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# Philadelphia All the Time: Sound of the Quaker City, 1896-1947

Charles Hardy

*West Chester University*, [chardy@wcupa.edu](mailto:chardy@wcupa.edu)

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**“Philadelphia All the Time:”  
Sounds of Quaker City, 1896 - 1947.**

**From Spinning Discs to Talking Pictures:**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Ferruccio Giannini, “La Quella Pina (Trovetore)” 1896.                                | 1:26 |
| 2. John McCormack, “Off to Philadelphia in the Morning” 1941.                            | 3:23 |
| 3. Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, “Pension Fund Notes/Comments” 1935. | 3:36 |
| 4. Bert Harvey, “All the Quakers are Shoulder Shakers” 1919.                             | 3:07 |
| 5. Frankie Richardson, “Ukelele Lou” 1924.   | 3:25 |
| 6. Jeanette McDonald/Nelson Eddy, “Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life” 1935.                      | 3:30 |

**The Military/Concert and String Bands:**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 7. Philadelphia Police and Fireman’s Band, “Hail Philadelphia” 1926.   | 3:04 |
| 8. Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Cooperative Band, “March of the Mitten Men,” (conducted by John Phillip Sousa) 1926. | 3:12 |
| 9. Arthur Pryor’s Band, “Philadelphia All the Time” 1926.  | 2:45 |
| 10. Ferko String Band, “Oh Dem Golden Slippers” 1947.  | 2:40 |

**The Music of Black Philadelphia:**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 11. Marian Anderson, “Deep River” 1923.  | 3:08 |
| 12. Bessie Smith, “I’m Wild About That Thing” 1929.  | 2:52 |
| 13. Ethel Waters, “Dinah” 1925.  | 3:15 |
| 14. Clarence Williams Orchestra, “I Can’t Dance, I Got Ants in My Pants” (Charlie Gaines), 1934. | 2:59 |
| 15. Tindley Quaker City Gospel Singers, “Everybody Will Be Happy” 1932.                          | 3:14 |

**The White Bands:**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 16. Howard Lanin and the Benjamin Franklin Hotel Orchestra, “When Eyes of Blue Are Fooling You” 1925. | 2:46 |
| 17. Joe Venuti’s Blue Four, “The Wild Dog” 1927.  | 2:41 |
| 18. Jan Savitt Orchestra, “When I Go A Dreamin’,” 1938.   | 2:53 |

**Spoken Word:**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 19. Russell Conwell, “Acres of Diamonds” 1922.             | 5:40 |
| 20. John Barrymore, “Soliloquy from Hamlet” 1928.          | 4:41 |
| 21. W. C. Fields, “The Day I Drank a Glass of Water” 1946. | 5:47 |



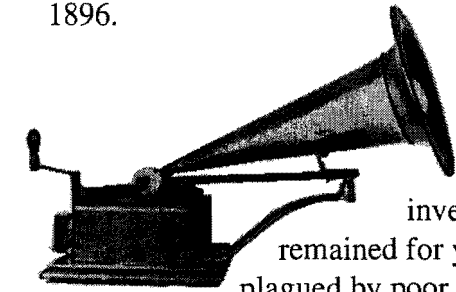
**Sounds of the Quaker City,  
1896-1947**

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## FROM SPINNING DISCS TO TALKING PICTURES

### 1. Ferruccio Giannini, “*La Quella Pina* (*Trovatore*)” 1896.



After a brief flurry of interest in Thomas Edison's phonograph during the 1870s, popular enthusiasm for his invention waned. The phonograph remained for years a technological curiosity, plagued by poor sound quality, high cost, and undefined uses. But the idea of sound reproduction continued to fascinate inventors, among them Emile Berliner, a young German immigrant who spent four years developing a system that unlike Edison's cylinder system, would record sounds by carving lateral cuts into the face of flat discs. Berliner presented the first public demonstration of his new disc recording and reproduction method at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute on May 16, 1888. It, too, remained little more than a children's toy until Eldridge Johnson, owner of a small machine shop in Camden, attached a clockwork motor to the novel invention.

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# A

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Company, and in 1897 opened the nation's first professional recording studio and a retail record shop in downtown Philadelphia.

The gramophone was born during the golden age of opera, a universally popular art form at the turn of the twentieth century. Singers like Enrico Caruso and Nellie Melba enjoyed a status comparable to that of the most popular rock stars today. Although

courted by the early record manufacturers, operatic stars resisted trusting their voices to these imperfect and vulgar mechanical novelties. Italian tenor Ferruccio Giannini, a voice teacher in Philadelphia, performed the only operatic recordings in Berliner's first American catalogue. Though Giannini never rose to celebrity, his children enjoyed distinguished musical careers. Son Vittorio Giannini (1903-1966) was a noted neo-

Romantic composer and taught at the Eastman School of Music for many years. After a highly successful New York debut in 1923, daughter Dusolina Giannini (1900-1987) performed as a concert soloist in the United States and Europe, recorded for the Victor Company in the 1920s, sang with the Metropolitan Opera from 1936 to 1941, and became a noted teacher after retiring from the concert stage. It is Ferruccio, however, who claims a special place in the annals of recorded sound as vocalist on the first commercial operatic recordings ever released on disc.



Ferruccio Giannini and Family





2. John McCormack,  
"Off to Philadelphia in the Morning,"  
1941.

Within a decade of Giannini's first recordings for Berliner, the fledgling recording industry had won over many of the great operatic stars. The Victor Talking Machine Company, which absorbed Berliner in 1900, aggressively pursued and signed international stars to its prestigious Red Label. Victor stars — including the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, who signed with Victor in 1903 — brought the young company and its gramophone recording format popular acceptance and respectability. Snapping up the best young talent, Victor signed the young Irish tenor, John Count McCormack (1884-1945) in 1908. A former ballad singer who had made his London debut only a year before, McCormack was one of the hottest young stars of European opera. The Victor gamble paid immediate dividends. McCormack's "I Hear You Calling Me," released that same year, became the most successful recording of the acoustic era with sales of more than four million copies. The popularity of McCormack, Caruso, and "The March King," John Phillip Sousa, made Victor the world's largest record producer by 1909. McCormack's ballads, operatic airs, and popular songs set one recording sales record after another. His 1917 rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" became the fastest selling recording Victor ever released, with over 250,000 sales in one month! Fast becoming a national institution, McCormack achieved unrivalled celebrity after Caruso died in 1921. From that year until his own death some twenty years later, McCormack reigned as the world's highest paid musician.

Within a decade of signing his Victor contract McCormack



gave up his successful operatic career for the popular stage. During the peak of his popularity in the 1920s the Irish tenor combined the dual role of "serious" and "popular" artist,

mixing popular ballads with operatic solos in his many concert performances. Often considered the greatest Irish tenor of all time,

McCormack was also the most popular recording artist of the early twentieth century. His 856 recordings were split almost evenly between serious and popular music. McCormack was especially popular among Irish immigrants, more than one and a half million of whom had fled the poverty of rural Ireland for the cities of England and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Avid fans waited through his operatic airs to hear heart-felt renditions of rural Irish and Irish-style ballads. McCormack's career occupies a transitional moment in musical history, bridging the leap from the vocally unassisted opera singers of the nineteenth century to the microphone assisted singers of the twentieth century. Microphones and new recording technologies permanently transformed popular tastes and singing styles. Bing Crosby, a young "crooner" who finally supplanted McCormack as America's most popular recording star, best represents the new style.

McCormack did not record "Off to Philadelphia" — an old Irish melody revised and adapted by the song team of Temple and Battison in 1928 — until late in his career. Typical in many ways of the Irish ballads of the era, the song suggests Philadelphia's popularity as a place of Irish settlement. A center of Irish immigration since the potato famine of the 1840s, Philadelphia boasted an Irish population second in size only to New York's. Twelve years after McCormack's death, St. Patrick's Catholic Church at 20th and Locust Streets was still holding memorial masses in his memory.



### 3. Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, “Pension Fund Notes, Comments” 1935.



**H**aving surpassed their European competitors as the world's leading industrial producers, American capitalists in the late nineteenth century turned their attention to culture. They used their new wealth to build art museums and concert halls, to establish symphony orchestras and opera companies, and to import European musicians and performers in an effort to make the United States culturally competitive with Europe. International artists performed regularly in Philadelphia, often using their stays in the city to record for the Victor Record Company, located just across the Delaware River in Camden. Philadelphia's close proximity to Victor also cemented the relationship between the world's largest record company and the fledgling Philadelphia Orchestra.

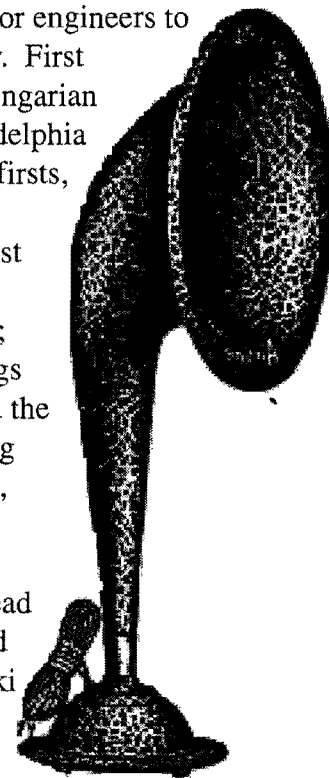
During the era of mechanical recordings (1874-1925), records were made by the force that unenhanced sound waves exerted upon a stylus etching a wax master disc. Simple ensembles, strong voices, and loud instruments made the best phonographic recordings, so the technology was ideal for operatic stars like Caruso and McCormack, small brassy jazz combos, and other groups whose instruments and voices punched through clearly. The great range and complex mix of an orchestra's instruments and voices presented formidable obstacles to early recording

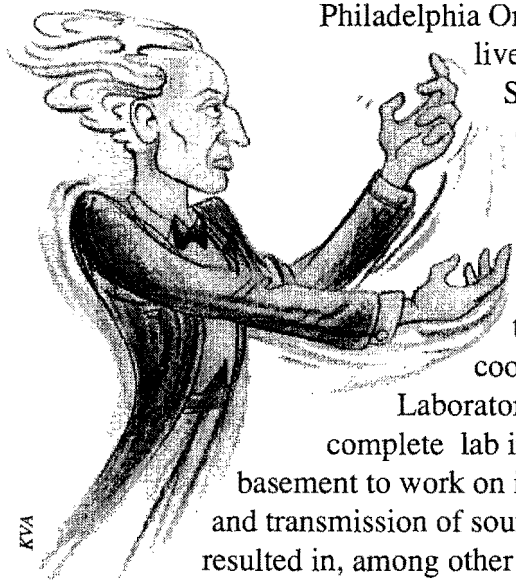


engineers. Mechanical recordings generally lost softer voices and lower octaves, while brasses came to the foreground. The record companies re-orchestrated music to recreate an symphonic sound; often substituting and doubling lower string parts with brass and woodwinds.

Spurred by the growing market for symphonic music, Victor conducted extensive experiments to improve its orchestral recordings. The company found an enthusiastic ally in Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The orchestra had been a purely local organization from its founding in 1900 until Stokowski's arrival in 1912. Within a decade, the young English conductor had remade it into an internationally famous ensemble, widely acknowledged as America's most innovative. Intrigued by the challenges of recording a full-orchestral sound, Stokowski repositioned instruments and worked closely with Victor engineers to produce recordings of unparalleled clarity. First recording for Victor in 1917 (Brahm's Hungarian Dances 5 and 6) Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra marked a number of recording firsts, including the first Stravinsky recording (Dance of the Firebird, 1917); Victor's first complete recording of a full symphony (Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, 1924); Victor's first electrical orchestra recordings (Saint-Saens' Dance Macabre, 1925); and the first complete symphony recorded for long playing (L.P.) records, (Beethoven's Fifth, 1931).

The popularity of the Philadelphia Orchestra's phonographic recordings spread its fame and reputation. As radio matured into a major broadcast medium, Stokowski turned his attention to mastering its challenges, and by the late 1920s the

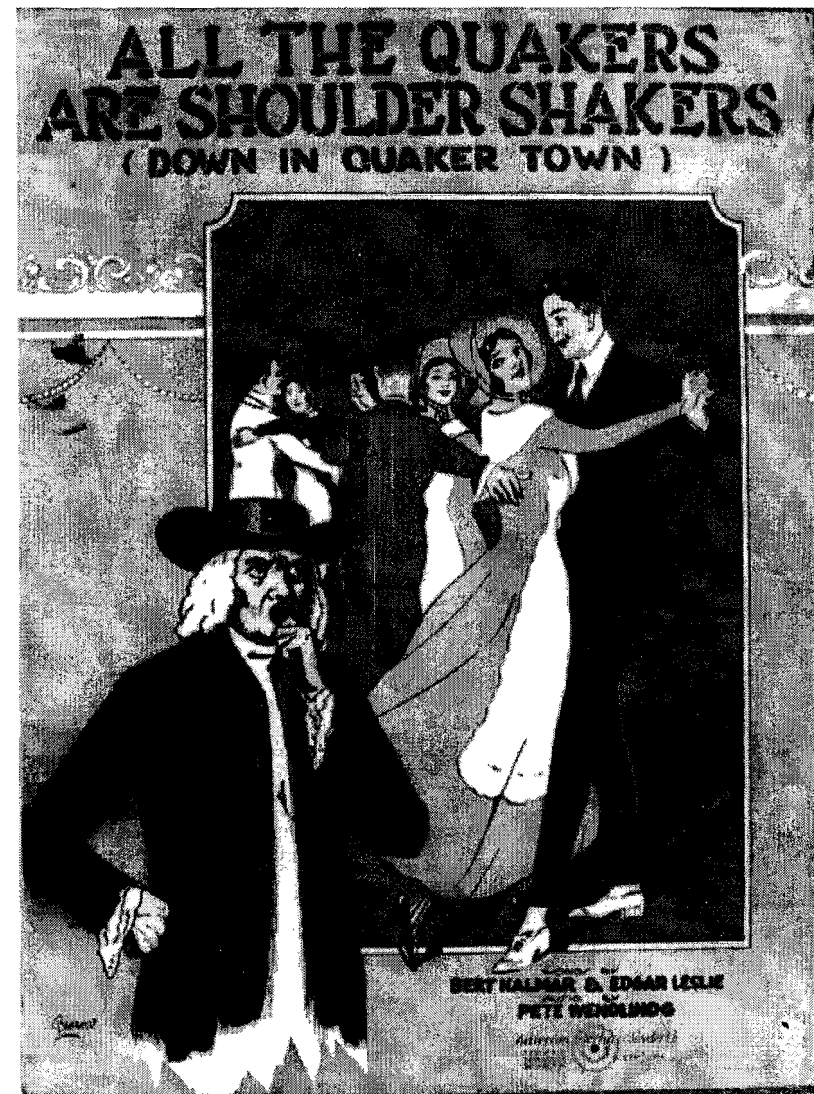




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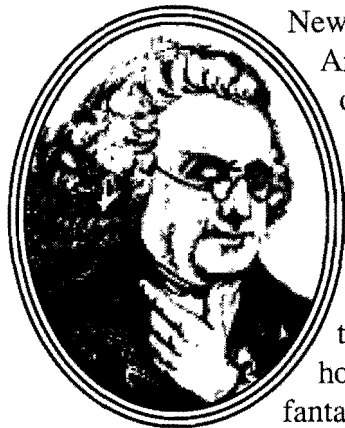
Philadelphia Orchestra was broadcasting live concerts across the United States. The Maestro experimented with a control panel installed in front of his podium and later permitted a broadcast engineer to sit in front of the orchestra. He also cooperated with Bell Laboratories, which set up a complete lab in the Academy of Music's basement to work on improving the reproduction and transmission of sound. This collaboration resulted in, among other things, an experimental stereophonic recording in 1932.

No man with Stokowski's independent spirit and unconventional ideas could expect to remain free from controversy in as conservative a city as Philadelphia. The Orchestra's board of directors objected to the quantity of modern compositions in the Stokowski repertoire and at one point attempted to increase revenue by directing Stokowski to play more operas. The ongoing contest of wills came to a head in December, 1934, when Stokowski offered his resignation because of what he considered unwise management and improper interference with his artistic integrity. When Victor recorded the Musical Fund Concert excerpted in this anthology, Stokowski had all but ended his relationship with the orchestra. Although he conducted the opening and the finale of each concert series from 1936 until 1940, Stokowski had already turned his interests and energies elsewhere. His future efforts would include a collaboration with Mickey Mouse as the conductor in Disney's animated classic, *Fantasia*.



4. Bert Harvey, "All the Quakers Are Shoulder Shakers, Down in Quaker Town," 1919.

The phonograph revolutionized musical culture when it entered American homes during the first decades of twentieth century. Music publishing had been the mainstream of the American music industry for decades. Centered in a section of



New York City called Tin Pan Alley, American song houses employed hundreds of professional songwriters crafting songs to order for the mass market of amateur musicians and singers who performed the popular tunes. Sentimental and romantic songs were the mainstay of the industry, but tunesmiths also ground out songs they hoped would appeal to the geographical fantasies and regional pride of the capricious sheet music consumer. For the Philadelphia market

this meant tunes crafted around such timeless civic symbols as William Penn, the Quakers, Independence Hall, and the Liberty Bell. In an era when most middle-class homes had parlor pianos and family members who could pick out the notes of a simple and harmonious tune, songs with titles like "Won't You Come Over to Philly, Willy?" "Philadelphia Town," "The Pale Face Quaker Boys," and "The Quaker Girl" competed for space on the shelves of music and department stores, beckoning to be taken home and given a try. Generally derivative, pedestrian efforts, these songs rarely enjoyed more than passing interest, but they did fuel a voracious sheetmusic market.

The phonograph appeared during a time of rapid cultural transformation. New forms of entertainment and leisure activities fulfilled the cultural needs of millions of Americans living in an increasingly urban, industrial world. Immigrants from Europe, African-Americans from the South, and white Americans fleeing the farms watched motion pictures, listened at home to phonographs, read newspapers and magazines, and visited amusement parks, baseball stadiums, and vaudeville theaters. The great dance craze of the 1910s had young Americans gyrating their pelvises to erotic rhythms and grasping their partners in close embraces in the dance halls and nightclubs that sprang up in American cities. These changes did not take place uncontested. Many municipalities sought to censor and control the new music,

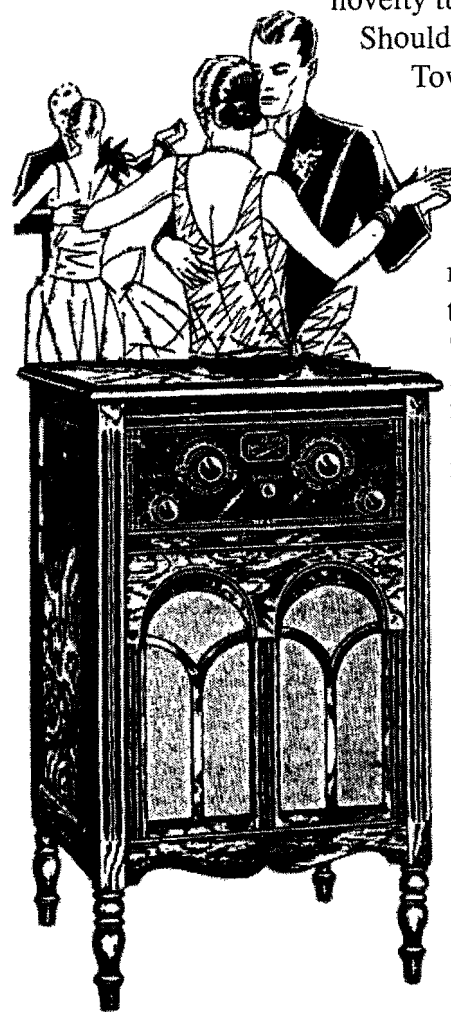
wild dances, and commercial entertainments, fearing that they were undermining the moral fibre of American youth and subverting traditional values. Urban Americans were embroiled in a social conflict that pitted the culture of nineteenth century, small-town America against the "modern" popular culture of the cities. It was against this backdrop that three successful New York songwriters — Peter Wendling, Bert Kalmar, and Edgar Leslie — teamed up in 1919 to write some new songs for Waterson, Berlin, and Snyder, one of the up and coming song-houses. Within a year they had written two million sellers, of which "Oh! What a Pal is Mary!" was the most popular. Another of their successes was the novelty tune "All the Quakers are

Shoulder Shakers Down in Quaker

Town" (words by Kalmar & Leslie, music by Wendling). It was an

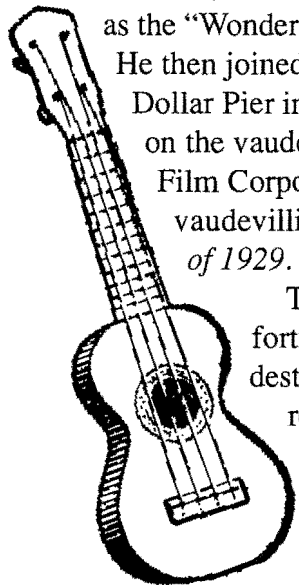
intriguing concept; a song in which Philadelphia Quakers, the very personification of social restraint and conservatism, did that hot new dance, the Fox Trot.

The publisher arranged for popular New York cabaret singer Bert Harvey to record the song in order to promote the sale of sheet music, but the record did not sell well. Released as the Roaring 20s began — a time when new jazz rhythms were already beginning to revolutionize American popular music — the recording was already old-fashioned; its steady 4/4 beat a tired reminder of the Tin Pan Alley songs of an earlier age.



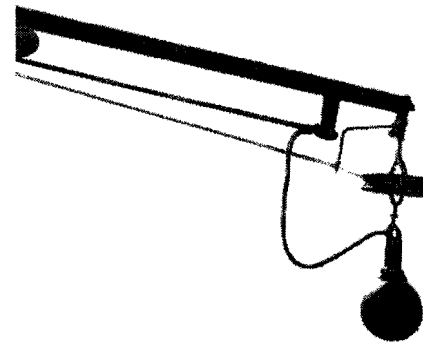
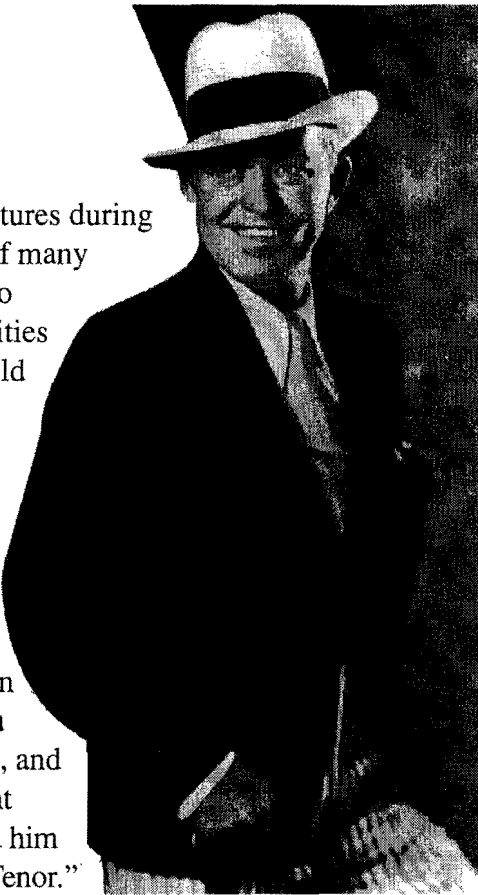
5. **Frankie Richardson,**  
*"Ukelele Lou"*  
 1924.

The advent of talking pictures during the 1920s ended the careers of many great silent film actors. It also opened tremendous opportunities to young performers who could sing. Philadelphia's Frankie Richardson (1898-1962) was one of the first stars of the new sound picture era. The son of a railroad detective, Richardson was born and raised in Philadelphia's Kensington section. He began his singing career at the Bijou Theater at the age of fourteen, and was soon hired by the Dumont Minstrels, which billed him as the "Wonder Boy Tenor."



He then joined the Emmet Welsh Minstrels at the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City and later toured the country on the vaudeville circuit. A screen test for the Fox Film Corporation landed the thirty-one-year-old vaudevillian a starring role in *Fox Movietone Follies of 1929*.

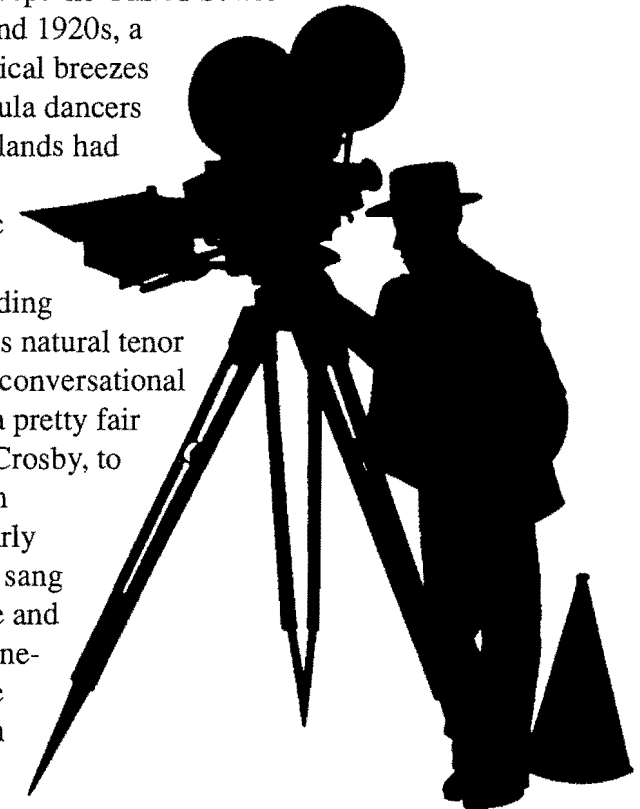
The timing couldn't have been more fortuitous. The Great Depression almost destroyed the American recording industry; record sales plummeted from a high of 104 million discs in 1927 to only six million in 1932. Unable to afford records, Americans turned to the radio and the new



talking movies for an escape from their daily hardships and bleak prospects. Richardson's appearances in such upbeat talking pictures as *Sunny Side Up*, *Let's Go Places*, and *Happy Days*, made him one of the nation's most popular screen entertainers. When Richardson's

film career declined in the mid-1930s, he returned to his old hometown where he remained a popular performer until his death in 1962.

Richardson recorded "Ukelele Lou," (Sterling) in 1924 when he was with the Welsh Minstrels; "Ukelele Lou" was of one of the hundreds of mediocre "Hawaiian" songs written during a Hawaiian music craze that swept the United States during the 1910s and 1920s, a time when the tropical breezes and scantily clad hula dancers of the Sandwich Islands had joined the Old South as the idyllic land of American fantasy. The recording shows Richardson's natural tenor voice, his relaxed, conversational singing style, and a pretty fair yodel. Like Bing Crosby, to whom he was often compared in the early 1930s, Richardson sang in the new intimate and informal microphone-enabled vocal style just then gaining in popularity.





6. Jeanette McDonald & Nelson Eddie,  
"Ah Sweet Mystery of Life" from *Naughty Marietta*, 1935.

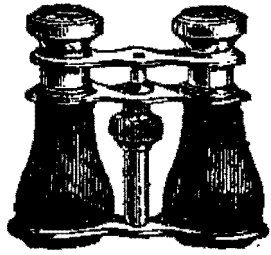


One of the most popular screen couples of the 1930s, Jeanette McDonald (1903-1965) and Nelson Eddie (1901-1967), both laid claim to Philadelphia roots. McDonald was born in West Philadelphia where she attended the Dunlop Public School and

West Philadelphia High School for Girls. Active in stage productions from early childhood, Jeanette and her older sister Blossom showed such musical promise that the family moved to New York where the sisters quickly landed roles on Broadway. Starting as a dancer, the young McDonald worked her way up to singing parts in a string of musical comedies. "Angela," brought her to the attention of Hollywood film director Ernst Lubitsch, who in 1929 teamed her with French entertainer Maurice Chevalier in *The Love Parade*, a highly successful romantic comedy. Film operettas with Chevalier that were more popular in Europe than the United States made McDonald an international celebrity. Audiences were captivated by his charm and her beautiful voice and innocent sex appeal. Slim and long-legged, McDonald appeared in lacy lingerie at least once in each film. Gossip columnists proclaimed her one of the ten most beautiful women in Hollywood. Unlike Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo, the sultry and mysterious beauties of the era, MacDonal had an all-American, girl-next-door quality. She exuded humor and freshness. When the studio teamed her with classical baritone Nelson Eddy a year later, one of the most successful and popular couplings in motion picture history began.

Nelson Eddie's family had moved from Providence, Rhode Island to Philadelphia when he was 14. Unable to finish high school because of his family's poverty, Eddie worked at a succession of jobs: orchestra drummer, telephone operator, obituary writer, newspaper reporter, and advertising copywriter. But his real love was singing, which he learned by listening to operatic records, accompanying the soloists until he mastered their parts. After studying voice in Germany, Eddie made his American debut in 1924, and performed his first concert recital in Philadelphia in 1928. For the next five years he scraped by

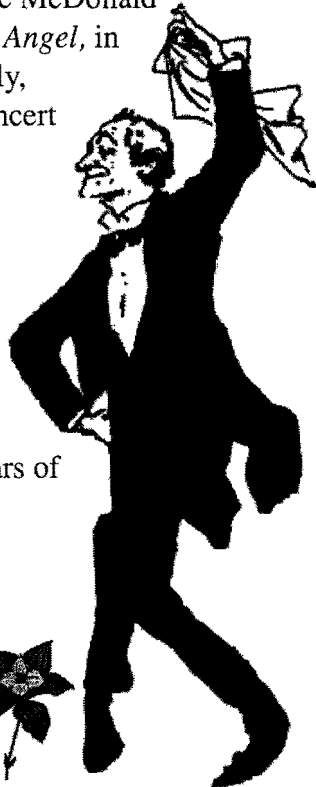




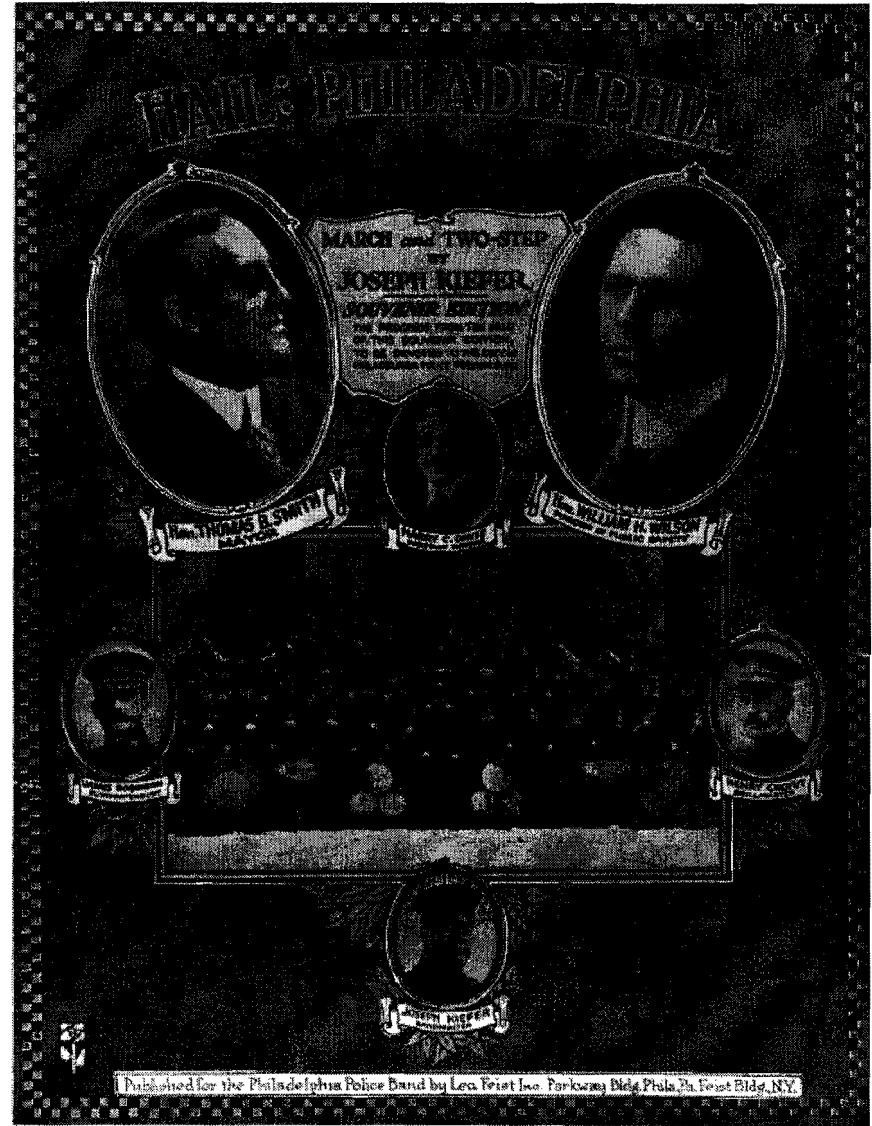
touring as a concert singer. Eddie's big break came in 1933 when Ida Koverman, Louis Mayer's private secretary, persuaded her boss to sign the handsome blonde singer to a nine-year film contract. Mayer teamed Eddie with Jeanette McDonald in *Naughty Marietta*, a musical

remake of the *Prisoner of Zenda*. The film was a box office hit. The on-screen chemistry between the young singers led to a string of eight musical film romances, moneymakers all. Audiences in the mid-1930s were entranced by the filmic formula of simple sentimental stories with happy endings. But the lustre faded by the early 1940s and their last pictures were greeted with critical disdain. Americans' tastes were changing, as filmgoers' affections turned to a new, younger generation of screen couples, among them Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, Fred Astaire and Eleanor Powell. Nelson Eddie and Jeanette McDonald made their last film together, *I Married an Angel*, in 1942. Each continued to perform separately, embarking on successful careers on the concert stage, radio, Broadway and television.

"Ah Sweet Mystery of Life," (Victor Herbert) was the most popular song from *Naughty Marietta*. Featuring the pure voices and sweet harmonies of America's most beloved musical duo, it harks back to a time when the two young stars gave American audiences a few innocent moments of escape during the bleakest years of the Great Depression.



## THE MARCHING BANDS



7. Philadelphia Police and Fireman's Band, Director Captain Joseph Kieffer, *Hail Philadelphia*," circa 1926.

Military concert bands were ubiquitous in turn-of-the-century America; their martial music expressed the nationalistic fervor

and military enthusiasm of a nation in the midst of an industrial revolution and international expansion. Countless small towns across the country boasted concert bands which introduced Americans to the popular songs and musical styles of the day and served as training grounds for young musicians. Although military bands waned in importance during the dance craze of 1910s, they remained popular throughout the 1920s, performing at amusement parks, civic celebrations and sporting events.

As many as thirty marching bands performed regularly in early twentieth-century Philadelphia. The police and fire departments each had their own ensembles. So did Philadelphia Autocar, Lit's Department Store, and dozens of other companies, ethnic and fraternal associations, and neighborhood groups. John Wanamaker's Department Store supported two bands, one black and one white! German bands figured prominently in the industrial neighborhoods of North Philadelphia; Italian concert bands performed nightly in South Philadelphia; and the African-American O.V. Catto Elks Lodge sponsored a highly regarded band. One of the most popular local ensembles, the Philadelphia Police Band recorded for the Vocalion and Aeolian labels during the 1920s. The band's director, Captain Joseph Keiffer, composed "Hail Philadelphia" in 1917 and donated the proceeds from sales of the sheet music to the Police Pension Fund. The band recorded the march privately in the 1920s.



8. **Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Cooperative Band,**  
*"March of the Mitten Men,"*

Lt. A.W. Eckenworth Dir., (conducted by John Phillip Sousa)  
 1926.



John Phillip Sousa

**F**or decades, John Phillip Sousa (1854-1932) led America's most famous military and concert bands. Sousa's Philadelphia connections dated back to the Centennial Exposition of 1876 when the twenty-one-year-old served as concertmaster in Offenbach's orchestra. Sousa left the city in 1880 to become director

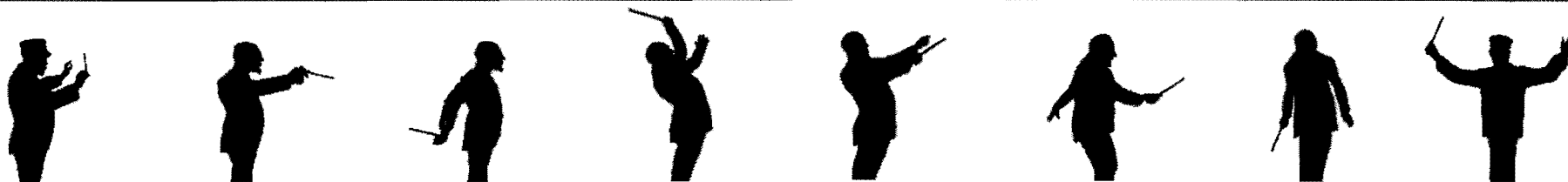
of the U.S. Marine band, a position he held until 1892 when he left to organize his own commercial band. Sousa soon emerged as the nation's most popular bandleader and composer, turning out one memorable march after another. He composed 136 marches in all, including "Stars and Stripes Forever," which premiered in Philadelphia on May 14, 1897 at the Academy of Music. Sousa maintained his Philadelphia ties, performing with his band each summer at the Willow Grove Amusement Park from the park's opening in 1896 until 1928.

Sousa's recording career began when the recording industry was in its infancy. A Columbia cylinder catalogue of 1890 included twenty-seven of his marches. Sousa also produced the first American dance recordings, including two polkas and three waltzes, for Berliner in 1897. During the first two

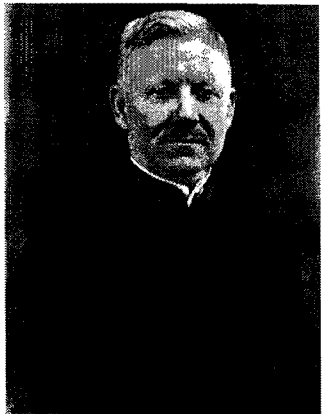


decades of the twentieth century, he, Caruso and McCormack together reigned as America's most popular recording artists. This 1926 recording by the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Band is the only Victor recording upon which Sousa's name appears as conductor. Sousa wrote the "March of the Mitten Men" in 1923 for Thomas E. Mitten (1864-1929), the long time

president of the PRT and a founder of Willow Grove. ("Onward Christian Soldiers," Mitten's favorite hymn, is woven into the melody). Competition among local bands could be keen, and the PRT was among the best. Established in 1922 by Albert E. Eckenworth, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company Band included six separate units, and performed for twenty-five years until its dissolution in 1947.



9. Arthur Pryor's Band,  
"Philadelphia All the Time,"  
1926.



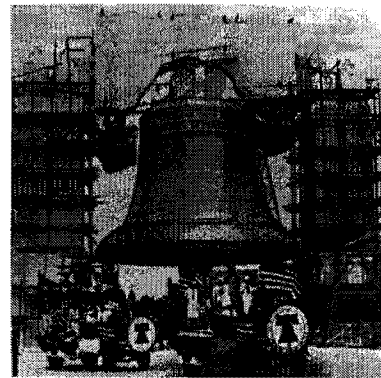
The right song can make a city's reputation. "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," "New York, New York," and "Chicago is My Kind of Town" have captured the spirit of these cities and proved public relations bonanzas. But Philadelphia has never quite gripped any songwriter's soul with sufficient power to elevate his muse to the inspirational heights required for such transcendental

creations. This is not for any lack of trying, as generations of songwriters have continued to this day to search for that illusive musical grail, the Song of Philadelphia.

Local boosters desire for a city song tends to be especially acute in the years immediately preceding major anniversaries and other public celebrations. While the Bicentennial of 1976 produced little new music, the city's Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926 inspired a tremendous outpouring of musical enthusiasms. Edison entered the market with "Meet Me in Philly, Billy," a novelty song sandwiched around an old-fashioned minstrel routine to fill out the two additional minutes offered on his long-playing Diamond Disc records. Marches were especially conspicuous, flowing from songwriters' facile pens. By far the best of the Sesquicentennial offerings was "Philadelphia All the Time" (words by Herman Dieck and Joseph Murphy, music by Charles P. Shisler), the official theme song of the Sesquicentennial Exposition. It remains to this day the closest thing Philadelphia has ever had to a civic anthem. An official souvenir recording of the



march featured a vocal quartet led by Vincent Rizzo, conductor of the Sylvania Hotel house band, with an instrumental version on the flip side. Arthur Pryor's Band, the most recorded concert band of the early twentieth century, produced a second recording which featured a full orchestra and male chorus.



Arthur Pryor (1870-1942) first achieved acclaim as "The Pagannini of the Trombone" in the 1890s. The premiere soloist with the Sousa Band, he was an attraction second only to the great Sousa himself. Pryor developed his talents as a conductor when he filled in as Sousa's substitute; he led the band during many of its Victor recording sessions. He left in 1903 to form his own band and launch an early Victor orchestra. The Pryor Band's output of more than 5,000 takes and 2,000 titles between 1903 and 1924 surpassed that of any other band. One of the nation's best, Pryor's Band recorded many novelty songs and popular melodies as well as marches. A gifted composer, Pryor also wrote one of the greatest novelty songs of all time, "The Whistler and His Dog."



10. **The Ferko String Band,**  
**"Oh Dem Golden Slippers"**  
1947.



Capt. Joseph Ferko  
Ferko String Band

No music today is more closely associated with Philadelphia than that played by marching bands of lavishly costumed mummers who strut up Broad Street each New Year's Day. While one musical craze after another has swept across the nation, permanently altering American musical tastes and fashions, Mummer's clubs rooted in Philadelphia's declining industrial neighborhoods and ethnic enclaves have preserved and kept alive

music popular among working-class Philadelphians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This unique survival of the popular band music of the early twentieth century has since emerged as one of Philadelphia's most celebrated traditions.

Given their current popularity, it might seem strange that the first Mummers' recordings date back no farther than 1946. String bands came comparatively late to the Mummer's Parade, first appearing in 1902 when a makeshift group of eighteen musicians zigzagged up Broad Street. Philadelphia's New Year's Day parades contained only a smattering of musical groups until the awarding of separate prizes for bands in 1916 triggered a rapid growth and the development of the unique mummer's string band sound. Composed of amateur musicians, the string bands preferred popular songs with simple melodies and chords usually



played in a simple 4/4 beat that was good for marching. To increase volume, they added more players and replaced quieter violins and guitars with banjos, saxophones, glockenspiels, and accordions.

Fierce competition between string bands also led to improved musicianship and showmanship. The string bands developed their unique sound and repertoire at the same time that disillusionment in American and world militarism in the aftermath of World War I coupled with rapid changes in music to end the great era of the professional civilian recording and touring band. The collapse of the recording industry during the Great Depression and participation of many mummers in the Armed Forces during World War II precluded any commercial recording of the string bands until after the war.

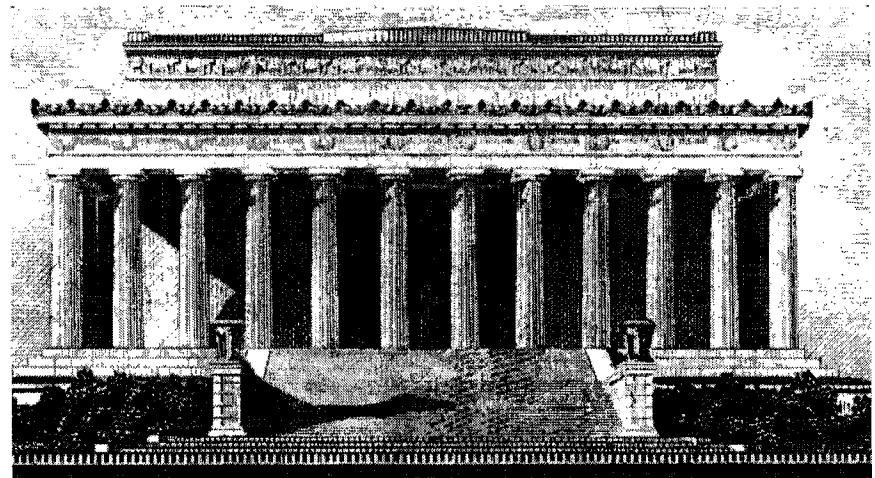
The Ferko String Band won First Prize in the 1947 Parade and recorded "Oh Dem Golden Slippers" later that year. Organized in 1923 by Captain Joseph Ferko — the man who began the custom of Mummer's captains marching at the front of their bands — Ferko was a perennial favorite with audiences and judges. So, too, was "Oh Dem Golden Slippers," a minstrel song written by African-American composer James Bland in the 1870s and first performed by mummers in 1905. For generations since it has been the parade's theme song— the perfect musical accompaniment to the famous "Mummer's Strut."



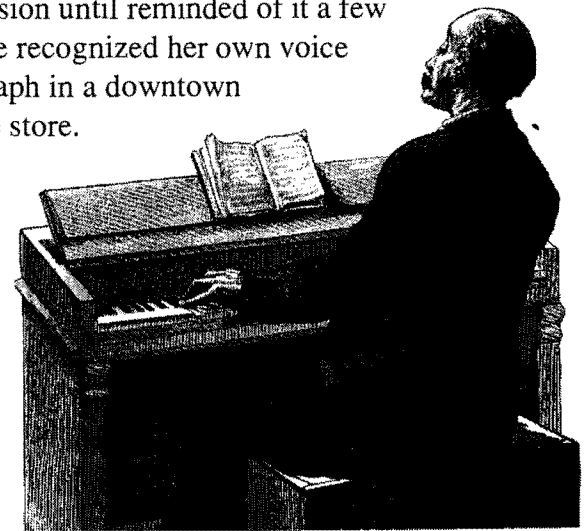
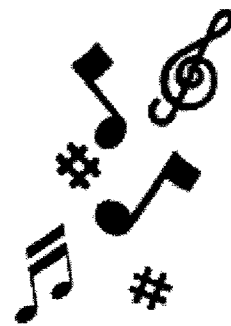
## THE MUSIC OF BLACK PHILADELPHIA

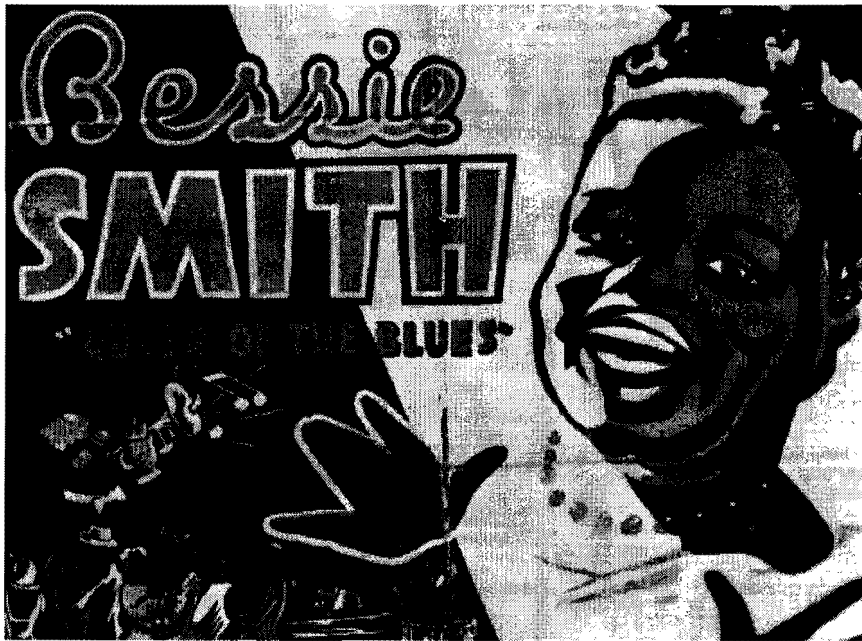
### 11. Marian Anderson, "Deep River" 1923.

**E**arly twentieth-century Philadelphia boasted the largest African-American population north of the Mason-Dixon Line. An educated black elite of caterers, skilled craftsmen, and personal service workers supported a rich musical culture, especially in the areas of classical and religious music. Black Philadelphians had their own symphony orchestra; African-American music teachers and singers who had learned their craft in church choirs performed music ranging from the gospel compositions of local minister Charles Albert Tindley to the works of Bach. Philadelphia's best known classically-trained black artist was Marian Anderson (1902- ), one of the great contraltos of the twentieth century. Born into a poor South Philadelphia family, Anderson demonstrated exceptional musical talent at an early age, performing her first concert at Union Baptist Church while still in elementary school. Sponsored by her family, her church, and a succession of friends and teachers, Anderson received a solid musical education and pursued a concert career. Her New York debut in 1935 followed successful tours of Europe in the early 1930s. Anderson's name became a household word in 1939 when the Daughters of the American Revolution excluded



her from Constitution Hall because she was black, and she performed instead at the Lincoln Memorial before an audience of 75,000 which included much of the nation's political elite. Anderson's international acclaim grew when she became the Metropolitan Opera Company's first black soloist in 1955. Gifted with great volume and a striking quality of voice—Toscanini called hers "the voice that comes once in a hundred years"—Anderson was best known for her performance of African-American spirituals. This 1923 recording, her first by many years, was the product of a single Victor recording session. Anderson recalled that she quickly forgot the session until reminded of it a few months later when she recognized her own voice playing on a phonograph in a downtown Philadelphia furniture store.





12. Bessie Smith,  
*"I'm Wild About That Thing,"*  
 1929.

Philadelphia's location just north of the Mason-Dixon Line made the city a popular destination for African-Americans fleeing the South in the early decades of the twentieth century. The city's growing African-American population nurtured a thriving entertainment industry anchored by the black-owned Standard Theater on the 1200 block of South Street. Black Philadelphia boasted a string of cafe-saloons, speakeasies, night clubs, and dance halls where local and visiting musicians played the popular music of the day.

Blues singer Bessie Smith (1894-1937) was one of the thousands of young black women to arrive in Philadelphia in the early 1920s. One of seven children born to an itinerant minister and his wife, Smith grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Orphaned at nine, she sang for spare change on the streets of Chattanooga to help support her family. By her early teens she was touring the South with a troupe that included Ma Rainey.

Smith began a solo career in 1913 and moved north in 1922 as part of the Great Migration, the northward movement of over a million blacks between the outbreak of the First World War and onset of the Great Depression. In Philadelphia she married Jack Gee, a night watchman, and settled in South Philadelphia.

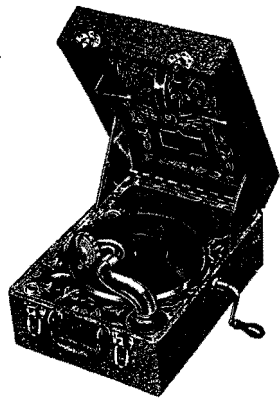
The music and culture that southern blacks brought to northern cities in the early twentieth century electrified America. Victor's 1917 recording of the Original Dixie Land Jazz Band, a group of white New Orleans musicians playing a watered-down version of black jazz, signalled a revolution in American popular music. This first "jazz" recording sold over a million copies, brought jazz to white American audiences, and inspired a musical craze that swept the nation.

The blues, meanwhile, remained popular primarily among southern blacks. This changed in 1920 when Columbia recorded Mamie Smith, the first black female singer to record a solo performance. When Smith's "Crazy Blues" became an overnight sensation other record companies rushed to record black female blues singers.

Initially overlooked because of her rough southern style of singing, Smith's 1923 rendition of "Down Hearted Blues" sold over 780,000 copies in less than six months and propelled her into national prominence. She was soon the highest paid black entertainer in the country. A consummate show-woman, Smith mixed the pure country sound of husky throat tones, moans, wails,







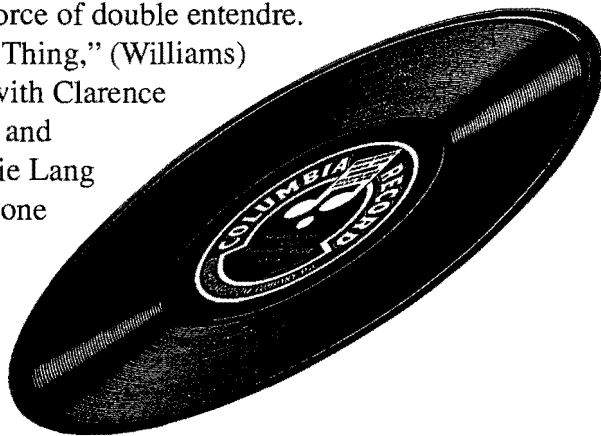
and soul that thrilled rural listeners, with the slick production, wit, and sophisticated blues sound that appealed to urban audiences. The undisputed “Empress of the Blues,” Bessie Smith brought the blues into the mainstream of American popular music.

Bessie Smith was more than just a popular singer and entertainer. She quickly became a symbol of resurgence of militancy and racial pride associated with

Marcus Garvey and the New Negroes of the 1920s. Loud, brash, out-spoken and impatient, Smith openly defied bourgeois conventions. Channelling her own experiences through the black oral tradition of rural folk blues, she sang about the pain and complexities of the African-American experience. But her unconventional life-style of torrid, often violent affairs with men and women, hard drinking and hard-fighting took a heavy toll on her health and career.

The 1920s was a decade of changing sexual mores, as Victorian reserve gave way to the exuberance and free spirit of the Jazz Age. Smith’s musical repertoire—learned in the black vaudeville houses, tent-shows, and night clubs of the South—fit the decade; her sexually-explicit blues songs delighted audiences. Although toned down for recording sessions, they remain tours-de- force of double entendre.

“Wild About That Thing,” (Williams) recorded in 1929 with Clarence Williams on piano and Philadelphian Eddie Lang on guitar, remains one of Smith’s most famous recordings in this genre.

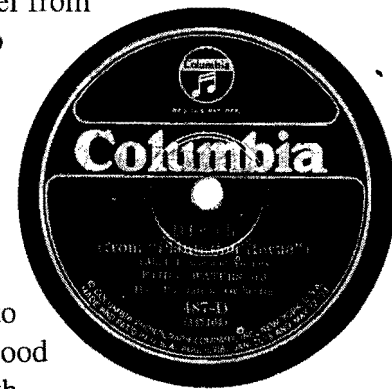


13. **Ethel Waters,**  
“*Dinah,*”  
1925.

**E**thel Waters (1900-1977) was born in Chester, Pennsylvania and grew up in the racially integrated slums of Chester, Camden, and Philadelphia. She began her show business career in her early teens at Pop Grey’s dance hall on South Street where she performed the latest dances and sang

popular torch songs. Her clear northern diction and refined vocal style made her the ideal blues singer for a white audience uncomfortable with the raw southern sounds of the first wave of female blues singers. Waters in 1921 was signed by Black Swan, the nation’s first black-owned record company and quickly became one of its most popular recording stars. When Black Swan folded in 1923, Water’s joined Bessie Smith at Columbia. “Dinah,” (Artist, Lewis and Young) one of her first Columbia recordings, catapulted her to fame.

Many of Waters’ hits were simple sentimental Tin Pan Alley numbers initially written for the vaudeville stage. One of the most popular female singers of the 1920s, she became one of the first black entertainers to cross over from the black vaudeville and nightclub circuit to the American entertainment mainstream; moving from the theatrical stage and nightclubs to motion pictures. The star of a series of movies and shows in the early 1930s, she was one of a handful of black character actors to work on a regular basis in Hollywood in the middle years of the twentieth century.



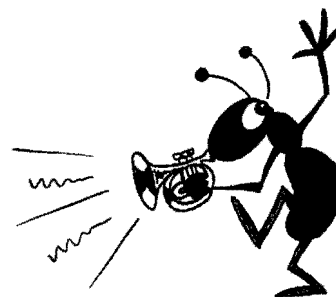
14. Clarence Williams Orchestra,  
 (Charlie Gaines on Trumpet)  
 "I Can't Dance, I Got  
 Ants in My Pants" 1934.



Philadelphia's  
 nightclubs,  
 dance halls,

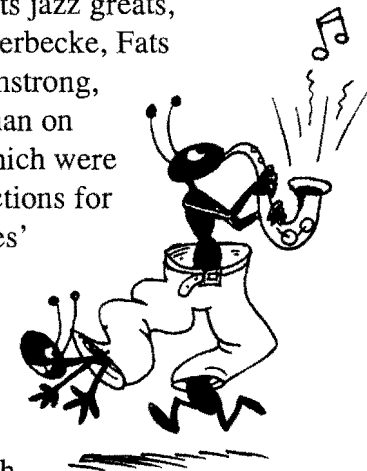
hotels, and silent movie houses provided steady employment for hundreds of musicians. But New York, just over an hour's train ride north of the city, remained the nation's musical center and drew off many of the Quaker city's most talented musicians. This musical drain was part of the reason local jazz bands never developed a distinctive sound. But some first-rate jazz musicians continued to pursue their careers in Philadelphia. One of the most talented of these local greats was Charlie Gaines.

Radio  
 PICTURES



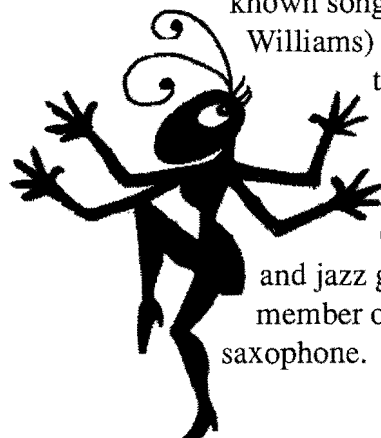
Born and raised in South Philadelphia, trumpet player Charlie Gaines (1900-1987) began his career in Wanamaker's all-black marching band. He moved from there to the house orchestra at the Roseland Dance Hall on Chestnut Street, and in 1920 joined the Wilbur Sweatman Band in New

York City. Gaines played with some of New York City's best jazz bands of the 1920s and with most of its jazz greats, including James P. Johnson, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller, Coleman Hawkins, Louis Armstrong, and Joe Venuti. He played as a sideman on dozens of recording dates, most of which were loosely organized, low-budget productions for the African-American market. Gaines' trumpet can be heard on some of the earliest jazz records produced on the East Coast.



Returning to Philadelphia in 1930 for family reasons, Gaines led the pit crew at the new Pearl Theater in North Philadelphia. To remain in Philadelphia, he turned down offers by several prominent band leaders, performing around town and appearing as a regular on radio broadcasts over WIP. Gaines' best

known song, "I Can't Dance," (Gaines, Williams) became a national hit in 1934 after the record was banned from the air because of its suggestive lyrics. This recording of "I Can't Dance," performed by the Clarence Williams Orchestra, features Gaines on trumpet and jazz great Louis Jordan, at the time a member of Gaines' Philadelphia band, on saxophone.



15. **Tindley Quaker City Gospel Singers,**  
*"Everybody Will Be Happy,"* 1932.

Jazz and the blues gave voice to the secular lives of black Americans. The world of the spirit found its voice in gospel music, a new amalgam of traditional African-American spirituals and the urban blues. One of the great pioneers of this new musical form was Philadelphia minister Dr. Charles Albert Tindley (1851- 1933), pastor of the Calvary Methodist Church on Bainbridge Street. Born a slave in Berlin, Maryland, Tindley came to Philadelphia as a young man, where he worked as a hod carrier and church sexton before joining the ministry in 1885. Composing hymns for his small congregation of poor blacks and southern newcomers, Tindley merged black folk tunes, folk images, Biblical proverbs, and the music of white hymnody, creating a new music that gave voice to the spiritual hopes and concerns of black urban dwellers. He went on to publish two volumes of songs, some of which have become standards of the African-American liturgy. Drawn by both his charismatic preaching and his music, southern migrants flocked to Tindley's church. By the time of his death in 1933 he presided over the city's largest black congregation. The Tindley Temple on South Broad Street boasted over 10,000 members; its huge, four-manual organ rivalled the great organ in Wanamaker's Department Store.

Another notable feature of the Tindley ministry was the C.A. Tindley Gospel Chorus, led by Dr. Tindley's son Albert, which won acclaim performing songs composed by their pastor. The quartet was one of the many popular male singing groups spawned in early twentieth-century African-American churches. The great demand for the Tindley chorus led to the formation of a second quartet which soon broke off from the church, went professional, and toured the country during the 1920s and 1930s. This latter group, the Tindley Quaker City Gospel Singers, recorded three records: two in 1926 and one in 1932. Unfortunately, neither Tindley group ever recorded any of Dr. Tindley's own compositions. The song featured here, "Everybody Will Be Happy Over There," does, however, demonstrate the rich harmonies and extraordinary voices of the Tindley quartets.



Dr. Charles Albert Tindley

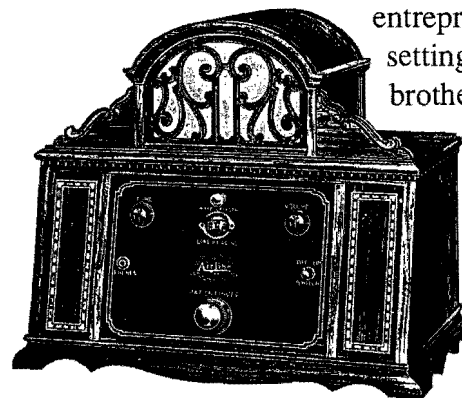
**THE WHITE DANCE BANDS**

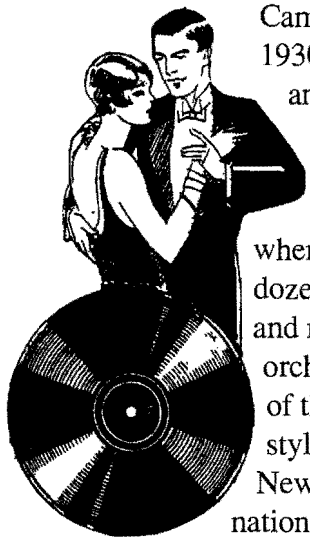
16. **Howard Lanin and the Benjamin Franklin Hotel Orchestra,**  
*"When Eyes of Blue Are Fooling You,"*  
 1925.

**H**oward Lanin, (1899-1991) "The King of Society Dance Music," was a musical institution in Philadelphia for more than 65 years. One of ten children born to a Russian Jewish orchestra leader who had resettled his family in South Philadelphia, Lanin was working professionally as a trumpeter in small Philadelphia and Atlantic City clubs by his early teens. Lanin's career as a "society" bandleader began in 1923 when Campbell's Soup president John Dorrance, delighted by his performance at a social engagement in Wildwood, New Jersey, asked Lanin to play at the Radnor Hunt Club. The young band leader was soon the darling of upper-class Philadelphia, for whom he performed at debutante balls, weddings, and other social affairs. The success of Lanin's non-stop arrangements of show tunes, waltzes, Latin rhythms, and jazz, all played with the distinctive Lanin "get-up-and-get-with-it" beat, led to bookings two and three years in advance. To meet the demand, the young



entrepreneur franchised his music setting up orchestras fronted by his brothers. Although the Howard Lanin Orchestra's primary performance market was the Mid-Atlantic region, the Lanin brothers came to play an important role in the national recording industry. Howard Lanin led the

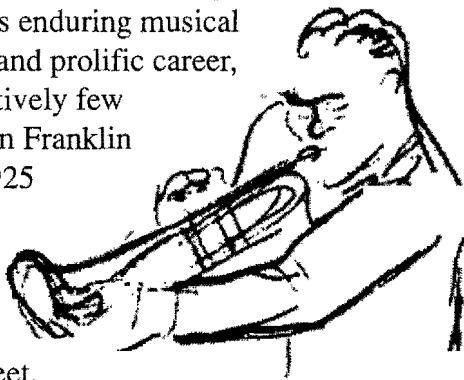




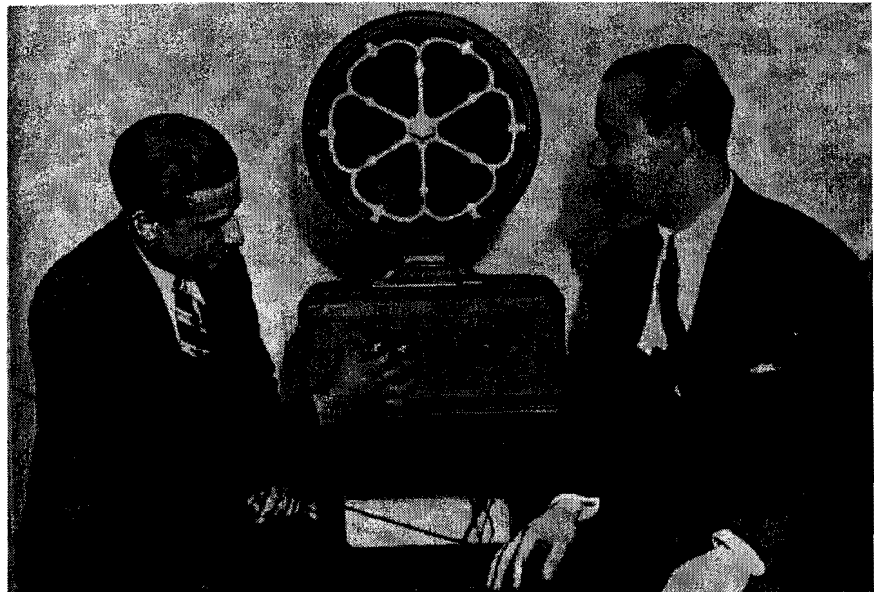
Campbell's Soup Radio Orchestra in the 1930s; among its members, at one time or another, were Red Nichols, Artie Shaw, Benny Baker, and both Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. Younger brother Sam Lanin moved to New York in the 1920s where he became a major band broker for dozens of record companies; he set up players and recording dates for hundreds of make-shift orchestras which recorded the popular tunes of the day. Carrying the Philadelphia, Lanin style of "society"-based popular music to New York, he went on to become one of the nation's most popular society bandleaders. The band performed for presidents and heads-of-state as well as for the balls and New Year's Eve bashes of America's well-heeled.

Howard Lanin remained in Philadelphia, enjoying his position as one of the city's enduring musical institutions. Despite his long and prolific career, Howard Lanin made comparatively few recordings. Lanin's "Benjamin Franklin Hotel Orchestra" made this 1925 Victor recording of "When Eyes of Blue Are Fooling You," (Clare, Monaco) soon after the Benjamin Franklin Hotel opened on Chestnut Street.

Make sure to listen for that inimitable Lanin "get-up-and-get-with-it" beat.



17. **Joe Venuti's Blue Four, with Eddie Lang,**  
*"The Wild Dog,"* 1927.



*Joe Venuti ( Right ) and Eddie Lang.*

**W**hen Giuseppe (Joe) Venuti (1903-1978) and Salvatore (Eddie Lang) Massaro (1902-1933) first played together in South Philadelphia's James Campbell Elementary School orchestra little could they have imagined that theirs would eventually be remembered as one of the great collaborations in jazz history. Lang was the tenth and youngest child of Dominic Massaro, an Italian guitarist and mandolin maker; Venuti, the youngest of eight children, was born on his family's voyage from Italy. Both showed early promise as violinists. Classically trained, Venuti performed with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra when he was only thirteen. But Venuti loved the jazz he heard in South Philadelphia's cafe-saloons and dance halls, and sometime around 1917 teamed up with Lang, who had by then switched to the guitar. They formed a musical partnership that lasted until Lang's death sixteen years later.

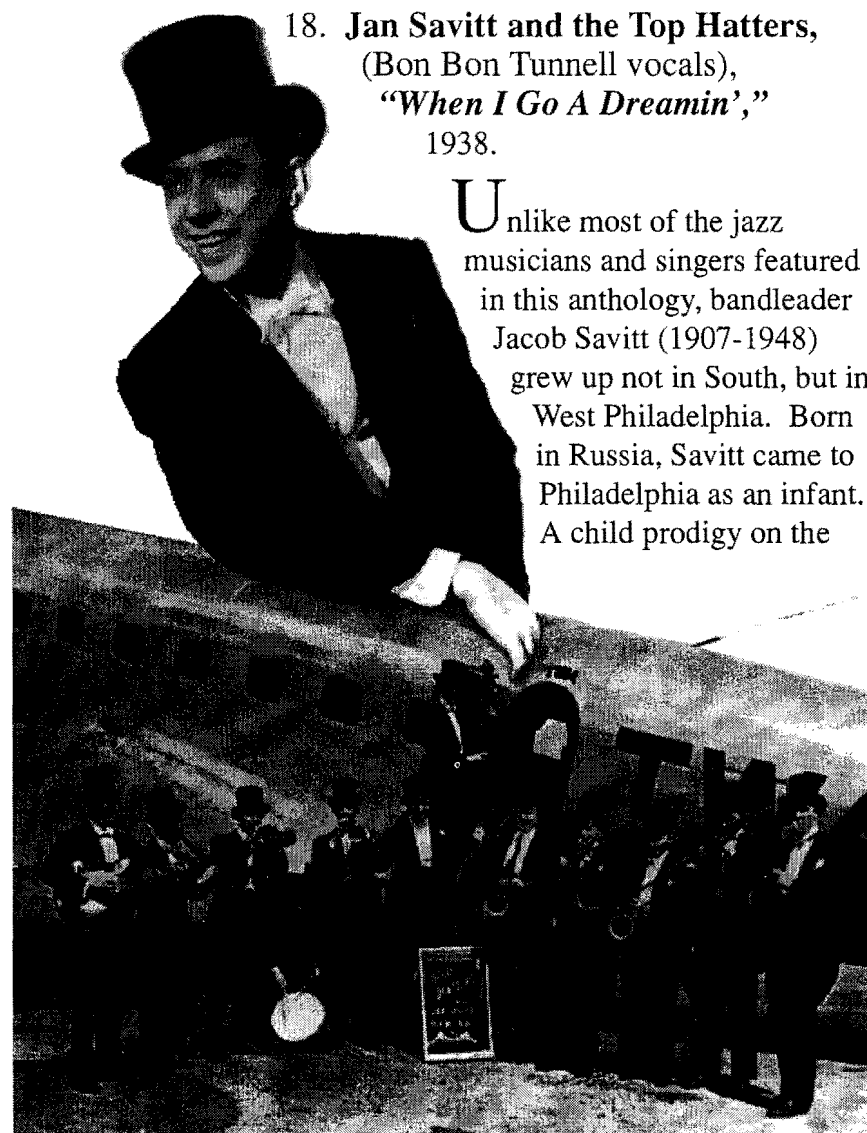
Venuti and Lang showed a musical sophistication that set them apart from their local contemporaries at a time when East Coast

jazz was still largely influenced by older ragtime and musical comedy styles. Their jazz innovations continued to attract attention after they moved to New York in 1925. Before long, they joined the top echelon of white jazz sidemen, among whom Venuti became known as “The Clown Prince of Jazz” for his endless practical jokes and keen sense of humor in performance. A big barrel-chested man, he was also a brawler and tended to be temperamental. In 1929, the pair joined America’s most popular band, Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra. When Whiteman laid them off one year later to cut overhead, Lang began to accompany another Whiteman alumni, singer Bing Crosby, with whom he became the nation’s highest paid sideman. Before his death in 1933, Lang made over 70 records with Bing Crosby . After Lang’s death, Venuti’s career fell into decline. He resurfaced in the 1960s when a series of live performances and new albums reminded jazz fans and critics alike of his superb musicianship and engaging style.

Lang and Venuti periodically teamed up to release their own recordings. Many critics consider Joe Venuti’s and Eddie Lang’s Blue Four recording sessions of 1927-1928 to be white jazz at its best. “The Wild Dog,” (Venuti, Lang) recorded in 1928, demonstrates Venuti’s free swinging style that set the standard for jazz violin, and Lang’s pioneering single-string solo technique that forever changed the way the guitar is played. Joe Venuti’s and Eddie Lang’s influence has been greatest not in the United States, but in Europe, where the partners formed the inspiration for the great jazz guitarist Django Rienhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli, among others.

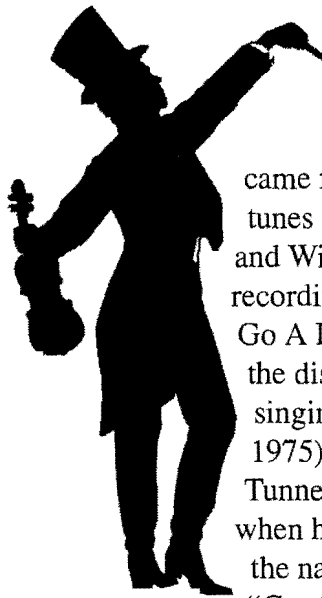


18. **Jan Savitt and the Top Hatters,**  
 (Bon Bon Tunnell vocals),  
*“When I Go A Dreamin’,”*  
 1938.



Unlike most of the jazz musicians and singers featured in this anthology, bandleader Jacob Savitt (1907-1948) grew up not in South, but in West Philadelphia. Born in Russia, Savitt came to Philadelphia as an infant. A child prodigy on the

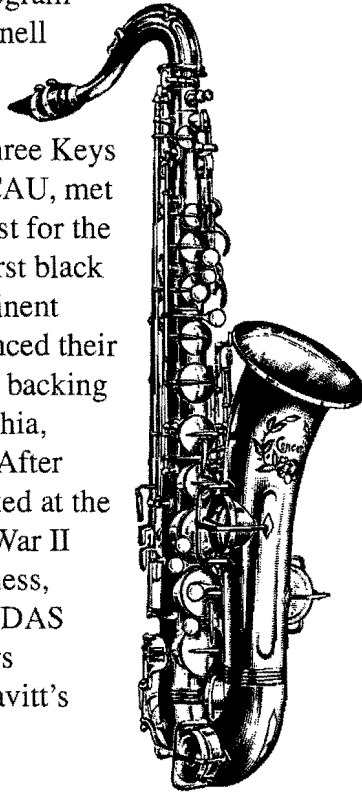
violin, he attended West Philadelphia High School and studied violin and conducting at the Curtis School of Music. At Curtis the eighteen-year-old Savitt caught the attention of Leopold Stokowski, who invited him to join the Philadelphia Orchestra. Like Venuti a decade before, Savitt was drawn to popular music. He became a music director of WCAU radio in 1934. In 1936, Savitt and his group, the Top Hatters, jumped to KYW where his



“Music for Moderns” radio program brought the group national attention.

Jan Savitt’s first big hits came from his arrangements of show tunes from University of Pennsylvania Mask and Wig Club performances. This 1938 recording of Mask and Wig Club song, “When I Go A Dreamin’” (Reichner, Boland) features the distinctive Savitt “shuffle rhythm” and the singing of George “Bon Bon” Tunnell (1912-1975). Born and raised in South Philadelphia, Tunnell began his singing career in small clubs when he was fourteen years old. He acquired the name “Bon Bon” while singing with the “Candy Brothers,” a confectionery company-

sponsored duet formed by WCAU program director Stan Lee Broza in 1929. Tunnell moved on to The Three Keys, a black trio NBC hired in 1932 to compete with the Mills Brothers. When the Three Keys dissolved in 1936, Tunnell joined WCAU, met Savitt and began to appear as a vocalist for the Top Hatters in 1939 and 1940 – the first black vocalist to sing regularly with a prominent white band. The Top Hatters experienced their greatest popularity in the early 1940s, backing Frank Sinatra in 1943 in his Philadelphia, Boston, and Pittsburgh appearances. After leaving the Top Hatters, Tunnell worked at the Sun Shipyard in Chester until World War II ended; he then returned to show business, becoming a popular disc jockey on WDAS radio in Philadelphia. The Top Hatters continued to perform together until Savitt’s death following a stroke in 1948.



## SPOKEN WORD

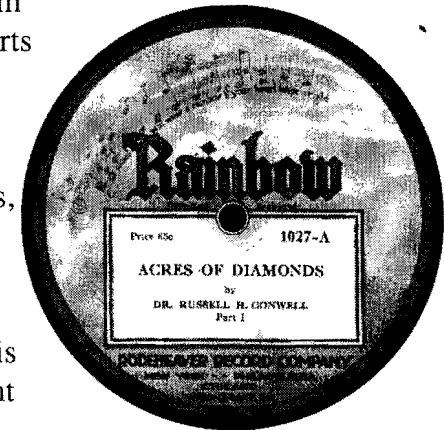


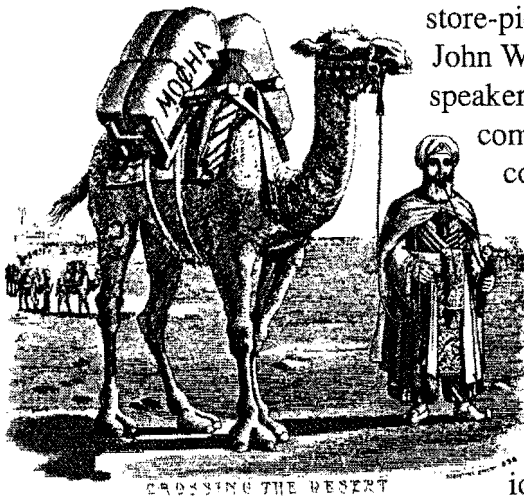
19. Russell Conwell,  
“Acres of Diamonds,”  
1922.

Early on, Thomas Edison speculated that the phonograph would find its use in preserving for posterity the voices of great men and women. With this in mind he attempted in 1888 to record English poet Robert Browning who gripped by anxiety while standing before the new invention forgot the words to his own poem “How

They Brought the Goods News From Ghent to Aix.” Berliner also recognized the importance and the commercial potential of recorded speech and included his own renditions of “The Lord’s Prayer” and Lord Byron’s poem “Manfred” in his first catalogue of gramophone recordings. Spoken word recordings formed an important part of many record catalogues in the following decades. These ranged from serious authors and statesmen to popular entertainers and vaudevillians, from actors and poets to elocutionists and humorists, from hucksters and advertisers to sports figures and bird-imitators.

Philadelphia produced its share of orators and public speakers. For over twenty years, African-American minister Charles Albert Tindley gave his Christmas sermon to crowds numbering in the thousands. His contemporaries rated department

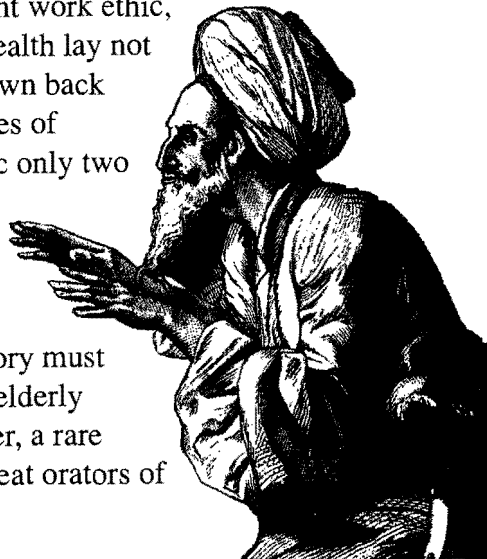




store-pioneer- turned-statesmen John Wanamaker a public speaker of great eloquence and commanding presence. Few comedians could claim better timing than Philadelphia-born W.C. Fields; few actors better elocution than the great Barrymores. But of all the celebrated speakers and performers identified with the city,

none commanded a greater reputation or more respect than evangelist-turned-educator, Russell T. Conwell.

Converted to Christianity in the 1870s, the Massachusetts-born Conwell became minister of North Philadelphia's nearly moribund Grace Baptist Church in 1879, and soon transformed it into one of the city's largest congregations. Conwell founded Temple University in 1888 and supported the fledgling working man's college with honoraria earned by performing his famous "Acres of Diamonds" speech over 6,000 times. The speech, a set piece on social uplift and the Protestant work ethic, told Americans how great wealth lay not in distant lands but in their own back yards. This rendition of Acres of Diamonds, committed to disc only two years before Conwell's death, suffers from both the advanced age of its speaker and the ennui that so many performances of the same story must have exerted on the by then elderly minister. It remains, however, a rare sonic record of one of the great orators of the late nineteenth century.



20. **John Barrymore,**  
*"Soliloquy from Hamlet,"*  
 1928.



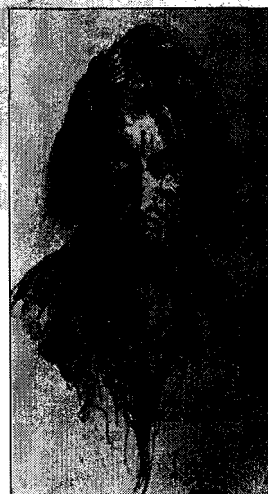
For the past three hundred years, Shakespeare's Hamlet has reigned as the supreme dramatic challenge for English-speaking actors. Performers of this role have placed themselves in comparison with the greatest of their predecessors. Descended from three generations of prominent stage performers, John Barrymore (1882-1942), was the youngest and perhaps most talented member of the first family of the American theater and stage. He was already one of America's greatest actors when in 1922, he accepted the challenge of playing Hamlet.

Barrymore dropped all other projects and spent months working with a private vocal coach to prepare for his fall premiere on Broadway. The hard work paid off. Barrymore thrilled American audiences and critics alike

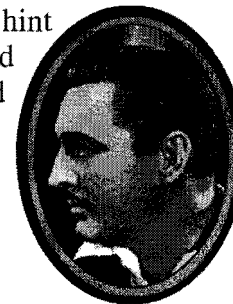




Some of John's self-renderings. Above, how he saw himself, a dual nature consisting of the polished matinee idol and an inner demonic presence. Right, self portrait in the role of Don Juan.

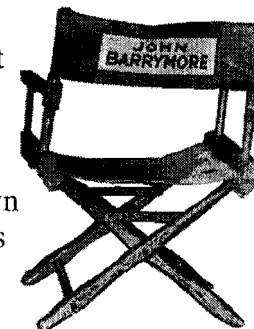


with his daring "modern" interpretation and its hint of incest in the relationship between Hamlet and his mother. (Biographers have since speculated that this interjection of Freud into Shakespeare may well have reflected Barrymore's seduction at the age of fourteen by his father's second wife). His 101 performances would break the endurance record set by the great Edwin Booth almost a half century earlier. Though critics acclaimed him as the greatest stage actor of his generation, Barrymore grew bored playing the same role night after night and soon left the stage for Hollywood.



With their theatrical parents constantly on tour, the three Barrymore children, Ethel, Lionel, and John had grown up in the house of their grandmother, Mrs. John Drew, herself a well-known actress and the manager of Philadelphia's Arch Street Theater. After his mother's early death, John had bounced from one school and guardian to another. He became an actor reluctantly, drawn to the stage by his

family only after his first career as a commercial illustrator in New York had failed. An alcoholic since his teens, Barrymore grew increasingly self-destructive in his later years. This Victor recording of the Hamlet soliloquy, which dates from 1928, demonstrates his extraordinary emotional range, vocal control, and passion at a time when the ravages of alcoholism were already eroding his extraordinary skills. The greatest actor of his generation ended his career performing drunken parodies of his own great stage persona in radio comedy programs and live performances.





21. W. C. Fields,  
*"The Day I Drank a Glass of Water,"*  
 1946.

No anthology of Philadelphia's sonic history would be complete without a recording from perhaps the most famous Philadelphian of them all, William Claude Dukenfield, a.k.a. W. C. Fields (1880-1946). The son of an English vegetable huckster, Fields grew up in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. Dropping out of grade school by the age of eight, Fields worked for his father until the mutual assaults forced the raw youth to flee home and strike out on his own. By the age of fourteen he had already worked as stock boy at Strawbridge and Clothiers Department Store, as a shill for a shell game, pool hustler, petty thief, and professional drowner on the Atlantic City beaches before landing his first full-time job as a juggler in a travelling road show. Born, as he later wrote, "with a



**W.C. Fields**  
**ORIGINAL**  
**UNIQUE and**  
**ECCENTRIC**  
**JUGGLER**

**W.C. FIELDS**  
**EXPERT BILLIARDIST**

*W.C. was also a talented cartoonist, doing a series of self-caricatures for newspapers that were running ads or interviews about his act. The cartoons show precisely how his costume evolved after a number of years. (Upper left) The lost 1925 film "That Royle Girl". (Right) as he appeared at B.F. Keith's Colonial Theatre, May 1913.*

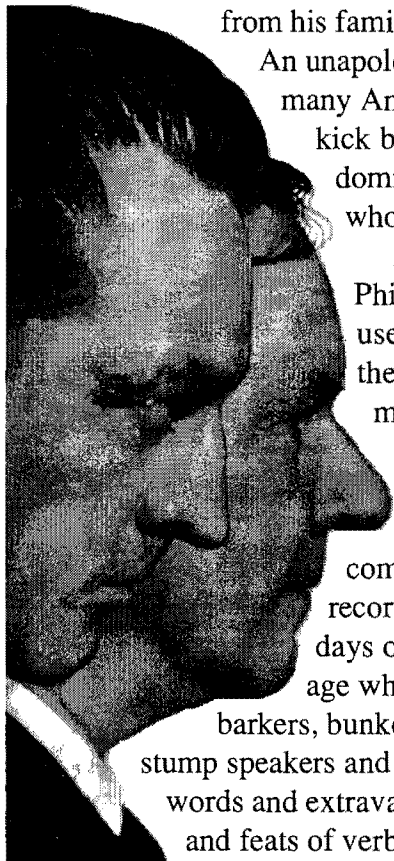


fatal facility for juggling things," Fields used his impeccable timing and wry, self-deprecating humor to move from small town road shows to vaudeville, the musical stage and motion pictures.

One of the great comics of the twentieth century, Fields used his own life as inspiration for his portrayals of the perennial outsider victimized by the forces of modern life; the henpecked husband, down-on-his-luck con artist, and common man, alienated from his family and lost in the vastness of society.

An unapologetic curmudgeon, Fields expressed many American men's forbidden desire to kick back at the smug businessmen, domineering wives, and bratty children who made their lives miserable.

A close drinking buddy of fellow Philadelphian John Barrymore, Fields used his deep fondness for alcohol as the fount of inspiration for some of his most memorable comedy. Although not recorded until the year of his death in 1946, Fields' "The Day I Drank a Glass of Water"—his only commercially released phonographic recording—harkened back not just to the days of Prohibition, but to a still earlier age when itinerant carnival side-show barkers, bunco-artists, patent medicine salesmen, stump speakers and story-tellers indulged their love of words and extravagant puffery in elaborate tall-tales and feats of verbal legerdemain.

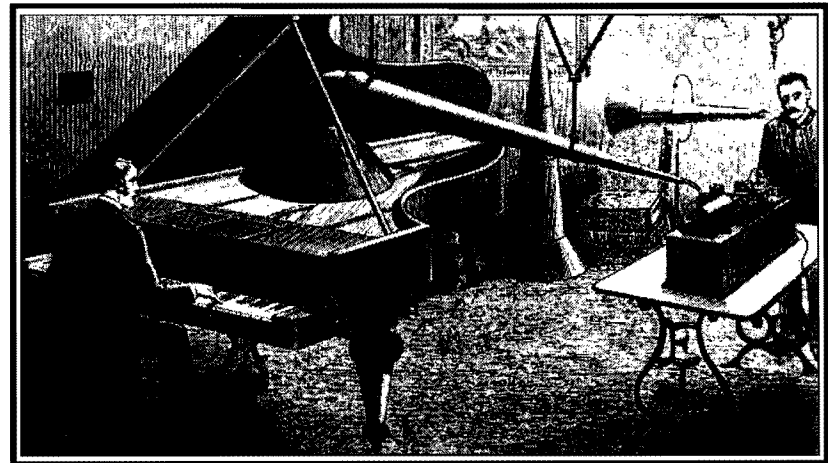


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### A Note on the Selection of Recordings:

The producers of this anthology have done their best to present a representative cross-section of the voices and music of Philadelphia during the first half-century of the American recording industry. It is by no means comprehensive. We have selected from among those artists who spent a significant portion of their youth in the city or who lived in Philadelphia during the productive years of their careers. For this reason certain famous performers associated with Philadelphia through parentage or residence in the city late in life have not been included. In addition, certain early recordings that might otherwise have been considered because of their historical significance were left out because of the poor sound quality of the original recordings. We welcome comments and questions about this anthology.



For more information or additional cassettes write:  
Spinning Disc Productions, 840 Winter Road, Rydal, PA 19046.

