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Abstract

After the United States' entry into the Second World War, music was one of the most prominent forms of art and popular entertainment to be repurposed by the federal government as part of the mobilization for war. The military implemented numerous music programs produced and consumed by a wide range of service personnel. These activities functioned as a means of building morale among military and civilian audiences, both on the domestic home front and in foreign nations, and disseminating an image of American culture that reinforced a set of values integral to the war effort. In order to present this argument, I will analyze the various motivations behind the measures undertaken by both the military and other government agencies, most notably the Office of Wartime Information (OWI), to expand and develop musical activities for military and civilian applications. I will then shift perspectives towards investigating how military personnel themselves undertook these duties and the roles in the war effort that they perceived for themselves as musicians.

Keywords

Music, Military, World War II, Morale, Nationalism

Disciplines

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Comments

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“Strike Up” and Mobilize the Band: Musical Activities in the United
States Military During World War II

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HIST 421

Professor Michael Birkner

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*I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work
and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.*

*“Through the difficult war years, music in its many varied forms has given untold inspiration and comfort to our fighting men, to our workers in industry and on the home front and to the millions of other loyal men and women who have made their contributions to the war effort. Music has reached into the lives of many who have made great sacrifices, who have suffered the deepest losses, and given them renewed strength and some measure of solace.”*¹ -U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt

Following the entry of the United States into the Second World War in response to the Japanese attacks on American naval bases at Pearl Harbor, both the federal government and general population mobilized for armed conflict in the European and Pacific theatres. This mobilization included efforts by many industries both directly and indirectly related to the military, ranging from weapons and ammunition production to popular retail industries. In addition to larger sectors of the wartime economy, many different forms of art and popular entertainment became involved. Music was one of the most prominent forms of entertainment to be repurposed by the federal government as part of the mobilization for war. Since the first armed conflicts in the nation’s history, the United States has utilized music for specific programs within the military during times of war. These programs have served a variety of purposes, such as training and directing soldiers in battle, sustaining morale within military ranks, and generating enthusiasm on the home front. During the nation’s involvement in the Second World War, the government devoted considerable resources towards expanding the existing musical activities within each branch of the military and developing a wide variety of new music programs designed for applications both on the home front and in overseas theatres of war.

¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Letter to C.M. Tremaine, Secretary of the National Music Week Committee,” in “President Praises Music in War Effort,” *New York Times* (New York), Apr. 9, 1945.

Much of the existing scholarship on the topic of music in the United States military during the Second World War has focused on analyzing how popular music related to the national war effort. Historian John Bush Jones argued in *The Songs That Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939-1945* that virtually all popular artists wrote or performed music directly or obliquely associated with the war that couched “war-related subject matter in the familiar forms of romantic ballads, rhythm numbers, dance tunes, and novelty numbers.”² He found that the most popular war-related songs were those about GI’s overseas, which captured a sentiment that had “tremendous capacity for building morale and motivating war-related activities.”³ As a result, this source develops other prevailing arguments on the topic, which have defined the primary function of popular songs as an escape from the war and the projection of American values, by more precisely categorizing the lyrical and musical techniques that composers of the era employed in creating war-related music.⁴

More recently, other scholars have devoted more attention to analyzing the government’s direct involvement in implementing music programs within the military during the Second World War. In her book *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War*, historian Kathleen E. R. Smith documented the efforts of the American music industry to produce music that met the standards outlined by the Office of Wartime Information (OWI) for a “proper” war song. She argued that the government sought to use music to cultivate Americans’ loyalty by increasing morale, “both in terms of keeping people happy and unifying their will.”⁵ Most publishers,

² John Bush Jones, *The Songs That Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939-1945* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴ G.P. Mohrmann and F. Eugene Scott. “Popular Music and World War II: The Rhetoric of Continuation,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62, no. 2 (April 1976): 145-156; Mohrmann and Scott found that “allusions to the war and related activities appeared frequently in the lyrics of the American popular song” during the years of World War II despite the fact that most popular songs of this era “contained no direct reference to the military conflict.”

⁵ Kathleen E. R. Smith, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 8.

instead, elected to appeal to the sense of escapism that was a “high priority for music listeners” at the time by writing romantic or novelty songs. Smith, however, concluded that these failed attempts to produce a “proper” war song did not detract from popular music’s positive influence on the general public’s support for the war.⁶ Scholar Annegret Fauser also examined the role of government organizations in sponsoring music programs related to the war effort as well as the experiences of individual performers and composers who served in the military in her book *Sounds of War: Music in the United States During World War II*. In order to supplement previous studies concerned with the role of jazz and other genres of popular music during World War II, Fauser focused on the narrowly-researched field of classical music in the United States during these years. She claimed that “American musicians found themselves in a cultural field rife with contradictory demands from government institutions and the military, from the general needs of day-to-day musical life at home, and from their own private desire to continue composing and performing.”⁷ Fauser illustrated these “complexities of civilian and military musical life” by analyzing both “the people and institutions that created, performed, and listened to this music” and its “sonic manifestations.”⁸ This monograph stands out from other works on the topic due to Fauser’s emphasis on illustrating the personal experiences of musicians enlisted in the military, gained from extensive archival work on individuals such as Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, and William Schuman.

In reinforcing these different fields of scholarship, I argue that the United States government created music programs produced and consumed by a wide range of service personnel as a means of building morale among military and civilian audiences, both on the

⁶ Smith, *God Bless America*, 1-11.

⁷ Annegret Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

domestic home front and in foreign nations, and disseminating an image of American culture that reinforced a set of values integral to the war effort. In order to present this argument, I will first provide more detailed contextual information on the United States military's history in sponsoring music programs. I will then analyze the various motivations behind the measures undertaken by both the military and other more specialized government agencies, most notably the Office of Wartime Information (OWI), to expand and develop musical activities for military and civilian applications. Primary sources that I intend to consult in this portion of the essay include government records from these organizations. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* by Otto H. Helbig contains many such documents, including official communications, letters, statements, recommendations, and photographs, mostly from the Music Branch of the Army Special Services Division. I will also shift perspectives towards investigating how military personnel themselves undertook these duties and the roles in the war effort that they perceived for themselves as musicians. One category of sources that I will use to assess these questions are memoirs and personal accounts from servicemen and women. The memoir *GI Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II* by Frank Mathias, which documents the experience of an Army musician in the 184th and 37th Infantry Division Band, is a particularly detailed source of this kind. The *Music Educators Journal*, a periodical published by the National Association for Music Education since 1914, is another significant resource for providing insight on the perspective of musicians affiliated with the military at this time.

Music had been a significant yet unstandardized component of American military operations for many years prior to the Second World War. The first musical activities supported by the military were those created by the Union Army leading up to the Civil War in 1861. In addition to the more traditional duties of field musicians, which mainly entailed issuing orders

through calls on camps, marches, and in combat, volunteer regiments and companies formed their own European-style brass bands and smaller groups of soldiers created informal glee clubs for singing well-known tunes of the era. Many soldiers and officers valued these groups, which included thousands of bandsmen from the Union ranks, as sources of entertainment and a connection to antebellum civilian life.⁹ By the beginning of the Spanish-American War, almost every U.S. infantry and cavalry regiment supported large bands comprised of up to twenty-four members along with a number of field musicians, which offered the same benefits of providing entertainment and instilling patriotism among soldiers and civilians and often continued their work in professional or semi-professional organizations after the war.¹⁰ In 1918, the military first attempted to improve the quality and organization of bands and other more informal musical activities when General John J. Pershing advised that the size of all United States Army bands be increased from 28 to 48 members, Warrant Officers be commissioned as band leaders, and two music schools for training band members be established so that these ensembles would be more comparable to those of Great Britain and France.¹¹

At the onset of the Second World War, the government expanded on Pershing's efforts to further develop music programs in the military which had previously been hindered by a number of factors, namely a lack of personnel, inefficient organization, and a shortage of musical supplies and instruments. In order to address these various issues, the Army formed the Music Branch as a part of the Recreation and Welfare Division in June 1941. This section of the Recreation and Welfare Division, later renamed the Special Services Division, appointed 28

⁹ Christian McWhirter, "The Civil War: Music in the Armies," in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. by Sarah Mahler Kraaz (New York: Routledge, 2019), 54-63.

¹⁰ Sarah Mahler Kraaz, "The Spanish-American War," in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. by Sarah Mahler Kraaz (New York: Routledge, 2019), 94-97.

¹¹ Otto Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 3-4.

Army Specialist Corps Music Advisors, which included civilian music educators, concert soloists, orchestra players, and sound engineers, to coordinate music programs on both overseas and domestic military installations. By 1944, a total of 72 music advisors were assigned to installations in order to develop song leader courses, instruct in small instruments, and assist in all matters pertaining to music.¹² In addition, music officers reported to the Special Service Division's headquarters "about the state of music within their service commands, addressing not only their own specific activities but also the question of whether music making was encouraged or hindered by military personnel in the field."¹³ After the offices of the Music Branch were formally authorized in Washington D.C. in 1943 and later relocated to New York City in 1944, the organization operated under seven specific sections: phonograph recordings, music production, planning, music in hospitals, radio programs, administration, and field service.¹⁴ Each of these sections of the Music Branch would often consult a number of civilian and government organizations as liaisons in order to formulate their policies. These agencies included the Joint Army and Navy Committee, the United States Organizations, the National Federation of Music Clubs, the National Recreation Association, the National Music Council, the Music Educators National Conference, and the Music Divisions of the Treasury among a wide variety of others.¹⁵

The United States Armed Forces collaborated with the federal government to promote these various musical activities as both an effective source of morale and a means of proscribing certain ideological values that the state sought to project as emblematic of the nation as a whole. In addition to the "practical applications of singing and band music in training, combat, and

¹² Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*, 11-14.

¹³ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 112.

¹⁴ Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*, 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

recreation,” military personnel explored the larger implications of amateur and professional music education as a “civilizing force.”¹⁶ This benefit was particularly applicable to classical music and other genres that were placed in the category of “good music,” which government officials deemed capable of providing moral and social uplift, in the spirit of New Deal-era policies, as well as entertainment. Based on a Western musical canon developed in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this music primarily included “the symphonic concert repertoire, opera, and—as a form of apparently authentic expression of the people—folk music.”¹⁷ The military, in turn, developed several different methods for producing and distributing music for consumption on domestic and overseas installations. In March 1941, the Army created the *Army Song Book*, a pamphlet with either lyrics or a vocal and piano score for “service, patriotic, nationality, folk, sacred, ballad, and old favorite songs” intended to be distributed to every enlisted man each month. The *Army Hit Kit*, first available in 1943, extended this model for military music publications by offering one folio of piano music along with fifty packet-sized folders of lyrics for six songs sent out each month, many of which included selections of popular music, that were intended to stimulate group singing among soldiers.¹⁸ In July 1943, the Special Services Division introduced a plan to produce and distribute twelve-inch plastic records known as V-Discs on a monthly basis. These phonograph recordings featured many “top-flight” American musicians and entertainers as well as “marching music, military bands, classical and semi-classical music, symphony orchestras, concert bands, and string ensembles and vocal music.” By 1945, production of V-Discs increased to 275,000 per issue and extended as a service to the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard.¹⁹

¹⁶ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113-116; See Figure 1 in Appendix.

¹⁹ Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*, 21.

The military also organized numerous programs that enlisted personnel stationed on overseas and domestic installations could participate in more directly. Large military bases often supported full-sized symphony orchestras containing as many as twenty-six, fifty-six, or ninety-eight members, most notably the Camp Lee Symphony Orchestra near Petersburg, Virginia, with numerous smaller, informal, soldier-organized vocal and instrumental groups, such as dance bands consisting between two to twenty members, often supplementing these larger bands. Service installations also created their own radio facilities to broadcast programs organized and administered by service personnel that often required music from one of many “regular” service bands and informal volunteer bands.²⁰ A more specialized application for these bands was to perform in military hospitals for the purpose of “reconditioning” injured soldiers, which included patients in general hospitals as well as more specialized cases, such as neuro-psychiatric patients, blind patients, and amputees.²¹ In order to train enlisted musicians for this broad range of activities on installations, the Army established music schools on several bases designed to instruct band leaders, song leaders, bandsmen, and field musicians in various skills pertaining to their specific assignments.²² Numerous famous civilian musicians and entertainers also volunteered to perform concerts at installations and hospitals for all branches of the military as part of the USO-Camp Shows, first established by the USO in October 1941.²³ This wide range of musical activities offered to and run by military personnel that involved both communal performance and listening “played huge roles in terms of morale, bonding, and even reminding those in battle just what they were fighting for.”²⁴

²⁰ Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*, 48-51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29-32; See Figures 2-5 in Appendix.

²² Howard C. Bronson, “Memorandum for Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 132-136.

²³ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

The proposal for a “Music Program for Retraining Centers” put forth in a memorandum by the Army Ground Forces on May 6, 1944 illustrated the large scope of these musical activities supported by most military bases. In this release, the authors identified the resources necessary for such a program that could “offer entertainment and recreation of sufficient value to encourage In-Camp activities” and allow retrainees to “develop self-entertainment skills for their use and enjoyment during future military experience in combat areas.” In terms of personnel, they claimed that each retraining center should appoint one chief Music Officer, one assistant Music Officer for every 5000 retrainees, and one Music Technician, “highly qualified” in organizing “Bands, Orchestras, Dance Bands, Choral Groups, and Mass Music Participation,” for every 1000 retrainees.²⁵ These officers should then help to organize activities for large groups of soldiers such as phonographs of popular and “serious” music, mass singing, glee clubs and choral groups, “small jive and hillbilly bands,” dance bands, string quartets and other small ensembles, variety shows, “jam sessions,” and “instruction in the playing of small instruments.”²⁶ The authors then stressed that the chief Music Officer on each retraining base should “make every effort to bring to the attention of all retrainees the various music activities available for either participation or listening.”²⁷ This plan illustrates the significant resources that many officials in the military attempted to devote to these operations as a form of recreation due to the value of music in stimulating morale among enlisted personnel.

The benefits that military officials identified in various music programs beyond their purpose as a source of entertainment is expressed in a letter from the Music Branch of the Special Services Division entitled “Utilization of Returnee Personnel in Musical Activities.” In

²⁵ Army Ground Forces, “Music Program for Retraining Centers,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 85-86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

discussing the potential structure for a peacetime music program, the author suggested that returnees from overseas theatres who were accomplished musicians prior to the war should go on to serve an Army Symphony Orchestra. He stated that the settings in which an Army Symphony Orchestra could perform would include “convalescent hospitals, general hospitals, separation centers, and redistribution stations” for soldiers and at “bond rallies and other civilian activities connected with the war effort.”²⁸ This type of large, highly skilled, mobile ensemble, along with other small musical units supported by the military, would provide a significant number of musicians an “ideal link to the resumption of their civilian careers.” In terms of public relations, the “orchestra would exemplify to the public the Army’s genuine and consistent desire to preserve and nurture the youthful talent of America” and “become a concrete example of the Army’s unfailing interest in the individual soldier and its persistent desire to send him back to civilian life an adjusted and productive citizen.”²⁹ Along with the more obvious purpose of providing relaxation and entertainment to soldiers and civilians, these ensembles “would act as a strong impetus to the formation of others of its kind all over the world.”³⁰ This emphasis on reacclimating enlisted musicians to their former occupations illustrates the educational and moral value that government officials believed many music programs provided to soldiers. The letter also demonstrates the key benefit that officers found in these programs of projecting to domestic audiences and foreign nations the image of a thriving musical culture in America.

In addition to providing soldiers with forms of musical recreation that increased morale in multiple respects, the Armed Forces worked in conjunction with a number of other branches of government to utilize music as a form of propaganda in the service of various political and

²⁸ Special Services Division, “Utilization of Returnee Personnel in Musical Activities,” in Otto H. Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 108.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

social objectives. The Office for Wartime Information (OWI), an intelligence gathering agency established by executive order on June 13, 1942 that served primarily to shape public opinion on war-related matters “through mass media (print, radio, and film), both at home and abroad,” grew to develop a number of programs for this purpose.³¹ Under the direction of the agency’s Overseas Branch located in New York, these operations included producing and broadcasting recordings of “American folk music, Western concert music, and so-called world music” from non-Western nations selected by renowned figures in American music, such as Henry Cowell, Samuel Barber, Elliot Carter, and Colin McPhee.³² The OWI conceived of these programs as “friendly propaganda” targeted towards “neutral countries to present the United States as a cultivated, forward-looking, powerful, and democratic nation,” Allied nations to celebrate their “musical heritage through performances by U.S. musicians,” American soldiers stationed abroad, and listeners in enemy nations, “for whom music was to serve as a signifier of American sophistication and freedom.”³³ Overall, these broadcast programs and other forms of musical propaganda sponsored by the OWI constructed the perception of a rich tradition of American music that accomplished the agency’s larger goal of boosting morale for the war effort by providing recreational entertainment for these audience that also emphasized positive values of “inclusiveness, diversity, and democracy” within American culture.³⁴

One example of the federal government’s attempt to associate democratic values with American culture during the war was a large-scale American music festival held in Paris under the joint sponsorship of the OWI and the French government in June 1945. According to a report on the event by Mark A. Schubart in *The New York Times*, the purpose of the festival, under the

³¹ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 78; Smith, *God Bless America*, 50-55.

³² Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 77-86.

³³ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86-93.

direction of American composer Aaron Copland with “young American conductor-composer-pianist” Leonard Bernstein as chief conductor, was “to acquaint the French people with musical development in this country since 1939.” In order to accomplish this task, the festival consisted of seven concerts, two “devoted to orchestral music by American composers,” one to “the works of Europeans now living in the United States,” one “to chamber music of American musicians,” one to “jazz and folk music,” and two to scores of “recent films and documentaries.” Schubart claimed that the Paris branch of the OWI began to formulate a plan for this festival, which included mostly European concert artists from noteworthy ensembles in Paris, after the agency “noted the interest in American music among French people.”³⁵ He also recounted a comment American conductor and chief of the OWI music division Daniel Saidenberg that the festival was intended ““to present as broad a picture as possible of contemporary American music... We are presenting these not so much to provide entertainment for the French people as to show what we have done in this country.””³⁶ This stated objective of the concert to promote multiculturalism in American music conformed to the larger purpose of music in the military as both providing a form of recreation and associating values of egalitarianism with American culture as a whole.

Similarly, the OWI produced and distributed musical propaganda for domestic audiences. Prior to the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, American songwriters from the popular music publishing industry known as Tin Pan Alley produced a significant number of songs that addressed subjects relating to the conflict in Europe and the Pacific, such as sympathy and support for Allied nations.³⁷ After the United States’ entry into the war, popular songwriters increased their efforts to compose pieces discussing a variety of themes which encouraged

³⁵ Mark A. Schubart, “U.S. Music Festival Planned in Paris,” *New York Times* (New York), Mar. 1, 1945.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War*, 54-93.

support for the war effort, such as patriotism, militancy, or antagonism towards the Axis powers.³⁸ However, the only category of these war-themed songs that found widespread popularity among American audiences were those about the separation between GIs abroad and their wives, mothers, and children on the home front.³⁹ The commercial success of songs that personalized the war for individuals relative to other war-themed pieces reflects how most popular music served as an escape from the current conflict by discussing love, romance, and other forms of nostalgia.⁴⁰ Accordingly, soldiers stationed on both domestic and overseas bases widely consumed hot and sweet swing music from acts such as Benny Goodman and His Orchestra, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, and Duke Ellington's Orchestra, who reached the height of their collective popularity by the end of the 1930s, due to the ability of these popular genres to exhibit a sense of familiarity. Listeners on the home front also enjoyed artists of a broad range of styles, "from the jazz-based harmonies of the Andrew Sisters to the crooning vocals of Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra," that "addressed sentimental themes."⁴¹

The federal government, however, became concerned with the lack of commercial success that most war-related songs achieved. Many officials believed that popular music could be crucial for boosting morale and support for the war effort among the general public. In November 1942, the OWI established the National Wartime Music Committee (NWMC), a group of representatives from each section of the government that utilized any form of music, to

³⁸ Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War*, 95, 116-140, 160, 181; For a more detailed discussion of anti-Japanese music during the Second World War, see Krystyn R. Moon, "'There's No Yellow in the Red, White, and Blue: The Creation of Anti-Japanese Music During World War II,'" *Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 3 (August 2003): 333-352.

³⁹ Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War*, 236-237; One of the few exceptions to the lack of popularity for "axis-bashing" songs was Oliver Wallace's "Der Fuehrer's Face," recorded by noted bandleader Spike Jones in 1942.

⁴⁰ William H Young and Nancy K. Young, *Music of the World War II Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 93.

⁴¹ Gina Bombola, "World War II: Singing and Swinging," in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. by Sarah Mahler Kraaz, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 164-170, 175.

evaluate “the sustainability of ‘morale’ tunes for civilian and military use.”⁴² This committee, which was replaced by the American Theater Wing’s Music War Committee (MWC) six months later, advised music industry groups on how to create “proper” war songs, similar to the popular World War I-era marching tune “Over There” by George M. Cohan, rather than those which discussed more sentimental subject matter.⁴³ But while these songs that attempted to instill morale by addressing the war effort in this fashion mostly failed to achieve commercial success, the OWI continued to support the efforts of composers within the MWC, many of whom considered their organization to be “a musical melting pot that, through song, idealized American democracy for its ability to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination,” to write popular songs that discussed subjects more indirectly related to the war effort.⁴⁴

Aside from these forms of musical propaganda, other branches of the U.S. government connected to the military also utilized music for similar political objectives. The State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations, for example, found state-funded musical activities to be an integral part of their efforts to construct positive diplomatic relations with foreign nations. This agency collaborated with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), established by executive order on July 30, 1941, to combat the influence of cultural propaganda from Germany and Italy that circulated throughout South and Latin American republics in the 1930s and, as a result, pursue Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy.⁴⁵ Despite the contrast between the State Department’s intention of reinforcing internationalism and the OCIAA’s focus on national security, the two agencies sponsored an inter-American music program that promoted folk and contemporary concert music through a variety of measures.

⁴² Young and Young, *Music of the World War II Era*, 9-11; Smith, *God Bless America*, 81-82.

⁴³ Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War*, 10-11.

⁴⁴ Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War*, 236-237; Smith, *God Bless America*, 83-84.

⁴⁵ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 94-95.

These activities included funding music education student-exchange programs, advertising Latin American composers' music during their visits to the U.S., creating "lending libraries of American music in several South American capitals," supporting concert tours by American ensembles, and recording folk music in Latin and South America.⁴⁶ The promotion of folk and concert music through these various expenditures served "two interconnected purposes by fostering cultural exchange, on the one hand, and by creating national as well as hemispherical identities, on the other."⁴⁷

Lt. Colonel Howard C. Bronson, Chief of the Music Branch in the Special Services Division, outlined these dual purposes of music in the Armed Forces in his October 27, 1942 memorandum to the Chief of the Special Services Division, in which he advocated for the creation of a separate Music Section within the Special Services Division. Bronson claimed that "the volume of work and variety of duties" associated with his assignment as head Music Officer in the Morale Branch has increased to the extent that a number of new functions have emerged in his work organizing the music program. These new functions include the "close liaison" to music advisors in the field, "the selection of, the arranging, publishing, and distributing to the Army of the music of South and Central America, the folk music of America, and the compositions of our soldiers," finding means for Army musicians to continue "America's musical advancement when the war is won," and encouraging "a cordial relationship between the Army and the civilian population through the medium of music."⁴⁸ He then emphasized that this work, which can only be performed by those with a "musical, administrative, and military" background, is "needed

⁴⁶ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 96-105.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁸ Howard C. Bronson, "Memorandum for Lieutenant Colonel Rank, Chief Athletic and Recreation Branch," in Otto H. Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 168-169.

because music is recognized as an important factor in relation to Army morale... by the President of the United States, the Secretary of War, and the Chief of Staff of the Army.”⁴⁹ This memorandum by Bronson illustrated the Armed Forces’ motivation for utilizing music in a variety of capacities in order to increase morale among soldiers and promote a positive image of American culture.

The musicians who served in a variety of capacities for the United States military embraced the numerous musical activities offered by the government as both an important source of morale among enlisted personnel and civilian audiences and an effective means of projecting a positive identity for the nation. Following the Selective Service Act of 1940, male musicians between eighteen and forty-five years old were not spared from military service due to their profession and, therefore, eligible to be drafted. Many professional musicians, however, enlisted specifically for musical assignments in the different branches of the Armed Forces due to the fact that those drafted had no guarantee of being given such duties.⁵⁰ While the large majority of enlisted musicians were only able to utilize their skills by performing as conductors, percussionists, wind, brass, and string players in military bands, a significant number of well-known musical figures acquired more specialized assignments. Numerous famous concert artists in both classical and popular music, including popular bandleaders Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw, Yehudi Menuhin, Lily Pons, and Nelson Eddy, donated their services to the USO and other entities in order to perform for soldiers stationed at service installations in both overseas theatres of war and the continental United States.⁵¹ Other prominent composers and educators also received more exclusive assignments as administrators and consultants within the

⁴⁹ Bronson, “Memorandum for Lieutenant Colonel Rank, Chief Athletic and Recreation Branch,” 169.

⁵⁰ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 18-20, 29.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 37-50.

institutional framework of the Armed Forces, such as Samuel Barber, Elliot Carter, Henry Cowell, Marc Blitzstein, Alan Lomax, Charles Seeger, and Harold Spivacke.⁵² Within these different capacities, enlisted musicians recognized and embraced the dual functions of the musical activities offered to them of providing recreational entertainment for servicemen and women while also projecting values such as cultural solidarity with Allied nations, educational uplift, and a thriving and distinct tradition of American music through their work.⁵³

In his memoir *GI Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II*, Frank Mathias illustrated how numerous enlisted musicians stationed on both overseas and domestic installations accepted music's dual purpose in the military as a source of morale and a means of promoting a positive identity for American culture. After entering the Army and completing the basic training as an infantryman, Mathias gained his first experience as an Army musician when he joined the 184th Infantry Band stationed in Fort Benning and Camp Wheeler, Georgia from January to August 1944. He recalled that the daily schedule for a bandsman in this division, which entailed "rehearsal, ear training, individual practice, marching band drills," and "dance band rehearsal" followed by performances at "variety shows, athletic events, service clubs of all stripes, USO Clubs in town, and civilian functions like bond rallies," felt like "living in a world of music-this in contrast to the war machine grinding away on all sides."⁵⁴ Mathias emphasized his recurring job performing with his band on radio programs, both the local shows "Fort Benning on the Air" and "Benning Bandwagon" as well as the nationally-broadcasted "Army Hour," as his most enjoyable assignment due to the exposure to broad audience of listeners across the country.⁵⁵ In

⁵² Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 15, 20-25.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 32-36.

⁵⁴ Frank Mathias, *GI Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 39-40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

general, he depicted these activities as both a “break from the boring routines of barracks life” and effective at forming strong personal bonds between himself and other soldiers, stating that upon learning he would be reassigned to a different base in preparation for combat duties in the Pacific, “the fun and games were finally over, but all of us took happy memories with us.”⁵⁶ Mathias’ account of his training in the 184th Infantry Band demonstrates the vast scope of musical assignments that most Army bandsmen would be tasked with and the effectiveness of these activities at maintaining morale among servicemen.

In addition to his duties for the 184th Infantry Band in the continental United States, Mathias discussed his experience as a member of the 37th Infantry Band during his service overseas in the Pacific. After joining the unit on the island of Bougainville near New Guinea in November 1944, he quickly acquainted himself with the other musicians in the 37th “Buckeye” Division, two of whom were of Mexican ancestry and became some of his closest friends.⁵⁷ Mathias later elaborated on the band’s duties of performing at many of the same events that he first experienced at Fort Benning and Camp Wheeler in conjunction with combat in several campaigns, mainly in the Philippines. One of these assignments included a performance for Allied prisoners of war recently released in Manila after American forces had recaptured the city from the Japanese in March 1945. At this event, Mathias noted that the “internees... gathered around our bandstand as we serenaded them,” with some soldiers dancing “while others were still sick and dazed by it all.” He, as a result, “sensed the need to play well here, to provide entertainment after their three harrowing years as prisoners.”⁵⁸ Mathias then described how music provided by the Armed Forces contributed towards a celebratory atmosphere in post-battle

⁵⁶ Mathias, *GI Jive*, 42, 53.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

Manila, claiming that at several “regimental parties” where he played with his dance band, Allied officers mingled with “Filipinos who had resisted the Jap occupation-men destined to lead the islands into the postwar years” while “Filipinas in lovely island costume swirled to our music in a columned ballroom.”⁵⁹ This portion of Mathias’ service in the Pacific illustrates his own perception of his duties as a bandsman of both providing recreation that built morale among soldiers and projecting a positive image of American forces as being a vital contribution to the war effort.

A significant number of composers in the United States also utilized their expertise to make a different set of contributions to the war effort. Unlike performers who were able to easily translate their civilian occupations to military activities, “composers had to work hard to generate and define talent-specific wartime contributions.”⁶⁰ In addition to assignments as advisors for government agencies involved with propaganda and morale operations, numerous composers wrote various forms of music that both expressed a sense of wartime patriotism and reinforced a national musical identity.⁶¹ During the 1930s and 40s, the federal government organized a number of programs for “education, appreciation, and public exposure” to both European classical and native folk music in an attempt to construct a national music that encompassed both of these genres.⁶² A majority of composers in the United States continued this trend by increasing the production of American-themed pieces that engaged with “specific aspects of American identity by way of musical references or through a programmatic title, and very often both.”⁶³ These works included commemorations and patriotic celebrations that exhibited “key

⁵⁹ Mathias, *GI Jive*, 158.

⁶⁰ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 57.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 135, 226.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 138, 161.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 227.

tenets of U.S. exceptionalist ideology,” such as “the nation’s foundation in the American Revolution, the frontier spirit, Manifest Destiny, liberty and equality for a multiplicity of immigrants, and the universalist claim of American nationalism,” as well as symphonies and operas that employed native folk music idioms as “markers of national identity.”⁶⁴ Along with these American musicians, European composers from Allied nations living as expatriates in the U.S. wrote pieces that reflected ideals associated with the war effort by emphasizing their national identities in these works.⁶⁵ Expatriate composers from the Axis powers in the U.S. also garnered public acclaim for creating works that criticized the Fascist regimes in their respective countries and championed the American war effort, despite the negative receptions that these musicians risked receiving from American audiences for expressing their nationalities.⁶⁶

Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini was one of the most noteworthy expatriate composers from an Axis nation residing in the United States who produced works that praised the war effort. In the September 26, 1943 *New York Times* article entitled “His Music Speaks for Freedom,” author Howard Taubman stated that upon learning of Benito Mussolini’s removal from power in Europe, Toscanini assembled the NBC Symphony Orchestra to rehearse “a program celebrating the surrender of Italy.” After Italy’s unconditional surrender on September 8, he conducted a half-hour concert entitled “Victory, Act I,” which consisted of “the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony with its defiant surging V-theme, the overture to Rossini’s opera ‘William Tell,’ which celebrates the struggles against a tyrant the Hymn of Garibaldi, who led another fight for Italian democracy, and ‘The Star-Spangled Banner,’ which

⁶⁴ Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 240, 271.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 216, 220-221.

remains dear to Toscanini's heart.'⁶⁷ According to Taubman, this concert represented Toscanini's "devotion to the great principles for which the United Nations fight" and was "one of the most moving moments of a career that has known every triumph and homage."⁶⁸ He also noted how the conductor has made similar political statements throughout his service as head of the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony Orchestra, such as in a performance of the "Hymn of the Nations,' by another great Italian patriot, Giuseppe Verdi," for which he changed the lyrics of the hymn "'Italia, mia patria,' to 'Italia tradita' (Italy betrayed)."⁶⁹ In a later article, Taubman described how these programs containing "patriotic music" that he continued to create for the duration of the war were advertised in several propaganda films produced by the OWI.⁷⁰ This recognition of Toscanini as a champion of the United States' fight against Fascist regimes in Europe demonstrated how this projection of democratic ideals of multiculturalism often reinforced the morale-boosting purpose of the music from various composers employed by the federal government.

Another group of musicians affiliated with the United States military who perceived their professions as providing these benefits to the national war effort were scholars and educators. Numerous articles from the *Music Educators Journal* indicate how American music educators responded to the escalation of the war in Europe and the entry of the U.S. into the Second World War by altering their approach towards music instruction in such a fashion that would contribute towards national solidarity and morale among the general public.⁷¹ In an article from

⁶⁷ Howard Taubman, "His Music Speaks for Freedom: Toscanini, Long an Enemy of Tyranny, Expresses in the Realm of Tone His Ideals and His Hopes for a United Nations Victory," *New York Times* (New York), Sep. 26, 1943.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Howard Taubman, "His Music Speaks for Freedom: Toscanini and Our Orchestras Carry Its Message to Our Friends Overseas, and to the Enemy Also," *New York Times* (New York), Jan. 23, 1944.

⁷¹ J. Scott Goble, "Nationalism in United States Music Education During World War II," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 30, no. 2 (April 2009): 103-117.

their March 1941 issue, the journal advertised the collective pledge of the Music Educators National Conference, the Music Teachers National Association, and the National Association of Schools of Music “to encourage playing and singing of songs which best employ the spirit and ideals of our United States” through the *American Unity Through Music* program. This initiative included the “fervent and frequent singing of our national and patriotic songs, with full understanding of their meaning,... respect for the rich heritage of music brought to America by various racial groups who are now Americans-all,... a more extensive knowledge of and appreciation for... America’s folk and pioneer songs,” and more attention for works “by American composers.”⁷² In cooperation with the military, musicians could also “offer to furnish entertainment groups for adjacent camps” or assist “army chaplains and commanding officers in connection with recreation projects they may wish to develop.”⁷³ The author, in turn, asserted that this “mysterious unifying power” of music to instill both loyalty and an “appreciation of free democracy within the “entire populace, in and out of training camps, is quite as important as man power, machines, and guns.”⁷⁴ By elaborating on music’s effectiveness at both creating national unity and promoting egalitarian ideals vital to ideological objectives of the war, this article articulated the integral role that music educators fashioned for themselves in the war effort.

In his article “Music in a World at War” for the May 1942 issue of the *Music Educators Journal*, director of the Yale University Glee Club Marshall Bartholomew also promoted military-sponsored musical activities as an integral component of the war effort. Based on his previous experience as an advisor for the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, he argued that music educators should encourage the War Department to develop

⁷² Fowler Smith, Richard W. Grant, et al., “American Unity Through Music,” *Music Educators Journal* 27, no. 5 (Mar.-Apr. 1941): 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

more programs for “active participation” in music in order to utilize it “as a constructive cultural and educational medium.”⁷⁵ Bartholomew cited a recreational singing program that he implemented in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which trained over 100 men as “song leaders” and helped form a thirty-five-member glee club, as one example of such an activity. In light of the widespread popularity of this glee club among soldiers and civilians, he considered communal singing to be “the most far-reaching morale activity” in the military. In addition to these activities on domestic installations, he noted that some of his students from the Yale Glee Club organized programs for teaching American songs to Chinese soldiers fighting against Japanese forces that have been effective at sustaining morale among these Allied servicemen. In conclusion, Bartholomew stressed that in this war in which America, as “a symbol of freedom” to many other nations, has been called upon to defend “all the democratic freedom-loving people of the world,” musicians’ jobs are “to blow the trumpet and beat the drum and keep singing.”⁷⁶ This essay further demonstrates the potential benefits that educators identified in military-sponsored music programs of projecting democratic values, such as human liberty, to Allied nations and maintaining morale among American soldiers.

The participation of minority groups of U.S. military personnel, namely women and African Americans, also underscores the purposes of music in the Armed Forces as both a form of recreation used to stimulate morale and a means of promoting a positive image of American culture. Similar to the case of enlisted male musicians, divisions in each service branch of the military for women supported a variety of ensembles used to serve the growing number of female enlistees. These units included the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve Band, the five Women’s Army Corps (WAC) Bands, the Women’s Coast Guards Reserve (or SPARS) Drum

⁷⁵ Marshall Bartholomew, “Music in a World at War,” *Music Educators Journal* 28, no. 6 (May-Jun. 1941): 52.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 53-55.

and Bugle Corps, and many other instrumental and vocal groups attached to Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES).⁷⁷ While they were initially full-time assignments or volunteer groups created as recreational entertainment for female recruits, these bands eventually performed for both military and civilian audiences in a wide variety of venues, such as rallies for selling war bonds, radio broadcasts, and military hospitals.⁷⁸ By commissioning female musicians to perform mainly patriotic and classical music, the government utilized these bands to build public morale while also countering negative stereotypes of women in the military. The servicewomen in these units, in turn, valued the personal bonds they formed through this shared experience as well as the opportunity to change the national perception of women's work prior to the onset of the war.⁷⁹

African American soldiers also participated in a range of different ensembles and musical activities affiliated with the divisions in which they served in each branch of the Armed Forces. In addition to offering the same benefits of recreational entertainment given to white soldiers, the various musical activities for African American regiments satisfied the political objective of validating the achievements of blacks as both musicians and servicemen. In African American ensembles such as the B-1 Navy Band, black musicians, who carried the same rank as their fellow white bandmen, enlisted to perform for both civilian and military audience in domestic and overseas locations based on the hope that they might foster integration within military ranks

⁷⁷ For a detailed history of each of these female bands in the United States military during World War II see Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands During World War II* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011).

⁷⁸ For a detailed discussion of the contributions of women's military bands in the United States to military hospitals see Jill M. Sullivan, "Music for the Injured Soldier: A Contribution of American Women's Military Bands During World War II," *Journal of Music Therapy* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 282-305.

⁷⁹ Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters*, 16, 123-125.

as a result of their service.⁸⁰ In addition, state-sponsored radio programs broadcasted to both black and white servicemen that featured enlisted African American musicians, such as the *Jubilee* variety show developed by the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS), were utilized by black artists to “reduce the perpetuation of racial stereotypes” by legitimizing African American music while also referencing current racial tensions in the nation.⁸¹ Similarly, the federal government requested prominent African American popular and concert musicians, such as Marian Anderson, to perform in USO shows on a number of installations, which promoted a pluralistic image of “racial uplift” within the nation in the vein of the Double V campaign, intended to link “the battle against Fascism abroad to the internal struggle for civil rights.”⁸²

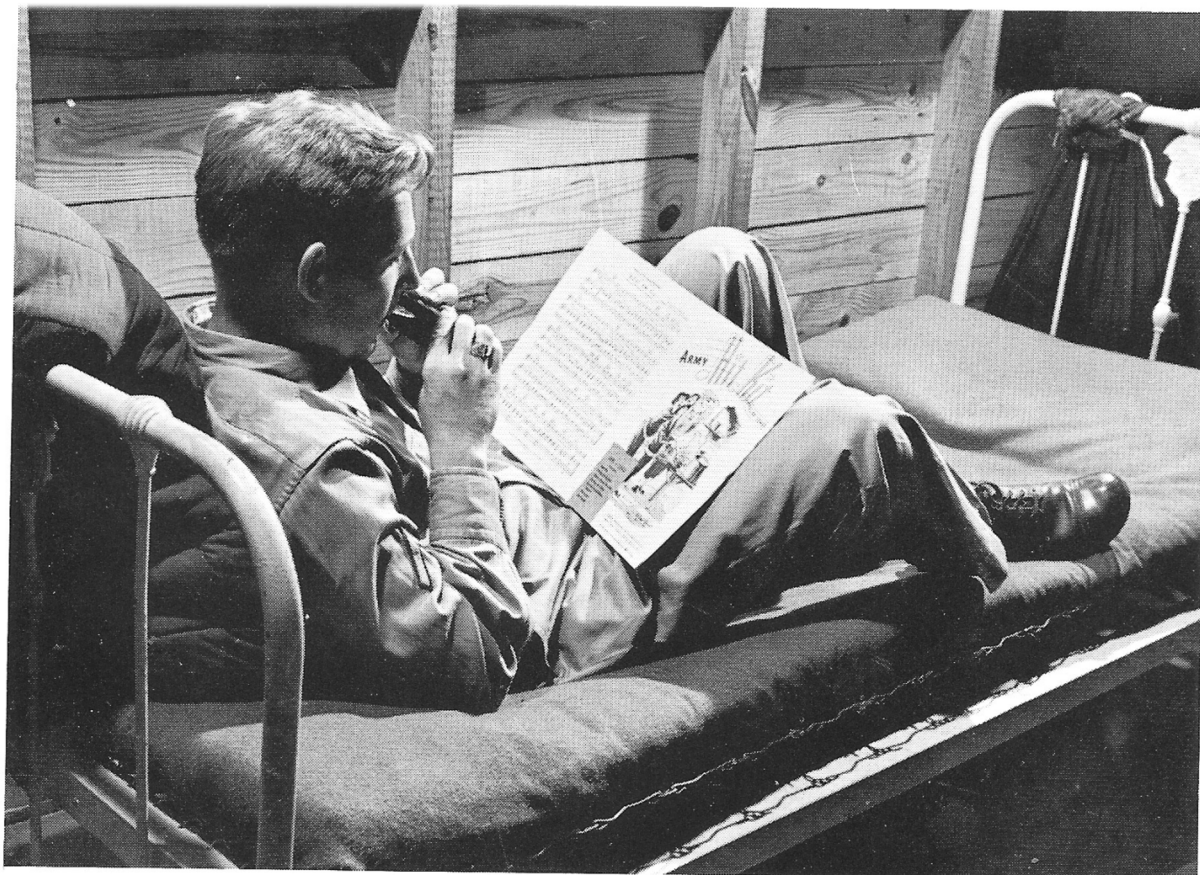
Leading up to and during the nation’s involvement in the Second World War, the United States military devoted a significant amount of resources towards the development and administration of musical activities utilized by enlisted personnel. The various musical activities sponsored by the government functioned as a benefit to the war effort both as a form of recreation conducive to constructing cohesiveness and maintaining morale among soldiers and an effective tool for promoting values within American culture that accomplished ideological objectives of the war. By producing materials, such as the *Army Hit Kit* and V-Discs, and offering a wide spectrum of opportunities for servicemen and women to both consume and perform popular and classical music, the military facilitated group camaraderie among soldiers while at the same time proscribing values such as moral uplift and multiculturalism that reinforced a positive image of the nation. The federal government, through agencies such as the

⁸⁰ Gregory Drane, “The Role of African-American Musicians in the Integration of the United States Navy,” *Music Educators Journal* 101, no. 3 (2015): 64-65; Anngret Fauser, “World War II: Music as Propaganda,” in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. by Sarah Mahler Kraaz (New York: Routledge, 2019), 156-157.

⁸¹ Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, “Variety for the Servicemen: The ‘Jubilee’ Show and the Paradox of Racializing Radio during World War II,” *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): 945-947.

⁸² Fauser, *Sounds of War*, 40-41, 232.

OWI and the State Department, also developed programs for musical propaganda that promoted these same values through various forms of entertainment for military and civilian audiences. The musicians employed by the Armed Forces in this broad range of capacities embraced the roles that the state constructed for them in utilizing music as both a resource for morale and a means of disseminating a positive image of the nation. As illustrated by Frank Mathias' account of serving in the 184th and 37th Infantry Bands, numerous performers within the military recognized their own value in both maintaining cohesion among service personnel and reinforcing various positive ideals associated with the nation. An influential group of composers affiliated with the government, which included American musicians as well as expatriates from Allied and Axis nations in Europe such as Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, also utilized their expertise to create a broad spectrum of works that both expressed democratic ideals emblematic of the nation and increased morale among domestic and military audiences. Lastly, many music educators accepted these dual purposes of musical activities in the Armed Forces, exhibited in periodicals such as the *Music Educators Journal*. In particular, the contributions and presence of women and African Americans in the various musical activities offered by the military emphasized the political objectives that the government attempted to accomplish through these operations. Overall, government officials and musicians in America were united in the belief that music could serve as both a form of entertainment and a means of promoting an image of the nation that reinforced a set of values and ideals associated with the war effort.

AppendixFigure 1

Soldier with a small plastic instrument and *Army Hit Kit* booklet

“Appendix C: Pictorial Review,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 235.

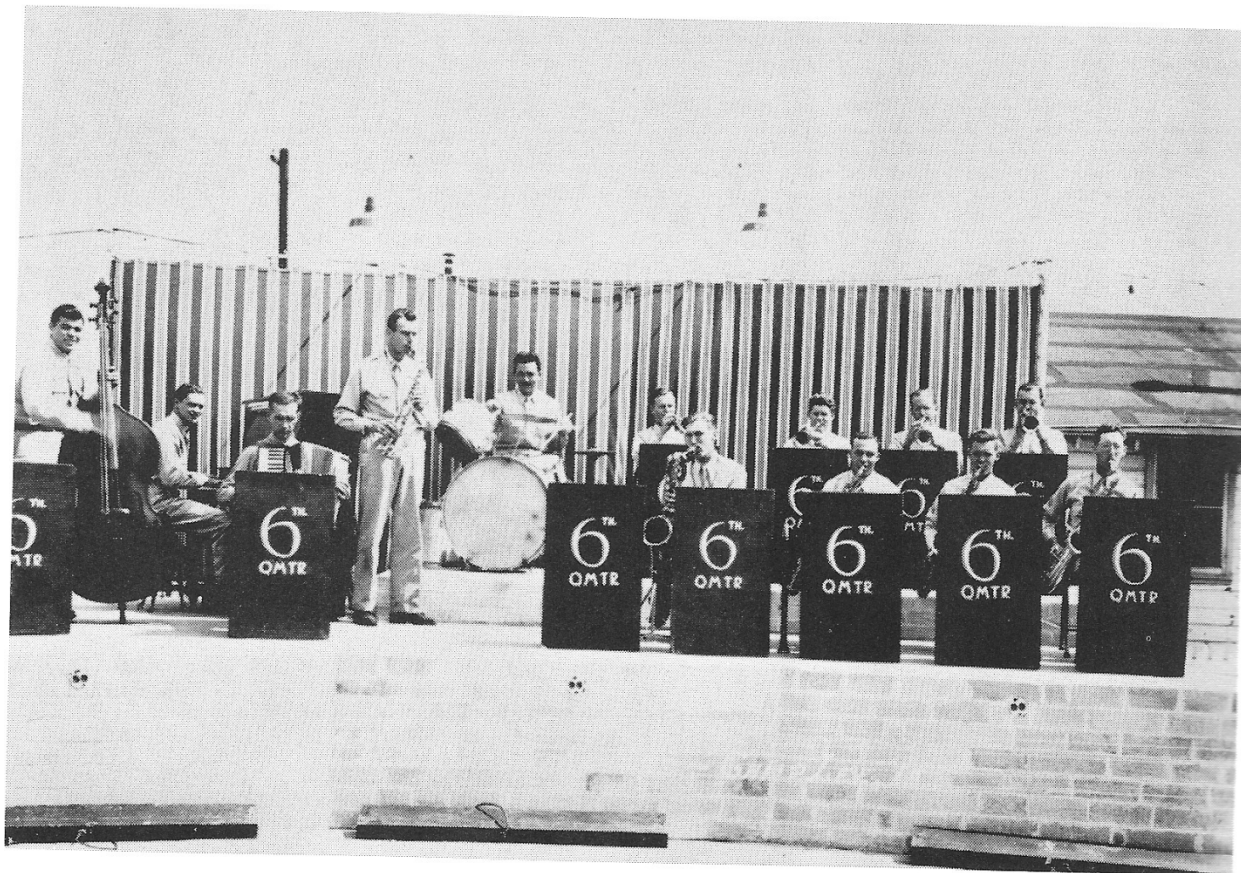
Figure 2



Radio broadcast from a service club at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (1941)

“Appendix C: Pictorial Review,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 239.

Figure 3



A regimental dance band at Camp Lee, Virginia (1942)

“Appendix C: Pictorial Review,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 242.

Figure 4



A service club variety show at Fort Bragg, North Carolina

“Appendix C: Pictorial Review,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 241.

Figure 5



Marching band at the School for Special Services (1943)

“Appendix C: Pictorial Review,” in Otto H. Helbig. *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia: M. W. Lads, 1966), 243.

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