

SOUND RECORDING REVIEWS

EDITED BY RICK ANDERSON



POPULAR SONGS OF THE GREAT WAR: BACKGROUND AND AUDIO RESOURCES

BY JOHN DRUESEDOW

The Great War will live vividly in the minds of Americans for the next hundred years.

—Thomas A. Edison, “Let Us Not Forget,” 1919¹

Introduction

The world entered into the second great conflict of the twentieth century in the late 1930s; it was known as the Great War, “the war to end all wars,” lasting over four years (August 1914 to November 1918), and taking many millions of lives—as many as ten million or more. It proved not to be the end of wars, however, and some historians now see it as the beginning of a pervasive, century-long struggle for the hearts and wealth of nations and their citizens, a worldwide struggle that continues into the twenty-first century.² There are very few today who may recall at first hand the sights and sounds of that great conflict, which officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919—five years to the day after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. In a few years, we will observe the centenary of the beginning of the Great War; several generations have passed since then, but thanks to the sophisticated development of sound recording and cinematography, starting around the turn of the twentieth century, we can now see moving pictures of actual events taking place during World War I, and we can hear the same recordings or at least authentic echoes of the songs that provided courage to those heading east across the Atlantic or southward across the English Channel, offering a moment of diversion for

1. From the first speech Edison recorded for the public, on 3756 Edison Blue Amberol (cylinder) and 6540 Edison Record (78 rpm), both made in 1919. Available online at <http://www.cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/> (accessed 20 August 2008).

2. Martin Gilbert, writing a decade and a half ago in *The First World War*, mentions that: “. . . the imagery of the First World War has remained for eighty years, and through several generations. A relatively short period of time, a war that lasted for four years and three months, has inspired, puzzled and disturbed the whole century that followed” (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), xxi.

those in the trenches and some comfort to the lonely and bereaved left at home.³

During the administration of President Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921), who reluctantly gave the orders for America’s entry into the war in April of 1917, our citizens (about 100 million strong in those days, one-third as many as today) were making music on a large scale, large enough to support dozens of piano manufacturers, publishers of sheet music, producers of phonographs, and entrepreneurs of sound recordings. Craig H. Roell, in *The Piano in America, 1890–1940*, provides some eye-catching statistics:

By 1914 more than 500,000 phonographs were being produced each year, with a value of \$27 million. But in 1914, a record 323,000 pianos were also produced, valued at \$56 million. Piano manufacturers, who were selling unprecedented numbers of pianos, were hardly worried by the possible threat of competition.⁴

During this period, sheet music publishers thrived as well. For five full years, from the onset of hostilities until midway into 1919, they marketed as many as 7,300 popular songs that could be classified as patriotic or otherwise associated with the war.⁵ Well over 200 of these songs, roughly estimated, were acoustically recorded and distributed commercially by the “big three” firms of Edison, Victor, and Columbia⁶ and others in the United States, as well as Decca and Gramophone in the United Kingdom.⁷ Radio broadcasting on a large scale was just around the corner. (The broadcast of the inauguration of President Warren G. Harding on 4 March 1921 has been recognized as a major event in the history of radio and the first of its kind; KDKA in Pittsburgh, the first commercial radio station in this country, began broadcasting on 2 November 1920.)⁸

3. According to the 22–28 March 2008 issue of the *The Economist* (vol. 386, no. 8572: 98), “Lazare Ponticelli, the last French foot-soldier of the first world war, died on March 12th [2008], aged 110.” Barely a dozen and a half veterans from other countries are counted as survivors at this date; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surviving_veterans_of_World_War_I (accessed 20 August 2008). The voices of a dozen survivors can be heard on the *World War One Living History Project*, issued as a 2-CD set in 2006 by Treehouse Productions (cat. no. 115272); see <http://www.treehouseproductions.org/> (accessed 20 August 2008).

4. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 48.

5. See Frederick G. Vogel, *World War I Songs* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1995), 45.

6. The “big three” accounted for 17,300, or close to 74 percent of the “estimated recordings produced and released by American companies between 1889 and 1919”; see David J. Steffen, *From Edison to Marconi: The First Thirty Years of Recorded Music* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), Table 6, p. 121.

7. The Wikipedia article, “1918 in music,” lists as an event “Worldwide sales of phonograph/gramophone records estimated at 100 million records this year” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1918_in_music [accessed 20 August 2008]), an astonishing figure that would seem to require further confirmation. The linked article on the “Phonograph” may be of interest (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph> [accessed 20 August 2008]).

8. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KDKA_\(AM\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KDKA_(AM)) (accessed 20 August 2008).

The avid listener to popular songs during the Great War had no need of electricity in order to enjoy the music. At home, there would be the parlor piano—upright or grand (almost exclusively in grand households)—a “library” of sheet music (often stored in the piano bench), and a mechanical playback device (with its prominent “horn” and wind-up crank). Nearby in the household would be a collection of recordings in the platter format, which by this time had gained favor over the cylinder format. (The latter was promoted for years by Thomas A. Edison [1847–1931], who is given credit for the invention of the phonograph.) And there would be no competition from the radio, still in its infancy.⁹

The stage was indeed set for many to listen to and perform the triumphal strains of “Over There” (1917) by George M. Cohan, as well as the more somber reflections in “Till We Meet Again” (1918) by Richard A. Whiting and Raymond B. Egan, and, of course, many others. James J. Fuld, in his much-consulted reference work, *The Book of World-Famous Music*, asserts that the song by Whiting and Egan “had one of the highest sheet music sales in history.”¹⁰ This wartime moment in history, bringing together acoustic recording technology and manufacturing, the publication of sheet music on a large scale, and mass production of good quality acoustic recordings, was unique.

Gramophones

No doubt the listeners in those early days of the “talking machine”¹¹ responded to its sounds with as much enthusiasm as the viewers of a later generation who stared at the (often) snowy images on the round face of the cathode ray tube, as commercial television became a reality in the late 1940s.

The playback device had a variety of names, depending mostly on the company of origin. “Gramophone,” for example, applies to the machine developed by Emile Berliner (1851–1929), and later marketed by Eldridge R. Johnson (1867–1945), the founder of the Victor Talking Machine Company of Camden, New Jersey (the successor to Berliner’s firm, the United States Gramophone Company).¹² In the U.K., “gramophone” became the generic term for the playback device. “Victrola” applied to a newly designed machine from Victor that hid the unsightly

9. In fact, according to one source, President Wilson banned nonmilitary broadcasting at the beginning of the U. S. participation in the war; see “Radio and Television Broadcasting” at http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761566157_2/broadcasting.html (accessed 20 August 2008).

10. New York: Crown Publishers, 1966, 581.

11. The playback device was often called a “talking machine” because of its potential business applications (stenography, for example).

12. See <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/berlhtml/berlgramo.html> (accessed 20 August 2008).

horn—that is, unsightly in some eyes—behind closed doors in a console or table-model unit.¹³ “Edison” became the generic playback term for some who cherished the Edison (and other) discs:

I really can't find words strong enough to express my love for my Edison. I have had my life made worth living since it came into my home. . . . I know the comfort his invention has given me is beyond explanation. It is the best tonic I ever had.¹⁴

The term “phonograph” was used early on by Edison himself in reference to his invention of 1877. It has mostly a generic application today.¹⁵

The British firm Decca developed a portable machine that was shipped in quantities to the front lines in Europe. It provided some entertainment for the many who were, knowingly or unknowingly, facing imminent death:

Recordings of some of the more popular tunes made their way to the front where they were played on portable gramophones, including one manufactured by Decca that was labeled a “Trench Model.”¹⁶ (see fig. 1)

Eric Charles Blake, in *Wars, Dictators and the Gramophone 1898–1945*, provides a detailed description of a very similar model:

The first truly portable gramophone to be made in Britain was the Decca Dulcephone, a product of the musical instruments firm Barnett Samuel and Sons Ltd., which later became the Decca Gramophone Company. The design of the basic model was simple and compact. A case 11½ inches square by 10½ inches high contained the clockwork motor and turntable in the lower part, whilst the hinged lid housed the sound box and tone arm. With its carrying handle it looked not unlike a small travelling case and sold at the reasonable price of two guineas (£2.10). It came on the market only a week or two before the outbreak of war and its popularity amongst the forces ensured for its makers an honoured place in the history of the gramophone.¹⁷ (see fig. 2)

In the United States phonograph manufacturing was booming, and some models produced during the war were much more expensive than the Dulcephone:

13. See <http://www.victor-victrola.com/History%20of%20the%20Victor%20Phonograph.htm> (accessed 20 August 2008).

14. William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

15. For further information, see “Émile Berliner and the Birth of the Recording Industry” at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/berlhtml/> (accessed 20 August 2008).

16. Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 64; for more information, see <http://www.gramophones.info/gramophones.decca.junior.html> (accessed 20 August 2008). See figures 1 and 2.

17. York: William Sessions Limited, 2004, 34.



Fig. 1. The “Trench Model” (from http://cgi.ebay.co.uk/WW1-OFFICERS-DECCA-TRENCH-GRAMMOPHONE_W0QQitemZ290219692103QQcmdZViewItem#ebayphotohosting [accessed 20 August 2008]).

The September 15, 1916 issue of *Talking Machine World* totaled more than one hundred pages of which twenty-three (one-fifth of that issue’s pages) contained various size ads for twenty different phonograph manufacturers. Advertised prices in this issue ranged from less than \$5 (\$82.50 in 2004 IADs) to at least one model retailing, according to the ad, for \$2000 (\$33,000 IADs.) This latter example was a very expensive model from the Aeolian Company of New York, specifically a model from their Vocalion-branded Art series.¹⁸

18. Steffen, 43. IAD: Inflation Adjusted (U.S.) Dollars; see n. 2 on p. 220.



Fig. 2. The Decca “Portable Reflector Gramophone,” manufactured by Barnett Samuel & Sons Ltd. during World War I (from <http://home.no.net/errykkje/Grammofon/decca.htm> [accessed 20 August 2008]).

Overview of Resources: Audio Recordings and Web Sites

In commenting on the poem *Dead Musicians III*, by the renowned British poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967; Sassoon was himself a veteran of the Great War), musicologist Glenn Watkins writes movingly that

... the phonograph was capable of momentarily recapturing or, more properly, of forever “freezing” the memories of former good times spent singing or listening to the latest musical hits with army buddies. But when the recording came to its conclusion, breaking off with the swooshing sound of a needle tracking an empty groove, reality set in: a time gone by was lost forever, and so were the friends. Nostalgia, and even ragtime, could go only so far.¹⁹

19. Watkins, 380–81.

The reality of the sound document remains, however, even if the direct experience of the Great War has been lost to all but a very few. At least fifteen collections of songs are currently available commercially on CD or LP (the LPs through second-hand sources, for the most part); the largest of these individual commercially available collections is listed on a Web site entitled *World War One Songs Early Recordings from 1918 Victrola*, with 216 items (not all are songs) transcribed to either a 12-CD or 12-cassette set, by means of “. . . a 1918 hand cranked victrola using special equipment to enhance and retain the characteristic victrola sound.”²⁰ According to the Web site, “every song on these tapes/CDs may be sampled.”²¹

Some 155 contemporary sound documents, with songs in the majority, are accessible through the Web site <http://www.firstworldwar.com/>.²² And more than 100 contemporary audio cylinders related to the war have been expertly transcribed and cataloged under the Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara²³ (see <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/> [accessed 20 August 2008]; a selection of twenty-one of these cylinders is available in the form of a thematically-organized radio program at <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/wwi-radio.php/> [accessed 20 August 2008]). Almost all have audio links. YouTube features, among various Great War sites, an interesting selection of songs—some rarely heard—accompanied by contemporary movie clips, in three parts (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtsarSga3Sk>, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrpVWWu_gts&feature=related, and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO0PeqcQnDY&feature=related> [all accessed on 20 August 2008]); part 2 includes a snippet of a phonograph (with a much battered horn) in the field, to the accompaniment of “Over There” in French and “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary” in French-accented English.

The Favorites

A small percentage of the songs of the Great War—several dozen, perhaps—were recorded again and again by various performers. They were heard in the home as well as live on the stage. After the war they found their way to the “talkies” (movies with sound, beginning in 1927),²⁴

20. See <http://www.besmark.com/ww1b.html> (accessed 20 August 2008); there is also a 2-CD or 2-cassette set drawn from this collection, described below.

21. Ibid.

22. See <http://www.firstworldwar.com/audio/index.htm/> (accessed 20 August 2008).

23. See <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/> (accessed 20 August 2008).

24. The first feature-length film with sound was *The Jazz Singer* (starring Al Jolson [1886–1950]), released in October 1927.

to radio and television, and eventually to digital formats. In liner notes of commercial recordings, library catalogs, and an increasing number of Web sites, they have been listed, described, evaluated, cataloged, and preserved, and the actual sounds of many are now available through the Internet. Working through these filters, one is able to compile without much difficulty a short list of the favorites. They are the hits of their day, having survived because of the music itself, or, equally likely, through the rhetoric of their poetry. Here is such a list, with brief individual descriptions accompanied by information from a variety of reference sources or liner notes.

Over There

This is likely to be the song that history buffs and popular song enthusiasts remember most readily from the time of the Great War. With music and lyrics by George M. Cohan (1878–1942), it was brought out by the William Jerome Publishing Corporation on 1 June 1917, just about two months after the United States had entered the war.²⁵ An early cover bears a photograph of Nora Bayes (1880–1928; she was the first noted performer associated with the piece), saluting and dressed in an unusual Revolutionary War (?) outfit, enclosed in an oval frame. Another edition, with a singularly unattractive photo of one Harry Ellis in a naval uniform, came out about the same time. Two other editions appeared the same year, both published by Leo Feist in New York. One featured on the cover a quartet of identically posed servicemen affecting the timeworn stage gesture of hat waving as they seem to move off toward the stage wings, and presumably from there to the departing convoy. Another from Feist has a different and more attractive arrangement of uniformed soldiers around a campfire, singing their hearts out. The cover art for this one is by Norman Rockwell (1894–1978; famous for his many covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*), one of at least three sheet music covers he supplied during the war.²⁶ One of the soldiers plays a mandolin, a very popular instrument in the United States around the turn of the century. Above the title, we read *Your Song—My Song—Our Boys' Song*, a motto that still seems to pull at the heart strings.

Cohan was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal of Honor in 1936 for *Over There* and for his artistic and patriotic contributions in general to the country. Glenn Watkins awards it the musical laurel for war songs of its era:

25. Fuld, 418–19.

26. The other two were Geoffrey O'Hara's "Over Yonder Where the Lilies Grow," published by Leo Feist in 1918, and Jack Caddigan's "Little French Mother, Goodbye!," also published by Feist in 1919.

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. . . . No other American World War I song, including Whiting's "Till We Meet Again," could ever match it; none would be remembered longer.²⁷

Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), probably the world's most well-known singer at the time and one of the most recorded stars of the opera world of all time, can still be heard singing "Over There" on the Internet.²⁸ The combination of his Italian-accented English (verse 1) and French (verse 2) binds the words and the sentiment of the song incomparably. No recorded patriotic song in history has ever had a more brilliant performance. A somewhat less energetic rendition, by Nora Bayes, is included in the Vintage Media/1917 roster of titles supplied by firstworldwar.com.²⁹

Oddly enough, the Cohan classic was not the first song with the title, "Over There." A little-known piece by Charles Gossin, published in New York by "Atwill's Music Repository" in 1844, called "Over There!," is described on the title page as "A Doleful Ballad," and "One of the Olden Time." The text concerns aspects of farm life, mentioning, curiously, potatoes, candles, geese, and clam pie. One source links (not too convincingly) the 1844 "Over There" to the great Irish potato famine of the 1840s.³⁰

It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary

The British equivalent, in terms of sentiment and popularity, to "Over There" was written by Jack Judge (1878–1938) and Harry Williams (d. 1930) and published in 1912.³¹ The song managed to break into the front ranks of popular songs in the U.K. soon after the beginning of the war. Over the years, it has popped up in movies (with great irony and effectiveness in the 1981 German film, *Das Boot* [The Boat], directed by

27. Watkins, 259.

28. <http://www.firstworldwar.com/audio/Enrico%20Caruso%20-%20Over%20There.mp3> (accessed 20 August 2008); originally recorded for HMV, serial no. 87294. See also the YouTube version at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2JzIT70PvE> (accessed 20 August 2008), which shows the playing of the disc on a vintage phonograph.

29. Bayes takes some liberties in this recorded version: line 6 of the first verse is sung "Everyone for liberty" instead of "Ev'ry son of liberty," and "Sammies" (soldiers representing Uncle Sam) is substituted for "Yanks" in the second and third repetition of the chorus. See <http://www.firstworldwar.com/audio/Nora%20Bayes%20-%20Over%20There.mp3> (accessed 20 August 2008).

30. See <http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=13830> (accessed 20 August 2008).

31. Fuld, 308–9. "Tipperary" was followed by an impressive number of "It's a Long Way to . . ." songs; see Bernard S. Parker, *World War I Sheet Music* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), I498–I511.

Wolfgang Petersen; the story follows the harrowing undersea adventures of a German U-boat during World War II) and television (e.g., the final episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in 1977).³²

Till We Meet Again

This favorite, with music by Richard A. Whiting (1891–1938) and lyrics by Raymond B. Egan (1890–1952), was published by J. H. Remick a little more than two months before the guns were silenced in November 1918 and “had one of the highest sheet music sales in history.”³³ The illustrated sheet music cover, swathed in the shadows of a new moon, reflects quite well the sentiment of the text: acceptance of the inevitable departure, some hope for the future (the refrain begins “Smile the while you kiss me sad adieu . . .”). This is a scene that must have been repeated countless times over the course of the war, one that many couples could identify with.

Keep the Home Fires Burning

This was the quintessential “home” song, British in origin but well known in this country as well. It was Ivor Novello’s (born David Ivor Davies [1893–1951]) greatest hit, published at first under the title “’Till the Boys Come Home” by Ascherberg, Hopwood, and Crew, Ltd., in London, on 8 October 1914; Chappel & Co. of New York brought out an edition in 1915. The words are by Lena Guilbert Ford (1870–1918).³⁴

Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag (and Smile, Smile, Smile)

We have here another British favorite of the “face-hardship-without-flinching” mode; this one, by Felix Powell (1878–1942), who wrote the music, and his brother George Asaf (pseudonym for George Henry Powell [1880–1951]), who wrote the words, was published on 23 November 1915.³⁵ The song appeared in the London musical, *Her Soldier Boy*, produced in 1916.³⁶ What is a “kit-bag”? In this country, it might have been referred to more readily as a knapsack or a suitcase, but in the song, “kit-bag” has the more appropriate percussive (i.e., confident) effect.

32. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It's_a_Long_Way_to_Tipperary (accessed 20 August 2008).

33. Fuld, 581. Frederick G. Vogel estimates that there were “more than 18 million copies sold over the years,” in “Songs of the First Great War,” *Sheet Music Magazine* 17, no. 3 (1993): 6.

34. Fuld, 316–17.

35. Fuld, 419. For more information on the Powell brothers, see the National Theatre (London) Web site (<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/?lid=18283> [accessed 20 August 2008]) under the heading, “Pack up Your Troubles.”

36. Barbara Cohen-Stratynner, ed., *Popular Music, 1900–1919* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1988), 287.

Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France

On the cover of the sheet music, we see a trans-Atlantic handshake between an American military leader (possibly General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing) and his French counterpart across the sea. With music by Billy Basquette and words by C. Francis Reisner and Billy Davis, it was published by Leo Feist of New York in 1917 and described on the cover of one edition as the “Big Song Hit of ‘Passing Show of 1917’ at N. Y. Winter Garden.” It ran for 196 performances on Broadway between 26 April and 13 October 1917.³⁷ Full of pre-battle-engagement optimism (in the same vein as W. R. Williams’ “We Don’t Know Where We’re Going But We’re On Our Way,” also published in 1917), it invokes the name of General Lafayette (America’s famous French ally during the Revolutionary War and much revered friend later), and projects a swaggering confidence about winning the war.

Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning

The brassy blare of the early morning reveille call was not to everyone’s liking, and Irving Berlin (1888–1989) captured the mood perfectly in this song, published by the composer in 1918. During the same year, it was featured prominently (and sung by Berlin himself) in his musical revue, *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, contributed as part of a fundraising effort for a community building at Camp Upton, near Yaphank, New York. It reappeared on Broadway in Berlin’s *This is the Army* (1942) and in the film adaptation (Warner Brothers [1943]).³⁸

Roses of Picardy

This was another of the British wartime favorites, composed by Haydn Wood (1882–1959), with words by Fred E. Weatherly (1848–1929), and much admired for its sweet sentiment and inspired lyricism. It was published on 4 December 1916 by Chappel & Co. of London.³⁹ (Other wartime “roses” include “The Rose of No Man’s Land” and “My Belgian Rose,” both published by Feist in 1918.)

Smiles

Vogel has a high opinion of this song:

Nineteen seventeen was a banner year for popular song hits. . . . But of all that year’s remembrance songs to mesmerize great numbers of persons both

37. See www.ibdb.com/production.asp?ID=8546 (accessed 20 August 2008).

38. Cohen-Stratner, 275.

39. Fuld, 386, 475.

in and out of the services, none approached the vaulting popularity of “Smiles,” ultimately the most satisfying of all World War I ballads.⁴⁰

The first publication, brought out by the composer, Lee S. Roberts (1884–1949), appeared on 25 August 1917.⁴¹ J. H. Remick published later editions. The words are by J. Will Callahan (1874–1946).⁴² The song appeared on Broadway in *The Passing Show of 1918*, which opened in July 1918, and it became the no. 1 hit of that year.⁴³ Unlike the British “smile” song (“Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag [and Smile, Smile, Smile],” mentioned above), it does not mention war, but its relevance to the Great War would have been understood by many.

There’s a Long Long Trail

The melody for this song was composed in the United States by Zo (Alonzo) Elliott (1891–1964), and it was published somewhat later (with words by Stoddard King [1889–1933]) by West & Co. of London on 18 February 1914, although there is a strong indication of an earlier edition.⁴⁴ The Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project at UC Santa Barbara lists a cylinder recording, possibly from 1911 (!), of a performance by Alan Turner (3413 Indestructible Record). Less jaunty by far than “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary,” which also predates the opening battles of the Great War, it does not mention war but expresses only the tired longing for a better day or even the near delirium of the lonely dreamer.

Chorus:

There’s a long, long trail a–winding
 Into the land of my dreams,
 Where the nightingales are singing
 And a white moon beams:
 There’s a long, long night of waiting
 Until my dreams all come true,
 Till the day when I’ll be going down
 That long, long trail with you.

Millions walked that trail during the Great War, and the echoes of their songs still reverberate.⁴⁵

40. See Frederick G. Vogel, *World War I Songs* (Jefferson City, NC: McFarland & Company, 1995), 64.

41. This was just a few weeks after the first wave of American soldiers landed in France (3 July 1917).

42. Fuld, 507–8.

43. Edward Foote Gardner, *Popular Songs of the Twentieth Century: A Charted History*, vol. 1: Chart Detail & Encyclopedia 1900–1949 (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2000), 322.

44. Fuld, 573.

45. Roell remarks on p. 19 that “. . . through the strains of ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning,’ ‘Till We Meet Again,’ and ‘Over There,’ Americans held together.”

SELECTED CD DISCOGRAPHY, WITH DISCUSSION

- The Great War: An Evocation in Music and Drama Through Recordings Made at the Time.* Pearl, GEMM CD 9355, 1989. (OCLC accession no. 150674748.)
- Keep the Home Fires Burning: The Songs and Music of the 1st World War from the Original Recordings.* Saydisc CD-SCL 358, 1986. (OCLC accession no. 33187207.)
- National Public Radio: Milestones of the Millennium: The Great War—Classical and Popular Selections from the Time of World War I.* Sony Classical, SMK 60989, 1999. (OCLC accession no. 41041583.)
- “Oh! It’s a Lovely War”: Songs & Sketches of The Great War 1914–1918, Vol. 1.* Recordings from the collections of James Nice, Bryan Webb, and Neil R. Storey, CD 41-001, 2001. (OCLC accession no. 54359775.)
- “Oh! It’s a Lovely War”: Songs & Sketches of The Great War 1914–1918, Vol. 2.* Recordings donated by Ian Bayley et al., CD 41-003 (2 CDs), 2001. (OCLC accession no. 57346392.)
- “Oh! It’s a Lovely War”: Songs & Sketches of The Great War 1914–1918, Vol. 3.* CD 41-006 (2 CDs), 2003. (OCLC accession no. 54379166.)
- Over There! Songs from America’s Wars.* Marlborough Singers and Chamber Players; John English, tenor; Rob Carriker, piano. Newport Classic, NPD 85662, 2002. (OCLC accession no. 52112865.)
- The Phonographic Yearbook: 1915.* “They’d Sooner Sleep on Thistles.” Archeophone Records, ARCH 9011, 2006. (OCLC accession no. 85621482.)
- The Phonographic Yearbook: 1916.* “The Country Found Them Ready,” Archeophone Records, ARCH 9010, 2005. (OCLC accession no. 62268933.)
- Songs of WWI: From Original Recordings, 1914–1926.* Take Two Records, TT501 CD (2 CDs), 1997. (OCLC accession no. 209323388.)
- Old Time Victrola Music: World War I Songs #1.* Mark Best, 1996. (OCLC accession no. 181655256.)
- Old Time Victrola Music: World War I Songs #2.* Mark Best, 1996. (OCLC accession no. 181655328.)

The above twelve titles comprise fifteen CDs and 330 tracks. As of spring 2008, most are commercially available. Well over 200 songs—in addition to purely instrumental pieces, the spoken word (called “descriptive sketches” in the liner notes), sounds of battle (for example, the gas attack by the British at Lille in 1915, a well-documented event, appears

in *The Great War: An Evocation in Music and Drama Through Recordings Made at the Time* and “*Oh! It’s a Lovely War*”: *Songs & Sketches of The Great War 1914–1918*, Vol. 1 cited above), and other recordings (including a speech by Winston Churchill at the time of the British General Election in 1918)—can be heard, many in multiple performances. Contents listings are available through the online catalog records from OCLC.

Let us begin with the most useful of these CDs, *Songs of WWI: From Original Recordings, 1914–1926*, with its two CDs and forty tracks, which covers the wartime popular repertoire in exemplary fashion and includes all ten of the “favorites” described above. The performers were all well known in their day. Nora Bayes (1880–1928), heard here singing “Over There,” was listed in the 2005 National Recording Registry for her performance of this piece.⁴⁶ Other performers, including John McCormack, Al Jolson, and Fritz Kreisler (playing an instrumental version of “Poor Butterfly”) remain on the roster of “stars.” Others, less well known at present (Henry Burr, the Peerless Quartet, Arthur Fields, and Billy Murray, for example), all made many recordings during the war years and soon after.

Oh, It’s a Lovely War, vols. 1, 2, and 3 are decidedly British in tone and content.⁴⁷ (The same is true for *The Great War: An Evocation in Music and Drama Through Recordings Made at the Time*.) According to the liner notes for *Oh, It’s a Lovely War*, vol. 3, the last two tracks of the second CD in the volume (“Memorial Record 11.11.1920—Abide with Me” and “Memorial Record 11.11.1920—Kipling’s Recessional”) “. . . are the very first electrical records sold to the public. They were made by Lionel Guest and Captain H. O. Merriman at the funeral service of the burial of the Unknown Soldier at Westminster Abbey on 11 November 1920.”⁴⁸ *Over There! Songs from America’s Wars* is a recording with eleven songs predating the Great War followed by an even dozen dating from 1914 to 1922; it is also the only recording with contemporary performers (Jon English, tenor, Rob Carriker, piano, and the Marlborough Singers and Chamber Players). The two recordings from “The Phonographic Yearbook” series

46. See <http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2006/06-083.html> (accessed 20 August 2008). The performance on this CD is apparently the same as the one offered through firstworldwar.com, mentioned earlier.

47. The title comes from the song of the same name by J. P. Long and M. Scott. In 1963 it was used in the stage production with a similar name, “Oh, What a Lovely War” (a satire incorporating World War I songs), and in the 1969 motion picture adaptation by Richard Attenborough. In the late 1960s, the stage production and the movie were linked to the war in Vietnam. See the Wikipedia article on “Oh, What a Lovely War” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oh!_What_a_Lovely_War [accessed 20 August 2008]).

48. CD 41-006, liner notes, p. [6]. 11.11.1920 was the second anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, ending the active involvement of troops on both sides. Armistice Day (Remembrance Day in the U.K.) was celebrated in this country until 1971, when the observance was renamed Veterans Day. See the history of Armistice Day/Veterans Day at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp> (accessed 20 August 2008).

(1915 and 1916) provide a context for their Great War contents by including additional songs that were not closely associated with the war but were popular at the same time. *World War One Songs, #1* and *#2* are drawn from the larger set of twelve CDs (mentioned above) produced by Mark Best. *National Public Radio: Milestones of the Millennium: The Great War—Classical and Popular Selections from the Time of World War I* includes thirteen “Classical Selections”⁴⁹ and six “Popular Selections.” *Keep the Home Fires Burning: The Songs and Music of the 1st World War from the Original Recordings* draws from archival copies of cylinders, 78 rpm platters, plus pianola (player piano) rolls, and “penny piano” (presumably a type of automatic player that required coin deposit, as in a jukebox) artifacts.

Finally, two other recordings should be mentioned: first, *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition: Songs of World Wars I & II* (New World, NW 222),⁵⁰ an LP; and second, *Proof through the Night*, the “CD for the book *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War*, by Glenn Watkins, published by the University of California Press.”⁵¹ The first of these, which includes six songs from the Great War period, should be noted for its extended authoritative liner notes and references. The second contains a 1919 Pathé recording of “On Patrol in No Man’s Land” (with credit given to Noble Sissle [1889–1975]; Eubie Blake [1887–1983]; and James Reese Europe [1881–1919]), performed by Noble Sissle with the 369th Infantry Regiment “Hell-fighters,” and conducted by James Reese Europe.⁵² There are also contemporary recordings of two songs by Charles Ives, “In Flanders Fields” and “Tom Sails Away”—two remarkable songs, which, while not exactly in the popular vein, share some of the sentiments of the others described in this essay.

BRIEFLY NOTED

By RICK ANDERSON

Guillaume Du Fay. Motets; Hymns; Chansons; Sanctus Papale. Blue Heron Renaissance Choir / Scott Metcalfe. Blue Heron BHCD 1001, 2007.

This is the first recording by Boston’s Blue Heron Renaissance Choir, a fourteen-

voice ensemble that formed in 1999 under the directorship of Scott Metcalfe and specializes in music of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Du Fay is no less fine a choice for being an obvious one, and if eight years seems like a long time for a choir to wait before producing a debut

49. See, especially, Maurice Ravel’s *Le tombeau de Couperin*. Each movement of this six-movement piano suite is dedicated to a French soldier lost in the Great War. Watkins, in *Proof through the Night . . .*, comments at length on this work; see especially the section “The Toccata and the War in the Air,” 176–90.

50. OCLC accession no. 3662675.

51. This is the title provided on the CD itself.

52. For more information, see Watkins, Ch. 18, “On Patrol in No Man’s Land,” 312–32; see also the OCLC information regarding New World NW 260 (“On Patrol in No Man’s Land”), accession no. 8400327. The song itself, “recorded around 14 Mar–1919” with a variety of battlefield sound effects, can be heard at <http://www.worldwar1.com/sfjre.htm> (accessed 20 August 2008).

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