that passive consumption of music was leading to a decline in concert life were untrue, Kramer asserted. Instead, he argued, changes in consumer behavior, brought on by the wide variety of electric home appliances and the automobile, had led to a change in human nature. Kramer felt that the new conditions called for optimism, an appraisal the reflected notions of progress that were prevalent in the era. Despite this, an editorial in May ruminated whether, in the pursuit of listeners that was endemic to a commercialized approach to radio, the quality of the music being offered was being sacrificed. In July, the Wisconsin Federation of Music Clubs announced they had received a plea for the revival of amateur music from a music professor from the University of Wisconsin, who “urged cultivation of music in the family, with less emphasis on the radio, the phonograph and other mechanisms,” and “asked for a reevaluation of music from that of a vocation to an avocation, which would bring the skilled amateur into prominence as against the mechanical form of music.”<sup>465</sup>

As the good music community weighed the future of music and their role in it, technology continued its march. John McCormack made his debut in the “Talkies” in January; Lawrence Tibbett became the first opera star to complete a feature film, “The Rogue Song,” and also appeared in “Singing for the World” later in the year.<sup>466</sup> New symphonic broadcasts signaled continued progress in radio, and the movies would continue to surprise as well: film

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<sup>465</sup> “The American Musical Scene,” *Musical America* 50, no. 2 (January 25, 1930): 4; “Good Programs or Many Listeners?,” “Federation Hears Plea For Revival of Amateur Music,” *Musical America* 50, no. 12 (July 1, 1930): 31.  
<sup>466</sup> “And So He’s King Tenor of the ‘Talkies’,” *Musical America* 50, no. 2 (January 25, 1930): 59; “Lawrence Tibbett ‘The Rogue Song’: First Opera Star to Complete Feature Sound Picture,” *Musical America* 50, no. 2 (January 25, 1930): 1; “Lawrence Tibbett ‘Singing for the World’,” *Musical America* 50, no. 9 (May 10, 1930): 20-21.

music by Arnold Schoenberg stirred Berlin, followed only weeks later by the Hollywood debut of Metropolitan Opera singer Grace Moore, in a film portrayal of nineteenth-century sensation Jenny Lind.<sup>467</sup>

In November of 1930, the Director of School Music at Western Reserve University in Cleveland opened another series of articles on music education, arguing that the entire system was mired in mediocrity, with poor teaching at the high school level producing ill-prepared music students who then slid through college, attaining only a minimum level of performance, in order to become music teachers, returned to the public schools, and repeat the cycle.<sup>468</sup> To good music supporters, the upgrading of music education seemed an unending task.

*Musical America* captured the moment for the cultural proselytizers with a headline in December, 1930, "This Perplexing Business of Making a Nation Musical." In the accompanying article Max T. Krone, a leader in the Music Supervisor's National Conference, questioned the vision under which the musical missionary movement had been operating, starting with the query, "Has the average listener a fourteen-year-old intelligence?" and he continued with questions such as, "Are there some to whom any musical instruction is useless? If so, how large a part of the population is this group? These are important questions that those who are entrusted with the musical education of our youth must answer."<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> "St. Louis Symphony to Broadcast Series," *Musical America* 50, no. 9 (May 10, 1930): 6; "Schoenberg's Music for Movies and Beecham's Appearance Stir Berlin," *Musical America* 50, no. 19 (December 10, 1930): 50; "Grace Moore: Screen Debut as Jenny Lind."

<sup>468</sup> See also "America's School Music: a Cycle of Mediocrity?"; "To What Degree, if Any Degree at All?," *Musical America* 50, no. 17 (November 10, 1930): 16.

<sup>469</sup> "This Perplexing Business of Making a Nation Musical." This was the second in a series of two articles.

## Realignment

As *Musical America* had predicted, good music proved to be a good business opportunity, at least for the new radio industry, and in the short term. This is evident in the largesse they were able to dispense in support of American composers and performers, much to the satisfaction of the good music supporters. Whether the radio networks profited directly from good music in ways that justified these expenditures; or if they calculated that this support for good music would benefit their overall merchandising structure; or perhaps, if they intended simply that these expenditures demonstrate their compliance with government requirements that they serve the community good, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What can be seen is that radio grew at a tremendous rate and that it changed the society as it grew; and in addition, that the actions of individuals in both the good music community and in the business community suggest that their attitudes were transformed in the process.

### The Beginning of Change in the Good Music Community

In April of 1930 the federation met to outline new goals, including a push to include music in the curriculum of the “general college student.” They also announced they would offer cash prizes to encourage new compositions: \$1,000 for a symphony or for a symphonic poem; \$500 for a work for three part women's chorus; and \$500 for a trio for violin, cello, and pianoforte.<sup>470</sup> However, the federation's prizes had been dwarfed by awards The Victor Company announced the following month: \$25,000 in total prize money to four of America's most promising

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<sup>470</sup> "Federation Offers Composers' Prizes," *Musical America* 50, no. 14 (September 1, 1930): 42.

composers: Ernest Bloch, Russell Bennett, Aaron Copland and Louis Gruenberg; and again, by a total of \$25,000 offered to young singers by the National Broadcasting Company in the Kent Radio Contest later that year.<sup>471</sup> Perhaps more importantly, in the following decade the networks would offer an “enormous amount” of airtime to American composers. As Margaret Key has shown, “the 1930s represented a ‘golden age’ of new American composition on radio.”<sup>472</sup> However, broadcasts and recordings produced by the companies included a full range of musical styles, including some that good music activists considered anathema.

Reactionary attempts of the MTNA and the federation to restrict radio and the types of music of which they disapproved in 1930 stand in contrast to the pragmatism that arose after that point, and this may be seen in an address given by a somewhat younger music educator, Elizabeth Beach, the following year. Beach was the Assistant Supervisor of Music in Syracuse, New York at the time she spoke on the radio in April 1931. Later that year she would found a Christmas Carol Festival for the public schools in Syracuse that the CBS Radio Network would feature in national broadcasts, and in 1934 she became Supervisor of Music in Syracuse. Beach attained enough prominence in her career that her papers are housed in the Music Educators National Conference Historical Center, and her career included significant international travel. For two years she directed the University Travel-Study Club of Cornell University, and she spent many summers working as a tour guide in Europe.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> "Victor Prize Divided Among Five Composers, Including Ernest Bloch," *Musical America* 50, no. 10 (May 25, 1930): 3; "Russell Bennett Wins \$10,000 for Two Works in Victor Contest," *Musical America* 50, no. 12 (July 1, 1930): 4; "\$25,000 Victor Prize," *Musical America* 50, no. 14 (September 1, 1930): 6; "Ten Singers Divide \$25,000 Prizes in Kent Radio Contest Funds," *Musical America* 50, no. 20 (December 25, 1930): 26.

<sup>472</sup> Margaret Susan Key, "'Sweet melody over silent wave': Depression-era radio and the American composer" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1995), 5-6.

<sup>473</sup> Special Collections in Performing Arts University of Maryland Libraries, "Elizabeth V. Beach Collection," Accessed July 20, 2006, <<http://www.lib.umd.edu/PAL/SCPA/MENC/beach.html#Biography>>.

In her address, Beach seems to encapsulate the existing situation for good music advocates, including the need for a new and constructive approach at a time when many of her peers may have been inclined to continue making futile gestures at over-reaching social control. She began by saying, “Ruskin says there are three things every man ought to know: 1<sup>st</sup>-where he is; 2<sup>nd</sup>-where he is going; 3<sup>rd</sup>-what he is going to do about it.”

Beach’s observations and the goals she will outline are focused and even simple, but still quite ambitious:

There are today 20,000,000 pupils in the public schools of the United States.... If the next generation is to love good music...that love and appreciation must be developed in them today while they are pupils in the schools.... Knowing where we are—in charge of millions of girls and boys in our schools today; and knowing where we are going—to the next generation—it is for the educators to determine what is to be done.<sup>474</sup>

Although ambitious, her goals are stripped of the grandiose visions of universal appreciation expressed by some of her predecessors. They are limited to the schools, and they are practical:

We are looking forward to the day when every school in Syracuse may have its own glee club, its own band and its own orchestra. We are looking forward to the time when every boy and girl desiring it may received a thorough grounding in music and a practical experience in a school musical organization. When that

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<sup>474</sup> Elizabeth V. Beach, "Radio Talk Given by E. V. Beach, Syracuse, New York, April 13, 1931," in *University of Maryland Performing Arts Library, Special Collections in the Performing Arts: MENC Historical Center, Elizabeth V. Beach Collection* (College Park, Maryland: 1931), 1.

time comes, we shall have added to the school curriculum one more spot of brightness and cheer. We shall have brought the school a bit nearer to actual participation in the thought world of the student, and we shall have enriched the lives of our boys and girls.<sup>475</sup>

The speech is a marker of a generational change.

### **The Radio Industry Positions Itself**

Good music advocates such as William Arms Fisher had argued for a publicly financed system such as the BBC, and would continue to do so until passage of the 1934 Communications Act secured the existing structure. In the years between the Radio Act of 1927 and the Communications Act of 1934, a relatively weak Federal Radio Commission reallocated radio frequencies in ways that generally favored commercial stations and curtailed educational ones, continuing the movement toward the funding and control structure for radio that eventually prevailed. The commercial nature of radio was hotly contested during this period, and competing bills revamping the funding and frequency allocation of radio were debated in Congress.

Two organizations epitomized the opposing sides of the debate over radio's future. Both were formed in 1930 to lobby on behalf of radio's future: the National Committee on Education by Radio, or NACER, formed by educators and other supporters of non-commercial radio, who wanted to have frequencies set aside for use by independent, non-commercial stations; and the

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 6.



similarly named National Advisory Council on Radio Education, or NACRE, which represented the radio industry's views, and which advocated "cooperation" between educators and radio networks: essentially maintaining the status quo. As Joseph Horowitz explains in his book *Understanding Toscanini*, allegiances were somewhat complex:

Adherents of Cooperation comprised an alliance of university and radio leaders. Opponents included members of the university community partial to NACER and members of the radio community hostile to prescribed high culture. Prominent among the latter was the swashbuckling John Royal, whom another NBC executive once characterized as having "no respect for educational features" and "lacking in appreciation of anything cultural."<sup>476</sup>

During the last years of the Hoover administration, supporters of non-commercial radio lobbied for passage of the Fess bill, which mandated that 15 percent of all channels be for educational use, but that bill failed to pass. Following the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a new bill was introduced that would have led to an even more radical restructuring of radio. The Wagner-Hatfield bill, as it was known, proposed that all existing licenses be declared null and void ninety days after the bill took effect, and also mandated that in the frequency reallocation that would follow, 25 percent of all radio broadcasting facilities would be assigned to non-

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<sup>476</sup> Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music*, 1st ed. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1987), 195. For more on NACER and NACRE, see Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini*, 194-96; Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: A Tower in Babel*, 261-64, 68, 82-83. See also "Educators Versus Commercial Radio: The Triumph of Consumer Culture in the 1930s," Chapter Six in Joel Spring, *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992). Susan Smulyan also deals extensively with the extremely negative reaction of "educators, publishers, and reformers" to commercialized, network programming in "Drunk and Disorderly: The Backlash against Broadcast Advertising," Chapter Five of Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 125-53.

commercial uses: “educational, religious, agricultural, labor, cooperative, and similar non-profit-making associations.” Wagner-Hatfield appeared to have sufficient support in Congress for passage, but supporters of commercial radio outmaneuvered radio reformers. Wagner-Hatfield was sidelined and effectively derailed by a successful proposal that its concerns and the solutions it proposed be studied by a new entity, and not by Congress itself: the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC; and with that, advocates of commercial radio won the day.<sup>477</sup>

During the period leading up to the passage of the bill that created the FCC, The Communications Act of 1934, radio industry executives faced an exceedingly complex public relations challenge. Using an untried medium to reach an audiences that had never before existed, they needed to satisfy their multiple audiences with a variety of programming, without the benefit of guidance that would be provided by opinion research in later years; they needed to retain the confidence of their advertisers, who were spending the very large sums of money that underwrote the entire enterprise, and to balance the sometimes intrusive opinions of these advertisers with regard to the type of programming needed against their own sense of network branding. Finally but perhaps most importantly, they needed to satisfy federal legislators that a commercial system of broadcasting was the right system for America, in order that it not all be brought down like a house of cards by the sort of sweeping legislative changes proposed by the opponents of commercial broadcasting.

This last area of concern was the subject of an unsigned memorandum extant in the Owen D. Young papers at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. It seems to have been intended to serve as part of a presentation on the existing radio structure and may well have had Young as its author. In any case, the February 15, 1932 “Memorandum on Advertising and the

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<sup>477</sup> *Congressional Record*, v. 78, pp. 8828-29, quoted in: Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: The Golden Web*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 24.

American System of Broadcasting” lays out the position General Electric wanted to present to Congress on the appropriate structure and funding mechanism for the emerging radio industry.

The memo begins,

The cultural programs which have been described to you constitute a service contributed to the public by the National Broadcasting Company out of its income. The cost of talent, wire lines, follow-up and experimentation is tremendous. How is it to be met?<sup>478</sup>

By noting what would be required as an alternative to commercial funding—new taxes—the memorandum could make a politically powerful point, and it continued this line of attack: “There are some who answer in good faith, by government ownership and the operation of facilities, with the levying of an annual tax on every receiver. It is substantially this system which is now in vogue in Great Britain.”

In describing the British system, the memorandum suggested it was fundamentally contrary to American sensibilities:

The policy of the British Broadcasting system Corporation is apparently based on the assumption that the listener does not know what is best for him and that management should provide not what the listener wants, but what management thinks he ought to want. For those who share these views, the American system will never be satisfactory....<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> "Advertising and the American System of Broadcasting."

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

The American commercial system, by contrast, was said to involve a free choice on the part of the listener:

Under that American system, programs are financed not by taxation, but by national advertisers. The so-called commercial programs—that is, those which these advertisers themselves present—have as their primary purpose, the building of good-will among the groups which are the advertisers' most likely customers.... The first aim of these advertisers is not to make direct sales over the air; it is, I repeat, to build good-will.... In other words, the powerful leverage of self-interest is constantly working in these commercially sponsored programs to give the people what they want....

Explaining the full range of benefits it contended were brought about by the availability of corporate funding by advertisers for the purpose of building “good-will” among listeners, the memorandum concluded:

But that is not the whole of the story. These commercially sponsored programs provide the broad base, financially and otherwise...which makes possible our operatic and symphonic broadcasts, the time we devote to government, education and religion, to the many questions...which are and must be of public concern in such as democracy as ours.... This, briefly, is what I

understand by the phrase, the American system of  
broadcasting....<sup>480</sup>

David Sarnoff approached the same argument from a different direction in a 1930 address to the Chamber of Commerce in Rochester, New York, titled “Educational and Cultural Roles of Modern Industry.” Sarnoff had risen through the ranks of American Marconi and its successor company, Radio Corporation of America, and was President of RCA at the time. In it he ridiculed the positions of those who denied the possibility of a connection between business, and the arts and education. Rochester, Sarnoff said, had “a splendid symphony orchestra” and “cultural and educational enterprises in other fields” that had been funded by the profits of the city’s businesses. “Through the support lent by business men,” Sarnoff said, “Rochester, an industrial city, has become an important center of musical art.” Still, he noted, “there are those who hold that it is incongruous to associate industry with culture and education. Every now and then someone arises to discover the cloven hoof of business – the profit making motive.”<sup>481</sup>

Sarnoff then proceeded to expose what he contended was the untenable position of those questioning the value of culture built upon the profits of industry. “It is probable,” he said, “that those who expressed their doubts about a civilization built upon the profit motive of industry availed themselves of typewriters to express their ideas... (2). He also noted that the nation’s public library system “traces its origin to the steel mills of Pittsburgh,” and that the “greatest foundation for medical and health research in the world grew out of the oil fields of Pennsylvania and Ohio” (3).

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> David Sarnoff, "Educational and Cultural Roles of Modern Industry," January 20, 1930, 1. David Sarnoff Library in Princeton, NJ.

Directly confronting the fears of good music activists, Sarnoff noted that although “radio broadcasting was first developed as a medium of entertainment, largely musical in character,” it had come to be accepted by “leading musicians and music teachers...as a service to musical culture.” Still, he continued, “Time has still to answer the doubts of those who fear the ultimate effect upon music if we are to become a nation of listeners. Appreciation, it is said, may grow flabby if the incentive to self-education in music is lost” (5).

Although they were in fierce competition in the marketplace, NBC and CBS shared a similar interest with regard to communications legislation, and CBS joined NBC in lobbying Congress for passage of the Communications Act of 1934. One example of this was a presentation by William S. Paley, President of The Columbia Broadcasting System, before the Federal Communications Commission on October 17, 1934, in which he outlined “the economic and social philosophy of America’s radio industry.” The address was later published under the title “Radio as a Cultural Force.”

In his talk, Paley offers a variation of the same point made in General Electric’s February 15, 1932 “Memorandum on Advertising and the American System of Broadcasting,” that the profits made by communications corporations allowed them to serve the public good. Paley argued:

Because radio is a sound business enterprise, it is able to make, and actually does make...a continuously effective contribution toward our nation’s cultural development.... In no other country of the world has radio broadcasting reached the development it has achieved here...the fundamental reason for this...is that it is the most widely interesting broadcasting in the

world.... I do not believe any...realignment of existing facilities,  
as has been proposed, would result in a more effective service than  
radio is now performing daily....<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> William S. Paley, *Radio as a Cultural Force* (1934), 1-2.

## CHAPTER 5: COMMERCIALIZATION AND JOINING THE SYSTEM

Looking back over recent decades, good music advocates in the nineteen-thirties who wanted to do so could have found satisfaction in what had been accomplished. However, as the decade opened many chose instead to focus on a perceived decline in the private study of music that was attributed to concurrent, dramatic gains in the numbers of people listening to music. Concerns over radio's influence on the level of participation in musical study and performance, and concerns about the effect that widespread exposure to jazz and other popular musical styles might have on the development of musical taste in the public led to reactionary efforts such as the "ban on jazz" discussed in the previous chapter.

Despite this there were many who perceived it was an era of promise. *Musical America* reported in May of 1930 that pianist and conductor Rudolph Ganz was sounding a "note of optimism," even as many others were "bemoaning a cruel fate" that was "'killing' music." While Ganz conceded there had been "an inhibition...temporarily placed upon the American people by the enormous advertising of mechanized music," this was "counteracted" by enormous gains made in public school music education. Ganz celebrated the excellent quality of high school orchestral musicians he had encountered, and also noted that despite abandonment of concert series by some cities, others had "more concerts than ever before." By the middle of the nineteen-thirties such optimism would prevail, at least among the leaders of the good music campaign.



## The Results of the Campaign for Good Music

From today's perspective the campaign for good music was extravagantly successful in many ways. Although advocates for good music did not succeed in creating universal preference for good music, they received quite a consolation prize in its place: recognition of good music by the new mass communications industry as its supreme product line, the premium offering in a wide range of entertainment options. To a certain extent this represented the successful harnessing of the tremendous power of the music business, the very goal good music activists had identified in the middle of the nineteen-twenties. Due in large part to their efforts, consumers had indeed been influenced in ways that had increased the demand for good music in the marketplace. Improvements in public school music education, together with concerted efforts to improve music in civic and religious settings, had resulted in a noticeable evolution of public taste. *Recent Social Trends* summarized these developments with approval:

The outstanding factors with regard to music are the increase in radio broadcasting of excellent music excellently performed, and the growth in quality and quantity of music in the public schools, especially in the secondary grades. The two have in a measure been inter-related, the radio bringing to many people both inside and outside the school system their first intimation of the full scope of music; and the schools, with their increased and improved instruction, helping to provide an audience sufficiently large to warrant a wider broadcasting of good music. It is significant that changed radio standards have come about through

growing popular interest and the decision of independent commercial concerns, not through government control....<sup>483</sup>

Good music was now being heard on the farm, in small towns, and in the major cities with a frequency as never before seen. Such genuine progress made it easier for good music activists to accept, at long last, the new reality Alexander Fried had announced in his scathing 1928 article, "The Prestige of Good Music": "A democratized public is freely indulging the universal human impulse to enjoy music, but in the modern commonwealth the populace chooses its own pleasures, and follows its own taste with little reference to the suggestion of specialized authority...."<sup>484</sup>

However, this acceptance must have been a bitter pill for many. Results were not in line with the deepest beliefs and hopes of good music supporters: they had not achieved their central goal of converting the public to a love of good music. They had believed such a universal conversion was possible; that good music could benefit *all* citizens, and that education would lead everyone to appreciate, cherish, and choose it. They had also imagined radio would be their ally in the fight for good music rather than a neutral if sympathetic partner.

Instead of facilitating the triumph of their particular vision, radio accomplished nearly the opposite. The most determined core of the good music activists had sought to establish a unitary hierarchy of musical value. If in their nearly religious fervor they had envisioned a sort of musical monotheism, then the pantheistic product of radio's expansion was a severe blow. Americans had increasingly easy access to good music, yet they also were tempted by a cornucopia of alternatives, from jazz to "hillbilly music."

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<sup>483</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 988.

<sup>484</sup> Fried, "The Prestige of Good Music," 29.

## Improvements in Good Music Attributed to Radio

Documentary evidence suggests that by 1935 the prevailing tone in the good music community has shifted away from resistance, toward a pragmatic acceptance and even, at times, an embrace of the new technologies and the industries that used them. Speaking to the gathered members of the Music Teacher's National Association in that year, Ernest LaPrade was upbeat and unabashedly pro-radio. LaPrade was a violinist who served as assistant conductor of the New York Symphony, a vantage point that brought him into regular contact with radio broadcasting.<sup>485</sup> His initial remarks are sheer nonsense but show his desire to ease the concerns of his auditors regarding radio's influence: "Orchestras and the radio belong to the category of natural affinities," he says. "Like ham and eggs, they are capable of independent existence, but achieve their highest destiny only in partnership."<sup>486</sup>

The figures he cites in response to long-expressed concerns about the effect of commercial radio on the health of the nation's orchestras are truly impressive. Because orchestral music was "least remunerative," as LaPrade described it, there had been concerns that they would be the first to suffer from the availability of free music radio provided. Instead, he reported growth:

In 1920 there were thirteen first-class orchestras in twelve American cities. Today, in spite of the radio—and in spite of the depression (which was *not* foreseen by the prophets of 1920)—twelve of those orchestras still exist. One of them did shut up

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<sup>485</sup> Sondra Wieland Howe, "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch, 1928-1942," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 51, no. 1 (2003): 69.

<sup>486</sup> Ernest LaPrade, "Orchestras and the Radio," in *Music Teachers' National Association National Convention*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association., 1935): 197.

shop, but the radio had nothing to do with that. Neither had the depression...it appears that since the birth of broadcasting we have lost one out of thirteen symphony orchestras. But while we were losing one we were gaining four: the National Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Kansas City Symphony and the Seattle Symphony. That is a net increase of nearly twenty-five per cent (197-98).

In addition, LaPrade reported overwhelming progress with regard to school orchestras:

Fifteen years ago, the public school orchestra was almost unheard of. Today, according to the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, there are more than 35,000. Allowing an average of fifty players to each orchestra—which is conservative—this means that nearly two million young people are engaged, during their most impressionable years, in the study and practice of symphonic music. What a reservoir of talent for our orchestras to draw upon, and what a backlog for future subscription lists (198)!

“Evidently, he concluded, “radio has not killed off the orchestras. Apparently it has not even prevented them from multiplying. But has it actually helped them?... (199)”

LaPrade also reported that radio had indeed produced the long-desired availability of good music to rural citizens of the country:

Some NBC statisticians went into a huddle the other day and emerged with the information that a Texas ranchman, a Kansas farmer, or a Montana miner could tune in more symphonic

programs this winter than any New Yorker, Londoner, or Berliner could possibly hear if he attended every concert given in his city from October to April (200).

In addition, LaPrade trumpeted the money made available to American composers in the form of prizes for composing competitions, noting especially The NBC Orchestral Awards. These, he said, “not only proved unusually attractive but produced unusually satisfactory results. The total number of scores submitted was 576, and the five prize-winning works have found a permanent place in the repertoires of our leading orchestras.” NBC, he reported, was offering yet another series of awards at this point, for chamber works (201-02).

All could attest to the improvement in performance standards that had taken place since the advent of networked broadcasting. “Potted palm” music<sup>487</sup> featuring local artists of dubious quality had given way to artists of the first rank, broadcast nationally into living rooms all across the country. More than ever *Musical America*’s assertion of 1925 was becoming a reality: “Standards are high—competition is staggering—mediocrity strives vainly to hold a place against genius—but success, more than ever before, attends those who have qualities or equipment beyond the usual.”<sup>488</sup>

Unfortunately, initial radio demographics had been less equalitarian than the “musical missionary” vision: the level of radio ownership tended to correspond directly with income, which was much higher in urban areas than it was in rural ones.<sup>489</sup> However, for residents of all sorts of locations who were able to afford the purchase of radios, the entertainment industry was at long last providing answers to long-standing problems with the widespread distribution of

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<sup>487</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>488</sup> “Music as An Art and a Business.”

<sup>489</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 1, 211-12.

high quality performances and the national management of concerts, while making infusions of money into the good music arena. Best of all, radio was developing an enthusiastic following for what it was doing. The country was falling in love with the radio, and it must have seemed sheer folly for anyone to attempt to swim against such a rip tide, instead of attempting to use it to travel to new places.

Yet there were downsides to the progress. Although broadcasting gains were not part of a zero-sum equation, the advantages radio brought in the amount of music listened to and in the quality of performances were offset by some undesirable outcomes.

### **Losses Attributed at Least in Part to the Radio**

Many of the fears expressed about the effects of technology by the more apprehensive members of the good music coalition had been realized. *Recent Social Trends* reported,

The general impression that during the greater part of the present decade there has been a falling off in the music actually performed in the home, due both to the development of mechanical instruments and the restlessness of modern life, is confirmed by the statistics of the sale of musical instruments, which have shown a sharp drop. Between 1925 and 1929 the total value of musical instruments and materials produced in the United States dropped from \$164,392,000 to \$77,843,000. In 1925, 306,594 pianos of all kinds were manufactured, in 1929 only 133,404.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 990.

Moreover, although there was greatly increased activity in the public schools, and in choral programs at the college and university level, it seemed that the success stopped there. For the most part, it did not carry over into the communities. The vision of a musical America was not being realized, at least not in its original form.<sup>491</sup>

LaPrade addressed those concerns in his 1935 address to music teachers. Broadcasters, he said, “thus far...have directed most of their educational efforts toward the development of better listeners.” While that had been necessary in the early stages of radio, he claimed,

broadcasters have not lost sight of the importance of participation.

They fully realized that though a nation of good listeners was a desirable objective, a nation of singers and players was a better one, and for several years they have been experimenting with programs intended to attain that second objective....<sup>492</sup>

Networked broadcasting improved the quality of performances being broadcast over the radio, but it did so at the expense of many performers of lesser abilities, who saw opportunities to appear on local radio programs disappear. Even as this was happening, the emerging music schools and university music departments were producing musicians of higher and higher quality. Thus, as radio grew in popularity, it had the simultaneous effect of increasing quality while reducing the number of performance opportunities available for young singers and players, as radio performances displaced live ones.

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<sup>491</sup> *Recent Social Trends* writes, “We still must ask ourselves the question, ‘What happens to all the skill and interest gained in schools when the students graduate into the community?’ Despite the examples already offered ... it must be said that throughout the country there is less carry over than one would expect.” *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 991.

<sup>492</sup> LaPrade, “Orchestras and the Radio,” 202; *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1935), 202.

Prior to the rise of networked radio and the movies, a large number of traveling troupes of entertainers had found opportunities for work, and for a time there had been significant opportunities for musicians to play for silent films. *Recent Social Trends* reported, “Not only the radio but the talking picture, which has operated to deprive many musicians of positions in theaters, is rapidly making it impossible for any but the most talented and expert performers to succeed in the profession. On the other hand, the high schools are training boys and girls in numbers previously undreamed of to sing and play good music with skill, but with no thought of becoming professionals.”<sup>493</sup>

### **The Transformation of the Good Music Campaign**

1930 was a pivotal year for the movement, one filled with conflicting views about the condition of music and about its future. By 1935, documentary evidence suggests that an equilibrium of sorts had been reached, and the outlines of the new order can be seen. Organizations devoted to the furtherance of a musical America, including the National Federation of Music Clubs” and “Music Teachers National Association,” continued their activities on behalf of music in America, and remain a major presence in the culture.

From federation committee reports it is evident that their operation was continuing on an impressive scale. The report of their “Department of Publicity” provides an account of the powerful means available to the organization for disseminating information:

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<sup>493</sup> United States. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *RST*, vol. 2, 988.



six newspapers, twenty-seven music journals, thirty-one state bulletins, assisted in disseminating publicity releases. Thirty-eight states have radio chairmen and are using the national radio releases regularly.

One hundred newspapers in thirty-five states carried from three columns to a full page of Federation publicity in connection with state conventions which were attended by the National President. A six weeks' series of broadcasts over NBC was carried on under the direction of the First Vice-President, Mrs. Elmer James Ottaway.<sup>494</sup>

It had taken decades, but by the middle of the 1930s greater tolerance at last gained respectability even among the elite in the good music community. Contact with the broader public tended to moderate partisan views. An article published in *Music Supervisors' Journal* in December of 1935 shows that such moderate sensibilities were also held by music educators in the Pittsburgh Public Schools at that time. Titled, "Aims and Objectives of Music Education," it conveys the results of a study conducted during the school year 1932-33, revealing a music curriculum designed to allow a high degree of integration into the general education objectives of the district while maintaining specific goals related to musical achievement. The report states that their "specific aim" was, "To develop appreciation and love of beauty through contact with, and the endeavor to create and re-create, the beautiful in music."<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Ruth Haller Ottaway, "Department of Publicity," *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs* (National Federation of Music Clubs, Ithaca, N.Y., 1935), 159.

<sup>495</sup> Florence L. Shute, Wallace Frost, and Mollie E. Laffey, "Aims and Objectives of Music Education," *Music Supervisor's Journal* 20, no. 2 (1933): 17.

Perhaps struggling with the possible disparity between lofty discussions about music and the need to relate music to the lives of their students, the report broaches the topic of “classical” music as opposed to “popular” music, explores relative musical value, and in addition, the meaning of “‘idealism’ in relation to music.” It says that:

It is necessary...to agree on a definition of music. Such terms as “classical” and “popular” are meaningless. Actually, classical music is the music of the classical period, roughly, from 1650 to 1800. Classical is not a term of appraisal. All genuine appraisal of music is made on internal evidence in the music itself. Some of the music of the greatest composers is dull, while occasional flashes of inspiration can come from anywhere. The important thing is to have a basis of judgment consisting of acquaintance with music. Music is in the world, it is a *human need*; clearly it is required of the schools to provide the opportunity to understand it. There is no war between two opinions, only the wish to know and so to enjoy.

It is also necessary, in view of the use of the term *ideal* in our outline, to dispel any vagueness that may hang about the term *idealism* in relation to music. Professor Mursell...deprecates what he calls “starry-eyed idealism.” In teaching music, we present two

ideals—the ideal of excellence of the music itself, and the ideal of superior performance.<sup>496</sup>

While declaring their desire to create an atmosphere of excellence, the report of the Pittsburgh Public Schools maintains a straightforward tone that reflects the sensibilities of front-line music educators used to repeated contact with the public.

Radio brought with it a level of cultural pluralism, and this led to more tolerance among the good music community. This can be seen in John Tasker Howard's comments in his paper at the National Federation of Music Clubs' 1935 Biennial convention, "Changed Conditions for The American Composer," in which Howard maintains that the marketplace is accomplishing great things for good music.

Responding to his auditors' dislike of commercialism, and with it, the advertisers who were behind it, Howard allowed that "these gentlemen seem short-sighted to us at times, and they are often singularly lacking in vision, but what they are trying to do is to please the public, even though they may have a foggy idea of what that public wants." That Howard made such comments in a presentation to federation members suggests a significant shift in thinking had occurred within the community of good music supporters over the past decade, since the time in 1925 when *Musical America* had asserted that the leadership of America's music business was "no place for the tyro, the gambler or the bungler..." and argued that the future of America's music was being worked out "by men no whit less able than the heads of great steel or oil corporations."<sup>497</sup> John Tasker Howard continued to believe that the genius of free enterprise would benefit the cause of music in America, but not because of the efforts of business leaders.

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid.: 16.

<sup>497</sup> "Music as An Art and a Business."

He argued, rather, that the marketplace would support the growth of American music because the public would require it:

Thanks first to Theodore Thomas, and after him to the phonograph and the radio, we have an increasing public for symphonic music. Whatever the public demands it will eventually get, even though the immediate control lies in the hands of boards of directors, and in the case of radio, with commercial advertisers.<sup>498</sup>

While this statement echoed views that had motivated the federation's "great campaign," and were not new in that sense, the tone has changed, and become far more accommodating. Howard further asserted that market forces could work to the benefit of American composers. Arguing that "recognition of American composers must come from the audiences," he explained,

If the great audience for concerts can learn that there is a vast literature of music (the fact that it is American is beside the question) which it would enjoy hearing more often, and program sponsors learn that it wants to hear that music, then American music will be performed so frequently that foreign nations may come to protest against our neglect of their composers.

In the short term, he says, American audiences may "prefer the "Isle of Capri" to a Brahms symphony," but nonetheless,

music lovers (whether they have been educated by the radio, the phonograph or by concerts which they have attended) are

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<sup>498</sup> Howard, "Changed Conditions for the American Composer," 39.

undeniably better able to judge for themselves than they were a few years ago. And what is most important of all, they are becoming honest.<sup>499</sup>

Radio gave the public an autonomy that was new: a level of control to over the music they were offered, at least to the extent that the radio networks could discern their desires. This freedom was a necessary part of the market, a fundamental aspect of a new consumer dynamic that Howard and others felt would benefit American music in the long run. While radio had led to a decline in the level of study of instruments, it also had increased the public's level of musical sophistication and transformed the nature of their reaction to radio programs.

In an address at the following biennial meeting in 1937, Davidson Taylor of the Columbia Broadcasting System also noted an increase in audience sophistication, and described changes in the reactions of radio audiences to contemporary compositions. "As you know," he said,

this has been an extraordinary year for visits by living composers to the United States. It used to be true that contemporary music on the air brought more protest than praise from our listeners. This year the situation has changed radically. I recall a series of broadcasts on the chamber music of Paul Hindemith made in 1933, which produced the angriest and bitterest letters I have ever seen come from the radio audience. Two weeks ago yesterday, Hindemith himself made his first American appearance at the Library of Congress Festival in Washington and we broadcast the

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.: 39-40.

entire concert, an hour and a half of nothing but Hindemith's music. Not a single letter of protest has come to us to date. On the contrary, there have been many expressions of high praise. On the night after the broadcast, I had a talk with a charming old lady from Iowa who is not and never has been musical. She informed me that she had enjoyed the program enormously, and the number which pleased her particularly was Hindemith's Sonata for Viola Alone, the most difficult and most uncompromising work on the program.<sup>500</sup>

The notion that radio was conditioning Americans in ways that would lead to more support of American composers was a very positive one for members of the federation, who had long considered support of composers to be an important aspect of their mission. The federation's "Department of American Music" was charged with this responsibility, which included securing "adequate recognition for serious native composers and artists," both at home and abroad.<sup>501</sup> The president's Summary of General Activities in the Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs for 1933-35 noted that

American composers have been given recognition on club, state, and national programs; there has been a definite increase in the number of American artists presented in club and civic concert series; a greater number of American programs have been

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<sup>500</sup> Davidson Taylor, "Educational Programs and the Radio Audience," *Ibid.* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1937), 55.

<sup>501</sup> Harold S. Dyer, "Department of American Music," *Ibid.*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Philadelphia: 1935): 143.

presented in foreign countries; and folk music research has been stimulated through Federation interest.<sup>502</sup>

Not only the goals and outlook of good music supporters were changed by the rise of radio; the music business community was also transformed. It would continue to grow in sophistication, in the level of its profits, and in its influence over the society, as it had since the introduction of the reproducing piano and the “talking machine” in the nineteenth century. However, in addition, men in the radio business would also seem to cross over and take an active role in the promotion of good music as the decade of the 1930s progressed.

### **The Federation Moves On: “Musical Appreciation” and “Leisure Time Activities”**

With the acceptance of the new commercial radio industry and the relinquishment of the dream of universal love of good music, music club members were able to engage the world in a new way, more like it truly was. They embraced the growing community of listeners to good music via the radio by adopting a new emphasis on music appreciation, advocating the use for musical ends of perceived gains in leisure time by average Americans.

By the 1935 meeting of the National Federation of Music Clubs the “talkies” had become “motion pictures,” the Communications Act of 1934 had solidified the structure of commercial radio, and the federation’s response to both media had become more sophisticated. The process of creating a musical America was an ongoing task starting anew with each generation, and a great deal of work remained for The National Federation of Music Clubs despite all that had been attained. The federation assigned committees to every arena related to its mission which

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<sup>502</sup> Agnes Bishop Jardine, "Reports of National Officers," Ibid. (Ithaca, N.Y.): 99.

acted on its behalf. A large portion of this activity fell under the general heading of education, and committee reports within the Department of Education section of the 1935 proceedings reveal their wide-ranging scope. The Department of Education, however, was only one of ten Federation departments submitting reports, seven at the Senior Division level and three at the Junior Division level.

The 1935 Department of Education report includes the following committee reports: Music in The Schools and College; Conference-Civic Music; Conference-Subsidization of Music; Library Extension; Music in The Home; Radio; Motion Pictures; Young Artists' and Student Musicians' Contests; and National Music Research, a section of Department of Education that was distinct from a completely separate Department of American Music.<sup>503</sup> The Department of American Music pursued three goals: (1) to secure adequate recognition for serious native composers and artists; (2) to foster both choral and folk festivals; (3) to encourage native folk research; and offered reports of its own activities under the headings "Orchestra And Chamber Music," "International Music Relations," and "Choral Music."<sup>504</sup>

The responsibility of those in the federation's "radio education" subject area seems primarily one of monitoring radio programs in order to encourage the utilization of existing opportunities on radio, which were then still new and exciting. Their report explains that, at first, music clubs had not taken the notion of using the radio for education seriously,

because the listening public was at that time only beginning to  
realize the great possibilities of those "magic waves" which bring

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<sup>503</sup> *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver, vol. I, Nineteenth Biennial Meeting of the National Federation of Music Clubs (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935), Second contents page.

<sup>504</sup> Harold S. Dyer, "Department of American Music," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Philadelphia: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935): 143-52.



to the radio audience symphony programs, operas, glorious voices, great possibilities of those "magic waves" which bring to the radio audience symphony programs, operas, glorious voices, presidential campaigns, summaries of news commentators, music appreciation, schools of the air--education for all!<sup>505</sup>

By the time of this report, however, the federation had state radio chairmen in all but four states, whose work "centered itself on the broadcasting of club programs, using the best available talent and embracing opportunities to talk of Federation work." In addition, "'listen in' groups" offered their "most valuable" comments to radio stations.<sup>506</sup>

The federation's role with regard to the movies had become pro-active rather than reactionary. They sought to influence the effect of movies offered to the public by promoting those they considered worthy. This approach demonstrated a level of subtlety that bespoke a significant transformation in less than five years, occurring since the time in 1930 when the federation had endorsed a "ban on jazz."<sup>507</sup>

This change is striking, but a great deal had happened since 1930. Perhaps the most important event had been the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, which had demonstrated that American society would impose limits on the amount of social control it would tolerate. Yet during the same period there had also been other moves in the direction of censorship to which good music activists might have looked for inspiration, including the imposition of industry self-censorship affecting both the movies and radio. These had occurred during a period during which there had been strong resistance to the commercial nature of radio, preceding the passage of the

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<sup>505</sup> *Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935*, 133.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> See Chapter 5; also, "Federation of Music Clubs Plans Cooperation With Other Groups," 3, 4.

Communications Act of 1934, a period during which radio networks had sought to reassure the public and the Congress of their responsiveness to community needs.

Both radio broadcasters and the movie industry had established codes of conduct in order to satisfy their critics. Because movies vividly portrayed using both sound and visual images, they were considered to have a particularly volatile potential for wreaking havoc with the morals of the nation's youth.<sup>508</sup> In response to these fears, the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association agreed upon a means of self-censorship known as the "Hays Code" in 1930, but only began to enforce it in 1934. The fact that the movie industry was highly centralized, together with the strong consensus about its potential for harm, created a situation in which censorship could be enforced more easily than it could in radio and allowed something like the Hays Code to be imposed and enforced.<sup>509</sup>

By contrast, the radio industry was less centralized and also at a more volatile stage in its development. Independent stations vied with the networks for listeners; and large numbers of citizens actively opposed the commercial nature of the industry as it was emerging. Radio network executives walked a tightrope of public and legislative opinion, but were particularly preoccupied with retaining the loyalties of as many listeners as possible in order to retain the confidence of businesses who paid them large sums of money in order to advertise their products.

The radio networks imposed self-censorship codes in response to directives from the newly created Federal Communications Commission, which in turn was responding to intense pressure from PTAs and women's organizations concerned about children's programming.

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<sup>508</sup> Spring, *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television*, 68-70.

<sup>509</sup> "Motion Picture Association of America," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2008), 5 July 2008 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9053963>>.

Radio's actions were modeled on those in the movie industry. On a network by network basis, and in a way that reflected market competition of the time, radio embraced a limited self-censorship.<sup>510</sup> Thus by 1935 American industry was actively working to ensure the proper moral content both of radio and movies.<sup>511</sup>

Regardless of the reason, by 1935 the federation's stance with regard to the media seems to have moderated. While it noted changes in the film industry in the official report of the education committee, the federation seemed to accept a posture that allowed the industry a wide berth to police itself, even as it sought to influence the sort of films the public would be likely to see through the use of positive reinforcement. The committee responsible for motion pictures reported, "Many changes have taken place in the motion picture world during the past two years. Music lovers will undoubtedly have better fare and with the new technique of recording and reproducing music, the federation is bound to become more active." Part of this increased activity was already evident in a "letter of inquiry directed to all state presidents asking for the names of state chairmen of motion pictures or for the name of some one willing to act in that capacity until a chairman was appointed." This query elicited responses from thirty-seven state organizations.<sup>512</sup>

The federation had created a two-pronged approach with regard to movies. On the one hand, in order to create new venues for good music and opportunities for young talent, it had entered into an agreement with Universal Pictures, which it said "planned to have judges present

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<sup>510</sup> Derek W. Vaillant, "Sounds of Whiteness: Urban Musical Subcultures, Race and the Public Interest on Chicago Airwaves, 1921-1935," in *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 238-39. For a further discussion of censorship in radio and in the movies, see Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

<sup>511</sup> Spring, *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television*, 83-84, 111-21.

<sup>512</sup> Mrs. E. H. Cahil, "Department of Education: Motion Pictures," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Philadelphia: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935): 134.

at our final contest for concert and opera voices, having promised the winners a screen test if they seem to have screen possibilities.” On the other hand, seeking to promote what it considered the best offerings of the studios, the federation apparently reviewed films, compiled lists of those it recommended its members advocate as appropriate for watching, and then printed and distributed these lists to its members. The chairman of the music committee explained their belief that “the Federation can best serve by encouraging those willing and eager to bring good music to the regular theatre. Every good musical film shown automatically displaces one trashy picture—really a matter of substitution rather than censorship.”<sup>513</sup> To a certain extent, the federation had joined the mass media system it had once opposed.

The same report noted one series of one-reel films called “Musical Moods,” which were “based on musical compositions and synchronized with beautiful visual accompaniment in color,” and said that the series promised “a most unusual and exciting experience,” adding that it had been “sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs,” which also planned a contest “in order to obtain new ideas for another series of Musical Moods,” explaining that “One thousand dollars in prizes is offered to individuals or clubs that will suggest the winning compositions and scenario for visual accompaniment.”<sup>514</sup> Indeed, life on the inside seemed far more fruitful than one spent in opposition.

Radio’s growth presented increasing numbers of Americans with choices about the sort of music to which they wanted to listen. As these new radio devotees began to form their listening habits, good music advocates concerned themselves with the development of “music appreciation” among those with little or no musical training. At a meeting of NBC’s Advisory

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid.: 135.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

Council in 1934, Walter Damrosch, whose broadcasts for school children were said to be reaching six million students, addressed the network's responsibility to the larger public:

The need for helping the unemployed or the partially employed to make wise use of their time imposed new obligations upon musician and broadcaster alike. He suggested for consideration a course of half an hour a week on the subject, "What to do with Our Leisure"....<sup>515</sup>

Sigmund Spaeth's address to the 1935 biennial meeting of the federation, "The Art of Enjoying Music," demonstrates the new dynamic in support of music appreciation. It begins with the announcement that "the art of enjoying music is literally possible, even among those who have had no technical training whatever."<sup>516</sup> Spaeth's contention is that the untutored, "common sense of music," shared by all "can be developed into an actual art by the simple process of listening, and, whenever possible, participating as well," and he seems intent on lowering barriers that may be separating music club members from their untutored fellow citizens.

Spaeth encourages music club members to take a greater interest in the education of those not affiliated with the clubs. Music clubs, he says, "have definite opportunities and responsibilities in reaching the so-called 'outsiders' in their communities and developing their musical potentialities." In this regard, he said, "the professional musicians are worse than the

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<sup>515</sup> Walter Damrosch. Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company. *The President's Report and Resume of Programs: Committee Reports. Report of the Chairman, Committee on Music*, Eighth Meeting, 1934, 14. David Sarnoff Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>516</sup> Sigmund Spaeth, "The Art of Enjoying Music," National Federation of Music Clubs in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, Ithaca, N.Y., 1935): 51.

amateurs.” His exhortations recall Seeger’s repeated use of the term “missionaries” in his essay on “Music and Class.”<sup>517</sup> Spaeth explains,

In most cases they are either unwilling or unable to impart any of the glamour of their art to the average listener.... When forced by circumstances, they are willing to teach, but again only in consideration of substantial fees, and reaching only one pupil at a time.<sup>518</sup>

Spaeth seems to ascribe the failure of the make-America-musical campaign to capture a larger audience for good music to its tendency to be overbearing: in effect, a failure of method, rather than an error of intent. He seems to suggest that the newer approaches will be more successful at attaining what had been desired all along:

The musical world is beginning to realize these defects in the system of making America music-conscious, and practical efforts are now being made in the direction of bringing music to the layman in a sensible, intelligible and entertaining fashion. In this campaign the radio, the phonograph, the motion pictures, the schools and to some extent the books, magazines and newspapers are all playing a part.<sup>519</sup>

This new approach offers the hope of success if it is done with incentives and importunings rather than through attempts to coerce, he says. Still, the accomplishment he is aiming for is an improvement in the level of musicality of the public, not the universal elevation

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<sup>517</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286-91.

<sup>518</sup> Spaeth, "The Art of Enjoying Music," 51-52.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*: 52.

of musical experience and acceptance of good music once sought. He says the effort to accomplish this lower level of enrichment of the public will require that new approaches replace others that have grown stale. As he explains this, he concedes that success will not be universal:

There are undoubtedly many who will never progress musically beyond the cheap, the obvious and the commonplace, but it is equally certain that the percentage of these illiterates need not remain permanently as high as it is at present. There are ways of making good music intelligible, interesting and entertaining to any one above the grade of a moron, without resorting to the old and outworn traditions of historical and biographical background, technical terms, or the mere vaporings of sentimentality.<sup>520</sup>

The most essential need, he concludes, is for clubs to turn their attention outward:

If every music club will consider itself such a source of inspiration to its community, instead of merely an inner circle existing only for its own pleasure and enlightenment, then we may perhaps look forward to the time when at least a reasonable proportion of the present outsiders will have developed their instinctive enjoyment into an actual art, a real contribution to the enduring satisfactions of life.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

In a related address on the same program, Henry S. Drinker, Jr. asks, “How may musical amateurs attain the maximum of pleasure and satisfaction from that part of their leisure time which they devote to music?” The answer, he suggests, lies in their love of music:

I am not sure but that the key to the problem lies in a correct and clear understanding of the proper meaning of the word “amateur.” An amateur is an amator, a lover. A musical amateur is one whose interest and participation in music is prompted by his love for music and by no other consideration.... These are the people I am looking for—the genuine amatores—and there are thousands of them, all, if they only know it, potential music-makers.

He continues his etymological exploration of the nature of the amateur music lover, noting, “The word ‘amator’ is the Latin equivalent of the Italian ‘dilettante’ —one who delights in music. Originally neither of these words implied superficiality.”<sup>522</sup>

Indeed, it is Drinker’s belief that to sustain this love of music and to continue deriving satisfaction from it will require an investment on the part of the music lover. The investment he believes is required is the acquisition of musical performance skills, not in order to “profit” or to “show off a beautiful voice or extraordinary skill in performance,” but because of “a real love of music.”

Drinker’s emphasis is somewhat different than Spaeth’s, although both are inclusive in tone, and both share the goal of widespread music appreciation. Spaeth acknowledges the need to educate the listener but urges that the net be spread widely and that the potential music lover

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<sup>522</sup> Henry S. Drinker Jr., “Music and the Leisure Time Program,” *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania): 53.



be brought along in his or her abilities within the context of a community of music lovers. Drinker would not directly disagree with that approach, but in his emphasis on the amateur's development of skills he seems to reach back for something that is seen as being lost with the growth of the new technologies and the passing of nineteenth century sensibilities: the widespread desire to attain the level of skill required to produce music on your own.

The process of industrialization and urbanization had created larger managerial and professional classes in the United States, the presence of which contributed to cultural change. Music reproducing technologies developed at about the same time, around the turn of the century. As a consequence the primary musical venue of most citizens made a virtual transition from the piano in their parlor, or some other equivalent involving their own singing or playing of instruments to create the music, to some remote location accessed with the help of a radio or phonograph. One change tended to reinforce the other; the music coming from these distant concert halls was produced by professional musicians, a source proportionately rarer in the nineteenth century, when most music was encountered in a home setting.

In his address Drinker evokes a time even earlier than the nineteenth century, explaining,

The concert is a comparatively modern institution. In Elizabethan England, when amateur music flourished perhaps more soundly than at any other time...concerts were unheard of. No one then thought of asking or inveigling an audience to come to a Hall at an arbitrary hour to hear him perform. Instead, musicians made their music wherever they happened to be together.... The

word "concert," spelled "consort," originally meant the group of instruments...and still later the performance itself.<sup>523</sup>

Drinker says that the role of music clubs is to train their own members with the skills they need to sustain their love of music. He lists the club responsibilities in order of priority:

First, the development of proficiency in sight reading so that the members can experience the glorious excitement of doing a new work right off at full speed the first time.... The second, and perhaps the most important, objective of an amateur music group should be to become familiar with and understand the great literature of music.... The third and final objective of a musical club should be the attainment of skill and polish in ensemble singing or playing....<sup>524</sup>

At the next biennial conference of the federation, A. Walter Kramer, Managing Director of Galaxy Music Corp. in New York City and editor of *Musical America* addresses the conferees on the topic, "American Creative Art." As part of his address Kramer addresses the issue of chamber music, which he says is "the kind of music that some people say they do not like. The reason they do not like it is due to their preconception that it is too intimate and that to listen to it is much more difficult than to take part in it."<sup>525</sup>

It is Kramer's intent to dispel such notions. "Chamber music," he says, "is one of the things we all ought to take time and learn more about." A positive force for this sort of

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid.: 53-54.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.: 54-55.

<sup>525</sup> A. Walter Kramer, "American Creative Art," Ibid., ed. Hazel. G. Weaver (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1937): 40-41.

transformation, he says, is the radio, “the much-maligned radio,” where for “a number of years” there has been a program that the National Broadcasting Company chose to call the “Music Guild Hour” due to listener squeamishness over the term “chamber music.” Because the network chose to name the hour the way they did, they managed to interest “quite a few people in the hour, he says, “I mention this because I want to tell you in a few words or sentences, about one of the worthy things that some of us have done for chamber music.”<sup>526</sup> For Kramer, obviously, the “much-maligned radio” has become a force for good.

### **The Walter Damrosch Journey**

Another window on the transformation of the sensibilities of the good music community can be seen in changes evident in views expressed by Walter Damrosch. As the conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra, Damrosch was a major figure in American music during the creation and rise of commercial radio. He had succeeded to the post of the conductor upon the death of his father in 1903 and established a solid reputation as a conductor of both symphony and opera. Damrosch was keenly interested in American musical development, and had been instrumental in the 1918 founding of the Conservatoire Americain in Fontainebleau, France, which figured prominently in the rise of such American composers as Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Walter Piston.

In 1926 Damrosch received a letter from Owen D. Young, writing on behalf of the new National Broadcasting Company, which was seeking to establish an “Advisory Panel.” This body would meet periodically to review the work of the new broadcast company as it sought to

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.: 41.

establish traditions and practices in the new radio industry, and a musical expert was needed on the panel to represent the interests of the public. Young explained a dilemma: the necessity of networked broadcasting was creating a tremendous concentration of power in the hands of the new network:

The appropriate control of radio broadcasting in the public interest is one of the most difficult problems with which we are faced today.... Service requires that the best programs...be made available for all.... In a word, service to the public requires close cooperation between a large number of stations, with the responsibility somewhere to provide national programs.... On the other hand, while service is demanding centralized operation, there comes naturally a feeling of apprehension as to the safeguards against misuse of such great power. There are those who believe that the safeguards should be either in the form of government control or government ownership of the broadcasting stations. Many others feel that government ownership or control would result either in impairing the service by bureaucratic control, or in throwing this agency into political hands, and thereby impairing the free functioning of our democracy. In short, the people opposed to governmental control feel it is as important to have a free radio as a free press.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Owen D. Young to Walter Damrosch, November 6, 1926, 1-2 Box 154, Folder 299, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.

Having laid out his case for corporate ownership, Young asked Damrosch for his help:

We believe that in this interval while a Democracy is learning how to handle an instrument of such power, it is most important that the decisions of its executives should be subject to review and correction by an Advisory Council. We ask you, therefore, to serve on this council in the public interest....<sup>528</sup>

Damrosch accepted and joined experts in religion, agriculture, and other areas on the board, which would meet annually to discuss radio developments. His reports show an evolution in his thinking over the years he served, with regard to the role of corporate leadership and the content of radio programs.

Earlier that year, Damrosch and the New York Symphony had started a series of concerts broadcast on NBC's Red Network, called the "Balkite Hour, which was sponsored by the Fansteel Products Company, makers of Balkite radios.<sup>529</sup> These concerts featured introductory remarks by Damrosch, and they were considered successful by the Fansteel Company, which saw a large increase in the number of radios sold. The sponsorship of this program would evolve over the next few years, and from 1928 until 1942 Damrosch would appear before the nation's school children in a highly successful series, the NBC Music Appreciation Hour. Damrosch's broadcasting career evolved along with his role on the advisory board.

From the minutes of the second meeting, on March 7, 1928, we learn that Damrosch reported "that the experience of the year had been most gratifying." Radio was, indeed, leading

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>529</sup> Howe, "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch, 1928-1942," 66-67.

to improved taste on the part of the public. In his graciously worded report, Damrosch expressed his belief that radio was playing a successful role in elevating the musical taste of the public:

I take great pleasure in reporting great progress regarding the quality of the music that is now broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company. Without any friction, the bad has given place to the better, the better to the good, and in some cases, the good to the best. This is due partly to a natural instinct which is found among all people, but also greatly to the evident desire on the part of your officials, to encourage such instincts...there are now millions, who, thanks to the radio, have learned something of the inner significance and emotional power of music as a language.<sup>530</sup>

The meeting minutes also note that Damrosch “spoke of the amazing eagerness of the schools to get radios so that they might have the best in music, and expressed particular interest in the significance of this phenomenon, especially to the schools in rural districts.” The minutes also report that “Mr. Damrosch added that we must be careful not to supplant, but to stimulate, the ordinary musical instruction in the schools....”<sup>531</sup>

At the 1930 meeting, Damrosch’s report once again spoke hopefully of improvements in the radio public’s musical sensibilities during the previous year:

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<sup>530</sup> Walter Damrosch. Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company. *Committee Reports. The President’s Report. Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Music*, Second Meeting, March 1928, 30-32. Box 154 Folder 299C, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.

<sup>531</sup> Everett Case, "Memorandum of Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company," By the Acting Secretary (10 pages typescript), March, 1928, 5-6. Box 154 Folder 299C, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton, NY.

The year of 1929 has greatly increased the desire among our people to hear the higher type of music over the radio.... If we look back a few years to the beginning of broadcasting, the development in the quality of music is unbelievable in its magnitude and cultural importance. I confidently believe that with such an opportunity reaching an entire country, we can lay the basis for a cultural development deeper and finer than any country of such magnitude has ever experienced.<sup>532</sup>

Damrosch's report the following year, for the 1931 meeting, covered the calendar year 1930, which had opened with a January meeting of the leadership of Music Teachers National Association at which they had passed the reported resolution condemning radio as a "Menace to Education." Undoubtedly attuned to such concerns, for the first time Damrosch used his report to complain about the continuing mixture of styles, noting what he considered the continuing problem of jazz on the radio. However, he also spoke hopefully of progress: "Your musical begs to report that while there is still an undue preponderance of jazz and other light music in radio programs, we can point with pride to a very generous offering of music of the highest class during the past year...." Despite the unfortunate, "undue preponderance," the still-hopeful Damrosch asserted,

I seem to note a distinct trend on the part of the public for better music and I am glad to affirm that the National Broadcasting Company is encouraging this trend in every possible way. The

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<sup>532</sup> Walter Damrosch. Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company. *The President's Report and Resume of Programs: Committee Reports. Report of the Chairman, Committee on Music*, Fourth Meeting, 1930, 35-36. Box 154 Folder 299H, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.

monotony of much of the jazz music seems to wear on the public, and as a result a more artistic development of this form of popular amusement is growing, and may eventually lead to a genuinely American art form.<sup>533</sup>

Damrosch's sour observations about the presence of jazz are temperate when compared to those reported by *Musical America*, particularly the MTNA's resolution of condemnation and the "ban" called for by the federation. However, they are an attack on a highly successful aspect of the radio network's broadcast offerings, and he is a radio insider whose efforts to reach school children with good music have benefitted tremendously from radio's support. Damrosch's protests give way to selective praise in the reports of coming years, even as his own employment situation is enhanced.

In 1932, Damrosch's report approvingly noted the great success of contests for American composers:

The year 1931 has brought to the National Broadcasting Company many interesting new developments in the higher cultural realms. The orchestral awards which were announced by the National Broadcasting Company, consisting of prizes of large amounts to be given to American composers for the best orchestral compositions in manuscripts have aroused enormous interest. Five hundred and seventy-three scores were entered, which is nearly three times as great as any similar competition on record in this

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<sup>533</sup> ———. Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company. *The President's Report and Resume of Programs: Committee Reports. Report of the Chairman, Committee on Music*, Fifth Meeting, 1931, 31-35. Box 154 Folder 299J, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.



country. The work that this imposed on the Jury, composed of eminent musicians, is so enormous that it necessitated a postponement of their decision until April. We hope that the generous offer of the National Broadcasting Company will help to stimulate and encourage creative art in our country.<sup>534</sup>

Opera broadcasts had also met with success. Damrosch said that “the interest of the public in the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts was evidenced by the mail....” On a more personal note, Damrosch continued,

Our Music Appreciation Hour for the schools and colleges of the country has gone still further on its way, rejoicing.... I am deeply grateful to our President, Mr. Aylesworth, for having taken my symphonic hour out of the commercial field, and making it a part of our “sustaining programs”. This gives me complete freedom as regards the character of the music....

Summarizing, Damrosch concluded,

It seems to me that the amount of good music broadcast is showing a notable increase from year to year. In closing my report, I should like to compliment the company upon its achievement in this direction and at the same time to suggest for its

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<sup>534</sup> ————. Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company. *The President's Report and Resume of Programs: Committee Reports. Report of the Chairman, Committee on Music*, Sixth Meeting, February 1932, 36. Box 154 Folder 299K, Owen D. Young Collection, Special Collections, St. Lawrence University Libraries, Canton NY.

consideration that an effort be made to bring about a better distribution of these programs throughout the week.<sup>535</sup>

In his report for 1934, the year that saw the consolidation of the commercial radio structure, Damrosch focuses part of his attention on the responsibilities of good music advocates, and he continues to steer clear of unfruitful discussions on the nature of radio. Like music educator Elizabeth Beach three years earlier, he seems to suggest they focus on immediate needs that are within their control, goals of the sort they have amply demonstrated their capacity to attain in the past and which constitute an immediate need. However, it also may indicate that he has completed a transition from the outside to the inside of radio, and has a new perspective. Damrosch writes,

In connection with their work I should like to see a concerted movement started by our educators and labor leaders, and all those interested not only in the material but in the cultural improvement of our young people, towards having radios and loud speakers placed in every school and college in the country. Because their schools are not provided with radios, there are still millions of students who are debarred from taking advantage of the musical contributions and of other educational activities which the radio offers free of any expense to the schools. Perhaps such great organizations, interested in the cultural development of our young people, as the Parent-Teacher Association or the National Federation of Music Clubs could be induced to interest themselves

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 36, 37, 40.

in this movement. Not only should every school have a radio, but music should be made a part of the school curriculum.<sup>536</sup>

In the same report, Damrosch seems to demonstrate an acceptance of the primacy of commercial programming over broadcasts of good music, which was offered during “sustaining hours,” programming paid for with network profits that did not have commercial sponsorship:

In chamber music, which is the highest and most spiritual of musical forms, we can also note progress. On Sundays especially, we have broadcast weekly chamber music concerts by members of the NBC String Quartet and other well known organizations.... I would suggest that more of these concerts be given on weekdays during sustaining hours. If commercial hours necessitate taking up the greater part of the evenings, a half-hour of chamber music at 11:30 New York time...would be like a benediction at the end of a more or less perfect day.<sup>537</sup>

### **Radio’s Public Campaigns**

Passage of the Communications Act of 1934 had ratified the existing commercial structure of radio in the United States, but it also codified continuing scrutiny of the new industry. Following enactment of the law, the new Federal Communications Commission conducted the hearings mandated by the legislative compromise that had defeated the Wagner-Hatfield coalition. These were followed by hearings also required by the bill for each station’s license renewal, which

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<sup>536</sup> Damrosch. *Report of the Chairman, Committee on Music, 1934*, 57.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

were conducted on an ongoing basis. The law required that these take place every three years, but in the period immediately following enactment of the law they were held at six-month intervals. These hearings required that stations, and especially networks, maintain a positive image so that they could present testimony to the FCC demonstrating that their stations were operating in the public interest. The public relations effort required for this was widespread, but NBC executive David Sarnoff played a prominent role in it.

David Sarnoff's storied career in radio, which started when he was a young wireless operator and continued through his rise through corporate ranks to head the Radio Corporation of America, was marked by frequent public addresses in which he sought to position commercial radio as a force for good. Sarnoff could be a pugnacious counter-puncher when responding to criticisms of radio, such in as his response to H. G. Wells in 1927, who reportedly had "attacked broadcasting" as "an art of little consequence to civilization..." in a "widely-published article."<sup>538</sup>

However, a more typical Sarnoff communication seems to have been an address delivered at a banquet or some other gathering, typically a long speech in which he lays out an extended, philosophical explanation of radio's role in the society, such as his address to a group gathered for the Town Hall Luncheon at the Hotel Astor in New York City on April 28, 1938, in which Sarnoff rhapsodized on "The American System of Broadcasting and Its Function in the Preservation of Democracy." These speeches were sometimes printed and distributed, and Sarnoff apparently sent copies to General Electric head Owen D. Young.

One task that Sarnoff seemed to set for himself in his public relations effort was limiting the expectation that radio could transform the nature of society. Radio was new, and the idea of

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<sup>538</sup> J. Haber, "Sarnoff Takes Issue With H. G. Wells on Value of Radio Broadcasting," Press release from Radio Corporation of America, April 28, 1927, 1. David Sarnoff Library, Princeton, NJ.

using it to educate was new as well. Concepts about its use remained a bit fuzzy, and expectations at times were unreasonably high. In an address before the National Conference on Educational Broadcasting in Washington, D.C., on December 12, 1936 titled, “Broadcasting in the American Democracy,” Sarnoff presented an argument that would be heard repeatedly from the representatives of radio during this era. He began by discussing what he said were two different types of education,

we have what seem to be two fundamental departments in education. Let us call the first the training of the mind, and the second, the feeding of the mind. The first is a disciplinarian process, the second, the “service of supply.” The first phase of education, that of mental discipline, must remain primarily the objective of the classroom; the second phase, which is barely commenced in school and college, is supplied by all the varied experiences of life itself and should continue to the grave.

Radio – in common with other forms of mass communication and entertainment – belongs to the second of these two educational fields. Radio programs can be create to inform the mind and elevate the spirit, but when one seeks to impose upon them the requirements that they also furnish mental training and discipline, one narrows their appeal and risks the dispersion of the

invisible audience, thereby defeating the very purpose for which the program was prepared.<sup>539</sup>

An article by Sarnoff published in *The Wharton Review* in February 1937, titled "Broadcasting and Education," again stresses both the advantages and limitations of radio as a tool for education. Sarnoff opens with a quotation:

A definition of education is suggested in the remark credited to the French Premier Clemenceau, when he was asked his opinion of his colleagues Poincare and Briand.

"Poincare," said the shrewd old statesman, "knows everything but understands nothing. Briand knows nothing but understands everything."<sup>540</sup>

Sarnoff continues,

We may never reach the ideal where knowledge and understanding are perfectly combined, but I think we can agree that education consists both in acquiring useful knowledge and in putting that knowledge through the process of intellectual digestion so that it nourishes the mind and helps us to think and to understand....

If we agree that learning how to think is an essential part of education, let me raise the question as to where that portion of our

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<sup>539</sup> David Sarnoff, "Broadcasting in the American Democracy," *National Conference on Educational Broadcasting* (1936), 4-5.

<sup>540</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Broadcasting and Education," *The Wharton Review* (1937): 16.

education should be acquired. While listening to the radio? By attending a motion picture theatre? By reading newspapers and magazines? I doubt it. These channels of information supply food for thought, but it is asking too much of them to demand that they should, in any direct way, teach their audiences how to think.<sup>541</sup>

Sarnoff and others associated with radio management repeatedly argued that their medium could offer access to fine entertainment, but that it could not take the place of educators, and therefore could not take responsibility for transforming the public's taste. Moreover, he also argued, if they were to attempt such a thing they would undermine their ability to expose the public to beneficial experiences such as fine music, because audiences would tune them out if they did not find the programs interesting. As Sarnoff explained,

Radio broadcasting involves the dual function of transmission and reception; and reception implies a listening audience. If I talk before a microphone am I broadcasting? Not necessarily. An explosion in the middle of the Sahara Desert makes no sound if there are no ears to hear it. I am not broadcasting in any real sense until I capture an audience—and hold it.<sup>542</sup>

Ernest LaPrade, by now with the National Broadcasting Company, delivered a paper at the 1936 gathering of Music Teachers National Association, in which he addressed the difficulties networks faced when deciding what to broadcast, titled “Problems in the Field of Radio.” This opened with the simple observation that, “The basic problem of broadcasting

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

music is repertory. What kind of music shall we offer, and how much? Should serious music predominate, or the so-called 'light classical,' or the popular?"<sup>543</sup>

LaPrade explained that the perceptions of broadcasters and audiences with regard to the type of music broadcast could be divergent, because the networks received feedback from different sorts of listeners. They were unsure how much weight to give the different sorts of feedback they received:

The most avid lover of serious music might appear to be well served. Yet some still complain that we do not give them enough. On the other hand, many listeners of different taste complain that we give them too much. Who is right? Unfortunately, we can only guess, because the mail response—which is almost our only means of gauging the attitude of the public towards our serious music programs—is generally too meager to serve as a reliable criterion. Broadcasters have always assumed that the audience for fine music is larger than its fan mail indicates. Otherwise we should hardly feel justified in broadcasting as much good music as we do. But perhaps we are wrong. Perhaps we are giving the radio public more good music than it actually wants....<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Ernest La Prade, "Problems in the Field of Radio," in *Volume of Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association*, ed. Karl W. Gehrken (Hartford, Conn.: Music Teachers National Association, 1936): 49.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*: 49-50.



LaPrade also discussed efforts at cooperation by the networks with the League of Composers aimed at supporting American composers, as well as their support of the Music Guild and other education efforts.<sup>545</sup>

David Sarnoff was very active during the first part of the 1930s, repeatedly explaining how the networks would be unable to meet the high expectations of educators who wanted radio to teach in ways to which it was not suited. It appears that by the end of the decade, that message had been accepted, because Sarnoff began arguing a new position, claiming that the “Aims of Broadcasters and Educators” were, in fact, “Identical and Complementary.” Perhaps with the rest of the world at war it was a good time to be reassuring. Sarnoff explained how the views of these two groups were in alignment: “Both desire to see American standards of culture and intelligence raised to higher levels. Both recognize the power of broadcasting as a means to that end.”<sup>546</sup>

Sarnoff’s transformation into an advocate for education can also be seen in his address at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation of the University of the State of New York in Albany on October 13, 1939, titled “Radio and Education,” which begins, “Radio and education are the youngest and oldest products of civilization...”<sup>547</sup> As ever, his objective seems to be to position radio in the best possible way and establish its role as an institution in the society, but he no longer seems preoccupied with limiting the expectations of good music supporters.

An address given by Sarnoff in his capacity as “chairman of National Music Week” is reported in the June 1937 issue of *Piano Trade Magazine*. The article is titled, “Sarnoff, in

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid.: 51-53.

<sup>546</sup> David Sarnoff, “David Sarnoff Declares Aims of Broadcasters and Educators Identical and Complementary,” *NBC Presents II*, no. 2 (1939).

<sup>547</sup> ———, “Radio and Education,” Address given at the 75th Convocation of the University of the State of New York in Albany (printed for distribution). October 13, 1939, 3. David Sarnoff Library, Princeton, NJ.

Radio Address, Advises People to Play as Well as Listen,” and it shows Sarnoff’s transition to the role of music education advocate most completely. The article shows him responding to concerns in the music community over declining rates of interest in learning to play an instrument on the part of students, and portrays him as strongly supporting active rather than passive enjoyment of music, despite the reality of his role as a radio mogul. A quotation from Sarnoff explains the why it is important to learn to perform as well as to listen:

Our resources in music are of two kinds—creative and receptive. If our musical life is to improve and expand, we must develop more and more creative artists of our own, both composers and performers. Our musical future depends upon their development. At the same time, we must provide their talents with a rich soil in which to grow and ripen. Such a soil is found only in a nation whose people not only love music but understand it, have opinions about it, and can bring to their artists a quality of critical appreciation that is both intelligent and sympathetic.<sup>548</sup>

### **Music and the Corporate Image**

Music occupied an important position in the newly media-savvy business world being created by advertising companies and the radio industry, in which corporations placed a high premium on their general approval level with the public. An exchange of public relations communications concerning the instigation of the General Electric Hour, involving General Electric President

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<sup>548</sup> "Sarnoff, in Radio Address, Advises People to Play as Well as Listen," *Piano Trade Magazine* (1937).

Gerard Swope, provides insights on the perceived role of radio programming in the cultivation of corporate images at this time.

A letter on the stationary of Dorland International, Incorporated, “ Domestic and Foreign Advertising,” located in the R. C. A. Building in New York, dated August 23, 1935, is addressed, “To Mr. Gerard Swope, President, General Electric Company,” and opens with a naked sales pitch:

I want to acquaint you with the most remarkable buy in radio, a program which if produced in New York under the minimum union scale for musicians would cost the sponsor \$5000.00 but which may be had for \$2000.00. It is the most unusual opportunity that has come to my attention.

I believe that this program will have an especial appeal for you as it is in keeping with the dignity of all your past promotion efforts.

I have the exclusive right to offer the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra of NINETY men under the direction of Eugene Ormandy.

The orchestra, as you probably know, is one of the three great symphony orchestras of the country, and Mr. Ormandy has made a sensational success as a conductor both here and abroad.... The character of the program need not be highbrow. It may be a program of light salon music if you so desire.

This is an opportunity to do a prestige job comparable with the Cadillac Sunday Concerts at a cost less than is paid for a reputable dance band of eighteen men. Whether you use a thirty minute or a full hour period, the price is the same....

Further correspondence and minutes of corporate meetings indicates that Mr. Swope is indeed in the market for some sort of entertainment. The minutes from a meeting held the following July in the "Audition Room," concerning the "General Electric Radio Program, describe the presentation by the advertising firm of Maxon, Incorporated of "two auditions of suggested evening programs for General Electric... "Electrical Frontiers," and "American Music."

The minutes indicate there was a lack of consensus on the most appropriate course to take:

Mr. Wilson suggested as the first question, "Do we wish to have a good program – one costing approximately \$1,000,000?".... There was some difficulty getting a definite Yes or No answer to the question, since obviously some wanted to know the kind of program first and others how its cost would be allocated.

We learn, surprisingly, that "the strongest opposition was based upon a belief by two or three who voted No, that General Electric's position or reputation as an institution is already too far ahead of its product and distribution position.... As one person put it "people think our products are better than they are." An enviable position for a corporation to be in, it would seem. The selection process pits the two possible programs against each other based on the anticipated reaction of the audience: "As between the two Maxon presentations – 17 favored "Electrical

Frontiers” (essentially a variety program) as against 5 for the “American Music” idea... Seventeen believed a combination of the two would be better...”<sup>549</sup> It becomes easier to understand why Walter Damrosch was pleased to have his program removed from the roles of sponsored programs!

Internal memos confirm General Electric’s standing, but also the apparent reason that the company is seeking to create a sponsored radio hour. A memorandum dated August 25, 1936 reports, “of the first eighteen national advertisers rated according to space taken in thirty-five national publications in the year 1935, every one of them has a radio program except the General Electric Company.”<sup>550</sup>

Another memo from Maxon, Inc. dated March 18, 1937 offers congratulations for the success that resulted from the decision the company made after the audition process. It reads,

I want to join the chorus of commendation on the present General Electric radio program and help arouse the indifferent, if there be any, to a new appreciation of its present and its possibilities.

Without any exception...it is acclaimed one of the best programs. N. W. Ayer Company, in behalf of Ford, has been trying to get it in place of Fred Waring’s orchestra.... Lucky Strike would like to add the “Hour of Charm” to its present schedule, carrying out the theme of relaxation and smoking Lucky Strikes. The Cadillac Motor Company and Graham Paige are also

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<sup>549</sup> Arthur Bergh to Gerard Swope, August 23, 1935, Schenectady Museum Archives, Schenectady, New York.

<sup>550</sup> F. B., August 25, 1936, Schenectady Museum Archives, Schenectady, New York.

after Mr. Spitalny, and they are offering him more money than we pay. The most recent offer is from General Motors. They propose to give their Sunday evening Symphony Orchestra a vacation during the three summer months and would like to use the all-girl orchestra in its place during this period.<sup>551</sup>

The problem now is to retain the talent in the face of competition.

Another internal memo from December of 1938 confirms the company's continuing public relations success:

Herewith is the latest Psychological Corporation's check-up on the favorable and unfavorable attitude toward eight large companies. You will note on the first tabulation page that all the companies have improved their favorable consideration over the previous report, and also that General Electric is still the highest in this 10,000-interview sample.<sup>552</sup>

Such successes contributed to higher corporate profits that justified the expenditures underwriting radio programming.

### **The Good Music Product Line**

Good music had entered this corporate world as radio's elite product line. "Fred Waring" and the "Hour of Charm" might have been highly popular, but merchandising schemes require a full

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<sup>551</sup> T. K. Quinn, March 18, 1937, Schenectady Museum Archives, Schenectady, New York.

<sup>552</sup> C. H. Lang, December 23, 1938, Schenectady Museum Archives, Schenectady, New York.

range of products for the customer to pick from, a range of products to suit the tastes and whims of a range of customers. Good music broadcasts such as “The Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts” and concerts by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony will serve as the top offerings.

Theodor Adorno would complain in a very few years that this approach was “the ideal of Aunt Jemima's ready-mix for pancakes extended to the field of music,” but it provided the public with world class musical performances, widely delivered, and at a bargain price Oscar Hammerstein could never have dreamed of matching.<sup>553</sup>

### **Acceptance of the Reality of the Marketplace**

Acquiescence by good music advocates to the reality of their role in a transformed society, which represented the final stage of their transformation, can be seen in a number of articles from the middle of the 1930s. These include “Music In The Changing Social Order: The Viewpoint of the Federation,” a paper delivered at the 1935 convention of the National Federation of Music Clubs by federation president Agnes Bishop Jardine, who wrote,

Music cannot be superimposed upon a people. If we are to have in America a cultural growth which will embrace an understanding of music, it will come about only when the masses of people regard this medium of expression as a personal necessity. One of the greatest factors in developing a love for music, and one

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<sup>553</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "A Social Critique of Radio Music," *Kenyon Review* 7 (1945): 211.

which brings a prompt and spontaneous result, is the active participation in the performance of the art.<sup>554</sup>

However, Jardine notes “many opportunities for the ushering in of plans to give to great numbers of people real experiences in personal enjoyment of music, not merely as listeners but as participants.”<sup>555</sup> Indeed, she says that “the general interest in music is increasing,” and that in particular:

The amazing increase of interest in the performance of the larger forms of music is astounding. A recent statistical survey of Federation activities informs us that three-fourths of the membership have studied or produced opera, or have helped to sponsor visiting opera companies; and that a greater number have aided in the support of municipal concerts and civic projects.<sup>556</sup>

Through these opportunities Jardine suggests that the federation can continue to play a transformative role. Simply put, she suggests that by coming in touch with the federation, many individuals will be transformed:

The changing social order brings with it many opportunities for the ushering in of plans to give to great numbers of people real experiences in personal enjoyment of music, not merely as listeners but as participants in recreating the musical ideas and ideals of the composer. If this certain increasing interest and

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<sup>554</sup> Agnes Bishop Jardine, "Music in the Changing Social Order: The Viewpoint of the Federation," in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs*, ed. Hazel G. Weaver (Ithaca, N.Y.: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935): 11.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*: 12.



devotion to idealism are characteristic of the life of organizations when they come into intimate relationship with state and national Federations, it is most important to add constantly to our membership that we may extend this influence into more extensive fields and thereby touch the lives of a greater number of people. Herein lies a responsibility of the Federation in this "changing social order."<sup>557</sup>

Jardine's expectations for the federation remain ambitious; Seeger's description of the good music activists in his 1957 essay as "more nearly realistic,"<sup>558</sup> as opposed to "realistic," is apt.

John Tasker Howard's presentation at the 1935 convention offers an admonition that is almost breathtaking in light of the postures adopted only a few years earlier within the federation. Howard offers that, "Hell hath no highbrow like a social snob," and proceeds to put such snobs in their place with the following description:

The cultural snob is one so lacking in confidence in his own opinion that he can approve only those things that are endorsed by recognized critics, amateur or professional.... Generally he is intolerant and bigoted, a thoroughly unpleasant person. The truly musically educated person will admit that everything has its place.<sup>559</sup>

Howard also offers an appreciation of Stephen Foster, whose biography he had just published, observing,

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid.: 11-12; *Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs, 1935*, 11-12.

<sup>558</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 288.

<sup>559</sup> Howard, "Changed Conditions for the American Composer," 41.

It is only in recent years that musicians and music lovers have come to realize that the current "popular" songs that Stephen Foster wrote in mid-century have outlived hundreds of the labored, manufactured symphonies by his contemporaries, in Europe as well as in America. A symphony is a mammoth creation, sometimes a masterpiece, but as a word it is no magic name that in itself insures greatness. It may be excellently wrought and devised, yet entirely dull; and what is worse, banal and trite.<sup>560</sup>

Yet another paper demonstrates an improved understanding of the fundamental nature of the broadcast medium, which communicated only at the pleasure of listeners who always had the ability to switch the dial or simply turn off the radio. The paper provides quite a contrast to the views expressed by federation president Jessie Stillman Kelley as she launched her campaign for good music about a decade earlier. The paper, "Music In Education," was presented by the Superintendent of Schools in Philadelphia, Edwin C. Broome. In it he explained the new understanding of the marketing nature of high culture in America, quite similar in substance to that held by good music activists a decade earlier, but evincing a world of difference in its tone:

Better music, like better plays and better literature, will be produced when the majority of our people demand it. The only way to create that demand is through education, not simply school education, but education through such organizations as those represented in this convention, through good music broadcast over the radio, and through the production of good music by civic

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid.: 40.

bands, orchestras, and choruses. To reach the multitude it must be music that can be enjoyed by all at little or no cost to the hearer.

The kind of music that our people will demand thirty years from now, and the kind that will be written and produced, will depend largely upon how well the schools do their work in training the present generation of children to understand, appreciate, and demand the best in music.

If we, as a people, fail in attaining our highest aspirations, we shall not fail intellectually but spiritually.<sup>561</sup>

The previous fall, John Erskine of Columbia University had delivered an address before the Fourth Annual Assembly of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education, titled, "The Future of Broadcasting." In it, he drew a parallel between advertisers and educators that would have brought a frown to many during the nineteen twenties, when commercialism was widely identified as the enemy of the good. Addressing a group that was encountering the new order created by the recently passed Communications Act, Erskine said,

We educators are so accustomed to securing our audiences by force or by economic pressure, that some of us hope to compel the radio audience also to come in. It has been proposed to reserve exclusively for education a certain proportion of the hours on the air. With this proposal I have no sympathy. Why go to such trouble to expose our nakedness? If education can bring to the public a

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<sup>561</sup> Edwin C. Broome, "Music in Education," *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: National Federation of Music Clubs, Ithaca, N. Y.): 62.

message which the listener finds interesting and important, then education will be at once a popular success, in no need of protection. If our message is not what the listener enjoys, he will tune off, and we shall have provided the country each day with so many hours of silence....

I think that radio has something to learn from education, and that education, during the period which I referred to as a preliminary ordeal, will learn much from radio. The commercial element which we disapprove of is, of course, the advertising which carries the programs. I think the radio advertisements can teach education some errors to avoid. The objection, if we analyze it, is not to advertising as such but to advertising which is inartistic and uninteresting....

To me, the lesson for the educator is that he cannot compel the radio audience to listen to him, as he compels his academic classes; and, if he tries to bribe them, he will fail...ignominiously.... He must present education on its merits, and he must make it so interesting that the public would rather listen than not.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> John Erskine, "The Future of Broadcasting," in *Radio and Education: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Assembly of National Advisory Council on Radio in Education, Inc.*, ed. Levering Tyson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934): 148-50.

## **The Discomfort of the Good Music Activists**

Although the general trend is toward acceptance, we can see a level of ambivalence in a memorandum prepared by Elizabeth V. Beach, Supervisor of Music at Syracuse, dated September 28, 1938. Beach had given a radio talk in 1931 that had not addressed the social issues that preoccupied some of her colleagues, instead focusing on the “20,000,000” school children who she said needed to be taught music, expressing the very focused wish that “every school in Syracuse may have its own glee club, its own band and its own orchestra.” Her 1938 memo indicated it had been submitted to “Dr. Aversou,” and was titled, “The Radio in Music Education.” It consisted of three numbered lists.

Beach first noted eight “Benefits being derived,” beginning with the statement, “We all acknowledge the value of the Damrosch Music Appreciation Hour”; then noting that, “It is and may become even more than at present a means of discovering talent. Her list continues with mention of benefits to rural listeners, listeners in general, and students, who are hearing music of quality interpreted by great artists, thereby becoming more discriminating, and hearing music by “Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, and other great composers, past and present,” who as a result “are becoming familiar names, thanks to the prominent conductors as Leopold Stokowski, Toscanini, Koussevitzky,” and in addition can “compare the methods of these conductors as they put their ideas or interpretations into practice.” In addition, she says, “Young composers are enjoying an unexampled opportunity to make known their works.” Radio, she concludes, “has become a living, all-pervading force, which holds an incalculable potentiality for good.”

She then lists, “The harm that may be done”:

1. Educational music programs are fine up to a certain point.

2. A beautiful half hour of music given on one broadcast has been, and is too often followed by a broadcast of jazz, which often employs the great compositions of the masters in a most distorted fashion, thereby throwing the young listeners into great confusion regarding what is good and poor in music.
3. Today there is so little respect for the property of others – beautiful parks, beautiful buildings, fine library books, choice and rare art treasures are mutilated and destroyed in thoughtless and heedless fashion.

She continues,

Is not the radio encouraging at times the destruction of great musical compositions of the masters when they permit jazz orchestras and crooners to mutilate the art of music by changing completely the rhythm and the beauty of these works?

4. It is inconsistent to the educational programs which are so worth while. Jazz music may have its place and its followers, but let it be confined to music written expressly for that purpose, and leave that music which is great to be performed and enjoyed as the great composers intended it should be.

Beach then offers a paragraph of “Suggestions”:

Radio music should work towards more carefully outlined and well planned programs. Leadership in this should be under the supervision of a governing committee chosen from outstanding musical leaders in the city – a group who will be in touch constantly with experts whose knowledge of broadcasting and its technique will help create a definite standard towards which their efforts will be directed.

She closes with another list under the heading, “Finally”; above the first typewritten entry another has been written in pencil, yielding the following:

1. Programs should stimulate creative efforts in the field of music.
2. Be good entertainment.
3. Encourage attitudes of good citizenship.
4. Be of cultural value.
5. Should not stimulate undue excitement.
6. In the schools it should stimulate and supplement the work of the classroom teacher.
7. Should use only fair advertising practices.

“Regarding another station being brought to Syracuse,” She concludes, “would not this cause even more interference than we encounter at present when endeavoring to “tune in” on foreign or long distance broadcasts.”<sup>563</sup>

Beach echoes sentiments expressed eight years earlier when the federation had condemned “jazzing the classics,” in the same announcement in which it had declared it would seek a “ban on jazz.” Apparently good music activists had accepted that not everyone would choose to listen to good music; however, they continued to maintain a proprietary interest in the way that music was used. Music was not emancipated, at least not in their eyes; they felt certain limits should remain in force.<sup>564</sup>

### Summary

Charles Seeger’s description of good music advocates as “missionaries”<sup>565</sup> is humorous, but in truth their campaign of 1924 was an act of faith, albeit one of a secular sort. The decade of the nineteen twenties was a time of tremendous change, and there was a widespread sense that no one knew what the future would hold, particularly because of new technologies such as radio. Seeger’s other label for these activists, “do-gooders,” although critical to the point of being harsh, contains an essential element of truth. While their ranks must certainly have contained a wide range of viewpoints, including individuals whose passion was the music itself and who did not aspire to impose their own views upon others, and who sought the camaraderie of these

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<sup>563</sup> Elizabeth V. Beach, "The Radio in Music Education," in *University of Maryland Performing Arts Library, Special Collections in the Performing Arts: MENC Historical Center, Elizabeth V. Beach Collection* (College Park, Maryland: 1938).

<sup>564</sup> "Federation of Music Clubs Plans Cooperation With Other Groups."

<sup>565</sup> Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," 286.



conservative organizations for professional or social reasons; as a group they sought a leadership role through which they could assume responsibility for the musical tastes of others.

Such an approach invited contrary views, particularly in an era when musical personalities such as Charles Ives and Henry Cowell were finding their voices. Certainly the wider public held a much more modest view of their own role in the affairs of their fellow citizens than did the good music activists.

The transformation of good music partisans to a more realistic stance and the mirroring conversion of radio executives such as David Sarnoff to a position sympathetic to that of music educators, along with the technological transformation that forced it, are the “two events of prime importance” in the musical development of the United States in the first half of the twentieth century in Charles Seeger’s account of the history of “Music and Class Structure in the United States.” As he says, the introduction of “a brand-new factor—the mechanical and, eventually, electrical projection of music”—that is, the creation of commercial radio—led to “the transformation of the two pressure groups”: on the one hand, those Seeger called the “make-America-musical missionaries”; on the other, the “sell-America-music’ group.” As Seeger explains,

from a musically esoteric, idealistic, contra-acculturative set of missionaries, the make-America-musical fraternity became a more nearly realistic, acculturative segment of the population. From a narrow commercial opportunism, the sell-America-music businessmen acquired a surprising amount of idealism, with many

partially sincere slogans of social service, and with a degree of group consciousness.<sup>566</sup>

This transformation of the good music activists was not voluntary. Instead, it was the long-delayed recognition of a reality that was beyond their control. As Seeger says in so many words, in this instance, market forces delivered power to the people: “Big business has been so far—at least, in music—more of a democratizing than an authoritarian agent.”<sup>567</sup>

The transformation of the goals of the good music activists that Seeger describes can be understood in multiple contexts within the changing society. It was the collective transformation of many individuals; it was also the transformation of an important group that had contributed to measurable changes in the society, including increases in the level of music education and a meaningful contribution to the structure of the new communications industry. Using Bender’s terms and concepts, it might also be viewed as exemplifying the problems that arose during the transition from a nineteenth century model of social interaction to a twentieth century model, in which a “gesellschaft,” or “society” model gained ascendancy over the “gemeinschaft,” or “community” mode of interaction, as more urban modes of behavior became more common than those that characterized small communities. In this model the make-America-musical activists, who had sought to assume nineteenth-century style community-based leadership roles in the larger society by manipulating the tools of the mass media came into line with contemporary expectations, following a period of what Ogburn termed cultural lag. Finally, it can be seen in Wiebe’s terms as part of a class realignment in which the nineteenth-century two class structure (skilled versus unskilled) gave way to a three-class model, in which the upper (“middle”) class

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.: 288.

was bifurcated into “local” and “national” classes, which in turn was part of the continuing evolution of the democratic structure of the United States. This bifurcation cut through the middle of the good music movement, dividing the average urban activists from the average rural ones, a schism that contributed to the transformation of the movement.

### **Democracy and the Creation of an American Musical Style**

In his 1957 essay, Seeger suggests another possible result from the amplification and emancipation the mass media brought to the extended process of interaction between those who sought to shape the direction of musical culture, those who sought to profit from it, and the society at large. Musing on the results of the defeat of the campaign for good music, he says,

The net result, as I see it, might be said to be that the United States is beginning—and I say thoughtfully, beginning—to come of age musically speaking. It has done so by swinging more than a little way from the imminent congelation of a neo-European social-economic music class structure and turning again toward the equalitarian mass use of what may be the embryo of a single integrated variety of music-usage based upon nationwide intake of mass communications.... From a situation in which music values were imprisoned in mutually exclusive compartments of an increasingly rigid class structure, we seem to be moving into one in

which the formation of a unitary music idiom may be taking place.<sup>568</sup>

### Afterward

The presence of jazz and “hillbilly” music on the radio and in the popular imagination challenged the entire structure of core beliefs held by the dedicated group of activists Seeger dubbed the “musical missionaries”: musical values that were interwoven with personal pedagogical experience; long-developed beliefs on the role of music in civil society; their visions of what an American music would be; and in addition, their moral sensibilities and the racial prejudices they shared with many in the society at large.

While this group grew to accept the presence of cultural pluralism in the mass media, many of the issues behind their resistance to it remain active in today’s culture. If the present study can contribute to an understanding of the persistence of these views in some small way, its author would be gratified.

Proponents of good music in the early decades of the twentieth century displayed preferences that seem confusing and contradictory from today’s perspective. They professed passionate support for the American composer but frequently chose European works over those by Americans, and they subscribed to equalitarian philosophies while attempting to impose music associated with the moneyed class. A sympathetic reading of their ultimate intentions might conclude that they were actually preoccupied with cultivating a *reflective approach to*

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid.: 288, 91.

*music* on the part of the public, something along the lines Socrates might have suggested with his well-circulated statement, “the unexamined life is not worth living,” applied to music. However, such a reading would be just that, involving a creative leap beyond what the mere facts offer in evidence.

As Seeger noted, the aesthetic preferences of good music supporters varied, from a preference for art music in the European tradition among typical urban activists, to the popular sheet music of the day most popular among rural activists. Yet they failed not because they could not agree upon what good music was, but because the notion that there even was such a thing as good music, in the sense that they conceived of it, was a concept whose time had passed, or more likely, had never come. The goal of creating universal acceptance of good music was never a reasonable goal, so it was inevitable that they would fail. In their attempt to reach it the campaign accomplished much that was good.

Their failure illustrated several perceptual weaknesses common to the era: they did not realize their own ethnocentricity, or the degree to which their perceptions were limited by their own self-absorption and by their insulated location within the larger culture. They also did not understand the strength of personal and group identity, including class identity—both for themselves and for the people whose music they rejected—or the way in which music reinforced such identities. Both of these failings were perfectly understandable and would have drawn no notice, had they not set out to try to change the world as they knew it.

They were also mistaken in their belief that public education could change the fundamental taste preference of virtually all pupils. Even their desire that all children acquire certain musical abilities was a highly ambitious goal; their vision included the additional notion that good music would have universal appeal.

Increased participation in musical activities and in listening to European-style concert music did result from the efforts of good music advocates of various types, but it came about through a dialogue with the public in which, as Seeger correctly notes, the commercial forces associated with radio played the central role. However, it is likely this would not have occurred if good music supporters during the nineteenth-century had not set in motion the campaign for a musical America, or if their descendents in the first half of the twentieth century had failed to answer the call to further its cause.

In the end these activists played only a supporting role in the larger cultural transformation resulting from the new mass media in which the music was commercialized and commodified, “bringing together...the three principal musics” in the process, a result Seeger characterizes as “democratizing.” With this transformation, music finally would be freely available for all to use, or to avoid, as they wished.

### **Postscripts**

Despite the complete anachronism of the term good music, and the reality that its usage has been unacceptable for some time, several of the concepts that animated the campaign for a musical America remain active today. Although most musicians trained in the tradition of Western art music would not likely condemn other types of music as did members of the good music community of the 1920s and 1930s, in practice some act as if good music exists; at least, we privilege some music above other music in ways that suggest there is something beyond personal preference involved.

To suggest this is the case is not to condemn the notion that some music evokes more interest than other music or even that some is more worthy of study; nor does it discount the importance that a long and noble tradition contributes to the respect we may accord some music. However, since the eclipse of the era when some music, through simple assertion, was held to be worthy of admiration while other music was merely of passing interest, at best, we have never constructed a replacement for the notion of good music. Almost fifty years have passed since Leonard B. Meyer asked, “What makes music great?” and it is doubtful that the answers he proposed would find wide agreement from a broadly educated audience, if the same question were asked today.

### **Adorno and Aunt Jemima’s Pancake Mix**

Theodor Adorno was a lover of Beethoven, but he was scornful of good music as it existed on the radio in 1945 when he wrote his essay *A Social Critique of Radio Music*. For Adorno the goals that led good music advocates to seek the broadcasting of their music on the radio were flawed, and he argued that simply conditioning people to listen to music by composers such as Beethoven and Brahms was meaningless unless they also learned to encounter the music on its own terms as art music.

For Adorno the problem arose from the reality that everything in our society functions as a commodity. It is unlikely that part of the picture that can ever change. However, Adorno challenges us in ways that still resonate when he asserts,

Today music is considered ethereal and sublime, although it actually functions as a commodity. Today the terms ethereal and sublime have become trademarks. Music has become a means

instead of an end, a fetish. That is to say, music has ceased to be a human force and is consumed like other consumers' goods. This produces "commodity listening," a listening whose ideal it is to dispense as far as possible with any effort on the part of the recipient—even if such an effort on the part of the recipient is the necessary condition of grasping the sense of the music. It is the ideal of Aunt Jemima's ready-mix for pancakes extended to the field of music.

### **The Sun Sets on a Radio Generation**

Two programs left the radio airwaves within days of each other in June of 2007; collectively their departure marked the passing of a generation of radio listening and perhaps, the close of a dialogue of sorts.

June 29, 2007 marked the last authorized broadcast of replays of Karl Haas' *Adventures in Good Music*. Haas began local broadcasts of his program locally in Detroit in 1959 and began broadcasting nationally in 1970. According to the website for the radio program, it "was for many years the most listened to classical music radio program in the world, carried by hundreds of stations in the United States, Australia, Mexico, Panama and world-wide by Armed Forces Radio." Haas died in 2005.<sup>569</sup>

The last *Schickele Mix* program was distributed on June 27th, 2007. According to the website of that program, *Schickele Mix* "explored Duke Ellington's maxim that 'if it sounds

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<sup>569</sup> "Adventures in Good Music: The Last Episode of This Program Will Air June 29, 2007," (2007).



good, it is good' ...combining such seemingly diverse music as Ravel, the Beach Boys, Willie Nelson, and Cole Porter....” The webmaster for the program, Lloyd Peterson, indicated that, to his knowledge there was no connection in the near-simultaneous timing of the ending of broadcasts for both programs, but that “there may have been some similar forces at work.” Both had been in re-broadcast for some time prior to the end of distribution.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> "Schickele Mix: Dedicated to the Proposition that All Musics are Created Equal," Accessed December 8, 2007, <http://www.schickele.com/mix/>; Lloyd Peterson, "[email]," ed. Stephen Greene (Pittsburgh, PA: 2008).

## APPENDIX A

### CHARLES SEEGER'S IDEAS ABOUT "MUSIC AND CLASS STRUCTURE" IN ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Seeger addresses important points that appear in his essay, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," in a handful of other essays, and each of these provides a slightly different perspective from that of his 1957 essay. The two that most directly address these topics are "Music and Society" (1952), which anticipates some of the ideas in his 1957 essay;<sup>571</sup> and "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions of Music in the New World," a paper he presented at the 1961 meeting of the International Musicological Society in New York.<sup>572</sup> These two articles are particularly helpful in understanding the development of Seeger's theoretical understanding of the problems he addresses in "Music and Class Structure in the United States."

Two other essays touch less directly on issues raised by Seeger in his 1957 article, but are also useful to understanding his thought on these topics: "Grass Roots for American

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<sup>571</sup> Seeger, "Music and Society: Some New World Evidence of Their Relationship," 182-94.; and in its earlier version, Charles Seeger, "Music and Society: Some New World Evidence of Their Relationship," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Latin-American Fine Arts, June 14-17, 1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1952. Reprinted with substantial revisions: Washington: Pan American Union, 1953. 9 pp. , 1952).

<sup>572</sup> Seeger, "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions in the Americas," 364-75.; republished in *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*: Charles Seeger, "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions in the Americas," in *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1977* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977): 195-210.

Composers,” which he wrote in 1939 for publication in *Modern Music*, and which is also available in *Studies in Musicology II: 1929-1979*,<sup>573</sup> and “Journal of a Field Representative,” written with Margaret Valiant and published posthumously in 1980 in *Ethnomusicology*.<sup>574</sup>

Seeger presented the first essay mentioned, “Music and Society: Some New-World Evidence of Their Relationship,” at the Conference on Latin-American Fine Arts in 1951. It reflects both the broader forum of his audience, and its position a bit earlier in his chronology. As its title suggests, its concern is with the relationship between music and society, and as such is directly related to his explorations in “Music and Class.” The essay anticipates Seeger's later explorations of the musical effects of colonization, and is of interest primarily because it shows that his interest in the topic endured over some period of time. It also provides a more detailed justification for his limitation of the source cultures he considers in “Music and Class,” and in addition expresses his baseline for determining when a culture is derivative and when it has achieved its own identity. Seeger postulated the following definition: “*Identity*. A new and separate identity can be said to result when the diversification of a culture is more easily described in terms of its own characteristics than in those of its earlier acculturative components.”<sup>575</sup>

Both the essay “Music and Society: Some New-World Evidence of Their Relationship” and the 1961 essay “The Cultivation of Various European Traditions of Music in the New World” are more systematic in their approach to their problems than the 1957 “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” which has a strong narrative line running throughout. “The Cultivation of Various European Traditions of Music in the New World” advances Seeger’s

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<sup>573</sup> Charles Seeger, “Grass Roots for American Composers,” *Modern Music* 16 (1939): 143-49.

<sup>574</sup> Charles Seeger, with Margaret Valiant, “Journal of a Field Representative,” *Ethnomusicology* 24 (1980): 169-210.

<sup>575</sup> Seeger, “Music and Society: Some New World Evidence of Their Relationship,” 184.

model somewhat; expands it to encompass both North and South America; and in addition broadens it to encompass the Greek and Judaic origins of Western civilization as well as consideration of one of Seeger's preoccupations, the music-speech continuum. In so doing Seeger is able to focus much more on his model than he does in "Music and Class Structure in the United States," but he skirts many of the historical issues specific to the United States that are covered in the 1957 essay.

First he distinguishes what he says are the "four contexts within which the many factors, both phenomenological and axiological, both intrinsic and extrinsic, which have molded the cultivation of European traditions of music in the Americas may be most briefly and rewardingly be grouped." Seeger lists these as:

1. *Cultural dynamics*—the population explosion of Renaissance and post-Renaissance Europe.
2. *Transplantation*—the manner in which European music traditions were brought to the New World.
3. *Verbalization*—the kinds and extents of control to which music traditions have been submitted by speech traditions.
4. *Acculturation*—the kinds and extents of contact among the three continental music traditions.<sup>576</sup>

In "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions of Music in the New World," Seeger discusses the development of shape-note composition, which he describes as, "a music-reform

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<sup>576</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Cultivation of Various European Traditions in the Americas," 202.

movement from-below-up, largely rural, deliberately opposed to the more refined urban movement from-above-down.” He explains how

In the Great Religious Revival of 1800, quite a number of native semiprofessional tunesmiths were able to turn out a quantity of hard-driving, not too mellifluous choral settings full of chords without thirds, abut with parallel fifths, fourths, octaves, and even seconds and sevenths, praising death and resurrection and damning worldly pleasures and the decadent ease of the cities. It was a music-reform movement from-below-up, largely rural, deliberately opposed to the more refined urban movements from-above-down. Thus the phenomenon of a war between two survivals of European music traditions in the New World got under way and lasted until well after 1900.”<sup>577</sup>

A bit further down in the essay Seeger describes public reaction to “well-to-do bourgeoisie” who managed, despite the opposition of churchmen, to introduce English ballad operas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These met with great popular success in terms of ticket sales, and Seeger describes their actions as representing, “by 1850, a well-defined pressure group,” which “pledged to ‘make America musical’ from-above-down.” Regarding this group, however, Seeger says, “Up to about 1930, the larger public, both rural and urban, looked with scorn upon this pressure group very much as had their ancestors upon the churchmen who wanted fashionable British music sung in their churches. It was snobbish and “highbrow.”<sup>578</sup> These

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid.: 202-03.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.: 203.

were Seeger's "musical missionaries" and their business allies, whom he described in his 1957 essay as the "sell-America-music" group. Revisiting those events, Seeger summarizes:

With the tools—one might almost say the weapons—of mass communication, in their hands it was only a matter of three decades, from 1920 to 1950, for them to enter into a full alliance with the make-America-musical pressure group and bring to almost total extinction the dwindling remnants of the shape-note tradition.<sup>579</sup>

Seeger's 1939 essay, "Grass Roots for American Composers," anticipates his musings on the emergence of an American musical style that combines elements from music of different classes. Citing the views of the well-known music critic, Seeger says, "We agreed with Mr. [Olin] Downes [sic] own view: 'It is surely evident that a national musical art must rise from a popular base and not consist of forms superimposed from more rarefied regions above.'"<sup>580</sup>

Yet, Seeger notes, his contemporaries seemed to look to the American public and see nothing that might contribute to the development of an American musical style:

How this was to be done was a vague matter. Very few tried seriously to follow the lead of Henry F. Gilbert and Charles Ives in utilizing American popular tunes for symphonic writing.... The first break in this jam came, I think, in 1925 or '26 with the realization that the jazz boys had hit upon something the academic or fine-art composer had missed... Contrary to our professional

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Grass Roots for American Composers," 383.

beliefs, the American people at large have had plenty to say and ability to say it, so that a rich repertory has been built up—thousands of tunes each for the dance, for the ballad, the love song, and the religious song.... The astonishing thing is that we have had to wait until the 1930s to discover these facts.<sup>581</sup>

Then Seeger raises the topic to which he will return again, almost twenty years later, in his 1957 essay. His passion is evident in this passage, most of which is cited earlier in this dissertation:

To understand the situation we must go back in history. About a hundred years ago Lowell Mason and some other “enlightened” professional musicians set out to prove (1) that America was unmusical and (2) that it could be made musical. These two preposterous propositions became the creed of a cult that is still strong. Indeed, most of us still follow it. According to its thesis, German folk songs were “music.” They had been sanctified by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Latterly, folk songs of other European nations have been found to be “music”—“good music..” Our public schools are still full of earnest expounders of Italian, Czechoslovakian and French folk songs. At least several “folk schools” are teaching Danish folk dances to the American backwoods!

But American songs, hymns, and dances were not and still to practically all musicians and teachers are not music at all, partly

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid.: 384.

because they have not been sanctified, but partly also because they go counter to sanctification as it was done in Europe a hundred or more years ago. Our hymns and spirituals too often run to parallel fourths, fifths, and octaves. Our ballads are sung too often without “expression” and without accompaniment. Our instrumental music defies too many “laws” of harmony and sounds terrible when played on the pianoforte. Our play-party games and singing games are often not “refined.”<sup>582</sup>

The article “Journal of a Field Representative” was created during the period January-June, 1936, initially published by the government in February 1937, and republished posthumously, with the field representative, Margaret Valiant, who was working under Seeger’s supervision in the Depression-era Resettlement Administration, as co-author. It is of interest for the purposes of this study because in it Seeger lays out the value system under which Valiant’s work as a field representative was to be conducted:

1. Music, as any art, is not an end in itself, but is a means for achieving larger social and economic ends;
2. To make music is the essential thing-to listen to it is only accessory;
3. Music as a group activity is vastly more important than music as an individual accomplishment;

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid.: 384-85.



4. Every normal person is musical, and music can be associated with any normal human activity, to the advantage of both parties to the association;
5. The musical culture of the nation is, then, to be estimated upon the extent of participation of the whole population rather than upon the extent of the virtuosity of a fraction of it;
6. The basis for musical culture is the musical vernacular of the broad mass of the people-its traditional (often called "folk") idiom; popular music (jazz) and professional (high art) music are elaborate superstructures built upon the common base;
7. There is no ground for the quarrel between the various idioms or styles, provided proper relationship between them is maintained-jazz need not be scorned, nor professional music artificially stimulated, nor folk music stamped out or sentimentalized;
8. The point of departure for any worker new to a community should be the tastes and capacities actually existent in the group; and the direction the activities introduced should take should be more toward the development of local leadership than toward dependence upon outside help;
9. The main question, then, should be not "is it good music.?" but "what is the music good for"; and if it bids fair to aid in the

welding of the people into more independent, capable and democratic action, it must be approved;

10. With these larger ends ever in view, the musician will frequently find himself engaged in many other kinds of activity, among them the other arts; this, however, promotes a well-rounded social function for him and ensures plenty of opportunity to make music serve a well-rounded function in the community.<sup>583</sup>

Seeger collected and edited *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, in which “Music and Class Structure in the United States” was re-published. Therefore, changes in the text between the first version of the essay and its republished version are of interest.

These are generally minor, but several are noted below that may suggest an evolution in Seeger’s thinking. Other minor changes, not included here, seem merely to involve updating of wording in order to conform to changing writing styles. However, most of the essay is completely unchanged, and this suggests that Seeger may have had reasons, perhaps subtle, that led him to alter the text in the 1977 version.

In the following parallel examples from the two versions I have altered the formatting of the text in order to draw attention to text that is different. Language in the original essay that is either replaced or has text inserted into it, and the corresponding passages from the later version of the essay, are shown in underlined italics. For convenience the source page number for each reference is shown.

The first change noted seems to soften the characterization of the “backwoods” residents’ reaction to good music:

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<sup>583</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Journal of a Field Representative," 179-80.

1957 (287): To the backwoods, still almost untouched by the drive for urbanization, the "old-time" music was still good; the new, to the extent it reached them, was foreign and therefore evil.

1977 (227): To the backwoods, still almost untouched by the drive for urbanization, the "old-time" music was still good; the new, to the extent it reached them, was foreign and therefore to be wondered about and ignored.

The next change is, in a sense, simply more evocative writing. However, it has the effect of more clearly delineating differences between the urban and rural settings:

1957 (287): Numerous social and cultural pockets or islands were formed: in the country, by transportation and communication arteries; in both cities and country, by industrial developments involving concentrations of masses of laborers. Although it became apparent that the dream of a classless society had less and less counterpart in reality, the dream itself remained a very intense reality.

1977 (227): Numerous social and cultural pockets, islands, or slums were formed: in the city by concentrations of large masses of recently immigrated laborers and in rural areas by the bypassing of main lines of communication. Although it became apparent that the dream of a classless society had less and less counterpart in reality, the dream itself remained very intense.

The following change heightens the importance of the phrase “highly authoritarian in its operation” within the sentence:

1957 (287): It is significant that the make-America-musical movement, composed as it was of members of the well-to-do classes, or candidates for these, and highly authoritarian in its operation, was thoroughly imbued with this paradox.

1977 (228): It is significant that the make-America-musical movement, highly authoritarian in its operation, and composed as it was of members of the well-to-do classes (or those who aspired to be), was thoroughly imbued with this paradox.

The following editorial change brings to mind a Charles Seeger phrase from his essay, “Who Owns Folklore—A Rejoinder”: “Buy cheap and sell dear has made America great. No?”<sup>584</sup>

1957 (288): The sell-America-music group, with its popular art, likewise was secure in its urban compactness.

1977 (228): The sell-America-music group, with its popular art, likewise was secure in its profits and urban compactness.

The next change noted seems to reduce the profile of the transformation of the good music activists within the phrase, but to what end is not clear:

1957 (288): Second was the transformation of the two pressure groups. From a musically esoteric, idealistic, contra-

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<sup>584</sup> Charles Seeger, “Who Owns Folklore?—A Rejoinder,” *Western Folklore* 21, no. 2 (1962): 98.

acculturative set of missionaries, the make-America-musical fraternity became a more nearly realistic, acculturative segment of the population. From a narrow commercial opportunism, the sell-America-music businessmen acquired a surprising amount of idealism....

1977 (228): Second was the transformation of the two pressure groups: from a musically esoteric, idealistic, contra-acculturative segment of the population; from a narrow commercial opportunism. The sell-America-music businessmen acquired a surprising amount of idealism....

Finally, in this last alteration we Seeger qualifying his earlier praise for big business:

1957 (288): and gave, in musical terms at least, a setback to the nearly successful drive to create a purely neo-European music class structure in the United States. Big business has been so far-at least, in music-more of a democratizing than an authoritarian agent.

1977 (229): and, in musical terms at least, set back the nearly successful drive to create a purely neo-European music class structure in the United States. Big business was-at least until about 1950 (since then it has become more and more autocratic)-more of a democratizing than an authoritarian agent in music.

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