

## COMPOSERS IN UNIFORM

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WITH the end of the war and the consequent demobilization those young composers who spent the war years in uniform are returning one by one to the musical life of the country. For many this means resuming creative activity after three to five years of almost total musical stagnation; for others, more fortunate in having their abilities recognized and utilized, it means turning their talents into normal channels again and applying whatever specific knowledge their wartime experiences may have afforded.

Despite the splendid gestures to benefit composers who were in service – like the Ditson and Guggenheim post-war fellowships – there is a strangeness, an incredibility about return to civilian life, which demands of these men a subtle readjustment in their creative lives of a sort that could not have been foreseen. Those who by necessity or momentary inclination wrote war-time *Gebrauchsmusik* are not very proud of that output in retrospect and realize the ill effects of a temporary, perhaps justifiable, lapse in their critical judgment. And those whom choice or poor classification (of which there was a good deal, in the Army particularly) assigned to non-musical duties that absorbed all their time and mind, find it difficult to get back to writing after such an extended lay-off. Yet when one considers the stakes for which the war was fought such sacrifice and hardship seem small indeed, and I write this even though the world which is the aftermath of the war seems not exactly fraught with blithe hope.

The most prolific composers were those assigned to motion picture units. Lehman Engel, after two years of conducting at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, was put in charge of music for Navy films and did scores for *Fury in the Pacific*, *Well Done*, *The Fleet Came to Stay*, *Report to Judy*, and *Irritability* and *N.P. Patients* for use in the treatment of psychoneurotics. Dai-Keong Lee wrote film scores including *Letter from Australia*, and *Pacific Prayer* and *Renascence*, both orchestral works. In the Philippines and New Guinea he collected folksongs which he has used in *A Tropical Overture* for band or orchestra. Over the Australian Broad-

casting System he conducted programs of American music. Gail Kubik composed film scores for *World at War*, *Paratroops*, *Dover*, *Manpower*, *Colleges at War*, *Earthquakers*, *Memphis Belle*, *Air Pattern Pacific*, *Thunderbolt*, and for band, an *Overture*, *Stewball*, *Fanfare* and *Fanfare and March*. He also did *A Wartime Litany* for male chorus, brass and percussion, *Three American Folksongs* for small orchestra, a *Toccata* for organ and strings and a ballet sequence, *Frankie and Johnnie*.

*The Airborne*, *Freedom Morning*, a symphonic poem dedicated to Negro troops, and the musical direction of the invasion radio station ABSIE, kept Marc Blitzstein busy. He returns very happy to have served in the Air Forces, where new and unconventional ideas were welcome. One such air-minded idea was to fly Samuel Barber around in B-24's for a couple of weeks, presumably to provide inspiration for his *Symphony Dedicated to the Air Forces*. On the ground he wrote his *Commando March* for band or orchestra and *Excursions* for piano. Though he did no film music his name is included in this group because his official duty, much of the time, was to compose.

As Army bandleaders or instrumentalists in service bands, many composers got valuable practical experience and found time to write as well. Ellis Kohs wrote *Life with Uncle Sam*, a suite for band or orchestra, *Automatic Pistol* for men's voices, *Night Watch* for flute, horn and tympani, *Sonatina* for bassoon and piano and a *Piano Concerto*. Cecil Effinger's production includes *American Men* for male voices and band, *Prelude and Fugue* for organ, *Concertina* for organ and winds, *Two Psalms* for male chorus, *String Suite*, *The Old Chisholm Trail* for chorus and orchestra, *Band Suite with Dixie Land Trio*, *Variations on a Cowboy Tune* and *Fanfare Based on Chow Call*. Homer Keller's *Fantasy and Fugue* for organ and *Raider* for male chorus and brass were written before he left for the South Pacific, where he started work on a *Second Symphony*. Kent Kennan set *The Unknown Warrior Speaks* for male chorus. Here mention should be made of the fine work the young American conductor, William Strickland, did for American composers at the Army Music School. Responsible for the first performance of many of the above compositions, he was a constant stimulation and encouragement to the composers who worked with him. I am indebted to him for much of the information included here.

Graham Stewart and John Klein, two young talents from Rochester, played and arranged for Army bands and during infrequent leisure hours wrote music more to their liking. Stewart composed *Twelve Etudes* for clarinet and piano and Klein did a *Violin Concerto in E*. Many composers, like Victor Landau, found there was a lot of fun in jazz for the first time in their lives. Landau also wrote *Two Palestinian Airs* and a

*United Nations March*. For the Navy, Leon Stein wrote radio background music and *Great Lakes Suite* for orchestra. Ulysses Kay produced a *Quintet* for flute and strings, a *Suite for Brass Choir*, *Suite in B* for oboe and piano, *Suite* and *New Horizons* for orchestra, *Evocation* for concert band and *Jeremiah*, a cantata for baritone, women's voices and organ.

The fact that the men whose duties were remote from music wrote anything at all, is important and indicative of a real creative urge. Joseph Wood finished a *Violin Sonata* and Andrew Imbrie wrote several songs. In off hours from signal intelligence duty John Verrall wrote a *Quintet* for woodwinds, a *Duo-Sonata* for piano, four hands, *Six Variations* and an overture, *The Children*, for orchestra. After some disheartening experiences with Army shows, Frank Wigglesworth completed *Six Songs* and several piano pieces. Two composers we haven't heard much from yet are Lee Eitzen and Louis Gehrm. Eitzen wrote a *Brass Sextet* and several songs and Gehrm composed a *Memorial Mass* for male chorus, an *Organ Suite* and a *Violin Sonata*.

Richard Franko Goldman's and Jack Avshalomoff's duties in the OSS were interesting and time-consuming, in spite of which the former composed a madrigal, *Care Charming Sleep*, *Three Duets* for clarinets and an *Etude on White Keys*, while the latter wrote *How Long*, *Oh Lord*, a cantata for women's chorus, alto solo and piano, a *Sinfonietta* and some songs.

There is also a group including Alex North, Jean Middleton, David Stackhouse, Hugo Weisgall, Jak Zadokoff, Vladimir Ussachevsky, Fredric Ballazs, Harold Brown, Emil Kochler, John Lessard, Walter Mourant, Lewis Raymond, Frank Hruby, Edmund Haines, Allen Willman and Jack Goodwin who are known to have been in the services but about whom further information is unavailable. I, also, served as an Army bandleader. Between concerts and campaigns I wrote an *Adagio and Allegro* and *Jubilation*, an *Overture* for orchestra, as well as music for an all-soldier revue, *The Life of Riley*, backgrounds for Korean propaganda broadcasts and some jazz.

Considering that this is a fairly complete list of five years' work on the part of a great proportion of our most promising young talents, it is not long. Yet there is ample indication that the "No More Business-as-Usual" challenge thrown down by Roger Sessions to his colleagues in early 1942 was heeded by these young men. So far as I know, no one who would have been mentioned here was killed or seriously wounded and that is our good fortune. What the total effect of the war years on these men will be remains to be seen. But there should be no misgivings on their part as to the use they made of their art during the war.