AMERICA SINGING

Author of 'Bound for Glory' Recalls What The Plain People Sing

By WOODY GUTHRIE

BUMMING my way around over forty-five of these here forty-eight States I heard plenty of folks singing.

Singing and working and fighting are so close together you can't hardly tell where one quits and the other one begins. Where you find one you'll find the other two, because folks that sing are always our best workers and hardest hitters.

Music has got to say what we're all trying to say.

People everywhere across the country are all working on the same big job. You hear them talk in the wheat fields of North Dakota, and it's just about the same words as you'll hear down in the celery patches or along the docks in lower California, and they say, "We got to all get together, and stick together, and work and fight together."

People's songs say this same thing. The migratory workers are trying to turn every grain of good dirt into a green leaf. They have contests to see who can turn out the most of the best quickest. They sing a song called: "Truck Patch Trooper" and another one, "I'm a Pea Pickin' Poppa." Down South you'll hear their work songs made up to fit the work itself. "Me an' my wife can pick a bale of cotton, me an' my wife can pick a bale a day!"

Classics and Folksongs

I ain't out to say that real honest classical music is better or worse than what you'd call folk music. Both are twin brothers and sisters. Both can learn plenty from the other. As far as "modern" music goes, or folksongs either, there's plenty of it that's good and plenty that's worse than useless.

If you've got war workers playing hooky from the job, I ain't a bit surprised. If you want to smell the rat in his neon-lit hole, take a sniff at this floating, drifting, aimless, pointless, mentally, morally and sexually confusing dope that is drummed into a hundred million ears day and night, day and night, on your pretty nickel phonograph.

I got picked by a man in Washington not so long ago and he asked me: "What's that there label say there on yer music box?"

"This machine kills Fascists," I told him.

"How'dya figger that?" he asked me.

And I says: "Well, you see this guitar makes me feel like beatin' th' Fascists, an' then that makes me sing how much I hate 'em."

"Yeh?"

"Then, well, I sing fer a bunch of folks, folks workin', er soldiers, sailors, seamen, an' that sort of makes all of us whip it up a little —then we all get ta feelin' a little more like beatin' 'em, an' 'course if a Fascist then just sort of happens to git in our way, he just naturally comes out loser, that's all."

And the man stopped and let me out. He drove through a gate into a big orchard, yelling back, "Kinda like my plow, by God!"

To me these war days, any tool, any sort of a gadget, trigger, spring or what, any kind of a horn is a war horn, any kind of a wheel is a war wheel, any kind of a smoke is war smoke and any kind of talk is war talk, any kind of singing is war singing, any music had ought to be war music.

Music We Need

People need work music. People need music to march by and to fight with, and if you composers don't dish it out right on the split second, you'll find folks passing you up and making up their own and playing and singing it.

An apple is just like a song, no matter if a ditch digger, a jeep-jumper or a college professor or a rich dame eats it—it's for your belly and for your war. The best love and kissing songs in the whole world had ought to be on the juke-boxes right this minute. But where are they? Maybe the juke-box don't know there's a war going on.

Well, the people know.

The people always know.

And rather than me to keep on scribbling here, it would be a whole lot better if we both always keep our eye peeled and our ear cocked to what all of us are trying to say—because all any kind of music is good for anyway is to make you and me know each other a little better. That's the most modern thing in the world.

RUSSIAN MUSIC GUILD

A new group to be known as the Russian Music Guild has been formed in this city by Irina Khrabroff, lecturer on Russian art and culture, and several Russian singers, for the purpose of deepening cultural relations between the Russian and American peoples. Its intention is to present the best Russian music, interpreted by Russian artists, in a manner that will interpret the spirit of their native land, as exercised in its music. One or two of the guild's vocalists, among whom are Mme. Lydia Chaliapin, Ruth Kittain, Moshe Rudinow. Ruth Leviash and others, will appear at each of the recitals being planned.





James Abresch and James Kollar

Among week's recitalists: Dorothy Eustis, pianist, and, right, Jeanne Lee, soprano, at Carnegie Chamber Hall.

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