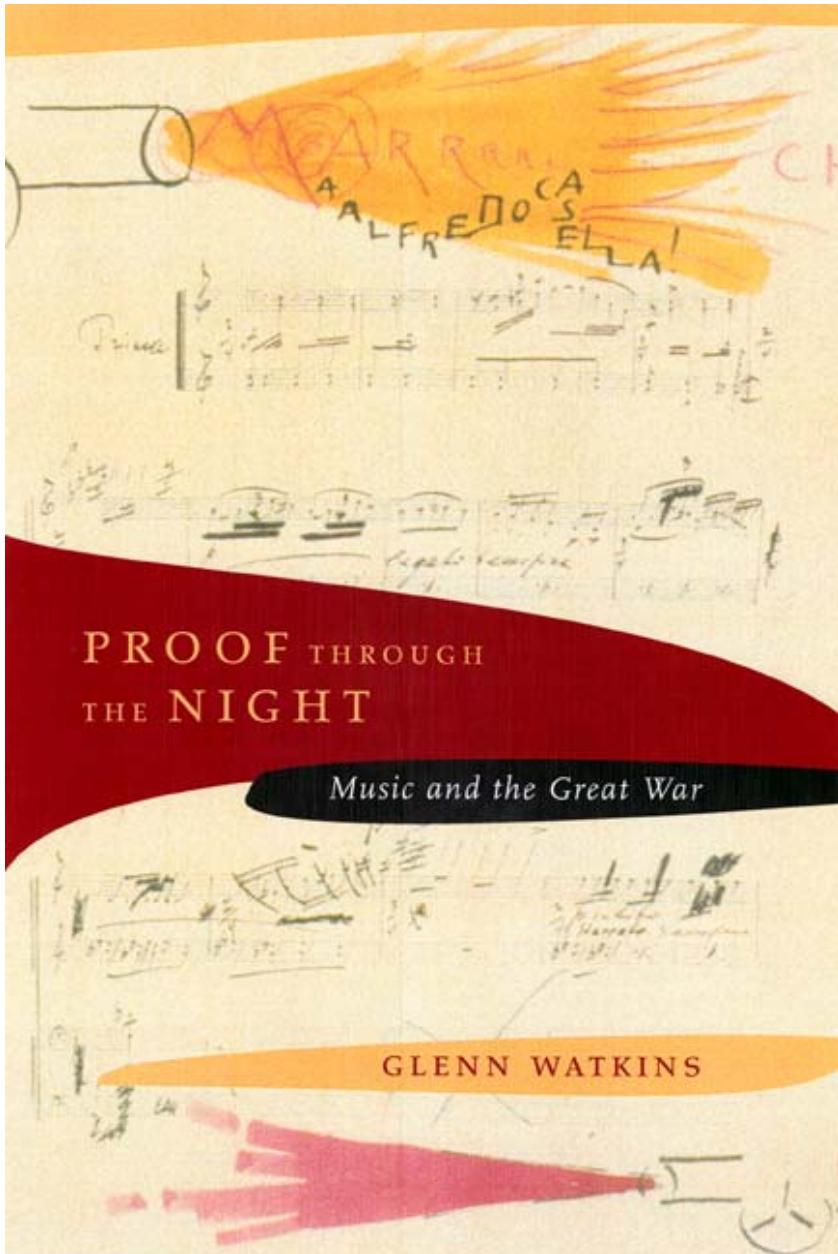


Excerpted from



©2003 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. May not be copied or reused without express written permission of the publisher.

click here to
BUY THIS BOOK

14 “The Yanks Are Coming”

We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: Make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to recover the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Arthur Zimmermann, telegram to the German minister in Mexico City, 19 January 1917

American entertainers and politicians alike maintained an uneasy neutrality following the outbreak of the war in August 1914. Al Jolson was already showcasing the popular English wartime song “Sister Susie’s Sewing Shirts for Soldiers” in *Dancing Around* when it opened on 10 October 1914 at the Winter Garden Theater in New York. Another of the rousing songs from the same season was Blanche Merrill’s “We Take Our Hats Off to You, Mr. Wilson.” Popularized by both Nora Bayes and Fanny Brice, it took on a new meaning as Wilson campaigned for reelection in 1916 on the slogan that he had kept the nation out of war. Other songs were more equivocal. “Go Right Along, Mr. Wilson,” A. Seymour Brown’s early campaign hit of 1915, for example, endorsed Wilson’s peace efforts even as it openly asked the country to ready itself for whatever sacrifices might eventually be called for.

Germany’s policy of unrestricted submarine warfare finally turned the tide. In April 1915 the Cunard liner *Lusitania*, which had become one of the wonders of the twentieth century by crossing the Atlantic in four and a half days in 1908, sailed from New York. As it departed the ship’s band played “Tipperary” and a Welsh male chorus sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” in a hearty bicultural send-off. On 7 May, however, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank just off the coast of Ireland. Among the 1,198 people who perished were 63 children and 128 Americans. Theodore Roosevelt called it piracy and murder and demanded immediate action, and *The New York Times* described the Germans as “savages drunk with blood.”¹ President Wilson’s protest was measured, al-

though it was still too strong for Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who resigned in the belief that Wilson's posture was destined to lead the country straight to war.²

Opinion in the United States turned irrevocably against the Central Powers. Songs like "When the *Lusitania* Went Down" and the "Lusitania Memorial Hymn" immediately captured the public outrage in a way that recalled the "Remember the Maine" fever that had triggered the Spanish-American War.³ "You provide the pictures and I'll provide the war," the newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst had told one of his illustrators in 1898, and now American music publishers launched what seemed to be a campaign to prepare the populace for inevitable intervention in the European conflict. The first of the *Lusitania* songs was published by Leo Feist in 1915 and recorded at once.

Warnings against America's involvement continued to come from various quarters. On 11 April 1915, only a few weeks before the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Henry Ford, a leading pacifist and a virtual icon of American self-reliance, vision, and industry, had told *The New York Times* that the war would not have come had the money spent on armaments in Europe been used for building tractors. The moneylenders and munitions makers were the real perpetrators of the war, Ford charged, with obvious reference to the German industrialist Gustav Krupp. If America entered the war, he said, he would refuse to build military vehicles. (It was a pledge Ford would ultimately fail to keep when he later turned to the manufacture of tanks for the American Expeditionary Force.)⁴

Joining Jane Addams of Chicago's Hull House, Ford undertook a worldwide campaign for universal peace in August 1915 with a pledge to get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas, a project that momentarily had the support of numerous European heads-of-state including Pope Benedict XV. The plan was doomed to failure, however, and Ford's personal mission aboard a Peace Ship to Europe proved to be a fiasco, although he captured the headlines by recommending that soldiers in the trenches go on strike to force a peaceful settlement. Irving Caesar, pacifist and the lyricist for Vincent Youmans's "Tea for Two," was aboard as Ford's personal secretary. The next year his "When the Armies Disband" was set to music by the young George Gershwin, launching a collaboration that would last into the early 1920s and include the wildly popular "Swanee."⁵ No more than three weeks after the ship docked in Norway on 19 December, however, Ford headed for home, leaving his peace commissioners behind. *The New York Times* quoted reporter Elmer Davis, who accompanied Ford, as saying that the group aboard the Peace Ship was "the largest and most heterogeneous

collection of rainbow chasers that ever found a pot of gold and dipped into it for six weeks."⁶

The faction favoring war, however, included some of America's most prominent men of letters, including college presidents and older established publishers and editors, who continued to view war in a highly romantic way, even suggesting that "war was a severe but necessary lesson in moral idealism."⁷ Oliver Wendell Holmes may have told Harvard's graduating class of 1895 that war's message was "divine," but in 1915 it was especially chilling to hear talk of "the chastening and purifying effect of armed conflict" issuing from the office of Princeton's president, John Grier Hibben.⁸

American propaganda and U.S. Army enlistment posters left no doubt about the direction in which the nation was headed. In H. R. Hopps's *Destroy This Mad Brute*, for example, which appeared in 1916, a year prior to America's entrance into the war, an enormous gorilla held a terrified damsel in a pose that for a later generation would automatically recall King Kong and Fay Wray (fig. 29). In this instance, however, the monster wears a German spiked helmet with "Militarism" inscribed across the front and carries a club provocatively labeled *Kultur*.⁹ As if to forestall any possible misunderstanding of its message, the poster displays the following words beneath the crumbling ruins of a village on the other side of the pond: "If this War is not fought to a finish in Europe, it will be on the soil of the United States." Advertisements for numerous films served the same purpose, including especially *The Kaiser*, *the Beast of Berlin*, which was filled with scenes of endless atrocities taken straight out of the British Bryce Report. The billboard announcing its arrival at the Broadway Theatre in New York, which featured a stern likeness of the helmet-clad Kaiser, even carried an open invitation to a mock brawl: "Warning! Any Person Throwing Mud at This Poster Will *Not* Be Prosecuted."

Around 1915 some openly pacifist songs had held an almost un rebuttable appeal when wedded to the voice of motherhood. "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier" (subtitled "A Mother's Plea for Peace, respectfully dedicated to every Mother—everywhere"), for example, predicted that as many as ten million young soldiers would march needlessly off to war and argued that if mothers around the world stood up, they could put an end to the fighting.¹⁰ Its rousing chorus no doubt appealed to a great segment of the American population when it was first released.

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.



Figure 29. H. R. Hopps, "Destroy This Mad Brute," propaganda poster, 1916.

Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future trouble,
It's time to lay the sword and gun away.
There'd be no war today
If mothers all would say,
"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier."¹¹

Aided by the fact that it lent itself to ragtime interpretations by popular pianists, the song achieved an enormous vogue, and its publisher Leo Feist boasted that more than 700,000 copies were sold in the first eight weeks. A recording of it, coupled with the equally pacifist "Stay Down Here Where You Belong," by Irving Berlin, was quickly made by Morton Harvey and released in March 1915.¹² Pro-war sentiment was now gaining momentum, but "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier" continued to sell well until April 1917, the month the United States entered the war, when the Victor Talking Machine Company understandably withdrew the recording.¹³ Notwithstanding songs like "My Country, Right or Wrong," "Wake Up, Uncle Sam," and "Fight for the American Flag," the vast majority of the tunes clearly favored non-participation prior to America's involvement.¹⁴

Before America's entrance into the war, the young Cole Porter also wrote his first professional musical, "See America First," which opened for a short run in March 1916. Despite the title, the composer himself left for Paris the following year. Claims that he had joined the French Foreign Legion proved false, however, and when the conflict ended he remained in France, married a southern belle of means, and became the toast of the Riviera.¹⁵

When America finally joined the Allies in April 1917, Theodore Roosevelt belligerently told an audience at Oyster Bay, Long Island, that Germany had become a menace to the whole world. "The man who does not think it was America's duty to fight for her own sake in view of the infamous conduct of Germany toward us stands on a level with a man who wouldn't think it necessary to fight in a private quarrel because his wife's face was slapped," he proclaimed. Roosevelt's remarks were prompted by President Wilson's declaration of war on 6 April, which came in the face of evidence that was too potent to ignore. General John Joseph "Black Jack" Pershing had pursued the Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa into Chihuahua after he launched a raid on Columbus, New Mexico.¹⁶ Then on 19 January 1917, the German foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, sent the German minister in Mexico City a telegram that promised the

Mexican government the return of its former territories in the United States if it joined the war on the side of the Central Powers.

On 23 January the German ambassador in Washington wired Berlin and proposed that, in addition to the promises made to Mexico, \$50,000 be spent to influence members of the U.S. Congress to keep America out of the war. The ambassador's telegram was intercepted by British cryptographers in London and decoded two days before its arrival in Berlin. Informed of its contents and faced with news that an American cargo ship, the *Hou-satonic*, had been sunk by a German submarine on 3 February, President Wilson broke off all diplomatic relations with Germany.¹⁷ Nothing could have better clarified the fact that America's occupation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic from 1915 to 1916, the purchase of the Virgin Islands the next year, and current involvement in Mexican politics were not isolated episodes but were rather "part of a regional strategy to pre-empt German influence."¹⁸

Further submarine attacks in March and the threat of invasion from the south suddenly brought the legend on the gorilla poster home with a new and threatening immediacy. But it took two months of open submarine warfare before the U.S. Senate voted in favor of war on 4 April. That was followed two days later by endorsement in the House of Representatives and President Wilson's declaration of war. Pershing was immediately recalled from Mexico and named to head an American Expeditionary Force, which was to be sent to France.

Pershing's "police action" in Mexico evoked few lyrics in the United States, although it did stir up a few in Mexico.¹⁹ In songs written by Americans prior to the United States's entrance into the war, most references to farewells and departed loved ones pointed to Britain and rarely to Pershing's cavalry, which was positioned south of the American border. Between 1914 and 1917, however, American tunesmiths showed that they could address the competing claims of isolationism and preparedness in a persuasive and forceful manner.²⁰ The prospect of heartbreak should America enter the war in Europe was the theme of three songs published in New York in 1915: "Bring Back My Soldier Boy to Me," "Daddy, Please Don't Let Them Shoot You," and "Don't Take My Darling Boy Away" ("Don't send him off to war / You took his father and brothers three / Now you come back for more").

Once America entered the war, newly minted tunes such as "If They Want to Fight, All Right, but Neutral Is My Middle Name" quickly became unfashionable. The mood had changed. Official persecution of conscientious objectors began.²¹ And in Edith Wharton's new novel, *The Marne*

(1918), one of her characters even extolled the Old Lie: "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."

WAR SONG AS INTERVENTIONIST PROPAGANDA

Once war was declared it was imperative that public opinion be mobilized simultaneously with the conscription of troops. Predictably enough, in 1917 and 1918 a flurry of counterresponses appeared to the earlier pacifist songs, including "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be a Coward," at least five different versions of "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be a Slacker," "I'm Going To Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier and a Credit to the U.S.A.," and the rambling flag-waver "I'm Sure I Wasn't Raised To Be a Soldier (But I'll Fight for Dear Old Red, White and Blue)." Another song from 1917, "America, Here's My Boy," reflected the totally different perspective of a mother who declared that, having only one son, she had raised him for America, but that if she had another he too would march proudly alongside his brother. It was outmatched only by the ultimate patriotic offering, "If I Had a Son for Each Star in Old Glory," which its publisher Leo Feist claimed was "doing its bit by helping recruit regiments for Uncle Sam."

A trickle of songs written before April 1917, such as "My Country, I Hear You Calling Me," reflected the steady movement toward military and industrial preparedness that followed the passage of the National Defense Act in mid-1916. Almost simultaneously with Wilson's declaration of war, Irving Berlin, Edgar Leslie, and George W. Meyer summed up the new mood with a song, "Let's All Be Americans Now," that was immediately recorded by the American Quartet. Such war tunes served to remind the country of its ethnic diversity. Whereas prewar songs such as Irving Berlin's "Hey Wop" (1914) and "Angelo" (1915) had humorously caricatured Italian, Irish, and other ethnic populations, creating a lucrative business for Tin Pan Alley,²² any question regarding immigrants' loyalty to their native land could now lead to suspicion and alarm. As a consequence, Roosevelt's challenge of "100% Americanism" became a rallying cry addressed to all U.S. citizens and pointedly so to immigrant populations. The issue was specifically introduced in posters like the one devised for the Third Liberty Loan drive that carried the caption "Are you 100% American? Prove it! Buy U.S. Government Bonds." Here potentially demeaning ethnic stereotyping had given way to a direct challenge to serve and support the country in visible ways.

Failure to buy war bonds, slowness to respond, and even silence were frequently taken as signs of disloyalty, giving zealots an excuse to display

their patriotism. Cases are documented in which German immigrants were forced to kiss the flag, tarred and feathered for resistance or refusal to buy war bonds, and, in extreme instances, beaten and even lynched.²³ "Let's All Be Americans Now" (1917) called on citizens to set aside loyalty to a previous homeland (including England, France, and Italy as well as Germany) and "fall in line / You swore that you would, / So be true to your vow, / Let's all be Americans now!"²⁴

Instruction in German, one of the most popularly studied modern foreign languages in American high schools, was widely outlawed. The California State Board of Education condemned German as "a language that disseminates the ideals of autocracy, brutality and hatred,"²⁵ and the study of French was elevated to a new prominence alongside Latin even in such inland states as Kansas.²⁶ How different America's solution was from that of France! In a surprising recognition of the classical foundation of eighteenth-century German literature as well as the practical fact that most citizens of Alsace—whom France hoped to welcome home following the war—were German-speaking, the Sorbonne indefinitely renewed the contract of its main professor of German literature and language in 1915.²⁷

In America any citizen of German descent came to be considered a potential saboteur. Attacks on German-Americans, or "hyphenated Americans" as Theodore Roosevelt labeled them, and on all things German were not only vicious but also frequently absurd. The first word in familiar terms such as "hamburger steak," "dachshund pup," and "German measles" were routinely replaced with the word "liberty." War hysteria even led to the lynching in April 1918 of a law-abiding citizen whose only crime was the possession of a German family name and to the acquittal of its perpetrators by a St. Louis jury on grounds that they had been motivated by patriotic concerns.²⁸ In the world of popular song a few pro-German items were copyrighted and published in America in 1914–1915 by the Leipzig-based publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. They soon gave way, however, to songs of the virulent "Beat the Hun" variety.²⁹

Something of this change of musical manners can be followed in the programs given by the U.S. Marine Band from 1914 through 1918. The performance of a rich parade of German marches under the direction of its German-born leader, William Santelmann, could hardly have failed to raise eyebrows as the war progressed. On 13 January 1914, for example, Franz von Blon's "Durch Kampf zum Sieg" (Through Battle to Victory), H. L. Blankenburg's "Germanentreue" (Fidelity to Germany), and Heinrich Warnken's "Treu zu Kaiser und Reich" (Fidelity to the Kaiser and Empire)

all appeared with their German titles on a program performed at the White House following the playing of John Philip Sousa's "Hands Across the Sea."³⁰ The Marine Band recorded the last two of these German marches for Victor only a few weeks later, along with Wilhelm Wacek's "Krupp March" and Carl Friedemann's "Grand Duke of Baden."³¹

Even after the outbreak of war, on 14 September 1914 and 18 January 1915, Warnken's march, now listed as "True to the Empire," appeared on Marine Band programs. "Durch Kampf zum Sieg" (still in German) also made a reappearance in a concert on 28 December 1914 and then again on 12 April and 27 December 1915 with the English title "Through Battle to Victory," while Blankenburg's march was played as "German Fidelity" on 17 January 1916. By 15 July 1918, however, Santelmann was showcasing Von Unschuld's march "America First" in the company of Puccini, Meyerbeer, and "The Halls of Montezuma." Santelmann's pro-German bias notwithstanding, all concerts throughout the period from 1914 through 1918 conspicuously concluded with a playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Immediately following announcements of the departure of American troops for France a new theme appeared, and on 26 April the opening of the *Passing Show of 1917* included the smash hit "Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France!" Filled with references to Miss Liberty, sweethearts, wives, and mothers, it went on to hail Pershing's arrival in France as America's way of repaying its debt to that country for Lafayette's role in the American Revolution (fig. 30).³² The propaganda value of the famous statesman's name had been tapped earlier in the war by the Lafayette Escadrille, a group of adventurous young pilots who attached themselves to the French military air service toward the end of 1916 and who continued to fly under French colors for a year after America's entry into the war.³³ Living the high life, they ate, drank, gambled, and made merry to a steady stream of rags, fox trots, and opera arias issuing from their gramophones.³⁴ This hard-drinking fraternity acquired a pair of lion cubs and named them Whiskey and Soda. As the life expectancy of Allied pilots who faced German air aces ranged from eleven days to three weeks, it is no wonder that these pilots created a song for themselves that was not only packed with bravado but also undisguisedly directed at a roster of familiar themes.³⁵

So stand by your glasses steady,
This world is a world of lies.
Here's a toast to the dead already;
Hurrah for the next man who dies.



Figure 30. Cover for "Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France," 1917. (Music © 1917 Leo Feist, Inc., New York.)

Cut off from the land that bore us,
 Betrayed by the land that we find,
 The good men had gone before us,
 And only the dull left behind.

Such words were for private consumption, of course, and not meant for the folks back home. Yet this unbridled cynicism found further justification when, with America's entry into the war, the black pilot Eugene Jacques Bullard was denied transfer from the Lafayette Flying Corps to the U.S. Army Air Service.³⁶

The reference to Lafayette in "Good-Bye, Broadway, Hello, France!" was not the only thing remembered about the song. After the Armistice Jean Cocteau parodied its title in France with "Adieu New York, Bonjour Paris," a title that was in turn borrowed in 1919 by the French composer Georges

Auric as the title of a foxtrot with a somewhat different message. As Auric explained in an article of 1920, grateful as most French composers were for the rejuvenating effects of American popular styles, he felt that it was now time to put them aside and search for pre-Debussyiste French values.³⁷ As it turned out, only the first part of this injunction was to prove hollow.

When the United States entered the war American musical theater suddenly seemed to come of age, prompted in large measure by the need to develop an alternative to Viennese operetta. Ingredients from operetta, musical comedy, and revue—all of European origin—were now amalgamated into an identifiably more American form that relied heavily upon the spirit of ragtime. Tunes indebted to European music-hall balladry continued to issue from Broadway in 1917 in profusion, however; they included "Till the Clouds Roll By" from *Oh, Boy!* by Jerome Kern; a patriotic finale by Victor Herbert in *The Ziegfeld Follies*, which opened in June and starred W. C. Fields, Will Rogers, and Fanny Brice; and "Will You Remember (Sweetheart)" from Sigmund Romberg's *Maytime*, which opened in July and ran for 492 performances.

Other revues that opened in New York in 1917 included *Over the Top*, which showcased the popular comedian Joe Laurie, Fred and Adele Astaire (originally Austerlitz), and the music of Romberg. *Going Up*, based on the 1910 play *The Aviator*, opened at the Bijou in November and featured "The Further It Is from Tipperary" ("The closer it is to Berlin").³⁸ The *Cohan Revue of 1918* opened on 31 December 1917, featuring Nora Bayes singing "The Man Who Put the Germ in Germany," in which the chorus begins and ends with the following series of irresistible patriotic puns:³⁹

We're proud of the WILL we found in Wilson
The man who put the US in USA . . .
But the world is now aflame
At the HELL in Wilhelm's name,
The man who put the GERM in Germany.

This play on words was soon invoked in the title of a film short, *Kicking the Germ Out of Germany*, released by Rolin-Pathé in 1918, which featured Harold Lloyd taking raucous pleasure in mistreating the Kaiser.⁴⁰ In March 1918, however, the pun acquired a sinister new meaning when the globe was caught in the grips of an influenza epidemic that took many more lives in six months than the fighting did in an entire four years.⁴¹ Songwriters and lyricists were not to be stilled, and songs such as "Spanish Flu Blues" and a ragtime number, "Oh, You Flu!," were offered in an attempt to alleviate the suffering.⁴²

Theodore Morse adapted a melody from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, using the lyrics "Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here." The result was one of the popular hits of 1917, along with "You're in the Army Now."⁴³ Civil War songs such as "Just Before the Battle, Mother" and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" were also revived, as were Carrie Jacobs Bond's "I Love You Truly" (1901) and Herbert's "Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life" from *Naughty Marietta* (1910). Nostalgic reminders of things left behind appeared in songs like "Back Home in Indiana" and "For Me and My Gal."

In 1918 songwriters traded on this early momentum and offered a cornucopia of melodies and lyrics: the sentimental "Till We Meet Again" by Richard A. Whiting and Richard Egan, the stuttering "K-K-K-Katy" by the Canadian-American Geoffrey O'Hara,⁴⁴ and the uncomfortably probable "Somebody Stole My Gal" by Leo Wood. *Oh, Look!* opened in March, featuring an adaptation by Harry Carroll of the central section of Chopin's *Fantaisie Impromptu* in the song "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows," that would later be revived during the American Depression. And the vaudeville trooper Mae West, then twenty-six, also did her bit for her country by appearing in *Sometime*, which opened in October, singing Rudolf Friml's "Any Kind of Man."

As the war edged toward its conclusion the music industry was kept busy with songs like "We're Going through to Berlin," "We Are Going to Whip the Kaiser," and "We Shall Never Surrender Old Glory." With "Just Like Washington Crossed the Delaware, General Pershing Will Cross the Rhine" (fig. 31), America once again found itself "Looking backward through the ages" at "hist'ry's pages" and the "Deeds that famous men have done" before settling on a chorus that drew a direct parallel between the American Revolution and the struggle in Europe.

Just like Washington crossed the Delaware,
So will Pershing cross the Rhine;
As they followed after George
At dear old Valley Forge,
Our boys will break that line.

It's for your land and my land
And the sake of Auld Lang Syne;
Just like Washington crossed the Delaware,
Gen'ral Pershing will cross the Rhine.⁴⁵

Pershing's stock was so high that the first official American war picture made under the auspices of the U.S. Signal Corps and Navy Photographers was *Pershing's Crusaders* (1918).⁴⁶ A poster released in conjunction with

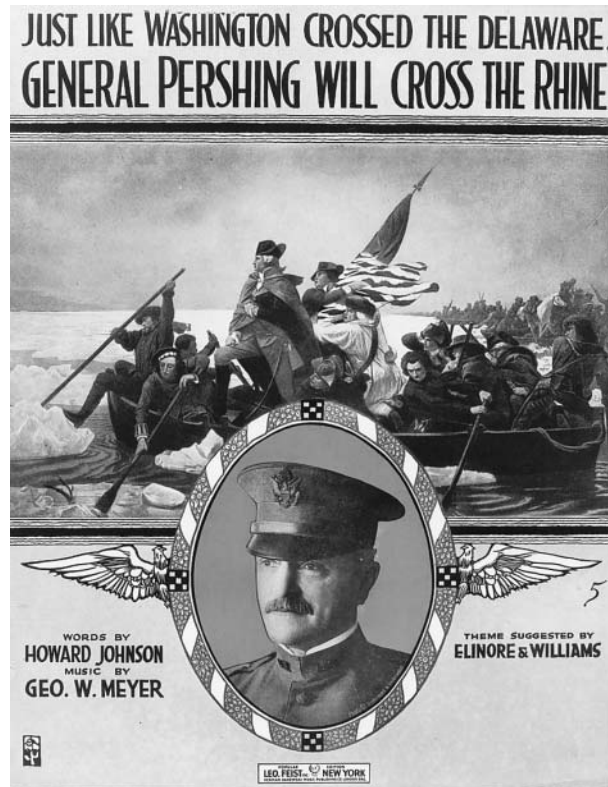


Figure 31. Cover for George W. Meyer and Howard Johnson's "Just Like Washington Crossed the Delaware, General Pershing Will Cross the Rhine," 1918. (Music © 1918 Leo Feist, Inc., New York.)

the film openly implied that his cavalry missions were considered to be so noble as to be likened directly to the Crusades of the Middle Ages (fig. 32).

More than one composer, including Sousa, aspired to write the ultimate American war song, but in terms of a rousing national chant none succeeded like George M. Cohan did with "Over There." Following Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war against Germany on Friday, 6 April 1917, Cohan pondered its meaning on a train into New York and then holed up at home all the next day. His daughter, Mary, recalled that on Sunday her father announced that he had just finished a new song that he wanted to sing for the family. He then placed a tin pan from the kitchen on his head and, using a broom for a gun, began to mark time as he sang:

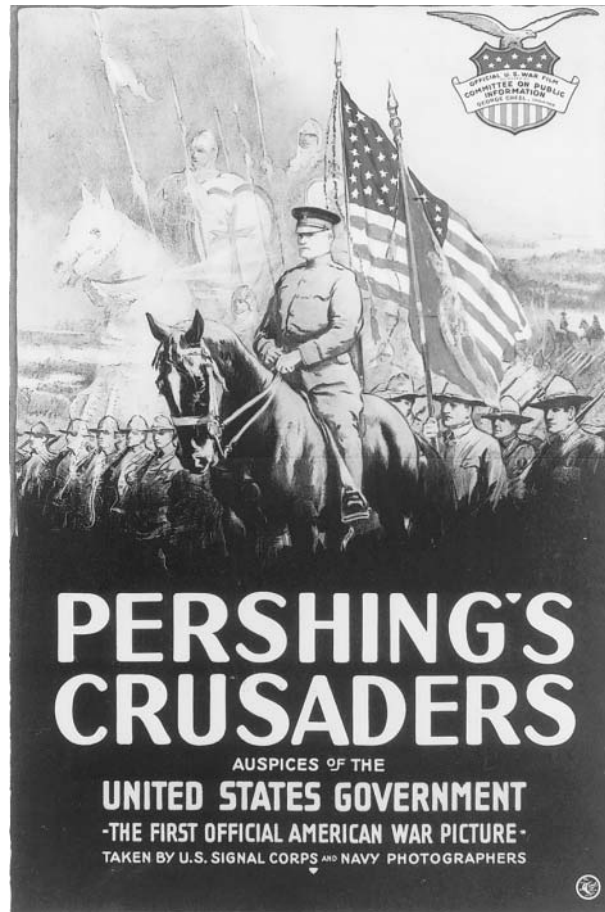


Figure 32. Poster for *Pershing's Crusaders*, 1918.

Johnnie, get your gun, get your gun, get your gun,
Take it on the run, on the run, on the run;
Hear them calling you and me,
Every son of liberty.
Hurry right away, no delay, go today.
Make your daddy glad
To have had such a lad.
Tell your sweetheart not to pine,
To be proud her boy's in line.

Cohan then began to march back and forth, arms swinging, as he embarked on the chorus:

Over there, over there,
Send the word, send the word over there,
That the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming,
The drums rum-tumming everywhere.
So prepare, say a prayer,
Send the word, send the word to beware,
We'll be over, we're coming over,
And we won't come back till
It's over over there.

"We kids had heard, of course, that the United States was at war," his daughter concluded, "and now here was Dad acting just like a soldier. So I began to sob, and I threw myself down, hanging for dear life to his legs as he marched, begging him, pleading with him not to go away to the war. I kept clinging to him until he stopped."⁴⁷

Cohan had created a classic. And while he later said that all he did was dramatize a bugle call, he had captured something of the American spirit of the moment and had summed up the euphoria and confidence that Americans would need to sustain themselves for the remainder of the war. By donating his royalties from the song to war charities, he provided a further model for Americans—a factor that no doubt later played a role in his being awarded a special congressional medal. No other American World War I song, including Whiting's "Till We Meet Again," could ever match it; none would be remembered longer. Immediately following its first public performance at a Red Cross benefit at the Hippodrome in New York City in the fall of 1917, its opening three-note motif took on a symbolism for future American composers as powerful as the opening notes of "Taps."

Norman Rockwell created a memorable sheet music cover for "Over There," and the song became so popular that Enrico Caruso, the most renowned singer in the world at the time—popular or classical—recorded it in both French and a richly accented English laced with extra vowels (fig. 33). "This Great World Wide Song Hit Now Has Both French and English Lyrics," Leo Feist's edition advertised on its cover. Drums imitated machine-gun fire in Caruso's recording, anticipating James Reese Europe's sonic arsenal in "On Patrol in No Man's Land." And Caruso substituted the word "boys" for "Yanks" in the fifth and sixth lines out of deference, no doubt, to other national sensibilities.

Throughout the war various maneuvers were employed to inflame the minds of people at home with stories of enemy atrocities. Some were true, some were false. The attempt to capitalize upon the power of such potent imagery was nowhere more manifest than in the British "Report of the

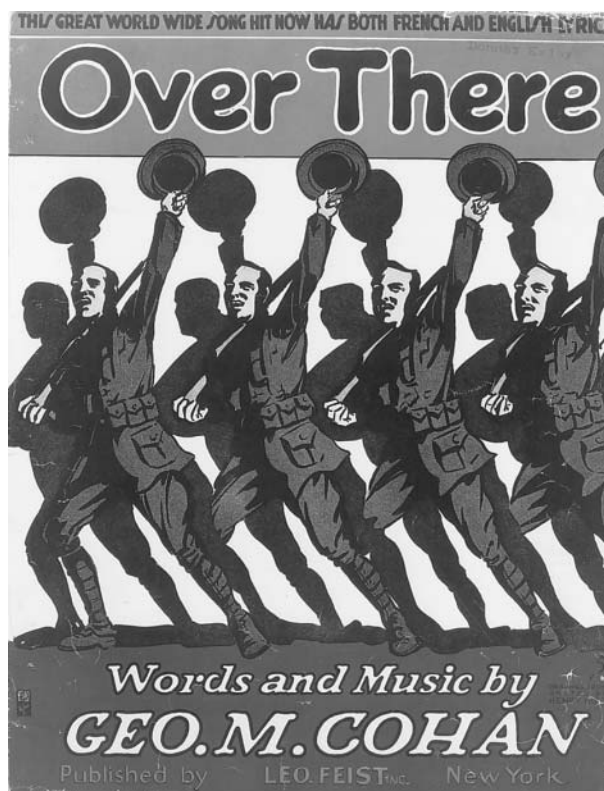


Figure 33. Cover for George M. Cohan's "Over There," 1917. (Music © 1917 William Jerome Publishing Corp., New York.)

Committee on Alleged German Atrocities." In an attempt to influence opinion at home it included stories about the mutilation of children with singing soldiers used as a backdrop.⁴⁸ "War Babies" (1916), which pledged that Americans would care for orphaned Belgian children, makes Debussy's lyrics for "Noël des enfants" seem tepid. In the opening verse two children are held in the embrace of their dead mother amid the rubble and thunder of war, and the song concludes with the following chorus:

Little war babies, our hearts ache for you,
Where will you go to, and what will you do?
Into a world full of sorrow you came,
Homeless and helpless, no one knows your name.
Gone is the mother love tender and true,
Gone is your dead daddy, too;

But you'll share in the joys
Of our own girls and boys,
War babies, we'll take care of you.⁴⁹

The fact that Al Jolson could turn such a song into a hit tune in 1916, which he did, indicates the degree to which American sympathies for the European crisis had already been fine-tuned before Wilson declared war. To further challenge America's neutrality, the cover of the sheet music bore a photograph of a row of Belgian orphans.⁵⁰

Purportedly conscious of the patriotic need to reduce paper consumption, some publishers issued so-called War Editions, a format that was 10 inches by 7 inches instead of the typical 13½ inches by 10½ inches. "To Co-operate with the Government and to conserve paper during the War, this song is issued in a smaller size than usual," the front cover of one of Leo Feist's editions conspicuously proclaimed. "Save! Save! Save is the watchword to-day. This is the spirit in which we are working and your co-operation will be very much appreciated." Feist's patriotic claims were, however, to be taken with a grain of salt, as "publishers printed only small numbers of this special issue, while simultaneously producing normalized originals of the same songs," suggesting "that the war edition may have been more a matter of patriotic publicity than enforced necessity."⁵¹

WOMEN AND THE WAR

"The Bravest Heart of All," a tribute to the International Red Cross by Arthur J. Lamb and F. Henry Cluque, eulogized the English nurse Edith Cavell, who had been executed by the Germans only a few weeks earlier, in October 1915, for helping prisoners escape.⁵² While the sheet music dramatically depicts a stoic nurse standing before a firing squad, tales of her martyrdom typically failed to mention that the French had shot two nurses that year for the same offense. The mobilization of public hatred through such images—contrasted in this case with a British poster that cast a German nurse callously emptying water from a canteen onto the ground in front of a group of soldiers dying of thirst—contributed powerfully to quieting periodic talk of a compromise peace.

Once America declared war the American Red Cross became the ultimate symbol of compassion. Will Mahoney's "The Girl Who Wears a Red Cross on Her Sleeve" portrays a young nurse who "works with the heart of an angel, / 'Mid the sound of the cannon's roar" and advertises the pride of a mother who states that although she had no boy, "It just filled me with joy / To give my darling girl when war began." Other popular tunes that

praise the organization's work are "Angel of No Man's Land," "My Angel of the Flaming Cross," "That Red Cross Girl of Mine," and "I Don't Want to Get Well (I'm in Love with a Beautiful Nurse)." ⁵³

Several popular American lyrics of 1918, including "Joan of Arc, They Are Calling You" and "Girls of France," invoke Joan of Arc, as though she were an adopted patron saint.⁵⁴ The former calls upon her to "Come lead your France to victory" and notes that France's sons "at Verdun, bearing the burden, Pray for your coming anew." The latter, however, opens its first verse with the reminder that the "Girls of France" had formerly been thought of as "Something to fondle and then to forget." The chorus concludes:

Girls of France, girls of France,
We're mighty proud of you;
When shadows fell and all was dark
You led your sons like Joan of Arc.

No figure had been more popular in forging the mythology of the sacred union of the French people than Joan of Arc, and Debussy was busy composing *Ode to France*, which invoked her vision and spirit at the very time when her image was becoming increasingly popular in America in song, poster, and hymn. A more fully secular American society had no historic counterpart to her, no figure that so clearly coupled the highest aspirations of church and state in a holy war, and it is hardly surprising that the myth surrounding "The Maid of France" was widely adopted. Her name also completely fascinated American soldiers, Protestant as well as Catholic: in the immediate postwar months prior to repatriation visits to her birthplace in Domrémy proved to be almost as popular as trips to Paris.⁵⁵

Throughout the war one of the most potent and enduring symbols of womanhood was understandably that of the home-front Mother, whose name was invariably capitalized and a famous song from 1915 spelled it out: "M-O-T-H-E-R, a Word That Means the World to Me."⁵⁶ Of all the "mother" songs, few could match the picture of "Mother Machree" (in Irish parlance "machree" means "my dear"), with silver shining in her hair and a brow "all furrowed and wrinkled with care." Written in 1910 by a trio of young Americans for an Irish show, *Barry of Ballymore*, it was destined to do wartime service when John McCormack embraced it as a signature song.⁵⁷ With America's entrance into the war, a former partiality for themes relating to the suffragette movement now gave way not only to the image of motherhood and the personal sacrifice of her sons ("America, Here's My Boy") but also to a mother's patience ("The Little Grey Mother

Who Waits All Alone") and especially her value as a recruitment ploy in songs like "America Needs You Like a Mother, Would You Turn Your Mother Down?"

Another song written before the outbreak of war that subsequently acquired a new meaning was "Peg O' My Heart." It took its name from a theatrical sensation of 1912 starring Laurette Taylor and was prompted by a competition for a song with the same name as the play. The music was composed by German-born Fred Fischer and the lyrics by Canadian Alfred Bryan, both established songwriters. Introduced in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1913, its sentiment was ready for adoption by every soldier who had left a girl behind ("Altho' her heart is far away, / I hope to make her mine some day"). The single woman who waited loyally for her sweetheart ("She Wore A Yellow Ribbon") figured prominently along with her prophecy regarding both the outcome of the battle ("If He Can Fight Like He Can Love, Good Night Germany!")⁵⁸ and promises for a postwar world ("Yankee Doodle Wedding" and "Little Regiment of Your Own").

Women increasingly played a crucial role in various volunteer efforts, and the U.S. Army and Navy nurse corps, newly activated, sent 25,000 women abroad as ambulance drivers, telephone operators, and hospital staff and relief workers.⁵⁹ Although the role played by women in such vital jobs was uncontested, their presence near the battlefields of France offered other possibilities that were impossible to ignore. "I'm Going to Follow the Boys"⁶⁰ promoted an exaggerated naïveté in the opening verse with the declaration "I don't know a thing about the war / I don't see what they're having it for / But when it comes to things like osculation / That's where I'd be missed." The comforts offered by female companionship are underscored again at the end of the chorus with the words, "If one little kiss or more can help them win the war, / Why I'm going to follow the boys!" The image of the female camp follower, or *vivandière*, is sanitized with a patriotic message but not entirely effaced. The musical elements invoked to accompany these sentiments attest to the standardization of an arsenal of figures and motifs in countless songs written throughout the war years. The opening of the refrain echoes bugle calls and cites an instantly recognizable patriotic favorite (George M. Cohan's sensation of the hour, "Over There"), but the syncopation is ragtime and the lyrics are mock heroic: "There's a feeling down in my heart, / That I'm a Joan of Arc, / So I'm going to follow the boys!"

Women had increasingly begun to link their acts of loyal wartime service to goals of racial and gender equality. At the same time, the traditional male view that women "signified the things for which men fight;

they are not the comrades with whom men fight,"⁶¹ still held powerful sway. "I Loved an Amazon," a poem published in the *Stars and Stripes* in 1918, openly expressed the dismay of a soldier, home on leave, upon seeing the unfeminine spectacle of his wife participating in a women's defense and drill group. The opening of the twenty-four-line poem sums up his chagrin.

I hastened home to find my child
Alone, unfed, provoked and riled.
My wife I found—my search was long—
The center of a female throng.
That voice, with love once soft and low,
Was shouting, "Right by section—HO!"⁶²

By 1917 full voting rights for women had been achieved in thirteen states, and between 1916 and 1921 some 500,000 black women from the South took steps to combat social and economic disfranchisement by relocating to the North and Midwest.⁶³ Woman's suffrage was just around the corner. First proposed in the United States in 1848 and advanced by Susan B. Anthony's National Woman Suffrage Association from 1869 on, women's right to vote would be fully realized throughout the country only in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Clearly, the Great War helped to bring unsuspected resolution to more than one issue at home.⁶⁴

Numerous songs of the period put the spotlight on women's wartime efforts, including their role in jobs formerly considered male occupations. Warning that the roles of chauffeur, police officer, executive, traffic cop, and house painter might in future no longer be the exclusive province of men, the lyrics of "You'd Better Be Nice to Them Now" suggested that women were becoming "more independent each day." It was an issue that increasingly came to the fore as servicemen returned home with a certain anxiety about the relationship of the sexes and their respective roles in a postwar economy.⁶⁵

Such exaggerated fears about the home front were matched by an ignorance of life at the front by the people back home. Nostalgia, patriotism, blatant propaganda, and concerns regarding disease, race, and gender flooded the songs and posters of the day, and critics seldom attempted to judge their individual merit. A writer for the *New York Evening Post* in August 1918 did broach the subject of the barrage of "New Songs of War," however: "Vulgar and Cheap? No doubt, they are often so. Yet the cheapest song may often seem transfigured for singers to whose deepest senti-

ments it somehow makes an appeal. . . . We can afford to have the people singing many shabby, faulty songs, along with better ones, but we could never afford to have them singing none at all."⁶⁶ Vulgar and cheap they may have been, yet numerous concert artists sang them not only at bond rallies but in their more formal concert programs. Realizing the public's desire for "good melody ballads," Leonard Liebbling noted in the *Musical Courier* for August 1918 that such well-known artists as Enrico Caruso, Alma Gluck, John McCormack, and Ernestine Schumann-Heink were now placing such songs on their programs. "Our nation is being stirred fundamentally at this moment," he said, "and the primitive and elemental rather than the subtle and cultured emotions and impulses [are] ready to react to the reductions of sentiment, written, spoken, or sung—especially sung."⁶⁷

Between mid-1914 and mid-1919 a torrent of American patriotic songs were composed, of which 35,600 were copyrighted and some 7,300 were published.⁶⁸ Frederick Vogel, in a careful assessment of what he calls the "Song Deluge," concludes that although

a few Great War songs were as catchy as the opening production number in a Broadway musical . . . , as the months passed the marketplace for songs quickly resembled an insatiable maw, ever eager for more songs to digest. The hundreds that were published simply overwhelmed the public; the result was that even many respectable songs were neglected by potential buyers unable to keep up with publishers' offerings.⁶⁹

TROOP ENTERTAINMENTS ABROAD

The variety of entertainment for American troops abroad did not vary much in kind from those offered other Allied troops prior to the entry of the United States into the conflict. The YMCA had some 35,000 volunteers in the field who set up shows, lectures, movies, and performances by stock companies in areas occupied by the American Expeditionary Force. The first to arrive were a mixed lot, including the pianist and singer C. E. Clifford Walker, a French musician, named Maletsky, with a troupe of performing rabbits, and Cobbina Johnson, described as a grand opera contralto. Later groups that made their way to the front appeared with names like the "Y Minstrels," "Just Girls," and the "Scrap Iron Jazz Band"—the latter encouraging the inference that their instruments were *objets trouvés* from the battlefield. Song leaders also made their appearance accompanied by a healthy supply of songbooks, and they encouraged soldiers to sing Civil War favorites such as "John Brown's Body," "Dixie," "When Johnny

Comes Marching Home," "Marching through Georgia," and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," the latter sometimes updated with words such as "Down with the Kaiser."⁷⁰

Songs sung not by the entertainers but by the soldiers themselves in the long tedious hours of waiting for the next round of action were frequently of a totally different cast. "I Don't Want to Be a Soldier," familiar to the British Army from the time of the Napoleonic Wars, flew in the face of prevailing national sentiment by ridiculing military valor. Dozens of similar songs circulated in World War I, illustrating the disparity between the nobly expressed perspectives at home and frontline cynicism. One of the recurring figures in Anglo-American war songs was the "reluctant warrior," who is the narrator in the following partial set of lyrics, which were applied to the tune of "The Darktown Strutters' Ball":⁷¹

Machine gun bullets whizzing all around me.
 Old tin hat feels mighty small,
 Inside it I want to crawl
 And hug the ground, just like a porous plaster.

 And when the shells are dropping near,
 I'm afraid I'm stopping here,
 In No Man's Land where they play
 That shell-hole rag, Whizz-bang!

Many entertainers forced such cynicism into the background, however, or parodied it with such comic skill that the bitter edge disappeared. Similar sentiments were also frequently served up in burlesque fashion along with more serious, nostalgic matter in *The Stars and Stripes*, the paper for American G.I.s and the equivalent of the British *Wipers Times*. The best-known example of mock mayhem and irreverence was concocted by Irving Berlin for an all-soldier show, *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, created to raise money for a service center. Opening at New York's Century Theater in August 1918 with a cast of 350 recruits from Camp Upton at Yaphank, Long Island, the show featured in addition to "Mandy" and "Soldier Boy" one of the most popular lyrics of the entire war, "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," which captured the essence of one of the soldier's most familiar complaints. Snuffing out a life was an understandable, if rhetorical, retaliation for the daily morning dose of psychological torture.

Someday I'm going to murder the bugler,
 Someday they're going to find him dead;
 I'll amputate his reveille, and step upon it heavily,
 And spend the rest of my life in bed.

The song was revived with equal success in 1942 for Berlin's Broadway musical *This Is the Army*, which toured until 1945. Another song originally intended for *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, "God Bless America," became America's most popular patriotic song following an Armistice Day broadcast in 1938 by Kate Smith.

A grab bag of soldiers' songs like "Hinky-Dinky, Parley-Voo?" "She Is a Lulu," "Hail! Hail! The Gang's All Here," "Good Morning, Mr. Zip-Zip-Zip," "I Want to Go Home," and "Après la guerre fine [sic]" flourished at and near the front.⁷² Most feigned a happy-go-lucky attitude, but "When the Guns Are Rolling Yonder," borrowed from the British and sung to the old revival hymn "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder," took a grim view.

You'll be marching up to battle
Where those damned machine-guns rattle,
But you'll never see your sweetheart any more.
When you're hanging on the wire
Under heavy hostile fire
Oh, you'll never see your sweetheart any more.

When your lungs are filled with gas,
You'll be thinking of a lass,
But you'll never see your sweetheart any more.
Lying in the mud and rain,
With a shrapnel in your brain,
Oh, you'll never see your sweetheart any more.

Chorus: When the guns are rolling yonder,
When the guns are rolling yonder, etc.,
I'll be there.⁷³

The soldier's capacity to change his sentiments on a dime is apparent from items included in army songbooks such as "The Tail of the Lonesome Swine" (parodying "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine") and "Underwear, Underwear" (sending up "Over There").⁷⁴ Many of the songs sung in camp—such as "Old Black Joe," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Silver Threads among the Gold," "Indiana," "I Want to Go Back to Michigan," "Missouri Waltz," and "For Me and My Gal"—had virtually nothing to do with the war per se. They simply recalled home.

One month after Wilson declared war John Philip Sousa, then sixty-two, was recruited by fellow composer John Alden Carpenter to train young bandsmen at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Directing Liberty Loan rallies and Red Cross relief drives until his discharge in January 1919, Sousa also composed numerous songs on war themes, including a setting of "In Flanders Fields" at the express invitation of John McCrae.⁷⁵

But even if the best of his wartime marches, “Sabre and Spurs” and “Solid Men to the Front,” never achieved the popularity of the British “Colonel Bogey,”⁷⁶ Sousa could proudly claim that his arrangement of the “U.S. Field Artillery March” became one of the most familiar and enduring musical emblems of the war. He might have failed to write the great war song that many predicted he would, but his very presence contributed mightily to the national *esprit de corps*.

The sheer volume of American popular songs that issued from the presses during the Great War is vivid testimony to the power of music to speak to the widest imaginable range of topics and social issues. Sheet music had been selling in the millions by the turn of the century, a fact that reflected the popularity of the piano in the American home. In 1900 New York boasted 130 piano factories with 200 retail outlets,⁷⁷ and the advent of sound recordings further increased the dissemination of the most popular numbers. Any attempt to control or censor such an avalanche of tunes, as the French attempted to do, would have been futile.

In addition, with the advent of war the daily newspaper not only furnished continuous material for a thriving industry but in its Sunday supplements also offered samples of these newly published songs, emphasizing topicality, concise lyrics, and simple melodies.⁷⁸ English songs that had found favor early in the war, like “Keep the Home Fires Burning” and “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag,” were also borrowed and quickly became favorites in America, and sheet music sales were aided by their typically striking covers. More somber covers, such as the one for “After the War Is Over” (“Will there be any ‘Home Sweet Home’”), tried to prepare people for eventual personal tragedy. When the war did end, songs that aimed at striking a comic note, like “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘Em Down on the Farm,” spoke not just of the youth who had come from the agricultural heartland of America but of a generation with new perspectives, hopes, and expectations.

If many of the war’s tunes and lyrics composed near the field of action were never set down and disappeared forever, a host of the more popular ones flooded the parlors of America not only throughout the war but also for years afterward. Although many ended up packed away in boxes or relegated to the bottom of the piano bench, the favorites, both rousing and sentimental varieties, were reclaimed and introduced to the children of the Depression by their parents as they gathered round the piano on the long

winter evenings following Sunday supper.⁷⁹ Little could this younger generation have suspected that the backward glance implicit in these nostalgic songfests with their parents was but the prelude to a war just out of view—a war in which some of their fathers would serve once more, this time alongside their sons.