

SWEET NOTES FOR MUSIC WEEK

ONE PLACE where they really take their music seriously is aboard a certain British airplane carrier. Every afternoon at four, unless there's a heavy gale running or the enemy actually has engaged the ship, there is a concert on deck. The band sits on the principal plane elevator, which is depressed about two feet, so that the musicians may follow better the baton-wielding of the conductor. He stands at the edge of the deck above, his back to the audience, which is always ample, since every man who can be spared is there under official orders.

On the afternoon in question, the carrier was coursing lazily through Mediterranean waters, and the concert was in full cry. Suddenly a mechanic in the control room noticed the plane-elevator indicator, which registered the fact that it was not quite flush with the deck. Afraid that the mechanism was out of kilter, he pressed a button hard. The ship's band, in the middle of the overture from "Carmen," suddenly disappeared from the view of the entranced audience and plunged into the bowels of the ship. The mechanic, horrified when he saw what he had done, hastily pushed another button. The elevator shot skyward. It came to the surface with a jolt that sent every musician bouncing at least three feet in the air. But ah, those imperturbable British! Not one man stopped tooting his instrument for a moment during the entire round trip. The leader never lost a beat. When the overture was concluded, the unsmiling ship's company applauded politely. . . .

IN HIS BIOGRAPHY of George M. Cohan, Ward Morehouse tells how "Over There" was written. The day after America declared war in 1917, Cohan strode into the library of his home in Great Neck and wrote the whole song in a little over an hour on two sheets of paper. It swept America and then the world; eventually Cohan was awarded a Congressional medal for it. The first time it was sung in public; however, "Over There" sounded a sour note, and that's a story that Morehouse missed. It was told to me by Arthur Hornblow, now an ace producer in Hollywood, in 1917 an officer candidate at Fort Myers, Virginia.

Cohan himself came down to entertain the boys, and told them he was going to use them as guinea pigs for a new song he had just written. It

was in the early days of American participation in the war, and the entertainment program was not yet organized efficiently. Besides, the boys had just come back from exhausting maneuvers. Cohan sang "Over There," went into his familiar swaggering dance, and then asked his audience to join in a second chorus. The result was so disappointing, the applause so feeble, that Cohan raised his hand for silence and said, "Well, boys, I guess you're right. It's just a bugle call anyhow. God bless you!" The next time Hornblow heard "Over There," he was an officer in France. The *Leviathan* arrived in a convoy. Nine thousand doughboys debarked and every one of them was singing "Over There" at the top of his lungs. . . .

IRVING BERLIN likes to tell about his first meeting with George Gershwin. Berlin was already a national figure by virtue of his "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and a dozen other great hits; Gershwin was a spindly, serious kid banging a piano in a cubicle of Remick's music publishing house on Tin Pan Alley. He stopped Berlin one morning and persuaded him to listen to a couple of melodies he had written. "Say, kid," said Berlin when he had finished, "you've got a load of talent. How would you like a job as my musical secretary? You'll make about three times what your job here is worth, and all you'll have to do is write down my tunes." "I'm sorry, Mr. Berlin," said Gershwin without hesitation. "I need the money badly, but I'm not writing down anybody else's tunes—even yours. I've got tunes of my own running round in my head!" . . . Some years later Berlin met another young man who knew what he wanted. A script of a play about the movies came into his hands. It was called "Once in a Lifetime," and the author's name—Moss Hart—was completely unknown. Berlin sent for him. "This would make a great musical



play," he said, "and if it's all right with you, I'll do the songs and lyrics for it." The ordinary tyro in playwriting would fall into a faint at the mere thought of collaborating with Irving Berlin. Not Moss Hart, however. "Musical play?" he cried, yanking the script out of Berlin's hands. "You're nuts!" The rest is history. . . .

THE MUSICAL FRATERNITY has an unending fund of anecdotes which it never tires of repeating. Moritz Rosenthal, the noted pianist, is responsible for many of them. It was either he, or Godowsky, or Hoffman—authorities differ—who accompanied Mischa Elman to that never-to-be-forgotten debut of Jascha Heifetz at Carnegie Hall. A tumultuous audience roared its approval. Elman mopped his brow, and grumbled "It's stifling in here!" "Not for pianists, Mischa," was the gentle reply. . . . Rosenthal attended one of Paderewski's farewell performances with another distinguished pianist and composer, Abram Chasins. It was a lamentable exhibition, and Chasins murmured sadly, "The things that man has forgotten!" "What he forgets isn't so bad," said Rosenthal; "it's what he remembers." . . .

ONE OF CHASINS'S most successful compositions was a piano piece called "Rush Hour in Hong Kong." "It was published only seven months ago," he told Rosenthal proudly, "and it has just gone into its seventeenth edition!" "I was never so crazy about that piece, Abe," was the answer, "but so bad I didn't think it was!" Back at Chasins's studio, he found the piano rack covered with compositions by Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert. "My, my," commented Rosenthal. "I was under the impression that you composed by ear." . . .

ROSENTHAL was dragged reluctantly one afternoon to hear a third-rate string quartet go through its paces. After the recital, the second violinist rushed up to him. "Did you like it, maestro?" he asked eagerly. "Excellent, excellent," lied Rosenthal. "And our tempi, did they suit you?" persisted the violinist. "Ah," said Rosenthal, "they were simply marvelous—particularly yours!" Another day, Rosenthal was listening to a friend's newest composition. He made no audible comment, but the composer noticed that he took off his hat several times, and then put it on again. "It's too hot in the studio here," the friend suggested. "I'll open a window." "No, no," Rosenthal assured him. "It isn't that. I was just bowing to all the dear old friends I recognized in your piece!" . . .

THE STORY GOES that Mrs. Vanderbilt once demanded to know what Fritz



"No, maestro, I don't think Wagner goes well with a goose dinner, better make it Tchaikovsky."

Kreisler would charge to play at a private musicale, and was taken aback when he named a price of five thousand dollars. She agreed reluctantly, but added, "Please remember that I do not expect you to mingle with the guests." "In that case, Madam," Kreisler assured her, "my fee will be only two thousand." . . . Another rich dowager was taken to a recital of the famed Budapest Quartet. Introduced later to the first violinist, she gushed, "It's a shame your little orchestra hasn't got money enough to expand. I'm going to write you out a check of five thousand dollars; we'll make that band of yours as big as Tommy Dorsey's!" . . . Toscanini had a painful experience one evening with a soloist who began his cadenza bravely enough but soon got into difficulty. Obviously flustered, he wandered further and further off key. The maestro and the entire orchestra held their breaths. Just before their cue to resume playing, the soloist managed to recover the original key. Toscanini bowed and said, "Welcome home, Mr. Ginsberg." . . .

IN NEW YORK, a five-year-old girl was taken to a concert, warned that she must remain quiet in her seat. She listened respectfully to two intricate pieces, then turned to her mother and asked gravely, "Is it all right if I scream now?" . . . In Detroit, an inspired critic wrote "The Blank Quartet played Brahms last night. Brahms lost." . . . In Cleveland, a guest conductor was driven crazy at rehearsals because at least one member of the orchestra was always missing. After the last rehearsal, he tapped for at-

tention and said, "I want to thank the first violinist publicly for being the only man in the entire orchestra who had the decency to attend every rehearsal." The first violinist hung his head. "It seemed the least I could do," he said in a deprecating tone. "You see, I don't expect to show up for the concert tonight!" . . . And of course *everybody* must have heard about the night that Stokowski was conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra in the rendition of Beethoven's "Leonora Overture Number Three," and the off-stage trumpet call twice failed to sound on cue. Directly the last note of the overture had been played, the apoplectic Stokowski rushed into the wings with murder in his heart. He found the trumpeter struggling in the clutches of a burly watchman. "I tell you you can't blow that damn thing here," the watchman kept insisting. "There's a concert going on inside!" . . .

NO COLUMN of musical anecdotes in the year 1944 would be complete without at least one about Frank Sinatra, now known simply as "The Voice" in worshipful radio circles. A few days ago Sinatra inaugurated his own weekly program, which will be heard on Wednesdays at nine P. M., Eastern War Time. Ginger Rogers was the guest star for his first show, and the rehearsal provided a field day for rabid autograph hounds. One of them carried off the signatures of both Ginger and Sinatra in triumph. A moment later Ginger heard her address a friend disdainfully. "Swap you Sinatra for an ordinary Roosevelt and Churchill? What kind of a dope do you think I am?" BENNETT CERF.

Jazz

by
ROBERT GOFFIN

Jazz Editor of Esquire
Introduction by
Arnold Gingrich,
Editor of Esquire

**FROM THE
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METROPOLITAN**



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JANUARY 22, 1944

What We Are Fighting For, Ahem

Our Correspondent Passes Along Some Eternal Truths

DAVID L. COHN

WASHINGTON, D. C.

I FEEL privileged to devote my Washington report this week to a stirring address that was delivered recently in Hot Springs, Arkansas, which has had considerable repercussions here in Washington. The speech was delivered by J. Wilbur Snavelly, Sales Engineer of the Aseptic Feather Pillow Manufacturing Co. I regret that because of the paper shortage, there is space here for only the following highlights of Mr. Snavelly's inspiring message:

THOSE of us who don't make the mistake of becoming impractical visionaries like a lot of Washington bureaucrats who never met a payroll in their lives, but keep our eyes on the advertising pages, know that when this war is over—and I'm told on good authority it will be over by the 20th of next month—a bigger and better America will be ours if we just have the horse sense to reach out and take it. Why, when I think of how we have stood in our own light, how we haven't answered when opportunity knocked and, like the Israelities in Egypt, have made our own stumbling blocks without straw, words fail me. But when I think of the new America in the making and compare it with the land I knew when I stood as a child by my dear Mother's side, words fail me again. But with your kind consent and knowing that that faithful old soldier—H. Harvey Rengoes—who hasn't missed one of these wonderful conventions in a quarter of a century has prepared some delightful luncheon surprises for you, I will try to paint a brief picture of what is coming and at the same time give you a glimpse of the America of the future.

After we've sent every yellowbellied Jap to kingdom come and our boys return to their jobs and loving families, this country will be run by sound men along sound economic lines employing the basic fundamentals that have never failed us and the common sense of our forefathers, like the time, for example, when they wrested Manhattan Island, where the great city of New York now stands in her commercial majesty, from the Indians for twenty-four dollars. That's what made us a great nation and that's how we ran it from the days of George Wash-

ington until we turned it over to a lot of socialists with foreign ideas that are opposed to the American Way. You know the men I mean. (Laughter). But now we're fighting for the American Way again and for Free Enterprise, the system that made us what we were in 1929, when we reached the highest pinnacle of prosperity ever known to man, and where we would be today if we had not listened to a lot of lunatics and communists but had let the law of supply and demand operate like God intended it to, because, as that great man President Coolidge told the country, "When men are out of work, unemployment results."

Now what do I mean by Free Enterprise? I mean the God given right of every man who isn't afraid of work and doesn't expect somebody else to support him, to get as much as he can out of his go-gettiveness, the amount of energy and brains that he puts into his job, making his product a little better than the other fellow and giving him better service, and breaking down sales resistance that stops the wheels of progress wherever it rears its ugly head. I don't have to tell an intelligent audience like this that if we divided all the money in the country evenly among all the people, it wouldn't be thirty days before some of them had most of the money because they are smarter and hustle while the others loaf. So while there's plenty here for everybody, some will be rich but, as the Bible says, the poor will always be with us because you can't change human nature. Therefore it's our duty to freeze Free Enterprise for the benefit of the



—Drawing by Waldo Pierce
for "All Good Americans."

brave boys who are fighting our battles all around the world, and give them the same opportunities for progress that you and I enjoyed when we were starting out in life in the good old days when every American boy knew that he could become President of the United States or president of a corporation and earn \$25,000 or more a year.

The new America will be reconsecrated to super-salesmanship as it was after World War I when we buckled down to work and in no time at all, under the guidance of that great Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, we lowered taxes, raised our tariffs to protect the American workman, and astonished the world. As soon as this war is over our salesmen—the men who are the uncrowned kings of this republic—will be out there outselling and outwitting their competitors just like our soldiers right now are out there in their foxholes outshooting and outsmarting their enemies. Even in the midst of this war and bloody carnage, our forward-looking manufacturers are conferring with their advertising agencies about the wonderful new products that will be placed on the market the minute we have put Tojo back in his place and we can get on the job again without having our thoughts somewhat distracted by the war.

HEADING the list is the automobile, America's greatest industry that has given us so much prosperity and placed a car in two families out of three and at least two cars among 11.8 per cent of the others. The Era of Progress cars will be entirely different from the old ones—as fine as they were—so that everybody will want a new one and it will pay him to go into debt to buy one because in that way he will be helping himself to more prosperity as it is poured out on everybody from the industry's horn of plenty. The bodies of these new cars will be built of molded whey thereby aiding the farmer who is the backbone of the country, while their tops will be made of reinforced rhubarb—yes, the same humble vegetables that used to go into pie—and as you sit there on luxurious Flower Wool woven of plain old field daisies, enjoying air-conditioning and checking up on things at the office through the wireless telephone with which these cars will be equipped and enjoying all these synthetic pleasures, you will realize that you have come into a new and wonderful era. That's just one example of what we can do when we can turn loose on a problem the best brains of the country without regimentation.

And speaking of brainy men, let me

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