

JILL M. SULLIVAN AND DANELLE D. KECK

The Hormel Girls

On any given summer Sunday evening in 1948, one could hear on the Mutual Broadcasting System the sponsor of a popular program exclaim: "S-P-A-M! The first meat of its kind in America preferred by most people! SPAM! Over eleven years ago the news sensation of the meat packing industry, SPAM. Today, this miracle meat of many uses continues to maintain its leadership from coast to coast." The program was *Music with the Hormel Girls*, the broadcast of a band of female World War II veterans organized to market food products of the George A. Hormel Company. Over a seven-year period, 1946–53, this group evolved from a competitive drum and bugle corps into a traveling caravan that used an assortment of sales strategies and musical performances to sell products. Their story illuminates a range of American topics: industry ensembles, drum and bugle corps, professional-performance opportunities for women musicians, and military women's postwar employment.

Women in the American Military

During the Revolutionary War colonial militias typically assigned three to six women per company to provide cooking, sewing, and laundry ser-

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vices, for which they were given food and housing. During the American Civil War, the Union military sought women to care for the wounded. During the Spanish-American War, an outbreak of typhoid among the wounded troops required the surgeon general to request the hiring of more civilian nurses.¹ It took an act of Congress to authorize the later request, yet by the end of the war female nurses had proven to be indispensable in treating ailing soldiers. Since civilian women had served in a variety of jobs with the military during previous wars, and nurses remained in short supply, Congress in 1901 authorized the establishment of the first female military auxiliary, the Army Nurse Corps, which at last acknowledged that the U.S. Army needed women in its ranks.

In the 1910s–1920s abundant new work opportunities appeared for women as typists, telephone operators, and clerical workers. As America entered World War I, Navy leaders realized they would need women to do some of these jobs. By March 1917 the Navy was authorized to begin enlisting women in the Naval Reserve, clearing the way for the Marine Corps to do the same (the Navy being the Marines' parent organization). The Army Nurse Corps deployed 10,000 females to Europe, resulting in several nurses earning medals for their heroic lifesaving deeds in the combat zones. Meanwhile, overseas-based Army generals, desperate for office workers, asked the U.S.-based military to send "uniformed" female telephone operators and clerical workers to release the male soldiers for combat. Instead of honoring these requests, the U.S. military, much to the generals' frustration, sent unskilled enlisted men, forcing General Pershing to ask the United Kingdom for such support from their Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

When World War I ended in November of 1918, although 11,000 American women had served in the conflict, there were no immediate discussions regarding women becoming a regular part of the U.S. military.² Only a decade later did the U.S. military consider the need for a Women's Army Corps. Major Everett Hughes initiated what would become known as the "Hughes Plan," a proposal that identified the need for more military women to work as secretaries, nurses, laundresses, cooks, and custodians—a cue he took from the dearth of such personnel in World War I. His plan stated that women should be "in" the military and not serve as auxiliaries: "Why not take the whole step and do the thing right?"³ But the Hughes Plan never made it through Congress, leaving the nation again with no way to secure women workers for the military.

Twenty-one years after the end of World War I, as parts of the world were engaged in what became known as World War II, Edith Nourse Rogers, a congresswoman from Massachusetts (and World War I veteran), realized that women would likely be needed in the U.S. military if America was drawn into the war. She believed in the Hughes Plan, and agreed that women should serve *in* the military, giving them official

military status and benefits. She began to draft legislation to that end. The Army, fearing Rogers's bill might pass, began drafting their own bill for a women's auxiliary. After considerable debate, the congresswoman reluctantly sided with the Army. "In the beginning," she later said, "I wanted very much to have these women taken in as a part of the Army. . . . I wanted them to have the same rate of pension and disability allowance. . . . I realized that I could not secure that. The War Department was very unwilling to have these women as a part of the Army."⁴

On May 28, 1941, Rogers introduced H.R. 4906, a bill that would establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps that stipulated that women would *not* be "a part of the Army, but it shall be the only women's organization authorized to serve 'with' the Army, exclusive of the Army Nurse Corps." While the bill initially lacked enough support to pass, after Pearl Harbor it became apparent more men would be needed to fight in both Europe and the Pacific. Thus, the secretary of war sent his approval for the bill's passage. Still, the Navy resisted, replying that "you are going to take a beating and we'll wait to see what happens." But a majority of senators found the measure necessary to win the war. The bill passed the Senate on May 14, 1942, and President Roosevelt, long a supporter of a women's corps, signed the legislation that became Public Law 554, forming the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). This identified women who joined its ranks as temporary workers who could come and go without official enlistment.⁵

The Army was the first of the military branches to form women's units; yet because theirs had only auxiliary status, recruiting was not as strong as expected and they never secured the 150,000-member enrollment anticipated in the legislation. Part of the problem was the competition for women employees by other branches of the military.⁶ Another part of the problem was the implicit competition with men that military women gave. According to one scholar, "Both female and male military leaders, as well as civilian proponents of the women's corps' agreed that 'female soldiers' must not seem to threaten either male power in the military or the notion that masculinity was integrally tied to the definition of 'soldier.'"⁷

The WAAC also endured something of a smear campaign that damaged its reputation. Newspapers aroused public suspicion with a story that the surgeon general had met with civilian doctors to formulate a plan to issue "prophylactics and contraceptives to the women to be enlisted." Unfortunately, the surgeon general neglected to invite WAAC or Army leaders into the discussion that led to this decision. Though the surgeon general's proposed plan never came to fruition, rumors about it spread. As some worried the military was trying to turn women into prostitutes, masculine females, or homosexuals, the government responded with propaganda showing images of beautiful feminine women in military

uniforms. One Army poster showed a young woman in a well-tailored designer uniform looking to the heavens with a caption that read, "Mine Eyes have Seen the Glory."⁸

To further the idea of a feminine segment of the military, New York designers were employed to create attractive uniforms and cosmetics that would coordinate with their new uniforms and already established colors of the military branch in which they served. For example, women in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, the last branch for women to be formed, hired the Elizabeth Arden Company to create matching lipstick and nail polish to create the color "Montezuma Red." Additional efforts included placing attractive military women on the front covers of popular magazines and trade journals as well as championing women's military contributions on American radio broadcasts as well as to troops serving abroad.

After the war, generals and national leaders publicly praised the women for their efforts. General Eisenhower stated, "At first [I] was violently against it. . . . Every phase of the record they compiled during the war convinced me of the error of my first reaction."⁹ Generals MacArthur, Arnold, Eaker, and Clark also praised the WACs for their "efficiency, endurance and adaptability."¹⁰ The Army alone reported that women worked in 228 different jobs, from mechanics to office workers—a big advancement from the jobs held during World War I. At war's end, women were expected to give up their jobs for the returning veterans and resume their prewar lives. Sherrie Tucker notes, "A public indoctrinated in Rosie the Riveter propaganda no longer reviled or pitied working women, but applauded them as pitching in for the war effort."¹¹

Industry Music in America

By the late nineteenth century, factories for products as diverse as clothing, food, glass, and machinery covered the American landscape. But factory jobs often required long and monotonous workdays, leading to high employee turnover. At the same time new merchant businesses—department stores, laundries, restaurants, publishing houses, and banks—appeared virtually everywhere in the country. Whether in industry or in service-sector jobs, poor working conditions led employees to form and join labor unions—something employers tried to prevent by offering recreational activities to workers. Such activities, they hoped, would foster company loyalty, create higher job satisfaction, promote a positive public image, and increase productivity. One such recreational activity was the organization of music ensembles. Some companies went as far as to show preference toward applicants who possessed musical skills. Company orchestras, choirs, and bands were developed as early as 1855 and endured for well over a hundred years.¹²

Kenneth Clark's 1929 book, *Music in Industry*, documents the results from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' 1926 survey designed to gather information about music opportunities for employees. It found 430 companies that offered some kind of musical participation. Of those, 151 had musical performance groups: 79 bands, 45 orchestras, and 27 glee clubs. A 1929 survey reported a growth in industry musical activities, with 679 companies reporting the existence of 267 bands, 182 orchestras, 176 choruses, and 133 plants where there was community singing.¹³ One company manager in the 1929 survey gave the following response regarding the importance of sponsoring a music ensemble:

We believe our products are materially helped in their sale by the fact that there is a high-class musical organization. . . . Those working here who play in the band are naturally benefited through their ability as musicians, which may mean that they do not "turnover." The band is well-liked in the community, and the mere fact of the name tends toward a feeling of good will.¹⁴

Richard Franko Goldman wrote of industry bands: "The purpose of this type of band is primarily that of a recreational facility for employees, but it also advertises the business and provides entertainment [for the community]."¹⁵ But the Hormel Girls, as we will see, were not organized for worker recreation, but to provide employment for women veterans—and eventually to expand into a long-term marketing strategy for the company. That differentiated them from most previous American industry bands.

The Hormel Company

In November 1891 George A. Hormel opened a new meat company in Austin, Minnesota. In 1929 his son, Jay Hormel, became its chief executive officer. Having "a distinct flair for the unusual and dramatic," Jay Hormel "conceived a promotional . . . twenty-member troupe of Mexican song and dance girls called the Hormel Chili Beaners."¹⁶ This troupe presented an hour-long show at county fairs throughout the Midwest and was credited with helping to sell 500,000 cans of chili the first year, primarily purchased by the Scandinavian population of Minnesota in 1936. In 1940 Jay Hormel contracted the biggest act in the country—George Burns and Gracie Allen together with Artie Shaw and his twenty-three-piece orchestra—to help advertise Hormel meat products. Meanwhile, the company began advertising the spiced-ham product it had developed in 1937—"SPAM"—in fourteen "women's" magazines, including *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal*.

World War II heightened the demand for food that could be easily preserved and shipped abroad. In March 1941, in response to Congress

passing the Lend-Lease Act (designed to provide material aid to U.S. allies), the Hormel Company doubled its hours of production. By 1944 more than 90 percent of Hormel's canned meat was going to the Allied troops—"hundreds of millions of pounds" of it. Advertisements, cartoons, photographs, and letters from soldiers demonstrate the importance of Hormel foods. The most important was SPAM, which became so dominant a wartime food in England that Edward R. Murrow, in a 1942 Christmas Eve broadcast, remarked that for this particular holiday there would be no lavish feasts, but only "SPAM for everyone." The English people, according to one source, "expressed their fervent thanks for SPAM," seemingly elevating it to a heroic-lifesaving status.¹⁷ Clearly, Hormel was sustaining not only the Allied troops, but the English home-front as well. Meanwhile, according to Nikita Khrushchev, "Without SPAM we wouldn't have been able to feed the [Russian] army."¹⁸

American newspapers and magazines showed families eating SPAM for meals, and newspaper columnists and radio and stage entertainers incorporated jokes about SPAM in their newspapers and acts. To meet the wartime sales demand—which resulted in record profits for Hormel—the company hired 1,300 women to replace men who had been drafted or volunteered for the war. After hiring the women, Jay Hormel continued to show support for former male employees serving in the military by sending each of them a letter promising that their jobs would be waiting for them when they returned. This would mean that after the war women would be replaced in the Hormel factories although they had contributed substantially to the company's record sales.

The Hormel Girls' Drum and Bugle Corps

When World War II ended, Jay Hormel insisted that the Hormel Company create jobs for both men and women who had served their country, partly because he was a World War I veteran as well as a vice-chairman of the American Legion National Employment Committee, a group focused on the repatriating of soldiers. In the summer of 1946 Hormel established the all-female American Legion SPAM Post 570 in Austin, Minnesota, as a publicity vehicle.¹⁹ All women veterans in his company were required to join. Hormel product manager Dale Schamber and sales manager Loran Waters began recruiting ex-servicewomen who showed aptitude for sales and had pleasant personalities and musical skill to join the new company drum and bugle corps. Recruitment procedures varied. Some women answered advertisements, some were referred by employment agencies, some heard of the new group by word of mouth, and some already worked in the Hormel Company. Also many recruits had received a direct mailing from the Hormel Company: Jay Hormel had acquired the rosters of all women's military bands from World War

II.²⁰ By late July 1947 Schamber and Waters had recruited fifty-six white females and begun ordering instruments and uniforms for what would become the Hormel Girls' Drum and Bugle Corps, a group that soon acquired the apt though unflattering nickname "the Spamettes."

Despite the demeaning connotations of the word "girls" for professional women who were former soldiers, the term (like "boys") was ubiquitous in literature of the day referring to unmarried persons under thirty years of age. Sherrie Tucker, in her book *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, writes that the women she interviewed were "more comfortable with the term 'all-girl' bands" than she was.²¹ The current authors found this to be the case as well. The women interviewed for this study did not feel devalued by the name and letters written by them indicate the pervasive use of the term "girls" and "kids" to refer to women in the group. Marilyn Wilson Ritter, a Hormel Girl, wrote, "We were 'Girls'—probably most were under thirty years of age. Hormel 'Women' sounded less attractive."²² Tucker, however, notes that the use of "girls" for such women should

resound with historic dissonance—in relation to the women who played in [these bands], the circuits they traveled, and the work they

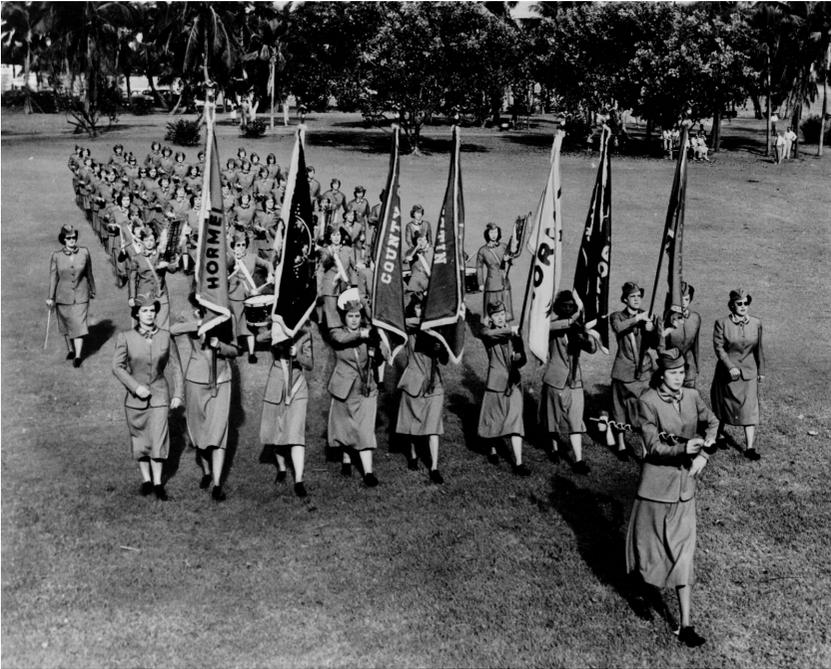


Figure 1. Press release photo of the Hormel Girls Drum and Bugle Corps, ca. 1947. (Courtesy of Hormel Foods Corporation.)

performed. The label summons the complexity of working under an umbrella of both opportunity and devaluation.²³

Some "all-girl" bands sponsored by companies fired members as soon as they married or became pregnant. This was the typical policy with the Hormel Girls, too. A newspaper article about the group reported, "A wedding ring is the equivalent of an honorable discharge. The company has ruled that matrimony creates too many personal problems in an all-female atmosphere." The sales manager also reported, "They couldn't be married and have their husbands with them at all. None of them had husbands." Hormel Girl Eleanor Jones more or less summed up the situation in a letter to her parents: "We lost two girls; they both left Saturday to be married."²⁴

Although there had been an African American WAC Band during the war, only 4.9 percent of the WACs were African American women; only seventy-two women served in the WAVES and only four SPARs were black. The Marine Corps did not record any black women among its ranks.²⁵ So understandably the Hormel Girls initially included no black women. In addition to the dearth of prospects, it may be that Hormel didn't want a mixed-race ensemble which, in some sectors, would have reflected negatively on the company. As the ensemble evolved it would be traveling south, where the Klu Klux Klan was still very active and where, as it turned out, even the white women of the Hormel Girls felt intimidated. By 1950, however, one black woman was welcomed into the group to play trombone and sing in the chorus. Still, it was reported that she had "light skin."²⁶

The Competition

Whatever cultural biases one detects in the group's name and policies, Jay Hormel planned to defy convention by sending the first all-female senior drum and bugle corps to compete against men in the American Legion National Drum and Bugle Corps Championship. This necessitated, he felt, a high degree of professional discipline. He communicated this to recruits in his welcome letter: "In order to make this a winning corps, there will have to be semi-military discipline and rules and regulations which, although liberal, must be strictly enforced. Misconduct, major breach of discipline, lack of cooperation or lack of aptitude must, of course, result in dismissal."²⁷ For the entire seven-year existence of the Hormel Girls, the women never signed a work contract with the company, making it easy for them to be dismissed if they did not meet work expectations or follow the code of conduct.

In preparation for the twenty-ninth American Legion National Drum and Bugle Corps Championship Competition to be held in New York

City, this group of women went to the Eastern Military Academy on Shippan Point, near Stamford, Connecticut, where Jay Hormel had rented a dormitory and rehearsal area for an entire month at the cost of \$5,000; he hired Fred Bachrodt of Chicago as their director.²⁸

The first day of training, August 1, 1947, was described in a newsletter called the *Spamette Gazette*:

Mustering on the dewy grasses of E.M.A.'s [Eastern Military Academy's] parade field, Spamettes fell in for waking-up exercises. . . . Muscles began to talk back. General assembly was called by Director Bachrodt in the gym where a fireside pep talk was thoroughly and enthusiastically received by all Spamettes. Bugles and drums were assigned and immediately the old gym walls received the shock of their long lives. They heard the service tunes of WW I and WW II as Spamettes huffed and puffed, limbering up the beautiful new instruments, the best our sponsor could find. Individual tests were given to each girl, whereby drum corps positions were assigned. Music was issued, and for the rest of the working day, drillmaster Esser took the Spamettes in stride.²⁹

The paper also reported that the women met Jay Hormel for the first time on this day.

After Director Bachrodt's introduction, Mr. Hormel started down the line stopping before each girl, who sounded off with her name and home state. . . . His parting words to us were, "Get in there and pitch." Your reporter's impression: He's Tops.³⁰

He also provided extra incentive for the women to win the competition: "If we place in the finals we each receive an extra \$100.00. If we WIN the competition, we each get another \$100.00. Also, any girls that are judged outstanding at the end of the month will receive still another \$100.00."³¹

The band's daily rehearsal schedule consisted of sectional practice for two and a half hours, a one-hour lunch break, followed by a full-ensemble rehearsal for two hours, and ending with a two-hour rehearsal on the drill field. Parade marching, for miles on the streets around the academy, was also part of their training. On the final mile the women would no longer play their instruments but rather sing as they marched. Ritter, one of the first Hormel Girls recruited, remembered the time at the academy this way:

Most of the girls were musicians. We had a good drill instructor and a good drum instructor, and these people had been in competitions through the years, so they knew what to look for and how to train us. We had a fifteen-minute drill we had to memorize. Most

of the music was arranged by Eddie Dunstedter, an organist from Minnesota.³²

Everyone involved hoped the training plan could be executed without significant problems. But this was not the case. Three weeks into the practice regimen, fifty Stamford neighbors complained about the seemingly nonstop noise. "It's perfectly atrocious. Why, these women drill hour after hour, practicing the same notes all day." Therefore, the neighbors "filed a motion for a temporary injunction to stop the rehearsing."³³ Marilyn Mosley, author of the *Spanette Gazette*, quotes what was published in the *New York Times* about this unfortunate incident:

They do not care that for the first time in American Legion history an all-woman drum and bugle corps composed of veterans of World War II is making ready to challenge male supremacy. This will take place in the annual Tournament of Music to be held during the twenty-ninth annual American Legion Convention in New York City.³⁴

In the end, an out-of-court agreement was made for the women to practice outside only in the morning, and the ensemble was transported to a nearby ballpark where they practiced in the afternoon for approximately nine days leading up to the competition.

Shortly before the competition event Mosley excitedly wrote of the group's anticipation: "Just one week from today! A day we all hope to make history as far as National American Legion Conventions are concerned. It can be done girls, and it will be done." Jay Hormel hired mock judges to assist in the ensemble's preparation. Their evaluations encouraged the women to practice even harder both their marching and playing a repertoire, comprised of music that "had seldom been bugled before"—"The Hormel Girls' Theme," "Light Cavalry Overture," "Tiger Rag," "Pennsylvania Polka," "Honey," "Yankee Doodle," "This Is My Country," "McNamara's Band," "Lullaby of Broadway," "Give My Regards to Broadway," "Minnesota Rouser," and "Cuddle Up a Little Closer."³⁵ Jay Hormel also hired an entourage of service people to cater to the women, including hairstylists and tailors, who assisted the women to look their best at all times.

For precompetition public relations, the Hormel Girls played in concert formation at Grand Central Station for Legion convention participants, then marched from Union Station to Madison Avenue, on to Radio City Music Hall, and finally Rockefeller Plaza. After a short rest, they marched down Fifth Avenue, ending at the Pennsylvania Hotel, the convention headquarters, where they played another short concert. The competition seemed to have already begun as other corps sized up the SPAM Post's corps, leading Mr. Bachrodt, the ensemble's director, to tell the women that his World War I buddies were afraid these women would show

them up. Feeling the pressure of representing womankind for the first time in this competition, the author of the *Spamette Gazette* referred to competition day, August 29, 1947, as "the all-important and most exciting seven-minutes in 48 gals' lives."³⁶

The day arrived, and when they finished their performance, the women felt they had earned kudos from many of the men in other corps: "Leaving the field after the seven-minute drill [excerpted from their full set listed above], Spamettes were extended sincere congratulations from 'gentlemen' drum corps awaiting on the line for their turn. The men really looked at the Spamettes with respect and admiration for a job well-done."³⁷ This was not surprising as the women placed thirteenth out of the forty-nine competing units, just missing the cut for the twelfth-place position in the finals by .20 of a point. The members of America's first and perhaps only female professional drum and bugle corps were deservedly very proud of their efforts, scoring 86.80 out of 100 points.³⁸ Ritter remarked: "Thirteenth was quite outstanding, but we just missed being in the finals by a fraction of a point. And those men had been practicing [and competing] for years and years."³⁹ Later they learned that one judge had marked the women last place for general effect. But the music judge singled them out for praise: "It was music that no other corps could match. Spamettes didn't blast, they brought forth tones that practiced ears will not forget for a long time."⁴⁰

The disappointment subsided as Hormel and his entire family met with the women at the academy following their performance, where he gave each woman a corsage and told them they could keep their uniforms. He also told them he wanted to do it again the next summer and hoped that all would come back to try again in next year's competition, to be held in Miami. Before leaving, he had the women line up so he could shake hands with each one and give her a hundred dollar bill even though they had not made the finals.

The next day the women marched in the American Legion parade down Fifth Avenue to the cheers of thousands of spectators. Mosley wrote in her newsletter: "It was quite a thrill to be marching in a National American Legion Convention parade, to be veterans of World War II, and to know that we represented hundreds of thousands of ex-servicewomen of the United States for their part in the greatest conflict of all time." That evening at the Hotel Savoy Plaza, Hormel announced that he wanted to keep the drum and bugle corps together to represent the "all-around American Girl" and as traveling advertisers for Hormel products. Twenty women immediately agreed to continue with the Hormel Company.⁴¹ The next day the group traveled to Mount Vernon, New York, where Mr. Hormel had a Technicolor movie made of the women rehearsing their drum-and-bugle competition show, both as an example of an all-female

American Legion drum and bugle corps and as a promotional sales tool for the Hormel Company.

A Minnesota newspaper assessed the Hormel Girls' accomplishments this way: "The Girls made their debut at the New York convention—the first all-girl American legion post ever to invade a strictly male province, the national drum corps contest, in which the Austin gals made an excellent showing."⁴²

The Sales Work

The twenty women who agreed to stay on with the Hormel Company became the nucleus of a sales force that was expected to sell products door to door, as well as perform and march in parades in select cities across America. Prior to the women arriving in each city, leadmen visited towns promoting their upcoming appearance by placing advertisements in the local newspapers. One ad, published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, read, "The HORMEL GIRLS will be here with PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! ON HORMEL DAY."⁴³ This ad showed pictures of corps members along with pictures of different canned products, such as Hormel Ham, SPAM, Dinty Moore Beef Stew, Hormel Corned Beef Hash, Onion Soup, Spaghetti, Deviled Tongue, and Liver Pate. Yet another newspaper ad asked, "Have You Seen This Girl?" followed by a picture of a Hormel Girl. The ad goes on to say,

You Will! Because one of these days she or one of her 20 helpers will be at your door to hand you a coupon that entitles you to an EXTRA can of Hormel Chili Con Carne (with beans) with your purchase of ONE can (with or without beans) from your grocer at his regular price. TWO for the price of ONE . . . Watch for the Hormel Girl!⁴⁴

The February 5, 1948, issue of the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans featured a picture of the corps in a full page ad that proclaimed

The Hormel Chili Girls are on the march again! The parade's not over yet! The famous Hormel Chili Girls who've helped you celebrate Mardi Gras are getting set for another march, this time right up to your front door. These talented ex-G.I. Drum and Bugle Girls have a special Chili offer for you and they'd like to present it to you personally.⁴⁵

To enhance the Hormel Girls' image, some newspaper ads showed the women posing for publicity shots with stars—as in 1948, while in California, where they were photographed with Gale Storm, "who at 28 was the star of Allied Artist Motion Pictures, a Sunday school teacher, and mother of three boys" and was chosen by the California American Legion as their "1948 Mother of the Year."⁴⁶ Jay Hormel gave the

Identity Card



This is a picture of
1 of 60
HORMEL GIRLS

Rebecca Gary "Hornel"

*I am your lucky Hormel girl.
I will be in a food store next*

WEDNESDAY
from 1:00 to 2:00 P. M.

11 With Lucky Coins good on the purchase of Hormel products while I am in the store.

A SPECIAL PRIZE TO ANYONE WHO FINDS ME AND GIVES ME THIS CARD! . . . The sooner you find me—the bigger the prize!

"First Prize" to the first to find me—20 Lucky Coins—enough to buy a Hormel Family Size (Quarter) Canned Ham. **"Second Prize"** to the second to find me—15 Lucky Coins. **"Third Prize"** to the third to find me—10 Lucky Coins. **"5 Lucky Coins"** to each of the other prize winners.

SPECIAL JACKPOT: If I am wearing a badge with the number shown under my picture on this card, first prize will be the "Jackpot"—50 Lucky Coins—enough to buy a Hormel Banquet Size (Whole) Canned Ham. One girl out of each five will have one "Jackpot."

NOTICE: Card valid only when punched by Hormel Girl in store, day, and hour shown.

LIMIT: ONE CARD PER FAMILY—ADULTS ONLY

Figure 2. Hormel Girls newspaper advertisement.

group additional opportunities to mingle with Hollywood stars when he hosted parties at his home in California and had Hormel Girls perform for those events by his pool.

Meanwhile, the group recruited new members with newspaper ads in cities where they sold and performed. One such ad read:

Veteranettes! Have you Ever Dreamed That You Would Like to Be Back in Service at \$50.00 a WEEK, as a Starter? With a Chance to See America First, and all Expenses Paid? Well girls, it's no longer a dream

. . . the trip, the money, the opportunity can be yours for the asking . . . and this is not a campaign poster! All you have to do is to be a girl. Once that point is settled in your favor, you must prove that you are an ex-GI, that you like people, and that you like to travel. Once these points are settled without dispute . . . you will find yourself, in all probability, eligible to become a member of the nationally known "Hormel Girls" Corps.⁴⁷

The Radio Show

Jay Hormel, recognizing the success of his unique sales force and wanting to bolster their national stature, decided to create a radio program for them. In February 1948, to prepare for broadcasting, he had the group travel to Hollywood for three months' training. Ritter said that "before we went to Hollywood, an arranger, director were added, then an orchestra and chorus were formed. They started recruiting more women." Louise Mulvany became the choral director, Eddie Skrivanek the orchestra director; Richard Wendelken produced the show, and Henry Howe directed it.⁴⁸ Of this group, Skrivanek was the most experienced and popular Hollywood musician. A successful freelance banjoist and guitarist, during the war he had been musical director for the radio show *Proudly We Hail*, heard on 1,200 stations each week. After the war he was employed as the music director of MacGregor Transcriptions and had his own orchestra—the Skrivanek Orchestra—whose members, as stated in a magazine of the period, he "drew from the finest ranks of radio and motion picture musical talent."⁴⁹ The primary ensemble formed by the Hormel Girls was a radio orchestra with brass, woodwinds (saxophones and clarinets), trap set, and an accordion that played most of the melody lines. As the ensemble grew, violins were added and a harp replaced the accordion. Similar to other radio-broadcast orchestras of the era, the harp needed to signal transitions in the music and arpeggiate the final chord of a piece, which led into the announcer's commentary. One dance-band member commented at that time, "So much of our music depends on the harp that it would be very hard to do a broadcast without one."⁵⁰

The first broadcast of *Music with the Hormel Girls* aired on a single radio station, KHJ in Los Angeles, on Saturday, March 20, 1948, with Marilyn Wilson Ritter serving as the announcer. A regional success, the show quickly spread to more than ten stations in the Don Lee Mutual Broadcasting System in California. By late May twenty stations were carrying the show. Soon it was broadcast on Sunday evenings from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. over the entire Mutual Broadcasting System.⁵¹ The show became moderately popular, according to the Nielsen ratings during the 1950–51 season, which ranked the show thirteenth out of twenty weekend radio



Figure 3. Broadcast of *Music with the Hormel Girls*. (Courtesy of Hormel Foods Corporation.)

broadcasts. In 1953 the show became a bona fide hit, moving to number four in the yearly rankings.⁵²

Recordings of Hormel Girls radio broadcasts from 1948 to 1949 show that their music resembled smaller commercial male big bands of the era, such as those of Sammy Kaye, Ted Weems, and Kay Kyser, as opposed to the groups like the Guy Lombardo Orchestra.⁵³ Initially the Hormel Girls radio broadcasts also shared similarities with the Kay Kyser radio broadcasts in that both were on NBC Radio and utilized a format that highlighted many of its performers rather than a strong leader. One college jazz professor remarked after hearing a Hormel Girls broadcast, “The players in the Hormel band seemed to be on the par with most of the other professional groups of that era. I would consider them professional-level musicians.”⁵⁴ The women considered themselves that as well: they were all members of the American Federation of Musicians.

The radio broadcasts evolved similarly to those of the Phil Spitalny *Hour of Charm*. The Hormel Girls shows from 1950 utilized an orchestra playing semiclassical repertoire, instrumentation that included strings (featuring harp), and performers who rarely, if ever, improvised. The women and arrangers did worry about sounding too old-fashioned (like Ted Lewis’s band) and didn’t want to emulate the Phil Spitalny band sound either. One comment made after the women went to a Spitalny

performance reflected this dislike of their sound: "Their presence is very good with lovely costumes. They sing well and individually the girls possess lots of talent. But, I think our arrangements are better. . . . The gooey style of theirs is undoubtedly just what Mr. General Electric wants." Nevertheless, Jay Hormel preferred they play in that vein. Phil Spitalny's performers used, according to Sherrie Tucker, "elaborate special arrangements, not sizzling from a hot 'ride' supported by 'riffs' worked out from the imaginations of the brass section." The Hormel Girls followed suit, their music closely following the written arrangements and seldom improvised—something for which, no doubt, their training had not prepared them in the first place.⁵⁵

The 1948 broadcasts were introduced in this way: "Music by the Hormel Girls' Corps" followed by a brass fanfare, and then their theme song, concluding with the announcer stating:

The Hormel Girls' Corps. George A. Hormel and Company has these 44 ex-G.I. girls who travel from coast to coast, going from store to store and from house to house to tell you about the famous Hormel Chili con Carne and the many other fine products which make up the Hormel family of good foods. As a group, these girls make appearances as a drum and bugle corps and as a marching unit. Sixteen of them have formed an orchestra and have built this little radio show. Each Saturday at this time these ex-G.I. girlfriends will bring you pleasant music and tell you interesting things about themselves and the famous Hormel Products.⁵⁶

This was followed by a musical number such as "Fine and Dandy" or "Peg o' My Heart." The first advertisement for a Hormel meat product followed, with wording such as

You know, friends, the one popular Hormel product that fills the bill for *every* kind of good eating—from planned parties to pot-luck snacks—is that smooth-spreading Hormel Deviled Ham. That's right, Hormel Deviled Ham is just as much at home on a plate of fancy appetizers as it is in a hearty, he-man sandwich in a lunch-box.⁵⁷

The broadcast flowed on with full-band numbers, occasional "special talent" features, and product advertisements woven throughout. Individual members were sometimes invited to the microphone to describe their service jobs, to play solos, read original poems, tap-dance, or sing. One example of a military job description occurred during a 1949 broadcast when Sgt. Lynn Pennington—a former member of the 402nd WAC Band stationed in San Francisco at the Letterman General Hospital near the end of the war—replied to the announcer's inquiry about her musical military service:

We played for the patients, you know: musical therapy has accomplished miracles for many of the boys. We'd always start with soft music for the bedridden boys, you know, things like certain symphonies and tone poems. Then as they improved we'd give them brighter and more lively numbers and once the Joes were on their feet, we'd talk to them and see what instruments they liked best and teach them to play those instruments. Believe me it was inspiring work!⁵⁸

Often the band accompanied vocalists, as in arrangements of Broadway-musical selections or other popular tunes of the era. Examples of music played and sung included "In the Blue of the Evening," "Tater Pie," "Paris Wakes Up and Smiles," "I Wish I Had a Wishbone," "Bali Hai," "Lady of Spain," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Summertime," "Guys and Dolls Medley," and "On the Wabash." Instrumental features on the show included Dixieland-band arrangements, as well as "That's a Plenty" and "Limehouse Blues" to name a few.⁵⁹ One transcript from the November 5, 1949, broadcast indicates the band played "I Love a Parade," "Farewell Blues," "Temptation," "The Thunderer," "My Blue Heaven," "Memphis Blues," and a Western medley.

After their 1948 appearance in the American Legion National Drum and Bugle Corps Championship (where they placed ninth overall in the final competition), the musical-sales force continued its cross-country travels. Due to increased exposure and company profits, the Hormel Girls organization grew. Jay Hormel purchased thirty-five white Chevrolets with the company name painted in hunter green on the sides of each car. The women could then travel to major cities in a long caravan, making a noticeable entrance.⁶⁰ On the trunk of each car was a logo that became the trademark of the Hormel Girls: a cow, a lamb, and a pig. (The women wore a hatpin with this same logo, and it was also painted on the bass drum head of the radio orchestra's trap set.) Jay Hormel knew that the sight of these thirty-five new white Chevrolets coming into a city would attract the attention of the news media, which he hoped would translate into bigger sales. Heightening the sensation of the caravan, he had his leadmen secure the town's police force to give a formal escort into town. Upon arrival the mayor would formally welcome the women to the city and the Hormel Girls' Drum and Bugle Corps would commence a parade down the city's main street performing popular marches, encouraging citizens to join in. Hormel Girl Eleanor Jones wrote home after a memorable entrance into a city:

We made the most spectacular entrance into Miami Sunday evening. We had a police escort all the way from Palm Beach to the edge of North Miami where we were met by an impressive fleet of motorcycle cops. So we roared through the city like ambulances, stopping

everything in sight. Exciting! We loved it! We skidded to a halt in front of the court house and there lined up waiting for us was the entire Miami Drum and Bugle Corps, rated probably as one of the top three in the country. They then marched in front of all the white cars from there to the hotel. The streets were lined. Dozens of people crowded around the hotel to watch us unload."⁶¹

It was a quasi-patriotic marketing campaign. Americans could show their appreciation to Hormel's war efforts by purchasing their meats—including the heroic SPAM.

After the parade the women would often divide into two-person teams to drive to surrounding communities. Team members would split and individually go to grocery stores to sell cases of meat. Since the women had become popular from radio broadcasts, advertising tactics changed. Set-up crews would arrive a few days early to prepare grocery-store displays, hang posters throughout the town, and place advertisements in newspapers. Often, coupons and "Lucky Hormel Girl" picture cards were mailed to residents several weeks in advance. For safety reasons, the now-famous Hormel Girls gave up distributing coupons door to door and instead remained in the stores to give out free samples.



Figure 4. The Hormel Girls at one of the many public food-industry events where they appeared in the late 1940s. (Courtesy of Hormel Foods Corporation.)

While women were not required to reach weekly sales quotas, they did get bonuses if they sold exceptionally well—as much as twenty-five extra dollars per week depending on how many cases they sold. Delores Marshal Haber, who enjoyed the sales portion of the work, remembered that there was a point system set up for selling: “We received different points for different products sold. If we sold SPAM, that was the main one we wanted to sell, we got a lot more points for that than if we sold sugar links or pig’s feet or something like that.” While Martha Awkerman did her best to sell products, she preferred the musical aspects of the job: “Well, you had to do what you had to do. You go into the store, you’d have your little case, just ‘Mom and Pop’ stores, they left the big stores to the real top sellers, they were really good. I was always at the bottom of the list. I didn’t want to sell anything. I was there to play my horn.”⁶²

The schedule varied slightly from team to team and from town to town, but the overall structure remained the same from week to week. Each two-woman team was given a weekly schedule indicating which town and which stores they were to visit on specific days. The teams would arrive at their first destination on Monday, spend two days in the stores, and then on Wednesday would meet the other teams and drive to a location for rehearsals. Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and evenings were taken up with practice. Friday and Saturday consisted of a dress rehearsal and a show.⁶³ Later the group was divided and schedules rotated so that half the group would travel and sell for two days while the other half rehearsed. Then both groups would switch, finally coming together at the end of the week for a full rehearsal and show.

Traveling Radio Show and the Stage Show

With the women traveling from city to city to sell products, Jay Hormel had to develop a plan that would allow the radio broadcasts to continue while the Hormel Girls were on the road. Ritter remembered: “A radio engineer, a sound booth, and a director would always travel with us. We carried our own remote broadcasting system.” Since the women would be “on location” recording the radio shows, it was decided to expand local musical offerings by adding a stage show with a live audience of local grocers, their families, and townspeople. There was no charge to see the show. Meanwhile, in an attempt to reach the largest possible radio market, Jay Hormel switched from the Mutual Broadcasting Network to the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), allowing the show to be heard from coast to coast on 227 of the affiliate stations, as well as on the Armed Services Network and even some CBS stations.⁶⁴

After each radio show was taped, a small ensemble (such as a Dixieland combo or a comedy act) would entertain the audience while the rest of the women quickly changed into costume and prepared for the stage

show. When the curtain rose, the stage show always began with “Barnyard Capers,” a musical act that included square dancing—a fiddling showcase of the string section—along with an extravagant number called “George Hormel Had a Farm.” The dancers wore colorful dresses and masks, each representing the cow, the pig, or the lamb, corresponding to the Hormel Girls logo. The show featured acts such as Dolores Spitzer Clark soloing on marimba or the “Rainbow Trio,” named because each performer had a different hair color. Caroline Hutchinson, a dance-band pianist from California who had been a member of the 400th WAC Band during World War II, often played a piano solo. Lois Aubele Sterner was a featured vocal soloist, getting that status, she recalls, fortuitously: “We did one trio number, and I had an incidental solo in it. Mr. Hormel liked my voice, then I started doing some incidental solos with the chorus for a month or so, and then I had my first big solo. From then on I had major and minor solos. I did all the ballads and the blues songs.” The dance troupe often danced the cancan, and at the end of the number pulled strings on their floor-length skirts to raise them up like a curtain. Grace Shipley remembered: “I had sung in choirs all my life, but then it became more of a variety show with dancing, so I became a dancer too.”⁶⁵ Sterner recalled that, as a dancer, she was

so clumsy. And they gave me a baritone horn—put it in my hand and said, “Hey, gotta learn this!” So I’m trying to learn how to dance and play, and I knew I could sing! Everyone had to do it at one time or another. They didn’t play favorites with anybody, no matter what you were doing you had to dance or you had to play the horn.⁶⁶

Despite the diversity of their roles during the show, in the finale the entire group donned green suits and played their instruments—an obvious look back at their performances during the war.

By the early 1950s, Jay Hormel lifted the ex-G.I. requirement for Hormel Girl membership and recruited professional musicians to raise the group’s musicianship. This seemed necessary because the show was now going to be live rather than taped. A newspaper article reported that “the newer members of the caravan have been chosen for looks and musical ability rather than service stripes. They play a good grade of popular music, on the brassy side.” Waters, the group’s sales manager, was quick to refute the article, insisting Hormel Girls were not hired for their “looks, but for their sales ability and musical background.” In any case, Sterner, a vocal soloist with the group, noted the rise in the group’s musical competence: “When I sang, and I had them backing me up, I knew I was all right. They just did a terrific job and I know they were some of the best musicians that I have ever worked with.”⁶⁷

Ernest Villas directed the orchestra from June 1951 until August 1953. While the women were out selling products, he would be studying the



Figure 5. One of several combo groups featured in Hormel Girls' radio broadcasts and stage shows. (Courtesy of Hormel Foods Corporation.)

music scheduled for performance that week. But his wife, who traveled with them, remembered "Mr. Hormel . . . hovering over him . . . a perfectionist with every minute detail."⁶⁸ Eleanor Jones wrote home to her parents:

There are more men in Hollywood who know more about modern music than anywhere else in the world and Mr. Hormel thinks he knows more. He spent most of the morning at the studio and completely upset us all, including the men who are working with us, by informing us that he doesn't think we can use any of the arrangements we're working on, simply beautiful arrangements made by the very best arrangers. Every single one we played, he took all apart and offered lots of his own opinion. He knows a great deal about his business, but why oh why must he be a tyrant about the music end of it.⁶⁹

At the same time, Jay Hormel got no support for his desire to have the radio orchestra directed by a woman. After the firing of a male producer and hiring of a female replacement, Hormel "really pushed to have the group conducted by a female. We disagreed with him to the point of thinking that most of us would be forced to leave shortly after an innovation of that sort."⁷⁰ Perhaps he felt he would meet less resistance

from female employees in charge of the ensemble than from the directors and arrangers who often disagreed with his musical suggestions for the ensemble. Or perhaps the ensemble members thought that, although their former military bands had been conducted by women, they would not be taken seriously if they had a female conductor. In their eyes having a male conductor added professionalism or legitimacy to the group, which was common for professional all-female groups at that time.

By 1951 the group's printed programs were glossy multipage pamphlets highlighting musical numbers, sponsors, and Hormel products. Cover photos became increasingly provocative, with dancers in strapless dresses and short skirts. Inside the programs were more photos of the dancers. The instrumentalists and singers—most of the group—seldom appeared in program photos, seemingly because they wore more clothing.⁷¹ A clear move away from a military image to an image that highlighted sexuality perhaps came with the belief that the music itself—let alone mere patriotism—was not enough to satisfy audience members. Apparently the company decided as the years passed that connections to the military were no longer as popular as displaying the attractive performers in quasi-magazines that became mementos for all audience members, who now had to pay \$2.00 to get into the stage show.

Compensation and Leisure Time

Initially, each member earned \$50.00 per week (rising to \$53.00 by 1948, then \$55.20 in the early 1950s) with possible bonuses for selling more products than expected. Each member also received a weekly food allowance of \$30, and \$3 for laundering uniforms.⁷² One member wrote home to her parents attempting to explain the union pay that also could be earned:

We made over \$70.00 last week. You see, we're paid according to the local union scale and in Hollywood it is high. Anything up to \$53.00 we don't get because the company pays us that salary regardless, but last week we went transcontinental, which boosts the rate considerably. Then too, if a person plays more than one instrument she gets extra and this is the only place when those silly bugles do any good. It's rather complicated, but it adds up to about twenty more dollars for last week.⁷³

Because the salary was good and their expenses were all paid, the women had extra money to spend on new cars, cameras, clothes, portable record players, and so forth. They were making more money than most observers thought possible for a group of female musicians.

During the war women might hold private-sector jobs that paid \$51.00

per week in an aircraft plant, for example, or \$48.00 per week as an electrician's helper. After the war many had to settle for less than \$30.00 a week working in a factory or a department store. Elaine Tyler May writes that, after the war, "Women's average weekly pay dropped from \$50.00 to \$37.00, a drop of 26%." She goes on to report that 90 percent of women who worked in industry during the war earned less money after the war. The Hormel Girls, by comparison, earned over \$200.00 per month plus expenses and sales potential for more. Kraft reports in *Stage to Studio* that in the 1930s male members of staff radio orchestras earned \$100 to \$120 per week and independent studio musicians earned \$25 to \$35 per program.⁷⁴ While this sounds like very good wages, Kraft indicates that studio employment was often intermittent work.

Not surprisingly, that was also considerably more than what the military paid women. Initially the Army paid the WAACs \$21.00 per month; later the Army raised WAC pay to \$50.00 per month, which was also the amount paid to women in the WAVES (Navy). Not only did Hormel pay the Hormel Girls more than four times what the military paid in base salary, all Hormel employees received profit-sharing checks at the end of each year, anywhere from \$100 to \$300.⁷⁵ Waters, the Hormel Girls' sales manager, remembered the women's pay this way: "It was really good, as I recall. When they came in it was \$50.00 per week and 100 percent expenses that included silk stockings. The women had a chance to make another \$25.00 in sales each week. . . . I think most of the women today who own their home used money that they had saved from the Hormel Girls."⁷⁶ This might well have been the best financial option for professional women musicians in the postwar era.

Beyond the pay were benefits, of course. The women, for example, earned a ten-day paid vacation every three months, as well as an all expense-paid trip home. Shipley recalled some experiences during her time off: "We were in the east, staying in New Jersey, during one of the best Broadway seasons ever. We went every night and we learned. I just don't know where you could get an experience like that." Jones had similar memories: "They gave us so much freedom to do these things. Mr. Hormel gave us freedom to experience this country while we were traveling. It was a great gift and we learned so much about America. He allowed us to use the Hormel cars on our days off to travel."⁷⁷ Of the travel, Awkerman remarked:

We had fun. We had these new white cars. The day after the show was recorded, we traveled. So we'd see a restaurant along the road and we'd stop at show time and go into the restaurant. One of the kids would have their little radio and we'd all sit in this restaurant and listen to the show, and everybody in the restaurant would start listening, too. Traveling was fun. We stayed in the same hotel for a

week, unless it was a large city like Chicago or Los Angeles and then we would stay anywhere from two weeks to a month. Mr. Hormel was great to us.⁷⁸

While some took in the local sights using the Hormel cars (permitted if they stayed within a specific mile range), others chose to order room service, sleep, attend church, see a movie, or just relax with friends. Sterner liked the option to relax on Sundays:

Most of the girls went sightseeing. I didn't. I just kind of lounged around and I really worked on my songs. I had breakfast in the room and we did most of our laundry in the room and would hang it up wherever we could. We also would go to movies on Sunday afternoons.⁷⁹

Some women took advantage of the music performances in the cities where they traveled. They heard many famous artists and ensembles, such as Dizzy Gillespie, Fred Waring, Kay Kyser, Benny Goodman, Jan Savitt, Skinny Ennis, Fats Pichon, Les Brown, the St. Louis Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and other entertainers such as Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell.

But the Hormel Girls also used their nonscheduled time for community service. In some cities they performed for patients in veterans' hospitals or for charities such as the March of Dimes. Some of the women, perhaps feeling fortunate to be so well paid, donated some of their earnings to local charities. Mosley remembers: "We'd go to church where we'd find some orphanages and pool our money together and buy them whatever they needed, such as stockings for the girls and socks for the boys."⁸⁰

The End of the Hormel Girls

The Hormel Girls' radio show proved successful. So when television began to gain popularity, the group recorded a handful of shows for this new medium, taping at Kling Studios in Chicago, then selling the shows for broadcast. But they never became as popular as the traveling stage show or radio broadcasts. By 1953 the caravan was costing the Hormel Company over \$1.3 million to sustain, convincing the company to move their advertising strategies in other directions. Jay Hormel, the inspiration and advocate behind the Hormel Girls, became ill. Competition from television was formidable and the Hormel board of directors decided to end the radio broadcasts and dissolve the group. On December 13, 1953, seven years after the group was formed, the Hormel Girls were disbanded. Laverne Wollerman remembered that "when the last show ended and we finished the flag-waving, everybody just stopped. They had to pull the curtain shut because they had a stage full of sobbing

women! Because it was all gone. It was good, it was very good. It was a thing to be proud of."⁸¹

Waters, the sales manager who had traveled with them for seven years, explained the group's aftermath: "When Mr. Hormel ended the Hormel Girls, all of the women were offered jobs elsewhere in the company in sales or clerical work wherever there was a position for them." But despite the women's mundane reassignments, the industry legacy of the Hormel Girls was clear. As Richard Dougherty wrote in 1966, "During [the group's] five years of existence . . . sales more than doubled. So, directly or indirectly, the caravan exercised great influence upon our operations and results."⁸²

Conclusions and Implications

The Hormel Girls were likely the most expensive industry musical organization to have existed up to that time in U.S. history and possibly up to the present day. While the original intent was to create an American Legion competition drum and bugle corps of women veterans, Jay Hormel soon realized the marketing potential of creating a national sales strategy largely carried out through radio advertising and "all-girl" group performances throughout the country. However unique, though, the Hormel Girls resembled other women's bands during this time and in the military during World War II, some of whom traveled the country helping to sell more than \$100 million in war bonds with their performances—something of which Jay Hormel was likely well aware when he decided to form a women's industry band.⁸³

A savvy businessman, Hormel knew that after the war patriotic sentiment still ran high. His meat products had been credited with helping to win the war, so he determined to capitalize on the goodwill image his company had earned by using women veterans to sell his products. Perhaps he suspected that homemakers, most of whom were either married to veterans or *were* veterans, would appreciate the efforts that the Hormel Company was putting forth to support ex-military personnel and therefore would favor his products. Jones remembered that "we really did connect with the housewives. They would flock around us and ask for our autographs."⁸⁴

While the paternal environment Jay Hormel created may strike us as offensive today, it was not viewed as negative in the postwar era—at least not by the group's members or legions of fans. Clearly we now would resist such practices as calling women "girls," having them wear barnyard animal masks while singing "George Hormel Had a Farm," using skirts that raised and lowered with strings, or requiring performers to weigh in before representing the company onstage. These strategies, which obviously diminished perceptions of the women's professional

contributions to the company, would not have been *modus operandi* for traveling *men's* industry bands or ensembles.

On the other hand, the Hormel Girls seemed eagerly to have accepted their odd status in order to extend their professional music careers for generous salaries. When the group ended, several former members joined the newly formed Women's Air Force and played in their band, an ensemble that lasted until 1961. Others got jobs through local musicians' unions. Some still perform today.⁸⁵ Most women, however, went home and found different work and started families, but continued to participate in music-making in amateur performance venues, such as those ensembles found in places of worship or small communities, or secured jobs as music teachers in schools or giving private lessons. All in all, the former Hormel Girls still remember gratefully the performance opportunities, education, and excitement that their industry-band experience provided.

Over fifty years later many of those who participated refer to it as one of the most exciting times of their lives. Grace Shipley perhaps best expressed what Jay Hormel had done for the group: "I think that the idea that Mr. Hormel had for the women veterans was something new, because everything had been done for the men. I think that he was before his time in supporting the women." The group's position in history remains unique, no doubt, a position that will surely provoke analysis, debate, polemic, and humor. But most women veteran musicians never considered that serving their country could lead to this kind of opportunity and fulfillment, a partnership between music and industry that, however unusual in its trappings, seems to have benefited all involved.⁸⁶

NOTES

1. Maj. Gen. Jeanne M. Holm, "America Goes to War," in *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II*, ed. Maj. Gen. Jeanne M. Holm and Judith Bellafaire (Washington, D.C.: Military Women's Press, 1998), 8.

2. Some historians believe that had the war lasted longer, an American women's corps would have been established due to the sheer necessity for skilled labor. See Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1991), 15; also, "Last American Female WWI Veteran Dies at 109," *Arizona Republic*, March 29, 2007, sec. A, 19.

3. Mattie E. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1954), 14.

4. *Ibid.*, 18.

5. *Ibid.*, 19, 24, 45.

6. In contrast, the other services, benefiting from the WAAC inauguration, proceeded to create their own units with full-duty enlistment that included military benefits for the women: the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), Coast Guard SPARS (from the Coast Guard's Latin motto *Semper Paratus* and its translation [Al-

ways Ready]), and the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR). The WAAC, however, always had the most women in their ranks during wartime, 140,000 members, with only one other service branch, the WAVES, having a six-figure membership, 100,000. All told, 370,000 women served in six different military organizations—the aforementioned plus the Army and the Navy Nurse Corps and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). See Susan M. Hartmann, *American Women in the 1940s: The Home Front and Beyond* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 32.

In Feb. 1 1943, new Army legislation was passed that removed the auxiliary status of the corps. To symbolize this change, a new name was utilized, Women's Army Corps (WAC). Both acronyms are used throughout this paper, but refer to the appropriate time period within the corps' history.

7. Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 17, 40.

8. Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 82. Several government leaders had previously warned of the probable negative publicity, in that the British and Canadians, who already had women's corps, had suggested that this would happen to the first female military organization in the United States, based on their countries' past experiences. Because the gossip was so prevalent and so malicious, the government suspected the media were not the leading culprits, but rather as stated by Meyer in her book, a suspicion arose that "Nazi-inspired" propaganda was at the root of the smear campaign which was aimed at discouraging women from enlisting, hence a reduction in the number of men needed to fight and win a war. However, a military and FBI partnership was established to investigate the source of the rumors and sadly discovered that the slanderous remarks were actually the work of American Army, Navy, and Coast Guard personnel, as well as civilian businessmen, women, and factory workers (see Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 205–6). Nevertheless, the rumors had done their damage: "The reports of the findings were published but the rumors persisted for more than a year until they had run their course. The slander campaign had the effect of forever making the Corps extremely sensitive about its public image." See Col. Bettie J. Morden, "Women's Army Corps: WAAC and WAC," in *In Defense of a Nation*, ed. Holm and Bellafaire, 47–48.

9. Holm and Bellafaire, eds., *In Defense of a Nation*, 145.

10. Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 54.

11. Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 48.

12. Hoyt F. LeCroy, "Community-Based Music Education: Influences of Industrial Bands in the American South," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 46, no. 2 (1998): 248; Richard Franko Goldman, *The Wind Band: Its Literature and Technique* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1961), 137.

13. Kenneth Clark, *Music in Industry* (New York City: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1929), 6, 204.

14. *Ibid.*, 228.

15. Goldman, *The Wind Band*, 135.

16. Richard Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality: Hormel's First 75 Years* (Austin, Minn.: Geo. A Hormel and Co., 1966), 158–59.

17. *Ibid.*, 181, 197.

18. Strobe Talbott, trans. and ed., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 226.

19. Brian Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," *A History of Drum and Bugle Corps*, vol. 2, ed. Steve Vickers (Madison, Wis.: Drum Corps World, 2003), 270. This post still exists today and women from World War II keep it active mostly by conducting community events to benefit local charities.

20. Eleanor Jones, letter to parents, September 1947 (hereafter Jones letters). She wrote letters home to her parents weekly while in this group from 1947 to 1951. Her mother kept all of them. Eleanor also wrote letters home during her two years in the Marine Corps Women's Marine Band during World War II. Photocopies of this and all other letters cited to Jones below are in one author's possession (Jill Sullivan). Our thanks go to Jones for sharing them with us.

21. Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 2.

22. Marilyn Wilson Ritter, email to authors, March 11, 2007.

23. Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 2. As to how the Girls felt about being called "Spamettes": one of the authors called and emailed a few of them and they don't remember the term being used much or bothering them.

24. Unknown newspaper source, April 2, 1950, 21, photocopy in authors' possession; Loran Waters, interview with Jill Sullivan, April 19, 2007 (hereafter Waters interview); Jones letters, Nov. 12, 1947.

25. Martha S. Putney, *When the Nation Was at Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 155; Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hull, "Navy Women's Reserve: WAVES," in *In Defense of a Nation*, ed. Holm and Bellafaire, 72; "Negro Women May Enlist," *The Bowsprit* 2, no. 1 (Nov. 18, 1944): 1; Col. Mary V. Stremow, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve," in *In Defense of a Nation*, ed. Holm and Bellafaire, 79.

26. This information was revealed during interviews with the women who participated in the Hormel Girls; Eleanor Jones in June of 1949 wrote home to her parents in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, about the "extremely active" KKK in the South.

27. Letter to Eleanor E. Jones from the George A. Hormel Company, July 3, 1947.

28. Jones letters, August 1947.

29. M. M. Mosley, *Spamette Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1947. This was the Drum and Bugle Corps newsletter (now in the Hormel Archives). Mosley wrote all of the information in the *Spamette Gazette*.

30. Ibid.

31. Jones letters, August 1947.

32. Marilyn Wilson Ritter, telephone interview with Danelle Keck, Oct. 24, 2004 (hereafter Ritter interview).

33. "It's A Lot of Noise Shippan Point Says: All-Women Drum and Bugle Corps, Seeking Legion Title, Arouses Community's Ire," *New York Times*, Aug. 24, 1947, 5.

34. "Fife and Drum to 'Pipe Down' Now," *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1947, 3.

35. Video of rehearsal, courtesy of the Hormel Archives, Austin, Minn.; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality* 208; Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 271.

36. Mosley, *Spamette Gazette*, Aug. 28 and 29, 1947

37. Ibid., Aug. 29, 1947.

38. Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 271; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 208; Ritter interview, 19.

39. Ritter interview, 19.

40. Mosley, *Spamette Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1947.

41. Mosley, *Spamette Gazette*, Aug. 31, 1947.

42. "Legion Corps of Austin-Spam Post Will Parade at Minneapolis Next Week," *Minnesota Legionnaire*, Aug. 4, 1948, 16.

43. Full-page advertisement, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 20, 1948, 13.

44. Full-page advertisement, no date or newspaper information, photocopy in authors' possession.

45. Full-page advertisement, *Times-Picayune*, Feb. 5, 1948, 9.

46. "Model Young Mother Cited," 1948, unknown newspaper and specific date, photocopy in author's possession (Jill Sullivan). The picture showed Storm being presented

a certificate by Margaret Merrill—a music education graduate from Eastman School of Music, member of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band during World War II, and director of the Hormel Girls Drum and Bugle Corps. Telephone interview by Jill Sullivan with Margaret Merrill, Aug. 9, 2002.

47. Unknown newspaper source and date, photocopy in authors' possession.

48. Ritter interview; Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 271; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 211.

49. Sam Rowland, "Names That Make the News in the Music Business: Eddie Skrivaneck," in *The Orchestra World*, June 1948, 9.

50. Jones letters, Nov. 26, 1948.

51. Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 211, 212; Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 271; photograph of the first broadcast courtesy of the Hormel Archives.

52. "The highest rated daytime programs during radio's golden age 1950–1951 season"; see <http://www.dg125.com/Gazette/bestofthebest/1950s/19501951dayss.htm>; "The highest rated daytime programs during radio's golden age 1953–1954 season"; see <http://www.dg125.com/Gazette/bestofthebest/1950s/19531954dayss.htm>.

53. The authors listened to eighteen two-sided records: nine from 1948, six from 1949, three from 1950. All records were then transferred to CD. Two recordings can be heard at www.public.asu.edu/~jmsulli/keck_hormel.htm.

54. Robert Hunter, Director of Instrumental Music at Mesa Community College and Past President of the International Alliance of Jazz Instructors, email correspondence with authors.

55. Jones letters, November 1948; Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 55. The women in the Hormel Girls learned to play in bands in the public schools, and "improvisation was not taught to any students in high school or college programs in the 1940s; it had to be learned elsewhere" (Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 56). Young women also would not have had the opportunity to go to late-night performances at clubs due to concerns about safety (and perhaps curfew). They had to rely on records or family members to teach them these skills.

56. The 1948 recordings of the radio broadcasts all opened with the same theme and with a similar greeting.

57. Transcript from the November 5, 1949, radio broadcast, 10, 13.

58. Hormel Girls' Corps Broadcast, March 20, 1948, C. P. MacGregor, Hollywood, California. This quote was transcribed from the record. The Music Therapy Profession got its start during World War II after a successful partnership was established between military doctors and musicians who helped to heal thousands of injured soldiers. See Jill M. Sullivan, "Music for the Injured Soldier: A Contribution of American Women's Military Bands during World War II." *Journal of Music Therapy* 44, no. 3 (2007): 282–305, for further information on this topic.

59. This list of pieces came from records and programs received from the women interviewed.

60. Because of these cars, the women became known as the "Hormel Girls Caravan" replacing the "Hormel Girls Corps." Jay Hormel arranged for the travel to be easy and comfortable. The caravan would travel in the south during the winter months to avoid icy road conditions and the north during the summer months. Company assistants traveled with the caravan in five trucks, which carried instruments, luggage, and supplies. Besides drivers, who would unload instruments and provide driving directions, there were two women who worked with wardrobe, seeing that the corps members had clean uniforms, and provided sewing and alterations.

61. Jones letters, Sept. 27, 1948. All of her letters home were on hotel stationery, which provided the evidence that the women did indeed stay at some of the nation's most luxurious hotels. According to the book *A History of the Drum and Bugle Corps* edited by Steve Vickers, the drum corps from Post #29 in Miami, Florida placed third in the final competition of the 1946 American Legion National Championship and then placed fifth in the 1947 final competition.

62. Delores Marshall Haber, interview with Danelle Keck, Jan. 13, 2005, Huntington Beach, Calif., tape, video recordings, and transcript, 7; Martha Awkerman, interview with Danelle Keck, Jan. 12, 2005 (hereafter Awkerman interview).
63. Hormel Girls' Caravan Schedule, Sept. 10–16, 1951, courtesy of the Hormel Archives.
64. Ritter interview, 13; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 212.
65. Lois Aubele Sterner, telephone interview with Danelle Keck, Jan. 21, 2005, 7 (hereafter Sterner interview); Grace Shipley, interview with Danelle Keck, Eau Claire, Wis., Oct. 31, 2004, 5 (hereafter Shipley interview).
66. Sterner interview, 5.
67. Newspaper article, unknown source, dated April 2, 1950, 21. (Women often sent newspaper clippings to the authors and they weren't thinking about citation protocol when they cut these articles out of papers in the 1950s.) Waters interview; Sterner interview, 6.
68. Vasiliky Villas, telephone interview with Danelle Keck, Dec. 4, 2004, tape recording and transcript, 7.
69. Jones letters, March 1948.
70. *Ibid.*, April 26, 1950.
71. "Music with the Hormel Girls," Scranton Kiwanis Club, Pennsylvania, Friday, Sept. 28, 1949; "Music with the Hormel Girls," St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Nov. 17, 1951.
72. Hormel Archives Records, Jan. 4, 1950; Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 272; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 220.
73. Jones letters, June 8, 1948. A "transcontinental" broadcast meant coast-to-coast.
74. Hartmann, *American Women in the 1940s*, 92; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 76; James P. Kraft, *From Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890–1950* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1996), 98.
75. Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 115, 117; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 220. Interestingly, the orchestra director earned \$400.00 per week, and the Hormel Girls Corps' director earned \$101.60 per week.
76. Waters interview.
77. Tolzmann, "Hormel Girls," 272; Shipley interview.
- Eleanor Jones, interview with Danelle Keck, Eau Claire, Wis., Dec. 4, 2004, 5, 14.
78. Awkerman interview.
79. Sterner interview, 22.
80. Mosley, *Spamette Gazette*, n.d.
81. SPAM Museum Video, Courtesy of Hormel Archives; Laverne Wollerman, telephone interview with Danelle Keck, Feb. 12, 2005.
82. Waters interview; Dougherty, *In Quest of Quality*, 221.
83. Jill M. Sullivan, "Women's Military Bands in a Segregated Army: The 400th and 404th WAC Bands," *Journal of Band Research* 41, no. 2 (2006): 13.
84. Eleanor Jones, telephone interview with Jill Sullivan, April 5, 2007.
85. Dixie L. Johnson, "The U.S. WAF Band Story," Springfield, Va., 2004. Helen Hammond, interview with Jill Sullivan, Aug. 5, 2002, Monterey, Calif., 14. She was a trumpet player and youngest member of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band during World War II. After the Hormel Girls, she performed with Ada Leonard, Ina Ray Hutton, and Spade Cooley to name a few from her long career. She still performs today and is a member of the Local 47 AFM in Hollywood, California. In 2004 she proudly received her fifty-year membership pin from them.
86. Shipley interview. The memory of the Hormel Girls lives on in the SPAM Museum, through written secondary sources such as this, and a musical revival of the *Hormel Girls* will premiere on November 23 at the History Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota, book and lyrics by Laurie Flanagan, music by Hiram Titus, conceived by Perrin Post, and directed by Sari Ketter.

MARILYN SHRUDE

Teaching Composition in Twenty-first-Century America: A Conversation with Milton Babbitt

MS: I have twenty-six questions for you today. We might even add a few as we go on.

MB: Well, at my age twenty-six will be enough.

MS: Do you use a particular methodology in teaching composition?

MB: Absolutely not. None whatsoever. You know, Marilyn, we're probably going to have to define these things anyhow. It depends what you mean. If you mean what I do now, which is to have students come to Juilliard only one on one, no composition classes, no composition seminars, the answer is certainly not. If you go back to my earlier days at Princeton, you could call methodology what began with species counterpoint and took students through various phases, through analytical work and so forth—yes, that would have been methodology. But it wasn't even so in that case. It really depended on the group of students, as now it depends entirely on the individual student.

MS: Well, were you involved in that curriculum at Princeton? Did you feel like taking them through the species counterpoint and . . . ?

MB: Well, we designed that ourselves. Mainly Ed Cone and I did it all. Because remember these were very small classes. This was Princeton, you know, where we had very small classes for anything that was technical. Most of my students were not music students. They were either general students with some background in music or they were the few specialists. When you get to graduate school, that's a different thing, because then I certainly only work with them one on one.

Award-winning composer and pianist Marilyn Shrude is a distinguished artist professor and chair of musicology/composition/theory at Bowling Green State University. This interview is one of a number she is conducting with American composers on how they teach composition.

MS: Do you use technical exercises?

MB: Absolutely not. Not with these people. No, certainly not. These are people who are composing. They come from very different backgrounds, they've had very different orientations one way or the other. But in the sense of exercises, no, nothing.

MS: What is your approach toward using literature? Do you assign them a list of works?

MB: What kind—you mean musical literature?

MS: Yes, right.

MB: No, I don't assign them anything. They come in and when they're working with something which I think might be a help—whether looking at particular scores or reading particular articles—then I do it ad hoc on the basis of where they are at the moment or what they seem to be confronted by at the moment. But I have no general assignments, never did.

MS: A lot of people feel like the students come in now with such a dearth in background, literature-wise, that they feel compelled to assign listening.

MB: You're absolutely right. And I really can't speak to that. Let me tell you why, Marilyn. I stopped teaching at Princeton—what was it?—seventeen years ago. The Princeton music student usually—I don't want to talk about this too much because it has to do with another era—in those days they were extremely, extremely aware of the literature. They knew the literature. In those days it wasn't depending so much on listening to records. They either played the literature or they had studied the literature. And then above all they had an intellectual education which was totally different from anything you'll find here at Juilliard. Very, very few people come to Juilliard with any kind of a genuine intellectual academic background. Most of them come from a kind of practical musicianship and you deal with them differently. But as far as assignments, telling them what to do, I deal with each case totally individually. This sounds like virtue, but it is not intended to be virtue. I wouldn't know how to do otherwise. They are so different. Look, after all, one of my students is Korean, one is Chinese and they come from these backgrounds; one is from Hong Kong, another is from Shanghai. It's true that you have to deal with them in terms of what they come with. The most esoteric person I have here from the standpoint of his interests and background is a Chinese young man who studied a little bit at the Walnut Hill Academy, if you know where that is, up here in Boston. And he's farther out in every sense (and I mean in a serious sense), he knows much more music of—call it what you will—the twentieth century than almost anyone else I have here. Others have had contact with a certain amount of contemporary music, but they haven't really studied it. He has. And yet he's sort of tied up

in knots when it comes to composition, and that's not an unusual circumstance. He knows much more than he can compose. No, each one is individual and I have to deal with each one individually. Sometimes I have to go home and think about what I can do with them. But I usually lead them to the library, whether it's to read or to look, and very, very often send them to scores which they have never heard. Very few of them here listen to phonograph records, I have to tell you. This is the thing about Juilliard, because there are so many pianists around who can play the music for them—if they're not pianists themselves. They can usually hear the music live. Of course they listen to records, but not to the extent that students in other places do.

MS: Do you do any analysis projects as part of a composition class?

MB: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely. But, you know, if you say "projects" that makes it much more formal than it normally is. I tell them to go up and look at something, and then we look at it together.

MS: Can you give me an example?

MB: Oh heavens, it could be anything. Today with my Chinese student it was the *Eroica* Symphony and the Schoenberg Fourth Quartet. And also the Schoenberg op. 33a, if you want me to be exact. With Dora today it was Brahms. So, it's all over the place.

MS: I think I know the answer to this: do you use a book?

MB: Well, as a matter of fact, I send them to books.

MS: Do you?

MB: Oh, I send them to books, absolutely. I mean, for example, many people around here now are reading Joe Straus's post-tonal book, a new edition, because the new edition is full of late Stravinsky. Many of them have turned to any number of the other books on so-called twentieth-century analysis, including a lot of them trying to deal with David Lewin's *Generalized Interval Structures* and with Lewin's *Form and Performance*. Oh yes, above all many of them are devoted to Bob Morris's *Composition with Pitch Classes*. Many of them have come from Eastman, of course, and know Bob Morris. Oh yes, a lot of books are read around here. The trouble is they can't afford them, and there's fighting in the library about them.

MS: But some people use a composition text per se.

MB: And go through the whole thing formally. Oh no, no. No, these kids go up and read the books, and I sometimes suggest where they can find what they want. Look, I'll tell you: as recently as yesterday one of the most sophisticated young men who came here, who is from New York and went to pre-college Juilliard, and is a very mature young composer, and a very serious one in the best sense of the word, I sent him to an exchange of articles that appeared in the *Yale Journal of Music Theory*—the reason I'm hesitating is even now I forget; I think it was the early 1960s—between a young man out at UCLA who analyzed Stravinsky

à la Schenker and then also some Chopin. And the response came from a real Schenker writer who lived right out here on 72nd Street. It's one of the most remarkable examples of two different analyses according to the same premises and the same procedures and it dealt with all of these issues of analysis in one fell swoop. I sent him to that article that is now forty years old. I lived it, after all.

MS: That's true. What is your expectation regarding output?

MB: That's terribly interesting. I must say that's one of the toughest questions, because I would expect composers to compose. On the other hand, I have this young man, who is Chinese and is still trying to get acculturated, who wrote one little piece, maybe two little pieces at the beginning of this year, and they were much too difficult. And he learned here at Juilliard, with his friends, that the piece was impractical, that he was asking for things that might be possible if a great expert worked at them for a year (and it was mainly the harp, you know, God forbid). And he learned. The result has been that he hasn't written anything now in a couple of months. And I've been trying to get him to write something over the Christmas vacation. I'll tell you, it happened to me personally. At one point Roger Sessions, my dear teacher with whom I studied privately, thought that he was composing too slowly. He was. There was a time in his life in the 1930s when he was writing very little music and he became alarmed. And he felt that perhaps his students were also composing too slowly. So he made us write a piece a day. And that was a disaster.

MS: A day?

MB: Yes. A piece, it could be anything. That was a disaster. It didn't work out. None of us liked it, none of us really profited from it, including Roger Sessions. No, I do expect them to compose and I hope they will compose. Look, around here that's scarcely ever a problem, for two reasons. First of all, most of them do want to compose. And they know they can get it performed. They're all writing orchestral pieces for a kind of competition, because not all their pieces can be performed. (Every orchestral piece here at least gets read.) And as far as chamber music is concerned, I know they've got friends who will play it at one of our concerts. And there are concerts all day long. The only place that has more concerts these days is Princeton. And that's another story of what's happened to schools like Princeton, because they're getting all the precollege boys from here, you know, because they don't want to go into music. They're too smart for that. So they go to Princeton and they major in physics and they have a wonderful orchestra there for them. A terrific orchestra.

MS: It's like Harvard.

MB: Columbia has that and Yale has that. And now they have these kids who are beautifully trained and are bright enough not to go into

music. I mean, they see no future, they see no reason. They're going to play their music and they're going to become physicists and mathematicians and economists and live in this world in its own values. No, that's a very serious question. These kids don't know what they're going to do. Where are they going to go? I mean one time there were academic positions, as I don't have to tell you. Where are the academic positions? So where are they going to go? Orchestras? These kids don't want to play in orchestras when they know what it means: there may be one clarinet job out in Kokomo in the next year. Because they live here, right where it all happens, there's the Philharmonic, there's the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. They hear these people playing in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, which is undoubtedly the best orchestra in this country, and the way people have to work to make it into any orchestra like that, they know the odds are against them. As far as the pianists are concerned, the day of the recital has gone. Are you aware of the fact that here in New York City recitals are *rare*. You don't have piano recitals anymore. You don't have vocal recitals.

MS: No, even in academia.

MB: Yes, you just don't have recitals. I'm talking about the "big time." Look, when I was a little boy, and got out of college, in order to hear the music that I didn't hear in Mississippi, I accepted a position—calling it a position is an exalted description—to review for one of those magazines that you're unaware of. You've heard of *Musical America*? There was another one called *Musical Courier* and there was another one called *Musical Leader* which came out of Chicago but had to cover New York. And I accepted because it was a dear old lady friend of mine, a dear teacher of mine named Marion Bauer who asked me if I would like to review the concerts, in return for which I got one thing: tickets. And I would go to two and three concerts a night, and I would hear music that I never had a chance to hear in Jackson, Mississippi. So I did that. Well, those concerts, those recitals don't exist anymore. I mean there was Town Hall, there was the hall on 57th Street—the kind of halls that don't even exist anymore. You can't go into Tully Hall or go into the few halls we have here now and hear piano recitals or vocal recitals or what not. They almost never exist anymore. When have you heard of the last saxophone recital in New York? They used to have them—Mr. [Sigurd] Rascher would come through. There would be everything: clarinet recitals, violin, piano, cello, voice—now gone, just gone.

MS: It seems like this bothers you.

MB: Oh, it does bother me.

MS: So ethically, how do you deal with this situation? Because it bothers me, too, but I think each individual has the right to live their lives and they get an education and they do with it what they will.

MB: Well, the trouble is we see too many tragedies around here. We walk into a restaurant and we find one of the best piano students we have trying to be a waitress, which she does very badly, whereas she plays the piano very well. You'll find that at any restaurant here, most of the people there are musicians, actresses. And remember we have the School of Drama here, which has turned out such great stars, and attracts all these people who want to be great stars—except the number of great stars who went through here is still a tiny, tiny number. (As for the dancers, don't ask me.) Anyhow, these people just don't know what they're going to do with their lives. And they begin to realize that—and that's the terrible part of it. If, as you say, they went through and got their degrees, gave their final recital and then decided, "The hell with it—I'm going to go home and teach piano," that would be one thing. But they don't. They sit here doing everything, learning to use computers, taking up menial jobs, and they don't know why, because they know there's no future. No, it's not funny. It's not amusing at all. I cannot think of anyone who has gotten an academic job in the last few years. Now obviously I'm wrong. But I would know about it. Sam Adler and I between us would certainly know about it.

MS: I've had this conversation with Sam, too. I really don't think that Juilliard students have the survival skills they need.

MB: Not that kind of survival skills.

MS: And I think they hate to leave New York. And that's a big problem.

MB: There's a lot of that. Or hating to leave the big time, so to speak. They look across the street at Philharmonic Hall and to the Metropolitan, or they want to get in the big time, or they want to win a big prize, or a big whatever they give these days. I think you're probably right about that, but they're not even aware of these other [academic] positions. Now, they do look in those places where these positions are advertised. I know, for example, one of the most sophisticated young composers I know, who has written one of the most remarkable orchestral scores I've seen in years. (Jimmy Levine and I were talking a couple of days ago, and I gave it to him and he was bowled over by it.) You know where he's teaching now? Wabash College. That's because he's a Midwesterner. He went to the University of Illinois, did all his graduate work at Illinois, and was desperate, could get nothing. And suddenly, little Wabash College. And people over here would not know that. Have you been to Wabash College?

MS: No.

MB: It's a lovely little place! Oh, it's a charming little place, it really is.

MS: Indiana?

MB: Ah, yes. You know, "On the banks of the Wabash . . ." So he got that out in the Midwest, that was a midwestern thing. I don't know

if any of the kids here heard about the job at Wabash. Now there's another aspect to it, Marilyn, if we're going to pursue this subject. It's the personal aspect of it. Most jobs are gotten as personal fortuities. He got that job because someone came through, an old graduate, and said, "Look, we just lost someone, would you be interested in coming to Wabash College?" It's as simple as that. Go back to mine. Now I got my first job at Princeton when I was twenty-two years old because I was studying with Roger Sessions and I was the only one of his students who had an academic background that would be acceptable at Princeton. I would never have gotten to Princeton, for lots of reasons, in those days, were it not for the Roger Sessions connection. But it's true, there was a time when a guy with a Princeton degree could go out into the world with a graduate degree and those kids are not going, I'm not kidding. Most of them, you know what they're doing, almost without exception?

MS: Computers?

MB: Exactly.

MS: But it's the way of the world, too. And that's not bad.

MB: No. And I told them when they're looking for a job, in my day they'd say they wanted someone to teach theory and be a pianist so you could go out and give solo recitals and play with the faculty string quartet and so forth. And I was not a pianist so that was hard for me. But now if you want a job it has to be with computer skills. You know, teach theory and be able to set up a computer studio or teach computer programs.

MS: And see, your midwestern universities are doing that. As an undergraduate requirement for a composition degree you may have to have two years of technology.

MB: Well, I think that they do some of it here where there's a very small electronics laboratory. But the kids can go up to Columbia, and some of them do. (You know, there's a program between the two schools.) And what most of them learn is Finale—though I think they're not all learning Finale anymore. They're learning Sibelius.

MS: But I mean, they're learning programming. They learn how to use computer applications for composition. And it's come in handy, I must admit.

MB: Oh, I'm sure of that, I don't doubt it for a moment. I have to hire people to copy my scores, since my publisher no longer can afford even to have an office in New York, let alone copy my scores. You know that's what's happened at Peters.

MS: Unfortunately, yes.

MB: No, it's true, it's a disastrous situation with regard to publishing. I don't know of any school that requires it around here.

MS: Does Juilliard have a composition curriculum?

MB: No.

MS: Did Princeton?

MB: Well, what did you mean by curriculum? Maybe I should modify that.

MS: Like, "Every undergraduate composition major must take . . .?"

MB: Not "must take." But "must produce" in the end, for a certain degree, works of a certain size and so forth. Now Princeton did not have an academic curriculum, I mean a composition curriculum. It doesn't have any curriculum. There are no required courses. Technically speaking you never have to turn up for a course at Princeton. But you have to do junior independent work, you have to take junior general exams, you have to write a senior thesis, you have to take senior general exams, and they work harder than any group of people I've ever seen in my life. I taught at Harvard and realized, "Hey, you can get through college without doing anything."

MS: So a person completing their sophomore year at Juilliard would have had to write what? Would have had to accomplish what?

MB: Well let me start at the beginning. Every year he's subjected to a jury. And the jury means that each member sees him independently and judges his work. So that goes on for him every year and he gets a fairly severe examination in a very informal sense. Then, by the end of his sophomore year, he's subjected to an evaluation. He can be asked to leave Juilliard if the administration plus the faculty feel he hasn't been doing what he should be doing.

MS: I didn't know that.

MB: It doesn't happen very often. But there are some people—well, we have one now who never turns up anything and he's going to get kicked out. But by the time he gets through his final year he has to produce an orchestral work, etc., and he has to give us a recital of his compositions. That is not true at Princeton: there's the recital and whatnot, but he has to do a tremendous number of other things. He has to be subjected to analytical exams, historical exams, and has to, of course, present compositions and so on.

MS: Do you think it's important for composers to be performers?

MB: You know, I don't like to answer that in an ethical way. I performed more music by the age of seventeen than most of my colleagues have in their whole lifetime. And therefore I got so tired I swore I'd never perform again. I got so tired of sitting out there, you know, having played in bands, jazz orchestras, every kind of thing. I played in every kind of thing that there was. I played in the pit bands when they'd come through town with the Victor Herbert opera and they'd have to supplement their own traveling orchestra. And I got so bloody tired of performing that I never wanted to think about getting out on that stage again. I'll tell you an anecdote about this and indicate why my

attitude is rather different than any of my colleagues. One day there was a party with people we know—well, you would know most of them. And Gunther Schuller turned up in his white tie, because he was playing at the Met—he was the first horn at the Met at that time. And he turned up and he said to me, “Oh Milt, it’s too bad you’re not still playing the clarinet because we could play the Schoenberg Wind Quintet.” And he knew what I had played, he knew that I had played clarinet together with people such as Dave Raskin—you know, the film composer—in Philadelphia. So he knew that I was a kind of virtuoso clarinet player. I said, “Gunther, you know, I’ll tell you, I’ll never forget when I got out there on the damn stage to start ‘The American Patrol’ and I went, ‘Where the hell’s middle C on this instrument?’” And Gunther said, “Look, don’t tell me. You know last night I played the horn solo in *Carmen* for probably the two-hundredth time, and I can’t tell you right now whether I played it or didn’t.” And he retired from playing about a year later. So, that’s why mine is a rather special attitude towards all of this. The only playing I’ve done since is cocktail piano. I just stopped, I decided to stop right there. I don’t know, I never intended to be a professional performer because I was surrounded at an early age in Philadelphia with relatives who went to Curtis. And I saw what life was like even then and I just didn’t want to get involved. That was a very, as you probably know, a very special and high-pressure place, in those days particularly. But no, of course I think it’s wonderful to play. I’d love to be a pianist. I mean, I really would love to be a pianist. Schoenberg always felt that way, not being able to play the piano. Schoenberg wouldn’t play middle C on the piano. When he taught a class he’d stand at the microphone and say, “Mister Stein, play a C major triad.” I can do much more than that, of course, at the piano—I can play an F-sharp major triad! But the fact of the matter is that I wish I were a facile player. First of all, it takes a lot of the pressure off your teaching of classes when you can suddenly sit down and play a Chopin Ballade and take up half the classroom time and not have to talk. I would’ve liked that. Of course, I did all kinds of Wagner courses and I could never scrape those. But I think, no, it’s wonderful to be a performer. And I think to get into the music that way is terrific.

MS: Do you encourage your students to establish a schedule, working a certain amount of hours a day or per week?

MB: I couldn’t dare. I’ve suggested it to some people who seem undisciplined and it doesn’t work. I can suggest the way they might work more efficiently, but one doesn’t have that kind of authority anymore.

MS: Do you grade each lesson?

MB: Oh no. Good God, no.

MS: Some people do!

MB: My heavens. No, I don't grade any lessons.

MS: They get grades though, don't they?

MB: Yes, they get grades. Yes, I just gave my grades at the end of the term. We all sort of give As to our students because they work very, very hard.

MS: It's called grade inflation.

MB: Of course it is. But we think it would be unfair, because they do work so hard and sort of grade their own music and they're working hard at it. I mean, if you have a goof-off, that's a different matter. I've never had one—just the one that I say now is. But I'm going to say this: Sam and I are the only two people on this faculty who meet our students every week for an hour. Some of our colleagues are only here every two weeks and lose a little bit of control over their students.

MS: I know that, yes.

MB: And we're very close to them.

MS: You show up.

MB: We show up.

MS: Yes. And that's important.

MB: I must say that I don't feel as close to most of these students as I did to the students at Princeton because we were all in the same building, working all the time.

MS: This is an urban campus.

MB: Yes, exactly, though they all live right here. But the main reason for it is that they are—you know, I'm trying to find the reason for it, now that I think about it. I mean, I could offer you superficial reasons, but I don't think really that they reach the crux of the matter. These students here are usually much more concerned about finding performances, running around, finding other people to perform. In Princeton they were much more concerned with composition as composition. Another reason—the main reason—is that there were no performances for them on the grounds. Very few could play their music. For performances of their demanding music they'd bring in New York groups. Now that's changed. They have much better players there, just as Columbia now has Speculum in residence. But in those days the composers were concerned when they were composing and then when it came time to perform their music you brought in outsiders. And that was just a small amount of time. So you saw them around the building as composers composing all the time.

MS: Do you teach your students how to promote themselves? You don't have to, do you?

MB: I don't know how to. First of all, they make very close relations here with performers. I mean there's a young man here now who was just telling me that one of the most celebrated singers of our time, Miss Fleming, is going to sing his work because she was around here for

years and at one point she promised to do a piece of his and she didn't for years and years and he kept after her and she finally said, "Okay, I'll do it." So she's going to do it out in Seattle with Gerry Schwartz. And so of course, they do meet people who become important soloists. Not many, not many. But there are the Flemings, and there are others—very few of them, but all of them are ex-friends once they get out. I mean, Juilliard has produced a couple or three conductors whose major orchestras now would play any of their friend's pieces.

MS: In your view, how important is publishing?

MB: Well remember, I'm an old, old, old, old, old, old, old man. I think that publishing is tremendously important. I mean, how do you study a score if you don't have the score? And so for me, I thought it was terribly important to have it there because, after all, what is published is what is performed, what is heard, and probably therefore what is written. But of course publishing is virtually dead now. People can talk about on-line publishing and all of that, but the fact is publishing is still publishing. To have a really gorgeous score in front of you is something very important.

MS: It's a thrill

MB: Absolutely.

MS: How important are multiple performances?

MB: Well, of course you know my answer for that would be—as it would for you or anyone—the more the better. Because multiple performances mean that somebody out here will take a crack at it. And I don't know that that's so important. But for the same person to do it multiple times is the most important.

MS: During a lesson in your studio, what is the typical *modus operandus*? You know, when so-and-so walks in . . .

MB: He walks in, he sits here, and we say, "What are we doing?"

MS: So you open the music and . . .

MB: We open the music and we might go to the piano but usually we don't. And look, I know all of these kids have wonderful ears. That's the amazing part of it. Sam discovered—I'm back to Sam—that all of his students have absolute pitch but one. Now that's an enormous percentage. So I know they can hear what they're doing and we talk about what they hear and then we try to extrapolate from other things what they've heard. And they all come in here and play their tapes.

MS: So, a computerized version?

MB: No, no!

MS: They get their friends together, and . . .

MB: They get their friends together and they sightread it. I could show you a piece—I don't have it here now—but one most people would say is an impossibly difficult piece for tuba. And he got two of his friends

and they played it. And it's an extraordinary performance, because these kids can play—oh boy, can they play.

MS: So the music is your starting point, whatever they're working on.

MB: Oh, absolutely, of course. Absolutely. And sometimes you know, I'll ask them to tell me what they think they're up to, what they think they're doing. And in some cases, that's when you would send them to a score where you think it's heading in the same direction, and doing the same kind of things they're attempting to do and perhaps doing them not so much *better*, but more expertly.

MS: Have you changed your approach to teaching in the last twenty years?

MB: Oh, probably. Twenty years takes me back, just barely back into my Princeton days. You see, the reason I say that is because if you had a student at Princeton, particularly if he were a senior or so, you knew exactly the kind of discipline he'd been through. And he'd understand the implications of what may just seem routine exercises. I mean, one keeps thinking, "Why did Beethoven go study with Haydn and Albrechtsberger and Salieri?" He didn't go there to study counterpoint so he could teach it in a school. He was studying composition and the basics of composition. I can never forget dear Schubert, who spent the last days of his life, after he had written everything, to go study with the famous theorist who had just arrived in town and had set up shop. And there's always a question: "Did Schubert really go there?" And the answer is he did and we now have a fugue that he wrote under those conditions. And Mozart, too. They all went with the notion that by learning fundamentals they were learning composition. So the teaching of composition meant that whole succession of events which would lead perhaps to a composition. And that's the way I felt at Princeton, because I know what these people had gone through and that they understood the implications of something that might be looked upon as a harmony exercise, but it was susceptible to all kinds of extrapolations. Here you can't do that because they come from such disparate backgrounds. You say "species counterpoint" and they don't know what you're talking about or they think it's something where maybe you follow some rules so you don't have parallel fifths. Schenker had an enormous influence on the people at Princeton, even though they hadn't had it at Princeton. They came from places like Mannes and Queens, where this was a fundamental way of teaching theory, so you approach them very differently from the people who would come out of the harmony book and wanted to know whether that was a "Besarabian sixteenth" or something, you know.

MS: How important is it for students to study with the same teacher for a length of time?

MB: That's a hell of a good question. Sam—I'll get back to talking about my colleague again—he's not the only one who believes it's a great idea to have a different teacher every year and to rotate teachers. Now, at Princeton we had no such principle, because the idea was that you would do it anyhow. And there we had no one teacher at all. We'd simply have our office hours and people would come in whenever we were available and they felt like. So they could go to one person one week and another the next. Now that may seem a little bit haphazard, yes. But they didn't have to. They could go to the same person all year if they wanted to, though we discouraged them from doing that. But here, you stick with one teacher, whomever you choose as a teacher. You're not assigned anything. That, I think, is a lousy idea. I mean they choose people on the basis of sometimes totally irrelevant considerations, or what they consider to be pertinent considerations, such as how famous he is or how much contact do you think he has with the right orchestras (and sometimes they do). That usually straightens itself out. They move around themselves and they *can* move around here. It's just a matter of somebody having enough time and changing off. I think it's valuable to be subjected to various kinds of teachers. But I've seen some dreadful, dreadful tragedies around here. I don't think there's anyone on this faculty that's going to be dogmatic and tell them how they should compose. But you will encounter it and I have observed it in any number of cases. And a university not too far from here is full of it. But no, nobody around here tells them how to compose. They try to deal with what they are composing. And I don't have at the moment—because they know me and they know what I write and I know them—anybody who writes music that obviously would not interest me very much. But we switch a few students around, absolutely. Well we just did that with one of your ex-students. She was with Sam, and Sam thought it would be a good idea for her to come with me. And then I had another one from another of my colleagues, a student with whom he just didn't get along at all. I've got him now. And there are a couple of students who I'm convinced would be better off with other teachers here. But it's hard because we become very good friends, so to speak.

MS: How important is it for students to be well versed in music technology?

MB: Well, of course I swore off of technology in 1976. I had spent too many years mastering the synthesizer, working with electronics from the very, very early days. I never learned computer production of sound because that came in at exactly the same time that I began working with the synthesizer, and too much was too much. At that point when my synthesizer was taken away from me and I could no longer work with it with a violin concerto—without an electronic part—I will never,

- never, never touch electronics again. And I decided it's too late for me to think about computers. But I think it's very important, of course. I mean it's not only a valuable thing to have and it's probably a very seductive thing to have. I certainly know that when I walk into that studio with a piece in my head and come out a few months or years later with the piece in my hand and a tape under my arm, that was a wonderful, wonderful kind of experience. I mean, for me it's wonderful to work alone. Taking all those things you can do with a computer—and now you can do it from your own home. Some of my colleagues at Princeton have all of their computer equipment at home, produce everything from start to finish, cut their CDs at the end, and that's it.
- MS: How have you dealt with technology as a compositional tool in your composition studio? Because a lot of people, you know, incorporate technology into the format of a composition lesson now.
- MB: No. I'm in no position to do that. They know far more about technology than I do. And they do it, and they bring it. Virtually every example I see here (with one exception) has already been computerized when they bring it in to show it. Every exercise they do, every little thing they do, it's computerized. I don't have a computer. I'm not on-line, I'm totally off-line. I don't have email. I don't have anything.
- MS: Unbelievable!
- MB: Well it's not because in any sense of the word I'm anti-tech or anything. It's just that, you know, I'm too old. I mean, I spent so many years learning . . .
- MS: My mother-in-law is your age and she does email.
- MB: Yes, well, as a matter of fact, I know someone older than I am who does email. Look, if I need email Juilliard supplies email and nobody uses it because all you do is get announcements of dance recitals. But I have a daughter who can handle the email if necessary so that's . . .
- MS: It's a different issue now. I'm no techno whiz myself.
- MB: I don't want to be regarded as some kind of a Luddite, because I think it's extraordinary what these kids have available to them.
- MS: It is.
- MB: Oh, absolutely.
- MS: Okay, talk about style.
- MB: Well, you know, that's another world.
- MS: I mean, there's everything out there now and as teachers we have to deal with it.
- MB: We live in multiple musics, we do indeed. And there are certain ones with which one doesn't feel one is expert enough and that's when you send them to another teacher. Or, you ask them to consider something else. You know you don't get that much of it here. I'm sure you get much more of it in other places. The students here (I hope this is true), about the time they get here—and this is probably

by no means a virtue—most of them think they know where they're going, what they want to do. Very few of them change in the course of their years here. Very few of them. They come here, they might refine it, they get more experience, particularly through performance and through relations with other composers. But if they're heading in a certain direction they usually stay in that direction. I agree with you, we're living in a world of multiple musics and have to deal with it. There's some that I just won't touch, not as a matter of taste, just as a matter of not feeling close enough to it. But you won't find, for example, any one of the students—and let's say we have twenty-five, I'm not sure, there may be more than that—who does improvisational stuff. No, no one here I know is interested in that. (There's some who *could* do it—they're obliged to work with the dance people on occasion.) I think the best you can do with that is try to understand what they're heading for, try to understand as well as you can. I have had, as very close colleagues, people who write music very, very different from mine, and I mention Sam again. Listen, you know who one of my oldest friends in the world is? John Cage. And we knew, we understood each other perfectly. But nobody ever came to me here with any interest in John and I've known John longer than most people—since 1949 when he was trying to write an article on one of my pieces (and it never appeared, I'm sorry to say). I'm trying to think. We have had at least one or two faculty members in the past—and I do mean the past (I'm not avoiding the issue)—who insisted that their students were on the wrong path. If there are people doing that here now, I'm not aware of it.

MS: If a student is only conversant with one type of music and wishes to stay in that comfort zone, how do you get them to explore other possibilities?

MB: I don't think that is necessary around here either, because they're usually aware of them all. I mean there are concerts still. New York doesn't have the recitals it used to have, but there are still the concerts, though they are diminishing. I mean the contemporary music groups are starving, as you probably know, and they're disappearing. Every season some of the major groups disappear. But the students do have a chance to hear a great variety of music. They can hear, not only here at Juilliard, but elsewhere. At Columbia they hear one thing, they go down to NYU they hear another. They can go to Mannes School and hear something else. So they go to a lot of concerts and hear a tremendous amount of music. They are not usually very much affected by it, I have to tell you. They continue their own way and that own way is not because they're not capable of feeling any sympathy to anything else. Here they really feel that they are already careered as compos-

ers and that may be a Juilliard syndrome. But even the youngest feel that they know what they're doing and that they're going to become celebrated. You know, the notion of somehow being a celebrity, even though it's a bush-league celebrity, is very important around here. Very important around here. Getting your name into the papers—the *New York Times*. I'll give you an anecdote if you want to know how things are around here—now would this be true anywhere else? One of our faculty members, a performer, gave a vocal recital the other week. And he got a very bad review, a nasty review in the *New York Times*. But he got a very good review in the *New Yorker* and the *New York* magazine. *New York* magazine particularly, I understand—I say “I understand” because I didn't read it—was particularly flattering to this person and to some other people and some of the composers. I went into the library there to read it and the page had already been torn out of the magazine. (I have to tell our librarian!)

MS: Has there been a world event that you feel was particularly influential on the music that is composed today? I'm not talking about 9/11 and so forth—that's almost too recent.

MB: No, I can't say, because my generation stretches over, of course, Pearl Harbor and the effect it had on us all. In my case, I wasn't able to compose for years and years. My whole life was changed and therefore my composing life was changed. World War II certainly had an effect on all of my generation. Some of our lives were not interrupted. Some of us were so involved in the war that we were involved in it before the war and after the war. So of course it had an effect and that would have been the most primary effect. I can't think of anything else that had an effect. I mean, things for which people dedicated pieces—as in the case of the assassination of Kennedy or things like that—those, I think, were transitory. But lives were certainly affected by World War II. I don't know how many lives are going to be affected by this [9/11], which I saw outside my window.

MS: Has there been any one composer who has been particularly influential on the music that we compose today?

MB: Well, of course, Schoenberg. I don't know who else it would be around here.

MS: John Cage?

MB: Oh, not here, not here.

MS: But you know, globally.

MB: John Cage has certainly had his influence. But in the United States and around this area, for example, no. There's no one composer. Not even Schoenberg, not even Stravinsky. I don't think anybody around here wants to be influenced, I'll be very honest with you. I don't think of any one composer that could have that kind of influence here. Now

you might be influenced by your teacher but that's not what you or I mean. No, there's no one composer who's had that effect.

MS: But a lot of people point to you—the kind of thing you did was so influential.

MB: Well, I'll tell you, not here now.

MS: Well, maybe not here now, but . . .

MB: No, to answer you honestly: at one time here, maybe Aaron Copland. Certainly not anymore. Bill Schuman? Not really, even though he ran the place.

MS: But I think the kind of approach that you had to your music caused a lot of people to think about things in a different way.

MB: Well you're very flattering but . . .

MS: In the same way that John Cage did.

MB: Well, John and I talked about that. You have to realize that we were as different as two people could conceivably be, in background, in attitude, and you name all the other possible things. But we knew each other very, very well. We came to New York at about the same time and John was a real gentleman. Definitely. I mean, people don't understand that. This was a gentleman, a very mature gentleman who, a great deal of the time, knew exactly what he was doing and why. And not only did I know John very, very well, but for a long time knew his performing companion, Paul Zukovsky, who traveled with John everywhere. As different from John as he was in every conceivable way, he played John's music, as well as Roger Sessions, as well as William Schuman, and so forth. Remember, Paul Zukovsky made a collection called *Music for a Twentieth Century Violinist* that nobody has touched. Unfortunately, too many people had difficulty with Paul Zukovsky. But I think of him because he and John were as different as two people could be, and yet he had more influence on John's development than anybody. So, no, I don't know of anybody who's having that kind of influence now. Look, there are the so-called minimalists. Percussion players down here, mainly, will play their music. But that's limited really to instrumental aspects of it. I mean, for example, take my most successful colleagues. I think of John Corigliano, who happens to be a very dear friend, whom I've known since he was a small boy. But John doesn't have that kind of influence. I mean what would it mean to say that you were influenced by John Corigliano? And John would be the first to grant you that. So I guess that's the answer.

MS: Talk about your own background as a composer.

MB: As you know, I grew up in the Deep South, and my first instrument was the violin. And therefore the first music I knew was violin music. But the main thing that influenced me, if you really want to know—and I want to be honest about this and I've said it before—

was that my mother was a Philadelphian and we would go to Philadelphia every two years to get out of the Mississippi heat and to visit my grandparents. (I was born there for that reason—my mother went to be with her parents when I was born.) Well, when I went up there I was surrounded by—and I use the word advisedly—an uncle who had studied with the wild man of music [Leo Ornstein], if you know who that was at that time. You know who that was? He was last heard of when he was 106 years old. I'm sure he still can't be alive. You don't know who that was.

MS: I don't even want to venture a guess.

MB: Okay, well I won't tell you. My uncle was a straightforward concert pianist. He was very brilliant, went to Curtis, and became one of the most successful composers of educational music for children and wrote a book on piano pedagogy. But he was a composer. (So was Persichetti, who was a very close friend of his.) His wife, whom he married later, was a concert pianist of a certain breed. All she was interested in was playing that piano, playing her concerto—she played every year with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and one year it was the Grieg, and one year it was the Tchaikovsky, and another year it was Brahms. She was playing a lot in those days. So I heard them all the time, all through the summer. And this sounds too pat to be true, but it is patently true: one day, when I was ten years old and my uncle knew that I was playing a lot of clarinet (including with him—Reger clarinet and piano sonatas, and so forth), he said, "What do you think of this?" He then played—and we've never been able to be sure what it was—the Schoenberg, either the opus 11 or the opus 19, because he played them both. And he played and asked what did I think of that. And of course it made no sense to me at all. But my uncle took it seriously and I took my uncle seriously and I wondered what the hell this was all about. And that was the first, most vivid impression I had of contemporary music. Because I didn't hear it in Jackson, Mississippi, and none of it was recorded. We heard nothing from recordings, of course. Nothing was available on recordings and I didn't have a score of that and I wasn't a pianist. So that was really the first and most vivid impression. So I came up north to Philadelphia to go to college at the age. Well, I was dying at the school. I didn't like where I was in the university there. I had the Philadelphia Orchestra with Stokowski and I heard Stokowski at his height, when he was playing Varèse, and the Schoenberg Orchestral Variations. And I went back there later to hear him do the first performance of the Schoenberg Violin Concerto. That would have been my fundamental influence. That really was the beginning. So I was in college, and I had sworn that I wouldn't go into music. I'll never forget walking down the stairs in dear old Jackson

with my father. My father was a mathematician and he knew nothing about the world of music, the real world of music. He, like any good European, had heard a lot of music, and knew a lot of it, and he had given up his own professional life in order to make life for us better than it ever could have been as an academician. And he said, "Why are you thinking of going to college? Why don't you go to a music school?" Because I spent all my life in music, playing there and writing songs, everything. So I said, "Because I've seen what happens at Curtis and I can't live that kind of a life. What would I become, a clarinetist in an orchestra?" So he didn't quite understand, but off I went to college. Well, two years of that, and I realized that he had been right. And I was surrounded by cousins who said, "Why the hell are you doing this? You're spending all of your time playing music around Philadelphia." And rightfully so. I went to NYU Washington Square College with dear Marion Bauer, and take it from there: two years there, and Marion made it possible for me to go see Roger Sessions, and it went like that. Meanwhile, of course, while I was at NYU, I heard all kinds of music. Those were great days. People don't realize the Depression was the best time for music. You know, we had nothing to do. I could wake up on a Sunday morning in New York and say, "Should I go to the Brooklyn Museum or should I go to the Museum of Natural History to hear which contemporary orchestral concert?" You heard contemporary orchestral repertoires such as you never heard again. And you know, with good conductors and musicians who were out of work. And talking pictures had come in and remember you had an orchestra at the Capitol Theatre which was eighty men with Ormandy conducting. And you had four major orchestras in the four big movie theatres. You had a major symphony orchestra at every radio station. Philip James, who was one of my teachers at NYU, was the conductor at Mutual WOR where they had a symphony orchestra. One night it was the symphony orchestra, the next night it was the wind ensemble, the next night it was a string orchestra. So there was this enormous amount of music. So I heard, I began to catch up, as I said. I took a job as a reviewer to hear these recitals. So that was definitely it, and that was that. So I went to study with Roger Sessions and from that point on it's downhill all the way!

MS: How did you carve out your particular style, though? I mean, you're different than Sessions.

MB: Well I could say this very easily, Marilyn, it's almost this easy: my birthday, 1934, which would have been my eighteenth birthday, I got hold of a conductor's score—which was very hard to do (there were no miniature scores of this kind of music in those days)—of Schoenberg *Orchestral Variations*. And that was it. Then in 1937 the Kolisch

Quartet came to New York and gave a concert including the first New York performance of the Schoenberg Fourth Quartet in a little room in the 42nd Street library, with the buses outside making ungodly noises. And that did it for me. That was it.

MS: Yes, a lot of people can point to a particular piece.

MB: Oh yes, I can certainly point to those, absolutely. And then came the war, and of course it all was interrupted for several years.

MS: How can you keep yourself challenged and interested?

MB: God, because I can write music. I hate to be that simple about it.

Challenged and interested? I don't feel challenged so much as interested. I'm challenged only because of the practical conditions which are becoming more and more and more difficult, as I say. These kids sit at home and do their work on their computer from start to finish a little bit the way I felt with the synthesizer, except I couldn't sit at home and do it. Because the problem of performance has become so overwhelming, the cost of performance in this town, the whole series of practicalities becomes so overwhelming. Look, we've lost the Group for Contemporary Music, we lost the New Music Ensemble, we've lost so many groups. And I mean, I've seen these young composer groups come and go and even the few who are left are so dispirited and so on and so on. Look, can you remember when the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation were both deeply involved in contemporary music? I mean the things that they were supporting. The National Endowment for the Arts was commissioning composers. Now all they do is give money to groups, which means their entrepreneurs and managers get the money. And they try to get it by keeping their groups in the same kind of condition that you would judge a sitcom: how many people come, and so forth. So that everything has changed so fundamentally with regards to support for music. I'm not going to go back to that old maxim, you know, about the French novelist who once said that music is the most annoying and expensive of the arts. But it's still the most expensive, and even with computers and all of the rest, so that no one is interested in supporting it. And don't forget that the paper that presumes to call itself the nation's newspaper referred to everything all and any of us do in any of our schools—you know what they called it? A subculture. And I think culturally, in the anthropological sense. Look, where is serious music regarded as even existing? Go to Tower Records, go anywhere else. You know there's something called the American Music Awards show. You're probably aware of it. You know, in the American Music Awards there's no place for anything that they call "classical" music or we would call "serious" music. We apparently are not American music. We must be un-American music. So, you know, one feels that

very strongly because that was not true in the '30s. I mean we're so dominated now by the popular music. So one feels that very strongly. You know, the Rockefeller Foundation founded New World Records. If you go to those people now, they laugh at you. You know, at the Ford Foundation there was one man, named Chet D'Arms, a classicist who felt that serious music wasn't getting its due. He didn't care particularly about the music, he cared about the issue. So they set up a recording program, a commissioning program, they sent young composers out to the high schools to teach, all of these projects—one man.

MS: It's hard times, because you get poor, poor people and we're elitists.

MB: Yes, of course, and the discrepancies. You know about the scandal with the Notre Dame coach?

MS: Yes, and today there's a scandal about the head of the divinity school at Yale. He used the money to pay for his daughter's tuition at Harvard.

MB: Oh, that will make it even better.

MS: He just resigned.

MB: Well, I'll tell you, the one I love about the Notre Dame thing was that, in talking about this, they said, "You know, Notre Dame is just a prestigious job, but they don't really pay very good salaries compared with University of Oklahoma"—you know, that stellar institution of higher learning. Would you like to guess what the salary of the football coach is?

MS: Probably a million?

MB: 1.9 million and all kinds of little extras.

MS: That's a lot.

MB: So can you imagine how many people at the University of Oklahoma on the faculty get 1.9 million?

MS: Okay, then, I have actually one more question, and it's this: Do you have any other comments or any pearls of wisdom that you would like to share in wrapping this up?

MB: Oh no. I must tell you, I can end on a very pessimistic note. You know, many years ago, I gave a lecture which became an article called "The Unlikely Survival of Serious Music." And I'm afraid I feel that way more than ever, and so do many other people. Where are we going, how are we going to survive? I mean the kids with their computers. I envy them and they can keep writing their music. But the point is nobody really gives a damn. And I've never felt for a moment, you know, that music shouldn't mean a great deal more to a lot of people the way other things mean something to us. And they're not aware of our names, even of our existences. I don't know how it is at your

university. I mean, right now at Princeton I'm sure the president of the university has never heard of Arnold Schoenberg. Look, the description of the course on American Music in the catalog at Princeton does not include a description of the composers. Consider Roger Sessions, who *founded* that department as a composer. It's a sad note on which it ends. So let me remain sad.

NOTE

The above conversation took place in Babbitt's office/studio at the Juilliard School, December 18, 2001.