

THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION AND TIN PAN ALLEY: ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY  
SONG IN THE UNITED STATES, 1917-1927

By

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To Lauren, Murphy, and Rufio.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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This study examines a small portion of Tin Pan Alley song texts that expressed a negative reaction to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and its implications within American politics, labor relations, and immigration policy. These songs reveal the stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions that, through utilization during the Red Scare (circa 1919-1920), left their scars upon the popular image of Russians and Russian culture in the United States. Additionally, these examples reveal an imaged and exaggerated construction of Russian culture, tooled by the fears and anxieties of the era.

This anti-radical song literature has not been studied in depth, and is often passed over in studies of popular music from World War I and the 1920s. As such, the present study illuminates an avenue of Tin Pan Alley that adds to the understanding and experience of American culture during this period. The years 1917 to 1927 have been chosen to encompass a period beginning with the Bolshevik Revolution, including the entire Red Scare, and going beyond into the later part of the decade. This allows for the inclusion of several songs that reveal the American opinions of Russian culture throughout these stages.

The specific songs included in this study were chosen from a larger body of anti-radical literature. They have been sourced from several archives, many of which were later obtained

from private collectors and sellers. These texts have been selected not only based on content, but availability through prominent archives and on commercially available sound recordings. This information has been provided in Appendix B and C.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Project Overview**

In spite of all that America gives, we have seen that the great majority of Russian immigrants are isolated and remain almost totally unlike the American people. When they first arrive, they come with a cultural heritage so totally at variance with that of the American that they form a distinct non-resembling group in our society. In language, occupation, education, and mores, they are unlike our average. As might be expected of two groups reacting on each other, segregation and mutual non-comprehension result. . . . We can safely conclude that the great majority of the Russians do not understand or love America. As a matter of fact, they look at her through the colored glasses of their experience.<sup>1</sup> -Jerome Davis, 1922

Approximately three million Russians emigrated to Western Europe and North America in the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> These expatriates fled both the dying Czarist regime and the subsequent Bolshevik Revolution. Their baggage included unique cultural expressions and icons, as well as an association with political radicalism and a government bent on a global industrial upheaval. The aim of this study is to contextualize and interpret Tin Pan Alley songs that reflect the negative reaction of American citizens to the early Russian Soviet state and the ensuing immigration wave.<sup>3</sup> This approach reveals various perspectives of Russian music and culture in order to offer interpretations of this data and gain insight into why such conceptions

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A note on style: This dissertation follows the standards set by Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale in *How to Write About Music: The RILM Manual of Style*, second edition ed. by James R. Cowdery (New York: Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale, 2006).

<sup>1</sup> Davis, *The Russian Immigrant*, 178-80.

<sup>2</sup> A figure based on language and national origin data recorded in the 1910 and 1924 census. Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 217, 223.

<sup>3</sup> In this study all songs referred to were published for commercial distribution as sheet music folios. Most were written for voice and piano with the occasional inclusion of ukulele chords. When applicable, arrangements taken from these songs will be discussed. Specific information regarding archival locations is found in appendix C. Otherwise song authorship will be addressed in footnoted information.

Sound recordings will also be mentioned in reference to this song literature. A discography is found in appendix B.

were made during the era in question.<sup>4</sup> Thus the current study is not intended as a search for musicological value systems, nor is it a presentation of a specific chronology of music in the United States. This research aims to offer insight into the public construction of the Russian Bolshevik as a cultural force antagonistic to the United States of America, and how this image affected Americans of Russian descent. These cultural stereotypes and misnomers inform the icons of American xenophobia and Russian civil turmoil present in this literature while also shedding light on the instabilities and uncertainties of American society.

An understanding of these images and their political context allows for a deeper interpretation of these songs, as Tin Pan Alley took part in their creation and recreation. This socio-musical exchange embodies the function and value of this repertoire today.<sup>5</sup> Anti-Bolshevik music produced stereotypes that reinforced and cultivated public opinion in the years following the First World War. This literature opens a window to this era and allows for its recreation and reinterpretation in the present.

Through the icons of Bolshevism and the Red Scare the songs selected for this study embodied another aspect of American musical culture. The threat of global Communism slackened after the Russian Civil War ended in the early 1920s. Lenin's government turned inward, focused on rebuilding its nation while other European Socialist uprisings ran out of momentum. At the same time the Red Scare simmered down, and public opinion of the Russian people took on a new dimension. The popular songs of the mid-1920s embody this change, in which Russian Communists became decreasingly threatening and more an image of mockery.

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<sup>4</sup> Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 201.

<sup>5</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 106.

This issue also fits within the broader scope of American xenophobia—a sentiment common to the post-Wilson years.

The songs that reflect this aspect of popular culture played an important role in constructing and maintaining this discourse. Many images utilized during the Red Scare returned in later music, but the attitude had greatly evolved. The act of performance allowed these icons and perspectives to coalesce for American audiences and to produce a constructed public consciousness that resonated with the exclusionism of the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> This is what Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano have dubbed the “racial imagination,” through which social or political context influence imagined identities.<sup>7</sup> While these authors specifically addressed race, the present study applies their model to ethnic and national identity. Their theory places identity within a perpetually evolving ideal (“forever on the loose”). Thus the construction of identity is never stagnant. So did the image of Russian culture in the United States change during the period under examination. The stereotypes of Russianness came to embody multiple meanings, and ultimately reflect an outsider perspective. Larry Hamberlin has articulated this effect as a means by which a musical text constitutes a desire to examine one’s own culture through another—to “probe” the “Western subjectivity.”<sup>8</sup> In effect the definition of Russian culture through American eyes is a definition of America itself.

The songs selected for this study were collected from archives across the United States.<sup>9</sup> Contained within them are different modes of rhetoric that suggest an American characterization

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<sup>6</sup> Parallel to Simon Frith’s statement that “music constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives.” *Performing Rites*, 275.

<sup>7</sup> Bohlman and Radano, “Introduction”, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Hamberlin, “Visions of Salome”, 632-3.

<sup>9</sup> For a complete listing that includes authors, publishers and the locations of extant copies please see Appendix C.

of Russian culture from the outside. This discourse includes information encoded in lyric content, song sheet artwork, and musical analysis. All of these areas enrich each other, and bring forth the values held by the society that produced them.<sup>10</sup>

The second chapter broadly examines the American Red Scare and the role taken by Tin Pan Alley in fostering domestic propaganda. The impact of Bolshevism in the United States is continued through an outline of the National Origins Act and the subsequently cooled threat of an American Communist revolution. The following chapters expand upon the cultural, political and musical values reflected in the selected song literature. The third chapter includes Communist ideology and political radicalism in the United States. The songs examined in this chapter reveal the American concept of Communism that plays an important role in the overall perspective of this project. The state administered Red Flag laws are also discussed, as is the perceived Bolshevik threat to domestic industry. This song literature strongly suggests the clear parallel made between the dangers of Bolshevism and labor solidarity. Chapter four discusses the specific cultural icons found in the song repertoire. These images express stereotypes of dance and lifestyle (food, drink, personal appearance), which contribute to the construction of a Bolshevik character. Chapter five concerns the imitation and mockery of Russian music. Songs of mockery are often the children of both political thought and musical cannibalism, as is the case with the literature discussed in this section. These selections were either based on Russian melodies or imitate aspects of Russian music and dance. The final chapter offers perspectives of Russians and Russian culture in the years following the Red Scare. The chapter examines assimilation, a staged performance of the Russian Revolution, and offers some final remarks. Three appendixes follow. The first provides biographical information on George L. Cobb, and

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<sup>10</sup> Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 30.

composer discussed in chapter five. This is followed by a discography, and song sheet source locations are provided in the third appendix.

### **Need for the Study**

The role of the United States of America in the First World War was perpetually debated during the period of American belligerence and subsequent demobilization. As a single portion of the larger cultural atmosphere, the songs that mirrored these sentiments and concerns constitute a valuable means by which to interpret this moment. The present study examines a portion of this tale that has been past over by many historians and musicologists. Various studies of World War I sheet music focus on the global conflict, but they do not discuss the songs relevant to the Russian Revolution or the subsequent American Red Scare. For instance, most common is the discussion of peace songs that dealt with demobilization, the Treaty of Versailles and the ill-fated League of Nations. The American perspective on global Bolshevik activity was a topic that evolved quickly, and specifically reveals the themes of national hysteria and cultural stereotyping relevant to this moment and the following decade. A close reading and analysis of Tin Pan Alley songs reflect such emotions providing contemporary musicologists and historians a way to unpack the popular opinions of Bolshevik culture and early Soviet society.

This topic has previously been approached through a few sources, which are represented in the following literature review. The present research is based on primary readings of song folios and sound recordings, archival research, biographical information, and examination of both American and Russian cultural histories.<sup>11</sup> While this topic involves an important phase of American political history and popular culture, it is not treated in several of the standard works that concern American music. Gilbert Chase's *America's music* (1955), Charles Hamm's *Music*

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<sup>11</sup> Additional information and direction was drawn from discussions with sheet music collectors.



*in the new world* (1983), H. Wiley Hitchcock's *Music in the United States* (2000), and Richard Crawford's *America's musical life* (2001) do not discuss this aspect of Tin Pan Alley song production. Studies specific to Tin Pan Alley have also disregarded this avenue of research. Charles Hamm's *Yesterdays, popular song in America* (1979), David Jasen's *Tin Pan Alley* (1988), and Lee Davis' *Scandals and follies, the rise and fall of the great Broadway revue* (2000) make no mention of the Russian Revolution, labor relations within the industry, or its impact on popular song. Glenn Watkins' *Proof through the night, music and the Great War* (2003) is a study of primarily art music during World War I, including a fine chapter on James Reese Europe, yet mentions the Russian Revolution only in regards to Sergei Rachmaninoff.<sup>12</sup> The work is further organized by each nationality engaged in the war, yet features no chapter on Russia. One of the only studies of American music to include Red Scare literature is Ian Whitcomb's *After the ball: pop music from rag to rock* (1972). Whitcomb quotes from the 1919 Leo Feist publication *Let's knock the bull out of the Bolsheviki*, yet limits the discussion to about half a page.

Ben Arnold's *Music and war, a research and information guide* (1993) provides brief information regarding the Russian art music perspective towards the revolution. He includes quick mention of Aleksandr Grechaninov's *The hymn of free Russia*; "a brief three-page, diatonic song in A major. One of the earliest works to grow out of the Russian Revolution."<sup>13</sup> Frederick G. Vogel's *World War I songs, a history and dictionary of popular American patriotic tunes, with over 300 complete lyrics* (1995) also offers little in the way of historical context, but

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<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of this study Sergei Rachmaninoff's name will be spelled as it was during the era under examination.

<sup>13</sup> However, this work is known to have been composed in praise of the Alexander Kerensky's Provisional Government, not in relation to the Bolshevik Party. Grechaninov disliked Lenin, and eventually immigrated to the United States. Arnold, *Music and War*, 161.

contains an entry for *The Russians were russin,' the yanks started yankin'*.<sup>14</sup> A recent text by the patriotic song collector Bernard Parker (*World War I sheet music* [2007]) examines the various levels of popular music produced by Tin Pan Alley during the war years. Although he does not specifically address the Russian revolution, his work does include several relevant entries and a brief but helpful bibliography.<sup>15</sup>

In light of the sparse treatment this topic has received, the present study intends to illuminate an area of popular music and American musical politics often overlooked by students of Tin Pan Alley and the First World War. Furthermore, this study serves as a resource of song sheets and recordings spread across many archives and collections.<sup>16</sup> More than eighty years have passed since Vladimir Lenin led the Bolshevik Party to power in a socio-economically crippled Russia, which influenced American international relations for decades following. The songs of this era inform the North American construction of Russian culture and enrich the study of politics (both national and international) and musical culture in the United States.

### **Literature Review**

There is no standard literature regarding the specific influence of the Bolshevik revolution on North American popular song. Many of these sources approach the subject indirectly, through cultural, political, social, or philosophical dimensions. To fill such a lacunae both American and Russian cultural histories have proven useful in contextualizing this movement and its relation to the arts. Several of these non-musical sources provide insight into Russian culture during the

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<sup>14</sup> Vogel, *World War I Songs*, 232.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Parker is a dedicated song collector whose text serves as a lexicography of primarily Allied-related World War I sheet music. This two-volume work identifies many songs, yet does not speak to their intentions or specific political context.

<sup>16</sup> This author has not identified any one collection or collector specifically attentive to this topic. Please see Appendix C for source information relative to this study.

early Soviet period and illuminate the ideologies and practices of this complicated subject. A classic study is James H. Billington's *The icon and the axe, an interpretive history of Russian culture* (1970), while a more recent counterpart is Orlando Figes's *Natasha's dance, a cultural history of Russia* (2002). These texts examine the topic from various angles, including visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, gastronomy, and other cultural expressions. They inform this author's writings on Russian cultural practice in regard to the American perspective. Another text more closely tied to modern Russia is Robert Service's *A history of modern Russia from Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* (2003). This work provides much specific data regarding the Bolshevik period.

Richard Stites provides a more specific glimpse of Bolshevik music in his *Russian popular culture, entertainment and society since 1900* (1992). This work offers a discussion of folk music and popular music within the developing Soviet state. Stites does not dwell on Russian intellectuals who left the country, but does briefly address the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians and their folk and Western-inspired music.

The relationship between American and Russian urban popular styles is documented in S. Frederick Starr's unique *Red and hot, the fate of jazz in the Soviet Union* (1994). Starr examines North American dance crazes and the reception of African-American music during the last years of Czarist Russia and throughout the Soviet period. This work and the previous citations offer a comprehensive overview of Russian musical culture and practice during the time period under study, and enrich the discussion of the American reception.

Examples of Russian dance are found in Marion Bergman's *The Russian-American song and dance book* (1947) and Leslie Clendenen's *The art of dancing: its theory and practice*

(1919).<sup>17</sup> These sources offer brief glimpses of Russian dance from an American perspective. Russian gastronomy is examined well in R.E.F. Smith and David Christian's *Bread and salt: a social and economic history of food and drink in Russia* (1984). This interesting work has informed the discussion of vodka and Russian culture.

Various studies of American cultural and political history have contributed to this study. Culturally specific research can be found in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of David Kennedy's *Over here, the first World War and American society* (2004). This work concerns the American experience during the War, while also touching upon the Russian revolution and its impact upon American society. However it does not fully breach the Red Scare that evolved during the period of demobilization. An early study of this topic was Robert K. Murry's *Red Scare: a study of national hysteria, 1919-1920* (1955), in which this Red Scare was examined with some minor undertones of the later Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Despite the ideological framework, this text has remained a standard on the subject. A much more recent study is *Reds, McCarthyism in twentieth century America* (2004) by Ted Morgan. Although focused primarily on the politics of Senator Joseph McCarthy, Morgan does present excellent data concerning the Bolshevik revolution and the Communist impact on American culture. Much of this material has been synthesized in chapter two of the present study. The specific mechanics of the Red Scare are also examined in Kenneth Ackerman's *Young J. Edgar: Hoover, the Red Scare, and the assault on civil liberties* (2007). His work obviously focuses on Hoover's early career, and also provides insight into immigration policy and the Palmer raids.

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<sup>17</sup> The later is available online through the Library of Congress.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Murray does frame the Red Scare as a lesson to be applied to the 1950s. For example, he writes that, "as in 1919, our present-day solutions must be the product of some facts, some exaggeration, some misinformation, and some personal prejudice. And yet, the important fact remains that the nature of our response to these problems and fears will determine in large measure whether we will forestall or, like the public of 1919, succumb to a much greater, more intense, and more disastrous Red Scare that can come." *Red Scare*, 281.

Publications that treat the general history of the Great War are in no short supply. Several of these sources have been valuable in providing historical and cultural data. For the purpose of the present study John Keegan's *The First World War* (1999) and S.L.A. Marshall's *World War I* (2001) have provided the most concrete information on the mechanics of the First World War.

There are many general sources pertaining to American immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Roger Daniels's *Coming to America: a history of immigration and ethnicity in American life* (1990), Leonard Dinnerstein's *Ethnic Americans, a history of immigration* (1990), and Philip Taylor's *The Distant Magnet: European emigration to the U.S.A.* (1971). More relevant studies include Vera Kishinevsky *Russian immigrants in the United States adapting to American culture* (2004), and the dated but excellent article "Immigration policy since World War I," by Edward Hutchinson (1949). Working with texts from the era in question has been more revealing due to a general transparency of opinion. A classic is W.I. Thomas's *Old world traits transplanted* (1921). Other more politically incorrect studies that illustrate the biases of the era are Jerome Davis's *The Russian immigrant* (1922) and Arthur Ruhl's contribution to Henry Pratt Fairchild's *Immigrant backgrounds* (1927). These sources give insight into the views and prerogatives of the era.

Many works examine Tin Pan Alley and the state of popular music after the Great War. The vast majority, however, make no mention of the Red Scare. This fact aside some of the most contextually helpful have been David Jasen's works: *Tin Pan Alley, the composers, the songs, the performers and their time* (1988), *That American rag, the story of ragtime from coast to coast* (with Gene Jones, 2000), and *Rags and ragtime, a musical history* (with Trebor Tichenor, 1978). Jasen provides much biographical information for composers and artists whose celebrity rests with ragtime. He also provides context and extra-musical discussion (such as the section on

*Tin Pan Alley* devoted to Irene and Vernon Castle), although his primary focus is hit song literature. *Rags and ragtime* is especially focused biographical information, although he again spends much time on the most commercially popular musical examples. Edward A. Berlin's *Ragtime: a musical and cultural history* (1980) also contributes similar information to this broad topic.

Jeffrey Livingston's chapter in *America's musical pulse: popular music in twentieth century society* (1992) provides an overview of music and the politics of warfare. It is not, however, specific to the World War I era. A better discussion is found in the introduction to Bernard Parker's *World War I sheet music* (2007). A retired philosophy professor and avid song collector, his catalog includes a brief yet well-informed picture of Tin Pan Alley during the War. The present author has also spoken to Mr. Parker and received some direction concerning his text.

David Brackett's *Interpreting popular music* (2000) and Richard Middleton's *Studying popular music* (1990) have provided some theoretical starting points. The writing of Simon Frith (*Performing rites, on the value of popular music* [1998]) has specifically added to the discussion of aesthetics and hermeneutics. The conclusion of chapter six opines regarding the experience of this music. Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano's previously mentioned theory of "racial imagination," has proven useful in expressing the role of music within the shaping of broad social opinion.<sup>19</sup> The texts examined in the present study illuminate the use of stereotypes and contextual confusion in the construction of an abstract Bolshevik identity. This image evolved in the years that followed the First World War, and left a mark on the public realization of Russian culture in the United States.

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<sup>19</sup> Bohlman and Radano, "Introduction", 5.

Very few of the composers relevant to this study have been well-treated by biographers. Others lack even the most basic of biographical discussion. Two excellent sources that contain data on these lesser-known artists are the *ASCAP biographical dictionary* (1980) and Warren Vaché's *The unsung songwriters, America's masters of melody* (2000). Appendix A treats one such author, George L. Cobb, whose biography is stretched between many sources, yet has no definitive version. Much of the information presented in this study is taken from the above two sources and other primary references.

Regarding those with extensive biographies, sources are easily available. The discussion of Irving Berlin draws specifically from Charles Hamm's article "Genre, performance and ideology in the early songs of Irving Berlin" (*Popular Music*, 1994) and *The complete lyrics of Irving Berlin* (edited by Robert Kimball and Linda Emmet, 2001). The discussion of George Gershwin is largely drawn from his two standard biographies: Howard Pollack's *George Gershwin: his life and work* (2006) and Edward Jablonski's *Gershwin* (1987). Information on Serge Rachmaninoff has primarily been drawn from Oskar von Rieseemann's *Rachmaninoff's recollections* (1979) and Watson Lyle's *Rachmaninoff* (1939). Other anecdotal information regarding these authors has been drawn from periodicals and serials that addressed or reviewed their works.

Several of these serials have also been crucial to this study. Those most quoted include primary accounts found in the *New York Times*, the *Literary Digest*, and *The Tuneful Yankee/Melody*.<sup>20</sup> The *Literary Digest* is a particularly good resource for political cartoons and issues relative to public thought and the wartime obsession with Americanization. Other journals and periodicals were examined, and contributed to the study. One excellent source of primary

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<sup>20</sup> *The Tuneful Yankee* became *Melody* shortly after its production run began in 1916. This journal is a good source of journalism and opinion regarding ragtime. It is, however, only available through the Library of Congress and the Bowling Green State University Library.

information is *Variety*, which reported on all things relevant to Tin Pan Alley and popular culture in the United States. *Theater Magazine* has also been a helpful source. More recent secondary source material has been drawn from the *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Popular Music*, and the online journal *Classic Ragtime Piano*.



## CHAPTER 2 TIN PAN ALLEY AND POST-REVOLUTION POLITICS

The American Red Scare re-contextualized the image of Russia and Russians in the United States by transforming culture into a vehicle for socio-political persuasion. Between the years 1917 and 1920 a mixture of exaggeration, misinformed data, and a purely theoretical invasion by Bolshevik ideology saturated the American public. Called the Red Scare, and reinforced by labor strikes and a nation-wide bomb scare, many citizens felt as though the Russian invasion was imminent. This was the relationship that Robert Murray called “the matrix that held the Red Scare together.”<sup>1</sup> The public opinion of Russian culture was altered, and stereotypes came to embody new meanings. The present chapter briefly examines the state of Tin Pan Alley publications during the period of American belligerence and then turns to the political environment of the Red Scare.

### **Popular Music and Propaganda**

The last years of World War I saw an output of songs unparalleled in the course of Tin Pan Alley production.<sup>2</sup> War songs occupied an especially large percentage of this literature, and served to inform and mirror the sentiments of American society without a firsthand experience in the European conflict.<sup>3</sup> Yet these songs did more than naively inform the listening public, they reflected the emotions of the domestic audience and stimulated their ears with government inspired propaganda. American involvement in the European conflict depended on an ideologically sound home-front informed by a propaganda machine that involved all levels of

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, *Red*, 83.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, *World War I Sheet Music*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Livingston, “Still Boy-Meets-Girl Stuff”, 33-34.

popular culture. The music industry thus provided a medium for the dispersion of government approved information.

In George Creel and his Committee on Public Information (CPI) President Wilson developed a federal body to treat domestic and foreign propaganda. The CPI existed to organize this information and appropriately distribute it to the masses. The most iconic segment of the CPI was Creel's Four Minute Men. This organization consisted of 75,000 willing citizens who were trained to beat the war drum throughout the country. This training focused on public speaking but also encouraged the use of song as a political tool.<sup>4</sup> They frequently spoke and performed at religious gatherings, public meetings, and at movie halls (where they earned their name based on the amount of time given to speak while rolls of film were changed out). During these short performances the Four Minute Men stimulated public support through song and speech specifically aimed at this goal. It has been estimated that the Four Minute Men reached out to 300 million American listeners.<sup>5</sup>

The war directly touched Tin Pan Alley publishers via the material limitations of paper. In an effort to conserve this resource many publishing houses followed the example of Leo Feist, who shrunk the size of his sheet music to conserve material and reduce overhead. The federal government turned this situation into an opportunity to encourage Tin Pan Alley to embrace patriotism and domestic propaganda. The War Industries Board granted a stable supply of paper to be provided to music publishers in exchange for the promotion of CPI literature.<sup>6</sup> Music

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<sup>4</sup> Songs such as Ralph L. Grosvenor's *We'll lick the Kaiser if it takes us twenty years* dedicated their proceeds to the CPI and the Four Minute Men effort. See Parker, *World*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. Yet, the CPI did not specifically engage musical recordings. This caused some tension between the government and the recording business, which was taxed as a luxury industry and received no real benefits despite the production of patriotic song literature. Record companies were further put out by the government's acquisition of record production facilities for military supplies. See Martin, *The Great War*, prologue.

<sup>6</sup> Whitcomb, *After the Ball*, 62.

became an essential element of American victory, as long as publishing houses followed the dictates of official government thought.

The CPI applied this motivation with the help of regulatory agencies such as the United Booking Office and the Vaudeville Managers Protective Agency. Bodies such as these kept track of each other, and reported artists who differed from government policy.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently authors kept in step with the CPI and flooded their audience with official propaganda. During these last years of the war much Tin Pan Alley output either praised the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) or called for the downfall of the Kaiser. America's relation to Russia was voiced more infrequently, and was not as popular as anti-German sentiment. When expressed, perspectives of Russian culture were tame in comparison, and show none of the negativity of the post-war era. One such example is *The Russians were rushin,' the yanks started yankin.'*<sup>8</sup> This light-hearted song exemplifies the desire for camaraderie and ultimate victory prominent during the years of American involvement in the European trenches. This perspective was common, as many American citizens hoped for an end to the stagnant war. *The Russians were rushin'* both exemplifies and amplifies this point. The song was released in 1918—after the Bolshevik Revolution. Yet the focus on Kaiser Wilhelm upstages the mention of the Russian Bolsheviks and adds another dimension to the song. The authors seem to have distanced the concepts of the Russian army and Lenin's Bolshevik party. Lyrically, these two entities were drawn into separate categories.

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<sup>7</sup> Offending songs could have been removed from circulation. Such was the case with Leo Feist's *It'll be a hot time for the old boys when the young men go to war* and *I don't want to get well, I'm in love with a beautiful nurse*. See Livingston, "Still", 34 and Holder, "Americanization as a Cure for Bolshevism", 339.

<sup>8</sup> Music by Charles. McCarron (1891-1919) and lyrics by Carey Morgan (1885-1960). Published in 1918 by the Broadway Music Corporation of New York.

The story was told from the perspective of a war veteran who, in the future year of 1953, related his version of the European conflict to an inquisitive grandson. The former soldier satirically depicted each nationality involved in the war as dependent on American intervention.

The first chorus reads as follows:

The Russians were rushin' the Prussians.  
The Prussians were crushin' the Russians.  
The Balkins were balkin' and Turkey was squawkin,'  
Rasputin disputin' and Italy scootin'.  
The Boches all bulled Bolshevikis.  
The British were skittish at sea.  
But the good Lord I'm thankin'  
The Yanks started yankin'  
And yanked Kaiser Bill up a tree.<sup>9</sup>

The Russian armed forces were equated with the other European powers. In typical wartime rhetoric, only the Americans (Yanks) could resolve the conflict. The Russian armed forces were degraded no further than any other foreign nation, yet the Bolsheviki were set apart. Lyrist Casey Morgan also cast the Bolsheviki in opposition to the boches.<sup>10</sup> This reference was too early to be a connection to the Socialist uprisings in Germany, and is a reflection of the dominant role Germany played on the Eastern front. More likely the specific mention of the Revolutionaries serves only the purpose of assonance, and has no deeper meaning. What is drastically more important is the separate mention of the Russians and the Bolsheviki. The utilization of the Russians versus the Prussians is symbolic of both the larger European struggle and resonates with the pre-war years. By pairing the Bolsheviki with the Boches, two stereotypes reinforce one another as emblems of the negativity generated by the conflict.

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<sup>9</sup> See figure 2-1.

<sup>10</sup> Boche was a derogatory expression used by the French to describe a German. The term kraut is an English parallel.

Yet the mention of Russia and the Bolshevik Party is slight. *The Russians were rushin,' the yanks started yankin'* had much more to say about Germany. The second verse and chorus continued the imagined retrospective:

My dream quickly changed to a schoolroom that day,  
The lesson was geography.  
A child raised her hand, said, "I don't understand,  
This map looks all wrong to me.  
What is this strange place that is marked Germany?"  
And the school teacher replied with a roar,  
"Why, that's an old map, dear, since we had that scrap, dear,  
There ain't no such place any more.

The Russians were rushin' the Prussians.  
The Prussians were crushin' the Russians.  
The good old Italians were hurling battalions  
Canadians raidin' and Frenchmen invadin'  
The Bulgars were bulgin' and Belgians  
But Yanks started yankin' you see.  
And when Peace was conceded,  
Some new maps were needed,  
They ruined the geography."

This song further reinforced the popular notion of 100% Americanism—an ideology that called for the repression of ethnic ties and the embrace of a homogenized socio-cultural identity. This repression, as opposed to an attitude of integration or education, increased as the war involved more and more American citizens.<sup>11</sup> *The Russians were rushin,' the yanks started yankin'* also did not treat the Bolsheviks as poorly as domestic minorities fared in contemporary literature.<sup>12</sup> The threat of a global proletarian revolution had yet to take hold on the American public, who had other more pressing worries.

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<sup>11</sup> This perspective was best embodied in Thomas Hoier's song *Don't bite the hand that's feeding you*:

If you don't like your Uncle Sammy, then go back to your home o'er the sea,  
To the land from where you came, whatever be its name.

Also see Parker, *World*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Such as the stereotypes concerning Native Americans presented in the song *Indianola* (1918) or the ridiculous plight of the African American enlisted man portrayed in *Mammy's chocolate soldier* (1918).

The stream of propaganda embodied by this song reached its zenith on 11 November, 1918. With the armistice came the rise of the peace song, while the vilification of the German people subsided.<sup>13</sup> Anxiety and degradation gave way to optimism and relief, all of which was reflected in popular culture. Yet the momentum built by wartime propaganda was slow to deflate, and other public sentiments filtered through this medium to voice the misgivings of the post-war world. This environment incubated the song literature discussed in the following chapters.

### **Demobilization and the Red Scare**

The Bolshevik government removed itself from the obligations of battle at the meeting of Brest-Litovsk. This was a unique moment, called “one of the more bizarre dramas of the war” by S.L.A. Marshall.<sup>14</sup> Bolshevik leaders sought a peace without an imperialist agenda, in which a cease-fire would be accompanied by the return of all land lost to the Central Powers. This was an untraditional armistice, and after much internal debate it was agreed that Russia could maintain her former provinces (Poland and the Baltic States) only if these regions agreed to rejoin Russia on their own terms. The Bolshevik delegation thus threatened to dissolve the conference, and the Ukraine took advantage of this moment to declare its independence from Russia. The former province signed a separate peace treaty with Germany on 9 February, 1918. Leon Trotsky, who led the Bolshevik delegation after a break for the December holidays, declared that Soviet Russia

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<sup>13</sup> The 1919 Treaty of Versailles cemented the artistic about-face. Comments were found in many publications, such as the December issue of *Melody*:

THE WAR IS OVER! and after this December issue of MELODY all war-songs, near war-songs, next-to and would-be war-songs will be under armistice in so far as any criticism in this column is concerned, and the erstwhile critic hereafter will smite his critical lyre only to the lays of love, peace and such-like lyrics. Cobb, “Just Between You and Me”, (December, 1919) 6.

Performance venues also reflected the political reversal, where managers began posting warnings that forbid the staging of war songs. See Livingston, “Still”, 35.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, *World War I*, 328.

was at peace, and would repel any advances made by the German army. The Bolsheviks believed that the threat of future Soviet revolutions would hold the Central Powers in check, and that any military action against Russia would stimulate a lower class rebellion in solidarity with the Bolsheviks and in opposition to an unethical Capitalist conflict.<sup>15</sup> Trotsky naively left the peace talks, and German forces commenced their invasion of Western Russia. Without the help of revolutionary forces and unable to stop the German advance, the Bolshevik government ultimately bowed to the treaty on 3 March, 1918. Lenin was forced to accept German conditions, which included the annexation of 34% of the Russia population, 32% of the farmland, 50% of the industrial holdings, and 90% of the coal mines.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the preparation for a global Socialist upheaval ultimately became an inward looking Bolshevik consolidation of national power. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army had been formed in February as a force capable of realizing this end, and aided Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Soviets after Kaiser Wilhelm's abdication created the possibility to disregard the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.<sup>17</sup> At the same moment Socialist-Revolutionary holdouts from the Provisional Government receiving western encouragement constituted a White Russian Army, the de facto enemies of the Bolshevik Reds. The German High Command was concerned with a Soviet infection, and supported any provinces that broke away from the Bolshevik government. The allies reacted by sending troops to Russia who inevitably sided with the Whites. When the Red army defeated these forces and brought an end to the civil war it was not

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<sup>15</sup> Keegan, *The First World War*, 381.

<sup>16</sup> Marshall, *World*, 333.

<sup>17</sup> Service, *A History of Modern Russia from Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin*, 107.

through a superior military strength, but the lack of German intervention during the closing months of the war.<sup>18</sup>

The German and Russian delegates who met at Brest-Litovsk sat for a three-month period, during which time their respective armies maintained a ceasefire. The German High Command wasted time fighting amongst itself, while Lenin and his supporters seized an opportunity to spread the call for a global Soviet revolution. General Max Hoffmann, who headed the German delegation, was foolish enough to allow those German and Russia troops still on the front to fraternize—a chance the Bolsheviks took to disseminate propaganda. Later in 1918 when the western front had stretched its resources to the breaking point it became impossible to recall those soldiers who served in Russia. The German High Command realized that their eastern forces were tainted with Bolshevik ideology.<sup>19</sup>

The Germans had good reason to fear this political infiltration. Soviet regimes sprung up in Finland and the Baltic States, while Germany witnessed the Spartacist Uprising and the failed revolutions in Bavaria and Hungary. In the United States, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk generated mixed emotions. On one hand, it came as no surprise that the Russian Provisional Government collapsed, and that American belligerence had freed the Atlantic and salvaged the Allied effort. Conversely, the Russians had broken their part in the Allied effort, and the Bolshevik government could not be given official recognition without condoning their actions. This formal acknowledgement would wait until 1933.

American observers were concerned with the global impact of Bolshevism, but more so the influence that Bolshevism might have on domestic economic and political issues. The

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<sup>18</sup> Keegan, *The First*, 392.

<sup>19</sup> Marshall, *World*, 334.



utopianism of the pre-war decades was strained by demobilization and revealed the specter of class struggle that would haunt the U.S. for many years.<sup>20</sup> A question was posed: Bolshevik uprisings had erupted in Germany and Hungary, but could this happen in the United States? Those concerned feared a contamination of organized labor, already a hot bed of political turmoil. The most logical choice was to shift the national vilification of the German people to the Russian Revolutionaries.<sup>21</sup>

Anxiety over anarchistic behavior had been a part of the American mindset since the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, highlighted by the assassination of President William McKinley on 6 September, 1901. During the year 1919 this danger became real for many American citizens through massive labor demonstrations and a number of mail bombs that targeted prominent political figures. On 2 February, 1919, the Washington D.C. Poli's theater held a pro-Bolshevik rally hosted by the League to Enforce Peace and Democracy. Speakers Albert Rhys Williams and Louise Bryant discussed their experiences during the Bolshevik revolution and reprimanded the American government for encroaching upon Soviet affairs. This meeting, and its subsequent review in the press, startled several members of Congress. They were shocked by the public attraction to Bolshevism and its incompatible nature with Democracy. Senator Thomas J. Walsh (D, Montana) called upon the Judiciary Committee investigating German propaganda to shift its focus to the Bolshevik influence.<sup>22</sup> An independent Congressional subcommittee was also created to investigate the potential reality of a Bolshevik threat in the United States. The subcommittee chairman was Lee S. Overman, (D, North Carolina), who had sat in office since

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<sup>20</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 287.

<sup>21</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

1903. He was a noted anti-immigration activist, and supported limiting this privilege for the exclusive use of Anglo-Saxons.

On 11 February the Overman subcommittee hearing on Bolshevism publicly opened. Yet behind closed doors the senators had heard the testimony of Archibald Stevenson, a lawyer and former Bureau of Investigation agent.<sup>23</sup> A trusted expert in Bolshevik propaganda, Stevenson fueled the Senators' anxiety:

Overman asked, "The idea then is to form a government within this government and overthrow this government?" Indeed it was, Stevenson assented. Overman asked, "You think this movement is growing constantly in this country?" Stevenson answered, "I think it is growing rather rapidly. If we can gauge it by the amount of literature that is distributed and the number of meetings held. . . . I conceive this to be the gravest menace today."<sup>24</sup>

This discussion set the tone for Overman's public hearings. One person questioned by the committee was Catherine Breshkovsky, a Russian native, who served the Provisional Government shortly after completing a thirty-two year exile in Siberia. She favored neither Czarism or Bolshevism, and stated:

We have simply gone from one form of despotism to another. It is not easy to change ancient forms. . . . So we came under [the rule of] two gendarmes, Lenin and Trotsky. . . . We are like mendicants now. . . . We need paper, we need scissors, we need matches, we need leather for boots. . . . Everywhere where the Bolsheviks are, there is not intelligence. . . . They destroyed all the intelligent people, the best professors, the professional men, the best men we had. . . . A government now springs up controlled by brigands, like bubbles out of water.<sup>25</sup>

These statements formed a mental picture of a diseased Russian state in which personal freedom and basic resources were anathema.<sup>26</sup> The Senators looked upon this construction as though

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<sup>23</sup> The Bureau of Investigation was christened the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 65.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>26</sup> It is instructive to note that many Bolshevik leaders were intellectuals with great philosophic and sociological insight. Yet the emergent stereotype latched onto an image drawn from lower class models. The Russian worker, who had been much oppressed under Czarism, became an emblem for the Revolution. This class gained the most ideological ground in post-Revolutionary Russia. In the United States this perspective was easily transferred to

viewing an alien landscape that held the potential for global chaos and the spread of Bolshevism in the United States.

On 10 March the hearings closed. The published report concluded that Lenin's Bolshevik party had inaugurated a "reign of terror unparalleled in the history of modern civilization."<sup>27</sup> The Committee set in motion plans to stop all distribution of Bolshevik propaganda and ban the use of the Red Flag, a popular icon of radical behavior. Yet some were displeased with Overman's attempt at whistle-blowing. Archibald Stevenson felt that the Committee had not gone far enough towards revealing the domestic Bolshevik threat. He contacted Senator Clayton Lusk (R, New York), a friend from the Republican Union League Club. Lusk conducted hearings at City Hall in Manhattan on 12 June, 1919, at which time he called upon state and federal officers to raid the unrecognized Soviet embassy (known as the Soviet Bureau). The Soviet representative, Ludwig Martens, was summoned and openly vilified as the chief agent of Bolshevik thought in the United States.

This vilification was not limited to Senatorial thought. Across the country the popular press expressed similar emotions and opinions. An article in the *New York Times* posed the question "Are we to fall in the path of the Red Terror which is now sweeping Europe?"<sup>28</sup> The *Saturday Evening Post* summarized the entire situation when, on 1 November, 1919, it called out the "Russo-German movement" for attempting to "dominate America."<sup>29</sup>

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domestic laborers, a point which is illuminated in the following chapters. Yet the Russian immigration wave that swept across Western Europe and North America contained many upper class citizens whose fear of Bolshevism or support of Czarism compelled them to leave. These people faced stereotypes built largely upon models of radicalism found within organized labor and the Russian lower class.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Ratshesky, "Americanization is Cure For Bolshevism", 45.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 63.

These sentiments were also influenced by a wave of small, homemade bombs sent throughout the summer of 1919 via the United States Post Office. They were aimed at prominent politicians across the country, and stimulated a need for retribution in the form of legislative action. On 2 June, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer became the near victim of a bomb targeting his Washington D.C. home. The bomber accidentally killed himself, scattering his body parts throughout the neighborhood. Through dubious police investigation it was declared that the offending anarchist was Carlo Valdinoci, a young Italian immigrant wanted for his role in other anti-government actions. In the blast, his body was obliterated and his identity was confirmed only through the anarchistic literature scattered at the scene and a lone segment of his hair. A French hairstylist, who claimed clairvoyance enough to state “show me a man’s hair and I will tell you his nationality,” declared the lock to belong to a youthful Italian.<sup>30</sup>

Palmer was convinced that these bombings were connected to political radicalism, especially based on his experience at the receiving end of the equation. In his mind these activities coalesced with other labor disturbances into a unified Bolshevik plot.<sup>31</sup> He instantly began reshaping his position as Attorney General to meet this threat. Palmer had occupied his post only since February of that year, and had brought in a group of friends from his wartime directorship, the Office of Alien Property Custodian. He established the General Intelligence Division as a subset of the Bureau of Investigation, whose purpose was to specifically target radical behavior. Palmer turned his program over to a young patriot named J. Edgar Hoover, a former Library of Congress employee. Hoover began documenting radical organizations and publications—a catalogue that grew to over 200,000 entries. Yet, initially the group did not

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<sup>30</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Disturbances such as the Seattle general strike and the recent May Day celebrations held around the country. *Ibid.*, 79.

identify any bombers, and Palmer's aid, Francis Garvan, was criticized before Congress for this reason. Palmer asked the House Appropriations Committee for an additional \$500,000 towards the cause, which prompted Senator Reed Smoot (R, Utah) to ask "Do you think if we increased this to \$2,000,000 you could discover one bomb-thrower—get just one? I do not mean in the papers. I mean actually get him." "I can try," Garvan replied, and the advance was granted.<sup>32</sup>

While the General Intelligence Division struggled to pin down specific anarchists the organization had much success distributing propaganda. Palmer authorized this material to be distributed throughout the country.<sup>33</sup> Bolshevism was painted as a dominant threat to the American way of life, as an example from the *Literary Digest* demonstrates (see figure 2-2).

Several members of Congress looked for other means to stem-off radical behavior. Their effort ranged from proposed transportation regulations, outlawing membership in organizations promoting violence, and (in the most extreme) a peacetime sedition bill.<sup>34</sup> However the easiest way to remove harmful individuals was deportation. This method did not involve any criminal proceeding, as deportation was not considered a punishment.<sup>35</sup> This process was controlled and administered by the Department of Labor (until 1940), whose immigration officers both heard cases and rendered outcomes without any public interaction. Based on legislation passed in 1917, immigrants were heavily taxed, the Asiatic Bared Zone was established, and literacy was required for naturalization. The bill drastically increased the powers of immigration officials to exclude and deport aliens.<sup>36</sup> In 1919 this legislation was enhanced, granting immigrants the

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<sup>32</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 73-74.

<sup>33</sup> Murray, *Red*, 194. In January 1920 the Department of Justice went as far as to mail propaganda to the press free-of-charge. *Red*, 220.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>36</sup> Hutchinson, "Immigration Policy Since World War I", 15.

possibility of deportation regardless of family and time spent in the United States. This method became the primary tool for Palmer's department, and was put to good use by J. Edgar Hoover, who had served on the Alien Enemy Bureau during the war.

Hoover positioned himself as a crusader against Communism. His first target was the Union of Russian Workers (URW), whose membership totaled approximately four thousand people spread across the country. The Department of Labor declared that membership in the Union was a deportable offense, and Hoover began constructing cases against any card-carrying members. On 7 November Bureau agents simultaneously raided URW headquarters in 12 cities, executing 452 of 600 outstanding warrants. Only half of the targeted members were eventually deported, yet Hoover was publicly acclaimed for the scale of his effort. On 21 December Hoover launched the "Soviet Ark," a troopship borrowed from the War Department that bore 249 aliens away from American shores. The cargo included 184 URW members and 65 accused anarchists and eligible deportees.<sup>37</sup>

While Hoover was lauded for his anti-radical theatricality others debated the legitimacy of American immigration policy. George W. Anderson, a federal judge from Boston, ruled on 23 June, 1920, that the current deportation policy was too broadly defined. He argued that membership in a Communist party did not prove guilt but that deportation should be limited to those who inspired violence or committed subversive behavior. Later that year the House passed the Johnson bill suspending all immigration for a two -year period. This bill died in the Senate but provided a basis for the Emergency Quota Act. This quota weighed immigration on a national scale. Each country of origin was allotted a set number of immigrants relative to 3 per

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<sup>37</sup> Morgan, *Reds*, 76. Secretary of Labor John Abercrombie also indicted more than 3,000 members of the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. By mid-1920 5,000 total arrest warrants had been issued—although only 556 of the accused were ultimately subjected to deportation. Murray, *Red*, 211 and 251.

cent of the number of foreign-born persons of such nationality resident in the United States as recorded in the 1910 Census. In effect this bill targeted immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, who were further restricted three years later via the National Origins Act.<sup>38</sup> These restrictions marked a crossroads in domestic foreign policy. As Edward Hutchinson has written, “heretofore the evolution of legislative controls on immigration had been toward progressively higher standards of admissibility and successive additions to the excludable classes. When it became apparent that limitation of immigration to moderate numbers could not be achieved in this direction, the quota formula was developed to put a ceiling on the number of migrants admitted in any one year.”<sup>39</sup> This law set the stage for the xenophobia that underpinned the 1920s.

The emergency quota act sapped Palmer’s momentum, and marked the war-weariness that enveloped the American public in mid-1920.<sup>40</sup> Yet his broad interpretation of radical behavior became his legacy. By the turn of the 1920s the construction of radicalism embodied recent immigrants, German sympathizers, mail-bombers, unionists, Communists, and any association divergent from the political mainstream. This broad definition contained Bolshevism under a blanket ruled not only by Federal propaganda but also dependant on personal emotions and biases. This connection kept the Red Scare alive for many Americans more than any specific example of radical behavior or political affiliation, and furthermore created anxiety that blew the

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<sup>38</sup> The 1924 National Origins Act restricted immigration to 2 percent of the 1890 Census. It further excluded all Asian immigrants.

<sup>39</sup> Hutchinson, “Immigration”, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Other factors contributed to the decline of the Red Scare—the containment of Bolshevism within Eastern Europe, Palmer’s effectiveness in dissuading Communist sympathy, and the emerging entertainment culture that defined the coming decade.

Bolshevik threat out of proportion.<sup>41</sup> The inflated Russian nemesis became an obsession that slowly deflated during the 1920s and laid the foundation of public opinions concerning Lenin's government and the role of Russians living in the United States.

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<sup>41</sup> Murray, *Red*, 167.



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**Chorus**

The Rus-sians were rush-in' the Prus-sians, — The Prus-sians were crush-in' the  
 The Rus-sians were rush-in' the Prus-sians, — The Prus-sians were crush-in' the

Rus-sians. — The Bal-kins were bal-kin' and Tur-key was squawk-in', Ras-put-in dis-  
 Rus-sians. — The good old I-tal-ians were hurl-ing bat-tal-ions Can-a-di-ans

put-in' and It-a-ly scoot-in' The Boch-es all bulled Bol-she-vi-kis — The  
 raid-in' and French-men in-vad-in' The Bul-gars were bul-gin' the Bel-gians — But

The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line with chords in the right hand. Dynamics include *p-f* (piano-forte) and accents. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Figure 2-1. Charles McCarron and Carey Morgan, *The Russians Were Rushin', the Yanks Started Yankin'*, mm. 45-64.



WHAT A YEAR HAS BROUGHT FORTH.

---Kirby in the New York World.

Figure 2-2. "What A Year Has Brought Forth", *Literary Digest* (22 November, 1919) 15.

## CHAPTER 3 INFLUENCE OF BOLSHEVIK IDEOLOGY

### **Bolshevik anxiety and the Red Flag**

Anxiety and fear fueled the Red Scare. In 1919 it was not uncommon to open a newspaper and read diatribes against Bolshevism, many of which were authored by political, economic, and religious leaders. One such example was the article “Bolshevism, The End of Civilization,” which quoted the Dutch Minister to Petrograd:

Translated into practise, the five points of Bolshevism really come to this: (1) High wages; (2) don't work; (3) take other people's property; (4) no punishment; (5) no taxation. . . . Wherever Bolshevism rules the nation has been beaten to a pulp, and is utterly helpless.<sup>42</sup>

Such was the denouncement of radical activity and Bolshevik politics. These statements kept the threat alive through exaggeration and extremist perspectives. Red Scare propaganda extolled the worst possible options, and created much agitation. This environment was perpetuated in Tin Pan Alley. Examples are common, and can be found in songs such as *Bolsheviki glide*, *The Bolshevik*, and *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*.<sup>43</sup> These three works depict Russian Bolsheviki as inherently violent and devious people.

The music for the *Bolsheviki glide* was intended to correspond with a stylized dance.<sup>44</sup> It is doubtful that the performance was faithful to the text, in which the dancers “dance it with guns and knives, don't give a cent for their lives,” and “dance it dress'd to kill.”<sup>45</sup> R.P. Weston and

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<sup>42</sup> “Bolshevism, The End of Civilization”, 17.

<sup>43</sup> The *Bolsheviki glide* featured the music of Harry Tierney (1890-1965) and the lyrics of Carl Randall (d. 1965). The song was published in 1918 by Jerome H. Remick and Company of New York. *The Bolshevik* was a collaboration between Bert Lee (1880-1947) and R.P. Weston (1878-1936), and was published in 1919 by Francis, Day, and Hunter. *Look out for the Bolsheviki man* was composed by Irving Berlin (1888-1989) and published in 1919 by T.B. Harms of New York.

<sup>44</sup> Discussed in chapter four.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted from the chorus. It is interesting to note that this song was presented at the Century Grove Revue at the Century Theater in New York City. Among its hosts were F. Ray Comstock and Morris Gest, the same impresarios who later sponsored Nikita Balieff's *Chauve-Souris*. See chapter five.

Bert Lee produced similar sentiments in their 1919 song *The Bolshevik*. Their Bolshevik antagonist calls for the murder of several non-specific people. He sings:

I'm awf'ly good at murdering,  
And as I'm unemploy'd,  
I've made a little list of those who've got to be destroy'd.

This list includes the barber, the servant (perhaps the author was mocking the ideological nature of Communism), the farmer, the doctor, the undertaker's assistant, the baker, the milkman, and the entire U.S. naval board. The specific tool of the Bolshevik is stated in the first verse, in which the victim is to be assassinated with a bomb.<sup>46</sup> Clearly this Bolshevik character was intent on not only committing mass murder but also destroying the structure of American society (as represented by the various victims). Weston and Lee created a very ungracious image, which featured prominently in Charles A. Wenman's musical production *Firefly*. The inclusion of an encore verse is also telling—the authors anticipated a positive audience reaction. Perhaps appreciated as both fear and farce, the song makes a strong case for the popular image of Bolshevik radicals as a danger to American society.

Irving Berlin contributed his version of this idealized characterization with his *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*.<sup>47</sup> His Bolshevik was not bent on murder, but took on the role of a trickster.

Berlin wrote:

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<sup>46</sup> There is also an encore verse:

I'll murder all the people who always shout "Encore,"  
They've made me come out here again though goodness knows what for,  
The play has got to finish, or we'll all be on the shelf,  
So if anyone wants more of it he can sing the dam [sic] thing himself.

<sup>47</sup> The Irving Berlin songs examined in this study—*That revolutionary rag*, *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*, and *Russian lullaby*—exhibit traits central to his body of work. First, they identify with their political situation, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally his songs commonly engage stereotypes understood by his audiences. Here the songs reflect Berlin the performer, who, in his early career, sang as an Irishman, Italian, Jew, or whatever ethnic identity his audience required or expected. The Berlin catalogue contains many such songs from the World War I era and later. He seems to have been more than willing to embrace his audience's politics, which

Look out for the Bolsheviki man.  
You can tell him any place,  
By the whiskers on his face.  
He's a slippery fellow from Russia,  
Seeking fortune and fame.  
Be careful of his game.  
It's full of 'bull' just like his name,  
So look out for the Bolsheviki man.<sup>48</sup>

His implication is that Bolsheviki did not adhere to the precepts of Communism, but associated themselves with political radicalism as a means to better their own material wealth. As with the previous mention of a Bolshevik servant, this is not simply a Communist jest. The authors are presenting Bolshevism as something misunderstood—to be poked fun at certainly—but as an idea constructed out of the misconceptions and bias of the intended song audience.

While these texts illuminate this broad characterization of Bolshevik party members, they do not reveal the largest and most iconic symbol of radical behavior abroad and at home. Symbolic of both Lenin's Bolshevik party and domestic labor turmoil, the Red Flag was the single most effective image presented in the literature of the era. It was also an image visible on

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occasionally got him in trouble (such as in the case of *Stay down here where you belong*, an anti-war song he penned in 1914).

In 1917 the 25 year-old Berlin volunteered to entertain the American Expeditionary Force, yet was drafted before his overture was accepted. Thus the songwriter was shipped off to Camp Upton on Long Island for basic training. Among the unexpected practices faced by a military recruit Berlin had a troublesome time waking each morning at five o'clock. This was the hour in which he had previously been accustomed to turning in, not rising for the day. His experience inspired the song *Oh! how I hate to get up in the morning*, which Berlin incorporated into his Broadway show *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*. Proceeds benefited the Camp Upton service center, and the author himself appeared onstage during the second act to sing the hit song.

As *Oh! how I hate to get up in the morning* demonstrates, many Berlin songs identify with a specific protagonist—the author himself in this case. This factor would have been especially true for those audiences who witnessed Berlin singing his own songs. Yet other songs from this period in Berlin's career point towards non-autobiographical figures and stereotypical cultural images. Slang, dialect and performance illuminate these encoded figures, as Charles Hamm discusses in his article "Genre, performance and ideology in the early songs of Irving Berlin",<sup>145</sup>. Regarding the present study it is difficult to weight the autobiographical content. It can safely be assumed that the songs that he wrote for others to sing (*That revolutionary rag* and *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*) were substantially less so than the songs he wrote for his own use, as has been claimed regarding the *Russian Lullaby*. See the linear notes to Fitzgerald, *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving Berlin Songbook*.

<sup>48</sup> The whisker issue is treated in chapter four.

city streets across the nation. On 1 May, 1919, radical political rallies and public displays occurred throughout the United States. One part of these festivities was Red Flag parades, which celebrated the most visible icon of radicalism and revolution. The image had previously been associated with political extremism going back at least to the 1889 London Dock Strike. North Americans tended to affiliate the flag with the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>49</sup> For many it was too coincidental that these radical organizations used the same red banner as their calling card. This bred intolerance such that the Red Flag became a sign not only of radical political activity but also as a visible threat to American democracy.<sup>50</sup> That year 24 states passed Red Flag ordinances, and eight more followed suit in 1920. The Wisconsin statute illustrates the language and purpose of these rulings. It “forbade the display of a Red Flag or any flag which symbolized ‘a purpose to overthrow, by force or violence’ the government of the United States or of the state of Wisconsin.”<sup>51</sup>

The most relevant issue was an assumed connection between organized labor and Communistic revolution. Irving Berlin again chimed in with a song that encompassed this belief, and on 17 February, 1919 his *That revolutionary rag* appeared in George M. Cohan and Sam Harris’s show *The royal vagabond*.<sup>52</sup> This song, which has a melody very similar to *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*, is a play on the word rag: it is both an abbreviation of ragtime and a derogatory expression for the Bolshevik banner.<sup>53</sup> The lyrics include the following description:

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<sup>49</sup> Holder, “Americanization”, 342.

<sup>50</sup> Murray, *Red*, 233.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>52</sup> *That revolutionary rag* was published in 1919 by T.B. Harms of New York. This song is also known for bringing together Berlin and George Gershwin, who served as the author’s musical scribe.

<sup>53</sup> The melodies are discussed below and in Holder, “Americanization”, 348.

Where the Russian breezes blow,  
There's a piece of calico.  
Ev'ry thread,  
Dyed in red.  
You can see it on a pole,  
Or in Trotsky's button hole.  
Long haired Russian foxes,  
Wave it from old soap boxes.

The melodic content provides an interesting link between Berlin's two songs. *Look out for the Bolsheviki man* was published on 30 June, 1919, approximately four months after *That revolutionary rag*, yet the songs contain melodically similar verses and choruses. The verse material is constructed around the pattern C-B-C-Db-Db-C (transposed to Bb-A-Bb-Cb-Cb-Bb in *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*, see figures 3-1 and 3-2).<sup>54</sup> This assists in making the connection between these songs and may have further resonated with the cultural perceptions of the time. It is well documented how Berlin often utilized ethnic stereotypes understood by his New York audience.<sup>55</sup> The specific pattern present in these songs can be linked to Eastern European culture, one that came to encompass a wide variety of people within the larger cultural makeup of New York City.<sup>56</sup> Yet within this diverse environment musical elements linked to cultural groups were distinctive icons, and allowed for the identification with specific stereotypes. In these two songs Berlin makes the point that radical politics is connected to Eastern European people, the majority of whom were recent immigrants.

The connection between political upheaval and unionism was commonly made in 1919. The Red Flag shared a semiotic connection as representative of labor disputes and Bolshevik

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<sup>54</sup> The melody is, however, harmonized differently. In *That revolutionary rag* the melody begins on scale degree 5 in the key of F, and is harmonized with a pattern of tonic, minor subdominant, and tonic chords. *Look out for the Bolsheviki man*, which also situates the first melodic note on scale degree 5, is set in the key of Eb and is harmonized with a pattern of minor tonic, diminished super tonic-seventh, and dominant-seventh chords. See figures 3-1 and 3-2.

<sup>55</sup> Hamm, "Irving Berlin's Early Songs as Biographical Evidence", 12.

<sup>56</sup> Slobin, *Tenement Songs*, 184.

activity. Observe figure 3-3, in which a flag labeled RED emerges from a strike scene.<sup>57</sup> The industrial concerns of the post-War years fueled this vilification of the Red Flag. As strikes broke out across the United States the image became further embroiled in the Bolshevik/Unionist conflation.

### **Industrial Concerns**

The famous Seattle dock strike of 1919 convinced many observers that American society had become tainted with radical ideology.<sup>58</sup> In Washington the Lusk committee revealed that Bolshevik-inspired radicals controlled at least 100 national trade unions and that the Rand School of Social Science, a workers school founded on Socialist principles, was publishing Bolshevik propaganda under the influence of Ludwig Martens.<sup>59</sup> The popular press went further to fan the flames of this imaged Bolshevik takeover. The *New York Evening World* reported:

Are irresponsible radicals to wrest from sound, self-respecting, 100 per cent Americans the leadership of labor? . . . He [the American workingman] must get his heel on the neck of the Bolshevik monster that is trying to devour American labor preparatory to sating its hideous appetite on the wealth with which a century and a quarter of industry under a stable, respected government has blessed this nation. The issue cannot be made too clear. It is organized labor's own fight against its own most insidious and dangerous enemy.<sup>60</sup>

This argument, for its extreme perspective, was not totally unfounded. Several musical settings were published by organizations like the Rand School that supported educating the common laborer in Socialist and Communist thought.<sup>61</sup> Naturally some of these examples are more overt than others. Figure 3-4 is the cover of one such radical song sheet, titled *The*

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<sup>57</sup> This image was in black and white, thus the RED label. See also figure 2-2.

<sup>58</sup> Kennedy, *Over*, 288.

<sup>59</sup> Murray, *Red*, 102.

<sup>60</sup> "Red Forces Disrupting American Labor", *Literary Digest* (25 October, 1919) 11.

<sup>61</sup> An example the song *The Red Flag*, published by the Rand School Press, can be found in Holder, "Americanization", 341.



*advancing proletaire*.<sup>62</sup> The publisher's stated mission was the distribution of music for the common laborer. The cover is telling enough, in which a stream of workers pours from an industrial backdrop, in so doing breaking down the wall that limits their horizons. It is a clear call for worker solidarity, and a fine example of the ideology that anti-Bolshevik and anti-labor citizens feared most.

This fear was manifested in the song *We'll never change the blue and white to red*.<sup>63</sup> The cover, figure 3-5, is a crystal clear embodiment of the Bolshevik/labor threat. Uncle Sam, clad in his AEF uniform, defends industry against anarchy.<sup>64</sup> The Red Flag is evident as the icon of anarchy and industrial ruin. The audience is given a choice: either support anti-radical propaganda or let labor boil over with Bolshevik influence. This option was typically portrayed in the press as a black and white scenario. See figure 3-6, "At The Place of Decision." Labor had only two paths, towards the light of progress and prosperity or the dismal choice of revolution and anarchy.

Yet mainstream labor organizers saw matters differently. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) spoke out against radical behavior and any connection between unionism and Bolshevism. The public, however, saw only bombs, strikes, and riots—signs that too conveniently linked labor struggles with political upheaval. Additionally, some unions outside of the AFL umbrella did appear to further embrace Bolshevism simply by refusing to align themselves with the conservative skilled labor pool that made up the AFL membership. Other

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<sup>62</sup> Music by Douglas Fairbanks and lyrics by A. Liebich. The song was published in 1919 by the International Song Publisher of Chicago.

<sup>63</sup> The essence of this song was interestingly mirrored in Elton Britt's *The Red We Want Is The Red We Got* (1950), an anti-radical song from the Cold War.

<sup>64</sup> This song also connects the then-recent drive to produce war-time patriotic literature with the Red Scare, and utilized the momentum of 100% Americanism. Music was provided by Leo Friedman and lyrics and M.L. Jennings. The song was published in 1919 by the Illinois Publishing Company.

circumstances further enhanced the popular opinion that Russian revolutionaries had infiltrated the American labor movement. Glenn Plumb's national railroad plan was one such example. Under the auspices of the Railroad Brotherhood, Plumb, one of their counselors, called upon the United States government to purchase and administer all of the nation's rail-lines. These railroads had previously been seized during the War, and Plumb hoped to nationalize the industry before it fell back into the hands of individual corporations. The plan met with some approval, but was publicly denounced for its socialist undertone. The Railroad Brotherhood was put on the defensive, as the press hailed the plan as a means to "Sovietize the railroads."<sup>65</sup>

It is instructive to return to the two aforementioned songs by Irving Berlin. They situate Bolshevism within organized labor for the purpose of connecting with the fears and anxieties of the Red Scare. *That revolutionary rag* implicates the Russian Bolsheviks for threatening the global power structure, and compares this upheaval to the French Revolution.<sup>66</sup> The 27 May, 1919 performance version of *Look out for the Bolshevik man* included an extra verse that stated, "We warned you to be careful when they came. And now another face has come to take their place."<sup>67</sup> This other face was the face of the American worker, interpreted as a disguise for the sleeping Bolshevik threat. Furthermore, Berlin's two songs from 1919 place Bolshevism within an outlaw culture by association with what many Americans understood as social ills. Jeffrey Magee outlined this connection in his description of Berlin's music from this era:

The songs also draw from a common well of themes linked by implications or descriptions of risqué or illicit behavior: vigorous dancing, drinking (this, during Prohibition), sexual

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<sup>65</sup> Murray, *Red*, 118.

<sup>66</sup> Perhaps not the strongest example of a negative political upheaval, although it does make the point that this is a European inspired problem.

<sup>67</sup> Berlin, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, 188.

freedom, and a carefree attitude about eternal damnation—all things that jazz was thought to inspire in the 1920s.<sup>68</sup>

Through the connection with these social ailments Berlin further developed the dangerous nature of his Russian antagonists. He was not alone in this regard. Observe figure 4-2, which pairs Bolshevism and the foxtrot. Both are presented as a dangerous occupation, one that could lead to certain destruction. Thus Berlin joined social danger with industrial and political fears. The question then remains as to how effective this propaganda may have been not as an agent of anxiety but as a hope for a better future. Some industrialists did place their hope with the power of music as a cathartic and protective force, not mere drum-beating. An article from *Melody* explained one such case, where music provided hope for a better industrial environment:

In these times of unrest, the more music we can have the better. As a cure for Bolshevism, it would be a consoling antidote. The community well supplied with the means of hearing good music is comparatively immune from the spirit of unrest and disruption incident to Bolshevism. This is proven in Mr. Schwab's immense plants, where thousands of workers of all nationalities are employed. Let the workers get together in singing meetings, in band rehearsals, and in listening to good music, and the lurking spirit of Bolshevism would find no place.<sup>69</sup>

Of course, Bolshevik architects in Russia made the same prophecy concerning the Proletkult movement, in which worker-inspired music was to become a tool of solidarity against Capitalist influence. Yet the hopefulness of the above quote is not without the marks of its era. In conclusion the article states that "It [music] would also bring about a spirit of brotherly love and fraternalism, amid which surroundings Bolshevism could not exist."<sup>70</sup> This reinforces the overriding stereotype of Bolshevism as a destroyer of social bonds.

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<sup>68</sup> Magee, "Everybody Step", 712.

<sup>69</sup> The author of this short article does not define what good music is or is not. "Music A Cure For Bolshevism", 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

A more common defensive theme was the connection to wartime propaganda. This element was manifested in the song *Let's knock the bull out of the Bolsheviki*.<sup>71</sup> The verses address an audience of soldiers and sailors, who listen to a public speaker lecture:

The war is over,  
And boys, your work is through.  
Then one lad hollered out,  
You're wrong,  
There's work that we must do.  
And then that loyal gang,  
All stood right up and sang:  
Let's knock the bull out of the Bolsheviki.

A clear connection is made between the militarism of the War years and the battle between Bolshevism and labor. This perspective sought to utilize the momentum of wartime propaganda and preparedness to combat this next threat. The same element is found within the AEF uniform worn by Uncle Sam on the cover of *We'll never change the blue and white to red*. This continuation of belligerent activity constructed the primary defense against industrial radicalism. It is unfortunate that this propaganda only offered blame, and no constructive solution to the problem.

This semiotic web drew together the threat of Bolshevism, the labor disputes and strike activity heatedly discussed in the press, the momentum established by wartime propaganda, and the stereotypes of Russian culture in the United States. This later issue will be explored in the following chapter through several iconic aspects of Russian cultural expression. During this period the popular image of Russians in the United States changed to reflect the values accrued during the Red Scare. When this political turbulence faded in the early part of the decade, these

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<sup>71</sup> The song was a collaboration between Howard Johnson (1887-1941), and Ira Schuster (1889-1945). Leo Feist Incorporated of New York published the song in 1919.

images and misconceptions lingered, tainting the cultural symbols once attached to the Red Scare.

# That Revolutionary Rag

Words and Music by  
IRVING BERLIN

In fox-trot time

Piano

*f* *ff*

*mf*

Where the Rus-sian breez-es blow There's a piece of  
Lit-tle Ma-ry An-toi-nette Was a love-ly

*mf*

Figure 3-1. Irving Berlin, *That Revolutionary Rag*, mm. 1-7.

# Look Out For The Bolsheviki Man

Words and Music by  
IRVING BERLIN

Moderato

Piano

*f*

*mf*

*mf*

Far a - cross the o - cean blue There's a dang-'rous

Figure 3-2. Irving Berlin, *Look Out For The Bolsheviki Man*, mm. 1-7.



COMING OUT OF THE SMOKE.

—Kirby in the *New York World*.

Figure 3-3. “Coming Out of the Smoke”, *Literary Digest* (11 October, 1919) 12.





Figure 3-4. Douglas Fairbanks and A. Liebich, *The Advancing Proletaire*.

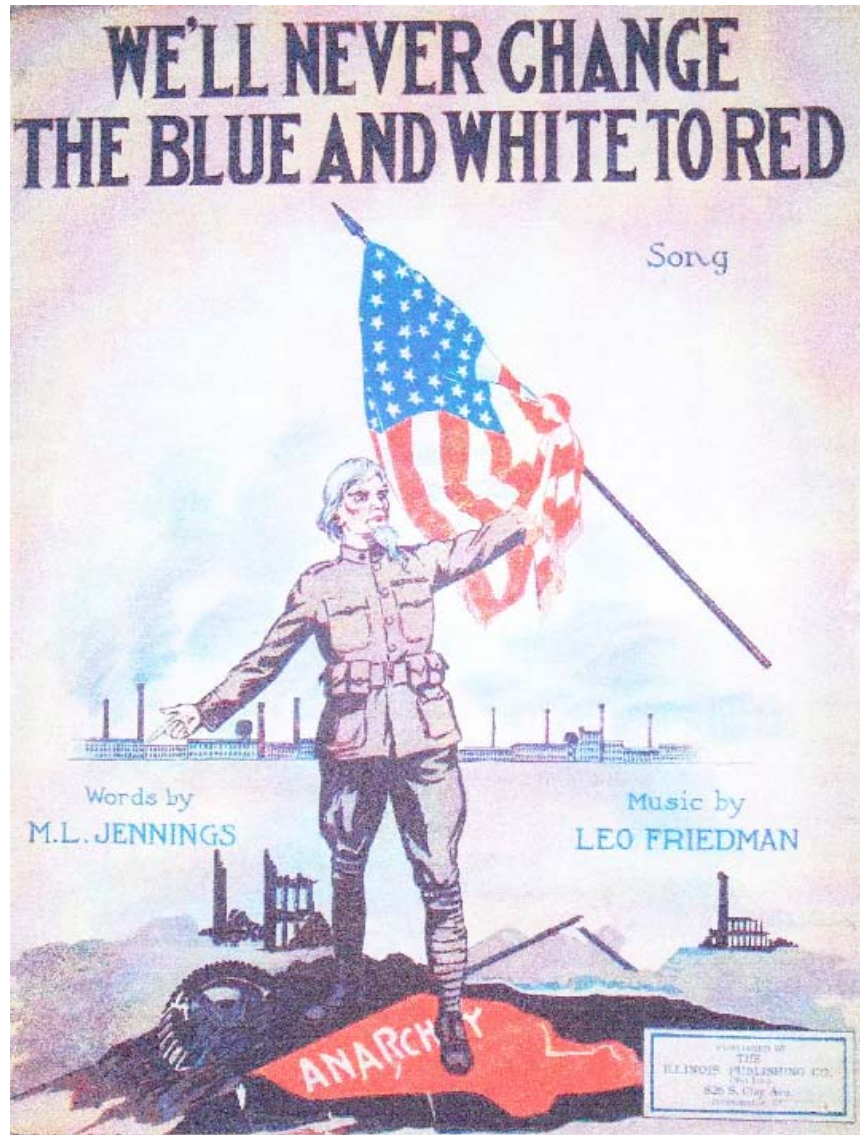
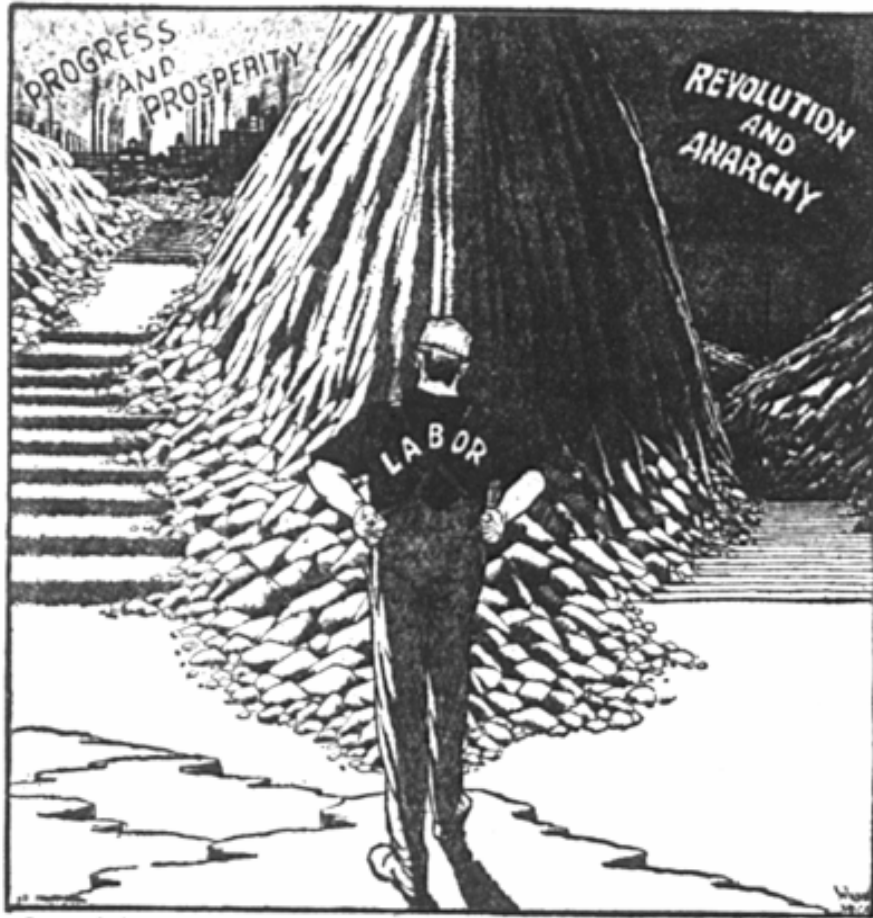


Figure 3-5. Leo Friedman and M.L. Jennings, *We'll Never Change the Blue and White to Red*.



Copyrighted 1919 by Star Company  
AT THE PLACE OF DECISION  
----McCay in the New York American

Figure 3-6. "At the Place of Decision", *Literary Digest* (25 October, 1919) 13.

## CHAPTER 4 IMAGES OF RUSSIAN CULTURE

Stereotypes of Russian culture were often exploited as the telltale signs of radicalism and socio-political unrest. As such it was not uncommon for Russian cultural expressions to be misunderstood by American witnesses. For example, shortly after Vladimir Lenin came to power a pro-Bolshevik rally was held at the New York Park View Plaza. Organized by “anarchists, socialists, I.W.W.s, and extreme left wing radicals hailing themselves as the Bolsheviki of the City of New York,” this meeting was thus depicted in the *New York Times*:

It was a demonstration of the Bolsheviki in action, and it wound up in a frenzy of music and dancing, with a long-haired Bolshevik reeling through the ranks of whirling comrades with a bottle of whiskey in his hand. He wore shabby clothes, his brown hair hung to his shoulders, and a loose black tie flowed from his neck. Holding the bottle aloft as he danced, he invited all to drink, and if none would drink with him he drank by himself, caressing the bottle as he did so, and wafting kisses after each drink to the spirit of freedom, to the triumph of the social revolution and the salvation of the proletariat. . . .

The speechmaking was only part of the celebration. The Bolsheviki, having disposed of the problems of the proletariat, started to dance, and many of the dances were as lurid as the speeches. A girl of about 19, Sylvia Stone, scantily clad, did a bacchanale for the audience. She called herself not a Bolshevik, but an “individualist,” and she danced like one. So did many others in the audience.<sup>72</sup>

This report embodies the perception of Russian culture found in the song literature of the era—a perception built on stereotypes and the cultural distance between New York based popular culture and native Russian expressions and practices. This chapter examines several social behaviors associated with Russians abroad and in the United States during the post-war years.

### Dance

In the years following World War I the Cossack dance was the single most distinctive means of performing a Russian cultural stereotype. The basic movement consisted of sitting on one heel while the other leg was extended. With arms folded or held away from the body the

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<sup>72</sup> “City’s Bolsheviki Drown All Order”, *New York Times* (3 December, 1917) 6.

dancer then alternated leg positions in time with the music. There are many iconographic representations of these basic positions, such as figure 4-1.<sup>73</sup> This dance was often associated with Cossack soldiers and went by several derivations of title. The Tin Pan Alley literature under examination called this dance the kazotsky.<sup>74</sup>

One brief mention of the Cossack dance is found in the previously discussed 1919 publication *Let's knock the bull out of the Bolsheviks*. This song made a solitary reference to the Cossack dance in the second verse:

We'll operate on Trotsky,  
And cut out his "Kazotsky."

A later reference was made in *Katinka: a Russian fox trot-sky*.<sup>75</sup> This play-on-words did not originate with the song, and can be found in other references. One example was printed six years earlier in a cartoon published in the *Literary Digest* (see figure 4-2).<sup>76</sup> *Katinka: a Russian fox trot-sky* is a lament for a Petrograd girl named Katinka, whose love for the Charleston inspires a rejection of Russian dance and culture. The story is told by her lover, who informs the audience that Russia is a "patriotic land," but "hard to understand." Katinka runs away with a Yankee who introduces her to American dance contrary to the belief that:

Ev'ry Russian sure loves his Kazotsky,  
Not a one would give up his Kazotsky.  
. . . She would Kazotsky with me ev're day,  
But she went nutsky from "Hey! Hey!" "Hey! Hey!"

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<sup>73</sup> This dance is one of the most distinctive icons of Russian culture, and can be found in examples throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries—perhaps most recently in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the kingdom of the crystal skull* (2008).

<sup>74</sup> Other variations include kazatsky and kazachok, which stem from the word kazak.

<sup>75</sup> Music by Henry Tobias and lyrics by Ben Russell. The song was published in 1926 by Leo Feist Incorporated of New York.

<sup>76</sup> This cartoon depicts British Prime Minister David Lloyd George dancing the fox-trotsky with Leon Trotsky himself. George was being criticized for restoring trade between England and Communist Russia.

In the third verse, set to the same strain, the listener is told that Katinka further outraged the storyteller by then spreading the Charleston to other Russians. They also took to the dance, which the storyteller finds hard to believe:

She got those Cossacks to dance in that way,  
Imagine Litvack going ‘Hey! Hey!’ ‘Hey! Hey!’”

The words “Hey! Hey!” were enhanced through a setting of the Charleston rhythm (see figure 4-3).

A more original mixture of dance and Russian politics was the 1918 *Bolsheviki glide*. New York-based Impresarios William Elliott, F. Ray Comstock, and Morris Gest featured this selection in their *Century Grove Revue*.<sup>77</sup> Carl Randall’s lyrics state:

When you speak of Russia Revolution’s in your mind,  
Still there’s other things that they can do.  
Dancing is their national pastime so we’ve been taught,  
But now they have a dance that’s new, very new.  
Syncopation now becomes their pride,  
With what they call the Bolshevik Glide.

On 31 March, 1919 the *New York Times* reported a “public tryout” of the Bolsheviki glide. Recent refugees Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Macklinoff previewed the steps at the Hotel Commodore ballroom. Witnesses reported “the glide was not unlike the present Russian Government—unsettled.”<sup>78</sup> This dance did not develop a following.

### **Beards and Vodka**

Many anti-Bolshevik songs featured elements drawn from the popular stereotype of Russian immigrants. Two distinctive elements that run through this literature are personal

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<sup>77</sup> Comstock and Gest are also discussed in chapter five with regard to Nikita Balieff.

<sup>78</sup> Anticipated members of the formal presentation included singer Enrico Caruso, artist Clarence Underwood, New York socialite Lydig Hoyt, and other members of high society. “Dance ‘Bolsheviki Glide’”, 11.

appearance and diet—specifically bearded men and the consumption of vodka. Both were identified with Russian culture, and were abused for the sake of reinforcing this perception.

The male beard was an icon easily associated with Russian cultural history. In the Greek Orthodox faith beards were long thought to symbolize both religious affiliation and manhood.<sup>79</sup> In 1698 Peter the Great forbade the wearing of beards as one part of the Westernization of Russia. This reform enhanced the Russianness and nostalgic qualities of the full beard.<sup>80</sup> During the post-war years this icon was still firmly entrenched in the western mind and surfaced in many political cartoons aimed at the utilization of Russian stereotypes (see figures 4-4 and 4-5).

Irving Berlin's two 1919 songs contributed to this construction. *That revolutionary rag* identified Russian Bolsheviki as "long haired Russian foxes." In the similar *Look out for the Bolsheviki man* Berlin advised his listener that when keeping an eye out for Russian radicals "you can tell him anyplace by the whiskers on his face."<sup>81</sup> This strong visual icon became one of the most commonplace stereotypes of Russian culture, much as Italian immigrants were labeled via the mustache. And as identity with food and wine also embodied the Italian-American experience so too did the stereotypical Russian consume vodka.

Historically, vodka was enjoyed at social functions. Records indicate that Russian holidays and festive occasions were the epicenter of alcoholic indulgence, yet this was primarily a social habit and was offset by the observance of Orthodox fasting days that forbid alcohol.<sup>82</sup> Prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, distilled beverages were also rare privileges. A typical Russian peasant

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<sup>79</sup> In Russian and much Christian iconography both Jesus Christ and God were depicted with beards.

<sup>80</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 43.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in the previous chapter.

<sup>82</sup> It has been suggested that vodka was introduced to Russian audiences through alchemistic endeavors, from which it achieved "a kind of magical aura for the Russian national mentality... Drink, if you will mystically, striving to transport the soul beyond earth's gravity and return it to its sacred noncorporeal state." Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 661.

would have preferred homebrewed mead or kvas to the distilled spirit obtainable via a specialist.<sup>83</sup> Only after the bureaucratic reforms of 1775 did vodka become widely available, after which public drunkenness emerged as a social ill rather than a festive indulgence.<sup>84</sup>

Taxes on vodka were a great source of national revenue in the century before the Bolshevik Revolution. This single tariff equaled all other income derived from public taxes prior to 1840, after which vodka duties lead all national taxes.<sup>85</sup> The increasing national dependence on distillation ultimately led the government to seize all control of the vodka industry in 1902. Thus many nineteenth-century temperance movements had little hold on a government exponentially reliant on the drink.

References to this classic Russian beverage can be found in several anti-Bolshevik songs—often for the purpose of highlighting the negative aspects of Russian culture for comic or political reasons. George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart collaborated with Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II on the song *Vodka*, a selection included in the musical *Song of the Flame*.<sup>86</sup> This amusing song explores the danger of vodka from the perspective of an intoxicated female devotee whose desire for the drink seems to outweigh the known side affects. The verse begins with a boozy melody, complete with what Howard Pollack has called “musical hiccups” (see figure 4-6).<sup>87</sup>

The protagonist warns the listener:

Don't give me Vodka,  
For when I take a little drink,

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<sup>83</sup> Kvas is a fermented drink similar to beer.

<sup>84</sup> Figs, *Natasha's*, 167-68.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 301-02.

<sup>86</sup> *Song of the Flame* is discussed fully in chapter 5. *Vodka* was published in 1925 by Harms of New York.

<sup>87</sup> Pollack, *George Gershwin*, 371.



I forget to think,  
What a little drink can do to me. . . .  
For when I take a little nip,  
I begin to slip  
And I start romancing with  
The man that I am dancing with.

The danger is imminent, as the singer reveals to his or her audience that as the song continues so too does the vodka flow. This sentiment was particularly damning during the era of prohibition, which imposed a recreational change on Russian-Americans that further cast vodka as a source of social ill behavior.<sup>88</sup> Yet the beverage remained lodged in the public image of Russian culture. In 1927 Arthur Ruhl was typical when he wrote that before the attraction of movies and popular culture many Russian immigrants had only vodka and the Greek Orthodox Church “to take him away from his everyday world.”<sup>89</sup>

### **Fashion**

Sheet music artwork also highlighted the North American take on Russian fashion. This typically exhibited a hybrid style taken from Russian peasant dress and American modernisms of the 1920s. Such images betray their true function—not to depict actual Russian practices but rather to showcase an idealized Russian-American personification.

Traditional peasant dress remained in use among various levels of Russian society until the fall of the Provisional government in 1917. For those at the top of the social order this connection to folk culture acted as a nationalist tool. The peasant wet nurse was an especially elevated role among the aristocracy, who was required to use folk dress to instill the child in their care with a connection to native Russian culture.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> It was thought that many Russians created vodka at home in the manner of other home-distillers—a socially reprehensible practice. Davis, *The Russian*, 85.

<sup>89</sup> Ruhl, “Russians and Baltic Peoples”, 222.

<sup>90</sup> Figs, *Natasha's*, 124-25.

Russian fashion was also rooted in Asiatic practices. Several distinctive articles of clothing trace back to Persia, such as the kaftan/khalat and sarafan. The Cap of Monomakh, one of the great symbols of Czarist authority, also betrays Tartar origin.<sup>91</sup> Figure 4-7 is taken from Gershwin and Stothart's *Cossack love song*, and is a basic yet effective depiction of Russian peasant attire.<sup>92</sup> Note the ornately patterned sashes and sarafans, idiomatic of the Russian "brilliantly colored costumes... adorned with embroidery and beading."<sup>93</sup>

This example was a vague yet easily acceptable mode of Russian folk dress, one that met the stereotypes of the era.<sup>94</sup> However, among Tin Pan Alley song sheets it was much more common to encounter images that intermingled folk identity with urban American popular culture—specifically the flapper. Russian culture had one great boon to give to this empowering social movement. The Russian footwear known as bootlegs proved to be an excellent place to store contraband. This fashion trend turned convenience became an important link between social rebellion and youth culture. Several examples exist, one of which is reproduced as figure 4-8.

Sheet music artwork also highlighted the bob hairstyle, indicative of women's liberation and departure from pre-War culture. Figures 4-9 and 4-10 clearly exhibit this icon of youth

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<sup>91</sup> Figes, *Natasha's*, 374.

<sup>92</sup> This song was published in 1926 by Harms of New York.

<sup>93</sup> Davis, *The Russian*, 203.

<sup>94</sup> For example, Arthur Ruhl expressed this stereotype in his 1927 essay, which runs parallel to the above mentioned sheet music artwork:

In the summer, the men wear a loose belted shirt or blouse, which falls outside their breeches and serves both as shirt and coat. [...] Different provinces, or 'governments,' as they say in Russia, have different characteristic costumes, and the women's waists, in particular, are often lively with red or dark blue embroidery, in which sometimes geometric figures are used, sometimes quaintly conventionalized ducks or turkeys. Ruhl, "Russians", 219-20.

culture intermingled with somewhat Russian characteristics.<sup>95</sup> A greater hybridity existed on the cover of *Katinka: a Russian fox trot-sky* (figure 4-11). Previously discussed for her dancing, the song's antagonist displayed several aspects of flapper culture. Her hair was chopped into a bob, her sarafan is much too short, and she is clearly sporting bootlegs. Her body was also drawn with an unusual posture. Was Katinka dancing the Charleston that she introduced to her comrades? It is difficult to say, and her limbs are not quite extended enough.

Another element common to a few of the above images was fur. Although fur can be declared as a stereotypical Russian resource, it also speaks to the opulence of Twenties' flapper culture. A final example is taken from the song *Bolsheviki* (Figure 4-12).<sup>96</sup> On the cover of this "comic song" the reluctant Russian bride exhibits many of the icons discussed previously. She wore the bootlegs, had a scandalously short dress, and was fringed in fur from neck to foot.

All of these images added to the hybrid characterization of Russian folk dress as part authentic and part urban America. The images were not negative in and of themselves, but were stereotypes often used within negative contexts. The final portion of this chapter will examine one song that encapsulated this notion while also addressing the domestic portrayal of Russian culture in the years following the Red Scare.

### ***Bolshevik***

This discourse is impressive due to the manner by which stereotypes came to embody radical behavior. The quotation that began this chapter brought these two spheres together; the dancing New York Bolsheviks were observed "wafting kisses after each drink to the spirit of freedom, to the triumph of the social revolution and the salvation of the proletariat." The

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<sup>95</sup> Fur and ornamental pattering, and a sarafan dress respectively.

<sup>96</sup> *Bolsheviki* was a collaboration between Arthur J. Jackson and George White. The song was published in 1918 by the Jerome H. Remick Company of New York.

examples already cited provide various cultural stereotypes contextualized within varying degrees of socio-political radicalism. Yet the cultural stereotypes found in the above texts were not exclusive to the Red Scare. The earlier songs are explicitly anti-Bolshevik, while some of the later songs, especially *Vodka*, were intended to express a less politicized take on Russian cultural practices. Anti-Bolshevik and anti-Radical song literature did not entirely disappear as the 1920s progressed. Lingering negativity kept the door open for an assault on Bolshevism.

One song that perfectly mirrors this sentiment is *Bolshvik*.<sup>97</sup> Published in 1926, this song occupies a meeting ground between several concepts found in this study. The song engages the conceptions of Russian dance, drink, personal appearance, and speech. All of these elements were set within the radical political context of the Red Scare. Yet this song does not inform the listener about the danger of Bolshevism. *Bolshevik* remained a lighthearted song—derogatory certainly, but not fearful of the Russian Bolsheviks.<sup>98</sup> Radicalism is presented tongue-in-cheek.

The novelty of Russian dance was not a singular obsession at a time when numerous dance crazes swept the United States. This was rather one small part of a trend that included many popular dances from around the world and the much noted animal dance mania that spawned the fox trot, grizzly bear, turkey trot, etc. Contemporary dance manuals provided the willing amateur with the details needed to reproduce their own Russian dances.<sup>99</sup> A triple foot stomp is one of the most distinctive elements of this instruction. The dancers were instructed to “slap hands 3 times over shoulder nearest to partner, at same time stamp feet 3 times.”<sup>100</sup> This percussive effect was

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<sup>97</sup> Music by Moe Jaffe (1901-1972) and lyrics by Nathan Bonx (1900-1950). The song was published in 1926 by Shapiro, Bernstein, and Company Incorporated of New York.

<sup>98</sup> Further discussion of *Bolshevik* is found in chapter five.

<sup>99</sup> Such as Clendenen, *The Art of Dancing*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

important to the dance's identity as a Slavic activity, as echoed in later dance manuals.<sup>101</sup> This effect surfaces in *Bolshevik* (see figure 4-13).

The *Bolshevik* lyrics constantly abused stereotypical Eastern Europe literary suffixes. "Sky" was the specific additive, and contributed to ridiculous phrases such as "I come from across-sky the sea," and "I will take a tax-sky now." The most concentrated portion of the song is the patter section—called the "Patter-ewski:"

[Patter-ewski]  
Hey pass-ky me-sky the whis-key,  
I'm-sky Motka from-sky Slabotsky,  
I must have-sky some-sky Shabotka,  
With-sky my-sky glass-sky of Vodka.

The title is an obvious play on Ignacy Paderewski (1860-1941), the famed Polish pianist and diplomatic champion of Polish sovereignty in post-War Europe. He represented his homeland at the Paris Peace Treaty, but became disillusioned by political detours unfavorable to his personality. In 1922 Paderewski returned to the life of a touring concert pianist and for a period toured the United States in a private railway car. He remained a visible musical figure and political activist through the mid-1930s.

His brief stint in international politics was good copy. Journalists and cartoonists fed on the bravura pianist's dual celebrity. Such attention is witnessed in figure 4-15, in which the artist rides into Warsaw astride his galloping instrument.<sup>102</sup> It should be no surprise that the authors of *Bolshevik* took a shot at Paderewski's figure, yet it sends a confused message. The pianist was an international musical icon, and was an Eastern European who settled in the United States for a

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<sup>101</sup> One example of which is Bergman, Marion. *The Russian-American Song and Dance Book* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1947).

<sup>102</sup> The pianist is identifiable by his hair. Paderewski was famous for his flowing locks, called "that famous blond mane" in the *New York Times* ("Love of Poland Rivals Music in the Heart of Paderewski"). His hair was a much-prized element of his persona, and was especially fawned upon by his female devotees. The pianist was also famously parodied in Irving Berlin's *I Love a Piano* (1914).

time, but had no connection to radical politics or Lenin's Bolshevik government. Obviously his name was a phonetic convenience, but acted as nothing more than a recognizable public figure not uncommonly jested.

The literary embellishment is much more important. The passage is slathered in "skys" that resonate with the various Slavic languages of Eastern Europe. The suffix is not specific to Russia, but does add to the cumulative effect of the song. In total these exaggerations stretch the suffix to ridiculous lengths—such as the fourth line "With-sky my-sky glass-sky of Vodka." Motka is a common name for a Russian male and Slabotsky is a surname that can be traced to modern Belarus. It is uncertain what the term Shabotka referenced.<sup>103</sup> Regardless, this alliteration produces a humorous novelty.<sup>104</sup>

The song lyrics also reference several themes discussed above. The Russian male prejudice for wearing beards is singled out in several lines:

Far far away  
In that Bolsheviki land-o-vitch,  
They never shave,  
So they never get the barber's itch. . . .  
They all wear beards  
So they can not tell just which is which.

This final line quoted above was also informed by the anti-immigrant bias held by many American citizens in the nineteen-twenties. Jaffe and Bonx's Bolshevik construction also features a social danger, although this danger does not involve political ideology or industrial revolution. Their idealized Russian drinks heavily, fulfilling another stereotype:

I come from a-cross-ky the sea,  
Oh! I'm a Bolshevik

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<sup>103</sup> It seems possible that the word is an exaggeration of Shabbat, although that does not work within the context of the passage that seems to imply that shabotka is a consumable substance.

<sup>104</sup> Such humor can be witnessed on Fred Waring's 1926 recording of *Bolshevik*. This recording is available on compact disc (see Appendix B) and is further discussed in chapter five.

The land-ski of Vodka and Tea,  
And stuff that has a kick. . . .  
When they take a drink (Hup)  
They don't stop to think (Hup)  
They don't use their head (Hup)  
'Cause their brains are dead (Hup).<sup>105</sup>

None of this imagery alluded to any real political or social danger, as did the songs of the Red Scare era. Instead, this selection presents the stereotypical Russian Bolshevik as an image to be mocked and looked down upon—a drunk and disorderly character worthy only of shame before the haughty stature of American culture. For its negativity *Bolshevik* does not warn of any imminent Bolshevik invasion or infiltration into American society. Those concerns had long dissolved by 1926. Unlike the *New York Times* report quoted at the head of this chapter the *Bolshevik* did not wave the flag of preparedness, although it did engage in the same stereotyped perceptions of Russian culture. This point provides an important link between the music of the Red Scare and the literature that addressed Russian culture in America in the later 1920s. In the next chapter this theme is continued, and is contrasted with the more apolitical songs of the later 1920s and other mid-decade portrayals of Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution.

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<sup>105</sup> See figure 4-15.



Figure. 4-1. Celia Aubert, *Cossack Dance*.





"OH, YOU FOX-TROTZKY!"

—*Evening News* (London).

Figure 4-2. "Oh, You Fox-Trotsky!", *Literary Digest* (19 June, 1920) 27.

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She would Ka - zat - sly with me ev - 'ry day, —  
 Fif - teen Ka - wot - skys she earned ev - 'ry day, —  
 She got those Cos - sacks to dance in that way, —

But she went nut - sky from "Hey! hey!" "Hey! hey!"  
 Till she went nut - sky from "Hey! hey!" "Hey! hey!"  
 In - a - gine Lit - vack go "Hey! hey!" "Hey! hey!"

Figure 4-3. Ben Russell and Henry Tobias, *Katinka*, mm. 59-66.



Protected by the George Matthew Adams Service  
"CURSES: IT WON'T EXPLODE IN AMERICA."  
-Morris for the George Matthew Adams Service.

Figure 4-4. "Curses: It Won't Explode In America", *Literary Digest* (18 October, 1919) 12



CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE  
----Mc Call in the Portland Telegram.

Figure 4-5. "Cause and Consequence", *Literary Digest* (29 November, 1919) 18.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Vodka" by George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart, measures 5-8. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4. The music is marked *p legato*. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower two staves. The lyrics are: "Of all con-coc - tions al - co - hol - i - cal". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Figure 4-6. George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart, *Vodka*, mm. 5-8.



Figure 4-7. George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart, *Cossack Love Song*.



Figure 4-8. Woman putting flask in her Russian boot, Washington, D.C. National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-97941.



Figure 4-9. Gus Kahn, Harry Richman, and Ted Shapiro, *Rose of the Volga*.





Figure 4-10. Meyer Gusman, James Kendis, Frank Samuels, and Harvey Samuels, *Underneath the Russian Moon*.



Figure 4-11. Ben Russell and Henry Tobias, *Katinka: A Russian Fox Trot-sky*.



Figure 4-12. George White and Arthur J. Jackson, *Bolsheviki*.

Hand Clapping

All - ay - yup (Clap - clap - clap) Fill em' up (Clap - clap - clap)

One more cup (Clap - clap - clap) Bol - she - vi - ki, HEY! *D.S. al Fine*

*to Chorus*

Figure 4-13. Moe Jaffe and Nat Bonx, *Bolshevik*, mm 71-78.



Figure 4-14. "President Paderewski Rides Into Warsaw", *Literary Digest* (17 May, 1919) 29.

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When they do their dance (Hup) They wear bloom-er pants (Hup) When they take a  
 When they play a game (Hup) Skee ball is it's name (Hup) They dont use their

drink (Hup) They dont stop to think (Hup) Far far a -  
 head (Hup) 'Cause their brains are dead (Hup) Far far a -

Figure 4-15. Moe Jaffe and Nat Bonx, *Bolshevik*, mm 43-52.

## CHAPTER 5 PARODY, IMITATION, AND MOCKERY

Russian culture provided more than inspiration for original works. Often folk tunes and art music offered material for parody and imitation. In line with popular sentiment, many of these compositions utilized quotation for the purpose of mockery or debasement. With topics ranging from light humor to political denouncement, this music was also located within the public discourse on radical activity. Paul McCann's recent article in *The Journal of Popular Culture* explores this topic through a 1922 short story, "The Jazz Baby."<sup>1</sup> The tale was originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and is quoted by McCann as follows:

Overwhelmed at first by the mere volume of barbaric sound [produced by her son's saxophone] she found herself after a time trying to analyze jazz. It seemed to her to be musical Bolshevism—a revolt against law and order in music. Apparently, too, the jazz Bolsheviks were looters, pillaging the treasure houses of music's aristocracy. One piece was based on a Chopin waltz, another was a distortion of an aria from Tosca . . . Was there a connection between the various disturbing elements—free verse, futuristic painting, radicalism, crime waves, obstreperous youth, jazz music, jazz dancing, jazz thinking?<sup>2</sup>

McCann notes that this perspective is held by "a wealthy traditionalist who fears the potential threat posed by Communism to her standard of living and way of life," yet, "the irony of course is that . . . the revolutionary underclass . . . has no fictional representation within the narrative but exists only as a figment of her paranoid imagination."<sup>3</sup> Thus the transformation of European art music into jazz crosses many wires, confusing the final product.<sup>4</sup> On the surface it is dance music inspired by past classics, but also represents various social ailments and fears,

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<sup>1</sup> McCann, "Performing Primitivism", 658-675.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 662.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 662.

<sup>4</sup> The conception of jazz as a social danger also connects with the previously discussed *Katinka: a Russian fox trot-sky* and the songs of Irving Berlin. Here the ills of society are blamed on a musical style, and this negativity is carried over to any other cultural symbols associated with these problems. In this case, a semiotic link that bound together Bolshevism, the popular conception of Russian culture, and the social upheaval associated with jazz music, dancing, and behavior.

including Bolshevik ideology. Chapter five discusses this “revolt against law and order in music,” offering several examples that amplify this theme. Attention will also be given to Nikita Balieff, the Russian impresario, cast as an example of how American audiences listened to and understood folk song-inspired popular music.

### *Russian Rag*

During the last months of 1917 Sergei Rachmaninoff became increasingly aware of the escalating political instability of the Russian Provisional Government. Civil unrest at his Ivanovka estate motivated the Rachmaninoff family to relocate to a flat in the soon to be capital city of Moscow. Ultimately, the pianist sought a way for he and his family to exit Russia. That November Rachmaninoff received an offer for a brief concert tour in Scandinavia. This minor concert tour, which the pianist would otherwise have declined, provided a means to leave the country that was not afforded to other artists.<sup>5</sup> Rachmaninoff had some difficulty in obtaining a visa, but he and his family were able to make the trip and ultimately escape Russia and the burgeoning civil war.

Through this concert series Sergei Rachmaninoff and his family fled a dying Czarist Russia and headed west. Stockholm and Copenhagen became their temporary homes until they arrived in the United States on 1 November, 1918, one year after their flight had begun. The Rachmaninoffs left their political woes and financial security behind in Moscow, and the pianist was motivated to perform as much as possible rather than spend time in composition. He concertized frequently and also became a Victor Talking Machine Company recording artist. Within a few years the family was financially stable enough to purchase a house in New York

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<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested that the Rachmaninoff family were the last to obtain such a visa. Typical Soviet practice was to keep a member of the family hostage so as to ensure the return of the traveling intellectual. Lyle, *Rachmaninoff*, 164.



City that allowed them to recreate their lost estate Ivanovka. It was here that they observed old world customs, employed Russian servants and offered a cultural oasis for other émigrés.<sup>6</sup>

The Rachmaninoff family was one of many Russian expatriates who opposed Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik party and yearned for a return to Czarism—they were White Russians. The Revolution, which inspired this political division between Red and White, produced mixed emotions among many American citizens, some of which had difficulty distinguishing between recent émigrés and Lenin's Socialist Revolutionaries.<sup>7</sup> This perspective was further complicated by a general resentment of immigrants from Eastern Europe. In December 1919 the *New York Times* offered an explanation of this effect:

There are in this city 60,000 Russians . . . Most of them live on the lower east side. The real majority of them are illiterate and the popular conception of them (not perhaps wholly an unjust one) is that they are "mostly Bolsheviks." . . .

Why? To begin with, the 60,000, most of them being comparatively recent immigrants, are not only illiterate and ignorant, but are in a state of mind which reflects the upheaval in their mother country. Thus they are peculiarly susceptible to the blandishments of the Bolshevik or the Bolshevisticly inclined.<sup>8</sup>

This article went on to illuminate the way in which Russian immigrants were highly susceptible to Bolshevik influence unless they were offered an American alternative. It is instructive how Bolshevism was also applied to all recent immigrants, regardless of social standing or economic background. This was not uncommon during these years, as witnessed in the following letter to the *New York Times* that defended Russian-Americans against this prejudice:

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<sup>6</sup> Norris, "*Rachmaninoff, Serge.*"

<sup>7</sup> This is an important point, which created a confused image of Russian immigrants. It must be remembered that Rachmaninoff was a member of the upper class, and enjoyed the lifestyle of a Russian aristocrat.

<sup>8</sup> "Beat Bolshevism In Its Best Field."

The impression that all the Russians in America are Bolsheviki is gaining credence in wide circles of American public opinion. . . . This is so, in fact, to such an extent that manufacturers and business men are beginning to “cleanse” their establishments of the “Russian element,” considering their Russian employees as “Bolsheviki”. . . . Being ‘laid off’ on account of being a Russian is surely the best kind of anti-American propaganda any Bolshevik would ever desire.<sup>9</sup>

In this atmosphere Russian cultural stereotypes became representative of an imaged society ruled and solely populated by the anarchistic Bolsheviki. To an increasingly xenophobic American public White Russians and their cultural baggage were subsumed under this stereotype.

As Rachmaninoff and his family were emigrating to the United States the composer George Linus Cobb created an arrangement of the pianist’s prelude in C# minor, op. 3, no. 2.<sup>10</sup> The work was christened the *Russian rag*, and fed on the popularity and public awareness of Rachmaninoff’s prelude.<sup>11</sup> The pianist first performed the work in the United States during a 1909 concert tour—nearly ten years before he and his family emigrated. During this lapse of time the American public did not forget the Russian virtuoso, and kept his celebrity alive via the prelude. The work lived on in music studios, cafes and other formal and informal performances.<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the work had been composed years earlier, only shortly after Rachmaninoff’s student years at the Moscow Conservatory, it grew to become his most publicly acclaimed composition. During his subsequent American concert appearances Rachmaninoff was incessantly called upon to perform his prelude. The appeal of the short work overshadowed his other compositions, which caused Rachmaninoff to loath its seemingly

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<sup>9</sup> “Bolshevism And Russians Here”, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Cobb’s biography is treated in Appendix A. The *Russian rag* was published in 1918 by Will Rossiter of Chicago.

<sup>11</sup> Jasen, *Tin Pan Alley*, 88.

<sup>12</sup> Lyle, *Rachmaninoff*, 178.

obligatory performance at his recitals. By 1924 he revealed that he was “sickened” by the sound of his prelude, owing specifically to its appropriation as “popular amusement.” He stated in clear terms that “I don’t even like to play it any more, much less hear it.”<sup>13</sup>

George Cobb based his rag on the introductory material of the prelude. Specifically he quoted the three-note motif A-G#-C# (transposed to Bb-A-D, see figures 5-1 and 5-2). He interpolated this quote with several rhythmic figures that offered typical ragtime syncopation and rhythmic organization. It was not unheard of for ragtime performances to feature syncopated parodies of well-known classical melodies—often called ragged classics. This was a display of virtuosity and wit intended to appeal to the knowledge and expectations of the listener. Often enough, such take-offs were further contorted into quodlibet style interpretations.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond the surface of musical showmanship, ragging the classics was a means by which to abuse the established masters of this canon in order to strike a blow at disapproving members of academia.<sup>15</sup> The use of the term “interpolation” betrays such an approach—to alter and corrupt the original composition via additive material. However, it is doubtful that Cobb’s rag was an attack on the arbiters of classical music. Rather it was a joke played at the expense of Rachmaninoff’s public image.

Cobb’s rag had no overtly anti-Bolshevik message. However, the work did entertain stereotypes of Russian culture associated with the Revolutionaries. The dancer Rhea McMurray introduced the *Russian rag*, and her image graced the sheet music cover. She performed under the stage name of Mademoiselle Rhea, which was an imitation of the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century French dancer and actress. The original Mlle. Rhea was born Hortense Barbe Loret in 1845 and

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<sup>13</sup> “Election Pleases Sir Henry Lunn”, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Berlin, *Ragtime*, 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

maintained an active career both in Europe and North America.<sup>16</sup> After an 1883 performance in Kansas City the child Rhea McMurray was named after the celebrity dancer. This second Mlle. Rhea went on to a less star-studded dancing career in New York City, yet assumed the stage moniker of her namesake for professional purposes.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, both Mlle. Rheas studied dance in the then Russian capitol city, St. Petersburg.<sup>18</sup> This was no coincidence, as prior to her North American debut Hortense Loret had launched her career in St. Petersburg, and Rhea McMurray followed the example of her elder. The professional mimicry further informs Rhea's image on the cover of the *Russian rag* (see figure 5-3). She is seen both in traditional ballet dress and in what appears to be folkloric Russian garb. Especially noticeable are the Russian bootlegs—which became an American fashion trend in the 1920s—and what appears to be a tambourine or frame drum. While it is unclear, this instrument could be a Russian buben, a tambourine-like percussion instrument similar to an Egyptian riq and commonly believed to have Greek origins.

There is an irony that overshadows this presentation. On the surface, Rhea's concept of Russian authenticity seems to mock the validity of this expression through the participation in a ragtime interpolation. She was a stereotypical Russian native presenting her nation's music as a farce. However, it should not be forgotten that George Cobb was attacking Rachmaninoff, an aristocrat and representative of a Russian art music tradition reaching back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mlle. Rhea embodied the aesthetics of this cultural standpoint through her depiction as a ballet dancer. Her former characterization, gypsy-like in outward appearance, represented a type

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<sup>16</sup> Mlle. Rhea passed away in 1899. Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage*, 144.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>18</sup> "Mademoiselle Rhea, Dancer, Marries", 8.

of popular music that had been infiltrating Russian society for several decades—similar to the expansion of ragtime in America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>19</sup>

Mlle. Rhea's image was also not without precedent in American popular culture. In 1914 Charles A. Gall published an original piano solo titled *Olga: Russian rag* (see figure 5-4). The song sheet cover featured a Russian peasant dancer similar in guise and posture to Mlle Rhea. Thus her image on Cobb's rag is not only an assumed representation of her Russian experience, but is reflective of the American eye. Her role as a peasant dancer fulfilled a stereotype recognized to some degree in urban America.

Did this music recreate Rachmaninoff for an American audience? His celebrity was widely regarded, and he concertized often upon arrival in New York City. Yet the prelude preceded his immigration. The work was popularized by pianists of all levels, and became the iconic work that haunted Rachmaninoff in his later career. In the years before 1917 the prelude became an embodiment of the composer that was recreated with each performance. In such a situation stereotypes would be employed to create an imagined Russian cultural expression and in doing so to posture an American interpretation.

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<sup>19</sup> In both Russia and the United States the new urban environment of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century bred a new kind of music seemingly divergent from established notions of folk and art genres. This more vulgar music took various shapes in Russian cities, where it reflected the idiosyncratic value system of this modern society. This new urban music flourished in the bars, drinking gardens and vaudevilles of Russian cities, and appealed to an urban audience confronted with rapidly evaporating social values.

Russian popular music in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century thus centered on few specific styles. Common was the *tsyganshchina*, or gypsy song, which appealed to an upper-class fascination with this cultural other. The gypsy figure embodied characteristics desirable to an urban audience surrounded by the icons of modernity. The Cossack *volya* (an uncouth dignity) and *toska* (a yearning for an unattainable lost past) were central to this mystique, in which the gypsy represented an escapist fantasy.

Urban gypsy singers were usually not real gypsies, but served to reinforce popular stereotypes. Singers within this genre were appreciated for their mixture of an imagined folk culture with an urban reality. Those opposed to this style attacked it much as American's disapproved of early jazz, with "racist references to 'hot blood' or tropical passion." Stites, "The Ways of Russian Popular Music to 1953", 20.

It is possible that McMurray's experience in urban St. Petersburg may have informed her concept of gypsy culture. Regardless, her depiction in stereotypical folkloric clothing paralleled the intention of Cobb's interpolation—both juxtaposed high and low culture and framed the conservative within a modern context.<sup>20</sup> Her image also ran parallel to the popular opinion that the Russian working class was contaminated with Bolshevik ideology. She fed into a constructed realization of Russian peasantry that, as an exotic cultural presence, was infiltrating American life. The use of parody situated the *Russian rag* within the Bolshevik discourse central to the American Red Scare.

The Six Brown Brothers Clown Band also endorsed the *Russian rag*.<sup>21</sup> This well regarded minstrel troupe performed the rag arranged for saxophone ensemble—the group's signature presentation. Beyond the saxophones they were known for their clownish image and stage buffoonery. The Brown Brothers never recorded Cobb's rag, but did feature it in many performances. Their popular 1920 show *Tip Top* included a scene that remained constant through later Brown Brothers performances. Tom Brown, the group leader, described the use of the *Russian rag* within this scene:

Then I walk as though I was going to leave them [the rest of the band] when I hear them start to play SWEET ADELIN I turn back smilingly and do the DIRECTING to SWEET ADELIN (which is a big success) then at the finish of the directing after I do the scratching (Which gets a big laugh-) I run off and take off the bridal veil and get back in time to line up for the RUSSIAN RAG which is the finish of the act. Of course we do the dance with the rag which helps to put it over.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It should also not be overlooked that the image of Mlle. Rhea in folk dress overlaps her depiction as a ballerina.

<sup>21</sup> Their image was featured on the sheet music cover. See figure 5-5. An excellent account of the Brown Brothers can be found in Bruce Vermazen's *That Moaning Saxophone: The Six Brown Brothers and the Dawning of a Musical Craze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Vermazen, *That Moaning Saxophone*, 147.

The rag must have been a powerful curtain-closer, yet their arrangement is unfortunately unknown. The Brothers performed and recorded another similar rag by George Cobb, *Peter Gink*, a construction based on the music of Edvard Grieg.<sup>23</sup>

The Brown Brothers endorsement of Cobb's rag inspired John Philip Sousa's use of saxophones in his 1919 tour. The March King had begun featuring a saxophone sextet, much in emulation of the Brothers popular success, and the *Russian rag* became one of several "popular syncopated melodies" transferred to the Sousa book.<sup>24</sup> The rag became increasingly popular as numerous other artists arranged and recorded the parody. The first was by Earl Fuller and his orchestra, followed by a similar treatment via the Emerson Military Band. Also that year, Diero Pietro offered his version for accordion solo on the Victor label. While these and doubtlessly numerous other performers took the virtuosic solo into their repertoires, a recording made by James Reese Europe and the "Hellfighter" Band propelled the rag to international fame. This rendition, billed as a foxtrot, was released on disk by the Pathé Actuelle company.<sup>25</sup>

Within a few years Cobb's rag accrued such fame that he was pushed to create a sequel. Thus, the *New Russian rag* was published by Will Rossiter and reached the American public in 1923. This was a more "pyrotechnical" rendition of the popular prelude that catered to the virtuosic demands of vaudeville piano soloists.<sup>26</sup> It also contained more of Rachmaninoff's

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<sup>23</sup> *Peter Gink* was also recorded by the Okeh Dance Band in 1919—on the same 78 as the *Russian Rag*. Perhaps the disc was meant to inspire mockery. The Brown Bros. performance of *Peter Gink* apparently horrified lovers of Grieg's ballet. *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>25</sup> Pathé was well-regarded in France, yet was not well-received in the United States. The production method called for a phonograph player with a unique needle and rotation setting—90 rpm. The Pathé Actuelle title, however, was affixed to records cut at the 78 rpm standard. These were more successful abroad, although the company's primary market was the French public.

<sup>26</sup> Jasen, *Rags and Ragtime*, 176.

original content than the first *Russian rag*.<sup>27</sup> The sequel, however, was not as fresh as the original and ultimately paled in comparison. Cobb's first *Russian rag* continued to be rearranged throughout the 1920s, as late as Roy "Wizard of the Strings" Smeck's 1928 arrangement for banjo and piano or John Krachtus's accordion arrangement from the same year (see figure 5-8).

The Soviet perspective of the infamous *Russian rag* adds an ironic twist to this story. Like the work of many expatriate artists, Rachmaninoff's music was officially banned within the sphere of Communist influence. However, it was the manner in which his music was evaluated that brings the American perspective to the surface. In mid-1931 the United Ukrainian High School system published the following statement in the *Kharkov News*:

The author of works which, in their emotional and mental effects are bourgeois through and through, the composer of *Liturgies*, *Vesper Masses*, and the *Bells*, the manufacturer of foxtrots, *Rachmaninoff*, was and is a servant and a toll of the worst enemies of the Proletariat, the world-Bourgeoisie, and world-capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, not only was the pianist accused of creating anti-Communist art music, he also produced foxtrots, a hallmark of western popular culture. This dance style was further derided as a manufactured music; not composed like art music. The link to American music speaks to the enduring popularity of Cobb's rag and branded Rachmaninoff as a clear enemy of the Soviet regime. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff was not opposed to foxtrots. In April 1919 he told a journalist that ragtime music was "Colossal! Famous! Superb! Most Original! I never heard any rhythm like it before!"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See figures 5-6 and 5-7. Advertisements for the *New Russian Rag* focused on this point, calling it "an elaborate edition with more 'Prelude' and all the up-to-the-minute tricks of 'modern' harmony." Cobb, *New Russian Rag*.

<sup>28</sup> Riesemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections*, 204.

<sup>29</sup> "From Rage To Rags." Both Cobb and Rachmaninoff's images graced the *New Russian rag*, although it would be unfair to cite this coincidence as any form of approval. See figure 5-9.



## Nikita Balieff and the Chauve-Souris

As the *Russian rag* illustrates, the recycling of art music into ragged classics could be a controversial technique. The merits of such parody were much debated during the early 1920s, and were one part of a larger discourse on the nature of ragtime and jazz. Outspoken critics such as Ernest Newman attacked ragged classics for their iconoclastic nature and the supposed immaturity of the parodists. Newman was also typical of conservative writers when he used his contempt for the ragged classics as an attack on the popularity of American jazz in London and Europe. Hailed by the domestic press as “England’s musical St. George in combat against the dreadful dragon of American jazz” the critic sought to discount jazz and all those who created and listened to it.<sup>30</sup> He claimed that these “jazzsmiths” showed no musical invention and practiced the worst kind of artistic parody. He wrote:

It is one thing to have a good picture turned into a thing of harmless fun by someone who is himself a quick-witted artist; it is quite another thing to have it scrawled over by a moron. The average jazzsmith, in his would-be humorous treatment of a classic, is merely a street urchin who thinks he has been smart when he has sidled up to a poster when no one was looking and added a mustache to the upper lip of the beautiful lady who figures in it. My gentle exhortation to the jazzers to keep their dirty paws off their betters has been grievously misunderstood; to get the true sense of it, it should be read with the accents on “dirty,” “paws” and “betters.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See “British Music Critic Excoriates Jazz,” 1 and “Newman Resumes Attack on Jazz”, 30.

<sup>31</sup> “Debunking Jazz.” This debate involved authors less abrasive than Newman, yet his opinion was not uncommon. In 1925 Fritz Kreisler was quoted as saying:

Those jazz writers who steal all the old-time melodies which came from the brains of others and turn them into syncopated time because it means a quick return of money are nothing better than thieves. Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler*, 240.

Years later Aaron Copland reflected on this trend in his text *The New Music*:

The so-called “swinging” of the classics. . . is less to be encouraged. Not so much because of the bastard versions of the classics that it makes known, though these are tasteless enough, but because it indicates a weakening of invention on the part of our popular composers. It should be discouraged not because it is bad for the classics (they will survive, I imagine), but because it is definitely bad for jazz. It glorifies the arranger at the expense of the tunesmith. *The New Music*, 63.

A statement such as this could not rest without comment, and Paul Whiteman provided an intelligent response in the *New York Times*. In brief:

Who is to say that this composer may experiment with a classic and that one may not? And can Mr. Newman tell me just what a classic is? . . . If the classic is a great one, clowning will not kill it. Experimenting with the materials of which a masterpiece is made is not going to ruin the masterpiece.<sup>32</sup>

Within a year of the *New Russian rag* New York audiences witnessed Paul Whiteman's famed "What is American Music?" concert. At this event, which is well remembered for featuring George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in blue*, the Rachmaninoff prelude again became the subject of parody. Under the category "flavoring a selection with Borrowed Themes" Ferdie Grofé offered his *Russian rose*, a conglomerate of Russian music arranged for dance band. Along with the prelude were quotations from the traditional *Volga boatmen song*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Song of India*, and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and *Marche Slave*. While records of the event tend to focus on the new work by Gershwin to the detriment of the other selections, Grofé's *Russian rose* has stimulated some thought on the nature of its performance. After all, Rachmaninoff was in the audience that night, as were other notable Russian musicians whose purpose was to determine an answer to the evening's question.<sup>33</sup>

According to one contemporary writer Rachmaninoff laughed at the exaggeration of his prelude, although realistically one must question how deeply the composer enjoyed seeing others make financial gains from his art at a time when his efforts were focused on providing a stable

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Yet the popularity of ragged classics cannot be denied. Besides the numerous compositions published, many instructional manuals taught amateurs how to rag any melody they choose (such as Edward R. Winn's *Winn's practical method of popular music and ragtime piano playing*, published in 1913 and reprinted at least five times).

<sup>32</sup> Whiteman, "In Defense of Jazz and Its Makers", SM4.

<sup>33</sup> "Whiteman Judges Named: Committee Will Decide 'What Is American Music'." In 1927 Whiteman said that "Rachmaninoff [is a] believer in the musical value of jazz." Whiteman, "In Defense."

family life.<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to say if the *Russian rose* was performed tongue in cheek, or if the parodies were milked to their full extent. What can be said is that Grofé utilized Rachmaninoff's prelude based on its mass appeal and distinctive opening passage. It can also safely be assumed that the listening public was not only well adapted to hearing Russian music, but was accepting of its parody via the foxtrot. The important question is whether the *Russian rose* shared any of the political baggage carried by Cobb's *Russian rag* and *New Russian rag*. Based on the scores it does not seem that Grofé was quoting Cobb, but rather offering his own take on the prelude. On the other hand, the *Russian rag* was well established by 1924, and numerous recordings and arrangements were commercially available. One could conjecture that a New York performance of Rachmaninoff's prelude by the Whiteman orchestra would be enough to stimulate a connection to Cobb's rag.

There is no single perspective regarding the possible interpretations of the Grofé suite. A later popular song, however, enriches this discussion. It is instructive to recall that Cobb's rag was a child born of heated public opinion and political pressure. Yet, this opinion lost its intensity as the Russian Civil War came to an end and the American Red Scare ran out of political steam. Anarchist inspired bombings, government raids, and mass deportations of suspected radicals had ceased by mid-decade. What did remain were the images and stereotypes propagated during these years—images that would shape the American perspective of Russian culture for years to come. The cultural pastiche of the *Russian rag* was alive and well eight years later in the song *Bolshevik*.<sup>35</sup> It was introduced and recorded by Fred Waring and his

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<sup>34</sup> Lyle, *Rachmaninoff*, 172.

<sup>35</sup> Discussed in the previous chapter.

Pennsylvanians, a group popular among the student body of Pennsylvania State University.<sup>36</sup>

Waring and his band cut this track for the Victor Company on 20 August, 1926, in which they presented their own interpolation of the collegial hit. As the recording reveals, the Pennsylvanians introduced a quotation from Cobb's *Russian rag* during the introduction to *Bolshevik*.<sup>37</sup> This was not a feature of the original published song sheet, but the recording itself is full of other artistic liberties such as vocal effects (such as what must be a teeth solo). However, this was not problematic for novelty song literature. What is more important was the link created between the cultural implications of the *Russian rag* and *Bolshevik*.

*Bolshevik* is a tongue-in-cheek take on Russian culture in mid-1920s America. The use of the *Russian rag* was a reminder—a means by which to transfer the imagery of the Red Scare to a time in which Bolshevism was not a domestic terror. This negative connection reinforced the Russia stereotypes found within the song text. It projected the ideologies of the Red Scare into a later context. Americans received this presentation of Russian culture through their own experiences, yet the not all stereotypes were illustrated by native artists. Enter Nikita Balieff and the Chauve-Souris, or Moscow Bat Theater. This vaudeville company swept the North American stage in the years following the Bolshevik takeover. The music and performance history of this troupe served to reinforce Russian cultural stereotypes through a mixture of authenticity and an appeal to the currents of Vaudeville.

The Russian impresario Nikita Balieff (1877-1936) was born in Armenia as Mkritich Balian. His celebrity status rested upon the Moscow Bat Theater that he created in Russia from

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<sup>36</sup> Fred Waring (1900-1984) began his musical career in 1917 as the leader of "Waring's Banjo Orchestra," a quartet that expanded to ten pieces by 1922. The group was renamed the "Pennsylvanians" and began recording with the Victor company. His early popularity rested on the performance of flamboyant novelty literature (such as *Collegiate* and *Bolshevik*), while later recordings reveal a transition to Whiteman inspired polish.

<sup>37</sup> See figure 5-10. Rachmaninoff's prelude is quoted in measures 8-12, played by the brass (This transcription offers melodic content only). The following measures begin the song verse.

the ranks of the Moscow Arts Theater. Originally conceived as a *kapustniki*, in 1912 the Bat developed into an independent cabaret.<sup>38</sup> Balieff's hallmark was his inventive use of language. An experienced English speaker, his stage persona mixed languages and expressions as a linguistic novice. "The laughs always came as he reached a climax of jumbled inexpression, occasionally pointing with a few words of slang."<sup>39</sup>

Adrift within Bolshevik Moscow, Balieff left the country in 1919—speculatively disguised as a rug merchant from Constantinople.<sup>40</sup> He traveled to New York City, where in mid-July Balieff's longtime musical collaborator Alexi Archangelsky also arrived. The composer had stayed in Moscow to maintain the Bat Theatre in Balieff's absence, and had spent considerable time petitioning the Russian government for his visa. The American Morris Gest was credited with cementing Archangelsky's arrival, as he had similarly aided Balieff.

The *Chauve-Souris* began their 1922 show at the 49<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre and moved to the Century Theatre Roof on 5 June. Nicholas Remisoff, the proclaimed "Chauve-Souris artist," decorated the roof in "Russian style."<sup>41</sup> This style was modeled after the wall décor found in the Moscow Bat Theater. As an environment cultivated by stage performers, Balieff's Russian theater was adorned with images of famous entertainers. The paintings were an act of constructed authenticity, and set the mood for an intimate, star-studded performance. The *Chauve-Souris* song publications mirrored this artistic bent, as demonstrated in figures 5-11 and

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<sup>38</sup> A *kapustniki* was literally a "cabbage party." Held during the 40 days of Lent in which theaters closed and cabbage dominated the Lenten dinner plate, these performances were given for and by idle actors. Eventually the term came to denote any informal amusement created for a closed environment. Law, "Nikita Balieff and the *Chauve-Souris*", 19.

<sup>39</sup> "Nikita Balieff, 59, Stage-Figure, Dies."

<sup>40</sup> Law, "Nikita Balieff", 22.

<sup>41</sup> "Remisoff Redecorates Century Roof." The show was popular enough to inspire a parody at the Punch and Judy Theatre. George C. Tyler organized a vaudeville troupe under the banner of the Forty-Niners. They were described as "a native 'Chauve-Souris.'" "Authors to Give Plays."

5-12. On 15 July the troupe performed their 200<sup>th</sup> American performance at the Century—it was referred to as their “second century.”<sup>42</sup>

The Chauve-Souris repertoire was a hodge-podge of foxtrots, one steps, polkas, and traditional folk material. The most culturally relevant were *Katinka*, *Anuschka*, *Sparkling wine*, and *The Volga boatman’s song*.<sup>43</sup> Their authenticity met with American prerogatives and the popularly constructed image of Russia. The songs were often hailed not only for their entertainment value but also for their exotic suggestion. The *New York Times* claimed the “carefree band of Muscovites . . . have taught America to imagine, if not to talk in Russian.”<sup>44</sup> This statement reveals the cultural undercurrent—that the troupe in part represented an imagined Russia. Balieff’s authenticity blended with a common vision of Russian culture and, while it did not contain negative imagery, the music did provide a model for less genuine representations. Other critical remarks further linked the construction of Russian culture with the exotic. William Chase wrote:

The Chauve-Souris bears pictorially the hallmark of Russia’s quaint, exotic, often half-barbaric art, recalling painters from Verestchagin to Bakst, songs of the Russian Isba, tinkling melodies of the Balalaika Players, dances of the Diaghileff and Pavlowa troupes. Only it is all different, miniature, individual, in a spirit of fun.<sup>45</sup>

On 14 March, 1924 the company celebrated its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Montreal. The *New York Times* took this opportunity to again comment on the cultural distance represented by the Chauve-Souris. The ceremony included “the breaking of bread with unusual rites and singing.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “Theatrical Notes.”

<sup>43</sup> A separate portion of their stage show was titled “a night at Yar’s restaurant in Moscow, 1840.” This segment included the “fiery gypsy songs” *Dark eyes* and *Two guitars*.<sup>43</sup> Law, “Nikita Balieff”, 23.

<sup>44</sup> “Meet Mr. Archangelsky.”

<sup>45</sup> Chase, “The Last Laugh Out of Russia.”

<sup>46</sup> “Chauve-Souris Anniversary.”

There was no specific explanation for these singular activities, only the emphasis on the cultural distance that separated the company from Western audiences. This connection was an important part of the group image and the expectations of their audience. To put this simply, one contemporary writer described the typical Russian lifestyle as “very much as people lived in Biblical times, or as English peasants may have lived in Shakespeare’s time or before.”<sup>47</sup>

*Anuschka* is one example that highlights the Russianness of the Chauve-Souris repertoire. The song contains many elements common to Russian folk songs commercially available in the U.S., such as a flexible rhythmic inflection of the chorus.<sup>48</sup> This portion of *Anuschka* begins with held fermatas that lead to a slackened tempo that gradually increases in speed, a performance indication that lends itself to great flexibility (see figures 5-13 and 5-14).

Such treatment of folk-inspired material existed within the light, satirical performances of the Chauve-Souris. The troupe originally produced these shows in balance with their parent company the Moscow Arts Theater, yet New York audiences saw the show only within the context of Vaudeville. Balieff’s comic presentation of this material could have been perceived as an amplification of stereotypes—a perspective that was supported by the contemporary critics. For New York audiences the stereotypes of Russian culture were both a reality and an abstraction, and the Chauve-Souris allowed the listener to entertain either perception. For some, the group represented more than an exotic cultural experience but a tangible encounter with Red Scare politics. These listeners heard Balieff’s tongue-in-cheek satire as an opportunity for mockery and debasement.

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<sup>47</sup> Ruhl, “Russians and Baltic Peoples”, 223.

<sup>48</sup> This element can be found in widely published songs such as *Kalinka*, *Two Guitars*, and *Dark Eyes*.

In March, 1923, the *New York Times* ran a reactionist essay by an author identified only as T.R.Y. The article rings the Bolshevik alarm through phrases typical of the Red Scare and the anti-immigration bias of the early 1920s:

Something is abroad in our land which may be as deadly to our minds as a cholera germ would be to our bodies, yet it is allowed to go on its dreadful way unhindered.

Every evening—and several afternoons—each week thousands of New Yorkers are being ruthlessly exposed, for all we know, to the most awful microbes in the world, yet nothing is being done about it.

Not a solitary organization lifts up its voice! Not a Senator, not a Congressman, volleys and thunders in the halls of the Capitol! Not a policeman gets agitated! For all the interest aroused by this terrific menace it might as well be an amendment to the American Constitution! And yet it is just the kind of thing which, but a few months ago, we were told might undermine the foundations of the American Republic!

I allude to the Russian actors and actresses now performing with impunity in our midst.<sup>49</sup>

The author goes on to dispute the political intentions of Russian stage performers in light of the audience subconscious. T.R.Y. argues that Russian performers, especially those who speak or sing in Russian, are polluting audiences with radical thoughts:

. . . We want to be able to sit calmly in our seats and listen to what goes on behind the footlights without being haunted by the horrible fear that, after the final curtain falls, we may run our hands through our hair, dash madly on to Seventh Avenue, bellow “Long live Lenin!” and inquire of the cop on the beat where we can buy a good, reliable bomb.<sup>50</sup>

The famous Chauve-Souris were made a specific target for investigation. T.Y.R. suggests that the group has been transfixing New York listeners—transforming them into Bolshevik automatons:

. . . Once my patriotic zeal had been aroused I decided that not only the Moscow Art Theatre Company now acting in our midst but also the Russians of the Chauve-Souris deserved careful scrutiny. . . . The dreadful thought occurred to me that perhaps the Chauve-Souris company was nothing but a bunch of traveling Rasputins, which was hypnotizing its audiences into becoming Bolsheviks while they waited! And to think that

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<sup>49</sup> T.R.Y. “Safety First From Propaganda”, SM8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, SM8.



the Chauve-Souris had been running for months, that Balieff's speeches in broken English might have been carefully broken for him by Lenin before his departure from Moscow. The thought unsettled me terribly. Another sleepless night!

But that night bore fruit. In the morning I resolved to bring forward the suggestion that the politics of all the Balieff's Chauve-Souris performers be subjected to some well-known test for unearthing Bolshevism, and that the results be duly tabulated on the program, though less exhaustively than in the case of the more serious actors.

For instance, take the case of the wooden soldiers who participate in that now celebrated little march. I has been on now many months and I have a shrewd suspicion that the original Russians who marched have been working for a log time at lecturing, chauffeuring, looking interesting at afternoon teas, and other jobs that exiled Russians are heir to. Nevertheless, there are many people in the audience who still fear that propaganda may be at work while the wooden soldiers are marching. So I would suggest that something like this appear on the program in future:

The management begs to announce that the Wooden Soldiers are tested weekly by 100 percent American experts. The result of the last weekly test was as follows:

First Soldier From the Left,

JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRAT.

Second Soldier From the Left,

MASSACHUSETTS REPUBLICAN.

Third Soldier From the Left,

ENGLISH CONSERVATIVE.

Fourth Soldier From the Left,

SEVENTH-GENERATION SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN.<sup>51</sup>

The list of fictitious ethnic and political affiliations goes on. This essay is clearly an extreme example of the political fallout that lingered beyond the Red Scare, as the author misunderstands and distorts cultural expression. The above excerpt states that "the results be duly tabulated on the program, though less exhaustively than in the case of the more serious actors." Are the Bolsheviki more likely hidden among the comic actors? Certainly then the

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<sup>51</sup> T.R.Y. "Safety", SM8-14.

Chauve-Souris company housed a great many radical performers. By T.R.Y.'s estimation this makes the Chauve-Souris a prime distributor of Bolshevik propaganda, both on stage and in the home (via sheet music).

The more important point is the assumption that all Russian culture is negative; that Russians in America thrive on disruption and espionage, which the domestic audience is helpless to defeat. This is why George Cobb's *Russian rag* was so important. The work has no text, yet was assumed to be a part of the Russian/Bolshevik cultural invasion of America. Thus the inclusion in Fred Waring's recording. This specific cultural and political environment allowed for various interpretations. Imitation was not used solely for negative purposes, but was a socially bound relationship that depended upon the musical experience and the attitude of the individual listener within a certain context. Other popular songs did quote Russian melodies for less negative purposes, such as George Gershwin's *Song of the Flame*.<sup>52</sup> These value judgments depended on personal perspective. Yet the imagined reality of the Red Scare created a negative impression of Russian culture for many New Yorkers and citizens of the United States.

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<sup>52</sup> This topic is discussed in chapter six of this study.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF Op. 3, No. 2.

Lento

The image displays the first six measures of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C# minor, Op. 3, No. 2. The music is written for piano in a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Lento'. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1, 2, and 3. The second system contains measures 4, 5, and 6. The right hand (treble clef) starts with a series of chords, marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The left hand (bass clef) begins with a descending bass line, marked with a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand.

Figure 5-1. Sergei Rachmaninoff, Prelude in C# minor, op.3, no. 2, mm. 1-6.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a piece titled "RUSSIAN RAG". At the top left is a circular logo with the letters "AS" and "CAP" inside. The title "RUSSIAN RAG" is centered at the top in a large, serif font. Below the title, it says "Interpolating the world famous, 'PRELUDE,' by Rachmaninoff" and "by GEORGE L. COBB". The tempo is marked "Moderato Not too fast". The music is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The first system (measures 1-4) features a right-hand melody starting with a forte (*ff*) *marcato* dynamic and a left-hand accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) includes a *marc.* (marcato) marking and a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic. The third system (measures 9-12) continues the piece with various dynamics and articulations. The page number "3" is visible in the top right corner.

Figure 5-2. George L. Cobb, *Russian Rag*, mm. 1-12.



Figure 5-3. Rhea McMurray from the cover of the *Russian Rag*.



Figure 5-4. From the cover of *Olga: Russian Rag* by Chas. F. Gall.



Figure 5-5. The Six Brown Brothers Clown Band as featured on the cover of the *Russian Rag*.

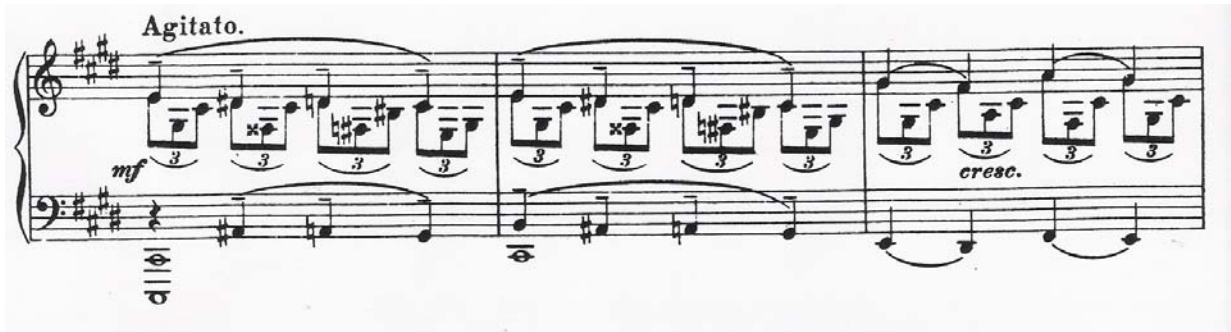


Figure 5-6. Sergei Rachmaninoff, Prelude in C# minor, op. 3, no. 2, mm. 15-17.





Figure 5-7. George L. Cobb, *New Russian Rag*, mm. 76-79.

No. 33

PRICE 40c

# Russian Rag

Will Rossiter's  
SERIES OF  
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**MUSIC**

Arranged  
by

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Figure 5-8. George L. Cobb, *Russian Rag* arranged for solo accordion.



Figure 5-9. Sergei Rachmaninoff and George L. Cobb from the cover of the *New Russian Rag*.



Figure 5-10. Melody of *Bolshevik* as recorded by Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, mm. 1-14. Transcribed by the author.



Figure 5-11. Dailey Paskman, *Sparkling Wine*.



Figure 5-12. Richard Fall and L. Wolfe Gilbert, *O Katharina!* Note the bat used to represent Nikita Balieff's eyebrows.

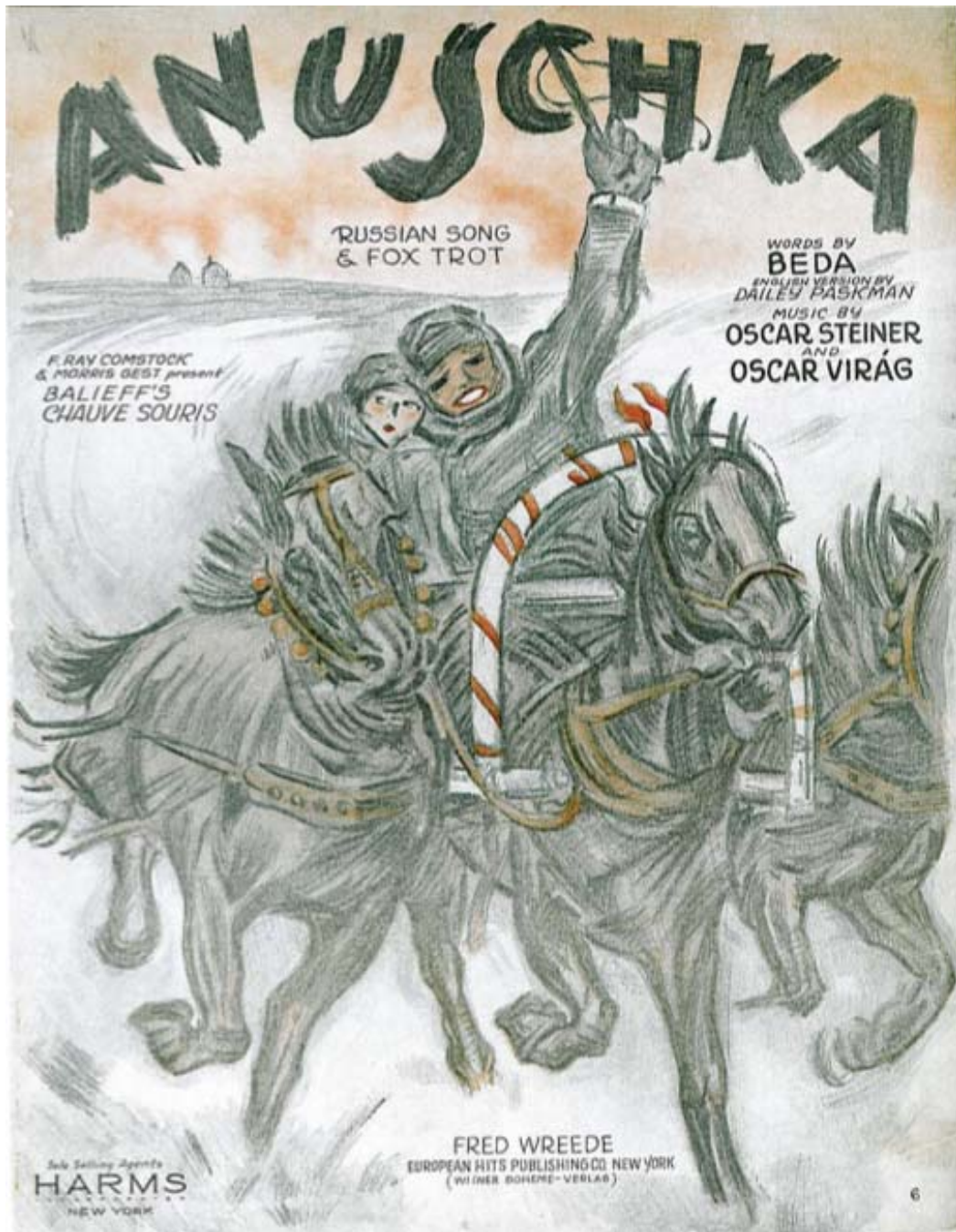


Figure 5-13. Oskar Steiner and Oskar Virag, *Anuschka*.

Refrain (*In marked tempo*)

*p-f*

"My love - ly An - usch - ka, (*Sound of kisses*) An - usch - ka

*p-f*

6679. B Anuschka

Figure 5-14. Oskar Steiner and Oskar Virag, *Anuschka*, mm. 22-25.



## CHAPTER 6 BEYOND THE RED SCARE

Although historians place the end of the Red Scare at some point during 1921, this political movement left behind many scars—memories of immigration concerns that resonated throughout the following decade. The efforts of 100% Americanism also tainted the American labor movement and the social image of Russian immigrants. In fact, union membership bottomed-out as employers continued to associate labor organization with political radicalism. The open-shop policy was called the “American Plan,” which stamped unionized industries as un-patriotic organizations.<sup>53</sup> Yes, the Communist movement in the United States was quelled by the “sledgehammer” of Red Scare drum-beating, but nothing was done to assuage the difficulties laid upon targeted ethnic groups.<sup>54</sup>

Stereotyping continued, and Russian-Americans who may have no longer been called Bolsheviks endured continued degradation. As late as 1927 Russian immigrants were categorized by the following generalization, which was intended to highlight the nature of these people and differentiate them from other recent immigrants:

They [the typical Russian immigrant] do not take very readily to American hustle and push. The “regular” Russian [an immigrant from Moscow or the surrounding regions] is a bit lazy and easy-going. He is more interested, in his natural state, in having a good time in a simple way than in “getting ahead.” When his work is over, he likes to loaf about, drinking vodka or endless glasses tea, playing the concertina, perhaps, singing or dancing. . . They might seem rough, crude, dirty, superstitious, lazy, or what you will.<sup>55</sup>

The tone of this statement was an undercurrent of the 1920s. Many biases inherited from the First World War were held beneath the gloss of economic prosperity and cultural advancement often associated with the decade. As Ann Douglas summarized this environment in

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<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, *Over*, 292.

<sup>54</sup> Ackerman, *Young J. Edgar*, 389.

<sup>55</sup> Ruhl, “Russians”, 217, 228.

her *Terrible honesty*, “America at the close of the Great War was a Cinderella magically clothed in the most stunning dress at the ball, a ball to which Cinderella had not even been invited; immense gains with no visible price tag seemed to be the American destiny.”<sup>56</sup> Yet cultural clashes remained, and recent immigrant groups were often not welcome at Cinderella’s ball. The legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution lingered throughout the decade and tainted nearly all Russian-American cultural expressions.

### **Assimilation and Nostalgia**

For recent immigrants, a return to Russia became nearly impossible in the years following the Civil War and the establishment of Lenin’s Communist government. Those immigrants who supported Czarism over Bolshevism also realized that their former way of life was lost, and would perhaps never exist again.<sup>57</sup> Thus culture became a means to stimulate nostalgia and to reconstruct a past world in the United States. Many of these immigrants surrounded themselves with cultural icons, so as not to forget the Russia that was and to also ease or defend themselves against assimilation into the dominant American mainstream.

Assimilation was not an easy task. Immigrants dealt with pressure from two sides: to keep their native culture alive and to surrender as much as possible to the dominant mainstream. 100% American groups provided most of the later, while others applied less aggressive opinions. In

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<sup>56</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe permanently rooted themselves in the United States more than any other cultural group. Historian Roger Daniels summarized this tendency:

There is a general consensus among scholars that about one Jewish emigrant in twenty returned to Europe, and some of those were sure to emigrate again later. Of all the other ethnic groups of the period for whom return rates have been calculated, only the Irish have a rate below 10 percent. *Coming to America*, 225.

During the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century several groups were formed to protect recent Jewish immigrants, such as the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League. The Irish too faced a native political and cultural situation from which escape was quite desirable, although a longstanding history of Irish immigration to the United States eased their arrival and assimilation. It should also be noted that much back-and-forth immigration ceased after the quota system was introduced in the early 1920s.

1921 William Isaac Thomas included “the symbols of his [the immigrant’s] home land” as an important element of identity within a society bent on the assimilation of recent immigrants.<sup>58</sup> Thomas felt that immigrant organizations and cultural preservation played a crucial role in this process, and should not be overlooked. Yet the process was difficult. Many immigrant Russians experienced the loss of family members left behind the walls of the Bolshevik regime. This experience pessimistically tinted their view of life in America, affecting even those who adapted well. The stresses of distance and cultural adaptation were worse for Russians who had difficulty learning the English language and letting go of their past.<sup>59</sup> Thus assimilation was not a simple matter of personal choice. External pressures—social, political, cultural, economic—kept it so. The process was not “a steady fading of memories, as a smooth transition from one set of relationships, one dominant immigrant world, to another.”<sup>60</sup> It was a way to balance the past with the future, and the family unit with the larger social environment.

Within the struggle to construct identity within a new world, culture became a natural catharsis. In 1921 the song *On the banks of the Volga* stimulated this emotion. It is one of many examples that allowed the listener to connect with a pre-Revolutionary Russia, experience pride, and move towards the acceptance of a lost world. The lyrics follow:

On the waters of our little-mother Volga  
The storm is lashing, and the waves rise high;  
Alone a tiny boat is battling  
Alone ‘midst the fury of the gale;  
But look! at the helm there stands a figure,  
Scorning death in the waters dark and grim,

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, 295.

<sup>59</sup> Kishinevsky, *Russian Immigrants*, 235.

<sup>60</sup> Taylor, *The Distant Magnet*, 259. The immigrant experience is often seen as a linear “fading of memories.” See Dinnerstein, *Ethnic Americans*, 72.

'Tis the hero of our little-mother Volga  
Our Stegneka Rasine.<sup>61</sup>

This quote appears in a 1922 text, where the author comments: “It is no wonder that the Russian appreciates his own music and that in the dark city tenements he will occasionally recall his homeland in such verses as these.”<sup>62</sup> The isolation of the immigrant persona is evident (“in the dark city tenements”) as is the clear need for the comfort of nostalgic thought. Yet the music acts as a transcendental element. It allows for an experience that goes beyond the limitations of social barriers. Nostalgia provided a means for personal reflection and the empowerment to transform boundaries into identity.<sup>63</sup>

Irving Berlin, himself a Russian immigrant, provides a famous example of this type of song with his *Russian lullaby*.<sup>64</sup> This song was performed and recorded constantly in the years after its release, and is still included in the repertoire of singers such as Tony Bennett and Marilyn Horne.<sup>65</sup> Lyrically, the song is a lullaby sung by a lonely Russian woman to her crying child:

Where the dreamy Volga flows  
There's a lonely Russian Rose,  
Gazing tenderly down upon her knee,  
Where a baby's brown eyes glisten,  
Listen.

Ev'ry night you'll hear her croon,  
A Russian lullaby.  
Just a little plaintive tune,  
When baby starts to cry,

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<sup>61</sup> Davis, *The Russian*, 86-87.

<sup>62</sup> Davis, *The Russian*, 86-87. No specific music is mentioned in this source, yet Davis seems to identify the feeling of nostalgia with native Russian music.

<sup>63</sup> Stokes, “Introduction”, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Berlin's song was published in 1927 by Irvig Berlin Incorporated of New York.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix B for further detail.

Rock-a-bye my baby,  
Somewhere there may be a land  
That's free for you and me  
And a Russian lullaby.<sup>66</sup>

The woman, presumably located by the Volga river, sings her baby to sleep in the hope of one day experiencing a free society. The Volga itself is described as a dreamy river, as in a distant memory or an image constructed around a sight never seen. These elements combine as a representation of both nostalgia for the Russian landscape and a plea for freedom from the reality a Post-Revolutionary political climate.

The actual Russianness of the song has been debated, yet audiences in 1927 may have been more drawn to the Jewish elements common to Berlin's prior work. The *Russian lullaby* betrays these traits through structure: specifically a major-minor chorus and a descending chromatic bass line.<sup>67</sup> Yet on the surface there is no overt connection to markings that signal any ethnic ties. There are no proper names; the characters are only the mother (a "Russian Rose") and her unnamed baby.<sup>68</sup> Gone are the melodic indicators present in the two 1919 songs discussed previously.<sup>69</sup> The only surface level identifier is the Volga River, which acts as an agent of nostalgia. In the years following the 1924 National Origins Act a song like the *Russian lullaby* provided much needed nostalgia. It has also been suggested that authors such as Berlin may have found their audience more susceptible to images from the past than the realities of assimilation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See figure 6-1.

<sup>67</sup> Magee, "Irving Berlin's 'Blue Skies'", 549.

<sup>68</sup> If anything the title "rose" would infer an Irish ethnicity—a stark contrast with the Russian locale.

<sup>69</sup> A marker of assimilation.

<sup>70</sup> Slobin, *Tenement*, 199. It is also well known that Irving Berlin composed few songs after the First World War that dealt with ethnic minorities. Hamm, "Irving Berlin's Early Songs as Biographical Documents", 14.

The *Russian lullaby* reached out to an audience dislocated from their cultural, geographical, and social pasts. It spoke as both nostalgia and catharsis—therapy for those who may have also felt the pains of separation and the desire to keep native culture alive in an assimilatory society. Rhea Maria Gershon, a noted singer of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century who emigrated from Russia in 1914, reflected on the *Russian lullaby* in her memoirs:

The *Russian lullaby* sung by Rosa Rosalie [Rhea Maria Gershon’s stage name] in the Broadway theatres became one of the best loved songs of that day. This song was remembered and cherished by [my] sonny Julian during his early childhood when I held him in my arms and sang to lull him to sleep.

During my son’s visit to my residence in Sarasota, Florida, while we were discussing the cover of my book of “Memoirs,” Julian said, “Mother, why not use the *Russian lullaby* for the cover of your book?”

At these words, a nostalgic scene rolled by, and I saw this young son, as it were, lying either in his little bed or in my arms, and I sang these words with deepest love and concern for his future.<sup>71</sup>

Thus the son of Russian immigrants gave Americans a song rich with identifying symbols and a sense of yearning for a more perfect world. It is little wonder that performers like Rhea Gershon popularized the melody, or that audiences took to the song. Yet as a counterpoint to Berlin’s nostalgia, another famed author of Eastern European immigrant parents created an image of Russian culture with more attention to detail and less concern for the reconciliation of immigrant communities with mainstream American culture. This example is the *Song of the Flame*, written in part by George Gershwin and featured on both stage and screen.

### *Song of the Flame*

Lyricist Oscar Hammerstien II and Otto Harbach conceived this operetta, and utilized the musical talents of both George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart.<sup>72</sup> The *Song of the flame* opened at

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<sup>71</sup> Gershon, *Russian Lullaby*, ii.

<sup>72</sup> The specific authorship of the individual numbers that constituted this score are discussed below in footnote 76.

the Wilmington, Delaware Playhouse on 11 December 1925, 19 days prior to its New York premiere. Fate may have conspired against the production, for Tessa Kosta (who played the lead role) was accidentally knocked unconscious during a dress rehearsal.<sup>73</sup> A day later it was reported that the Playhouse roof collapsed during a performance, which injured twelve cast members and destroyed much of the scenery, lighting, and stage.<sup>74</sup> These events did not foreshadow more physical impediments, but rather the cool reception that the work solicited from New York audiences and the eventual flop of the film version.

The operetta begins on the streets of Moscow in March of 1917. The Bolshevik character Konstantin sings the tune *Far away* and begins ridiculing bystanders for their support of the Provisional Government. Aniuta, a noblewoman disguised as a revolutionary in a “fiery scarlet” costume, rouses the crowd with *Song of the flame*.<sup>75</sup> Police arrest Konstantin and disperse the crowd. The second scene skips to October 1917 and opens on a tributary of the Volga River, adjacent to the Kazanov summer palace. Workers sing of their drudgery (*Woman’s work is never done*) while two peasants, Grusha and Nicholas, poke fun at one another (*Great big bear*). Aniuta has fallen in love with Volodya, a soldier who is about to join the White Russian Army and is unaware of her dual identity as a member of the upper class and a Bolshevik sympathizer. They gesture to one another (*The signal*) and sing of their promised love via the *Cossack love song*. Meanwhile, the Bolshevik Konstantin returns as a commissar in the local Soviet. He plots to capture the Kazanov jewels for himself, rather than allow the government to absorb them. Before moving this plan into action Konstantin sings of his love for Aniuta (*You may wander away*). Outside the palace his plans are thwarted by Volodya, yet Konstantin coerces the mob to

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<sup>73</sup> “Song of the Flame’ Opens”, 26.

<sup>74</sup> “Stage Roof Falls”, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 115.

rebel against the aristocratic soldier. The act concludes with a drunken bacchanal (*Vodka*) during which the love between Anuita and Volodya is threatened by Konstantin's exposure of her socialist leanings.

Act two places our characters outside of Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. The act is set on New Year's Eve 1919 in the Parisian Latin Quarter, and begins with a ballet described as "symbolic of Russia's long winter of adversity and the arrival of the first blossom of victorious ideals."<sup>76</sup> Konstantin is the owner of a Russian restaurant, the *Café des Caucasiens*, where he employs several other minor characters. Apparently he made off with the Kazanov jewels after all, for that was how he procured the establishment. He expresses his continued love for Anuita in a reprise of *You may wander away*. She soon appears, having served time in a Russian prison for the theft of the jewels. She, longs to be reunited with Volodya, and sings of her desire in *Midnight bells*). In the café's samovar room Russian exiles reflect on their lost country, while Volodya appears with a White Russian vigilante group. They expose Konstantin as a Bolshevik turned opportunist and pressure him to return the jewels. The operetta closes with Anuita and Volodya reunited and resolved to return to Russia and "fight for the people."<sup>77</sup>

At the end of the tale all characters have been relocated to Paris. Perhaps this was a way to distance these figures from a specific Bolshevik stage presence—to keep the radical suggestion to a minimum. However a more meaningful interpretation is informed by American foreign policy. By 1925 the American government had still refused to recognize the Russian Communist state, and much of the populace believed that the Bolsheviks did not truly represent the Russian people—that "they were holding their position only by murder and violence."<sup>78</sup> Yet Americans

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<sup>76</sup> Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 116.

<sup>77</sup> Pollack, *George*, 370.

<sup>78</sup> Murray, *Red*, 274.



were not above humanitarianism and informal relations (primarily via Herbert Hoover). This duality—of political disdain and social concern—breaks through the surface of the *Song of the Flame*. The character Volodya represents both the decadent aristocratic elite and the counterrevolutionary spirit of the White Russian movement, while Anuita is an aristocrat intoxicated by radicalism. Konstantin represents several stereotypes of a Bolshevik revolutionary—a mixture of fact and fiction. Ultimately Volodya and Anuita become transformed aristocrats while Konstantin’s efforts fail. These relationships reveal the sentiments of the American public; the operetta calls for “social reform, but not of the Bolshevik variety.”<sup>79</sup> Both the aristocrats, as figurative of the old Czarist order, are exiled and identify themselves as White Russians, united in their opposition to Bolshevism—to fight for the people enslaved by this political body.

Below the surface Konstantin reveals himself as the most complicated character in the operetta. He represents not only a surface level Bolshevik, but more so the specifically American perspective of Bolshevik behavior. He incites an uprising in act one, yet he plots to exploit the Bolshevik seizure of aristocratic holdings for his own benefit—an obvious break from Communist ideology. Konstantin manages to retain the Kazanov jewels for himself, which he then utilizes to purchase the Café des Caucasiens. This is a clear connection to the popular opinion of Bolshevik radicals as rapacious opportunists, bent only on the destruction of the old world for personal gain. Edward Jablonski has suggested that Anuita was also a character with multiple levels of meaning. He has noted that “apparently The Flame’s contribution [to the Revolution] was not appreciated by the Bolsheviks,” as she is jailed and then exiled to Paris.<sup>80</sup> The authors of *Song of*

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<sup>79</sup> Pollack, *George*, 370.

<sup>80</sup> Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 115.

*the Flame* highlight this element, and stress the belief that Bolshevism is a reckless invention that holds no bonds of honor, in which sympathy offers no salvation.

In New York City the response to the operetta was not positive. The script seemed to be the greatest disability, labeled “ponderous, weighty, trashy, flimsy, and hopeless” by contemporary critics.<sup>81</sup> Yet if the libretto had its flaws the production was a spectacle that delivered a fabulous visual display. The cast was supplemented with the 80-member Russian Art Choir, the 75-member American Ballet Company, and a 60-piece orchestra. The gratuitous scale of the performance was cheered as the production’s only salvation. The position regarding Bolshevik Russia was an interesting element of the operetta’s reception glossed over by many critics, although Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* did opine “to fashion a romantic theme upon a frightful social gestation, is perhaps not the quintessence of literary propriety.”<sup>82</sup> If the plot met public opinion squarely on the nose, then perhaps no comment was needed.<sup>83</sup>

Politics aside, the *Song of the flame* did utilize some Russian folk material. This gave the operetta an authentic flavor not found in many of the examples previously studied. The program noted that much of the music was based on Russian folksongs, although without going into specifics.<sup>84</sup> Examination of the 1925 Victor Light Opera Company recording has shown that the

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<sup>81</sup> Pollack, *George*, 373.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>83</sup> Or perhaps the plot was such a tired subject that reviewers had nothing more to say—the worst review can be no review at all.

<sup>84</sup> Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 116. Yet Jablonski offers little definitive authorship. He claims that Gershwin can only be specifically identified with *Midnight bells* and *The signal*. He believes that Gershwin primarily composed *You are you*, although both he and Stothart were credited. Howard Pollack (*George*, 371) assigns the following authorship:

1) Both Gershwin and Stothart: *Far away*, *Song of the flame*, *Cossack love song*, *Vodka*, and *The first blossom* (also including *You are you*, which was later dropped).

2) Gershwin: *Women’s work is never done*, *The signal*, *Midnight bells*.

3) Stothart: *Great big bear*, *Tartar!*, *You may wander away*, and *I want two husbands*.

title song, *Song of the flame*, was inspired by the folk tune *Kazbek*. The refrain is melodically identical to the folksong (see figures 6-2 and 6-3). The *Cossack love song* was also taken from a Russian source, the song *Minka*. As in the previously cited song, the refrain is melodically identical to the folksong (see figures 6-4 and 6-5). Howard Pollack has identified folksong inspiration in other portions of the operetta, although in less detail. Both he and Edward Jablonski see *Vodka* as such an example; Pollack claims it “reveal[s] a marked Slavic profile,” while Jablonski notes that the song is “folk-flavored.”<sup>85</sup> Pollack goes on to identify the peasant song *Women’s work is never done* as a “frank” borrowing from Bedrich Smetana’s orchestral tone-poem *Vltava*.<sup>86</sup>

These borrowings made the performance more realistic, and perhaps inspired more confidence in the realness of the plot. It is important to note that the musical numbers selected for recording were those with a blatant folk music flavor.<sup>87</sup> The two songs, *Song of the flame* and *Cossack love song*, occupy important elements of the plot and are sung by the lead characters. They are the musical highlights, and showcase the use of folksongs as an agent of realism. The story is authenticated by their presence, and increases the realism of the non-authentic material.

Despite a lack-luster stage history, *Song of the flame* was transformed for the silver screen in 1930. All known copies of the film have been lost. A rare frame, however, is reproduced here as figure 6-6. This still was included in the June 1930 issue of *Theatre Magazine* with the following caption:

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<sup>85</sup> Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 116 and Pollack, *George*, 371.

<sup>86</sup> Pollack, *George*, 371.

<sup>87</sup> All of the operetta’s musical numbers were published as sheet music.

Miss Bernice Claire, a Soviet Joan of Arc, in First National's adaptation of "The Song of the Flame," that colorful operetta of the Russian Revolution which Broadway approved not long ago.<sup>88</sup>

The Russian Revolution may have been too stale for Hollywood audiences in 1930. The market had also previously experienced this topic four years earlier through Cecil B. DeMille's production *The Volga boatmen*. This film, which shared a poor public response with *Song of the flame*, presented a similar plot of love and adventure within the class struggles of the Bolshevik Revolution. Both productions also utilized folk songs—DeMille included the well-known title song *The song of the Volga boatmen* (see figure 6-7).

DeMille claimed to take no one side of this political issue, yet others have been critical of this position. One writer has pointed out that while the protagonists represent the oppressed peasantry and the aristocracy, the Czarist militia were "portrayed as the most outrageous scoundrels."<sup>89</sup> Ruthlessness aside, DeMille seems to have favored the Revolutionaries beneath "the romance story that occupies the majority of the plot."<sup>90</sup> Yet the political intrigue was no match for the negative responses of critics and the public. One contemporary critic summarized the cheap blandness of DeMille's production by drawing attention to a scene where a character fools the Bolshevik soldiers into thinking that wine is blood:

Well, now that Mr. DeMille has turned the Volga into a picture it can't ask for much more on this earth. It now remains for Mr. Demille to try his directorial hand on the River Styx, where possibly he could find some real blood and would not have to use valuable burgundy, as he does in "The Volga Boatman."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The approval mentioned is a debatable topic. Fryer, *Photograph of Bernice Claire*, 56.

<sup>89</sup> Hall, "The Screen: The Russian Revolution", 21.

<sup>90</sup> Fortune, "The Volga Boatman d: Cecil B. Demille."

<sup>91</sup> "Days on Volga Are Recalled By Chaliapin", X3.

The production was also mocked one year later in the Laurel and Hardy silent comedy *With love and hisses*, which used the most iconic scene from DeMille's production. Taken from the finale, this scene showed Russian aristocrats being forced to haul barges in the manner of their once servant Bolshevik peasants. DeMille used this image as an advertising element, featuring the barge haulers on his movie posters. This depiction is also found on sheet music published concurrently with the film (see figure 6-7).

### **Conclusion**

The stereotypes of Russian culture in the United States changed dramatically in the years following the First World War. These images and practices, which had been commonly associated with Russian-Americans since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, evolved under the influence of the Red Scare, labor unrest, and immigration legislation and policies at home and abroad. Yet these accrued meanings lost their intensity as the Red Scare faded from newspaper headlines and the threat of a global Bolshevik Revolution subsided. Radicalism became less a menace, and more and more of a target for ridicule and mockery. The failure of the films addressed above illuminates the American interest in Communist Russia during the mid-1920s. No longer was Bolshevism an insurmountable threat to labor, democracy, and day-to-day life in a nation that had successfully rebounded from the economic and social stresses of the First World War. The Russian Revolution was no longer a topic of immediate concern, and many Americans saw little need to entertain the anxieties of the post-War years. Yet the scars remained, and Russian culture in the United States retained the marks left by the misunderstandings and cultural extremism of this period.

The previously discussed song *Bolshevik* is a clear example of this situation. Although it was published and recorded in 1926, it utilized the rhetoric of 1919-1920. Fred Waring's recording also connected the song with the Red Scare through the inclusion of the quote from

George L. Cobb's *Russian rag*. On the surface, the song seems stuck in the past. Yet there was clearly an audience that enjoyed this recording. *Bolshevik* carried the values of the Red Scare into 1926, and allowed listeners to comically reflect on their past fears and re-evaluate their stance on the issues contained within. As the 1920s progressed these stereotypes remained, having forever altered the image of Russian culture in America.<sup>92</sup>

Beyond these generalities, this study suggests no definitive timeline, but only the aesthetic choices that were made throughout the period. As the War years trained Tin Pan Alley to both mirror and help sculpt policy towards belligerent nations, so too did the industry adapt to the political environment of the 1920s. Images of Bolshevik Russia were mixed with the existing popular culture, creating a transformed image of Russians in the United States. Today this song literature opens a window to the past, through which the listener can relive the emotions, biases, and identity problems of the 1920s. Yet beyond this contextualization lies a more important element—the manner in which these songs become recontextualized through performance and recordings. *Bolshevik* revived the icons of the Red Scare in 1926, and in this manner the song produced new values and interpretations, based on the subjectivity of the listener. The same can occur within any contemporary environment. This song literature adds not only to an understanding of the 1920s, but allow performers and listeners to recreate the era and pull the past into the present, creating new connections and meanings.<sup>93</sup>

Some of the songs in question, however, contain meanings that modern listeners find difficult to interpret. The *Russian rag*, for all its quotation, is one such example that requires

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<sup>92</sup> Of course not all Russian-themed Tin Pan Alley songs continued to express these values. A song such as *Underneath the Volga moon* has no political connection. It is merely a love song set in Russia, and can be identified more as a nostalgic song than anything informed by the Red Scare. As the decade wore on more and more Russian-themed songs departed from the negativity of the Red Scare, yet this was a slow process.

<sup>93</sup> Frith, *Performing*, 270.

some explanation to fully decode. When pianist Dick Wellstood recorded the rag live in 1986, his performance ended with the following exchange between artist and audience:

I see you like—I see you like classical music? [Laughter] That was the *Russian rag*. That was written by a man from Boston; Boston's own George L. Cobb. Cobb; C-O-B-B George L. Cobb. He used to work for the Boston Music Company. In 1918 he wrote that. [Pause] Well, you may remember they made a rock tune out of Beethoven's ninth symphony a few years ago—his is the same thing. You know Rachmaninoff wrote that prelude in 1892 and this—eh—took 'em fifteen years to make a rag out of it. [Laughter]<sup>94</sup>

This brief discussion begins with mild applause, signifying that at least some portion of his audience recognized the tune (either Rachmaninoff's or Cobb's interpolation). Yet the above explanation was important enough to make it onto the final recording, as an instruction to later listeners. Wellstood reminds his audience that this music is a joke—a disguise through which to criticize the aesthetic experience of Rachmaninoff's music. He drives this point home by comparing the *Russian rag* to Walter Murphy's *A fifth of Beethoven*.<sup>95</sup> Both songs updated a well-known art music composition—Cobb turned Rachmaninoff's prelude into ragtime, while Murphy created a Disco version of the first movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony. The humor is in his comparison and his point: that music can make fun of itself, regardless of historical era. The explanation also allows us to question how seriously we want to take this music, illuminating the humor of ragtime through a more modern example.

Wellstood understood that his listeners required a way to interpret this music. This scheme of interpretation, as Simon Frith has called it, provides context and a means by which to experience the song's content. To know that ragtime poked fun at art music is the first step to understanding the humor. A familiarity with the music of Rachmaninoff and the politics of the First World War takes the listener further. Thus the true meaning of the *Russian rag* is revealed

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<sup>94</sup> Wellstood, *Dick Wellstood Live at the Sticky Wicket*.

<sup>95</sup> Assuming he mistook Beethoven's fifth symphony for his ninth. *A fifth of Beethoven* was featured in the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*.

only through a historical perspective provided not only by the ear.<sup>96</sup> This humor, through both the aesthetic experience of listening and the historical connection to ragged classics, is an exercise in realization and identity; it allows the listener to create meanings built upon socially and personally defined aesthetics.

Irving Berlin's *Russian lullaby* has been arranged for numerous musical groups, and has been recorded both with and without lyrics. Thus the individual recording conditions the listening experience.<sup>97</sup> Based on this subjective element, audiences could identify with performers and their recordings in different ways, especially with a diversity that ranges from Marilyn Horne to Jerry Garcia, and from Bunny Berigan to the New York Pops Orchestra.<sup>98</sup> This song can thus entertain a variety of personal meanings and experiences. Other songs included in this study have no modern recordings, and are only available on original pressings from the 1920s. These examples are accessible only to those willing to unearth old song sheets or locate a 78 rpm disc player—troublesome, but not impossible tasks. Thus a portion of this literature is partially held in the past, awaiting new life via reprinted scores and modern recording technology. The researcher can experience this music in a way that many casual listeners cannot, which is unfortunate. Music does gain value by its relation to personal experiences, but is enhanced by exposure to similar literature.

This music, as well as all other music, allows listeners to identify with others and expand upon personal experience. Of importance to this study is the way that music can also transport

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<sup>96</sup> Frith, *Performing*, 249. Frith further explains this topic: "Music listening is, by definition, a double process, involving both the immediate experiences of sound and an abstract, comparative exercise of judgment." *Performing*, 259.

<sup>97</sup> Between such recordings the entire meaning and thus genre can be altered. Hamm, "Genre, Performance and Ideology in the Early Songs of Irving Berlin", 146.

<sup>98</sup> See Appendix B for a more detailed listing.



listeners to “imaginative cultural narratives.”<sup>99</sup> Songs like *Bolshevik* and *That revolutionary rag* preserve an era through which one can recreate emotions and experiences both real and idealized. Based on the experiences of the individual listener it is possible to identify with the people who both directly and indirectly influenced this song literature. Many of the songs discussed were consumed within the context of the Red Scare, immigration changes, and the struggle to either establish or wipe away ethnic identities. The *Russian rag* and *New Russian rag* were not specifically political, but came to represent an image of Russian culture that further allowed American audiences to experience this abstraction and, more importantly, question their personal opinion of Russian immigrants working in the United States. This music thus allowed for the creation of an alternate reality—one in which Russian Bolsheviks leered across the Atlantic at an American society soon to be within their grasp. Thus popular opinion was expanded and interpolated into a fantasy of political extremes. The songs of this period allow for the continued realization of this abstract world. Through performance, the opinions and stereotypes that fueled this fantasy come alive, and present a mock social environment that opens the door to those whose imaginations are stimulated enough to take this fantasy into their own lives.

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<sup>99</sup> Frith, *Performing*, 275.

Russian Lullaby 3

Tune Ukulele  
or Banjulele Banjo  
G C E A

Words and Music  
By IRVING BERLIN

Valse moderato

VOICE

Where the dream-y Vol-ga flows

There's a lone-ly Russ-ian Rose,

Gaz-ing ten-der-ly down up-on her knee,

*Ukulele Arr. by MAY SINGHI BREEN*

Figure 6-1. Irving Berlin, *Russian Lullaby*, mm. 1-20.



Figure 6-2. *Kazbek*. Transcribed by the author.

Refrain Tempo di Marcia molto marcato

What's that light that is beck - on - ing?

Through the night it is beck - on - ing.

The musical score consists of two systems. Each system has a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clef). The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is 'Tempo di Marcia molto marcato' and the dynamics are 'mf-f'. The lyrics are: 'What's that light that is beck - on - ing?' and 'Through the night it is beck - on - ing.' The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and single notes in the bass line.

Figure 6-3. George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart, *Song of the Flame* mm. 21-27.



Figure 6-4. *Minka*. Transcribed by the author.

Refrain  
Ben moderato

Don't for-get me, Don't for-get me, Keep me in your heart and let me lin-ger there no

mat-ter where you go. I'll be near you, al-ways near you,

Figure 6-5. George Gershwin and Herbert Stothart, *Cossack Love Song* mm. 21-30.



Figure 6-6. Bernice Claire in the film adaptation of *Song of the Flame*. Photograph by Elmer Fryer, from the collection of the author.



Figure 6-7. Carl Deis, *Song of the Volga Boatmen*.



APPENDIX A  
BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE L. COBB

Of all the authors included in this study, George Linus Cobb (1886-1942) has one of the most compelling yet unavailable biographies. His music embodies several themes discussed previously, and reached out to a large audience through sheet music and sound recordings. His biography, however, is lesser known. There is also no one definitive version. This appendix is an accumulation of many scattered primary and secondary sources that provide a more complete biographical overview.

George Linus Cobb was born in Mexico, New York on 31 August, 1886. At the age of nineteen he entered the School of Harmony and Composition at Syracuse University. That year, 1905, Cobb also published his first original compositions. The young man sold *Dimples: characteristic march and two-step* to the Vinton Music Publishing Company and published *Mr. yankee march and two-step* on his own.

Upon graduation from Syracuse University he moved to Buffalo, New York, where he won a song competition (and a subsequent publication) with his *Buffalo means business* (1909).<sup>1</sup> In the same year he published his first rag, *The rubber plant*, with Walter Jacobs.<sup>2</sup> Cobb scored several other early successes within the ragtime medium including the *Bunny hug rag* (1913) that capitalized on the then fashionable animal dance craze.

During this period George Cobb became acquainted with the writer Jack Yellen (1892-1991). Yellen had emigrated from Poland in 1897, and the two Buffalo residents met after the success of *The rubber plant*. The writer later left New York in order to attend the University of

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<sup>1</sup> Tjaden, "The Rags of George L. Cobb."

<sup>2</sup> This Boston based firm published no less than 130 of Cobb's compositions, and their relationship lasted until the composer's death in 1942.

Michigan, but returned in 1913 as a journalist for the *Buffalo Courier*.<sup>3</sup> That year the two artists renewed their friendship, the fruit of which was their first Tin Pan Alley success *All aboard for Dixie land* (1913). Elizabeth Murray successfully introduced the song in Rudolph Friml's operetta *High jinks* on 10 December, 1913. In New York City the pair's music went over well, with featured performances on Broadway and through recorded media. The appeal of song writing so gripped Cobb that he composed no rags for a period of two years while he and Yellin rode a wave of success. According to Warren Vaché, the pair "discovered that writing songs about the South could be very profitable," and produced both *Alabama jubilee* (1915, introduced by Elizabeth Murray) and the popular *Are you from dixie? ('cause I'm from dixie too)* (1915).<sup>4</sup> Three years afterwards Cobb reflected on the genesis of this tune as only he could:

One morning about three years ago your truly was idly toying with the keys of a small upright piano in a music shop in Buffalo, where I usually held forth and seldom "held" anything better than a pair (of hands), when my old partner Jack Yellin (in the service now, bless his liver and bacon and kidney stew), then sporting editor of the *Buffalo Courier*, blew in (he's always breezy) and loosened up that he had a "bear" of an idea for a song-hit up his sleeve.

Now, one's sleeve is no place for a bear, so I told him to shake out the cub and let's see the strength of its word-claws. He shook the little critter out by giving me the title and reciting the words of the chorus, and I (the little rascal that I be) took the thing to my bosom and immediately ground out the melody that was destined soon to be whistled from coast to coast. I can't for the life of me explain how it was really done; it just came along as naturally and easily as a kitten lapping up milk from a saucer, and with no more effort than a wild mountain goat leaping from crag to crevice without making a slip, and inside of an hour we had *Are you from Dixie?* on manuscript paper.

A few days later we wended our weary way (we really rode in a day coach, but "wended" sounds more like poetry) to New York to beard the music-publishing lions in their respective dens. We not only bearded but hunted lions, yet lo! The first two real big howlers failed to see our effort in the same light we did—in short, couldn't see it in any old light. Undaunted, and still retaining our wonted nerve, we made a formal call on Mr. Isadore Witmark of the House of Witmark, and found him a most gentle and genial lion.

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<sup>3</sup> Jasen, *That American Rag*, 229.

<sup>4</sup> For a pair of writers from northern New York this was perhaps an unusual fortune. Vaché, *The Unsung Songwriters*, 64.

With never a growl he unblushingly told us the number was “there,” immediately grabbed it and—well, you know the rest.<sup>5</sup>

For the remainder of his career Cobb retained Yellin as his primary collaborator.

On 5 June, 1917 the thirty year-old composer registered for the American Expeditionary Force draft. His draft card reveals several interesting facts about his character and lifestyle. Cobb described himself as tall and stout, with grey eyes and brown and gray hair. He at first claimed to have no disability, although he struck-out his answer and noted that he did suffer from a hernia. As an occupation he declared “composer and arranger of music” employed by Walter Jacobs, with which he supported his wife, mother and father.<sup>6</sup> It appears that Cobb did not serve.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the early 1910s Cobb began selling his works to a variety of publishing houses, and Walter Jacobs felt the need to bind the composer to his company. Jacobs offered Cobb a staff writing position that was declined, but Cobb did agree to write for *The Tuneful Yankee*, a magazine generated by the company in late 1916. This monthly magazine featured articles on ragtime and popular music, as well as three to four compositions and the obligatory advertisements. In January 1918, one year after its official launch, the magazine was renamed *Melody*. Cobb was given a monthly column entitled “Just Between You and Me” in which he offered salty answers to the questions of would-be popular songwriters.<sup>8</sup> Apparently his writing dominated the journal, and he occasionally used the pseudonym Leo Gordon to lessen the obvious saturation of his prose and music.<sup>9</sup> Ted Tjaden has uncovered at least six compositions

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<sup>5</sup> Cobb, “Just”, (October, 1918) 22.

<sup>6</sup> Tjaden, “George L. Cobb WWI Draft Registration Card.”

<sup>7</sup> Based upon his steady employment during the War with the Ragtime journal discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> His image and *Melody* moniker are reproduced in figure A-2.

<sup>9</sup> His writing style was also dominating. Cobb pulled no punches, and those who submitted to his column faced an acerbic reviewer. His more abrasive responses include invectives such the following taken from the November, 1918 issue:

that Cobb wrote under his assumed pen name, including *Georgia rainbow* (1916), *Bone head blues* (1917), *Hang over blues* (1917). *You and you waltz* (1917), *My little pal* (1918), and *Opals: waltz* (1918).<sup>10</sup> In early 1920 he stopped writing for the magazine.

Cobb was a popular columnist, despite his short tenure with *Melody*. As evidence of such public interest, *Melody* published two poems written by members of his readership. The first, by Ulysses S. Huggins of Pittsburgh, PA, Cobb titled a “Tribute from a Trojan”:

Say George,  
I get many a darn good laugh  
Digestin’ your  
“Just Between You and Me” chaff.  
By golly! It’s funny;  
It’s witty, and punny.  
You’re onto your “personal” job.  
When I sit in your “corner,”  
Like Little Jack Horner,  
And pick out a plum,  
I like it quite some.  
Here, George—my greeting!  
It’s just like eating  
Sweet corn right off the Cobb.  
Say, George, old top,  
If I wasn’t afraid,  
I’d send you some lyrics I’ve made;  
But that pen you sling  
Has a wicked sting.

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[To J.O.D., Buffalo, N.Y.] “When the Irish Navy has a Hebrew Admiral and wool grows on hydraulic rams, then and not before, will your song, “I Have Corns” get by. This number is the worst piece of “nuttiness” that has ever crossed the vision of yours truly. Your words are vapid and almost disgusting and our music and its arrangement is way beyond crudeness. I don’t wish you any hard luck, Doc, but if you ever turn over another song like unto this, I’ll put a jinx on you so all your children will be born acrobats. . . .”

[To G.T.B., Reno, Nev.] “You’ve got a huge flock of unadulterated nerve when you try to tell me that your musical setting of “The Rosary” is as good if not better than [Ethelbert] Nevins’. You go on to state that three big publishers have turned this song down, but not on account of its merit. This statement savors of the male bovine, in other words, bull. If you are so anxious to see this piece in print, publish it yourself, then you’ll know why it was turned down. Frankly, this number has no melody to brag about and the way it is put together is pathetic. What you need is an ear for music and an operation on your ego.”

<sup>10</sup> Tjaden, “The Rags.”

I'll keep my song.  
So long.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1918 George Cobb published his arrangement of Sergei Rachmaninoff's prelude in C# minor, op. 3, no. 2. Cobb presented his “interpolation” to the publisher Will Rossiter who christened the work the *Russian rag*.<sup>12</sup> The rag was subsequently arranged and recorded by Earl Fuller for Columbia Records, and the Emerson, Okeh and Victor companies soon followed with other versions.<sup>13</sup> James Reese Europe also issued a recording with his famous 369<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry “Hellfighter” Band in March, 1919. Cobb's success led to the less-acclaimed sequel, the *New Russian rag*, of 1923. The sequel has not inspired repeated arrangement, yet the original rag has undergone continuous transformation.<sup>14</sup>

In the late 1920s Cobb stopped publishing on a regular basis. His last composition concerned the Second World War: *When Uncle Sam comes to town: mow 'em down, mow 'em down, mow 'em down* (1942). During that year Cobb also joined ASCAP.<sup>15</sup> He passed away in Brookline, Massachusetts on 25 December, 1942.

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<sup>11</sup> Cobb, “Just”, (March, 1919) 7.

<sup>12</sup> Jasen, *Tin Pan Alley*, 88.


<sup>13</sup> See Appendix B for a complete listing.

<sup>14</sup> The famous parody has been arranged for banjo, accordion, organ, mandolin quartet and other ensembles. See Appendix B for further details.

<sup>15</sup> “Cobb, George L, *ASCAP Biographical Dictionary*, 90.



Figure. A-1. George L. Cobb, *The New Russian Rag*.



## Just Between You and Me

GEORGE L. COBB'S own corner, wherein he answers questions, criticises manuscripts, and discusses the various little matters close to the hearts of Melody readers—all of a more or less "personal" nature, and for that very reason of interest to all.


 No Manuscripts Returned Unless Accompanied by Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope. Address all communications direct to MELODY.

Figure A-2. George L. Cobb's column "Just Between You and Me," *Melody* (April, 1918), 24.

APPENDIX B  
DISCOGRAPHY

**Commercially available recordings**

***Bolshevik***

Waring, Fred. *Fred Waring vol. 1 The Collegiate Years*. CD (The Old Masters MB 126, 2000).

Waring, Fred. *The Fred Waring Memorial Album*. CD (Viper's Nest VN-179, 1995).

***Russian Lullaby***

Armstrong, Louis. *Louis Armstrong in Scandinavia, Vol. 1*. CD (Storyville Records 101 8348, 2005).

Bennett, Tony. *Bennett/Berlin*. LP (Columbia FC 44029, 1987).

Berigan, Bunny. *Bunny Berigan and His Boys*. CD (Collectables Records COL-CD-7847, 2006).

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Classic Tracks*. CD (Kaz Records Kaz 313, 1996).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Count Basie, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, Bunny Berigan*. CD (Membran 222791, 2005).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Jazz Me Blues*. CD (The International Music Company 204361-203, 2000).

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Pied Piper, 1934-40*. CD (Bluebird 07863-66615-2, 1995).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sophisticated Swing*. CD (TIM 201918-302, 2000).

Brewer, Teresa. *American Music Box: The Songs of Irving Berlin*. CD (Sony Music AK 40231, 1991).

Bushkin, Joe. *Irving Berlin Piano Party*. CD (EMI-Capitol 72438-19470-2-9, 1997).

Cole, Nat King. *Hall of Fame*. CD (Past Perfect 220233, 2001).

Coltrane, John. *The Best of John Coltrane*. CD (Prestige PRCD-5717-2, 2004).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Fearless Leader*. CD (Prestige PRCD6-30059-2, 2006).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Prestige Profiles John Coltrane*. CD (Prestige PRCD-5809-2, 2004).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Soultrane*. CD (Prestige PRCD 7142-2, 1999).

Crosby, Bing. *Going Hollywood, Vol. 4, 1944-1949*. CD (Jasmine Records JASCD 130/1, 2003).

Dickenson, Vic. *Nice Work*. CD (Vanguard Records 79610-2, 1999).



- \_\_\_\_\_. *Vic Dickenson Septet*. CD (Vanguard 662221, 1993).
- Ecklund, Peter. *Gigs: Reminiscing in Music*. CD (Arbors Records Incorporated ARCD 19230, 1999).
- Fitzgerald, Ella. *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Irving Berlin Songbook*. CD (Verve 314 543 830-2, 2000).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ella For Lovers*. CD (Verve 440 065 331-2, 2003).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Irving Berlin Songbook*. CD (Verve 829 534-2, 1986).
- Garcia, Jerry. *All Good Things*. CD (Garcia/Rhino R2 78063, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Compliments*. CD (Rhino R2 78063-B, 2004).
- Garner, Erroll. *Erroll Garner's Finest Hour*. CD (Verve 314 589 775-2, 2003).
- Getz, Stan. *Summer Sequence*. CD (Castle Pie PIESD029, 1999).
- Goodman, Benny. *Air Play*. CD (EPM Musique ZET-754, 1991).
- Horne, Marilyn. *All Through the Night*. CD (RCA Victor 09026-61278, 1991).
- Hyman, Dick. *Face the Music, A Century of Irving Berlin*. CD (Musical Heritage Society MHS 512213Y, 1988).
- Kenton, Stan. *The Kenton Era*. CD (Sounds of Yesteryear DSOD 723, 2007).
- Kiselyov, Valery. *Russian Lullaby*. CD (Russian Compact Disc RCD 24101, 1996).
- Klein, Janet. *Come Into My Parlor*. CD (Coeur de Jeanette 202-1115-9357, 1998).
- Marcovicci, Andrea. *Always, Irving Berlin*. CD (Cabaret CACD 5014-2, 1994).
- New York Pops Orchestra. *Victoria Presents a Summer Concert in the Park*. CD (Capitol CDM 7 64796 2 0, 1993).
- Norvo, Red. *Red Norvo and His Orchestra, 1944-1945*. CD (Classics 1356, 2004).
- Pell, Dave. *The Dave Pell Octet Plays Irving Berlin*. CD (Fresh Sound FSR-CD 503, 2000).
- Ralph Sharon Trio. *The Magic of Irving Berlin*. CD (Avid AMSC715, 2000).
- Smith, Stuff. *Stuff Smith, Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson*. CD (Verve 314 521 676-2, 1994).
- Various Artists. *An Irving Berlin Songbook*. CD (Excelsior EXL20552, 1997).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Complete Irving Berlin Songbook*. CD (Verve 314 539 442-2, 1996).

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Jazz Giants Play Irving Berlin*. CD (Prestige PRCD 24194-2, 1997).

### ***Russian Rag***

Duo Capriccioso. *Vol. 6*. CD (Thorofon CTH 2448, 2000).

Europe, James Reese. *James Reese Europe with his 369<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry 'Hellfighter' Band: the Complete Recordings*. CD (Memphis Archives MA7020, 1996).

Godwin, Anthony. *Salon to Swing*. CD (Chandos CHAN 8856, 1990).

Ikemiya, Mas. *American Ragtime Orchestra*. CD (RCA BVCF-1522, 1993).

Kortlander, Max. *The Piano Roll Artistry of Max Kortlander*. CD (Smithsonian Folkways RBF 43, 2000).

Morath, Max. *Max Morath Plays the Best of Scott Joplin and Other Rag Classics*. CD (Vanguard VCD 39/40, 1988).

Ostroushko, Peter. *The Mando Boys Live, Holstein Lust: The Midwestern Tours 1987-1995*. CD (Borderland Productions BPL 02, 2006).

Reffkin, David. *Ragtime Chamber Music*. CD (Crazy Otto Music CO-009, 2003).

Thomson, Don. *Hot Dog!* CD (POP 121, 2006).

Various Artists. *Ragtime Vol. 1*. CD (EPM Musique 159052, 1997).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Real Ragtime*. CD (Archeophone 1001, 2001).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Spaghetti Rag: Rag Music with Mandolins*. CD (Naxos 8.557999, 2006).

Wellstood, Dick. *Dick Wellstood – A Night in Dublin*. CD (Arbors Jazz ARCD 19241, 2000).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dick Wellstood Live at the Sticky Wicket*. CD (Arbors Jazz ARCD 19188, 1997).

### ***Russian Rose***

Peress, Maurice. *The Birth of Rhapsody in Blue*. CD (Musicmasters 7037-2-C, 1986).

### ***That Revolutionary Rag***

Sears, Benjamin and Bradford Conner. *She's So Beautiful: Irving Berlin Songs for Florenz Ziegfeld 1910-1927, and Other Songs From 1919-1921*. CD (Oakton Records ORCD1007, 2000).

### ***Vodka***

Ganz, Isabelle. *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off! Songs of the Gershwins*. CD (Pentagrama Magico KPD/PM-10.4012, 2001).

Minnesota Klezmer Band. *Gershwin the Klezmer*. CD (Frozen Chosen Productions 660355191428, 1999).

Saloff, Spider. *The Memory of All That: A Celebration of Gershwin*. CD (Kopaesthetics K-104, 1997).

Sullivan, K.T. *American Rhapsody: George Gershwin to the World*. CD (Jessisaraly Music JSD-0001, 1999).

### **Out of print recordings and selected source locations**

#### ***Bolshevik***

Christian, Tommy. *Oh How I Love Bulgarians*. 78 (Harmony 270-H, 1926). Pennsylvania State University Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbera.

Waring, Fred. *Her Beaus Are Only Rainbows*. 78 (Victor 20146, 1926). Pennsylvania State University Special Collections.

#### ***Cossack Love Song***

Victor Light Opera Company. *Song of the Flame*. 78 (Victor 19954-B, 1925). Collection of the author, Institute of the American Musical Incorporated.

#### ***The New Russian Rag***

Foley, George. *Cleveland Rag*. LP (Jazzology JCE-85, 1977). Bowling Green State University.

#### ***Russian Lullaby***

Abranovicz, Sergei. *Für eine Stunde*. 78 (Grammophon 21272, date unknown). University of California Santa Barbera.

Aleman, Oscar. *The Guitar of Oscar Aleman*. LP (Old Masters TOM 31, 1970). University of Maryland, Columbia University, Bowling Green State University, Old Dominion University.

Arnold, Harry. *Sweet Violins*. LP (Hollywood LPH-34, 1957). Bowling Green State University.

Berigan, Bunny. *Bunny*. LP (RCA Camden CAL 550, 1960). Florida State University, Sonoma State University, Connecticut College, Peabody Conservatory, University of Missouri Kansas City, Rutgers University, Columbia University, Eastman School of Music, Bowling Green State University, University of Miami Ohio, Del Mar College, University of North Texas, University of Texas Austin.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bunny Berigan Memorial Album*. 78 (Victor P 134, 1942). University of California Santa Barbara, Library of Congress, Indiana University, College of Santa Fe, University of South Carolina.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bunny Berigan Plays Again*. LP (RCA Victor LPT 1003, 1952). University of California San Diego, University of Northern Colorado, Library of Congress, University of Missouri Kansas City, University of Mississippi, Bowling Green State University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Texas Austin, University of Virginia.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Complete Bunny Berigan, Vol. 2*. LP (Bluebird 5657-1-RB, 1986). University of California San Diego, University of Northern Colorado, Columbia University, Bowling Green State University, University of Texas Austin.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Russian Lullaby*. 78 (Victor 26001, 1937). Collection of the author, Indiana University.
- Blackton, Jay. *Let Me Sing and I'm Happy*. LP (Epic LN 3408, 1957). Broward County Florida Library, University of Alabama, Bibliomation Incorporated, University of Missouri Kansas City, Morris County New Jersey Library, Eastman School of Music, Bowling Green State University, University of Central Oklahoma, University of Texas Austin.
- Bradley, Will. *The House of Bradley*. LP (Epic LN 3199, 1950s). University of Missouri Kansas City, Old Dominion University.
- Calloway, Cab. *Russian Lullaby*. LP (Unique Jazz UJ 006, 1978). Rutgers University.
- Cohn, Al. *Jazz Mission to Moscow*. LP (Copix CP 433, 1962). University of Florida.
- Cole, Cozy, Red Norvo. *Jazz Giants, Vol. 3, Cozy Cole and Red Norvo*. LP (Trip TLP-5538, 1944). University of Missouri Kansas City, Eastman School of Music, University of Texas Austin.
- Coleman, Bill. *Russian Lullaby*. 78 (Asch 351-1A, 1944). Middle Tennessee State University Center for Popular Music.
- Coltrane, John. *John Coltrane*. LP (Prestige PRT 24003, 1972). Florida State University, University of Illinois, Peabody Conservatory, Appalachian State University, Queens College, Stony Brook University, Baldwin-Wallace College, Denison University, Oberlin College, University of Wisconsin Richland.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Soultrane*. LP (Prestige PRST 7531, 1958). Arizona State University, Connecticut College, University of Missouri Kansas City, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, University of Akron.
- Crawford, Jesse. *The Genius of Jesse Crawford at the Theatre Organ*. LP (Doric, 1975). San Jose State University, University of Colorado Boulder, Smithsonian Institute, Judson College, University of Illinois, Bowling Green State University.

- Crosby, Bing. *Bing Crosby's Treasury: The Songs I Love*. LP (Longines Symphonette Society LWS 347, 1970). Arizona State University, Phoenix Public Library, University of California San Diego, Pitkin County Colorado Public Library, Jefferson Township Indiana Public Library, College of St. Scholastica Library, Delta State University, Mars Hill College, College of Santa Fe, State University of New York Geneseo, East Stroudsburg University, Geneva College, Amarillo Texas Public Library, University of Utah, College of William and Mary.
- Garcia, Gerry. *Compliments*. LP (Round Records RX-102, 1974). University of Florida.
- Gibbs, Terry. *Jazz on the Air, Volume 1*. LP (Brunswick BL 58048, 1953). University of Miami, University of Missouri Kansas City, New York Public Library.
- Gibson, Margie. *The Irving Berlin Century*. Cassette Tape (Townhall Records C-39, 1988). Ida Illinois Public Library.
- Gillespie, Dizzy. *Dizzy Gillespie and Stuff Smith*. LP (Verve MG V-8214, 1957). Florida International University, Connecticut College, Library of Congress, University of Iowa, Bowling Green State University, University of North Texas.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dizzy Gillespie's Big 4*. LP (Pablo 2310-719, 1975). Arizona State University, University of California Berkeley, University of Colorado Boulder, Library of Congress, University of Chicago, Harvard University, University of Missouri Kansas City, Cornell University, Stony Brook University, University of Texas Austin, University of Wisconsin Madison.
- Goodman, Benny. *Changes*. 78 (Bluebird B-11226, 1941). Indiana University, University of South Carolina.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. VI*. LP (RCA/Bluebird AXM2-5566, 1980). Arkansas State University, Valparaiso University, Columbia University, Bowling Green State University, University of Texas Austin.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Indispensable Benny Goodman (1938-1939), Vol. 5/6*. LP (RCA NL-89587, 1986). Bowling Green State University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Margie*. CD (TIM 205373-205, 2001). New Mexico State University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On the Air, Vol. 2*. LP (Aircheck 32, 1983). University of Alabama, University of California San Diego, University of Missouri Kansas City.
- Goland, Arnold. *Surprise*. LP (Columbia CL 2312, 1965). Library of Congress, University of Missouri Kansas City, Bowling Green State University.
- Grant, Bob. *Song Hits of 1927*. LP (Vocalion VL 3639, 1959). Library of Congress, University of Missouri Kansas City, Bowling Green State University, University of Texas Austin, College of William and Mary.

- Kahn, Rodger Wolfe. *Russian Lullaby*. 78 (Victor 20602, 1927). University of California Santa Barbara.
- Kenton, Stan. *Stan Kenton – 1944*. LP (Queen-Disc Q-054, 1981). University of Missouri Kansas City.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Stan Kenton and His Orchestra, 1943-44*. LP (London Records HM-A 5061, 1979). West Chester University.
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APPENDIX C  
SHEET MUSIC SOURCES

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brian Holder is a graduate of the University of Dayton (B.M. 2002) and the University of Florida (M.M. 2004). He currently serves as an adjunct professor at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida, and teaches percussion at Lipham Music Store.

Brian's research has been presented at regional conferences of the American Musicological Society (2008) and the College Music Society (2005, 2007, 2008). He has also lectured at several conferences held at the University of Florida, including the Musicology Lecture Series (2005, 2006, 2007) and the English Graduate Organization Annual Conference (2007). He was a cofounder of the University of Florida Student Society for Musicology, and developed the organization's first annual symposium in 2007. At the University of Florida Brian has also taught such courses as the Introduction to Music Literature (MUL2010), American Popular Music (MUS4905), and given percussion lessons to music minors. His work is published in *American Music*.

As a featured percussionist Brian has appeared at the Percussive Arts Society International Conference (2003, 2005, 2007), the Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference (2007), The Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival (2004), and the International Festival of Women Composers (2008, 2009). The University of Florida Symphony Orchestra has twice featured Brian as a solo performer (2004, 2007). He has studied percussion with Rick Andre, Jane Varella, James Latten, Jim Leslie, Mance Grady, and Kenneth Broadway. Brian has had the honor to premiere works by Chan Ji Kim, Jennifer Higdon, Russell Podgorsek, and Paul Richards.