

# The music of world war two music essay



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From Wilhelm Richard Wagner to Irving Berlin, the music of World War II was used on both sides of the conflict to gain support at home and give a feeling of patriotism and boost morale. Interestingly, it was also used as a vehicle to express a vision of government, to attract the enemy troops to propaganda, and encourage the home troops as well. Looking at the music of this time provides insight into the attitudes and cultural tone of the political leaders to all different levels of society

Adolf was a fanatical admirer of Wagner since his teens. His passion for Wagner knew no bounds and a performance was almost like a religious experience to the young Adolph. Adolph was carried away by Wagner's powerful musical dramas, the evocation of a heroic, sublimely and distant mystical Germanic past. Adolph's first and favorite Wagner opera was Lohengrin, which is the saga of a knight of the grail, the epitome of the Teutonic hero, who was sent from the castle of Monsalvat by his father Parzival to rescue Elsa who had been wrongly condemned, but ended up betraying her.

Adolph's philosophy was built upon the works of Wagner which can be seen in his statement " These criminals who wanted do away with me have no idea what would happen to the German people, they don't know the plans of our enemies, who want to annihilate Germany so that it never can rise again. If they think that the western powers are strong enough without Germany to hold Bolshevism in check, they are deceiving themselves... I am the only one who knows the danger, and the only one who can prevent it." The author Ian Kershaw sums up Adolph's statement " Such sentiments were redolent, through a distorting mirror, of the Wagnerian redeemer-figure, a hero who

alone could save the holders of the Grail, indeed the world itself from disaster - a latter-day Parsifal." (page 851).

### German Songs

Due to Hitler's fascination with Wagner and especially the Germanic culture that Wagner promoted, the Nazis took a strong interest in promoting the music and culture of their remote ancestors through the use of radio and at the same time promote their propaganda. As with most dictatorial governments the Nazis had an obsession with controlling and promoting the culture of the people and as a result the common people's taste in music was kept secret but many Germans were able to use their radios to listen to jazz which was hated by Hitler but loved by the world. Soldiers in the German army were "expected to learn a repertoire of marching songs and traditional songs that they could perform on demand". (Les Cleveland page 8)

One of the most popular songs of World War Two was Lili Marlene which was popular with both the German and British forces. Based on the German poem "Das Mädchen unter der Laterne" which was set to music in 1938. The song was recorded in both German and English versions. Due to the popularity of the song it was used throughout the war not only as a popular song, but a propaganda tool.

The best understanding of German Music from World War Two has to come from official Nazi government policy. Regrettably as the losers in the war Nazi Songs and German Music from this time period has not been assigned the high heroic status that British and American popular music of this time period.

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## British Songs

1. I Haven't Seen Old Hitler A song from the closing period of the war, still alive in the oral tradition.
2. The D-Day Dodgers It was widely believed that Lady Astor, MP, had referred to troops in Italy as 'D-Day dodgers' because they missed the 1944 landings in Normandy. In fact, these men had seen some of the ugliest fighting in the war. This song - a riposte from the front - became a forces' favourite. The original appears to have been written by Lance-Sergeant Harry Pynn of the Tank Rescue Section, 19 Army Fire Brigade, but the lyrics underwent many variations. This version was collected by Denis Healey when a sapper with the 8th Army in Italy.
3. Ode to a Gezira Lovely Gezira, an island in the Nile, possessed a sports club much frequented by Allied officers in North Africa. A version of this ode appears in an Imperial War Museum document, Army Songs, compiled by the Intelligence Corps at 8th Army HQ in Italy, 1944.
4. Tins The humble petrol tin was adapted for many domestic necessities in wartime. This tribute originated among coastal command squadrons stationed in Iceland from 1941. From Ward-Jackson's Airman's Song Book.
5. The Ballad of Wadi Maktilla A song collected in 1940 by Hamish Henderson, an intelligence officer who served with the 51st Highland Division. The song commemorates 'a somewhat abortive raid by the 2nd Camerons on an Italian outpost about 12 miles east of Sidi Barrani.' From Roy Palmer.

6. The Dying Soldier A stark narrative set at Kohima on the Indo-Burmese border, to the tune of the Red River Valley. From Roy Palmer.
7. Service Police Song A parody sung to the tune of Offenbach's Gendarmes' Duet. Written for an RAF station concert party. From Ward-Jackson.
8. Kiss Me Goodnight, Sergeant-Major A hit song written in 1939 by Art Noel and Don Pelosi. Though a product of Tin Pan Alley, it displays a subversive humour that places it firmly in the low concert tradition. Note the comb-and-toilet paper chorus.
9. Thanks for the Memory Wartime parody from the collection of Roy Palmer. The 1937 hit, written by Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger, was much adapted in World War Two. WAAF officers on a Gas Course in 1941 sang of the 'respirator drill, which shook but did not kill - Pathetic it was.'
10. Come on Chaps One of many similar ribaldries current in World War Two. All shared the same formula: the rhyme calls for an obscenity which is never in fact voiced. (Army Songs)
11. The Firth of Forth A song marvellously 'browned off in mood, which was sung with many variants by RAF squadrons in World War Two. The targets in the last verse are the 'Ops Room twots' - personnel in Operations Room, Headquarters.
12. Down the Mine A deeply affecting song written by Arthur Smith of Leven, Fife, who was one of many British POWs held by the Japanese at Kinkaseki, Formosa (now Taiwan). Inmates were made to work in a copper mine. The

bunsho dono was the camp commander; a chunkle was a pick. From Roy Palmer.

13. The Sailor's Wife World War Two version of a popular Royal Navy song which is 19th-century or earlier in origin.

14. Longmoor One of many wartime parodies of The Mountains of Mourne. Longmoor Camp is in Hampshire; a similar song targeted Carlisle.

15. I Don't Want to Join the Army (medley) The song - a soldiers' favourite in both world wars - leads into a medley of barrack-room verses. Fred Karno was a comedian noted for his ineptitude; the RSC was the Royal Service Corps. The lyric 'I've Been in the Saddle,' originally sung by the cavalry regiments, was also relished by WW2 infantrymen. This track is not for the fainthearted.

16. Bloody Orkney Crushing boredom in an out-of-the-way garrison town. The original, about Orkney, was written by Captain Hamish Blair but many variants were devised. Denis Healey knew it as Sheffield in the Blitz. Airmen sang of 'Bloody Shrimpton-Bassett'.

17. We Are the Boys Collected by Dave Townsend from the singing of Ron East of Weston-on-the-Green in Oxfordshire.

18. Africa Star A soldierly disrespect for campaign medals is exhibited in this song which, like the D-Day Dodgers, takes a sideswipe at Lady Astor. From Roy Palmer.

19. The Sinking of the Graf Spee Song celebrating the sinking of a German pocket battleship by three British cruisers in December 1939. Roy Palmer recalls a Dick Bamber of Tandragee, who 'remembered singing this song in pubs during the war and not having to buy a drink because of it.'
20. My Bomber Lies over the Ocean 'A pretty little bomber song sung by 175 and other squadrons from 1942' (Ward-Jackson).
21. When this Bloody War is Over A World War One song still widespread in World War Two. The hymn tune is What a Friend We Have in Jesus.
22. The Gay Caballero A bawdy tale very popular with wartime servicemen. Versions appear in Roy Palmer and in Army Songs.
23. Onward 15 Army Group Morale in Italy declined late in the war as fighting dragged on and, one after another, Allied commanders left for other theatres. General Mark Clark was an American who took charge of 15 Army Group. This piece, collected by Denis Healey, is also found in Army Songs.
24. The Highland Division's Farewell to Sicily A composition by Hamish Henderson - one of the finest songs of World War Two. The dialect does not obscure its mood of haunting regret for the 'puir bliddy bastards', weary of war, who rest at the waterside. The tune is Farewell to the Creeks, a Gordon pipe march.
25. 'Bless' 'em All This song was current in the forces long before 1940 when Jimmy Hughes and Frank Lake copyrighted an arrangement of it. Bless 'em All was the title of their wartime hit. Servicemen used a different verb - so do we.

## American Songs

During the war, many people in the US and Great Britain found an escape by listening to the radio. Hit songs were a nice form of catharsis for the public; the lyrics were often about situations the average person could relate to, and it helped the listeners to feel that they were not alone. So, naturally, songwriters wanted to provide music that would be uplifting, encouraging, and of course, patriotic. American Songs

Ac-cent-tchu-ate The Positive - Composer: Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen

©1944 The music was written by Harold Arlen and the lyrics by Johnny Mercer, and it was published in 1944. It is sung in the style of a sermon, and explains that accentuating the positive is key to happiness. In describing his inspiration for the lyric, Mercer told the Pop Chronicles radio documentary " I went to hear Father Divine and he had a sermon and his subject was 'you got to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.' And I said 'Wow, that's a colorful phrase!'"[1]HYPERLINK "#cite\_note-1"[2]

Be Careful, It's My Heart - Composer: Irving Berlin - From: Movie " Holiday Inn" - ©1942

The Anniversary Waltz - Composer: Al Dubin and Dave Franklin - ©1941

Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy - Composer: Don Raye and Hughie Prince - ©1940

The song was written by Don Raye and Hughie Prince, and was recorded at Decca's Hollywood studios on January 2, 1941, nearly a year before the United States entered World War II but after the start of a peacetime draft to expand the armed forces in anticipation of American involvement. The



flipside was " Bounce Me Brother With a Solid Four". The Andrews Sisters introduced the song in the 1941 Abbott and Costello film *Buck Privates*, which was in production when they made the record. " Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Song.

It is closely based on an earlier Raye-Prince hit, " Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar," which is about a virtuoso boogie-woogie piano player.

#### Storyline of the song

According to the lyrics of the song, a renowned Illinois street musician is drafted into the U. S. Army during the Wartime Draft imposed by the Roosevelt Administration. In addition to being famous, the bugler was the " top man at his craft," but the Army had little use for his talents and he was reduced to blowing the wake up call (Reveille) in the morning. This caused the musician to become dejected: " It really brought him down, because he couldn't jam." The commanding officer took note of the blues man's blues and went out and conscripted more musicians to assemble a band to keep the bugler company. Thereafter, the bugler found his stride, infusing the military marches with his inimitable street flair: " He blows it eight to the bar - in boogie rhythm." Even his morning calls attain some additional flavor: " And now the company jumps when he plays reveille." But, the bugler is not only empowered, he is possibly spoiled, because thereafter, " He can't blow a note if the bass and guitar/Isn't with him."

Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me - Composer: Bob Russell and Duke Ellington  
- ©1943

Don't Get Around Much Anymore - Composer: Bob Russell and Duke Ellington  
- ©1942

Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me) - Composer: Lew  
Brown, Sam. H. Stept, and Charlie Tobias - ©1942

Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye - Composer: Cole Porter - From: Musical " Seven  
Lively Arts" - ©1944

Have I Stayed Away Too Long - Composer: Frank Loesser - ©1943

The Fleet's In - Composer: Johnny Mercer and Victor Schertzinger - From:  
Movie " The Fleet's In" - ©1942

I Came Here To Talk For Joe - Composer: Lew Brown, Charlie Tobias, and Sam  
Stept - ©1942

I Don't Want To Set The World On Fire - Composer: Sol Marcus, Bennie  
Benjamin, and Eddie Seiler - ©1941

I Don't Want To Walk Without You - Composer: Frank Loesser and Jule Styne -  
From: Movie " Sweater Girl" - ©1941

I'll Be Seeing You - Composer: Irving Kahal and Sammy Fain - From: Musical "  
Right This Way" - ©1938

I'll Be Home For Christmas - Composer: Kim Gannon and Walter Kent -  
©1943

I'll Get By (As Long As I Have You) - Composer: Roy Turk and Fred A. Ahlert -  
©1928

I'll Never Smile Again - Composer: Ruth Lowe - ©1939

I'll Walk Alone - Composer: Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne - From: Movie "  
Follow The Boys" - ©1944

I'm Beginning To See The Light - Composer: Don George, Johnny Hodges,  
Duke Ellington, and Harry James - ©1944

In The Blue Of Evening - Composer: Tom Adair and D'Artega - ©1942

Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't (Ma' Baby) - Composer: Billy Austin and Louis Jordan  
- From: Movie " Follow The Boys" - ©1943

Juke Box Saturday Night - Composer: Al Stillman and Paul McGrane - ©1942

It's Been A Long, Long Time - Composer: Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne -  
©1945

Kiss The Boys Goodbye - Composer: Frank Loesser and Victor Schertzinger -  
From: Movie " Kiss The Boys Goodbye" - ©1941

The Last Time I Saw Paris - Composer: Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome  
Kern - From: Movie " Lady, Be Good" - ©1940

Long Ago (And Far Away) - Composer: Ira Gershwin and Jerome Kern - From:  
Musical " Cover Girl" - ©1944

Love Letters - Composer: Edward Heyman and Victor Young - From: Movie "  
Love Letters" - ©1945

Moonlight Becomes You - Composer: Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen -  
From: Movie " Road To Morocco" - ©1942

Moonlight In Vermont - Composer: John Blackburn and Karl Suessdorf -  
©1944

My Shining Hour - Composer: Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen - From: Movie "  
The Sky's The Limit" - ©1943

A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square - Composer: Eric Maschwitz and  
Manning Sherwin - ©1940

One For My Baby (And One More For The Road) - Composer: Johnny Mercer  
and Harold Arlen - From: Movie " The Sky's The Limit" - ©1943

Praise The Lord And Pass The Ammunition! - Composer: Frank Loesser -  
©1942

Saturday Night Is The Loneliest Night Of The Week - Composer: Sammy Cahn  
and Jule Styne - ©1944

Seems Like Old Times - Composer: John Jacob Loeb and Carmen Lombardo -  
©1946

Sentimental Journey - Composer: Bud Green, Les Brown, and Ben Homer -  
©1944

Somebody Else Is Taking My Place - Composer: Dick Howard, Bob Ellsworth,  
and Russ Morgan - ©1937

Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year - Composer: Frank Loesser - From:  
Movie " Christmas Holiday" - ©1943

A String Of Pearls - Composer: Eddie DeLange and Jerry Gray - ©1941

That Old Black Magic - Composer: Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen - From:  
Movie " Star Spangled Rhythm" - ©1942

There's A Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere - Composer: Paul  
Roberts and Shelby Darnell - ©1942

They're Either Too Young Or Too Old - Composer: Frank Loesser and Arthur  
Schwartz - ©1943

When The Lights Go On Again (All Over The World) - Composer: Eddie Seiler,  
Sol Marcus, and Bennie Benjamin - ©1942

This Is My Country - Composer: Don Raye and Al Jacobs - ©1940

What Do You Do In The Infantry - Composer: Frank Loesser - ©1943

(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs Of Dover - Composer: Nat  
Burton and Walter Kent - ©1941

Why Do They Call A Private A Private? - Composer: Frank Loesser and Peter  
Lind Hayes - From: Army Special Services Revue " About Face" - ©1944

You And I - Composer: Meredith Willson - ©1941

You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To - Composer: Cole Porter - From: Musical  
" Something To Shout About" - ©1942

You'll Never Know - Composer: Mack Gordon and Harry Warren - ©1943