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Music for the Microphone: Network Broadcasts and the Creation of American Compositions in the Golden Age of Radio

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Music for the Microphone: Network Broadcasts and the Creation of American Compositions in the Golden Age of Radio

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of the major American radio networks on music, especially new compositions specifically written for broadcast. It focuses on two initiatives by the networks--NBC’s Orchestral Awards (1932) and CBS’s Columbia Composers’ Commissions (1937-1938)--as examples through which the networks directly influenced the creative activities of the nation.

One of the major issues in this study is the influence of technology on compositional style. Aaron Copland utilized a new “radiogeneric” orchestration in his Music for Radio (1937), based on what was promoted by music directors at CBS: Davidson Taylor and Deems Taylor. They thought that composers should cultivate the possibilities of the electronic medium as an integral aspect in their orchestral writing. According to these directors, amplification of the sound with the use of the microphone was unique to radio, and specific elements of orchestration, such as the use of muted brass sounds, was also important as these sounds would be more effectively reproduced by the contemporary radio receivers. Other composers skillfully formulated a form of music based on various radio productions. William Grant Still composed Lenox Avenue, a continuous music narrative of Harlem combining instruments with a narrator, using a the form he employed in the radio program “Deep River Hour.” Louis Gruenberg wrote “non-visual opera” titled Green Mansions, using various musical sounds, including the theremin, to evoke imagination to cover than lacking visual component of the radio opera. Howard Hanson, on the other hand, simply presented his Third Symphony without any radiogeneric features.

This study also examines the social and cultural context that made it possible for radio directors to promote commissions and competitions for American composers. The
discussion of the cultural context is viewed in the contemporary dichotomy of “highbrow” and “lowbrow,” which can clarify the cultural tension between radio directors, educators, and listeners. The discussion of the social context examines network radio as a patron, and its influence on actual radio compositions, including the question of accessible musical styles and nationalism. Marc Blitzstein’s I’ve Got the Tune is analyzed as a social commentary and a reflection of his contemporary society.
INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

This dissertation will investigate American music commissioned by network radio stations during the 1930s and 1940s, the “Golden Age of Radio.”¹ It focuses on the connections between the medium of radio and what has been termed American “concert music.” The investigation will illuminate an era, long passed, when art music was taken seriously by the major radio networks in a way that is now largely unthinkable in the United States.²

This investigation has three foci: musical, cultural, and social. The first focus is twofold, including an analysis of technological advances in the Golden Age of Radio and their impact on musical style, in addition to an interpretive study of nationalistic characteristics in radio music. The second focus includes both an examination of two basic cultural stereotypes of American music--serious (highbrow) and popular (lowlbrow) --and their interaction in radio broadcasting. Although such a dichotomy is simplistic, this dialectic conveniently illustrates the cultural tension that existed in the 1930s among radio directors, critics, and radio listeners. The third focus is twofold again, including the discussion of American composers’ social roles and their responsibilities to the listening public, as well as the increasing importance of nationalism and patriotic music during this period.

¹ The term was taken from Thomas A. DeLong, Mighty Music Box: The Golden Age of Musical Radio (Los Angeles: Amber, 1980).

² Recently, this situation began to change with the broadcasting of the music on the Internet, on which all listeners from the world are able to hear and support new, serious music.
The Musical Focus

The sonic quality of radio established new aesthetic parameters. Therefore, among various musical issues, the interaction of technology and music will be a central topic. When CBS commissioned six American composers to write new pieces for the first time, their music consultant Deems Taylor stated that the purpose of commissioning radio music was “to encourage writers of serious music to utilize the possibilities of the microphone and loud speaker.” Taylor was so conscious of the possibilities of radio equipment to affect sound that he recommended that composers visit the CBS studio to consult with their program producer, conductors, and arrangers. Many composers actually became frequent visitors. They listened to programs, talked to engineers, and observed how a radio production worked. Aaron Copland, following a visit to the CBS studio and after listening to the demonstration, decided to use “special sound effects” in the orchestration in his Music for Radio, “such as a muted trumpet, a flutist standing at the microphone, bassoons and saxophones for jazz effects, and vibraphone.”

Another musical issue is radio’s impact on musical format. For example, many composers had to use a radio orchestra, consisting of fewer musicians than a regular symphony orchestra. Louis Gruenberg included a narrator in his radio opera, because listeners were not able to rely on a visual image of the stage but only on their imaginations. The narrator made musical events clear. Gian Carlo Menotti wrote his first opera in the English language, The Old Maid and the Thief, for NBC, because of the language’s immediate appeal to the listeners.

The Cultural Focus

Besides these musical issues, the dissertation will examine the interaction between highbrow (serious) and lowbrow (popular) cultures in the 1930s. When radio directors of CBS created

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5 Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, Copland: 1900 through 1942 (New York: St. Martin’s), 255.
Everybody’s Music, a music appreciation program, they tried to elevate the nation’s cultural standard. The program, however, could not realize the directors’ goal without communicating to a general audience that was not always familiar with the most recent art music. Some composers understood this circumstance very well and used jazz idioms in their serious compositions, since jazz appealed to many listeners.

Historically, radio magnified the patriotism and nationalism of the Depression. For instance, a CBS program, entitled the American School of the Air, aired American pieces based on folk tunes by numerous composers, including Henry Cowell and Roy Harris. CBS also aired programs that featured U. S. military bands, and other programs dedicated exclusively to the performance of American art music. Furthermore, radio broadcasting in the 1930s was national in its nature. Different from today’s locally-operated stations, whose programming is more directly determined by its own local audience, most Americans in this period listened to very centralized, nation-wide network programs. This made it much easier to disseminate a more unified idea of a nation, because people listening to network radio throughout the country shared a common experience.

The Social Focus

One of the purposes of this investigation is to examine how American composers and radio directors thought and acted during the great sociological changes that occurred from the 1920s to the 1940s. Prior to this period, most European and American composers generally wrote for a small number of the elite who could understand the intellectual background and subtleties of modern music. Many composers of this new music had an artistic motivation to follow the historical progression from nineteenth-century chromaticism to twentieth-century atonality. From their point of view, the audience of modern music was “chosen” and had an exclusive quality as apposed to those who were not initiated with the history of serious music. However, the advent of radio broadcasts of American music during this period changed this power relationship, because composers now had to deal with a larger proportion of the general public to
be successful. In this situation, the audience had the power to choose the composers rather than vice versa.

Another aspect of the social issues to be discussed will be of radio and its place as a patron, since radio supported contemporary composers with prizes and incomes. When CBS commissioned new American compositions, for example, each creator received five hundred dollars for their work and kept the rights for publication, concert, and radio performances.6

In another example, five composers shared NBC’s Orchestral Award, a total of ten thousand dollars. The awards were determined by a jury of professional musicians hired by NBC. In both of these cases, the significant financial support by the radio networks must have been quite an encouragement for American composers at this time.

The social context surrounding American composers also affected their creative habits. To be sure, after CBS commissioned twelve works in two years, musical scores began to “flow into the radio station by the dozens,” waiting to be performed.7 Howard Barlow at CBS even announced that he would perform at least one American work every Sunday afternoon with the CBS Symphony Orchestra. He eventually received so many scores that he did not have enough time to look through all of them.8 Radio had such a broad impact on American composers that Gail Kubik called CBS the “twentieth-century Esterháza[a].”9 It was indeed a modern Esterháza because the station supported musical activities and American composers financially, but the network offered more than monetary incentives.

This dissertation will also investigate radio’s great impact as a democratizing force, since broadcasting allowed easier and wider access to art music. Audiences did not have to pay to listen, did not have to go to any specific place at a specific time, and did not have to wear formal clothes. This enabled people from different social classes to listen to serious American music.

6 Letter from Deems Taylor to William Grant Still, 19 September 1936. Correspondence with Columbia Broadcasting System, 10 September 1936-17 March 1966. University of Arkansas Libraries, William Grant Still and Verna Arvey Papers, Manuscript Collection MC 1125, Group 1, Series 1, Box 9.


8 Ibid., 96.

Before the arrival of radio broadcasting, Americans were “satisfied . . . with the simple forms that could be produced in the home, the modest offerings of the churches, and the occasional concerts . . . in the larger centers of population.”\textsuperscript{10} Thanks to radio, people of all classes throughout the country could enjoy performances from the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Because of radio’s ability to reach a large number of people, teachers saw the potential of using radio as an educational tool. In response, CBS created a radio show, \textit{Everybody’s Music}, introducing European master composers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as new American pieces commissioned by CBS. To enhance their educational aim, an accompanying book was published for a general readership.\textsuperscript{11}

The musical discussion will also investigate nationalistic elements in radio music, including the use of folk and popular music and jazz in William Grant Still’s \textit{Lenox Avenue} and Roy Harris’s \textit{Time Suite}. Extramusical associations will be a part of the discussion as well, especially when it comes to the image of the West seen in Copland’s \textit{Music for Radio} and Jerome Moross’s \textit{A Tall Story}.

In the Golden Age of Radio, a large number of people in the United States became a mass audience of art music for the first time. They became an integral part of the whole musical community more than ever before. Composers and radio could not escape from these changes and their subsequent social influence.

**Review of the literature**

A first body of the literature relevant to this dissertation includes studies of the Depression. The most useful historical overview of this period is Michael E. Parrish’s \textit{Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941} (1992). It not only covers a broader historical


\textsuperscript{11} Schima Kaufman, \textit{Everybody’s Music} (New York: Crowell, 1938). The book starts with a picture of CBS Studio with its orchestra performing and the director in the control room. This picture shows how radio was considered a powerful force for disseminating serious music.
period than this study’s time frame but also deals comprehensively with a variety of topics, ranging from politics, race issues, literature, and popular entertainment. Parrish summarized that all these were an integral part of the “consumer society” and “consumer-oriented economy,” and related actions by the federal government in Washington.

Charles C. Alexander’s *Nationalism in American Thought, 1930-1945* (1969) serves as an accessible introduction to the general cultural issues of the Depression. The author provides an overview of the sociological background first and then examines the intellectual currents and aesthetics that formed this historical period. Alexander divides his discussion into several categories: literature, visual arts and music, films, radio, journalism, science and scholarship, and education and religion.

Richard G. Pells’s *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (1973) has more profound discussions about the society, politics, and culture of this time period. The author does not cover music directly but deals with political thought as it is reflected in the literature and mass media such as movies and radio. The author is particularly strong on Marxist thought and describes this ideology's influences on various levels of the American society.

Herbert J. Gans’s *Popular & High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (1974, rev. 1999) provides a way to classify cultural activities hierarchically. The author divides cultural types into five levels and describes the characteristics of each one of them, including who belongs to which cultural hierarchy. Although his discussion may lead to a consideration of stereotypes, it still provides a framework for an examination of society and culture in general.

Lawrence W. Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1986) traces the history of high culture consumed by a popular audience. The interaction between highbrow (high culture) and lowbrow (popular culture), evidenced in the reception history of Shakespeare, art music, and other genres of fine arts, are examined. Although Levine’s narrative ends with the early twentieth century, his methodology and viewpoints can be adapted to later historical periods, as well.
As primary sources, music periodicals in the 1930s and 1940s are valuable. Especially useful is *Modern Music*, because its contributors, some of whom were actually composers, knew the music quite well. Each issue of this journal, from Volume 14 to 23 (the last issue), included a column titled “Over the Air,” written by critics who focused on new music. In *Serenading the Reluctant Eagle*, Nicholas E. Tawa cites this column as he attempts to describe the relationship between American composers and their audiences. He concludes that American compositions aired on radio did not have much of an impact on the nation’s musical culture, because listeners enjoyed more traditional European compositions, and the occasional broadcasting of American pieces did not receive enough support from listeners. He is probably right in that there may have not been much effort by radio networks to disseminate art music after WWII. However, radio’s powerful influence and listeners’ active participation in music programs that were broadcast during the Depression are historical facts that should not be easily dismissed.

In addition to the column, *Modern Music* published other articles on music and radio. For example, Davidson Taylor's “To Order, For Radio” discusses the influence of network radio broadcasts on the creation of new American music, and speculates convincingly on the strong potential of radio on “average” listeners.

More general music journals reviewed and critiqued music on the radio. For instance, many short articles that appeared in *Musical America* were dedicated to various musical radio productions. These articles briefly discuss a variety of topics concerning music but occasionally deal with American music and new music in general. Magazines and newspapers from the 1930s and 1940s are also important resources. In *The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Newsweek*, and *Time*, for example, journalists and critics frequently featured musical topics and reviewed new American pieces with comments by composers and radio directors.

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12 The authors were Cecil Michener Smith (Vols. 14/1 and 14/2), Goddard Lieberson (14/3-16/2), David Diamond (16/3-17/1), Conlon Nancarrow (17/2-17/4), and Charles Milles (18/1-23/4).


There are also a small number of books about radio and art music. Thomas A. DeLong’s *The Mighty Music Box* (1980) devotes one of the twenty chapters to concert music on radio. While the chapter is titled “The Maestros,” its investigation centers around Arturo Toscanini, among others. DeLong does not always talk about the activities of the radio station, but NBC’s contribution to the American musical community is described in connection with Toscanini’s career in the United States.

Barbara Zuck’s *A History of Musical Americanism* (1980) briefly touches upon the musical initiatives of CBS and NBC. She places these initiatives within a broader discussion of music history and relates them to anti-modern movements and the American adaptation of *Gebrauchsmusik* in the 1920s and 1930s. Marc Blitzstein's radio opera, *I've Got the Tune* is also included in Zuck’s discussion of the composer.

Joseph Horowitz’s *Understanding Toscanini* (1987) is not a straightforward biography but a sociological contextualization of this master musician. Although the book does not deal directly with the relationship between Arturo Toscanini and American composers, its thorough investigation reveals Toscanini's views on new American music. In fact, several pages discuss new American music in the 1920s and 1930s. The social context that the author discusses in the book is also useful for the present study, which deals with the same historical period. In this context, Horowitz depicts the United States as a “transplanted multicultural community” created by immigrant European musicians and French-trained American composers (p. 226).

Furthermore, Horowitz addresses issues on modern music and mass culture. According to the author, for example, various writers criticized the popularization of art music initiated by radio and phonographs as it degenerated its value. To enhance his argument, Horowitz elaborates upon Theodore Adorno’s criticism of mass media’s treatment of serious music. Horowitz argues that this German musicologist’s view was reflected in the way that the American elites thought of the wide dissemination of art music to the masses (pp. 229-243).

Although dealing with different medium and different musical genres, William Howland Kenny’s *Recorded Music in American Life* (1999) provides ideas and a methodology useful to this dissertation. The author’s kaleidoscopic observations deal with some important issues,
including the social impacts of recorded music, records as a medium to document a society and its
history. Kenny also touches upon the dissemination of certain ideas such as political views and
racial and gender stereotypes as well as musical styles by the media.

Among the earliest serious studies of this subject was Frederick William Westphal’s 1948
dissertation “Music in Radio Broadcasting.” He broadly discusses technological aspects of radio
broadcasting, from the physics of sound to the way radio transmits the sound. Such topics in
radio-music literature were very popular in the period when radio symbolized state-of-the-art
technology. The discussion, unfortunately, is a little outdated from today's point of view, but it
still illuminates the way people in the 1940s regarded the medium. Perhaps more useful is a
chapter that details how a radio production with original background music would have been
created in the 1930s. Westphal samples several program scripts and reproduces a musical score
actually used in a radio production.

contextual information and a detailed analysis of two operas aired on CBS: Marc Blitzstein’s I’ve
Got The Tune and Vittorio Giannini’s Beauty and the Beast. With many musical examples, Short
describes plots and musical events thoroughly. The author also lists fifty-seven radio operas
with annotations, and supplies information on publication, manuscripts, plots, and critics’
reviews.

A more recent dissertation, Louis E. Carlat’s “Sound Values: Radio Broadcasts of Classical
Music and American Culture, 1922-1939” (1995) is an interdisciplinary investigation, generally
organized chronologically. This survey traces the history of NBC’s serious music programming
and its directors’ influences upon it. One of the most important issues discussed in the
dissertation is NBC’s integrated presentation of popular and high culture in their musical
programs. Carlat examines two ways this goal was accomplished by the network: one was to
popularize art music and the other was to make jazz fit into the category of symphonic music.

A more focused study related to this dissertation's subject is Margaret Susan Key’s “Sweet
Melody over Silent Wave: Depression-Era Radio and the American Composer” (1995). Key’s
research uses numerous archival and secondary materials written by composers, critics,
journalists, and those who were directly involved in radio productions. Looking at archival documents to describe what was happening on American radio stations during the Depression, Key’s research deals with the social context of American music on radio. Various issues are raised and, for the discussion of each topic, numerous documents are cited. Numerous quotes (almost on every page) from primary documents illuminate various perspectives and views. She also discusses network stations’ commitment to the cultivated music tradition.\textsuperscript{15} Radio encouraged American composers to write more pieces because their music had more of a chance of being performed on radio and of reaching a broad range of people all over the country.

In addition, Key covers five radio pieces in the manner of program notes. The pieces in her discussion include William Grant Still’s \textit{Lenox Avenue}, Aaron Copland’s \textit{Music for Radio}, Roy Harris’s \textit{Time Suite}, Louis Gruenberg’s \textit{Green Mansions}, and Marc Blitzstein’s \textit{I’ve Got the Tune}. She documents the commissions and examines the characteristics of these pieces. Unfortunately, she uses only six music examples from the Harris, Gruenberg, and Blitzstein pieces and does not employ other scores for her discussion. A more extensive investigation of musical styles in radio music will be undertaken in this dissertation.

Various biographies of American composers often provide close studies of specific compositions for radio. One such work is Verna Arvey’s \textit{Studies of Contemporary American Composers: William Grant Still} (1939). This book, actually written by the composer’s wife, gives contextual details on Still’s piece \textit{Lenox Avenue}, from its commissioning procedure by CBS’s Deems Taylor to listeners’ responses to the premier. The author actually quotes a few letters from listeners to describe how the piece was warmly appreciated.

\textit{Aaron Copland: 1900 through 1940}, by Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis (1984), includes Copland’s own account of his radio piece, \textit{Music for Radio}. He describes the commission procedure and his visit to the radio studio to examine orchestration. Copland also discusses the title-naming contest that resulted in the creation of piece’s initial name, \textit{Saga of Prairie}, later revised (by Copland himself) as \textit{Prairie Journal}.

Eric A. Gordon’s *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein* (1989) discusses the commissioning procedure of his radio opera *I've Got the Tune*, along with the opera's synopsis and reception history. Gordon details how much CBS paid for Blitzstein’s project and explains that the composer thought the piece was an “integration of music and drama.” Gordon's account, however, may need a critical read and reexamination when it comes to details. For example, he states that few other composers “showed as specific an appreciation for the medium as Blitzstein,” but this statement contradicts the fact that many other composers were aware of the medium of radio and took advantage of it in one way or another.

This dissertation relies heavily on archival materials, which includes unpublished documents and autograph scores of radio music. Broadcast stations were not in the habit of keeping any pertinent documents from the 1920s and 1930s, but both NBC and CBS donated their business papers, letters, and manuscript scores to several libraries in the United States. Plentiful documentation related to NBC can thus be found in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which also houses materials on the composer Marc Blitzstein. The New York Public Library holds some scores donated by CBS. This collection includes autograph scores of radio music by Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, Roy Harris, and Jerome Moross. The same library has a separate collection of Louis Gruenberg, which includes not only his score of *Green Mansions*, written for CBS, but also other materials, including letters and related documents for this composer. The Library of Congress houses a major collection related to Aaron Copland, which includes most compositions and other related documents. The recording division of this library holds a transcription recording of Louis Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions*. Other than these national libraries, materials from university archives have been used for this dissertation. The University of Arkansas holds documents related to William Grant Still, and the State University of New York, Stony Book, holds Philip James’s letters and music.
Methodology

Archival research is essential for this dissertation in order to provide the resources to answer complex questions. Documents, including contracts and correspondence between radio stations and composers, have clarified the nature of a commission and the musical criteria set by radio stations. This archival research also included manuscript scores, since most pieces written for radio broadcasting have not been published.

Stylistic analysis of actual pieces has illuminated the types of compositions that were commissioned. For example, a piece may have been written in an “accessible style,” suitable for general radio listeners. There may be a nationalistic character to some pieces, or there may be special technical requirements due to radio station equipment.

An analysis of cultural and social contexts will be of significance in order to evaluate the radio pieces in a broader scope. For example, these pieces should be viewed as part of the American music of the 1930s and 1940s. This will show how the role of individual works can affect the larger, general American culture.

Selected case studies will incorporate the various methods discussed above as they are applied to actual radio compositions. For example, a study of William Grant Still’s *Lenox Avenue* includes an investigation of the piece’s special instructions found only in archival materials. The study also includes the piece’s “accessible style” through the use of a jazz idiom. Stylistic analysis will clarify some “radiogeneric” features in *Lenox Avenue*, such as the use of a narrator, various kinds of brass mutes, and composer’s notes for the studio engineer regarding the placement of microphones. Additionally, the piece can be seen as an evocative cultural statement, representing an African-American landscape in New York’s Harlem specifically and Black culture in general.
Introduction to Chapters

Chapter 1, as background information, discusses radio’s important initiations that led to the creation of “music for the microphone,” namely, NBC Orchestral Awards (1932) and Columbia Composers’ Commissions (1938-39). It will describe the purposes of these competitions and commissions, characteristics of the submitted compositions, and reactions to those historical events.

Chapter 2 focuses on musical aspects of actual compositions, especially the influence of technology upon their orchestration, forms, and subject matters, because radio in the 1920s and 1930s symbolized the latest technological development. This investigation especially discusses CBS’s effort to encourage composers to use the instrumentation suitable for radio broadcasting by actually creating a radio program to demonstrate what one might call “radiogenic” orchestration, the word appeared in some publications in the 1930s.

Chapter 3 deals with the cultural context that surrounded music. As the title of the chapter indicates, it will discuss the cultural context from two stereotypes--popular and serious--as polemics. This investigation will illuminate cultural tension and integration that contributed in more serious-music radio programs in the 1930s.

Chapter 4 examines various social impacts of the medium related to serious music, because radio during the Depression was one of America’s major entertainments, along with movies and phonograph recordings. It discusses radio as a patron of serious music, an educational institution, a democratizing force, and a vehicle for expressions of current events in the society.

16 The term “radiogenic” was probably used for the first time by R. D. Darrell in his review article in “Sights and Sounds,” New Masses (9 November 1937), 29.
CHAPTER 1: COMPETITIONS AND COMMISSIONS

Introduction

Radio music can be divided into two categories: incidental music and music written especially for radio. The first of these, the incidental or background music, was used mainly to enhance radio dramas or other non-musical shows. This type of music often suggested emotions associated with certain parts of a script and made the story more enjoyable to the listeners. The music also helped the audience to create various images, even though the medium itself could not supply any concrete visual information.

This chapter, however, will forego a discussion of incidental music and focus on pieces especially written for radio. Such compositions were written for competitions or commissions, such as the NBC Orchestral Awards in 1932 and the Columbia Composers Commissions (provided by CBS) in 1937 and 1938. Both events typify the contribution of commercial radio networks to the promotion of American music.

NBC Orchestral Awards

One of the most exciting events that tied serious music and the NBC network was the Orchestral Awards they sponsored. In 1932, during the early days of the Depression, NBC planned to give a total of $10,000 to five American composers. This award, proposed by Deems Taylor, then a music critic and composer, was to cultivate the listeners of the whole nation and stimulate American composers’ creativity. NBC’s president, Merlin Aylesworth, promoted the
staff members of NBC as good businessmen, who knew that “if one works to stimulate consumption, one must also encourage production.”

The competition was not just honoring five composers but actually provided significant monetary support because NBC believed that “money alone can buy an artist’s most vital necessity—time” so that the composer would be able to write more. Also, NBC wanted listeners to focus on the talents of five composers. The network, however, did not assume that the money “automatically produce[d] music of enduring merit.”

NBC President Alyesworth announced the competition on 7 June 1931 after the broadcasting of an operatic program hosted by Deems Taylor. The conditions for applicants were further announced on 31 July as follows:

Works submitted must be conceived and scored for symphony orchestra, and not take more than twelve minutes to play. Special instruments, such as piano, saxophone, etc., may be introduced at the composer's discretion. Any form is permitted except marches and waltzes as such, but dance suites may be entered.

Any American citizen, resident irrespective of residence, and any alien resident in this country who has taken out first citizenship papers, is eligible. A competitor must be prepared to submit documentary evidence of his citizenship or intended citizenship if required.

Each work submitted must be sent separately wrapped flat, postage paid, to “N. B. C. Orchestral Awards,” 711 Fifth Avenue. Works must be in legible written full-score form, and identified only by a pseudonym or motto. An accompanying sealed envelope marked with this pseudonym or motto on the outside must contain the composer's full name and address and an official entry blank properly filled out. Entry blanks may be had on application at the above address. Return postage must also be enclosed, and candidates are advised to keep copies of their manuscript. A composer may submit more than one work. No works already performed in public will be eligible.

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1 Document entitled “Mr. Aylesworth's Speech,” Correspondence files, Box 14c, NBC-WI. Quoted in Margaret Susan Key, “Sweet Melody over Silent Wave: Depression-Era Radio and the American Composer” (Ph. D. diss., The University of Maryland, 1995), 123.

2 Alyesworth, in the script for the award-presentation broadcast, 8 May 1932. Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook. Of course, this might be read as an excuse for the poor results of the competition, as there were some criticisms from listeners that will be quoted later in this chapter.

3 “NBC Will Sponsor Symphonic Awards,” Musical America 51/11 (June 1931), 4.

4 Quoted in “To Award $10,000 for Five Works,” Musical America 51/13 (August 1931), 4.
According to the August 1931 issue of *Musical America*, the five awarded pieces became the property of NBC for a year and would be used in their broadcasts on radio and television after the announcement of the competition winners. The orchestra parts were to be extracted from submitted manuscripts by the station’s staff composers. No other rights were claimed.5

At this time, NBC had not decided upon members of the jury, but their names were announced in the 10 December issue of *Musical America*. It turned out that all the jury members were conductors of major symphony orchestras: Frederick Stock of the Chicago Symphony, Nikolai Sokoloff of the Cleveland Orchestra, Tullio Serafin of the Metropolitan Opera, Leopold Stokowski of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Walter Damrosch of the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The deadline for the submission, 5 pm on 31 December 1931, was also announced.6

The five winners of these Orchestral Awards were to be revealed to the public on 21 February 1932; the first-place piece was going to be broadcast nationally on the next day, during the George Washington bicentennial celebration. Walter Damrosch, however, told the advisory council of NBC that the number of applicants exceeded their expectation and the jury had to postpone their decision until April. According to Damrosch, the total of five hundred and seventy-three submissions was “nearly three times as great as in any similar competition on record in this country.”7

In addition to this postponement, NBC added another step in the award-decision process. The jury of five conductors would not decide who won the first prize; instead, they would select five compositions and let listeners around the nation, chosen by NBC, rank them by voting. Thus the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugene Goosens, eventually performed five selections on 1 May 1932 without telling the composers’ names. After the broadcast, the National Committee of Awards, or chosen listeners, telegraphed their ranking to

6 “Conductors to Judge NBC Composers’ Test,” *Musical America* 51/19 (10 December 1931), 39. Originally this announcement was to be made in the fall of the same year. See “To Award $10,000 for Five Works,” 4.
the New York headquarters of NBC. On 8 May 1932, the same NBC Symphony Orchestra with Goosens performed five pieces in order of their ranking, starting from the fifth.

The National Committee of Awards included, among others, professional musicians, publishers, schoolteachers, people from newspaper companies (See Appendix A). They did not represent all the diverse races and social classes of the United States. Instead, NBC selected an elitist group of listeners, who were more likely to have heard serious music before. Although NBC did not have direct control over the characteristics of the music, the careful selection of the Committee members worked as a kind of filter to include more serious music.

NBC awarded Philip James the first prize for *Station WGZBX*; Max Wald, the second, for *The Dancer Dead*; Carl Eppert, the third, for *Traffic*; Florence Grandland Galajikian, the fourth, for *Symphonic Intermezzo*; and Nicholai Berezowsky, the fifth, for *Sinfonietta*. All five pieces, not only the first-place piece, were again broadcasted by the same NBC Symphony with Goosens on 8 May 1932. In this presentation program, each composer expressed his/her gratitude to NBC and commented on the competition.

Deems Taylor, who proposed the NBC Orchestral Awards, was satisfied with the overall results and commented: “I may say with propriety that I was struck by the amazing skill and technical command with which the pieces were scored. The orchestration was invariably effective, imaginative, and well-balanced.” One of the National Award Committee members, David Stanley Smith, the dean of Yale University’s School of Music, was delighted to know, after the first hearing of the five pieces on 1 May, that the works were generally “refreshingly free from the cynicism and ugliness” found in...“modern” [radio] programs. The pieces were not burdened with the woe of the world, nor were they bitter in tone. They were modern, very much so, but the propaganda of atonality and other ‘isms’ had had little effect on them. . . .

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8 Although Berezowsky was born in Russia, he was considered to be an American citizen, because he was “naturalized.” “Five Composers Get $10,000 Radio Prizes,” *The New York Times* (9 May 1932), 18.

9 Max Wald, who won the second prize, was in Paris on the day of the presentation program, but his voice was transmitted by short-wave. Wald was able to hear his own voice and the performance on radio. A transcription of the extant script of the show is reproduced in Appendix B.

10 Deems Taylor, quoted in “Five Composers Get $10,000 Radio Prizes,” 18.
Last night’s concert made history. And I was glad to note that the wave of imitating Stravinsky shows signs of flattening out. Stravinsky himself is an important figure and his general influence on the new music in unmistakable, but his direct imitators, like all imitators, must expect to join the forgotten company of little Wagners, little Strausses, and washed out Debussys. . . . The conductors of our orchestras should take note of what went on last evening. Most of the pieces played are finer than the general run of modernistic compositions, native or foreign.  

Such a comment indicates that pieces presented on the show were conservative and not using atonal languages. It also showed his preference for nineteenth-century composers and French impressionists. Two extant pieces from the Orchestral Award, Philip James’s Station WGZBX and Berezowsky’s Sinfonietta, the former of which will be discussed in Chapter 2, would fit Smith’s observations and personal preferences.

Not all reactions were so sympathetic, however. For example, a radio listener from Philadelphia named Alexander Kelverine criticized the whole competition in a letter to the editor of The New York Times. In his letter, Kelverine expressed how he was “astonished at the utter mediocrity and worthlessness of the compositions presented” and questioned if “it is physically possible for any one member of the selecting committee. . . composed of persons well known to be professional occupied to the very utmost, to thoroughly examine each and every submitted work.” This question seems not unreasonable. Although NBC’s official documents do not clarify the selection process by the five famous conductors, it is easy to question how much time each jury member actually examined each score within the five months, while also conducting their orchestras.

Kelverine added: “If the works chosen represent the standard required for recognition of an American composer, then why such a low standard.” The question of how to evaluate any musical work, more or less, relies on subjective value judgments, and this study will not deal with

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13 Ibid., 7.
that issue. It is certain, however, that not all listeners of the NBC Award pieces were satisfied with the results.

Less severe criticism appeared in the *Musical Courier*. The reviewer praised Station *WGZBX* by James but criticized the other four pieces simply because the composers of these did not know “the conditions and limitations of broadcasting.” Whether these criticisms affected NBC or not is uncertain, but the orchestra competition was discontinued, partly because of the lack of financial support.\(^{14}\)

NBC did hold another competition for chamber music: The NBC Music Guild Awards for American Composers 1936. It was “open to native or naturalized American citizens, or to foreign born residents in the United States, its territories or possessions.”\(^{15}\) The following lengthy announcement appeared in *The American Music Lover*:

First award--One thousand dollars  
Second award--Five hundred dollars  
Third award--Two hundred and fifty dollars

Each work receiving one of these awards will be given at least two broadcast performances within one year from the date of the awards.

The NBC Music Guild Awards for American Composers 1936 are open to native or naturalized American citizens, or to foreign born residents in the United states, its territories of possessions, who have applied for citizenship and who have received their first naturalization papers. A candidate must be prepared, if required, to submit documentary evidence of fulfilling this requirement. These awards are open to all such composers who agree to the terms and conditions as set forth in the Official Entry Blank and who submit their works in the manner therein described.

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\(^{14}\) Walter Damrosch reported, “Economic conditions have forced the discontinuance of the Awards for the time being. Even if their amount were materially reduced they would still offer a tremendous incentive to American composers. It is to be hoped that they will be re-established as soon as possible.” Damrosch quoted in Advisory Council of the National Broadcasting Company, *The President’s Report and Resume of Programs*, Seventh Meeting February 1933, 58. Philip James Collection, Broadcast Pioneers Library, College Park, MD, quoted in Key, “Sweet Melody over Silent Wave,” 124.

The Official Entry Blank, which must accompany all works submitted, may be obtained by addressing the NBC Music Guild Awards Committee, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y.

These Awards are offered for compositions in 3, 4, 5 movements, in either suite or sonata form, for any one of the three groups of instruments herewith designated

a) Four or five stringed instruments (string quartet or string quintet)

b) Three or four stringed instruments with piano (piano quartet or piano quintet)

c) Any combination of four of [sic.] five of the following instruments: strings, woodwind; brass; piano.

Playing time of entire composition must not be less than twenty minutes nor more than twenty-five minutes.

Works submitted will be considered by a board of seven judges selected by the National Broadcasting Company and announced publicly in the near future.

If the total number of scores submitted exceeds fifty, a preliminary selection may be made by a committee appointed by the judges for the purpose of eliminating the least promising compositions and enabling the judges to concentrate more effectively on the remainder.

All entries must be received at the headquarters of the national Broadcasting Company, Inc., RCA building, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y., not later than 5:00 P. M., Eastern Standard Time, February 29, 1936.

The awards will be announced on April 1, 1936, or as soon thereafter as the judges reach a decision.

In addition to the three awards specified above, honorable mention may be awarded to any composition which in opinion of the judges merits such recognition. Works receiving honorable mention will, if the composer so desires, be given at least one broadcast performance within one year from the date of the awards.

Only works submitted according to the terms and conditions set forth in the Official Entry Blank will be entered for the consideration of the judges. In order that all compositions may be considered on a uniform basis it is necessary that each candidate obtain an Official Entry Blank, and that this be properly completed and sealed in the Official Envelope provided for that purpose. Only compositions accompanied by this Official Envelope properly completed with enclosures will be considered for the NBC Music Guild Awards, 1936.

Any composition received without the required Official Envelope will be returned to the composer, together with an Official Entry Blank and may be resubmitted in the required manner. In such cases this procedure will be followed without divulging the composer's identity to the judges.
Official Entry Blanks containing complete details and conditions may be obtained by addressing the NBC Music Guild Awards Committee, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y.¹⁶

Like the Orchestral Award, the length of the piece is specific, probably limited to the amount of time allotted to the presentation program. The instrumentation is also specific and genres allowed are limited to instrumental ones; no voice would have been included. Also, for these awards, NBC carefully thought out the jury process because, in the Orchestral Awards, they had received too many manuscripts and had to change the award-decision process in the middle of the competition. Furthermore, the application form was more complicated, as all the entries had to be sent in the official envelope and this would discourage idle application for the awards.

The jury for this competition included Sergei Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Frederick Stock, the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Harold Bauer, pianist; Georges Barrère, flutist; and Oliver W. Strunk, the chief of the music division of the Library of Congress.¹⁷ The first prize went to Mitya Stillman for his String Quartet No. 7; the second to Alois Reser’s String Quartet; the third, to Rudolf Forrest for a string quartet. A *Music Courier* reviewer stated that NBC’s effort symbolized “a new testimony to the powerful influence which leading radio chains exert in sponsoring the work of America’s most gifted composers.”¹⁸

The Columbia Composers’ Commissions

Introduction

In 1937 and 1938, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) commissioned twelve American composers each year to write new pieces specifically for radio. This remarkable concept was

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¹⁷ “Judgement Board Chosen for NBC Guild Contest,” *Musical America* 56/3 (10 February 1936), 222.

called the “Columbia Composers’ Commissions.” The six composers chosen for the first commission in 1937 were Aaron Copland, Louis Gruenberg, Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Walter Piston, and William Grant Still, and the six for a second commission in 1938 were Robert Russell Bennett, R. Nathaniel Dett, Vittorio Giannini, Jerome Moross, Quincy Porter, and Leo Sowerby.\textsuperscript{19} Table 1-1 shows the titles and premiere dates of commissioned pieces.

Table 1-1: Pieces written for the Columbia Composers’ Commissions

(1) The first commissions

William Grant Still, \textit{Lenox Avenue} (Premiered on 23 May 1937)
Walter Piston, Concertino for Piano and Orchestra (20 June 1939, with Jesus Maria Sanroma, piano and conducted by the composer)
Aaron Copland, Music for Radio (16 July 1937)
Roy Harris, \textit{Time Suite} (8 August 1937)
Howard Hanson, Third Symphony (19 September 1937, conducted by the composer)
Louis Gruenberg, \textit{Green Mansions} (17 October 1937)

(2) The second commissions

Robert Russell Benett, \textit{Eight Etudes} (17 July 1938)
Leo Sowerby, \textit{Theme in Yellow} (31 July 1938)
Quincy Porter, \textit{Two Dances for Radio} (14 August 1938)
Jerome Moross, \textit{Tall Story} (25 September 1938)
R. Nathaniel Dett, \textit{American Sampler} (2 October 1938)
Vittorio Giannini, \textit{Beauty and the Beast} (a radio opera, 24 November 1938)

As with NBC’s Orchestral Awards in 1932, it was Deems Taylor, CBS’s consultant since 1936, who proposed these commissions. Designed differently than NBC’s awards, CBS did not make an announcement about the commission to the public first. Instead, CBS sent letters to six composers about their commission (September 1936), and asked them to keep the whole thing

\textsuperscript{19} The list of composers for the first commissions actually included George Gershwin, but Gershwin did not accept the commission and Copland was chosen as a substitute. Deems Taylor to William Grant Still, 19 September 1936. William Grant Still-Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Series 1, Box 10. As Margaret Susan Key first reported in her dissertation, this letter states that George Gershwin was one of the composers to whom CBS sent letters. Gershwin, however, turned down the offer and Aaron Copland was chosen as a substitute. See Margaret Susan Key, “Sweet Melody over Silent Wave,” 134.
secret until a later time; they wanted to wait until all the composers had accepted the proposal and “then break a big story all over the country.”

The announcement by CBS about the commissions on 5 October 1936 astonished their rival network, NBC, probably more than the general public. The NBC President David Sarnoff wrote the following to Lenox R. Lohr on 6 October 1936:

You have doubtless noticed the attached in this morning’s Times. I do not know how much of substance will finally emerge from this idea, but it is an attractive idea nevertheless. It is just this kind of forward-thinking and exploitation on the part of Columbia which makes their company a subject for favorable comment. To the man in the street it carries an impression of leadership, initiative and originality.

The news was a great shock to some people, especially those who had known Deems Taylor, who had worked at NBC and proposed the NBC Orchestral Awards in 1931. This time, Taylor convinced CBS to accept a similar idea earlier used by its rival. John F. Royal wrote to Lohr the following:

In 1932 the National Broadcasting Company awarded $10,000 for orchestral compositions. It was the first time that Deems Taylor was ever prominently identified with radio, and we engaged him to handle this contest for us and to get us publicity. On the publicity angle, he failed. Columbia has now taken our old idea and revamped it a little. Mr. Sarnoff might have forgotten all this. I am sure he will be interested to know the results of that contest. I am attaching hereto a list showing the number of times the winning selections have been played by outstanding conductors in 1932, 1933, and 1934. Also hereto attached is a copy of the RCA News, with a story about the NBC orchestral awards. NBC does not have to be ashamed of anything we have done in music. We have been far in the lead of Columbia in our contributions.

These correspondences include a clipping from The New York Times, dated on 5 October 1936. The article in this newspaper, titled “Radio’s Own Music to Fit Time Limit,” described Deems

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20 Deems Taylor to William Grant Still, 19 September 1936.


Taylor as a “composer-critic-commentator, and consultant on music for the broadcasting company.” Indeed, the Composers’ Commission was Taylor’s first major job as a new music consultant at CBS.23

On the other hand, John F. Royal wanted to demonstrate, to Lohr at least, how NBC successfully presented serious music in the past by listing their past achievements. The lists included “Some NBC ‘Firsts,’” which registered what NBC has done for the first time in radio history. For example, according to this “Firsts” list, NBC did the first broadcast of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1927, the first broadcast of grand opera in 1927, the first program of opera from Europe, among others; the list continued to the year 1937. The second list highlights outstanding music programs during the same ten years.24

According to The New York Times article, CBS originally planned to have a competition, just like NBC did in 1932, but Deems Taylor proposed commissions instead. Apparently, Taylor wanted to place more control over the selection of composers and their music’s quality. He commented: “It is difficult to induce talented and successful men to take part in a contest in which they run the risk of having nothing for their pains but experience. . . . We feel that the reputation and past achievements of the men we have selected are a guarantee that we shall be able to offer the public six works that we can be proud of having sponsored.”25

Genre of Music

For this commission, CBS provided composers with as few restrictions about the genre of music as possible. The piece could be a symphony, tone poem, chamber music, solo music, opera, cantata, or oratorio.26 No composer, however, wrote chamber or solo music. All twelve


24 All lists included in NBC History Files, Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Folder 207.

25 Ibid.

26 Deems Taylor to William Grant Still, 19 September 1936, William Grant Still and Verna Arvey Papers, The University of Arkansas, Series 1, Box 10.
composers, perhaps, wanted to take an advantage of using the CBS Symphony Orchestra in their compositions.

CBS’s restriction on orchestration, on the other hand, were very specific and smaller than that of NBC, which did not hesitate to accommodate an orchestra up to eighty people. Deems Taylor announced the availability of the following instruments which, according to him, were very common to “the average radio concert orchestra”:

- Two flutes, two oboes (second can double English horn), two clarinets, one bassoon, three saxophones (doubling two clarinets and bass clarinets), two horns, three trumpets, two trombones, two percussion, one piano, one harp, six first violins, four second violins, two violas, two celli, two basses (one can double tuba). A total of thirty-seven instruments.\(^\text{27}\)

Compared to NBC’s award, therefore, composers needed to score their pieces for a much smaller orchestra. Taylor added the following comment:

- If you wish, you may have a third and fourth horn instead of the three saxophones; also you are at liberty to use a third trombone instead of a third trumpet. If you wish to eliminate the second flute or the English horn, you can have a bass clarinet. You can always gain an extra wind instrument by eliminating either the piano or the harp. The essential point is that wind section must not exceed seventeen players.

  (IMPORTANT: Bear in mind that the string section, playing before the microphone, sounds much fuller than it would in a concert hall).\(^\text{28}\)

From this note, it is clear that Taylor had very thorough knowledge about orchestration, probably acquired from his own experience as a composer. He also encouraged composers to use the microphone as a part of the orchestration technique. The idea of utilizing the latest technology will be discussed later in Chapter 2.

As in NBC’s awards, CBS’s commission limited the length of each composition. If the piece was a symphony, a cantata, or an opera, it should not exceed forty minutes. If the piece was a suite or a concerto, it should not be over twenty-two minutes. If the piece was written in one

\(^\text{27}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{28}\) Ibid.
movement, it should be no shorter than eight minutes and should not exceed fourteen minutes.\textsuperscript{29} The reason for writing a piece “no shorter than” a certain number of minutes would be there for programming sake, as the schedule of a radio program is much more exacting than that of a concert hall performance. This was especially essential when, in the 1930s, a single network radio station needed to accommodate all kinds of programs including news shows, sports, and other entertainment. If a music program did not end on time and shortened the next scheduled program, the station risked receiving an enormous number of letters of complaint from listeners.

Curiously, such restrictions on the length of radio music encouraged the idea that compositions written for radio in the future generally might become smaller in scale than usual concert pieces. For example, NBC’s Samuel Chotzinoff believed that the radio-music composer “must, of necessity, curb his usual expansiveness; and his exercise of musical economy results in a lighter, simpler, more cohesive piece of music than the one that is intended for the concert hall. It is safe to say that no future symphony written expressly for radio will ever be more than fifty minutes long.”\textsuperscript{30}

Reactions

The Columbia Composers’ Commissions did not satisfy their producer Davidson Taylor. Taylor expressed his frustration as follow:

Today, what can we say of these Composers’ Commissions? Are they isolated manifestations with impermanent effect, or landmarks in American music history? Undoubtedly the radio public has not risen up to call the American composer blessed because of the twelve works. There has been no avalanche of fan mail, nor have the reviewers been unduly exercised about scores.

He also complained the composers’ reactions:

Composers generally are disappointed at the limited reaction to America’s first attempts at creating for radio. Some are not happy about the works themselves.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

Nobody is elated at the bland disregard with which most of the music critics treated the performances.31

The commission, however, was not a complete failure. In 1939, some commissioned pieces were rebroadcast over the network, because CBS received “a warm response” to “a number of pieces.”32 Additionally, the Columbia Composers’ Commissions coincided with the general public’s growing attention to American music. Knowing such a phenomenon, Howard Barlow, who conducted most of the Commission pieces, announced that he would conduct orchestral pieces of “unknown” and of “comparative unknown American composers” submitted to CBS. Barlow would examine the manuscripts personally and play at least one piece each Sunday afternoon, on his program “Everybody's Music.”33 CBS’s policy resulted in the submission of various new works from all over the country. There were so many manuscripts that Howard Barlow did not have enough time to examine all the scores and hired special staff for that purpose.34 The following pieces, however, were broadcast in the 1938 summer season:

Table 1-2: Manuscript compositions performed by the CBS Symphony Orchestra under Howard Barlow in 1938.35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composers</th>
<th>Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul Creston</td>
<td>Partita (Aired on 24 July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Smith</td>
<td>Episodic Suite (24 July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoltan Kurthy</td>
<td>Puszta (7 August)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Castellini</td>
<td>Misty Dawn (7 August)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weldell Diebel</td>
<td>First Piano Concerto in C Minor (21 August)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Gershfeldi</td>
<td>Save the Saugatuck (28 August)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


32 *Ibid.*, 95. Taylor also reported: “The radio listeners have responded just as warmly to new native works as they have to standard pieces.” Introduction to Schima Kaufman, *Everybody’s Music* (New York: Cromwell, 1938), vii. Unfortunately, Taylor did not specify which pieces received a warm response from the radio audience.


34 Lieberson, “Over the Air,” 66.

Table 1-2 (Continued)

William Schuman, Symphony No. 2 (11 September)
Charles Jones, Suite (25 September)
Carl Mathes, One movement from *Five Tone Pictures* (16 October)

Some pieces received good reviews. Goddard Lieberson praised Paul Creston’s *Partita* for “its solidity and virility.”36 He saw it as Creston’s first significant, accessible work departing from “his early super-chromatic, pieces for piano.”37 The review also pointed out strong influences from the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and jazz in the piece. Lieberson even recommended that the composer be commissioned to write a new piece for “Everybody's Music.”38 William Schuman’s Second Symphony, Lieberson continues, showed “a marked development . . . and individuality, which . . . carries conviction.”39 About eighty percent of the radio audience reacted favorably to the new American music, and supported CBS’s policy to broadcast a new piece every Sunday.40 Many of these favorable responses, however, often included criticism against certain pieces. The remaining twenty percent of the listener letters were longing for more traditional repertoire, and expressed their dissatisfaction with the “cacophonous modern music.”41

By the middle 1940s, however, the situation for serious music worsened. CBS announced that it would broadcast serious music only a half an hour a week, thereby extremely restricting opportunities for new American piece to be heard on the medium. Composer Gail Kubik lamented such a decision by one of the nation’s largest radio networks.

Davidson Taylor . . may have had trouble selling the network’s executives on his brainstorm, but these gentleman can hardly be unaware now that the commissions have been held up for years as a shining example of radio’s intense and

37 Ibid., 66.
38 Ibid., 66-67.
39 Ibid., 69.
41 Ibid., 245.
philanthropic interest in the welfare of the American composer. No network minds being credited with that sort of philanthropy... But that was in the middle ‘thirties. Today that same network not only is not commissioning any works, but even declares that with only one-half hour a week of company time available for serious music, only a limited number of new works will be played in order that the program may not lose its present audience.  

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Table 2-3: Copland: *Music for Radio*, Changes in Orchestration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orchestral Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trumpets and Trombones: Solo-one mute (m. 75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trumpet I: Felt hat over bell (m. 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clarinet I Solo: Subtone (at the mike) (m. 97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trombone I: Can sound (straight) (m. 100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flute I Solo (at the mike) (m. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trumpet I Solo (at the mike) (m. 115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Flute I Solo (at the mike) (m. 120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Trumpet I: Cup mute (m. 125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Trumpet I Solo: Cup mute (m. 135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Bassoon I (stand up) (m. 150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Trumpets: Con Sord (straight) (m. 155)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Trumpet II (Cup mute) (m. 160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Alto Saxophones I and II: Slap tongue (m. 170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Flute I Solo (at the mike) (m. 175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Flute I Solo (at the mike) (m. 180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Trumpet I Solo (Cup mute) (m. 190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Trumpet I: Cup mute (m. 195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. French Horn I and II: Con Sord (m. 220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. French Horn I and II: Con Sord (m. 225)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. French Horn I and II: Con Sord (m. 235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Trumpet II (Cup mute) (m. 240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 245)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 255)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 260)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 280)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 285)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 290)</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 295)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 305)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. French Horn: Con Sord (m. 310)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Trumpet II: Cup mute (m. 315)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:*
- Crossed out by pencil.
- Changed into "Cup mute".
- Added a note: "Felt hat over bell" should be used in radio performance only.
- Ink: "Simply, in the manner of a folk-song".
- Added a note: "Felt hat over bell" should be used in radio performance only.
- Crossed out by pencil and added a note by black ink.
27. Clarinet III: Subtone (at the mike) (m. 320)

28. Violins I, Div in 3: at the point (m. 322)

29. Vibraphone (m. 326)

30. Trumpet I. Solo (Solo tone mute)

31. Trumpet I and II (Con Sord) (m. 337)

32. Trumpet I Solo (felt hat over bell) (m. 342)

33. Trombone I Solo (felt hat over bell) (m. 342)

32* Added a note: "Felt hat over bell should be used in radio performance only"

33* Added a note: "Felt hat over bell should be used in radio performance only"

27* Crossed out by pencil
Broadcast technology was still primitive in the 1930s, and American composers had to work within its limitations. To obtain the best sonority possible, composers like Copland devised new and effective orchestrations designed specifically for radio. These new types of orchestrations might have been a direct result of the limited sonority available on the medium, but directors and composers saw them as a significant part of the music of their future.

After World War II, as a more sophisticated sound technology developed, radio listeners benefited from a much more realistic orchestral sound reproduced on radio and the radiogenic orchestration became obsolete. Copland’s Music for Radio, and the other pieces that took advantage of the most advanced technology of the 1930s, cannot be faithfully performed without knowing how to transform a radiogenic orchestration of the past to today’s standards. A reexamination of the performing practice, especially as regards knowledge of the performance space and technological supports in a radio studio for enhancing the sound of the orchestra, is necessary for a better appreciation of Copland’s work.

Radio Production and Radio Music

Among composers who wrote for CBS’s commissions, some took advantage of the resources available only in radio technology. For example, William Grant Still did not adopt everything demonstrated by Taylor, but he knew how radio could influence his compositional style. In his piece, Lenox Avenue, Still prepared notes for the conductor, engineer, and announcer. Example 2-2 shows excerpts from the notes prepared by Still.

According to an article in the magazine Etude, Still wrote directions even for miking, gaining, balancing, and “every spot where a player stood up was marked on the score.” A New York Times article further reports, “the score contains complete directions as to how the engineers shall 'mix' the voices and orchestra.” Unfortunately, the only extant segment of the full score at the University of Arkansas does not have any of these markings. Only the accompanying notes, written separately from the score have detailed directions for the narrator, conductor, engineers, and musicians. See “Radio’s Own Music: Mr. Still Offers ‘Lenox Avenue' as Music Especially Adapted for Broadcasting.” See The New York Times (14 February 1937), 10:12.
Example 2-2. William Grant Still, *Lenox Avenue*, Notes for the score (excerpts).51

The places where the Announcer speaks are indicated in the orchestra score. All of the continuity, with the exception of that which follows the Introduction, that which occurs in the latter part of the Episode IV, and that which follows the Finale, is to be delivered during the Interludes.

The players should stand up for all solo passages. Whether or not the players should go to the microphone for solo passages or stand up for passages other than solo passages is left to the discretion of the conductor. The conductor is urged to substitute for the brasses other mutes than those indicated in the score in the event that he finds the latter insufficiently effective.

The mixer is urged to refrain from giving undue prominence to either chorus, orchestra, or piano in the Finale (as follows). From No. 57 to No. 59 the chorus should be more prominent than the orchestra. At No. 59 chorus and orchestra are equally important and should be equal in volume, with the piano somewhat subdued. But, at No. 63, chorus, orchestra, and piano are to be equal in volume. This continues to No. 65, at which place the chorus again assumes greater prominence than the orchestra.

In the first excerpt, Still wrote some kind of markings so that the announcer could enter precisely at a certain point while the music was being performed. The second excerpt indicates that Still’s interest in the amplification of sound according to the relation of the microphone and the instruments, just as Copland used all kinds of similar effects in his *Music for Radio*. The solo players were encouraged by Still to stand and play, probably for more effective miking of their performances. On the other hand, the conductor could decide to use the microphone to make some passages or instruments more audible to the radio listener. Like Copland, Still was also interested in using various kinds of brass mutes (see the third note) and he indicated the types of mutes in the score.52 Still, however, left the conductor the choice of mutes based on the actual sound created by the orchestra. This would be more practical for later performances, when the sound quality could change according to different studio microphones or sound-mixing devices.

51 Notes contained in William Grant Still-Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Group 3, Series 1, Subseries 7, Box 97, Folder 1

52 Unfortunately, there is no extant copy of the full score of *Lenox Avenue* in the William Grant Still and Verna Arvey Papers, the University of Arkansas. The only information regarding the kinds of brass mutes came from the excerpted notes.
A brief comparison between these remarks and the score actually used for the premier would illuminate Still’s compositional craft relating to the technology available at that time. Unfortunately however, the extant copy of the piece located at the University of Arkansas does not indicate when the announcer starts speaking. The manuscript is titled *Central Avenue*, which was conceived originally as a ballet. Verna Arvey considered this a completely separate piece from *Lenox Avenue*, even though the first half of *Central Avenue* is very close to *Lenox Avenue*.\(^5^3\) The vocal score of Louis Gruenberg’s radio opera *Green Mansions*, on the other hand, may suggest what Still had written in the score. In Example 2-3, the announcer’s part is clearly designated with the arrow. In another section of this piece, the composer Gruenberg used dotted lines that corresponded to the barlines of the score. By these indications, the conductor or radio director, reading the score, could have cued the announcer.

By using these detailed notes and the continuation sheet, Still obtained tight control over the total musical event. Still was so satisfied with the presentation of his work that he said, “On only one other occasion in my life have I heard my music performed exactly as I wished it to be.”\(^5^4\) Deems Taylor of CBS praised Still’s effort with the medium: “I must congratulate you on the completeness and clarity of the technical setup. You certainly know your radio.”\(^5^5\)

\(^5^3\) Wayne Shirley extensively examined *Lenox Avenue* and *Central Avenue* from their musical contents and subject matters. See Wayne Shirley, “*Lenox Avenue* and *Central Avenue*,” Unpublished Paper, presented at “A Tribute to WGS,” Flagstaff, AZ, 26 June 1998.

\(^5^4\) Still, quoted in “Composing for the Radio,” *The Etude* 57 (November 1939), 698. It is unfortunate that Still did not specify what the other occasion was. It is possible, however, to hypothesize that his job for the “Deep River Hour” (discussed in the following section) was such an opportunity, since Still had complete freedom and control over the selection and arrangement of music.

\(^5^5\) Deems Taylor to Still, 3 February 1937, William Grant Still--Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Group 1, Series 1, Box 10.
Example 2-3: A page from Louis Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions*. 
Example 2-4. Verna Arvey, “Continuation sheet” for William Grant Still’s *Lenox Avenue* (draft) \(^{56}\)

1:-- INTRODUCTION

(The orchestra plays the brief Introduction and stops abruptly.)

ANNOUNCER:

“Lenox Avenue--like so many other streets: Decatur Street, Beale Street, State Street, Central Avenue--any of the main Negro thoroughfares in the United States. But our Avenue cuts through famed Harlem, where the folk laugh in the face of tragedy; where joyous music disguises the beat of aching hearts. . . . . Let’s take an evening stroll down Lenox Avenue, and see it through the eyes and ears of a musician.

“Radios blaring. . . people hanging out of windows to watch the crowd pass. Some dressed flashily, others poverty-stricken and dowdy. Some show the marks of dissipation, some look neat and wholesome. [. . . ]

“The screeching of an occasional siren. . . the subterranean rumble of the subway. . . rattling streetcars. A West Indian accent. . . several different Southern dialects. . . and Harvard University English. A Different world, a different atmosphere. [. . . ]

“Dusky faces. . . dusky smiles. . . fun and anger and love and religion, all on Lenox Avenue.”

2:-- EPISODE I-- “Lenox Avenue”

(Orchestral)

3:-- INTERLUDE I (:08 1/2)

(Begin speaking immediately after the down beat of the first measure)

ANNOUNCER:

“There’s a pretty girl crossing the street---so lovely she almost takes your breath away. Can you blame that fellow for flirting with her? They certainly make a handsome pair.”

4:-- EPISODE II-- “The Flirtation”

(Orchestral)

5:-- INTERLUDE II (:08)

(Begin speaking immediately after the down beat of the first measure)

ANNOUNCER:

“Who’s that? Her brother? Good heavens, no! It’s her husband! We’ll see a fight on Lenox Avenue now!”

6:-- EPISODE III “The Fight”

(Orchestral)

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\(^{56}\) This script is quoted from the typescript notes in the William Grant Still-Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Group 3, Series 1, Subseries 7, Box 97. An in-house editor of CBS altered this script before the premier. They found the original text “a bit stiff” and made it “more colloquial.” See Davidson Taylor to William Grant Still, 24 May 1937 in the same collection.
Example 2-4 (Continued)

7:-- INTERLUDE III (:09)
(Begin speaking on the down beat of the first measure)
ANNOUNCER:
“All fights must end sometime. And that policeman looks as though he means business. See how deliberate and how important he is as he hauls the fighters off to jail.”

8:-- EPISODE IV-- “The Law”
(Begin speaking immediately after the silent measure)
ANNOUNCER:
“Look at the boys dancing. I’ll bet they’d give Bojangles himself a run for his money”

9:-- EPISODE V--“Dancing Gamins”
(Orchestral)

10:-- INTERLUDE IV (:12)
(Begin speaking during the second measure)
ANNOUNCER:
“That dancing fellow over there is trying to imitate the boys. He’s drunk, or I miss my guess! One more swig and he’d be under the table. Folks laugh at his grotesque movements. Look out, mister! You’ll fall down!”

Regardless of these positive reactions, Davidson Taylor suggested ways improve Still’s orchestration. In a letter of 24 May 1937, he offered the following, concerning the final section of the piece: (1) “The distribution of the choral parts should be concentrated a little,” (2) “the last chord should proceed upward instead of downward,” and (3) “The last note should be made a half instead of an eighth.” Additionally, he pointed out at the climax the voice parts sounded “clipped” and repented that he did not persuade the conductor to hire African-Americans for chorus; all the choir members were white. Taylor thought that African-Americans would have given a piece “more gusto and better rhythm.”

Nevertheless, Still’s through knowledge of radio production did amaze the broadcasters. He acquired this skill from his previous experience with the radio program titled the “Deep River Hour” on WOR. On 17 December 1931, Still signed a contract with Willard Robison, a white musician specializing in presenting Negro spirituals and southern melodies. The “Deep River”

57 Davidson Taylor to Still, 24 May 1937. William Grant Still--Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Group 1, Series 1, Box 10.

58 Ibid.
was a half-an-hour suspended program, featuring Still’s arrangements of popular tunes evocative of the South.\textsuperscript{59} Since the program was not interrupted with any commercial message, Still was able to compose continuous music that filled the whole air time with his original “bridge” music. For him, making such a continuous thirty-minute potpourri was like a composing a “symphonic poem.”\textsuperscript{60} He had numerous opportunities to create many symphonic poems as the program was aired on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon of each week.\textsuperscript{61}

In an interview conducted in 1967, Still explained that he experimented and learned a great deal about orchestration while writing for the “Deep River Hour”:

> During all the years prior to that, I had made many notes. They were my theories about orchestration, effects that I had dreamed up, and I was just waiting for an opportunity to see whether they were practical or not. Now here came the Deep River idea, and I had a chance to do them, because I had absolute freedom there.\textsuperscript{62}

His freedom extended to the selection of music in the program. According to Still, in the program, the orchestra “played all sorts of things--Debussy and things of that sort--and then we would take a piece like ‘Frankie and Johnny’. . . .”\textsuperscript{63}

It is therefore not surprising that Still knew the medium of radio very well before CBS reached him. In fact, Verna Arvey explained that “Still has never asserted that in \textit{Lenox Avenue} he created a new form. After all, on the Deep River programs long before, the announcer had spoken over musical interludes. Thus, Still simply took something old and applied it in a very special way.”\textsuperscript{64} Goddard Liberson, in his review of \textit{Lenox Avenue}, related the piece to Still’s radio production:

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\textsuperscript{59} The term “suspended program” signifies an unsponsored program. For details, see Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{60} William Grant Still, Interview by R. Donald Brown (Fullerton: California State University, Oral History Program, 1967), 9.


\textsuperscript{62} Still, Interview by Brown, 8 and 9.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.

Still produced a very sprightly and entertaining piece of semi barrel-house jazz, with a narrator, solo jazz piano, and mixed chorus. It was a smooth running composition, remindful of the Willard Robison Sunday afternoon *Deep River* series.65

There are, however, differences between an arrangement for the “Deep River Hour” and *Lenox Avenue*. For example, in *Lenox Avenue*, Still did not arrange pre-existing songs, but wrote original melodies and interludes. Additionally, all the scenes were more closely knitted by the subject matter into a single piece, rather than a mixture of a Debussy and “Frankie and Johnny.”

**Louis Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions: A “Non-Visual Opera”***

**Introduction and Biographical Background**

The technological aspect of CBS’s Radio Commissions also fascinated Louis Gruenberg, who wrote a radio opera called *Green Mansions*.66 In fact, Davidson Taylor suggested Gruenberg “all kinds of radio devices for the effects he has visualized, and he will use some of them.”67 Taylor’s suggestion included the musical saw, an electrical voice breaker, producing “a mathematical tremolo,” “a rustle of a whip dragged through grass” for “a hiss” for a snake, a high tenor singing through a filter, with which the low frequencies would be “removed from his voice and only sinister quality” remains, and recordings for voices of running water, thunder, and howling monkeys.68 The technological feature more specific to radio was the amplification of certain instruments. A *New York Times* article reported:

Gruenberg is conceiving also a specific employment of the microphone by means of which certain instruments can be singled out in unusual solo fashion. A particular instrument, to be brought into dynamic high relief, having reached its

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65 Goddard Liberson, “Over the Air,” *Modern Music* 15 (1937-38): 54. It is not known if “Deep River Hour” was on the air on Sunday afternoons as Liberson describes here.


own maximum dynamics, will be reinforced by an individual microphone at minimum microphone amplification.\(^6^9\)

These technological features may not necessarily have been unique to radio, but they were new to musical composition. Just like other commissioned works, one of the most important features in the 1937 commissions was to present the most advanced sonic technology then available to radio production and to demonstrate it to the public.

*Green Mansions* was premiered on 17 October 1937, along with the other works written for the 1937 commissions, except for Howard Hanson’s Third Symphony. Subtitled “Non-Visual Opera,” *Green Mansions* was specifically written for the audio medium of radio, which could convey sounds alone and no images.\(^7^0\) That the piece was written to take advantage of broadcast technology made it unusual, since Gruenberg was known to the public as a prolific composer of traditionally staged operas.

Louis Gruenberg was born in 1884 in Brest-Litovsk, Russia.\(^7^1\) His family moved to the United States in 1885, and Gruenberg received his first musical lessons from his father. Gruenberg pursued formal music education at the National Conservatory in New York, studying piano with Adele Margulies. Then, he went to Berlin in 1908 to study music theory and composition with Friedrich Koch; he went there again in 1908 to become a pupil of Feruccio Busoni (until his death in 1924). Busoni encouraged the young American composer to develop his compositional technique, and this motivation resulted in Gruenberg’s early pieces such as the operas *The Witch of Brocken* (1912) and *The Bride of the God* (1913).

With his 1919 symphonic poem *Hill of Dreams*, Gruenberg received the Flagler Prize ($1000), which constituted his the first major success; now he was able to participate more deeply in professional activities. In 1923, Gruenberg introduced Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* to the United States and co-founded the League of Composers to promote new music. As a composer, the 1920s marked a decade of establishing a new musical style using American idioms such as jazz and African-American spirituals. Examples of this new style include *Daniel*

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\(^7^0\) The subtitles “Non-Visual Opera” appears on the first page of the autograph score, Louis Gruenberg Material, New York Public Library, Call Number JPB 80-20.

Jazz for voice and chamber ensemble (op. 21, 1925), Jazzberries for piano (op. 25, 1925), Jazzettes for violin and piano (op. 26, 1926), and Jazzsuite for orchestra (op. 25, 1925). In the 1930s, Gruenberg returned to theatrical works, Beanstalk (op. 35, 1930) and The Emperor Jones (op. 36, 1931, based on Eugene O’Neill); the later was performed eleven times at the Metropolitan Opera and became his best-known composition.

From 1933 to 1936, Gruenberg was the Dean of the composition department at the Chicago Musical College. Around this time, his compositional style became more conservative and depended less on jazz and spirituals. Gruenberg resigned from his teaching position and planned to move to California so that he could have more time for composition. In February 1937, just before Gruenberg and his family were about to leave Chicago, he received a letter from Davidson Talyor, asking for a new piece to be performed on radio.

W. H. Hudson’s Green Mansions and Gruenberg’s Libretto

Louis Gruenberg’s Green Mansions was based on William Henry Hudson’s 1904 novel of the same title. It was Hudson’s fifth book of fiction and is his “south American romances,” along with El Ombú.  

When Green Mansions: Romance of the Tropical Forest was originally published in England, it achieved a “moderate success and highly praised by discriminating readers.”

When the same book appeared in the U. S. market, however, the novel became the writer’s first big best-seller.

The story of Green Mansions is narrated by its protagonist, Abel Guevez de Argensola, a political refugee from Venezuela. He was exiled from “civilization” deep into the Amazon. While he became seriously ill in this new environment, Abel managed to travel from one native tribe to another and finally settled down in the village whose chieftain was Runi. As Abel recovered from illness, he started exploring the surrounding forest with Runi. Soon Abel realized that tribesmen were talking about a forbidden forest, ruled by the evil spirit, the daughter of the Didi.

Abel ignored Runi’s warning and entered the prohibited area and heard “a low strain of exquisite bird-melody, wonderfully pure and expressive, unlike any musical sound I

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have ever heard before.” Runi and his tribesmen warned Abel repeatedly not to go into the forest, but Abel entered the possessed forest again to look for the creator of the bird-like melody; he saw a girl named Rima who could communicate with birds and other forest creatures and lives with the old man Ruflo. As Abel and Rima conversed, he became fascinated by Rima and fell in love with this girl from a different tribe than Runi. Led by curiosity, Abel became more interested in Rima’s birthplace. Rima and Ruflo, together with Abel, then began a journey for seeking their native land, but they did not succeed in their mission. After a great disappointment, Rima realizes how much she is dependant on Abel and his love. Rima and Ruflo returned to their forbidden forest and Abel returned to Runi’s tribe. Abel later went back to see Rima again but this time, he realizes that Ruflo’s hut, where Rima lived, was destroyed by Runi’s tribesmen. Abel avenged himself on these “savages” by killing his lover’s murderers and returned to civilization.

According to the extant documents about Green Mansions, housed at the New York Public Library, Louis Gruenberg conceived of an opera without its visual component prior to the commission from CBS. Some rough ideas on Green Mansions, then subtitled “A Novelized Opera after Hudson’s Novel,” were recorded in the composer’s typescript note, signed by Gruenberg on 20 March 1934. According to this document, the creation of this opera came to Gruenberg “after a reading of one of Cervantes’s one-act playlets,” in which a character spoke of his adventures so vividly that he was able to “hypnotize the audience into actually seeing these happenings without it being aware of the fact that actually nothing occurs except a description.” Gruenberg was especially fascinated by W. H. Hudson’s “wonderful descriptive power with music,” which eventually prompted him to use it for his new opera’s subject.

To stir imagination from sounds, Gruenberg thought of utilizing non-human characters: the winds, the sky, the flowers, the spirit of the jungle, the trees. They would create an imaginary place in which the human characters act. The composer consequently called for a list of

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75 Ibid., 26.

76 Louis Gruenberg, notes on Green Mansions, signed on 20 March 1934, Louis Gruenberg Manuscript Material, New York Public Library, Call Number JPB 80-20.

77 Ibid.
characters, or “unseen voices” as he called them, when he wrote a more specific plan for the new opera in 1936 (Table 2-4).

Table 2-4: Gruenberg, An Excerpt from the Notes for *Green Mansions*, 1936

> The announcer explains the scope, the idea, and the outline of the story. Somewhat like a newspaper headline. Completely impersonal.

1. The Various characters.
2. Poetic descriptions by a voice different in quality than the characters (or by the voices 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
3. The winds (men’s voices). The Storm.
4. The sky (women’s voices).
5. The flowers (children’s voices).
6. The spirit of the jungle (spoken through a megaphone)
7. The animals of the jungle (voices imitating the various animals, all expressing thought relative to the story and its characters). Humming birds.
8. The sobbing of the trees (complete chorus), expressing among themselves to events, descriptions of pantomime and actions of the characters.
9. The announcer again, this time relating the end of the story, again impersonal.

The characterization of these unseen voices needed to be carefully planned. As Gruenberg pointed out, “all these unseen voices must be sharply contrasted so as to reveal their identity to the listener immediately.” This “sharp contrast” may be important even in a conventionally staged opera, but is crucial in a radio opera.

Besides these characters, Gruenberg called for an announcer who at the beginning “explains the scope, the idea, and outline of the story.” He occupies an important role as he can concretely provide the scenery and context of the opera by his description. He appears at the end of the piece as well, simply and impersonally letting the radio listeners know of the story’s closing.

Based on these notes, Gruenberg made three libretti: two completed versions and one incomplete one. The two completed versions were both written in 1936, and one of them lasts

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79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid. Gruenberg listed the announcer as the end of the piece as number nine in the list of “unseen voices.”
for twenty-three pages and another, only four pages. The longer version must have been written earlier, because it has numerous hand-written corrections and additions that were not seen in the conductor’s score used for the piece’s premier. Also, the shorter version is much closer to the radio performance that the longer one.

Just like the notes he wrote before (Table 2-4), the earlier and longer version of the libretto features non-human characters, such as a low, warbling bird-like voice, a multitude of birds, a snake, a butterfly, forest trees, murmuring waters, howling monkeys, approaching thunder, and sparks (See Table 2-5).

Table 2-5: Gruenberg, *Green Mansions*, “Voices and Sounds”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Announcer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Abel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus of Guayana savages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kua-Ko [sic.], a native chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A low, warbling bird-like voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A multitude of birds</td>
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<tr>
<td>A snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A butterfly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmuring waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howling monkeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching thunder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rima, a wild girl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sparks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the earlier version of the libretto, Gruenberg also let the announcer speak about the concept of non-visual opera in a brief introduction:

*Green Mansions* is an experimental opera in which the actual visualization of the stage, with its scenery, personages, and lights, have been transplanted into the realm of imagination, into the land of sound. This has necessitated giving inanimate things like trees, water, thunder, etc. actual voices with which they express their thoughts and emotions very much like human beings do.

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83 Ibid. The narration at the beginning of the opera lasts for one double-spaced page. As most announcers in the 1930s were male, the discussion in this chapter uses the masculine pronoun.
Then, the piece opens with an extensive explanation of the protagonist Abel.

Abel Gueves de Argensola, a young and hot-handed Venezuelan gentleman of unblemished reputation, has allowed himself through a mistaken idealism, to be drawn in a political conspiracy; and when this was discovered by the authorities, was compelled to flee for his life. Having heard reports that gold was to be found in the vast almost unexplored territory south of the Orinoco, he managed after many perilous adventures among countless unmapped rivers and trackless forests to reach the upper Orinoco.84

The explanation talks about Abel’s political background, how he traveled from his native land to the deep jungle, and why he seeks to explore such an isolated place. One double-spaced page is dedicated to the announcer’s script.

Furthermore, in this version of the libretto, Gruenberg also thought of creating an aria for Abel. At the beginning of the opera, he performs a song in Spanish accompanied by the mandolin, the instrument appears in W. H. Hudson’s original story. According to the libretto, Gruenberg was thinking about using the actual sound of the mandolin to accompany Abel’s aria, but, in the novel, this instrument was not actually used to accompany a song. In fact, “the small mandolin” was Abel’s imagination based on the sound coming from the forest:

From the foliage of a neighbouring tree came a few tinkling chirps, as of a small mandolin, two or three strings of which had been carelessly struck by the player. He [Kua-kó] said that it came from a small green frog that lived in trees; in this way my rude Indian--vexed perhaps at being asked such trivial questions--brushed away the pretty fantasies my mind had woven in the woodland solitude. For I often listened to this tinkling music, and it had suggested the idea that the place was frequented by a tribe of fairy-like troubadour monkeys, and that if I could only be quick-sighted enough I might one day be able to detect the minstrel sitting, in a green tunic perhaps, cross-legged on some high, swaying bough, carelessly touching his mandolin suspended from his neck by a yellow ribbon.85

With the mandolin accompaniment, Abel sings the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muy mas clara que la luna</td>
<td>Brighter far than the moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sola una</td>
<td>alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en el mundo vos nacistes</td>
<td>in the world you were born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan gentil, que no vecites</td>
<td>so gracious that you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi tuvistes</td>
<td>no rival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competidora ninguna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Desdínñez en la cuna
conbrastes fama; beldad
con tanta graciosidad
que ves dete la foruna

Since infancy in the cradle
you have acquired fame and beauty
with the charm
that Fortune gave you for a dowry\textsuperscript{86}

This poem was introduced later in the novel, when Abel converses with the another native person named Cla-cla. It was written by Juan de Mena (1411-56), a Spanish court poet who was believed to have composed this poem just before Columbus was about to depart for his exploration. By placing this song at the beginning of the opera, Gruenberg was able to establish the character Abel as a white prospector coming from a Venezuelan city to the South American jungle, searching for gold. Also, Gruenberg might have conceived of bringing Hudson’s description into the actual sound.

Another fascinating musical element woven into the final version of this the opera is the voice of Rima, who is supposed to be half human and half animal. Abel’s first encounter with this character’s mysterious voice was a seminal point in the story and one of the challenging elements for music-making. For Rima’s voice, Gruenberg employed the theremin. This electronic instrument, indicated in the score as “the musical saw,” provides an unearthy, mysterious voice for this character (Example 2-5).\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 3-4. Gruenberg quoted this complete poem from the Hudson original. The Spanish lyrics here were taken from W. H. Hudson, \textit{Green Mansions} (Oxford University Press, 1998), 91 and the translation, not provided in Gruenberg’s libretto, was provided by the editor, Ian Duncan, for this Oxford University Press edition, 207.

\textsuperscript{87} Although Gruenberg never revealed the use of the theremin to the public, it is easy to identify it even with a casual listening of a transcription recording. In fact, Gruenberg almost gave a hint of the use of the theremin in his script before the piece’s premier. In the script, the composer said that Rima was particularly problematic in its realization in an opera but the problem was “solved only by [an] electronic sound devise.” He later crossed this phrase and substituted with the following “you will hear [it] later.”
Gruenberg created the final, four-page version of the libretto by extracting a few episodes from the earlier, twenty-three-page libretto. There is no clear documentation why he made this reduction, but it is obvious that twenty-three pages of spoken and sung text were too long for forty minutes, the time restriction set by CBS. The composer needed to compress the whole story of Hudson’s novel again.

What Gruenberg did in his revised libretto was not just to shorten the story; however, he also eliminated some characters. The chieftain Kan-Kó was eliminated as the scene for him was also cut, making Abel and Rima the two central characters. Non-human characters—a snake, a butterfly, forest trees, howling monkeys, approaching thunder, and sparks—were all eliminated. Instead, the women’s choir had to sing the murmuring waters and chirping birds. The following is the list of performers who appeared in the premiere of the non-visual opera.

Table 2-6: Performers for the Premiere of Louis Gruenberg’s Green Mansions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Performer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abel</td>
<td>Ernest McChesney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rima</td>
<td>Hollace Shaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savage Chief</td>
<td>Melville Ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Saw</td>
<td>Stanley Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>Frank Gallop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 Measure 223 contains extra beats, but all these notes are written within one single measure both on the vocal and full scores.

Gruenberg reduced the number of “voices and sounds,” especially inhuman ones. There is no snake, butterfly, forest tree, howling monkey, approaching thunder, or sparks. Men’s and Women’s chorus, according to the autograph score, played murmuring waters and a multitude of birds. This reduction resulted in a musical problem, as the clarification of the characters by the use of different voices became very difficult. Gruenberg, as seen in the preliminary notes (Table 2-4, page 58), planned to have choruses of men, women, and children for winds, the sky, and flowers, respectively. In the final version, however, the women’s chorus had to represent murmuring waters and chirping birds. The only clue for listeners to distinguish these two would be the tessitura and text of the chorus, as the murmuring water is sung in a low register as opposed to the birds. Another characterization problem became apparent when the piece was actually premiered on radio. Since both Abel and the chief of the savages were sung by tenors, listeners may not have been able to distinguish the chief of the savages from Abel unless they paid careful attention to the text of both characters.  

In addition to the reduction of characters, the length of the story was shortened in the final libretto. The whole opera now was divided into four sections: (1) Forest scene, (2) Dialogue with Rima, (3) “Symphonic portion” (Gruenberg’s term), and (4) The murder of Rima. Furthermore, in the course of shortening the story, detailed descriptions of each character were omitted. For instance, Abel was simply mentioned as “a young prospector,” ignoring all of his political background and the relationship with the tribesmen.

The symphonic section in the final version of the opera is a section for the orchestra alone. There is no singing or narrator there. The reason for having this orchestral section is not known, as Gruenberg did not discuss about it in any extent document. Also, the meaning of this

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90 The use of tenors for the two male characters may be the result of limited sonic quality of radio. As lower and higher range were generally week on AM radio, the tenor would have sounded better than bass or soprano on radio.

orchestral music is not clearly explained in the score. In fact, at the premier of the piece, Frank Gallop added the following extra announcements before and after the symphonic section:

Example 2-6: Gruenberg, *Green Mansions*, Extra Announcements added to the symphonic section

(1) And then for the lovers there followed in the forest, days of unearthly peace and beauty, in which the half-wild dream of [brought?] greater happiness than he had ever dreamed.

(2) For all the while that Abel was with Rima, the savages, who would worship him as their god were searching for him and the witch girl in the jungle. Led by their chief, they closed in on the lovers’ heavenly feast.

**Visual Effects in Non-Visual Opera**

Gruenberg was attracted by the sounds of instruments and voices described in Hudson’s novel and sought a way to change these described sounds into actual musical notes. For him, radio provided an opportunity to experiment with a “non-visual opera,” which may not be effective on stage but was very attractive for radio.

One of the most difficult challenges in this radio opera was how to represent things that appeared in the novel. The idea of stimulating the listeners’ imagination through a variety of sounds motivated Gruenberg a great deal. For example, he explained that even the principal characters will be known to the listeners not just by the presence of their voices but also the surrounding creatures that would speak about the characters: “Whereas in the old opera very often much more than half of the suggestion was received through the eye, now everything must [be] conjured by auditory means.”

He continues, “Even the man who is one of the chief figures in the story will be ‘shown’ or ‘reflected,’ as it were by the exclamations and expressions of everything in nature. His presence and actions will be suggested by the animals and inanimate

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92 Taken from a transcription recording located at the Recorded Sound Reference Center, The Library of Congress, Call Number LWO 38109.

things, which likewise must become articulate to suggest their existence.” An example of such a reflection was used for Abel. The forest birds sing of Abel under the tree:

    And whispering, bird-like voices fleetèd down from above
    “Who is this stranger lying beneath and gasing upwards?
    He is white instead of red...
    What does he seek?
    What does he wish
    Is he an enemy? Is he a friend?

Gruenberg knew that a radio opera would lack “scenery, lights, personalities of singers and above all, pantomime,” and he needed to employ personification of non-human creatures. He “found it was necessary to have a flock of birds flying above him, who whispered among themselves; ‘who is this man reclining below? Is he an enemy? Is he a friend’. . . etc.” By introducing these birds’ chirping about Abel, listeners would imagine Abel is relaxing under the tree; and from above the tree, the birds are discussing if this human-being is a friend like Rima or an enemy, as other human beings. According to Gruenberg, “this method has been followed in many cases, taking the place of pantomime” (measure 158). To achieve such an effect, Gruenberg was said to have “collected authentic bird-song to the number of 2000 to find what he wanted to stir the imagination of his hearers.”

Tone painting is another way to evoke imagination in a non-visual opera. One of the most explicit examples is seen in the chirping of forest birds imitated by the piccolo (Example 2-7).

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94 Ibid., 173.


96 Ibid.

97 Isabel Morse Jones, “Native Composers Aided by Radio,” The Los Angeles Times (31 October 1937).
Thus, Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions* was very strongly tied with the idea of “non-visual” presentations. He even thought that this non-visual opera would be “quite unsatisfactory for the ordinary stage,” and television would “make this form useless.” What he meant by the word “stage” obviously meant the operatic stage, as a non-visual opera on a symphony hall, except for technological features specific for radio, would not be totally impossible.

It is then no surprise that Gruenberg chose W. H. Hudson’s *Green Mansions* as the foundation for a radio opera, because one of the most attractive elements in this novel was its evocative description of sounds and noises in the forest. For example, Abel encountered “a concert of howling monkeys which had so terrified me.” He also “recalled some of the Indian beliefs, especially that of the misshapen, man-devouring monster who is said to beguile his victims into

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98 The description at the beginning of this example was taken from the autograph vocal and full scores, Louis Gruenberg Manuscript Material, New York Public Library, Call Number JPB 80-18.

99 Gruenberg, however, was apparently working on this radio opera even after the radio premier to create a staged version. For this version, the composer excluded descriptive narrations from the piece and replaced it by stage directions. See Typescript, dated 1951, Louis Gruenberg Manuscript Material, New York Public Library, Call Number JPB 80-20.

100 Of course, any other non-visual media, such as a compact disc, would successfully produce this opera, too.

101 Hudson, “Green Mansions,” 34.
the dark forest by mimicking the human voice—the voice of a woman in distress—or by singing some strange and beautiful melody.”

Hudson’s story would not give readers a concrete picture of the forest; his description would rather allow readers to create their own versions of the landscapes from their imaginations. What Gruenberg needed to accomplish in his radio opera, perhaps, was to provide the radio audience with various sounds of voices and musical instruments so that they were able to create their imaginary landscapes.

Reactions

A review by Isabel Morse Jones was positive regarding the cohesiveness of the piece and its orchestration. She wrote, “‘Green Mansions’ is a fascinating condensation of descriptive musical ideas into an intense, dramatic three quarters of an hour. . . . The instrumentation was positively green in its depth and shafts of tone from the celesta gave the jungle sunlight.”

The performers were satisfied with the overall production, but Gruenberg was not totally happy, partly because of the small number of rehearsals, which he himself could not attend. In addition, he had originally planned to premier the piece in California under Otto Klemperer, who was then conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The lack of rehearsal was not apparently recognizable, but Abel, sung by Ernest McChesney, got lost at measure 385. He tried to recover around measure 392, but got lost again. Rima, who was supposed to answer Abel at measure 408, entered two bars earlier.

Goddard Lieberson pointed out that the subject matter was not attractive:

Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions* was unfortunate in choice of subject. The burblings of the forest primeval, the white girl in the midst of savages, the terrifying yell of cannibals over the protests of the Great White Girl, all conspired to call to mind

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103 Jones, “Native Composers Aided by Radio.”


105 Based on a transcription recording located at the Recorded Sound Reference Center, the Library of Congress, Call Number LWO 38109.
the usual five o’clock radio hours of Tarzan and Flash Gordon, while musically the illusion was not heightened by the heavy Straussian orchestration.\textsuperscript{106}

Perhaps Lieberson did not understand Gruenberg’s reason for the choice of Hudson’s novel, because what the composers was interested in this work was experimenting with the non-visual presentation of a story within the frame of the opera, rather than to attract listeners with an exotic story. The subject matter of \textit{Green Mansions} might have been “unfortunate” in terms of the audience appeal, as many of the commissioned pieces tried to convey nationalistic quality.\textsuperscript{107} The original story was written by an English writer, the story was based on a South American jungle, and the music sounded too European.

\textbf{Other Composers}

Among the other composers who wrote for CBS, Marc Blitzstein utilized the medium of radio effectively, just like William Grant Still, in his radio song-play or opera, \textit{I’ve Got the Tune}.\textsuperscript{108} In Scene 3, he inserted various sound effects such as whistle, bomb, machine-gun, pistol shots, siren, and whips. The places to use these sound effects are indicated in the score, but some of the indications are also hand-written in the script. The extant copy of the script has such markings as “Get whips ready” and “3 WHIPS.”\textsuperscript{109} In Scene 4, a bell on the subway, and street noises were inserted as sound effects probably created by CBS’s staff members.\textsuperscript{110} These markings indicate that speakers may have actually produced these sounds, while they were talking into the microphone. He also incorporated spoken dialogue with music, making the piece sound like a radio drama. Bernard Hermann, who we know from his film music, conducted the premier.


\textsuperscript{107} See Chapter 4 for a discussion on nationalism and music.

\textsuperscript{108} This piece will be discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{109} Script used for the premier of the piece, housed in Marc Blitzstein Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Box 39, Folder 4, page 20.

\textsuperscript{110} Based on a transcription recording of the premier. In the published vocal score, the places to insert all the sound, except for whips, are indicated, and the subway bells are notated in the piano part.
Reviewers of this piece praised Blitzstein’s technological prowess. Irving Kolodin of the Sun said, “Mr. Blitzstein’s score is uncommonly well-wrought, with expert use of the medium, and constant, successful concentration on the problems of making his meaning articulate through speech and music.”

Different from composers discussed so far, Howard Hanson, who simply submitted three movements from his Third Symphony to CBS, did not appear to have a strong interest in radio’s sonic quality. Goddard Lieberson reviewed the symphony as a “straight piece of music with no particular significance for radio.” Hanson said that the technological issues were not part of his compositional thought, for Hanson regarded radio’s limited sonic quality as an engineer’s problem, not the composer’s:

If music sounds well on the ordinary concert stage, then it should sound all right when broadcast. Of course, some instruments are better or worse than others from the “mike” standpoint, but those inequalities are the problem of the sound-engineers, not that of the composer, who should write as he feels.

Hanson’s position was not unique. Most engineers at radio studios actually understood the poor quality of radio reproduction as a technical problem. What they wanted for musicians was to play as in a concert hall, while the engineers’ adjustments solved the sonic problems.

Musicians often heard the sound reproduction of the radio differently from sound engineers. According to Max Butting, “technically perfect broadcasts have completely failed to satisfy the artist who has in mind the native tone of the instruments. On the

111 Quoted in Eric Gordon, Mark the Music: The Life and Works of Marc Blitzstein (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 156.

112 He had not intended to write a symphony in three movements but simply was not able to finish the whole piece in time. The length of the entire Third Symphony, with the finale, would not be longer than the time restriction set by CBS, as the total length of Hanson’s recorded Third Symphony (with the composer conducting, Mercury 434 302-2) is about thirty-three minutes. Also, Hanson clearly stated that the symphony would have been in four movements. Hanson, quoted in “Columbia Broadcasting Co. Commission New Radio Works,” The American Music Lover 2/7 (November 1936), 210. The Third Symphony, with its fourth movement, was premiered on the rival network NBC, again under the composer’s baton, on 26 March 1938.

113 Ibid., 53.

114 Hanson, quoted in Westphal, “Music in Radio Broadcasting,” 238.

other hand, certain tonal distortions which upset the engineers do not bother the musicians at all.”

Hanson, however, cared deeply about the sound reproduced on the radio. In the article titled “Music Everywhere: What the Radio is Doing for Musical America,” Hanson discussed the sound quality of radio equipment and advised readers not to buy a cheap radio receiver:

Do not economize on your radio. Get the best you can possibly afford. It will pay. Some receiving sets are so faulty that it is easy to conceive that they may have a permanently injurious effect upon the hearing perceptions of their owners. Indeed they could vitiate musical taste very seriously. With cheap instruments, the tonal values of the orchestra often are terribly distorted. This is particularly true of the brass instruments.

Nevertheless, Hanson viewed that broadcasters, not composers, were responsible to for more faithful reproduction of his orchestral piece and improving technology and was not accommodating the scoring especially for a new technological development. Indeed, Hanson’s Third Symphony does not use any brass mutes to enhance the sonority of these instruments; it does not use any electronic devices to amplify a particular musical instrument; it does not use any form associated with radio, such as announcer; and as an abstract symphony; and the Third Symphony does not use any programmatic content associated with radio. He even presented only the first three movements from the symphony, because he had not finished the finale. It looks as if he was just promoting the latest development in his career to the public.

Philip James’s Station WGZBX: A Technological Soundscape

Introduction

The influence of technology on musical composition, along with technology and production method, was naturally seen in the subject matter of a composition. One of the pieces written for the 1932 NBC Orchestral Awards, Philip James’s Station WGZBX, was such an example. This

116 Ibid., 15.

117 Howard Hanson, “Music Everywhere: What the Radio is Doing for Musical America,” The Etude 53/2 (February 1935), .84.
 orchestral suite was extensively discussed in numerous publications. A picture of Philip James with the NBC President Merlin Ayselworth, presenting him a check, appeared in Musical America.\textsuperscript{118} This section will discuss the musical characteristics of the winning piece. It will also analyze the musical style of the piece and its historical significance in the American symphonic literature.

Philip James was born on 17 May 1890 in Jersey City, New Jersey, to a Welsh father and German mother.\textsuperscript{119} While learning the organ (1904-1909), he began his “advanced study” and training in counterpoint in 1907 with Homer Norris. With Norris's recommendation, James went to Europe and studied organ with R. Moyrick-Roberts and Sir. J. F. Bridge in London and Alexandre Guilmant in Paris. After he returned to the United States, James worked as the organist and choirmaster in many churches in New York and continued studying with Norris. His early pieces were organ and choral pieces, reflecting his career as a professional church musician.

In 1917, Philip James enlisted in the army, where he learned the tenor saxophone. He also became the assistant bandmaster for the American Expeditionary Forces in France in 1918. After WWI, James worked as the bandleader for General Pershing’s “Own” A. E. F. Headquarters Band, which performed the Victory Loan Concerts in 1919 in various major American cities. Victor Herbert happened to be in one of the audiences and was so impressed with this bandleader’s conducting skill that he hired James for his musical Golden Girl.

James’s musical experience as a practicing musician was further expanded with his orchestral conducting. He founded the New Jersey Orchestra in 1922 and conducted it for seven years. In 1929, James became the regular conductor for the Bamberger Little Symphony that broadcast a weekly program on station WOR. Initially the size of the orchestra was comparable to a studio ensemble, but it was later enlarged to a full-fledged orchestra. As a result of his conducting career, Philip James started writing orchestra pieces, and his orchestration became larger as the

\textsuperscript{118} “American Music Cause Aided by NBC Orchestral Awards,” Musical America (25 May 1932), 5. The original photograph is found in Box 8, Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Bamberger Little Symphony became bigger. James wrote *Station WGZBX* when he was becoming popular as a composer as well as a conductor for WOR radio concerts.

**Analysis of the Piece**

*Station WGZBX* is an orchestral suite, consisting of four movements. It was written in New York in August 1931 and orchestrated in October of the same year. According to the composer, the whole suite portrays “the very sound of radio; that moving or inspiring power of radio; radio with its youth; its vigor, its humor, its exasperation, in fact in all, its relation to our everyday lives.” Since its radio premier, this suite has often been called a satirical suite, but the composer James did not intend it as such.

As this note implies, *Station WGZBX* is programmatic, and Philip James gave each movement a title as well as descriptive program notes that follow the music closely. The first movement in 6/8, titled “In the Lobby” portrays “the corridors of a large radio station.” It begins with a lively motive on woodwinds (Example 2-8a) followed by a refreshing theme on strings (Example 2-8b), accompanied by a rhythmic impulse on woodwinds. Hazel Getrude Kinscella interpreted these sounds as “radio itself.” Although what she meant by the “radio itself” was unclear, it might mean the vitality of a big radio station, where many staff members actively participated in various productions and engaged in administration; perhaps such a vitality and its element were so obvious elements to many at the time of piece’s premier that she considered them “radio itself.” The introductory motive and the theme on strings frequently appear and divide the movement into sections (See Table 2-8, page 75).

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120 Program notes by the composer, typescript, Box 33, Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

121 Ibid., 1.

122 Ibid., 1. James said: “Another critic spoke the work as good natured satire. Although a good part is satirical, the composer did not have this in mind so much as he wished to portray the very soul of radio.”

123 Ibid., 1.

124 *Music on the Air*, 341.
Example 2-8: James, *Station WGZBX*, Movt. 1 “In the Lobby,” (a) The Chromatic Motive, (mm. 1-2), (b) Stepwise Melody, (mm. 6-8).

(a)

(b)

After the strings build to a climax and end with a long tone held by the whole orchestra, the chromatic motive comes back (measure 31). It is followed by a new section in 2/4. According to the composer, these new themes are “the sound of rehearsals and broadcasts of Chinese and Indian programs.” The “Indian music” thus appears on woodwinds in a canon (Example 2-9). It is not known if Philip James quoted an actual melody from any Native-American songbook, but the use of the “Indian tom-tom,” marked in the score, clearly indicates the music’s intended ethnicity. The canonic treatment of the theme was probably James’s idea, as the authentic native-American music uses call-and-response prominently. Also, the rhythm pattern of the tom-tom sound is different from what we know of the “Hollywood-style Indian music,” but James’s version certainly has a flavor of stereotypical “Indian music,” as understood in mainstream American society at the time.
Example 2-9: James, *Station WGBX*, “In the Lobby,” “Indian music” (mm. 41-46).
Table 2-7: The Form of "In the Lobby," Movt. 1 of Philip James’s Station WGZBX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Meter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chromatic Motive (C)</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stepwise Melody (S)</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;Chinese music&quot;</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;Indian music&quot;</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;The End&quot;</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>6/8</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Measure</th>
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<th>Key</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chromatic Motive (C)</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stepwise Melody (S)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>&quot;Chinese music&quot;</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>&quot;Indian music&quot;</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>&quot;The End&quot;</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Material</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Meter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Chromatic Motive (C)</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Stepwise Melody (S)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>&quot;Chinese music&quot;</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>&quot;Indian music&quot;</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>(G#)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Restatement of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Development of S</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>&quot;The End&quot;</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sound of a “Chinese program” is subtly introduced before the entrance of the “Indian” tune, with an ostinato motive on the Chinese temple blocks (C-Eb-F-Ab-Bb-C). Chinese-like music more clearly appears on the solo violin with harmonics (Example 2-10). The composer does not clearly label this as Chinese, but the parallel-fourth progression and the rhythm of this motive skillfully present stereotyped Chinese music.

The Indian and Chinese music must have been a very important element in such program music like this. The composer assumed that most listeners would recognize these “ethnic” sounds as an integral part of their daily radio listening.

Example 2-10: James, Station WGZBX, “In the Lobby,” “Chinese music” (mm. 47-50).

After these seemingly “exotic” musics, the stepwise theme comes back (measure 77) without the chromatic motive on woodwinds. The stepwise theme develops chromatically, suggesting the following program provided by the composer:

We hear the noise and bustle of the crowds in reception rooms, voice trials from audition rooms. . . talks and announcements interpolated with the sounds of a jazz band and in all a veritable radio “Grant Hotel.”

As this program indicates, after the chromatic development of the stepwise theme, saxophones and drums suddenly appear as if they are the star musicians of a jazz band, appealing to the radio audience (Example 2-11). Strings provide a background (stepwise theme), but they support this jazzy music with a dance rhythm. The jazz idiom heard in this section, especially the sound of the saxophone and percussion, give a taste of jazzy music, probably often heard in the 1920s.

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125 Philip James, Program Notes for Station WGZBX, 1.
Example 2-11: James, *Station WGZBX*, “In the Lobby,” “jazz music.” (mm. 106-111).

As the jazz sound fades out, the diatonic melody comes back, but this time it is played by woodwinds. Then, the music builds up the final climax until the tutti stops with a bassoon solo (measure 158ff, Example 2-12), which might have sounded comical and satirical to listeners; the whole orchestra then plays a very clear cadence.

Philip James explained that the piece was written in sonata form, but the absence of the theme in the dominant key is unusual (See Table 2-8, page 90). An analysis of the movement shows an emphasis on alterations between the stepwise melody and new musical materials. The former establishes the movement’s overall character. The latter provides what one would hear as he/she goes down the corridors, the very typical sounds of a day in a radio station.
Example 2-12: James, *Station WGBZL*, “In the Lobby,” (mm. 158-162)

This movement, however, does not depict any particular event. Instead, it captures the general sounds and noises of a radio station, its people, and its productions. The various people in the lobby and studios create loud noises. The “Indian” and “Chinese” music perhaps signify radio dramas featuring these “ethnic” people. They must have been popular in early radio broadcasting, providing an exotic atmosphere that captured the imagination of the listeners, who consisted mainly of European-Americans. Jazz also must have been very familiar to the radio audience. Reproduction media such as radio and phonographs were vital forces in disseminating this musical genre, and most people must have remembered hearing jazz on the radio. The piece does not deal with distinct sound pictures and did not need to use an intricate musical narrative to describe images, but it did need the sounds of the various musics that were heard by radio listeners, all woven into the narrative of this movement.

In the second movement, “Interference,” the orchestra imitates diverse noises coming from a radio receiver. According to James’s own description, this movement
portrays the rather embarrassing and distressing moments caused by badly tuned sets, blinking of stations, static, etc. . . . Throughout we hear scraps of announcements, “Squeals” of neighbors’ hydrogen sets, explosive sounds from static and other interference, diminuendos of fading, the dot and dash weather report of a wireless operator and the many other phases of Interference.\textsuperscript{126}

James expressed the embarrassing and distressing moments with two chromatic motives (Example 2-13). These motives appear throughout the movement and establish the overall character. The sound of “the dot and dash weather report” is presented literally by the telegraph instrument (Example 2-14). Although he added and “ad. lib” indication, the rhythm is strictly notated.

Example 2-13: James, \textit{Station WGZBX}, Movt. 2 “Interference,” two motives

(a)

```
\begin{music}
\setMidiCentsToFrequencies \setStemLength 5 \setBarlinesVisible true
\begin{musicframe}
\newmusicinput{example213a.txt}
\end{musicframe}
\end{music}
```

(b)

```
\begin{music}
\setMidiCentsToFrequencies \setStemLength 5 \setBarlinesVisible true
\begin{musicframe}
\newmusicinput{example213b.txt}
\end{musicframe}
\end{music}
```

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}
Example 2-14: James, Station WGZBX, “Interference,” the telegraph instrument

The “scraps of announcements” were presented by the “voice of a robot” which comes with an “inarticulate speaking part” as follows

Example 2-15: James, Station WGZBX, “Interference,” The Voice of Robot, text

La. . . . And we are. . . a-. . . present. . . a. . . [pro]-gram sponsored by. . . makers of. . . oomiak on. . . o.. . nat. . o. . poeia. . .trigueting. . . agent. . . . This concert. . . overture on. . . yaked composer. . . left the concert hall with. . . however changed the. . . in almost. . . will receiver a flacon of. . . domonium of. . . Floyd. This is sta. . . of the lymphold. . . speak of. . . . Ha ha ha (wild laughter from the robot, ad. lib.)

This robot not only speaks segments of various announcements but also croons. The crooning is a vocal technique that was commonly used by popular singers who employed a soft voice that was amplified to match the loudness of the accompanied jazz band. The operatic bel canto singing technique became unnecessary as the human voice could be magnified with electronic

127 Taken from the manuscript score, Box 33, Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook.
devices. Crooners were popular from their phonograph recordings, but many people heard the crooners on radio, as well.\textsuperscript{128}

Additionally, the piccolo imitates the “squeals” from receiver. The long high note followed by a strong, brief attack on the same note sounded like a typical noise heard during the tuning procedure on AM or short-wave radios (Example 2-16).

Example 2-16: James, \textit{Station WGZBX}, “Interference,” Imitation of Radio Noise

As a whole, the second movement may be viewed as an accessible expression of the modernistic world in that it uses the sounds of machines: the telegraph instrument, the robot, and the siren, which was also used in other modern compositions such as Edgar Varèse’s \textit{Amériques}. Musical modernism is also apparent in the atonality with dense chromatic harmony and unusual phrases that imitate the radiophonic noises.

The third movement, “A Slumber Hour,” according to the composer, “expresses the quietude of a late evening program.” It opens with overlapping notes that create a quietly dissonant chord (Example 2-17), presumably expressing a mysterious night mood. After the choral-like opening, the violin solo presents a sweeping passage (Example 2-18)

\textsuperscript{128} Rudy Valee, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, and Frank Sinatra later became very popular crooners. James did not specify any crooner in his program note.
Example 2-17: James, Station WGZBX, “A Slumber Hour,” Opening.
The fourth movement, titled “Mikestruck,” depicts amateur musicians who loved to appear on the air. Such a crash of musicians is expressed by the pseudo-canonic treatment of a melody in the solo section of this rondo movement (Example 2-19).
James wrote “Tempo de Jazz” in the autograph score, but it is unclear what exactly he meant by this indication. At least, he introduces the sound of more popular music to the piece, along with the jazz music that appeared in the first movement. James introduces triplets in the main theme, giving the movement of a taste of “swing” (Example 2-20).

Example 2-20: James, Station WGZBX, “Mikestruck,” Ritornello Subject

Reactions

In the article entitled “Experience Wins,” an anonymous reviewer in the Musical Courier praised the May 8 radio performance of the Station WGZBX. This writer emphasized James’s skill and knowledge, which seemed especially suitable for radio broadcasting, while, according to the same reviewer, the other four prize-winners did not know “the limitation of effective radio scoring.” The review continues: “The old axiom, ‘A cobbler should stick to his last,’ is again appropriately quotable in connection with Mr. James’ accomplishment. Had all the other 573 entrants been as experienced in radio matters as this WOR conductor, they would have given him a run for his money.”\(^{129}\)

Of course, the fact that the composer had extensive experience with WOR or any other radio station was not known to the jury members or listeners who made the decision (see the previous

section about prize-decision procedures). It is also not known whether the effective scoring was
the primary criteria for the NBC Orchestral Awards. An illuminating element in this review,
however, was that this music critic was looking for an effective orchestration designed especially
for radio broadcasting; such “radiogeneric” instrumentation later became one of the main foci in
CBS’s Composers Commissions in 1938 and 1939. Interest in the impact of technology on
musical writing was very much in people’s mind at that time.

After its premier in the NBC studio, Station WGZBX was performed in many other concert
halls. The first concert performance was done by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the
direction of Albert Stoessel on 20 January 1933. There were at least two other performances by
non-radio orchestras in the same year. Howard Hanson performed the piece with the Rochester
Philharmonic Orchestra on 31 March and the composer himself conducted the New York
Orchestra at Carnegie Hall on 28 November.130

*The New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, a German-American newspaper, gave the following review:

> The novelty of the evening (at least as far as the concert-hall is concerned) was
> the satirical Suite for Orchestra—*Station WGZBX* of Philip James. . . . The opus
> is written in the jargon of those years which were concerned with Tempo, always
> Tempo. Today we find ourselves somewhat removed from that unrestorable era.
> We regard a work like this satirical suite as a piece from out of a curio-cabinet, a
> work which commands interest because it is a depiction of a period (Zeitbild).
> Mr. James knows the potentialities of the orchestra and uses them well. His score
> is spiced with a considerable amount of coloristic extravagance and permeated
> with much rhythmic vigour. The audience enjoyed the work and applauded
> heartily.131

This review tells us that at the time of the New York premier of the piece, the writer felt that the
piece belonged to a specific time period, and that period was not his/her own. The word “tempo”
in this review seems to refer to the modernism of a decade past, when machines symbolized the
“Roaring Twenties,” with a fast productivity and prosperity. Perhaps, the word “tempo”
signifies a fast tempo, not an adagio. Another critic also found that this piece evoked a different
era. When Charles Mills heard Station WGZBX on WNYC in the early 1940s (probably 1940),

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131 A translated article from *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, (29 November 1933), translator unknown, Box 33b, Philip
James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook.
he felt that the “satirical” suite “turned out to be an unfunny reminder of the good old days when radio was peppered with static and other objectionable noises. As a piece of concert music it is merely a specifically dated commentary: as radio music it’s too much like the object of its parody.”

For some people, the piece definitely was memorable. A reader of The American Music Lover, who attended the concert at Carnegie Hall still remembered his reaction toward the piece five years later: “Philip James’ Station WGZBX still has us laughing at the memory of hearing it. The Philip James thing was so funny that the audience in Carnegie Hall guffawed.”

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132 Charles Mills, “Over the Air,” Modern Music 18/3 (March-April, 1941), 199.

133 “Correspondence,” The American Music Lover 4/7 (November 1938), 246. This letter was written as a response to the article written by George A. Brewster titled “The Musical ‘Comics,’” The American Music Lover 4/6 (October 1938): 201-204. The Brewster article includes “Dance of Mosquito” by Ogden Nash and Robert Bencheley, Surprise and Farewell Symphonies by Haydn, Musical Joke by Mozart, the “village band” section of the Pastoral Symphony by Beethoven, “Witches’ Sabbath” from Symphonie fantastique by Berioz, the “Mephistopheles” section of the Faust Symphony by Liszt, La Valse by Ravel, “Golliwog’s Cakewalk” from the Children’s Corner Suite by Debussy, Variations on a Nursery Theme by Dohnanyi, Fugato on a Well-Known Theme by William McBride, Facade by Walton, and the Concerto Grosso for Dance Band and Orchestra by Robert Russell Bennett.
Station WGZBX sounded satirical, when listeners shared various sounds and expressions in the piece with the composer, even though what James wanted to express was more a vivid portrait of radio than its satire. Various sounds—“Indian” and Chinese music, noises coming from the receiver, the voice of robot, the siren, and amateur performers—were, perhaps, so vivid to them that they made listeners smile. When the same sounds, associated with the past, were heard in later performances, the piece became nostalgic and gave listeners the fantasy of their “good old days.” It did not sound satirical any more, even though it still was memorable.

Whether Station WGZBX deserved $5,000 or not might be a debatable topic today, but it did appeal to people at the time, especially those who lived with radio and the music coming from the speaker.

Summary

Today, radio would hardly be associated with the latest developments in technology, but in the 1930s, the technological aspects of this medium were among the most important issues for engineers, radio directors, and composers. From the investigation of pieces written for NBC and CBS, it is clear that radio directors took the technological phase of music very seriously and encouraged composers to write pieces that used a certain element of technology. Some composers, like Copland, came up with new ways of orchestration suitable for the medium. Others composers, like Still and Gruenberg, invented musical forms tailored as radio productions. Still others, like James, used technology as an appealing subject matter for a new composition.

These pieces, all composed in the 1930s, are so specific to the time of their creations that they appear a bit awkward today. For example, the significance of the radiogenic orchestration of Aaron Copland’s Music for Radio would not be understood by today’s standard, as our FM radio transmits and reproduces the sound of the orchestra much more faithfully. Philip James’s programmatic, extra-musical elements in his Station WGZBX would not fully be appreciated without the knowledge of the sound coming from radio: “Indian” music, tuning noise from a receiver, and amateur performers. Ironically, compositions that refused to adopt any radiogenic feature, like Hanson’s Third Symphony, would be more easily performed by today’s symphonic orchestras, because
serious music have not have incorporated performance practice with electronic means very much into its convention.
CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL CONTEXT: POPULAR VERSUS SERIOUS

Introduction: Radio and Cultural Perspectives

Radio, when it is viewed simply as a machine, can theoretically transmit every type of sound from one place to another. Depending on how it is used, however, this medium could represent and disseminate certain aspects of culture; this was especially true when a few nation-wide radio networks had power to broadcast their programs to all the people within the national boundaries. In the 1930s, for instance, only a handful of network companies were responsible for most of the broadcasting business in the United States and various writers passionately discussed what type of music should be on the air. Their arguments depended on their belief that radio should represent “better” aspects of culture depending on various ideas and values inherent within the message and sound coming from radio programs.

The following discussion will be based on two stereotypical categories as a starting point: “popular” and “serious,” the terms commonly found in publications in the 1930s.\(^1\) Although such a classification is overtly simple, it does have an advantage, as this dichotomy classifies various opinions regarding the media and music of the 1920s and 1930s as an opposed pair. It also illuminates the cultural tension, which existed in this historical period, influencing the radio directors and composers at that time.

\(^1\) Other similar terms, lowbrow and highbrow, will also be used to match popular and serious in this chapter’s discussion.
Radio and Popular Culture

Prior to a cultural analysis of radio and music, the meaning of popular culture in this period must be clarified. There are many ways to define popular culture, but one of the most important and consistent elements in any definition is commercialism. Although music has always been supported financially by various kinds of patrons, the patrons for popular music have generally been commercial institutions.

Commercialism was one of the most definitive factors to differentiate American radio systems from their European counterparts, which operated under the general public’s tax money regulated by the federal government. For example, in the United Kingdom, the British Broadcasting Corporation was the chief sponsor of radio broadcasts from its establishment in 1922 until late in the twentieth century. As a public institution, their programming and annual budget were part of the British governmental activities, and the BBC did not have to make a profit from their operations. The sense of “public service” must have been stronger in this type of system than for American radio stations because of the direct financial support of the station from the public.

On the other hand, in the American system, as Horold A. Lafount, a member of the Federal Radio Commission, proclaimed “Commercialism is the heart of broadcasting in the United States” because it supported “the life blood of the industry.” The main incentive for these institutions was to make a profit in order to continue their activities; the music they patronized, as a commodity, therefore, needed to appeal to a large number of listeners.

Commercialism was an important issue not only among sponsors but also among musicians, who found radio an important tool for self-promotion. The medium had such a strong publicity value, many musicians performed with no compensation. Publishers, too, saw a great value in

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broadcasting, and this was even reflected in the publication of sheet music, such as *The Radio Kiss* (1922) by B. K. Hanchette and E. R. Steiner.⁴

The type of music aired on radio also symbolized the cultural nature of the medium. Early radio stations for example, did not yet clearly show the impact of popular culture on radio yet, as serious concert music dominated the programming. According to a 1923 survey, typical programming of New York station WJZ between May and December was as follows:

Table 3-1: The Number of Programs on the Air at New York Station WJZ between May and December 1923⁵

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soprano Recitals</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Recitals</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestras</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Song Programs</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin Solos</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor Recitals</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baritone Recitals</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1 shows that a large number of programs were devoted to “recitals” but, according to George H. Douglas, the domination of concert music on radio at this time was due to the fact that few advertisers saw the promotional potential in the medium.⁶ Additionally, not all of these were performances of art music; the most-aired music in the 1920s came from the “genteel” tradition, representing various genres of music that could be safely broadcast to the general public.⁷

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Such a choice of music reflects the early radio stations’ conservative taste in music, avoiding any type of music that might be “objectionable.” Phonograph recordings of jazz were considered commercially viable in the 1920s, but jazz had difficulty getting on air because broadcasters were afraid of complaints from listeners. Genteel music was not necessarily the most appealing musical genre to the public but it was a safe choice. Robert West points out that the sponsors’ influence on programming also resulted in the “planless, crazy-quilt mixture of ‘classical,’ ‘semi-classical,’ and ‘popular’ music (often on the same program),” because of their wish for “appealing to every taste.”

It also represented a station’s economic constraints for musical programs. A performance of a symphony orchestra or opera was still rare and was treated as a special event because the production cost too much. On the other hand, there were many local musicians who would have gladly performed on radio for little or no compensation. Before the advent of radio networks, all commercial radio stations aired programs locally; the limited budget of each of these regional stations inevitably resulted in inexpensive productions, featuring few musicians.

The guardians of serious music optimistically believed in radio’s potential to “elevate” the nation’s “cultural level.” Harold V. Milligan, executive director of the National Music League, said, “A perfectly enormous public has been awakened to music of a quality which they never knew existed; the spread of musical knowledge and discrimination is perfectly astonishing. . . . I believe radio is educating a new musical public in this country amounting to millions, all of whom are potential concert-goers of the future.”

By the end of the 1920s, however, popular music became an increasingly dominating force in radio programming, as the national networks with greater financial strength took control of the

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8 The nature of complaints and opposition toward jazz in general on radio will be discussed later in this chapter.

9 Robert West, The Rape of Radio (New York: Rodin, 1941), 123.

nation’s broadcasting business.\textsuperscript{11} For example, in 1928, of 356 hours broadcast during a week, 259 were devoted to “harmony and rhythm” (including jazz, dance music, and popular songs) and only 42 to “serious music.”\textsuperscript{12} A survey in 1935 (See Table 3-2) more clearly illustrates what was on the air. In all likelihood, the strong listeners’ support for popular music, seen here, came from their casual listening habits (especially using the radio as a background to their other activities), their attraction toward big bands and jazz, and their practical use of radio music for dancing.

Table 3-2: Percentage of Time Devoted in 1935 to Various Types of Musical Programs in a Typical Month\textsuperscript{13}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Percentage of broadcasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dance Orchestras</td>
<td>13.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiclassical [sic.] music</td>
<td>7.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal artists--popular</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ music</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety programs--popular</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonograph records</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain and barn music</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal artists--classical</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphonies</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old song favorite</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} The exact year of the change in music selection on radio would be difficult to trace, but Susan J. Douglas observed that there was a shift, in the years 1924 and 1925, regarding radio stations’ musical selections from genteel music to various other kinds of music, including symphonic music, opera, and jazz. See her “Tune In to Jazz,” in \textit{Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination} (New York: Random House, 1999), 87. Leonard quoted an editorial in \textit{Etude} published in 1924 to demonstrate that jazz was already a dominating musical genre on radio: “Listen in on the radio any night. Tap American anywhere in the air and nine times out of ten Jazz will burst forth.” \textit{Etude} 4 (January 1924), quoted in Neil Leonard, “The Impact of Mechanization,” in Charles Nanry ed., \textit{American Music: from Storyville to Woodstock} (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1972), 46.

\textsuperscript{12} Leonard, “The Impact of Mechanization,” 46.

\textsuperscript{13} Reproduced from Hadley Cantril and Gordon W. Allport, \textit{The Psychology of Music} (New York: Harper, 1935), 76. The genre called “semiclassical” music signifies the type of music written for bridging the gap between serious music and popular music for a wider audience appeal. It also designates pieces originally composed as serious music but heard popularly among people.
Table 3-2 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negro spirituals</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety--semiclassical</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band concerts</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table, it is clear that the traditional categories of “serious music” (“vocal artists classical” and “symphonies”) constituted only 2.33% of a broadcast month. According to Neil Leonard, radio producers programmed little serious music because they believed it would not appeal to a mass audience, and “academic musicians” were reluctant to perform on the medium.\(^{14}\) Additionally, live performances of jazz outside of broadcasting coincided with the growth of the radio networks. A different investigation showed that in 1934, “dance and light music” took up 43 percent of the broadcasting time on the NBC and CBS networks combined, while “classical” and “semi-classical” occupied 18 percent.\(^{15}\) The same resource shows that in 1939, the figures were 37 for “dance and light” and 10 percent for “classical” and “semiclassical \([sic.]\).”\(^{16}\)

By the mid-1930s, most network executives, such as Ernest LaPrade of NBC, had a clear vision of radio’s primary usefulness as a popular medium.

> The primary function of broadcasting is to entertain. There may be some who will question that proposition, but I think the majority will agree that radio can make its greatest contribution to the sum of human happiness in the form of entertainment. It was natural, therefore, that in the beginning broadcasters should consider music only as a source of enjoyment.\(^{17}\)

Though most radio broadcasts consisted of programming that can be considered “popular,” it is perhaps ironic that it was along with the phonograph among the most private entertainment media available during this period. The sense of privacy surrounding radio was very real. In


\(^{16}\) *Ibid.* , 47.

many cases, a radio audience at home consisted of one or only a few persons, unless the whole family gathered in the living room. Such a home audience would typically not have included strangers sharing the same sonic space as would happen in a concert hall or even a movie theater. This home audience also did not have the expanded social context commonly found in these same concert halls and movie theaters. There would be no gathering of people who would discuss the musicians or pieces presented in the concert. The intimate, private character of the medium was, perhaps, one of the reasons that the radio audience sent their response letters to the broadcasters and some writers encouraged listeners to submit their opinions to stations for “better radio music.”

Radio’s popularity, on the other hand, radically changed practices of disseminating music. Those who used to play music from sheet music or piano rolls did not stop their performances at home altogether, but many people began tuning in to the radio or played phonograph recordings more often. Popular music, before the advent of the radio depended heavily on sheet music and its wide distribution. Especially during the nineteenth century, publishers’ catalogues grew quickly as more middle-class Americans began buying pianos. Some training in deciphering music notation was necessary to produce the actual sounds from the written notes either vocally or instrumentally, and a variety of musical institutions attracted domestic, amateur musicians. Those who could not read music were able just to listen to the music performed by others, as the number of public concerts also increased at the same time. Because of phonographs and radio,

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18 Periodicals featuring recording music, such as *The American Music Lover*, functioned as a space for these isolated home audience to unite and exchange or share their impressions of a particular musical broadcasting or of recordings. See the discussions about this issue later in this chapter.


20 Charles C. Alexander, *Nationalism in American Thought, 1930-1945* (Chicago: McNally, 1969), 156. According to Hoy, there were other music machines such as music boxes, mechanical manicure sets, and water pitchers. See “The Home Set to Music,” 72.

however, the central focus for the promotion of popular music shifted from mass-produced sheet music to the various new reproducing media.  

The concept of radio as a “popular” medium was not limited only to its audience. Radio producers also saw radio as a medium for popular entertainment. On commercial stations after World War I, less serious music was on the air, because radio producers thought that it would not appeal to the majority of the American population. Paul Girard stated that radio was a part of “lowbrow” culture and serious music was “too intellectual for the masses.”  

In fact, when Howard Barlow, a conductor of CBS Symphony Orchestra, started his career on the station in 1927, “the general attitude of the time was against ‘serious’ music on the air, and the light classics were supposed to be the only acceptable diet for the radio public.”

### Radio and High Culture

**Commitment to Art Music**

Although radio primarily belonged to popular culture, there was a strong countermovement to make this medium useful for art culture. Critics, educators, and writers often participated in heated debates concerning radio programming. They believed in radio’s power to elevate the nation’s cultural standard by airing more serious shows and music.

Such a debate, quite possibly, was based upon the idea that music could have an ethical and moral impact on Americans. Even before the advent of radio broadcasting, they believed that music had “the power to uplift and transform. . .” and “could improve one’s character and sense of well-being.”  

Relating art music to higher morality was nothing new in the United States. In

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22 Because of the dissemination of art music by radio, however, piano sales actually increased later in the 1930s. See discussions later in this chapter.


the nineteenth century, church hymns, sung mainly in Protestant households, were considered to make a home “a sacred unit.” 26

Debates over radio programming continued in the 1930s as critics expressed their frustrations about it. These critics thought that radio did not effectively cultivate art culture and successfully disseminate serious music. Cantril and Allport, in their book The Psychology of Radio, claimed, “The nation. . . is not about to be transformed into a vast Handel and Haydn society.” 27 Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a German-born sociologist rather cynically criticized, “It is unlikely that any considerable cultural achievement has ever sprung spontaneously out of people’s need” and therefore proposed the necessity for more leadership from the top. 28

Naturally, the broadcasting of certain genres of music at certain times was a very controversial issue and often resulted in a serious dispute. In 1927, John Henry Maynor, who claimed to be the secretary of “Keep-the-Air-Clean-on-Sunday Society” protested the broadcasting of jazz on Sunday over WMCA, New York, because the music was “degrading” and “defaming” of society. 29 Eventually listeners sent letters to endorse the jazz program and Federal Radio Inspector refused to rule on the case. 30

Leaders and representatives of white communities, who claimed to be concerned with “public morality” and education, often criticized jazz severely. Their opposition toward jazz was based upon their prejudice against this musical genre, relating it to “crimes, vice, and greater sexual freedom” and dismissing it based on what they called “the common roles of morality.” 31 An article in a 1926 issue of The Bookman criticized jazz as the “sins of the sound factories that hurl

26 Ibid., 62.

27 The Handel and Haydn Society was a music organization founded in Boston in 1850, promoting serious art music to the public by number of their concert series.


29 “Opposes Jazz Airs on Sunday Radio,” The New York Times (14 March 1927), 19. The organization, according to this article, had twenty members.


noises into the ether.” A few articles in the Home Journal said, “Jazz originally was the accompaniment of the voodoo dancer, stimulating the half-crazed barbarian to the vilest of deeds,” and “blatant disregard of even the elementary rules of civilization.”

**Sustaining programs and the Sense of “Public”**

While U. S. broadcasting had strong ties to popular culture because of its commercialism, this was already changing in the late 1920s, as seen in these debates. Due to its increasingly stronger national influence, American radio stations began to be viewed as public institutions. With such a change, music broadcasters were often expected to behave like art organizations. Even though many art organizations needed to support themselves financially, their aesthetic positions did not, or perhaps could not, explicitly expect a profit from their artistic activities. While profit is the goal of commercial ventures, art organizations are motivated by a sense of public “service.”

One of the crucial elements of such a movement for public service was the sustaining program. The sustaining program was the radio program in which a radio station paid for its production and sustained the broadcast until a sponsor would have come forward to buy the time. The production costs, therefore, were paid by the radio station itself from the profits derived from their commercial programs. As discussed above, American radio after World War I was a commercial venture. However, only thirty percent of the radio airtime had sponsors even in 1935, and all the rest was filled with “sustaining” programs. Originally, these programs were just on the air to fill the airtime that was not purchased by sponsors, but as radio became more influential in the American society, people began finding several different purposes for these sustaining programs. Firstly, they publicized the importance of radio broadcasting by providing

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listeners a chance to enjoy the medium’s varied offerings. Secondly, by creating a larger and
diverse radio audience, broadcasters were able to demonstrate radio's strong social impact and
subsequent appeal to the growing commercial potential of these sustaining programs. Thirdly,
stations had opportunities to air programs that were deemed important but that did not attract
advertising clients. Finally, sustaining programs fulfilled the requirement guideline for “public
interest” by the Federal Communication Commission, which will be discussed later in this
chapter.35

Radio directors, although knowing that the number of serious music listeners was much
smaller than those for popular music, recognized the need to provide serious music, because they
thought that broadcast of serious music was a service to the important and exclusive (and rich)
few. NBC’s Samuel Chotzinoff claimed that radio stations should not be limited to a particular
musical genre but should include a mixture of all types and styles, and radio directors needed to
find a way to express their democratic, diplomatic, and administrative abilities by including not
just entertainment music but also all other kinds of “little-rewarding” musical genres. Chotzinoff
was aware of this and valued the importance of the sustaining program: the “sustaining program
has the essential function of providing what one might call minority art and culture. It is the
pioneer program and its operation is an essential condition of the American system.”36 Among
such neglected musical genres, he especially encouraged the broadcast of string quartets and
chamber music.37

Symphonic music, on the other hand, was not ignored altogether; in fact, symphonic programs
by large networks were the main selling point for demonstrating the maturity of sustaining
programs aimed at the highbrow audience. By 1937, NBC spent $260,000 for a series of
orchestral programs, featuring such renowned conductors as Artur Rodzinsky and Arturo
Toscanini. The same network also programmed five seasons of the Metropolitan Opera

programs were also used as try-outs for unknown entertainers.


broadcasts; three seasons out of the five were actually sponsored by Lucky Strike and Listerine, and the rest were treated as sustaining programs. Like NBC, CBS started the eighth season of weekly broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic in 1937.  

Critics, most of whom were the guardians of the highbrow culture, extolled such initiatives achieved by radio stations. A *Newsweek* article reported that critics were losing their “contempt for the loud-speaker” and began reviewing radio broadcasts of symphonic concerts for the medium.

Furthermore, teachers, critics, and directors recognized the radio’s potential for educational uses, which also contributed to greater seriousness in radio programs. Walter E. Koons of NBC stated that radio’s “three fundamental purposes” are “to serve, entertain, and enlighten a nation.” In fact, the same network pioneered the music education with the use of radio; they started the “Music Appreciation Hours” in 1932, featuring the conductor Walter Damrosch. The Music Educators National Conference also created the program “Music and American Youth,” and the National Federation of Music Clubs started their own educational show.

Writers tempted listeners to turn on more serious music. George R. Marek, a music editor of the *Pictorial Review*, wrote the following introductory statement to his book, *How to Listen to Music over the Radio*: “The charge is made that, musically speaking, radio is occupied with a procession of jazz bands pouring out their stultifying rhythms, morning, noon, and night. That charge is only partly true. Most music on the air is jazz. But I hope to show you, there is more good music to be had than anyone can or should listen to.”

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40 *Radio in Music Education*, 69

41 Ernest LaPrade “Radio Music for the Youth and the Adult,” in *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs* 2 (1937): 61. The name of this program, unfortunately, was not mentioned in this speech; LaPrade simply called it “the Federation series.” According to him, this program was on the air for several years on NBC. American educators and critics debated the possibility of using radio for music educations.

for their reader to submit an essay under the title, “What Does Radio Lack?” seemingly looking for debates on a lack of serious culture and the hope for more serious music.  

Law and Public Aspects of the American Radio System

Radio’s obligation to the general public was enforced by federal legislation regarding radio broadcasting. For example, the Radio Act of 1927 proclaimed that broadcasting licenses could be renewed for stations operating for the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.” Although radio stations in the United States were all commercial, such a regulation suggested that radio stations should not just pursue commercial success but seek to serve the public. Some broadcasters, influenced by the Act, envisioned a new, separate government-run network similar to the BBC for providing a public broadcasting service. Such a public station would have produced more highbrow programs and become a model for other commercial stations to follow.

Another federal regulation that affected the nature of the radio was a 1934 addition to Section 26 of the Radio Act. It reads, “No person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall utter any obscene, indecent, or profane language by means of communication.” The problem of this passage was that there is no explicit criterion to define “obscene, indecent, or profane language.” What radio producers feared most was the denial of a broadcasting license’s renewal due to what the Federal Radio Commission found offensive in their broadcasting content. To avoid potential problems, radio producers often voluntarily eliminated anything that might be problematic. West called such a practice “private and invisible censorship.”

43 The American Music Lover 2/6 (October 1936).
Such “censorship” was carried out by individual networks; at NBC the responsible department was called “Continuity acceptance” and at CBS “Continuity Editing.” The continuity, or radio script, was screened before it was allowed on the air. Occasionally, such a screening resulted in the elimination of certain “authentic” jazz and song lyrics associated with it, because the words in some songs were found offensive to some people. The first occurrence of such action was taken by station WFFA, when they banned the song “Little Red Riding Hood,” because the song contained the line, “How could Little Red Riding Hood have been so very good and still keep the wolf from the door.”

Among the serious compositions written for radio, Blitzstein’s I’ve Got Tune became a target of the CBS’s “continuity editing.” The final scene of this radio song-play included a children’s choir singing “The Solidarity Forever.” Of course, the “Solidarity Forever” was associated with the American Federation of Labor and probably one of the most popular union songs in the United States. In the original version, as it can be easily suspected, the scene was supposed to depict a May-Day parade in Union Square. Although Blitzstein submitted a newer version without these leftist connotations, the scene became a target of “self-censorship” by CBS. A small memorandum pad with a letterhead “From Mr. Schimek” pointed out, “The Solidarity' sequence on this [libretto] page was the well known A. F. L. song. Interpolated [sic.].” Another memo says, “While this may seem [an] innocent ‘song of youth,’ it was a perfect reproduction of a Union Square Mayday rally.”

The whole movement toward greater regulation, however, did not create the American censorship system. According to a 1938 survey, most Americans were actually against

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49 West “The Rape of Radio,” 461. According to West, the “private censorship” was also practiced not to offend sponsors.


51 Based on a transcription recording of the premier, distributed by Radio Spirits. Blitzstein probably referred to Union Square in Manhattan, as the piece started with a walk in Broadway and Scene 5 begins with noises from a subway and street crowds.

52 A complete libretto for I've Got The Tune, 8 October 1937, Marc Blitzstein Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Box 39, Folder 4.
censorship. Even the Federal Radio Commission, later the Federal Communication Commission, clearly stated that their Radio Acts of 1927 were not intended to impose any state regulation concerning the contents of each program.

Serious Listening Habits

Many critics and other musical writers in the 1930s considered radio a medium to present art music. One of their typical topics for discussion was that art music needs a serious listening habit. For example, George R. Marek encouraged a serious participation by the radio audience to art music: “Have your jazz and dramas, if you like, but deny yourself serious music unless you are ready to receive it seriously.” Marek here implied that most radio listeners listened to jazz casually and that art music is something they should turn to for a serious listening.

Although radio listeners would have had the freedom to enjoy art music however they wished, those who had listened to art music before the appearance of mass media might have retained their earlier listening habits and considered that their serious listening was truly authentic and faithful to serious music. For example, Howard Hanson impatiently pleaded the radio listeners’ careful and active participation in music.

The tendency to turn the radio on and to leave it on, as I knew one hostess to do during a bridge game, to the accompaniment of the New York Philharmonic, is just silly. It should be an insult to the average intelligent person to be submitted to such an artistic outrage. A fine program of a great symphony orchestra, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, should be listened to just as attentively as though one were in the auditorium itself. When the radio is taken as a kind of tonal shower bath, it seems very ridiculous. . . . If radio creates at any time a disrespect for music, blame no one but the hearer. The machine is not the one at fault.

But in fact, radio permitted and promoted such casual listening and might have fostered a new accessible way to hear the traditional European repertoire.

53 Rape of Radio, 459.

54 Ibid., 7.

55 Howard Hanson, “Music Everywhere: What the Radio is Doing for Musical America,” The Etude 53/2 (February 1935), 84.
There was also an elitist attitude among those who promoted seriousness on the radio. One example was an article in *The American Musical Lover* by Paul Girard. He said that when radio began music programming, symphonic music was not “taken [into] the consideration,” because radio was a part of lowbrow culture and the music was “too intellectual for the masses.” By using the word “masses” in this context, the readers might share an impression that they were not a part of “masses” but a member of a restricted “intellectual” group.

Commercialism was one of the most vital forces that affected radio’s programming, but as the medium became more public with sustaining programs, demands for art music increased. That was a part of the movement to make radio highbrow, but popular culture coexisted on the same medium because radio stations had to support themselves by funding from sponsors.

### Mixing the Two Cultures

During the 1920s and 1930s, the distinction between lowbrow and highbrow in music became increasingly defined, but reproduction media, such as phonographs and radio, actually created a different movement, namely, one that integrated these two tendencies. Such a movement happened in two ways: firstly by popular music, especially jazz, being accepted by a more erudite audience and secondarily by art music becoming more popularized.

The first movement was generally seen in the history of jazz. This music genre, which many critics, educators, and writers considered to be “lowbrow,” was gradually accepted in art-music society, thanks to many bandleaders in the 1930s. Among them, Paul Whiteman was the most publicized musician in the period and was even called “the King of Jazz.” This conservatory-trained musician, who played the first viola for the Denver Symphony Orchestra for a while, but organized his own dance band and performed in hotels in California and the East. He was, of course, well known for the premiere of Gershwin's most famous symphonic jazz piece *Rhapsody in Blue*, premiered in New York’s Aeolian Hall on 12 February 1924.

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Since his first performance for WJZ (New Jersey) in 1922, however, Whiteman also became one of the best-known jazzmen on radio.\(^{57}\) He employed the famous arranger Ferde Grofé, who could arrange jazz pieces into more acceptable “classical” styles, opening jazz to an audience more used to serious music.\(^{58}\) One way to make jazz acceptable to the public was evident in Whiteman’s own views on music, in which jazz could be used as an introductory musical genre to gain the attention of and promote an attraction to music on the part of new listeners. He then hoped these people would move to an appreciation of more “sophisticated” symphonic music. He summarized his thoughts as follows:

Let the baby hear a jazz record, and it will begin moving and jumping around. There you have an instinctive, primitive appeal. Regarded in that light, it is fine thing. . . . We need something to stimulate us spiritually as well, if our emotional lives are to be balanced and complete. This sort of appeal requires greater maturity than a baby can supply; it requires cultivation, contemplation.\(^{59}\)

Regardless of Whiteman’s fame during his lifetime, there are other musicians who, from today’s point of view, would be remembered for a more authentic type of jazz performances influenced by art music. Most obvious examples of such include swing-band leaders such as Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman. The former had live radio broadcasts weekly from the Cotton Club in the Harlem of New York during the Depression, which secured his fame to employ skilled musicians from every part of the country. With them, he was able to spend his most creative period as a jazz composer.\(^{60}\) Benny Goodman also began performing for radio in 1935 on the program *Let’s Dance*, which was produced by NBC in New York and aired by over fifty affiliate stations in the United States. In this same decade Goodman also became interested in serious music and may have used his interest in the musical styles associated with serious

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\(^{57}\) In 1932, The station WJZ was purchased by the Radio Corporation of America and moved to New York.


music as inspiration for his own jazz pieces. In fact, Goodman was one of the earliest jazz musicians who also became as famous as a performer of serious music. In 1935, he performed Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet before an invited audience in the home of John Hammond, an important producer of jazz and popular music recordings. Three years later he recorded the work with the Budapest String Quartet. One further example is that in November 1938 he commissioned Bartók to write a new piece entitled Contrasts [italics], and gave its premiere with the composer and Joseph Szigeti in January 1939 at Carnegie Hall and later recorded the work with the same artists.

Critics and writers began accepting jazz, too. In 1928, Peter Hugh Reed wrote in the *Woman’s Home Companion*: “Nothing has done so much good for music in its way as good jazz.” Here, he has an unclear but certainly selective view of jazz, but good jazz had “stirred up a rhythmic vitality and removed an innocuous and cloying sentimentality which threatened to enshroud music” at the end of the nineteenth century.

The increasing acceptance of jazz was also evident in the use of jazz among serious musicians. In fact, some composers chosen by CBS for the “Columbia Composers Commission” in 1937 and 1938 had some associations with this popular music genre. Aaron Copland wrote symphonic works such as *Music for the Theater* (1925) and his Piano Concerto (1926) by utilizing musical idioms (such as syncopated rhythms and extended harmonies) associated with jazz. Gershwin, who was commissioned by CBS but did not actually write a new piece, was already popular as a “symphonic jazz” composer with his *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924).

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63 Reed, quoted in Foy “The Home Set to Music,” 72.

64 NBC’s 1932 Orchestral Awards did not specifically require anyone to write a new piece using a jazz idiom. Philip James’s *Station WGBZX*, however, happened to have a section of jazz music in the first movement and the composer provided the “Tempo de jazz” indication for the fourth movement; See Chapter 2.

65 As discussed in Chapter 1, Gershwin did not write a piece for the CBS commission, but it was obvious that CBS was looking for this composer’s output, knowing what kind of music Gershwin had written before.
Grant Still was one of the most famous serious African-American composers, who also worked as an arranger for the Paul Whiteman band. Although Howard Hanson did not use jazz idioms in his Third Symphony, written for CBS, he respected certain elements in jazz: “I am quite willing to admit that jazz contains some novel ideas. . . . I take off my hat in admiration before certain of the orchestrations of Ferdie [sic.] Grofé: I am entirely willing to admit that jazz has influenced and will continue to influence our serious composers as well as our composers of dance music.”

Composers such as Copland and Grant Still might not have been considered acceptable to concert audiences if other serious musicians had not appreciated jazz. Leopold Stokowski, arguably, was one of the most open-minded musicians regarding the types of music performed on radio. He suggested that future radio programs should broadcast “American folk music, including, on the one hand, the powerful primitive jazz mainly created by our musicians of Negro origin, and, on the other hand, sensuous romantic jazz, folk songs from various parts of our country, such as cowboy songs (there are hundreds of them and they are purely American), songs of Virginia mountains, songs and dance music of the many tribes. . . .”

Stokowski’s conceptions of American folk music could have been influenced by people like Alan Lomax and Henry Cowell. The former hosted his own radio show to promote what he considered the “genuine” folk and popular music of the United States. The latter, who wrote a piece for the Lomax program, was also interested in non-European music as well as American music traditions. Alan Lomax, along with his father John Lomax, was a leading advocate for conserving and documenting the folk music of the United States. His pioneering efforts in collecting traditional songs are documented in the sound archives of the Library of Congress and in the many recordings and books he produced, but his virtual monopoly over the definition of traditional music in the United States, as well as his power to disseminate his collections to the whole nation, unfortunately, standardized both popular and academic conceptions of the American folksong tradition. Some regional musical traditions which did not neatly fit into


Additionally it should be noted that to Davidson Taylor “serious” music was not necessarily limited to European-style “classical music.” His conception of serious music focused upon its evocative characteristics, especially if it produced dark, tragic, and depressing feelings. Also “good” music did not in his view have to be serious as long as it had a strong meaning for people’s lives.\footnote{Davidson Taylor, “Education and Radio Audience,” in NFMC Proceedings, 1935-37, 58.} For him, the cultural division between highbrow and lowbrow was not important.

**Popularizing the "Highbrow" Music**

The mixture the “highbrow” and “lowbrow” cultures was also achieved by popularizing the “highbrow.” For example, the recordings of Enrico Caruso were so readily obtainable to many people that opera as a genre became more accessible to the general public. In many respects, it became a vital component of popular culture in the early twentieth century. Especially Caruso’s recording of “Vesti la giubba” from Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci* was no longer just a part of highbrow opera but virtually a hit song.\footnote{William Howland Kenny, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 50. The first radio performance of *Pagliacci* with Caruso dates back to 2 November 1920 over KDKA, Pittsburg. Siegfried Goslich, Rita H. Mead, Timothy Roberts/Joanne C. Lee, “Radio,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (accessed on 7 November 2002), <http://www.grovemusic.com/>.}

Furthermore, in contrast to the opinions of serious music writers and critics, the general music audience actually became more interested in art music than ever before. Radio, which was regarded “a dangerous competitor of the instrumental music,” increased piano sales threefold in 1933.\footnote{“Radio: A Help to Piano Industry,” *The American Music Lover* 2/4 (August 1936), 125.} Music courses in the public schools, which were much less prevalent before the 1920s,
also increased. Radio furthermore stimulated the production of some new educational music publications. *The American Music Lover*, a magazine for recorded music fans (phonographs and radio), started publication in 1935. The contents, dealing both with art music and jazz, clearly focused on the general public, rather than studio teachers and professionals. This bi-monthly periodical frequently introduced European master composers and discussed new recordings and future radio programs.

The second issue of *The American Music Lover* included an advertisement by Harcourt, Brace and Company, for a series of study scores with formal commentaries actually written on the musical scores. Their first publication was *The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven in Score*. The advertisement for this edition stated that “orchestra scores are no longer used for actual conducting or for analytical purposes in the study of musical theory; musicians and music lovers are becoming more and more accustomed to using them at concerts or when listening to radio broadcasts and phonograph recordings.”

Another factor affecting perceptions of serious music on the radio is that during the 1930s radio became a more important part of people’s domestic lives, since radio receivers were generally considered home furnishings. Different from the early hand-made receivers, which were considered a noble experiment in home garages, the radio of the late 1920s and the 1930s, due to easier tuning and improved sonic quality, became a part of everyday life. With mass-produced receivers, people’s focus changed from the experimentation of transmitting various sounds wirelessly to a listening activity on the new medium. By 1934, Howard Hanson was able to say, “Music has never played such a vital part in the life of the average man. With our theater orchestras, the radio, the phonograph, to say nothing of our symphonic and operatic

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72 Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting 1899-1922* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 153. She also points out that between 1929 and 1939 the number of major symphony orchestras increased from ten to seventeen and the total of all the American orchestra increased from 60 to 286. Douglas does not give enough proof that this increase was due to the radio broadcasting of concert music, but these phenomena did coincide with the growth of network broadcasting and their serious music programs.

73 Today, this magazine is known as the *American Record Guide*.

74 *The American Music Lover* 1/2 (June 1935), 144-145.

organizations, it is almost inconceivable to think of our country stripped of the ministration of the art of music.”

People marveled at serious music sounding in their own homes. As Paul Girard points out, “before the advent of radio or electrical recordings, no one ever seriously considered the symphony orchestra as a factor in the parlor. . . it [radio] has made an absolutely foreign element an agreeable and enjoyable one in the home.”

Of course, the contribution of Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini and his career with the NBC Symphony Orchestra cannot be ignored. Although he was popular before the appearance with this radio orchestra, the broadcasting of his concerts was consistently supported by commercial funds. Toscanini himself, however, was not particularly interested in his popular appeal. He refused to talk to the radio audience and refused to appear in movies. As Joseph Horowitz described, the extensive promotion of this conductor was carried on by “all the other people.”

Educational programs also helped popularize art music. Before Toscanini’s arrival in the United States, Walter Damrosch hosted his “Music Appreciation Hour” on NBC, in which he introduced many European masterpieces from the symphonic literature. He became the Musical Counsel to this network on 1 May 1927 after his retirement as the music director of the New York Philharmonic, and then started his own program in 1928 aiming at three types of audience: teachers, grammar-school children, and high school and college students. According to Westphal, thousands of schools used the program as a regular part of the school curriculum, millions of adults tuned in, and thousands of encouraging letters were sent to NBC.

When presenting art music to the public, Damrosch did not hesitate to use descriptive and picturesque illustrations to explain musical events, because listeners were able to access easily

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76 Howard Hanson, “Conditions Affecting the Development of an American Music,” The Etude 50/4 (April 1934), 247.


80 Ibid., 85.
into what was happening on the radio. For a passage from Brahms’s First Symphony, he provided the following passage so that high-school students could remember the music:

Walking along, singing a song,
Sunshine or stormy weather.
What care I?
So long as you and I are together.\(^8\)

Such an illustration may not be appreciated by those who study music analysis seriously, but it might have appealed to and reached a large number of listeners. H. A. Follows, a former member of the Federal Radio Commission, praised Damrosh’s program and claimed that what a music appreciation program needed was “a friendly informality, suitable for a living-room.”\(^8\)

Because of his effectiveness with introducing art music to radio listeners, Damrosch was well known as a radio host nationwide. When he conducted a symphony orchestra, he welcomed the audience with the same greeting message that he used for his radio show. The people in the concert hall burst into laughter, because what they heard was the friendly voice, which they knew only from their favorite musical show, coming from the very serious-looking musician.\(^8\)

Damrosch’s style of presentation was very successful. By 1938, seven million students had listened to the “Music Appreciation Hour” and over seventy thousand schools used the program as a part of the required curricula. Another four million adults listened to his and other music-appreciation broadcasts.\(^8\)

CBS’s “Everybody’s Music” was also an educational program initiated by their musical consultant, Davidson Taylor. The title of the show clearly proclaims that this program was not intended for an exclusive few but for all the possible listeners who would have tuned into this program on Sunday afternoons.\(^8\) Taylor said,

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The title of the program was chosen not because the repertoire intended to be “popular” in the sense that it would seek to reach listeners of a low average level; on the contrary, the programs have adhered rigidly to the best example of new and old symphonic music, which could be done. The title “Everybody’s Music” expressed a hope and an invitation: a hope that everybody would find the broadcasts approachable, and an invitation for everybody to approach the music unafraid.86

In other words, he wanted to preserve highbrow culture derived from the European (and American) art music traditions but present it to many general listeners, most of whom were the consumers of lowbrow culture.

When CBS started “Everybody’s Music,” serious music was presented to the general public in an accessible manner, possibly in the manner of Walter Damrosch. Deems Taylor, a music commentator at CBS, claimed that when he made comments on music, he tried “to make it real and exciting as a book or a play or a movie, or any of the various forms of entertainment which people enjoy. . . . I don’t have to be a critic or a musicologist. I’m just a toastmaster, whose business it is to whet your appetite for what is to come.”87

It was for this educational program that CBS commissioned twelve composers to write music especially for broadcast, and the executive directors apparently choose composers who would write in accessible styles. As mentioned earlier, Copland, Gershwin, and Grant Still knew jazz. Roy Harris was one of the most popular composers at that time. Howard Hanson was known for his “Romantic” Second Symphony, based on the conventions of nineteenth-century music. Perhaps, such a choice was safe to the public, as well.88

85 Everybody’s Music was a hour-long program aired on Sundays at 2 pm from 3 May 1936 to 17 October 1937 and 3 pm from 15 May 1938 to 23 October 1938. See Jay Hickerson, The Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming and Guide to All circulating Shows (Hamden, CT: Hickerson, 1992) for air times of many other old-time radio shows.


88 More discussions on music styles will be found in Chapter 4.
Cultural Interaction

The interaction of two cultures—popular and serious—was nothing new in American history and radio was not the only forum for such an interaction. As Lawrence Levine observes, the performance history of Shakespeare plays shows a mixture of high and popular cultures in the American theatrical tradition. Being one of most popular cultural events in colonial America, Shakespeare’s plays were both artistic and entertaining. For example, a performance of a Shakespearean play in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries consisted of the play itself along with other kinds of entertainment, magic acts, dances, songs, acrobats, a minstrel show, and perhaps a comedian. People from a variety of social classes were able to come and enjoy the play or its other entertainments and enthusiastically responded to the stage acts.

The significance of this variety-show approach to performance changed in the later nineteenth century, due to a changing cultural awareness in the American theater, where more “complete” performances of Shakespeare plays were being encouraged. For instance, as early as 1855, the American Theater of San Francisco advertised that there would not be a “farce” attached to the performance of the play “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” because the main Shakespearean play in its complete form was much longer than the version normally staged before. By eliminating the entertaining elements from the theater, only certain people would come to see the play in its more “authentic” setting.

Opera had a similar history in that it started as a genre of entertainment and later was perceived as more serious. One of the seminal factors that made opera appear serious was the language used in a performance. In the early days of American music history, opera had been performed in English, but more and more people demanded performances in the original languages.

Radio was able to unite once-separated cultural types again by abandoning the social context of the opera house and symphony halls and by presenting only the sound of music. Audiences did not have to pay to listen, did not have to go to any specific place at a specific time, and did

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not have to wear any formal clothes. This enabled people from different social classes to listen to serious American music. Although initially radio ownership fell along income lines when radio was still experimental and expensive, receivers eventually became available to most of the American population. In the late 1920s, the average price of a radio sets was still about $100. According to a survey in 1935, the percentage of households owning radios related to annual income as follows.

Table 3-3: Family Income and Radio Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual family income</th>
<th>Percentage of homes in this income group owning radios.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over $10,000</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$5,000</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000-$3,000</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,000-$2,000</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,000-$1,000</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Psychologists Cantril and Allport observed that although the table shows the wealthiest households owned the most receivers, the strongest supporters of broadcasting were “middle-class” citizens.

Radio’s representation of two different cultures, popular and serious, was in a sense inevitable. Different from today’s multiple local stations, each of which treat one or only a few musical genres, the earlier networks had to broadcast all genres of music as well as other forms of entertainments, such as sports and news shows. The medium could not control the type of radio audience directly, since anyone who had an access to the receiver was able to hear all the programs provided by the station. Only the contents and the broadcasting time would have been able to have an effect on the type of listener. For example if a certain program was aired in the

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91 Taken from Cantril and Allport, *The Psychology of Radio*, 87.
daytime, most listeners would have been housewives who stayed at home and had an access to the receiver, because other family members were very likely at work or school.

**Summary**

It might be overtly simplistic to divide all the cultural activities of the United States into two opposite camps such as serious and popular. In fact, both American jazz and European serious music were broadcast on the same network station, and therefore it is possible to say that radio represented both popular and serious cultures. These cultural stereotypes, however, illuminate the cultural tension and disputes that existed in the 1930s among radio directors, critics, educators, sponsors, and radio listeners, all of whom came with their own value judgments of culture. Musically, jazz was always the center of such cultural disputes. It was new and attractive and was enjoyed by the majority of Americans on the one side and it was related to the bad morals on the other hand. For those who were critical about this musical genre, the amount of jazz music appeared crucial, as this music seems to affect the whole character of radio in American society.

Opinions from the popular side were naturally strong. As American radio networks were generally all commercial, they wanted to make their broadcasts attractive to the largest audience possible who would hear advertising message, along with music, and broadcasters needed to demonstrate their commercial messages’ effectiveness regarding the sales of the advertised products. Naturally, they would provide what listeners wanted, jazz, rather than less attractive genres of music, with which the chances of advertisement heard by radio listeners could have been severely small.

American radio in the 1930s, however, was not able to survive simply by providing the most profitable music, partly because radio stations were expected to behave like public institutions, and there were strong voices to make American radio look more “prestigious” by more broadcasts of serious music. Educators also pointed out serious music’s educational value on the nation’s children.
Although radio directors had the power to make final decisions regarding their choices of music, they were always in the middle of various opinions; and, in the 1930s, these various opinions can be seen in sharply distinguished polemics. One of the easiest ways to get the most satisfactory results would have been to mix two cultures: such as popularizing art music and making popular music sound more serious. Such mixtures may not have satisfied the extremists but might have resulted in a wide audience coming from both sides.

Mixing elements emblematic of highbrow and lowbrow cultures in American society did not always need such deliberate actions. The absence of visual information helps to detach the cultural contexts inherited from visual information associated with various genres of music. Performance spaces--concert halls and opera houses for serious music and cafés and nightclubs for popular music--were not just filled with music but all other visual elements such as a dress code, and social class. Radio successfully eliminated these cultural symbols and presented just the sounds of music.

Radio’s private nature enhanced the elimination of cultural contexts, because what listeners saw when they were listening to a radio broadcast, was just a radio receiver or a living room. Although the quality of a receiver would be different based on each family’s economical status, whoever tuned in one particular station at one particular time would have been able to receive the same sound of music regardless of a listener’s social class or race. Radio waves simply cannot distinguish these factors; only human beings have the ability to do so.
CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Introduction

This chapter will examine the social context that surrounded early radio music. It includes a variety of issues. First, the chapter will discuss radio’s role as a patron that supported composers and musicians, expanded the serious-music audience, and educated the public. Second, the chapter will deal with social influences on the musical styles of radio music. As a concrete example, Marc Blitzstein’s I've Got the Tune will be extensively analyzed as an expression of the 1930s, as a musical piece reflective of the composer’s social awareness, and as an example of the radio-music style created under the influence of these two elements.

Radio as Patron

One of radio’s most significant contributions to the history of art music was its role as a patron. Large network stations supported composers and musicians in various ways. NBC provided a total of $10,000 to five composers in their Orchestral Awards in 1932. CBS, more directly, commissioned new works especially written for radio in 1937 and 1938. They paid each of twelve composers $500 as “a modest honorarium” for the premier and $150 for each repeat performance by their radio orchestra, the CBS Symphony Orchestra.¹

Enzo Archetti, although talking about phonographs, noticed the potential of media as a new type of patron in the twentieth century. He pointed out,

The modern composer is no longer dependent on a generous patron or a sympathetic interpretive artist for a hearing. Nor is he dependent upon special performances at Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge concerts, at Music Festivals, or by the League of Composers--all strictly local and therefore limited gatherings.²

Archetti was right in that phonograph records (and by extension radio) were able to reach a much wider audience, but his observations seemed too optimistic, because not all composers living in the United States were equally supported or publicized by radio and recording producers. Rather, record companies or radio directors would choose certain composers, just as other patrons did.

Patronage by radio stations was nevertheless different, because the monetary support for composers did not come from a wealthy individual. The money used for NBC’s competition and CBS’s commissions were taken from profits made by their commercial programs, and they were not necessarily musical programs. The sponsors, who paid money to radio stations, did not always know every aspect of the radio business, even though their opinion would have affected the programming to a certain degree. Radio directors and programmers were therefore more directly responsible for the contents of the program and the use of the funds from profits. In a sense, American composers were indirectly supported by advertisers.³

Composers naturally welcomed the new opportunities given by broadcasters. Howard Hanson praised the Columbia Composers’ Commission and said: “American composers always have had to face financial hardship to some degree. . . . This is a step in the right direction.”⁴ An Esquire columnist expressed a desired that reflected nationalistic ambitions: “If radio continues to encourage the production of new music, and spread knowledge of it, we may become a musical nation.”⁵ In the late 1930s, NBC felt pressure to broadcast more new music on radio. Frank J.

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² Enzo Archetti, “The Record--As Spokesman for the Composer,” The American Music Lover 1/2 (June 1935), 68.

³ The problem of “who is paying for radio” was much debated throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. See Susan Smulyan, Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

⁴ Howard Hanson, quoted in “Dr. Hanson Chosen for Air Premier Series,” Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (6 October 1936), 17.
Black thought that NBC was “under [a] greater obligation for presenting new works than any local symphony” because of their “lofty position.”

Radio also provided composers with the opportunity to become “staff composers” who wrote incidental music for radio dramas, including theme songs or “signatures” for various radio productions. Gail Kubik, an American composer, claimed that writing for radio was new and valuable especially to young American composers, while most composers of the previous generations had established themselves already as professionals and were not always enthusiastic about finding new jobs in radio studios. Perhaps Kubik said this because he knew certain musical skills were required especially for staff composers. According to Ernest LaPrade, staff composers needed to acquire the “tricks of the trade.” Such tricks included effective writing for “any conceivable” instrumentation “from a trio to a symphony orchestra,” and making background music that did not “overpower or distract attention from the dialogue,” but “establish a mood, suggest a scene, or intensify an emotion with a few measures of music.” Staff composers had to compose incidental music very quickly; they were expected to provide scores for a few programs every week, but in extreme cases, they had to create a score for a thirty-minute program “on less than twenty-four hours’ notice.”

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5 Clipping in Scrapbook Volume 8, Group I, Series 4, Subseries 1, William Grant Still–Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, quoted in Margaret Susan Key, “‘Sweet Melody over Silent Wave’: Depression-Era Radio and the American Composer,” (Ph. D. diss., The University of Maryland, 1995), 77.


7 Aaron Copland further proposed the idea of hiring “regular staff composers, very much in the way that Count Esterházy employed Haydn.” Here Copland’s “staff composers” are very likely to be those who write full-fledged concert pieces rather than incidental music for dramas or commercial jingles. Copland quoted in Joseph Horowitz, Understanding Toscanini: A Social History of American Concert Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 266.


10 Ibid., 100.
Staff composers arranged non-orchestral music and reduced instrumentations to fit the requirement of the smaller ensemble typically used on a radio show.\footnote{Ibid., 29.} As of 16 December 1935, NBC had the following four staff arrangers:

Table 4-1: Arrangers at NBC and Their Salaries\footnote{Taken from Thomas H. Belviso to Alfred H. Morton, 16 December 1935, NBC History Files, Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Reference Center, Folder 212. NBC also had to pay overtime after 6 pm.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arranger</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry Gerstle</td>
<td>$427.50 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles N. Grant</td>
<td>$375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude MacArthur</td>
<td>$375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolf Schmid</td>
<td>$427.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total per month</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1605.00</strong> for arrangers working 38 hours per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Radio orchestration tended to be bigger than that for dance bands. The most popular printed orchestrations were scored for Violin A, B, & C, Piano, Guitar, Bass, two Saxophones, Trumpet, Trombone, and Drums, according to the “regulation dance band orchestration supplied by most publishers.”\footnote{Ibid.} The radio orchestra, on the other hand, often added two clarinets, two horns, viola, cello, flute, oboe, bassoon, and harp.\footnote{Ibid.} Their arrangements were all archived in the station’s music library for later use.

Furthermore, there were copyists who extracted parts from manuscripts; they transposed accompaniments and marked cues, cuts, and corrections in existing parts.\footnote{LaPrade, Broadcasting Music, 29.} NBC paid copyists by the page they extracted, even though the network changed that policy to one cent per measure in 1936. That policy changed at this time was due to some copyists who intentionally began

\footnote{LaPrade, Broadcasting Music, 29.}
writing big notes to expand the page numbers for more payment, “whereas another more honest copyist would give double and sometimes triple the amount of work for the same price.”\(^{16}\)

### Musicians, Librarians

Radio’s patronage was not limited to composers, because it provided a variety of new jobs for musicians. For example, network stations had supported their own symphony orchestras; since their musical programs were mostly broadcast live, even though local stations relied more frequently on recorded music. Radio stations also employed dance bands, chamber ensembles, organists, and conductors.\(^ {17}\) Perhaps, the most famous among such radio musicians was the Italian maestro Arturo Toscanini, who became a conductor of the NBC Symphony Orchestra. In fact, the NBC Symphony Orchestra became a full-fledged concert orchestra solely for his performance, and Toscanini conducted it from 1937 to 1954, bringing the network great success and enhancing its reputation. This legendary conductor introduced many European masterpieces to the general public and proved that serious music broadcasts could be profitable to the sponsors and become a part of ordinary people’s lives.\(^ {18}\)

Additionally, network stations needed people for their large music libraries, which kept published music and manuscripts as well as phonograph records.\(^ {19}\) NBC’s music library, “The Walter Damrosch Symphony Library,” owned about 350,000 items.\(^ {20}\) All materials were catalogued alphabetically by composer or by various other classifications, such as “nationality,

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\(^{16}\) W. H. Magill to Helen Guy, 30 June 1936, NBC History Files, Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Reference Center, Folder 212.


\(^{18}\) Of course, phonograph records of serious music had been sold widely and expanded the listening public of this kind of music; Toscanini might only have awakened the public’s interests. His career with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, however, has been a decisive influence in the course of music history. For social contexts surrounded Toscanini, see Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini: A Social History of American Concert Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

\(^{19}\) LaPrade, *Broadcasting Music*, 28.

\(^{20}\) Frank J. Black, a report of the 1937-38 season written for John F. Royal, NBC History Files, Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Reference Center, Folder 207.
and mood, or historical connection.”

A card index was provided for conductors to find a piece that would fit a specific mood. According to Ernest LaPrade, NBC acquired music by purchase, loan, or rental; and they often rented the printed and manuscript scores to other stations.

Besides manuscripts and printed music in libraries, radio stations stored instruments for use by musicians, and they were maintained by other staff members. By the end of World War II, the NBC studio in New York had forty-five pianos, one three-manual pipe organ, eleven electronic organs, four Novachords, fourteen vibraphones, eight xylophones, one marimba, ten pairs of timpani, twelve bass drums, one harp, ten sets of chimes, four sets of temple blocks, four gongs, one pneumatic calliope, and nine celestas.

According to George Zachary, music broadcasting also needed a “production man,” who timed programs, placed musicians in the studio to achieve a good sound balance, and arranged the length and sequence of announcements. The skills required for this position were knowledge of music literature, score reading, knowledge of the various functions of microphones, and the basics of radio engineering.

Publicity of Composers

Radio’s contribution to American composers was not limited to their financial support; the medium introduced and promoted new music to a large audience. In the presentation program for the NBC Orchestral Awards, the announcer, Deems Taylor, invited all the awarded composers to

21 LaPrade, Broadcasting Music, 28.

22 Ibid., 28.

23 Ibid., 39. The novachord is a polyphonic electronic organ created by the Hammond Company. It was their first electronic-tube based instrument. See F. D. Merril, Jr., “The Novachord,” Electronics 12/11 (1939), 16. LaPrade did not mention any other instruments in this description. Perhaps, musicians came to the studio with their own instruments.

speak directly to the listeners.\textsuperscript{25} When CBS aired commissioned pieces, some composers conducted and had chances to talk about their pieces as on the NBC program. Howard Hanson made comments on his Third Symphony and conducted its premier with the CBS Symphony Orchestra. Walter Piston also conducted his Concertino for Piano and Orchestra. Louis Gruenberg spoke about the technological features employed in his radio opera \textit{Green Mansions}.\textsuperscript{26} Roy Harris introduced each movement of his \textit{Time Suite} with the orchestra presenting a brief excerpt from the piece to explain the piece’s programmatic contents.\textsuperscript{27} Radio listeners were able to hear voices of these composers in their living rooms and must have accepted them intimately, even privately, as a part of their lives. Such a type of presentation was more effectively used by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he spoke directly to the people at home on his “fireside chats” broadcasts.

\textbf{Radio Audience}

As many people had an access to a receiver in the 1920s and 1930s, radio had the potential to provide music to everybody in the United States. In the late twenties, the average price of a radio set was about $100, and twelve million homes had radios by the end of 1929. By 1940, twenty-eight million (86\% of the population) had radio sets.\textsuperscript{28} In the same year, Deems Taylor calculated that “there are about thirty-seven million radio sets in use in this country, over which an audience of approximately eighty million persons listen in.”\textsuperscript{29} Opera broadcasts on Saturday

\textsuperscript{25} Not every composer was at the NBC studio in New York; Carl Eppert was in a studio in Chicago. Max Wald was in Paris, and NBC used a short-wave transmission to receive his voice. See the script prepared for the presentation program in Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{26} The script for the radio show, October 1937, typescript, Louis Gruenberg Manuscript Material, New York Public Library.

\textsuperscript{27} Based on a transcription recording provided by Dan Stehman.


\textsuperscript{29} Deems Taylor, \textit{Well-Tempered Listener} (1940), 268.
afternoons in 1938 alone could have brought as many as twelve million listeners. These broadcasts, moreover, extended their listening area outside the United States by short-wave transmission; the Metropolitan Opera was heard in South America, Europe, and Asia. The voice of the legendary Met singer Kirsten Flagstad reached her mother in Oslo, and a Spanish-speaking announcer was provided for the South American Met broadcasts.

Observing these phenomena, radio in late the 1930s could be seen as a medium for advocating new music nationwide. Goddard Lieberson was overjoyed with the radio’s strong potential for providing an audience and said: “An answer! An answer to all those who say that the American composer does not have an audience in America!” George Marek passionately described how much radio contributed to American society:

When you think that today the New York Philharmonic plays for the farmhand on an Iowa plain, for the housewife in a Seattle living room, for the man who fries hamburgers in the Florida roadside rest, and for the earnest young student in Brooklyn who wants to become America’s next great conductor—when you picture this, you must be awed by the universality of radio and be thrilled by the new democracy of music which it has established.

Along with this geographical extension, radio also crossed class boundaries. In 1932, Walter Damrosch “suddenly” found

the opportunity of reaching not only the people who belong to that small, cultured, and well-to-do community, but also the millions of what you and I call the common people. I mean by that the backbone of our people. I mean by that the people who do mechanical work in the factories and in the shops; the artisans, the farmers and farmers’ wives who lived in lonely communities in little villages, on ranches, on the prairies.


31 Ibid., 305.


33 George Marek, How to Listen to Music over the Radio (New York: Pictorial Review, 1934), 4. Marek’s highly visualized and somewhat fantasized view is still alive in a promotional message on public television. In their public announcement, television sets, showing Luciano Pavarotti singing, are placed in various isolated places in the United States. It conveys the message that serious music is available everywhere in the nation thanks to the public television.

Educational programs also provided opportunities for enormous numbers of people to hear serious music. NBC’s “Music Appreciation Hour,” hosted by Walter Damrosch started in 1926. Its regular broadcast season began in October continued to the next April. Only twenty-six stations aired this program in 1928 but the number increased to seventy-four in the 1932-33 season, and 142 in 1938. By 1937, about seven million students in seventy thousand schools, as well as four million adults, were listening in to the “Music Appreciation Hour.”

The program cultivated many enthusiastic listeners of serious music. In the 1928-29 season, NBC received 10,534 letters from the radio audience. The number increased to 17,109 in the next season. These letters often included a variety of questions and required extensive research to prepare responses. The following are some examples:

“Where can I obtain instructions regarding the organization of a toy orchestra?”
“Where can I find biographical data on Emile Waldteufel?”
“How can I ascertain the value of an old violin?”
“Where can I obtain a piano small enough to place on an invalid's bed?”
“Which instrument would you advise my nine-year old daughter to take up -- the horn or the clarinet?”

NBC staff members answered most of these questions, but some were too frivolous. Other kinds of letters included those from members of women’s clubs. These letters frequently asked for help in preparing a paper on a certain subject for a musical program. One letter invited Walter Damrosch to write a paper for the clubs but it was declined “with regrets.”

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35 This program was originally started in 1928 as the “RCA Educational Hour,” sponsored by the Radio Corporation of America. The same show became one of the sustaining programs (see Chapter 3) and was paid for by NBC, with a new name “The NBC Music Appreciation Hour.” See a Report on “The NBC Music Appreciation Hour” (NBC, 1933), NBC History Files, Recorded Sound Reference Center, Library of Congress, Folder 208, unpaged.

36 Horowitz, Understanding Toscanini, 151.

37 Ibid., 203.

38 Quoted in a report on “The NBC Appreciation Hour” for the 1930-31 season, written for Mr. Elwood, NBC History Files, Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Folder 209.

39 Ibid.
CBS provided two music programs related to education. “The American School of the Air,” which featured a series of episodes called “Wellsprings of Music,” aired on Tuesdays from 1940 to 1941.40 “The Ford Sunday Evening Hour” was chosen as the best musical program on the air by the Women’s National Radio Committee.41

There were instructive shows more directly related to musical skills, as well, on local stations. For example, “Dr. Maddy’s Band Lessons,” hosted by Joseph Maddy of the music department of the University of Michigan, was a pedagogical program designed for the performance of wind instruments. This weekly show, started in 1938, was produced at the Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan. Maddy, who was a renowned educator and active participant in the National Music Educators Conference, wrote an accompanying book and it was published by the radio station. The book included simple exercises with the descriptions of their merits.42

According to Philip Kirby, a sales person in the Midlands often stopped his car while he was traveling long distances, and practiced the trombone inside the vehicle, closing all the windows.43

More importantly, radio was able to reach a variety of people who would not have access to serious music without this medium. CBS, for example, received letters from “bed-ridden people” and “old people who ‘had never heard an orchestra before.’” The producer of the “NBC Appreciation Hour” planned to produce student notebooks in Braille type for the visually-impaired with help from the American Red Cross.45 Also, as examined in the previous chapter, people from all social classes and races, perhaps more so than from phonographs, were able to have access to art music, because once a person bought a receiver, he/she did not have to buy


41 Ibid., 57.


43 Ibid., 307.


records, sheet music, or concert tickets to enjoy music. Of course, the music aired on the radio was chosen by directors, and it is naive to think that every musical genre was available at that time, when the number of stations was limited and many supplied the music from the networks’ headquarters. Radio waves, however, did not choose listeners; only the economic factor, related to purchasing the receiver, might have restricted the people with financial difficulties from listening to radio at home.

Furthermore, radio gave listeners access to a wider variety of music than was typically available in concert halls. According to the statistics covering the period from 5 January 1932 to 1 January 1933, the CBS Symphony Orchestra performed 236 symphonic selections, including forty-three complete symphonies, twenty-six piano concerti, twenty violin concerti, thirteen orchestral suites, fifty-four overtures, and sixty-seven tone poems, rhapsodies, and other miscellaneous orchestral pieces. By the time Deems Taylor wrote *The Well-Tempered Listener* in 1940, these numbers dramatically increased. In this book, Taylor quoted a letter from a young woman in Santa Barbara, California, who counted the number of pieces that she heard on the radio in five months (probably CBS, as Taylor was a music consultant for this radio network at that time). Her list contained fifty-five complete symphonies, including all of those by Beethoven, Brahms, and Sibelius, and other individual symphonies by Franck, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, and Shostakovich, as well as 582 overtures, suites, symphonic poems, and ballets.

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47 The financial factor could also include those who chose to spend their money otherwise.

48 Mildred Chetkin, “Studio Orchestra’s Repertoire Larger than That of Average Symphonic Group,” *Musical Courier* 15 April 1933, 28. These musical selections also included a wide historical period, raging from the symphonies of Haydn and the concerti of Bach to Honegger’s *Pacific 231* and Gruenberg’s *Daniel Jazz*.

Radio’s Impact on Society

As examined so far, radio encouraged listeners to learn more about serious music, and it provided opportunities for modern composers and musicians. Radio impacted, furthermore, the style of music, as well. The following sections will examine radio’s social impacts on music styles, particularly focusing on some common traits observed in the radio pieces written for the Columbia Composers’ Commissions, including accessible musical styles and nationalism.

Accessible Musical Style

In concert halls, composers were able to anticipate a certain type of audience. For example, the concert audience typically would have known what was on the program prior to their purchase of tickets. They were also likely to have some knowledge of the composers and their general musical styles before making these purchases. Furthermore, the concert audience needed to fit into the cultural and social constraints of the concert hall etiquette, including the dress code and the type of people who could afford to attend such concerts. While those who listened to serious music on radio might also have been concert-goers, it is obvious that the radio audience would have experienced fewer restrictions for accessing music than concert audience, which eliminated some people based on economical, cultural, and racial factors.

Radio directors, observing the difference between radio listeners and the concert audience, believed that they should provide the inexperienced listener with established masterpieces from the European symphonic repertoire. A letter from Samuel Chotzinoff to Bruno Walter’s manager Bruno Zirato in the 1930s says:

As to NBC hopes that its conductors make selections with a view of a radio audience which numbers many millions. This audience differs somewhat from the audience at regular symphony concerts. A great many listeners are coming in
contact with serious music for the first time in their lives, and it is essential for them to encounter the tried and true classics of the symphonic repertoire.\textsuperscript{50}

The directors’ vision to provide “the tried and true classics” influenced their views concerning twentieth-century compositions: focusing on pieces in accessible styles. Of course, there is no one particular way to make music more accessible, because each person has a different musical experience and different musical background. It can be hypothesized, however, that broadcasters in the 1930s knew that atonal, serial, or ultramodern music was not easily accepted even among the most experienced serious-music listeners. Radio directors were then able to used this knowledge onto radio listeners, who would therefore have had less opportunity to hear music written in modern idioms.

The five jurors for the NBC Orchestral Awards, as discussed in Chapter 1, were all conductors, not composers. They probably knew what types of music would have been accepted by their audiences. Although these jurors could not identify the composers of the awards, they were able to see all the scores and had a power to eliminate what they considered would not have a broad public appeal.

CBS’s choice of composers for their Composers’ Commissions seems to confirm that radio directors were not eager to broadcast the newest, \textit{avant-garde} music to the public. Their choice instead displayed that CBS was aiming at the largest possible audience in the whole nation. This decision was partly due to the nature of programs, since most of the commissions were presented in “Everybody’s Music,” a substitution program for New York Philharmonic’s national broadcasts during the summer. The program was designed to be educational so that “everybody” could approach the music “unafraid.”\textsuperscript{51}

This gap between a modern composition and the public was also perceived by music directors at NBC, as they received a letter from a listener, complaining about their broadcast of modern


music. The listener, Walter G. Mitchell, wrote: “No doubt, some people like the modern composers, but I doubt if the majority of music lovers do... Your program would be better if the majority of it is music composed by the old masters.”

Composers shared this view, as well. Aaron Copland’s *Music for Radio* was written “in a style designed to bridge the gap between modern composition and the need for a wider public. It was written expressly for a large audience of inexperienced listeners, rather than for the more limited number of sophisticated devotees of the concert hall.” For him, writing for a large audience was an American composers’ obligation to the society:

Any composer who ignores the potential mass listeners of the future is simply not aware of the time in which he is living. The new radio and phonograph audience... is a challenge to every contemporary composer. I visualize a music which is profound in content, simple in expression, and understandable to all.

In fact, listener response to the premier of *Music for Radio* was so enormous that more than thousand letters for naming this piece came to CBS (See Chapter 2). Davidson Taylor, who was initially interested in the application of the newest technology of radio to the creation of music, was quite impressed by the social impact of the Copland piece. In a letter to the composer, Davidson Taylor asked if Copland deliberately composed the piece in a “popular” style:

I played the records for Vittorio Giannini... He was very much interested and said, “It doesn’t sound as Aaron Copland used to sound. I am not sure, but perhaps he is more natural now and more himself than he has every been before.” He liked it... Did you actually try to be popular? It’s none of my affair, but I’m curious about it. Did you actually try to be popular in “The Second Hurricane”? Anybody who can write as good tunes as you can ought to write good tunes. Your tunes sound sincere to me. “Music for Radio” sounds sincere.

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52 Meyer, “Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra),” 313 and 314.


54 Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 through 1942* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 154

I think you have imposed upon yourself some limitations of simplicity in both works, but I believe that you really care about simplicity. Am I near the facts?  

Prior to the 1930s, most European and American serious composers generally wrote for a small number of the elite who could understand the intellectual background and subtleties of modern music. The advent of radio broadcast of American music during this period changed this power relationship, because composers now had to deal with a larger proportion of the general public to be successful. In this situation, the audience had the power to choose the composers, rather than vice versa.

According to Copland, “the revolutionary pace” in modern music “was clearly bogging down” and music became “normal” by the 1940s because composers began seeking “the approval, not of the audience of the future but of the audience of today.” Perhaps he had had such an impression since this composer received overwhelming reactions toward his *Music for Radio*. Indeed, along with his opera *The Second Hurricane* (1937), this radio piece marked Copland’s departure from avant-garde writing to a simple, accessible one.

**Nationalism**

**Introduction**

There are many definitions of the word nationalism, and the word’s meaning changes according to political and cultural views, historical period, and the geographical area with which the word is associated. Nationalism, however, is generally considered as an “ideology based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individuals or group interests.” Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary uses a similar

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56 Davidson Taylor to Aaron Copland 30 July 1937, Library of Congress, Copland Collection, Box 335, Folder 9.

57 A script for radio titled “WABC Howard Barlow--CBS Symphony Orchestra--May 26, 1946,” Aaron Copland Collection, The Library of Congress, Box 216, Folder 41.

58 Copland’s Piano Variations (1930) would represent his avant-garde era.

definition: “loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.” In both definitions, nouns like “loyalty” and “devotion” are decisive because, as Richard Turaskin points out, nationalism is an attitude, and not to be confused with nationality, which is a condition, as nobody can choose the country in which he or she is born.

Then the question arises as to the meaning of the word “nation.” This chapter uses a definition by Benedict Anderson, who conceives a nation as “an imagined political community.” It is imagined because Anderson “concedes that all communities larger than villages with face-to-face contact are imagined.” Louis L. Snyder alludes to six elements that would create such an “imagined community” among people: (1) common territory, (2) common language, (3) religion, (4) common history, tradition, and customs, (5) national heroes, and (6) will to unite. The first of these six elements, common territory, seems obvious, as a nation in the 1930s equates to a political territory. A more important aspect, when it comes to the United States, is that a nation may consist of a mixture of diverse ethnic groups, but as a political unit, it is singular. This distinction becomes important when one talks about Americanism, which, in many cases, deals with the cultural diversity of the country, rather than political unity.

The second element for an imagined society, common language, was apparent especially in the 1930s since most programs from the network stations used English as a primary language as today’s major TV networks do. The third element, religion, may not have had a direct relation to radio or music, but many local stations would have broadcast church services on Sundays.

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60 Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1994), 773.


64 Louis L. Snyder, Variety of Nationalism: A Comparative Study (Hinsdale, IL, 1975), 20-23.
The most important element among the six mentioned by Snyder would be the fourth, common history, tradition, and customs, because radio can effectively create these quickly by providing the same information to a majority of Americans. Anderson points out that an “imagined community” was created by printed media and capitalism, but this is also true for electronic media.65

The fifth element, national heroes, would be clearly seen in radio dramas that features heroes like the “Lone Ranger” or in music, such as Aaron Copland’s *John Henry*. 66  The final element, the will to unite, was felt by many Americans. In fact, as Richard H. Pells pointed out, radio served “as an antidote to the fragmentation and chaos of the depression years. . . giving the lonely individual the impression that he was a member of some vast social unity.”67

**Musical Background**

Nationalistic expressions by American composers were stimulated by various elements surrounding their lives. One of these was the American radio network, which became increasingly a national medium in the 1930s. Susan Smulyan observed that the nationalization of the medium had its origin in three climates in the 1920s: the economic, technological, and intellectual.68  First, the economic climate of this period was most clearly symbolized by the existence of large companies such as the Radio Company of America, which seized controls of the production of receivers and of radio programs at the same time. With their financial strength, the company influenced the radio communication system of the whole nation.69  Second, the technological climate was represented in the fact that these large companies had interests in

65  “Imagined Communities,” 46.

66  The radio series of “Lone Ranger” was aired from 31 January 1933 to 31 August 1955 from station WXYZ in Detroit, Michigan.


creating a few nation-wide transmission systems rather than numerous small, community-based local ones. Third, the intellectual climate for the creation of a national network was seen in America’s general belief in mass media’s potential for uniting the whole nation. While many felt, before the arrival of radio broadcasting, that the country was fragmented into various opposing groups, such as immigrant versus native-born, and rural versus urban, radio provided one tool to meld these groups and interests

Another element that led American composers to musical nationalism was their return from studies abroad in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Among them, four composers who wrote for Columbia Composers Commissions were pupils of Nadia Boulanger: Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, and Walter Piston. These composers not only acquired compositional skills from the renowned teacher in Paris but also were exposed to the newest musical currents in Europe, which were very different from the “German orthodoxy,” that had influenced them prior to their European studies. They were eager to establish new music idioms that sounded uniquely American.

National Qualities Envisioned by Radio Directors

Radio directors felt a need for presenting more American music on the air. They consciously hired American musicians and presented new American works. NBC’s 1932 Orchestral Awards did not specifically aim at presenting works that expressed musical Americana, but its social impact on the musical talents of the country was obviously vast. More than five hundred manuscripts from all over the United States were submitted; and the final judges were chosen from radio listeners from every part of the nation. Besides, the competition was not international and the applicants were limited to American citizens.

70 Ibid., 31.

71 Ibid., 30.

72 The term “German orthodoxy” was used by Alan Howard Levy in his Musical Nationalism: American Composers' Search for Identity (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), 3.

Howard Barlow, a conductor for the CBS Symphony Orchestra, praised radio’s potential to expand the listening area for American music beyond the state of New York and expanded to a national level. Since most concerts did not regularly program American pieces, and these pieces were performed mostly in big cities like New York, Barlow was happy to present new American music outside of the city with his radio orchestra. In a *Newsweek* article, Barlow said: “I feel it is timely to seize the magnificent opportunity offered by radio to have music heard beyond the borders of New York, which is not America.”

Perhaps, his “America” was an assemblage of large cities, in which major American orchestras resided.

James H. Fassett of CBS pointed out that an economic factor especially gave radio chances to provide more American music to a large audience, while the same economic factor eliminated American compositions from conventional concert halls.

> In a way we have greater freedom than musicians who are making programs for non-broadcast consumption—that is, for concert hall programs which are heard by only a few hundred people. There are outstanding exceptions, of course—but on the whole orchestral concerts, vocal and piano recitals, etc., given in New York and other major music centers of the United States are restricted to time-tried music which the box office audience will not be afraid of. I am sure you can swamp me with innumerable exceptions—all of which I grant. But against each one you can place dozens of concerts in which no American music is heard.

Broadcasting American music, according to Davidson Taylor of CBS, was “coming to be characteristic of American radio.” He even felt radio’s obligation, not just its potential, to American composers: “It is inevitable that radio broadcasting should recognize its responsibility toward these [American] composers.” Feeling this kind of obligation, some radio directors criticized the musicians who did not perform much American music. For example, Arturo Toscanini, regardless of his contribution to introducing European masterpieces to the United

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States, was not able to escape such criticism. Sigmund Spaeth expressed his frustration with Toscanini's limited selection of American music: “I do blame [Toscanini] for his contemptuous attitude toward American music, and for the brazen chauvinism which leads him to play the puerilities of tenth-rate Italian composers in preference to making some honest effort to discover first-rate American Music.”\(^7^8\) Roy Harris also expressed his frustration at American broadcaster’s indifference towards American compositions: “First in the concert halls, then with the reproducing records and now with radio, the American public has been and is still being led through the same imported musical literature and the same ‘personality hokum’ about European ‘Maestro’ interpreters. The business men of music have learned a lucrative formula.”\(^7^9\)

In such a circumstance, Gruenberg saw the Columbia Composers’ Commissions of 1937 as truly an extraordinary initiative by a radio network. After listening to pieces written for this occasion, he was overwhelmed with the results: “European supremacy in music is passing. There isn’t another country in the world that could produce a two-hour concert of contemporary works which measure[s] up to this one.”\(^8^0\)

**Expression of musical Americana**

When CBS commissioned new pieces for radio in 1937 and 1938, they did not restrict the composer’s choices concerning subject matter. Many composers, however, dealt with American themes, and the nationalistic elements described by Louis L. Snyder can be observed in radio pieces, as well. For example, radio music frequently featured various places in the United States. Jerome Moross expresses the great plains in *A Tall Story* written for the 1938 commission. Moross described what prompted him to write a piece on this American place as follows:

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\(^{78}\) Sigmund Spaeth, A 1941 address to the National Federation of Music Clubs, quoted in Key “‘Sweet Melody over Silent Wave’: Depression-Era Radio and the American Composer” (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1995), 85.

\(^{79}\) Harris, “Does Music Have to be European?” *Scribner’s* 91/4 (April 1932), 206, quoted in Key, “Sweet Melody over Silent Wave,” 60-61.

I remember it was really one of the most wonderful experiences I’d had—that first view of the Great Plains and the far west. The dimensions of everything starting with the Great Plains just overawed me. It did something to me that was extraordinary—don’t ask me what—it’s like people getting religion or something. . . . I remember I got off the bus at Albuquerque and stayed there a few days before I just couldn’t leave. . . . You walked eight blocks and you were in the desert. That was all I could do, I could look at the desert and I never thought the desert and the mountains could be absolutely marvelous.  

Moross employed various musical features for an expression of American place. For example, mixture of major and minor triads in this melody, which shows an influence from blues (Example 4-1).

Example 4-1: Jerome Moross, *A Tall Story* (mm. 1 to 10).

![Example 4-1: Jerome Moross, *A Tall Story* (mm. 1 to 10).](image)

Also, the silence found in many of the orchestral parts gives an impression of a spacious landscape evocative of the great plains. Furthermore, Goddard Liberson, who reviewed the premier, pointed out that Moross used the temple blocks that would have reminded listeners of “Ferde Grofé’s mule,” and picturesque music suggested “a billboard showing the profile of William S. (Bill) Hart,” an American stage and silent movie actor, who was the leading hero of the early westerns.  

William Grant Still’s *Lenox Avenue* had a much clearer tie to a specific place: Harlem. This piece is divided into twelve “episodes,” some of which have names closely related to this

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81 Moross interviewed by Mike Snell, 4 February 1978, quoted in Charles Greenwell, notes for the recording of *A Tall Story*, Koch International Classics 3-7367-2 HI.


Still worked on a piece about an African-American street before writing this piece. Central Avenue, based on the byway of the same name in Los Angeles, was written in 1934. As Wayne Shirley stated, the first half of Central Avenue was very similar to Lenox Avenue. Also, Still was deliberately seeking to write a piece with an American expression when he was approached by CBS. He wired Deeds Taylor the following ambitious message: “I plan to write something American in character adapted to radio in a way that no major symphonic work has yet been adapted.”

Two other pieces written for CBS featured Broadway in New York. Marc Blitzstein’s song-play, I’ve Got the Tune, begins with a walk of two characters--Mr. Musiker and Beetzie--on Broadway to a park. After traveling all around the world, they come back to New York. The street noise and the bell on an old trolley indicate their return to the urban setting. Another piece that deals with Broadway was the first movement of Roy Harris’s Time Suite in six movements. The title has two meanings. First, there was a real time element in these six movements: the first movement lasts for one minute, and the second lasts two, and the third

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83 All these titles are taken from the script for the announcer used for the premier of Lenox Avenue. University of Arkansas, William Grant Still and Verna Arvey Papers, Group 3, Subseries 6, Box 97. Today, Sections 1, 5, 6 and 7 are named “The Crap Game,” “Dance of the Boys,” and “Dance of the Man from Down South,” and “The Old Man (The Philosopher) respectively. See Denise Von Glahn, Sounds of Place: Music and the American Musical Landscape (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003).

84 Von Glahn claims that Lenox and 135th Street was “a regular gathering place of ‘political and race radicals’” and religion and politics were never apart in this community. Ibid.

85 For details about these two pieces, see Wayne Shirley, “Central Avenue and Lenox Avenue,” unpublished paper presented at “A Tribute to WGS,” Flagstaff, AZ, 26 June 1998.


87 See the next section for more detailed discussions about this Blitzstein piece.
three, and so on through the fifth, except the sixth movement that lasts for only four minutes. Second, the piece is about Harris’s generation, or his “time.” Roy Harris made the following comments on his *Time Suite*:

I’m sure most of you have experienced a few seconds, which seem a lifetime long, and so in the time unit of one minute, radio expresses many different things. So in composing a work for radio, it occurred to me that a *Time Suite* would be quite appropriate. As Mr. Neely has indicated, this is not only a Time Suite, but a suite of our time. And the six movements consider six different aspects of our society.

The first movement is dedicated to Broadway. According to Harris, this movement “characterizes the asymmetrical rhythm for which Broadway is justly famous.” What Harris exactly meant by “asymmetrical rhythm” is not clear, but hocket-like alternations of a brief motive between the trumpet and French horn occasionally have syncopations (Example 4-2a). Also, the irregular accentuation of the main melody on the violins may create a syncopated effect (Example 4-2b).

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88 Originally, Harris intended to make the last movement seven-minutes long. Each of the six movements had been outlined as follows: (1) Fanfare for Brass, (2) Hymn for strings, woodwinds, and horns, (3) Gigue with woodwinds and trumpet emphasized, (4) March for the entire orchestra, (5) Chorale (6) Double fugue for full orchestra. See Harris, quoted in “Columbia Broadcasting Co. Commission New Radio Works,” *The American Music Lover* 2/7 (November 1936), 210.

89 Roy Harris’s comments spoken before the premier of *Time Suite*, transcribed from a recording provided by Dan Stehman.
Example 4-2: Roy Harris, *Time Suite*, Movement 1, (a) Trumpets and French Horns (mm. 1-9); (b) Melody on the Violins (mm. 5-16).

(a)

(b)

The use of a common language, Snyder’s second characteristic of nationalism, is seen in the use of the English language in radio operas. Louis Gruenberg’s *Green Mansions*, Blitzstein’s *I’ve
Got the Tune, and Vittorio Giannini’s Beauty and the Beast, all written for CBS, were composed to English texts. Outside the CBS commissions, Gian Carlo Menotti’s first English-language opera for NBC, The Old Maid and the Thief, could serve as an example.90

The religious element, described by Snyder as one of the elements and to create nationalism can be found in William Grant Still’s Lenox Avenue and Roy Harris’s Time Suite. Still used gospel-like choir in two sections of the piece: “The Mission” and “Finale.” The second movement of Roy Harris’s Time Suite is evoking religion in its hymn-like sounds. Harris described that two church modes to give this movement a Christian taste: the Phrygian and Lydian. The composer also claimed that the texture of the movement is “purely contrapuntal” and generally “treated in the vocal style.”91

Another important aspect heard in much radio music was Snyder’s fourth element: common history, tradition, and customs. Among various elements, the use of folksongs quickly established the sense of common tradition, as folksongs would be considered a national resource and have close ties to the history of a particular country. One of the most explicit examples of this category would be Roy Harris’ Folksong Symphony, written for NBC. This seven-movement orchestral work with choir consists of two interludes without choir and five named choral movements: “Welcome Party” (first movement), “Western Cowboy” (second movement), “Mountaineer Love Song” (fourth movement), “Negro Fantasy” (sixth movement), and “Final” (seventh movement). These choral movements are arrangements of well-known American folk tunes. For example, the “Welcome Party” uses a famous Civil War song The Girl I Left Behind Me and Good Night Ladies and the “Western Cowboy” uses Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie.92

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91 Harris quoted in John Tasker Howard, Our Contemporary Composers (New York: Crowell, 1942), 142. Unfortunately, the movement does not survive in the manuscript.

92 Dan Stehman, Roy Harris: A Bio-Bibliography (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991), 76-77. The arrangement of Bury Me Not on Lonely Prairie in the Folk Song Symphony is different from the one in Cowboy Songs, even though Harris used the mixture of major and minor harmonies for a background on strings, and the folk tune is performed on the French horn at the beginning.
Henry Cowell, Roy Harris, and many other composers wrote new radio pieces based on folk tunes for CBS when the network produced a series of episodes on American music for the “American School of the Air,” a famous educational program in the 1930s. Henry Cowell composed Reel for CBS Symphony Orchestra, based on his earlier piano composition titled Reel for Lilt. Harris created Cowboy Songs, which was premiered at the CBS studios in New York on 24 October 1939 by the CBS Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Bernard Hermann. This piece used three folksongs: Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie, Old Paint, and The Old Chisholm Trail. In the opening of Cowboy Songs, the French Horn plays a folk tune Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie on the accompaniment by strings (Example 4-3). In this section, Harris used his peculiar harmonization, mixing major and minor harmonies, as well as a contrapuntal writing seen in many of his other works.

Different from the compositions discussed so far, the nationalistic expression in Howard Hanson’s Third Symphony is hard to explain. The piece did not express distinctive American history or tradition in a programmatic sense. The only clue to American culture can be found in the fact that the symphony was written to commemorate Hanson’s hometown and cultural heritage, as he gave the following notes for his Third Symphony:

93 The program was hosted by Alan Lomax. His series in 1941 was called “Wellsprings of Music.” The show on 31 March 1941 consisted of the following selections, performed by the CBS Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Philip James: (1) Orchestral arrangement of Whoopee-ti-yi-yo by Amadeo Filippi, a CBS radio arranger, (2) Edward MacDowell’s From an Indian Lodge, performed by the composer, (3) Indian Canzonetta by Antonín Dvořák, (4) Selections from Giacomo Puccini’s The Girl of the Golden West, (5) Borodin’s On the Steppes of Central Asia, (6) Gail Kubik’s Sketch for Chamber Orchestra (based on Whoopee-ti-yi-yo), and (7) Arkansas Traveler, arranged by Joseph Cacciola, a CBS arranger. See William Fineshriber to Philip James, 31 March 1941, Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Box 27.
Example 4-3, Harris, *Cowboy Songs*, Opening

Temperamentally the Third Symphony is more closely related to the Nordic Symphony than to the Romantic. It springs definitely from the North, and has its genesis in my reverence for the spiritual contribution that has been made to our country by that sturdy race of northern pioneers who, as early as 1638, founded the first Swedish settlement on the Delaware and who were in later centuries to constitute such a mighty force in the conquering of the west.\(^ {94}\)

\(^{94}\) Hanson, quoted in Schima Kaufman, *Everybody’s Music* (New York: Crowell, 1938), 131.
National heroes, Snyder’s sixth element for the creation of nationalism, can be seen in Copland’s *John Henry*. John Henry is a fictive hero of widely sung Black American folk ballad. It symbolized a hard-working American who cultivated the country during the modern industrialization. This piece, like Harris’s *Cowboy Songs* and Cowell’s *Reel for CBS Orchestra*, was written for a CBS program “American School of the Air: Folk-Music of America.” Also, Vittorio Giannini composed *A Thedore Roosevelt Memorial Symphony* for the Roosevelt memorial program on 19 January 1936. The composer conducted the NBC Symphony Orchestra for its premier.

**Marc Blitzstein’s I’ve Got The Tune : “Today’s Music” On Radio**

**Introduction**

Marc Blitzstein signed a contract with Columbia Artists on 12 August 1937 to write a new piece for radio broadcast. This thirty-minute dramatic work, titled *I’ve Got The Tune*, was to be completed on 4 October 1937 and premiered on the program “Columbia Workshop” on CBS, 24 October 1937. Blitzstein wrote both the libretto and music for this piece and submitted “the dramatic script or “book,” a condensed piano score, as well as a full score.

Following the restrictions set by CBS, Blitzstein could use a chorus of no more than twelve voices, a cast of no more than nine principals, and an orchestra of no more than twenty-four players: one flute, one oboe, one bassoon, two horns, two clarinets, two trumpets, one trombone,

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98 Columbia Artists to Marc Blitzstein, 12 August 1937, Marc Blitzstein Papers, Historical Society of Wisconsin, Box 39, Folder 1.
six violins, two violas, two celli, one piano, and percussion.99 Blitzstein received $500 for the commission, and another $150 for each of the repeat performances.100

Blitzstein and Socialism

Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964) was famous as a socialist composer. In fact, I’ve Got The Tune has been considered one of the representative pieces during his “agit-prop” era, along with his most popular theatrical piece, The Cradle Will Rock.101 His first exposure to socialism was probably from his Russian-Jewish parents. They brought Blitzstein to the Ethical Culture Sunday School and programs sponsored by the Socialist Literary Society.102 In an interview for the Daily Worker in 1938, Blitzstein talked about his family as follows:

My household is one of the joys of my life. They have been the center of every progressive force way back. My grand-father, Dr. Leof, was at one time leader of the Labor Institute and is now Philadelphia chairman of the Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. My father is one of the two great influences in my life. He's a middle-class intellectual at one time part of a socialist literary society--well, 20 years back. A very sensitive, socially aware, vital and real person. My stepmother is chairman of the Philadelphia North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. As a matter of fact, there's a Blitzstein active in every progressive movement in Philadelphia.103

Blitzstein’s interest in society and music, however, was rather gradually increased and not always reflected in his creations. In the summer of 1929, there was a festival of Gebrauchsmusik

99 Ibid. CBS was also willing to supply one saxophone if the composer wished.


in Baden-Baden; while Blitzstein was in Germany and could have gone there, he did not attend this festival.104

A socialistic view attracted Blitzstein more directly when he saw, during the Depression, “talented young people” were “thrown out into a world of topsy-turvy values—a world we never made.” He saw that artists, writers, and composers, all “suffered” in this “world.”105 Blitzstein himself also experienced the hardship, as he was not able to make his living as a serious-music composer. After severe self-criticism, this composer found that he “had been composing in a vacuum,” and began thinking about using music as “a weapon” against “struggles in the society.”106

By observing the difficult situation among artists in the United States, Blitzstein also realized changes in the types of audience in the early twentieth century, and the communication between composers and their audiences was one of the seminal factors that turned Blitzstein to theatrical music. He found that the atmosphere of chamber-music concerts was closed to a small number of people. As a “modern music composer,” Blitzstein thought that the audience of new music was even more strictly limited.107 What he found in the music scene of the 1930s was a “crisis” because “the music seems to be aimed away from the public.”108 Concerts were performing more pieces by “dead masters,” and “modern work” appeared “in the proportion of about one to twenty-five.”109 Blitzstein's sense of “crisis” can be traced back to a review of the 10 December 1930 concert by the League of Composers, of which he was a member. He wrote:

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104 Minna Lederman, “Memories of Marc Blitzstein, Music’s Angry Man,” Show 4/6 (June 1964), 18. As an editor for Modern Music, Lederman did attend the concert. The Gebrauchsmusik will be discussed later in this section.

105 Hale, “Author and Composer Blitzstein,” 7.

106 Ibid., 7.

107 Blitzstein’s own comments in the recording Marc Blitzstein Discusses His Theatre Compositions, Spoken Arts 717 [LP].


Music written by the present-day composer, couched in not immediately perceptible idioms, already presented difficulties enough in communicating itself to an audience even under the best circumstances. To perform eight composers at one concert, exhibiting snatches of each, is to serve up a musical hors d’oeuvres.¹¹⁰

This idea of using music as a weapon in the society and reaching a wide audience must have derived, at least partially, from the German Gebrauchsmusik, even though Blitzstein was skeptical about it originally.¹¹¹ The word Gebrauchsmusik was used popularly since the 1920s especially in Germany to signify the type of music which could be seen as an antitheses of the music written with a belief in musical autonomy or “art-for-art’s sake.”¹¹² Generally translated as “music for use,” Gebrauchsmusik emphasized a certain piece’s usefulness outside the concert hall, where the musical “autonomous music” was believed to have been practiced. Such “music for use” can be written for radio, movies, and for children play, providing music to wider audiences: amateur musicians, students, and the young in general.

Blitzstein adopted other elements from these German composers, as well. First, he learned an accessible style for better communication with a broad audience, even though he sensed that the Gebrauchsmusik movement started among the elitist composers and looked like a “high-class musical charity, ‘bringing music to the people’ and all that.”¹¹³ Second, he was able to find places to present his works outside the concert hall. His song-play I’ve Got the Tune was written for radio listeners. Third, he found it important to use current topics in his music, just as Hindemith’s Neues vom Tage. As will be analyzed later, I’ve Got the Tune has a scene featuring racial supremacists. The Cradle Will Rock, an earlier theater piece, dealt with unionism and was considered to be too sensitive an issue at that time and banned before its premier.

Blitzstein, however, did not adopt the idea of Gebrauchsmusik wholeheartedly. He actually criticized German composers in this movement since it did not have clear messages for their

society. As a professional composer, Blitzstein wanted to express his political and social agendas more explicitly to arouse the awareness in the general public, or “masses,” as he might have called them. He said the following about the German Gebräuchsmusik composers:

The real lack was that the composers were trying to reach a lot of people, but had as a rule only a very vague idea what they wanted to say to them. They used timely subjects, which was good...; but most of them had little political or social education, they were satisfied with merely risible satire or superficial comment or no comment at all.\textsuperscript{114}

Analysis of \textit{I've Got The Tune}

\textit{I've Got The Tune} is a journey for finding the right lyrics to a melody created by the protagonist, Mr. Musiker. With help from his secretary Beetzie, who transcribes the spoken text, they travel and meet people who would provide the text that would fit Mr. Musiker's tune. Their journey, however, was not easy, and what they found were many inappropriate poems, which reflect different aspects of the twentieth-century culture.

After a brief introduction by the orchestra, the piece begins with Mr. Musiker's singing the motive with the lyrics, “O, I’ve Got the Tune.” Then Mr. Musiker introduces himself and his mission of finding the right words for tune. As he and Beetzie take a walk to Broadway, Beetzie sings about her typing skills and discusses her job with Mr. Musiker. After arriving at a park, Mr. Musiker finally introduced his tune in a complete form (Example 4-4). In the radio premier, Blitzstein himself acted as Mr. Musiker and hummed the tune.\textsuperscript{115}

In Scene 2, Mr. Musiker and Beetzie visit the penthouse of Madame Arbutus, a wealthy artist who appreciates literature, fine arts, and serious music. She claims to be the “Princess of New Music, New Poetry, and the New Art!”\textsuperscript{116} Mr. Musiker's tune was too simple for her and needed to have “some complication,” as an “improvement.”\textsuperscript{117} Madame Arbutus also believes in


\textsuperscript{115} Blitzstein planned to have Orson Wells for Mr. Musiker originally, but Wells was busy in another theatrical production and could not perform the premier.

\textsuperscript{116} Taken from the lyrics of Blitzstein’s \textit{I've Got the Tune} (New York: Chapell, 1938).

\textsuperscript{117} Talley, “Social Criticism in the Original Theatre Librettos of Marc Blitzstein,” 115.
autonomy of art as she claims, “we of the artistic life hate ideas.” Mr. Musiker’s tune, after the application of her ideas and improvements, became a piece written in a free atonality. As seen in Example 4-5, *Sprechstimme* notation (a), reminiscent of Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, is used along with an expression marking in German, “Unruhig” (b).

Example 4-4: Blitzstein, *I’ve Got the Tune*, Mr. Musiker’s Tune.

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Example 4-5: Blitzstein, *I've Got the Tune*, Scene 2, (a) Measure 66-71 and (b) 102-104
Madame Arbutus's version of the tune also has some associations to the German expressionist, showing obsession with the moon and blood in her phrase, “The moon is a bloody rag tonight.” The overall poem is hardly understandable, and Mr. Musiker and Beetzie leave Madame Arbutus's salon in horror. The sarcastic use of atonal music in this scene seems to have reflected Blitzstein's view toward the music of Schoenberg, with whom he studied composition in Vienna:

Schoenberg wrote *Pierrot Lunaire*, a masterpiece in the spirit of fantasy; but instead of the languorous or gushing of thrilling fantasy that might have been expected, full of plaster-of-Paris pixies and ogres, he wrote something devastating, horrible, neurotic, sick, grimacing, [and] hysterical. He knew what he was writing; it was the growth about the dreams of humanity in a world of war and violence.\(^{121}\)

In Scene 3, Mr. Musiker and Beetzie come to a camp run by Captain Bristlepunkt for a gang called “Purple Shirtsies.” In the middle of isolated woods, the two characters overhear an initiation ceremony conducted by these racial supremacists, probably caricaturing the Nazis or

\(^{120}\) This could have derived from a line from Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*: “Wie der Mond rot aufgeht!” (“How red the moon is,” Marie).

\(^{121}\) “The Case for Modern Music,” *New Masses* (14 July 1936), 27.
In this ceremony, Private Schnook is being brainwashed to the gang members’ ideals, which are summarized in their dialogue:

Captain Bristlepunkt: “Men of the Purple Shirts, what’s good American?”
Purple Shirties: “A white American!”
Captain Bristlepunkt: “Who do we hate?”
Purple Shirties: “The mongrel race!”
Captain Bristlepunkt: “What do we do to mongrels?”
Purple Shirties: “Kill the mongrels! Kill the mongrels! Yey!”

Private Schnook, who is joining this racial supremacists, hesitates and resists as he knows more about the group’s idea, but he has to obey what Captain Bristlepunkt says to become a member. The captain of the Purple Shirties eventually orders the Private to beat a person of the mongrel race. All the gang members gradually force the Private Schnook to obey the Captain’s command, and the private bursts into tears saying, “I’m doing.”

This fascist scene at least shows Blitzstein’s knowledge on the subject matter and reflects his view on the world events. The inclusion of this scene also indicates that radio listeners would have recognized what Mr. Musiker and Beetzie observed; some may think vividly of tragic fascist regimes in Europe.

In Scene 3, Mr. Musiker’s tune is transformed to a pseudo-medieval organum (Example 4-6). This musical style may imply a ritualistic or religious aspect in the initiation. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, Blitzstein combined this chorus with various sound effects related to a military and war, such as whistle, bomb, machine-gun, and pistol shots. According to Short, this was the earliest example of using the sound effect of radio drama used in an opera.

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122 Talley points out that the Captain’s name Bristlepoint has a reference to Hitler’s small moustache. Talley, “Social Criticism in the Original Theatre Librettos of Marc Blitzstein,” 115.

123 Blitzstein, I’ve Got the Tune, 22.

Scene 4 begins when Mr. Musiker and Beetzie saw a woman, who is about to jump from the roof of a building to commit a suicide. They saved her just in time and try to comfort her. The woman, seemingly in despair, expresses her depression in her song based on Mr. Musiker’s tune, which she has heard several times. Mr. Musiker listens her song but did not pay attention to her behavior. The woman escaped from him and completed her mission to kill herself.

Scene 5 begins with street noises in a big city. A bell on the subway car and crowd noise are heard. Mr. Musiker and Beetzie now had traveled all around the world; her notebook is full of words. Beetzie briefly describes what they had collected so far. Interestingly, what we hear is not exactly what words they found on their journey, but various versions of Mr. Musiker’s tune from one country to another. Her descriptions include an “oriental” lullaby (Example 4-7a), the Zulu Wardance, an Italian Hurdy Gurdy (Example 4-7b), and Tin Pan Alley (here the piece is called “Hangover Blues,” Example 4-7c). Mr. Musiker did not like any of them and was disappointed with the results, but Beetzie tries to cheer him up.

---

125 The score indicates that the name of this woman is Suicide, but her name is never mentioned in actual dialogue or music.

126 Based on a listening to a transcription tape of the premiere, distributed by Radio Spirits, Inc, this was apparently done by sound-effect specialists responsible for radio drama productions.
Example 4-7: Blitzstein, *I’ve Got the Tune*, Scene 4, Various Versions of Mr. Musiker’s Tune.

(a) Chinese Lullaby

(b) Italian Hurdy Gurdy
Then, suddenly, these two characters hear children singing on the street in springtime. The children were singing, under their choral director, popular labor songs such as “Hold the Fort,” and “Solidarity Forever.” The children, however, were tired of these songs and looking for a new one with the same kind of cheering spirit. Beetzie proposed to sing Mr. Musiker’s tune to the choir and their directors. They liked the melody and began adding lyrics, resulting in a complete song. The whole choir happily sings the tune:

> Because this is our day
> Because this is our tune
> We’re singing songs of May
> In ev’ry land and clime!
> Wherever growing people are
> And the world to you
> All the world is singing too
> Tomorrow is for us

---

127 Because of the inclusion of “Solidarity Forever,” CBS’s staff member suspected the socialist implication of the scene. See Chapter 3 about the “censorship” practiced by the network against this particular section, along with different instances in other pieces of popular music at that time.
So fight but sill be gay!
We’ll rule in that tomorrow
So we sing today!

Some critics did notice Blitzstein's effective use of current topics portrayed in *I've Got The Tune*. Ben Gross of the *Daily News* wrote that the piece was “tuneful, sprightly, colloquial and up-to-the-minute as today's newspaper.” Others were more interested in the format of the piece. Irving Kolodin of the *Sun* praises the work's "expert use of the medium, and constant successful concentration on the problems of making his meaning articulated through speech and music." Blitzstein’s use of natural speaking voice and non-opera singing signifies his knowledge of the medium because, with the use of the microphone, the vocal sound can be projected clearly and loudly enough to compete with the orchestra, just like popular singers were “crooning” during the same period of the premier. Likewise, Blitzstein was able to make amateur chorus in the final scene more vivid with a natural singing style and fashion his piece more similar to a radio drama.

**Summary**

Radio in the 1930s had strong and various influences on American society. As a patron of music, it gave composers financial support through competitions and commissions. These opportunities were also important to the composers because radio promoted their names and musical works to the whole nation, providing them future possibilities.

Radio’s social influence was not limited to its patronage, however. For example, network radio served as a musical institution. They hired musicians for their own symphonic orchestras, chamber ensemble, singers, and instrumental players for all kinds of musical broadcasts as well as drama productions. They also served as educational institutions, providing instructive programs coupled with printed study materials, as seen in NBC’s “Musical Appreciation Hours.”

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Composers naturally took such enormous social impacts of radio seriously. Those who wrote for the Columbia Composers’ Commissions were very aware of the nature of serious-music audience on radio. Aaron Copland, for example, could have been able to continue his career as an avant-garde composer, but he decided to write in the style of *The Second Hurricane*: simple and accessible. Expressions of musical Americana in many pieces also displayed the composers’ awareness of radio’s expanded audience, which was diverse in terms of the geographical area, ethnicity, and social classes, but unified under the one single nation. Blitzstein’s *I’ve Got Tune* not only shows his political views but also his interests in current world events and music in American society.
CONCLUSION

Network radio stations in the 1930s were one of the most powerful media to promote music. With their facilities, major networks, such as NBC and CBS, gave American composers opportunities, through competitions and commissions, to present their newest works to a large audience throughout the whole country. This study has analyzed what these opportunities meant to composers, radio directors, and radio listeners.

Some composers changed their compositional style according to the possibilities that radio provided to them. Aaron Copland, for example, devised a new orchestration, a “radio-generic orchestration” specifically designed for broadcasting in his *Music for Radio*. What CBS envisioned was to cultivate in classically-trained American composers a new orchestral sound based on that already practiced by popular musicians and commonly used in the radio orchestras at that time. From a different perspective, William Grant Still used his knowledge of radio production. Before he wrote *Lenox Avenue*, Still had arranged various genres of music for WOR’s “The Deep River Hour,” for which he created a potpourri of jazz and popular songs. In *Lenox Avenue*, Still adopted this form to create a medley of his own original music with a new dramatic narration to link the separate musical numbers. In terms of radio broadcast, Louis Gruenberg thought of a “non-visual opera,” that would arouse his listeners’ imaginations through musical sounds.

However, not all composers creatively responded to the challenge of writing for radio broadcast. Howard Hanson presented a symphony without any “radiogeneric” considerations either in its orchestration or in its form. He did not change his musical style just because he was writing a piece for radio. In fact, he did not finish the complete work for his CBS commission, and the complete symphony, with its finale, was premiered by the radio orchestra of CBS’s rival network, NBC. For him, rather than composing for radio as an incubator for new sound resources, radio needed to develop the technological resources to present his music ideas unaltered. Also, the social impact of radio did not affect radically to his musical style. Hanson was writing in a conservative style even before the CBS commission and continued writing in this same conservative
style after the premier of the Third Symphony. This was different from Aaron Copland, who had been considered by some critics an ultramodernist, but suddenly began writing music in a more accessible style. The tremendous size of the radio audience was a decisive factor in his reconsideration of his compositional style; the more than a thousand audience responses for naming his *Music for Radio* must have been a strong indication of this large audience.

Some composers intentionally used the medium of radio to convey specific ideologies. For Marc Blitzstein, radio was a tool for spreading his social awareness to the general public through his music. To accomplish this goal, he adopted the form of the radio drama and created *I’ve Got the Tune*. As radio was able to report the latest events from the world and spread political speeches, *I’ve Got the Tune* dealt with the current issues of fascism and socialism, as well as musical expressionism and *Gebrauchsmusik*.

Radio directors were among the primary forces motivating these composers to respond to the limitations of radio broadcasting. Deems Taylor conceived both NBC’s Orchestral Awards and the Columbia Composers Commissions during his employment by these respective networks. His vision was to promote American composers, and he demonstrated how much a radio director could contribute to the promotion of a nation’s music. Technological issues were also very important to radio directors. Davidson Taylor, together with Deems Taylor, studied popular music and European radio music; then they envisioned the possibility of adapting popular orchestration to serious music. The first season of Columbia Composers’ Commissions strongly encouraged composers to experiment with these newest sound resources, and even created and broadcast a demonstration program to educate composers.

For listeners, radio was one of the most easily accessible media to hear all genres of music. Radio’s lack of any visual or spatial restrictions enhanced a mixture of cultures, since the location and type of performance space often carried cultural and social signification. For example, performances of serious music traditionally did not exist outside their performing spaces, such as concert halls or opera houses, as well as the audiences, musicians, and staff members, who came to, and worked in, these places. The lack of these visual and spatial elements in the medium of radio removed social and cultural contexts derived from the performance spaces and allowed anyone access to the
sound of the music at a low cost. This contributed significantly to the breaking of cultural barriers often associated with serious music and gave the general public a chance to hear operas and symphonic music without leaving their homes. The radio audience was more diverse than any contemporary concert audience and many had not had the opportunity to listen to much serious music before. This new radio audience challenged composers to write new pieces in accessible styles so that this new audience, who were not always accustomed to hearing dissonant music, were able to enjoy the new music without acquiring the specialized knowledge often presupposed for a listener to modern music in this period.

Regardless of radio’s limited transmission abilities and poor sonic quality, serious music in the 1930s occupied a significant position in the broadcast of the large network stations. Overall, radio provided not only new repertory, but also new hopes during the Depression. It gave to composers new possibilities for musical resources and promotional opportunities. It gave listeners new chances to hear serious music without the economic or social barriers that had previously existed. Broadcasters witnessed how much they could do with their power and enjoyed their reputation as important ambassadors of American serious culture. All of these were vital aspects associated with the medium of radio during its “golden age.” Today, people’s attention to radio is limited, since technology has developed many other ways to appreciate music. However, the possibilities of large radio networks to influence the dissemination of music in the past should not be overlooked.
APPENDIX A: LIST OF MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF AWARDS (This list is taken from the typescript, Box 8, Philip James Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook. Some of the names that were crossed out indicate those who did not actually vote for the competition or withdrew before the broadcast).

ARIZONA

Dean Charles F. Rogers University of Arizona Tucson

ARKANSAS

Mr. Henry D. Tovey University of Arkansas Fayetteville

CALIFORNIA

Mr. W. A. Clark Jr. 424 Auditorium Building Los Angeles
Mr. Andres de Segurela 1150 Carson Avenue Hollywood
Mr. Alexander Fried San Francisco Chronicle San Francisco
5th & Mission Sts. San Francisco
Mr. Alfred Hertz 770 Camino Del Mar San Francisco
Miss Minerva C. Hall Long Beach City Schools Long Beach
Miss Alice Rogers Board of Education Santa Monica
Mr. Edward F. Schneider Box 79, Bohemian Club San Francisco
Mr. David Bruno Usher 6122 Scenic Avenue Hollywood
Mr. Glenn H. Woods Oakland Public Schools Oakland

COLORADO

Mr. John C. Wilcox Denver College of Music, Inc. Denver
1000 Grant Street

CONNECTICUT

Mr. Sandor Harmati Darien
Dr. David Stanley Smith 53 Edgehill Road New Haven
**DELAWARE**

Mr. Glenn Gildersleeve  
Dept. of Public Instruction  
Dover

---

**D. C.**

Mr. Edwin N. C. Barnes  
Dir. of Music, P. S. of the D. C.  
Washington

Mr. Robert D. Heinl  
405 Insurance Building  
Washington

Mr. Hans Kindler  
c/o National Symphony Orchestra  
Washington

Mrs. John Sherman  
The Mayflower  
Washington

Misses Rose & Ottilie Sutro  
2230 California St.  
Washington

---

**FLORIDA**

Miss Bertha Foster  
Miami Conservatory of the U. of M.  
Miami

Mr. William Geppert  
611 South Gulf Stream Ave.  
Sarasota

Mr. William Meyer  
1128 Riverside Ave.  
Jacksonville

Mr. George Orner  
Jacksonville College of Music  
Jacksonville

---

**GEORGIA**

Mr. Willis A. Sutton  
Board of Education  
Atlanta

---

**IDAHO**

Mr. Oliver C. Jones  
Boise Academy of Music  
Boise

---

**ILLINOIS**

Mr. John Beattie  
Northwestern University  
Evanston

Mr. Eric DeLamarter  
668 Irving Park Boulevard  
Chicago

Mr. Louis Eckstein  
North American Building  
Chicago

Mr. Alfred V. Frankenstein  
4501 Ellis Avenue  
Chicago

Mr. Rudolph Ganz  
64 E. Van Buren St.  
Chicago

Mr. Karleton Hackett  
300 South Wabash Ave.  
Chicago

Mr. Samuel Insuell  
72 West Adams Street  
Chicago

Miss Frances Kesser  
Bloomington Public Schools  
Bloomington

Mr. Edwin Knapp  
508 East Walnut St.  
Bloomington

Mr. W. Otto Miessner  
Kimball Hall  
Chicago

Mr Edward C. Moore  
Chicago Tribune  
Chicago

Mr. Robert Pollak  
120 South La Salle St.  
Chicago

Miss Sadie Rafferty  
Evanston Hotel  
Evanston
Mr. F. B. Stiven  
University of Illinois  
Urbana

Mrs. Andres Sherriff  
1320 North State Parkway  
Chicago

Mr. Eugene Stinson  
Chicago Daily News  
Chicago

**INDIANA**

Mr. Edward B. Birge  
Indiana University  
Bloomington

Mrs. Lenora Coffin  
2934 North Delaware St  
Indianapolis

**IOWA**

Dean Holmes Cowper  
College of Fine Arts  
Drake University  
Des Moines

**KANSAS**

Mr. Frank A. Beach  
Kansas State T. C.  
Emporia

Mr. William Allen White  
The Emporia Gazette  
Emporia

**KENTUCKY**

Miss Helen McBride  
Louisville Conservatory of Music  
720 South Brook St.  
Louisville

**LOUISIANA**

Dr. H. W. Stopher  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge

Mr. Harry Brunswick Loeb  
Loeb Piano Co.  
New Orleans

**MAINE**

Miss Florence Hale  
15 Melville Street  
Augusta

Mrs. Dorothy Marden  
Waterville

**MARYLAND**

Mr. H. L. Mencken  
704 Cathedral St.  
Baltimore

Mr. Otto Ortmann  
Peabody Conservatory of Music  
Baltimore

**MASSACHUSETTS**

Miss Inez Field Damon  
Department of Education  
Lowell
Mr. William Arms Fisher  Oliver Ditson & Co.  Boston
Mr. Wallace Goodrich  New England Conservatory of Music  Huntington Ave.  Boston
Dr. Edward B. Hill  Harvard University  Boston
Mr. John P. Marshall  Boston University  178 Newbury Street  Boston
Mr. John A. O’Shea  School Committee of the City of Boston
Mr. Moses Smith  407 Huntington Ave.  Boston

MICHIGAN

Mrs. Byrl Fox Bacher  619 East University Ave.  Ann Arbor
Miss Ada Bicking  Dept. of Public Instruction  Lansing
Mr. Ossip Gabrilowitsch  Detroit Symphony Orchestra  Detroit
Mr. Joseph E. Maddy  National Music Camp  Ann Arbor
Mrs. Elmer James Ottaway  1711 Military Road  Port Huron
Prof. Albert A. Stanley  University of Michigan  Ann Arbor
Mrs. Edith Rhetts Tilton  Orchestra Hall  Detroit

MINNESOTA

Mr. E. I. Carpenter  900 First National-Soo Line Bldg.  Minneapolis
Mr. T. P. Giddings  Board of Education  Minneapolis
Mr. Sumner T. McKnight  1111 Nicollet Ave.  Minneapolis
Mr. Eugene Ormandy  Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra  Minneapolis
Dr. Corlyle Scott  University of Minnesota  Minneapolis

MISSISSIPPI

Mr. Henry E. Wamsley  Mississippi A. & M. College  A. & M. College

MISSOURI

Miss Sara Conlon  President Apartments  St. Louis
Miss Mabelle Glenn  207 Studio Building  Kansas City
Mrs. Leonore Goldstein  Hampton Park  Clayton

MONTANA

Miss Marguerite V. Hood  Dept. of Public Instruction  Helena

NEBRASKA

Mr. Jean P. Duffield  5107 Underwood Ave.  Omaha
Miss Hazel Gertrude Kinscella 2721 “R” Street Lincoln
Mr. Joseph Littau Blackstone Hotel Omaha
Mrs. Carol M. Pitts Central High School Omaha

NEVADA

Mr. Theodore H. Post University of Nevada Reno

NEW JERSEY

Dr. Frances E. Clark RCA Victor Company Camden
Mr. John Tasker Howard 47 Lincoln Street Glen Ridge

NEW MEXICO

Miss Grace A. Thompson University of New Mexico Alberquerque

NEW YORK

Mr. Arthur M. Abell 32 Sheldon Place, Riverview Manor Hastings-on Hudson
Mr. Winthrop Ames 17 East 89 Street New York
Mr. Horold L. Butler Syracuse University Syracuse
Mr. Paul D. Cravath 15 Broad Street New York
Mr. Olin Downes New York Times New York
Professor P. W. Dykema Columbia University, T. C. New York
Dr. Frank Damrosch 120 Claremont New York
Dr. Hollis Dann New York University New York
Mr. Carl Engel G. Schirmer, Inc., 3 East 43 Street New York
Dr. John Erskine Juilliard School of Music 130 Claremont St. New York
Mr. Harry Harkness Flager 32 Park Avenue New York
Mr. George Fischer J. Fischer & Bro. 119 West 40 Street New York
Mr. Lawrence Gilman 200 West 58 Street New York
Mr. George H. Cartlan 131 Livingston St. Brooklyn
Mr. Edwin Franko Goldman 194 Riverside Drive New York
Prof. George C. Gow Vassar College Poughkeepsie
Mr. W. J. Henderson Langwell Hotel
Mr. Pierre V. R. Key 119 West 57 St. New York
Mr. Otto Kahn 52 William St. New York
Mr. Jacob Kwalwasser  
Syracuse University  
Syracuse

Mr. Alfred A. Knopf  
Heckscher Building  
New York

Mr. Leonard Liebling  
113 West 57 St.  
New York

Mr. M. M. Lichtmann  
310 Riverside Drive  
New York

Mr. Fred A. Muschenheim  
Hotel Astor  
New York

Dr. Victor L. F. Rebmann  
40 Mamaroneck Ave.  
White Plains

Dr. Alexander Russell  
40 West 45 St.  
New York

Mr. Robert A. Simon  
210 West 78 St.  
New York

Mr. Percy Rector Stephens  
36 West 73 St.  
New York

Mr. Richard L Simon  
386 Fourth Ave  
New York

Dr. Gustav Saenger  
Carl Fischer Inc  
New York

Mr. Pitts Sanborn  
201 West 11 St.  
New York

Mrs. Gerard Swope  
120 Broadway  
New York

Dr. Sigmund Spaeth  
113 West 57 St.  
New York

Mr. Reinald Werrenrath  
NBC  
New York

Mr. Felix M. Warbug  
52 William St.  
New York

Mr. Paul J. Weaver  
Cornell University  
Ithaca

Mr. A. D. Zanzig  
315 Fourth Avenue  
New York

NORTH CAROLINA

Dr. Wade R. Brown  
N. C. College for Women  
Greensboro

Mrs. Grace P. Woodman  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill

NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. Hywel C. Rowland  
University of North Dakota  
Grand Forks

OHIO

Mr. Edward Dickinson  
Oberlin College  
Oberlin

Mr. K. W. Gehrkens  
Oberlin College  
Oberlin

Mr. Eugene Goosens  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
Cincinnati

Mr. Max T. Krone  
Western Reserve University  
Cleveland

Miss Edith M. Keller  
State Supervisor of Music  
Columbus

Mr. Russell Morgan  
Board of Education  
Cleveland

Mr. James Rogers  
2906 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland

Miss Helen Haynes Roberts  
2531 Burnet -- Apt 22  
Cincinnati

Mr. John L. Severance  
480 The Arcade  
Cleveland

Mrs. Edgar Stillman-Kelly  
Western College  
Oxford

Mrs. Katharine H. Talbott  
Challahan Bank Building  
Dayton
OKLAHOMA

Mr. George Oscar Bowen  Tulsa Public Schools  Tulsa
Mrs. Frances Smith Catron  304 North 6th St.  Ponca City

OREGON

Dr. John J. Landsbury  University of Oregon  Eugene

PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. John F. Braun  314 Otis Building  Philadelphia
Mr. James Francis Cooke  1712 Chestnut St.  Philadelphia
Dr. Will Earhart  Board of Education  Pittsburgh
Mr. Linton Martin  The Philadelphia Inquirer  Philadelphia
Mr. Fritz Reiner  402 Academy Road  Merion
Mr. M. Claude Rosenberry  Dept. of Public Instruction  Harrisburg

SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. Maurice J. Matteson  University of S. C.  Columbia

SOUTH DAKOTA

Dean W. R. Colton  University of S. D.  Vermillion

TENNESSEE

Dr. Lawrence Goodman  Ward-Belmont School  Nashville

TEXAS

Mrs. John F. Lyons  Fakes & Company  Fort Worth
Miss Sudie L. Williams  Board of Education  Dallas

UTAH

Dr. Thomas Giles  University of Utah  Salt Lake City

VERMONT

Dr. Charles H. Farnsworth
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<td>University of Virginia</td>
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<td>Charleston Public Schools, Charleston</td>
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<td>Prof. Edgar B. Gordon</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin, Madison</td>
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APPENDIX B: NBC ORCHESTRAL AWARDS (1932), THE SCRIPT FOR THE PRESENTATION PROGRAM (Reproduced from The Typescript, Philip James Collection, State University Of New York at Stony Brook, Box 8)

Final Broadcast,
Sunday Evening, May 3, 17:15 P. M. Eastern R. B. Time

NBC Symphony Orchestra

EUGENE GOOSSENS, conductor
MILTON J. CROSS, announcer
DEEMS TAYLOR, master of ceremonies

MERLIN H. AYLESWORTH, GENE BUCK, NICHOLAI BEREZOWSKI, FLORENCE GRANLAND GALEJIKIAN, CARL EPPERT, MAX WALD, AND PHILIP JAMES, guest speakers.

On the air - 10:15

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MR. CROSS: OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Cross, and good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is the final broadcast in connection with the NBC Orchestral Awards. A week ago tonight, as many of you know, we broadcast the five works recommended by our Jury of Selection. This jury, composed of Walter Damrosch, Tullio Serafin, Nicholai Sokoloff, Frederick Stock, and Leopold Stokowski, selected from the 573 manuscripts entered for the awards the five that were, in their opinion, the best. Last week we broadcast these works to a National Committee of Awards, composed of upwards of 150 distinguished Americans, situated in all parts of the country. It was the duty of this committee to listen-in to the concert, and to vote, by telegram, as to the order in which the five awards, totaling ten thousand dollars, should be made. I should like here to extend my sincere thanks to the members for the promptness with which they reached their decisions and telegraphed their ballots. By Monday
afternoon, early, we had heard from all but two members, and by Tuesday morning the ballots had been tabulated and the results determined. At the time of last week’s broadcast, the names of the composers were not known to anyone, at the National Broadcast Company, or elsewhere. Every composition to be eligible, had to be entered under a pseudonym, accompanied by a sealed envelop in which was the composer’s real name. Until the final results of the balloting were definitely known, these envelopes remained unopened. Tonight we shall tell you the names of the five successful composers and play you their works in the order of their ranking by the National Committee. The orchestra that plays tonight is again the NBC Symphony Orchestra, augmented to eighty players, and, as at last week’s broadcast, is under the direction of Eugene Goossens, the brilliant young conductor of the Cincinnati Orchestra. There should, I think, be an element of novelty about every broadcast, and the feature of this one will be that I am not going to talk nearly so much as I did last week. I have secured two distinguished guest speakers for tonight’s performance, and between them they will do most of the work that would otherwise fall to me. The first of them will address you now. It is my very great pleasure to present Mr. Gene Buck, known to musicians the country over as the president of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. Ladies and gentlemen ---- Mr. Buck

MR. BUCK’S SPEECH

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Buck, both on my own account, as director of these awards, and on behalf of the National Broadcasting Company. And now, members of the radio audience, I have the privilege and pleasure of presenting Merlin Aylesworth, President of the National Broadcasting Company and sponsor of the NBC Orchestral Awards, who will announce the final decision of the National Committee and present the awards to the five composers thus chosen. Ladies and gentlemen ---- Mr. Aylesworth.

MR. AYLESWORTH: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Before announcing the final results of the NBC Orchestral Awards, I should like to say just a word regarding what--I hope--will prove to be their value. The National Broadcasting is not buying five pieces of orchestral music. The conditions governing the awards are proof of that fact. Nor do we claim that an offer of money can automatically produce music of enduring merit. The final verdict upon the five works to be played this evening can be pronounced only by time -- and you. What you can do, however, and
what I think we have done, is to bring to your attention five composers of undoubted talent. In the long run, an artist is more important than any one of his works, and the awards we make to five American composers tonight are as much as expression of our belief in their future achievement as they are a reward for the specific compositions that we are privileged to honor. We give them money rather than laurels, because money alone can buy an artist’s most vital necessity--time in which to do his work. We are paying them, so to speak, not only for the five works they have already written, but also for the next five that these awards will, I hope, enable them to write.

It is now my privilege to announce the ranking of the five selected works, as determined by the National Committee of Award, to announce the names of their composers, and to present the awards. I shall begin with the fifth award, or five hundred dollars, which goes to Nicolai Berězoffsky [sic] of New York, for his Sinfonietta, in three movements. Mr. Berězoffsky [sic.] is a naturalized American citizen, born in St. Petersburg, Russia. He studied under various Russian masters, and at the Julliard [sic.] School of Music in New York. He came here in 1922, as a violinist, and played first in the orchestra of the Capitol Theatre in New York. He later joined the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, where he played for six years. At present he is a staff violinist in the orchestra of Station WABC of the Columbia Broadcasting Company. His compositions have been played by various orchestras, including the Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony. He is in the studio with us tonight. Mr. Berězoffsky, I take great pleasure in presenting you this check for five hundred dollars, with the congratulations of myself and the National Broadcasting Company.

10:22:40 2:10
(MR. BEREZOWSKY’S RESPONSE)

10:23:10 :30

MR. TAYLOR: Now Mr. Berezoffsky’s Sinfonietta, which is in three movements, will be played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugine Goossens.

10:23:25 :15
SINFONIETTA -- ORCHESTRA & GOOSSENS

10:34:10 10:45
MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Aylesworth will now announce the fourth award.
MR. AYLESWORTH: It is with sincere pleasure that I announce the fact that a woman composer is among those to be honored by these NBC Orchestral awards. Our fourth award goes to Mrs. Florence Grandland Galajikian, of Maywood, Illinois, for her Symphonic Intermezzo for orchestra. Mrs. Galajikian, who was born in Maywood, and still lives there, is a young American pianist and composer who received all her musical training in and about Chicago. She is a graduate of the music school of Northwestern University, and has also studied under Doctor Otto Miessner, who is a member of our National Committee of Award, and did not know, until this moment, that one of his own his pupils was a candidate. She is in our Chicago studios this evening and will be handed the check for her award by Mr. Niles Trammell, Vice President of the National Broadcasting Company in Chicago. She began composing, by the way, only a little more than four years ago, and her symphonic Intermezzo is her first attempt at a serious orchestral work. Mrs. Galajikian, it is with great pleasure that I present you this check for seven hundred and fifty dollars, with our heartiest congratulations and good wishes.

MR. TAYLOR: Mrs. Galajikian’s response comes from the Chicago studios of the NBC. We now take you to Chicago.

Mrs. Galajikian: You can hardly imagine, Mr. Aylesworth, what this award means to me. To have my first attempt at an ambitious orchestra work thus honored, after so brief a composing career is a kind and degree of encouragement that is hard to put into words. I think that I may venture to consider the award as having something more than a personal significance. My work was entered, and judged, under condition that made it impossible for anyone to know the sex of its composer and its good fortune, and mine, may well be an encouragement, not only to myself but to every woman composer in America.

(Chicago Announcer: We now return you to New York.)

MR. TAYLOR: Now we shall hear Mrs. Galajikian’s fourth award orchestral composition, her Symphonic Intermezzo, played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugene Goosens.

SYMPHONIC INTERMEZZO

STATION BREAK
MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Aylesworth will now announce and present the third award.

MR. AYLESWORTH: The third award, of twelve hundred and fifty dollars, goes to Carl Eppert, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for his symphonic fantasy, Traffic. Mr. Eppert, who is native of Carbon, Indiana, began his musical education at the age of six years. He has studied much, both in America and Germany, and numbers among his instructors the famous conductor, Arthur Nickisch. He lives at present in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he pursues a triple career as teacher, conductor, and composer. He is also in our Chicago studios this evening. Mr. Eppert, it gives me great pleasure to present you, through our vice-president, Mr. Trammel, this check for the third NBC Award of twelve hundred and fifty dollars.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Eppert will reply from the Chicago studios of the National Broadcasting Company. We now take you to Chicago.

MR. EPPERT: This is a very proud moment for me. I am grateful, not only for the generous amount of the award itself, but for the great honor implied in my selection as a recipient of one of these awards. Such recognition is particularly inspiring to an American who, like myself, having studied and worked many years in Europe, returns home to find that a composer, unlike a prophet, may find honor in his own country. May I express my heartfelt gratitude to you, Mr. Aylesworth, and through you, to the Committee of Awards and the National Broadcasting Company.

(CHRIGAO OPERATOR: WE NOW RETURN YOU TO NEW YORK)

MR. TAYLOR: Now we shall hear Mr. Carl Eppert’s third award composition, Traffic, played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugene Goossens.

TRAFFIC

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Aylesworth continuous his announcement and presentation of the NBC Orchestral Awards.

MR. AYLESWORTH: Second place in the NBC Orchestral awards goes to Mr. Max Wald, for his orchestral tone-poem, “The Dancer, Dead.”
Wald, who is native of Litchfield, Illinois, has studied music both in Chicago, and at the Schola Cantorum in Paris. His previous compositions include two orchestral works that have been played by the Chicago Orchestra, and a violin sonata. At present Mr. Wald is living in Paris, and it is from the French capital that he is, tonight, receiving his award from my friend A. H. Morton, who is acting as my proxy. It is a great pleasure, even from a distance of three thousand miles, to present him with our check for $2500, with greetings and congratulations from his native land.

MR. TAYLOR: This broadcast, including Mr. Aylesworth’s last remarks, is being sent by short-wave transmission to the Paris offices of the Radio Corporation of America, where Mr. Max Wald is at present listening-in. Mr. Wald’s response will be transmitted by transatlantic telephone, to the New York Studios of the NBC, from which it will be picked up and broadcast to you. We now take you to Paris, France. Nous vous emmenons à Paris, en France.

SWITCH TO PARIS

MR. WALD (FROM PARIS): I take this opportunity of expressing my deep gratitude to the National Broadcasting Company for the award made to me, and also the privilege the contest has given me of making my composition heard. In thanking Mr. Aylesworth and Mr. Taylor, the distinguished jury of conductors, and the National Committee, for the great care and attention given my music I feel sure that I am expressing the feeling of every contestant when I say that never have composers been more fairly and considerately dealt with than in this skillfully and carefully planned competition. It seems to me that any musician not hopelessly withdrawn from life must welcome the opportunity the radio gives for immediate contact with the musical public that in the end is always right—the sincere lovers of good music: the serious works of the masters as well as the excellent lighter things. This great public numbers many millions, and its approval is the final justification of every composer.

(FOREIGN ANNOUNCER: We now return you to America)

(RETURN TO AMERICA)

MR. TAYLOR (N.Y.): Now we shall hear Mr. Max Wald’s second award composition, The Dancer, Dead: A Pagan Epitaph; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugene Goossens.
MR. TAYLOR: And now Mr. Merlin H. Aylesworth, President of the National Broadcasting Company, will announce and present the first award.

MR. AYLESWORTH: It now becomes my pleasant duty to present the first award, of five thousand dollars, to Mr. Phillip James, of New York, for his orchestral suite, “Station WGZBX.” Mr. James, who was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, has had a notable career, both as composer and conductor. His compositions have been performed by many orchestral and choral organizations. During the War, after serving with the infantry for a year in France, he became conductor and commanding officer of General Pershing’s Headquarters Band of A.E.F. At the present time, in addition to being assistant professor of music at New York University, and instructor in music at Columbia University, he is conductor of the Bamberger Little Symphony, of Station WOR of Newark, New Jersey. And now, Mr. Philip James, it is with great pleasure that I present you this check for our first award of five thousand dollars. And with it go my heartfelt congratulations and good wishes.

MR. JAMES RESPONSE

MR. TAYLOR: We shall now hear Mr. Philip James’s First Award composition, a suite for orchestra, entitled “Station WGZBX.” We begin with the First movement, entitled, In the Lobby, played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Eugene Goossens.

IN THE LOBBY

MR. TAYLOR The Second Movement: Interference.
11:21:40 2:50
MR. TAYLOR: The third movement: A Slumber Hour.
(If necessary, 50 seconds can be saved by making a cut in this. Time allowed is without cut)

11:21:45 0:05
A SLUMBER HOUR

11:27:10 5:25
MR. TAYLOR: Fourth and Last Movement: Mike-Struck

11:27:15 :05
MIKE-STRUCK

11:29:45 2:30
CLOSING: MR. CROSS

11:30:00 :15

**Australia**

I. The Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1938.
   A. Six works were written, including three operettas, a suite of carols, a cycle of Jacobean songs and an orchestration of children’s songs.

**Belgium**

I. By 1935, various orchestral score for radio plays were written.
II. Eleven new compositions were written for the Belgian National Broadcasting Service.
   A. Some of these works were written for Flamands and some for the Walloons.
   B. Included musical settings for plays such as *Oedipus*, *Esopus*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Le Tzigane*.

**Bulgaria**

I. Six compositions were written for Radio Sofia, including one symphonic poem.

**Czechoslovakia**

I. A Czech station commissioned a radio opera in 1935
   A. The radio station prescribed the text.
   B. The station also made certain restrictions on the form and the size of the piece.

**Germany**

I. Four works were commission by the Reichs Rundunk Gesellschaft.
   A. *Hölderlin* by Josef Matthias Hauer, for speaking voice, choir and orchestra
   B. *Festliches Präludium* by Karl Höffer
   C. Two Etudes for Orchestra by Wladimir Vogel
   D. *Lustige Suite* by Ernes Toch
II. These four works were written at Hermann Scherchen’s suggestion.
   A. Scherchen thought that the Höller piece was more successful than the others.
      1. Scherchen said, “Despite my advice, the others have proven (due to their construction) not so well adapted for the microphone, particularly the work of Hauer.”
III. Berlin Rundfunk commissioned Kurt Weill and Paul Hindemith to write a cantata called *The Lindbergh Flight*.
    A. The piece commemorated Lindbergh’s first flight across the Atlantic.
B. It is written for soprano, tenor, bass, and baritone soloists with chorus and orchestra.
C. The text was written by Bert Brecht.

Great Britain
I. Commissions by the BBC
A. Pieces written:
   1. Edward Elgar: Third Symphony
   2. Granville Bantock: Pilgrim's Progress for the tercentenary of John Bunyan
   3. Gustav Holst: Morning of the Year and Hammersmith for military band
   4. John Ireland: These Things Shall Be for the George VI Coronation program
   5. William Walton: Crown Imperial a march for the George VI Coronation program.
   6. Arthur Bliss:
      Scotland Calling, a fantasy for brass instruments
      Fanfare for the Royal Jubilee

Holland
I. 1936 Competition for Radio AVRO
A. Pieces written
   Hugo Godron: Microfoonouverture
   Jan Pauwels: Air de Ballet
   B. v. d. Sigtenhorst Meyer: Rondo voor Blaasinstrumenten
   Jan van Gilse: Kleine Wals
   Emile Enthoven: Zes Walsen voor Klein Orkest, Op. 36
   Henk Badings: Hors, Roemeense Dans voor Orkest
   Jan Felderhof: Tanwalla, Tango, Wals, en Seguidilla
   Julius Hijman: Weense Wals
   Bertus van Lier: Satyrdans
   Daniel Ruyneman: Divertissement

   B. “These pieces were written for radio A. V. R. O. in an attempt to get good amusement music.”

India
I. Twenty to thirty pieces, including one opera, were written for All India in New Delhi.
   A. These pieces attempted “to translate Indian music into an idiom which can be more readily understood by foreigners”

Italy
I. Radio music competition for radiogenic music by the Italian broadcasting organization in 1932
   A. Works would have been written especially for radio.
   B. Composers should use not less than fives instruments but should not exceed than twenty-five
C. Works should not exceed 10 minutes in duration.
D. The works were performed at the second festival of modern music at Venice in the fall of 1932 and broadcasted.
E. 8890 listeners participated in the voting.
F. The first prize of 2500 lire went to G. Cesare Sonzogno’s composition of “a ritual character”. The second sent to a suite of dances.

Jugoslavia
I. No commission, but had performed “certain pieces specially intended for radio, but written on the composer’s own initiative”

Latvia
I. Competition in 1934
   A. Works by J. Granbins, J. Medins, L. Garuta

Palestine
I. The Palestine Broadcasting Corporation was to perform Hebrew music specially written for broadcasting by Palestinian composers.
   A. There was a plan to make recordings as well.

Poland
I. Polskie Radio, Warsaw commissioned “works with composers, principally of a folkloristic character.”
   A. Pieces Presented
      Marian Rudnicki:
      *On a Mountain Meador* for orchestra
      *From Gdynia to New York* for orchestra, chorus and soli
      *By the Vistula to the Sea*, a suite of Polish folk songs and dances
      *Harvest Home*, a suite of Polish folk songs and dances
      *A Cracow Wedding*, a suite of Polish folk songs and dances for orchestra, chorus, soli.
      Tadeusz Sygietynaki:
      *An Evening among the Gorals (Tatrahighlander)*
      *From Hut to Hut*, a suite of Polish folksongs and dance melodies
      Songs and Dances from “Mazowsze”
      *With Songs and Dances through Poland*
      *Spring in Mazowsze*
      Roman Palester:
      *A Trio to the Seaside*, folklore suite
      *A Peasant Wedding*
      *The Song of Cracow-Soil*
      Maklakiewicz-Schiller:
      Christmas Carols
      Foliks Rybicki:
      *In a Peasant Wedding*
      *Songs of Mazousze* etc.
Michael Kondracki:
   *Silesia in Songs*

Stanislaw Popiel:
   *Concertmazur* for orchestra
   *Suite Kujawy*, folk song suite
   *Elegie of Kujawy*, folk song suite
   *From Kronsno*, folk song suite

II. Two compositions were written for the Danzig broadcasting station.

**Spain**

I. Union Radio (Spanish broadcasting organization) provided a competition in 1932
   A. A competition for a symphony written for broadcasting
   B. It was open to composers in other countries.

**Sweden**

I. Competition in 1935
APPENDIX D: PHILIP JAMES’S RESPONCES TO AYLESWORTH IN THE
AWARD-WINNERS PROGRAM (Taken from the typescript, Box 8, Philip James
Collection, State University of New York at Stony Brook).

TIMING 49 seconds.

DEEPLY TOUCHED, I AM. BY THIS DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD WILL
TO THE CAUSE OF THE AMERICAN COMPOSERS OF THE LARGE FORMS IN
MUSIC, MADE POSSIBLE ONLY BY THE GENEROSITY AND EXTREMELY
LIBERAL TERMS OF MR. AYLESWORTH AND THE NATIONAL
BROADCASTING COMPANY.

TO THIS GREAT AMERICAN ORGANIZATION, I OFFER MY
HEARTFELT THANKS FOR THE DISTINGUISHED HONOR AWARD TO ME. I
AM ALSO GREATFUL TO THE JURY AT LARGE AND THE JURY OF
SELECTION CONSISTING OF FIVE FOREMOST ORCHESTRAL CONDUCTOR,
ON OF WHO OUR OWN ESTEEMED DR. WALTER DAMROSCH AND TO THAT
ADMIRABLE AMERICAN COMPOSER DEEMS TAYLOR WHO IS THE
ORIGINATOR OF THIS CONTEST. THANKS ALSO TO MR. ERNEST LA PRADE
OF THE N. B. C. DEPARTMENT OF MUSICAL COUNSEL AND LAST BUT
CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, I MUST THANK MR. GOOSENS FOR HIS SUPERB
READINGS LAST SUNDAY NIGHT OF THESE WORKS ASSISTED BY THIS
EXCELLENT ENSEMBLE OF MUSICIANS.
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“Man Behind the Tune.” *Newsweek* 43 (20 July 1953): 86.


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Rowe, Billy. “Billy Still Submits First Serious Work.” *Pittsburgh Courier* 20 February 1937.


**Archives**

Aaron Copland Collection, Library of Congress. All Copland-related materials are collected here. Copies of Copland's *Music for Radio* (sketches, two versions of published score) are available here, as well. Finding aids are available at site.

Howard Hanson Papers, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, N. Y. The scores of Symphony No. 3 and the *Heroic March* are included in this collection. Also available are letters and other correspondence

CBS Collection, New York Public Library. The vocal and full scores of Gruenberg’s radio opera, *Green Mansions*, and related documents (synopsis and notes on the piece), are collected in their
Louis Gruenberg collection. The library also holds scores of radio music actually used in CBS’s “Everybody's Music.” The scores include Copland's *Music for Radio* (with a sketch), and Roy Harris's *Cowboy Songs*. The homepage of the New York Public Library is http://www.nypl.org/.

NBC Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. Their Marc Blitzstein collection is comprehensive and essential for all kinds of research related to this composer. Unfortunately, the online database does not have detailed information of the collection, but a finding aid is available on microfilm. The vocal and full scores and documents related to Blitzstein's *I've Got the Tune* are available from this collection. The Society also has an extensive collection of documents on NBC including incoming, outgoing, and internal correspondence. The Society has a homepage: http://www.wisc.edu/shs-archives/.

NBC History Files, Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Division (Recorded Sound Reference Center). This collection includes business papers about the network’s music programming policies, annual expense reports, and documents of NBC’s “Music Appreciation Hour,” including a few copies of teacher's manuals, student workbooks, and annual reports on the program. Finding Aids are available online: http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/record/rsfind.html.

William Grant Still and Verna Arvey Papers, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. The collection includes sections from Still's *Lenox Avenue*, as well as its related materials, including the correspondence between the composer and CBS. Finding aids are available online: http://www.uark.edu/libinfo/speccoll/stillarvey.html.

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Tall Stories (CBS, Everybody’s Music). Manuscript, signed (photocopy) with markings in black and red pencil, New York Public Library.


Still, William Grant. Cat’tch a Line’Em (Can’t You Line ‘Em)

Discography

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_____________. *A Tall Story*. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra; JoAnn Falletta, conductor. Koch International Classics 3-7367-2HI.


Still, William Grant. *Lenox Avenue*. Juano Hernandez, narrator (1st work); CBS Symphony Orchestra; Howard Barlow, conductor. Bay Cities BCD 1033.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Akihiro Taniguchi was born in 1968 in Toyama, Japan. His began his formal study of music in 1987 at Niigata University in Niigata, Japan, where he majored in music education (with an emphasis on vocal performance). He continued his study in music education at Tokyo Gakugei University from 1991, this time with an emphasis on musicology. After receiving a Master’s Degree in Education from this university, Mr. Taniguchi came to the United States.

After a year of language training at Boston University, he entered the Florida State University in the fall of 1994. At FSU, Mr. Taniguchi revised and expanded his master’s thesis, originally in Japanese. The revision became his MA thesis for FSU, “Roy Harris’s Third Symphony: An American Symphony?” Additionally, he has read two research papers at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Southern Chapter (2000 and 2003).

Mr. Taniguchi is also a writer in music in Japan. He has written news columns for the periodical called ExMusica. In this news column, he writes a correspondence section, focusing on recent American serious music. See http://www.exmusica.com/. He also has written program notes for the NHK Symphony Orchestra and essays for a music newspaper.

Additionally, Mr. Taniguchi hosts a radio show in Japan once a month, featuring American music. The program, started in January of 1999, introduced many nineteenth- and twentieth-century works from the United States. Most of the pieces he played on this program were heard for the first time in Japan.