

THE ARMY WAY TODAY

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THE importance of music to the morale of the Army was recognized too late in the first World War. Hundreds of thousands of American troops were in Europe before it became evident that our bands were not equal to those of the French and the British. An examination undertaken by Walter Damrosch, together with French and American officers, showed that a very small percent of bandleaders could qualify. This startling fact resulted in General Pershing's order for the establishment of a bandleader's school at Chaumont, largely staffed by French civilians and officers. It opened November first, 1918 – eleven days before the signing of the Armistice.

The Army Music School now located at Fort Myer, just outside of Washington, was revived two and a half years ago under the aegis of Captain Thomas F. Darcy, Leader of the Army Band. Since that time it has graduated more than 450 students who are now serving all over the world as bandleaders with the rank of Warrant Officer, junior grade. A small number of WAC's have been graduated also.

Soldiers wishing to enter the school must first complete at least three months of basic training and pass a competitive examination in music. Since only those students who have had a sound music training before entering the school can pass the examination, the curriculum at present stresses the military duties a bandleader must perform. The course runs for three months. In addition to the military branches the student is given instruction in conducting, band-arranging, harmony, ear-training and sight-singing. A majority of the men have come from the field of public school music, although there have been a number of young conductors: John Barnett, Thor Johnson, Robert Hufstader, Jacques Singer, as well as composers: Robert Ward, Cecil Effinger, Homer Keller and Ellis Kohs. There have also been a number of outstanding instrumentalists and church organists.

The Bandleader and the Special Services officer are the nucleus for any musical activity in an army post. Together they must provide music for military ceremonials, sports events, dances and entertainments. The appointment of Lieutenant Colonel H. C. Bronson, (Officer-in-Charge of Music of Special Services), as advisor on the curriculum of the Army Music School bodes well for the future close relationship of these two branches of the service. With the establishment of band training centers at Camp Lee, Virginia and Camp Crowder, Missouri, respectively, the problems of the musician in the army, whether as bandsman or bandleader should be substantially improved.

Each class of the school, numbering from twenty-five to seventy-five, is organized into a choir. This changing group contributes to the musical life of Washington through concerts held at the National Gallery of Art and the National Cathedral. Frequent broadcasts have been given with the Army Band. On two occasions the choir has sung with the Washington Cathedral Choral Society and members of the National Symphony in performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's *Litany* and the *Te Deum* of Dvorak. The school took part also in the first Washington performance of Robert Ward's *Hush'd be the Camps Today* and my own *Two Canticles of Praise*. The repertory has extended from the polyphonic music of Palestrina, Byrd, des Pres, di Lassus to such contemporary works as *A Stop-Watch and an Ordnance Map* of Samuel Barber, *The Dirge* of Constant Lambert and Lili Boulanger's *Twenty-fourth Psalm*. Students have been encouraged to write for the chorus, and a number of civilian composers as well, have written works especially for this group.

The men have also formed various chamber groups for performance of works of their own and while the Army Band was stationed at Fort Myer a number of compositions for band, such as Kohs' *Life with Uncle Sam*, were auditioned. Organists and singers have had an outlet through concerts at the Fort Meyer chapel. Two works for organ, a *Prelude and Fugue* by Effinger and a *Fantasy and Fugue* by Homer Keller, were written here and performed at one of the choir's cathedral appearances.

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If army morale has been improved by better band leaders and bands, so have the bandleaders been offered a challenge to accomplish much through the organizations entrusted to their care. The seventy piece orchestras formed at Fort Monmouth under Thor Johnson and at Camp Lee under George Hoyen are encouraging sign-posts of future possibilities.

Men have come here from all over the United States with different backgrounds and different ideas. The experience of going through the Army Music School will mean perhaps that their future work will have been enriched by association with their contemporaries.

Graduates of the Army Music School have written a number of works during this war, many of which have been introduced here. Cecil Effinger has composed *American Men* for band and male chorus; *Two Psalms* for chorus, a capella; *Fanfare* (based on Chow Call) for brass, horns, and a two-part chorus; a *Concertino* for organ and wind instruments as well as his *Prelude and Fugue* for organ. Already mentioned is Ward's *Hush'd be the Camps Today*, for full orchestra and mixed chorus. George Hunter's *Chicago* is for male chorus and four hand piano. Ellis Kohs' *The Automatic Pistol* (Set to the text of Army Regulations on how to "field-strip" a pistol) is for chorus a capella; his suite, *Life with Uncle Sam* calls for a band or orchestra with a narrator. Homer Keller's *Fantasy and Fugue* is for organ. Gail Kubik, no graduate, but a private with the First Motion Picture Unit at Culver City, California, has written a *War-time Litany* for chorus, brass and percussion, and a *Piece for Organ* which will soon be performed here. Among the works written for the school by civilians are a *De Profundis* for chorus and organ or full orchestra by Leo Sowerby; *Lines* for chorus, tympani and four horns by Richard Bales; a work for chorus and small wind orchestra, *Psalm 72*, by Ned Rorem; Mary Howe's *Prophecy-1942* for chorus and wind orchestra and her *Devotion* for chorus a capella; and Harold Friedell's *Psalm 25* for chorus and organ.