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Military Music for America's Peacetime: *Victory at Sea* and 1950s Post-War Television

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ABSTRACT

Peripherally military music—that is, music other than emphatic, duple-meter, trumpet-and-drum material—appears today in film scores, operas, and even musical comedies. In many cases it is overtly patriotic, but in others it can be used to entertain, or to express sympathy, or even as satire. The soundtrack for *Victory at Sea* (1952–53), jointly composed for American television by Richard Rodgers and Robert Rodney Bennett, represents various interrelated aspects of the history of military music: the *topos* itself; new forms of peripheral musical expression, many of them invented for Hollywood movies rather than concert performances; and the use of both non-military as well as combat-oriented music in the series' individual episodes, which simultaneously soothed American fears and confirmed the nation's economic success.

It may be true that entire cultures can be "infallibly mapped by musical topics," as asserted by Raymond Monelle.[1] But cultures change, and for more than two centuries composers have responded in a variety of ways to war-related issues. Today, *peripherally* military music—which is to say, music other than emphatic, duple-meter, trumpet-and-drum material—appears in film scores, operas, and even musical comedies. In many cases it is overtly patriotic; in others it exists primarily to *entertain* audiences, or to express *sympathy* for the victims of conflict, or to *satirize* "soldierly splendor" and the imagined glories of "military life."[2] A few war-related works are deliberately, even extravagantly experimental: George Crumb's challenging *Black Angels* (1970) is a case in point.

The pages that follow are devoted to three interrelated aspects of military musical history and their relationships to the soundtrack for *Victory at Sea* (1952–53), jointly composed for American television by Richard Rodgers and Robert Rodney Bennett. The first of these aspects is the military *topos* itself and some of its appearances in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century battle-related compositions. The second involves new forms of peripheral musical expression, many of them invented by twentieth-century composers for

[1]Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, and Pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 181.

[2]Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 122.

Hollywood movies rather than concert performances. The third considers non-military as well as combat-oriented musical aspects of individual *Victory at Sea* episodes, and how and why those episodes simultaneously soothed American fears and confirmed the nation's economic success. Finally, a brief comparison of the Rodgers/Bennett score is made to two other 1950s TV series and their soundtracks: *Air Power* and *Industry on Parade*.

Military music from antiquity to the early twentieth century

War and Western music have a lengthy and reciprocal history. Claudio Monteverdi's "rediscovery of an agitated, warlike [musical] style," one that portrayed "the intensity and anxiousness of war" itself, took place in the early seventeenth century and was characterized by such stock "battle devices" as "fast repeated notes, dotted rhythms," and "triplets."[3] A more familiar military figure today is the trumpet or bugle fanfare, which Raymond Monelle identifies as one of the topic's "principal signifiers."[4] In the Old Testament, the Jews defeated their enemies, the Canaanites, with the powerful sound of rams' horns—a sound that also inspired Jewish soldiers during battle.[5] Still another familiar trope is the fulsome use of percussion instruments, employed by ancient Greek and Roman armies to communicate, and by their Celtic enemies as they went into battle, accompanied by drums as well as bagpipes and horns.

Military signifiers have appeared in a number of cultural contexts, sacred as well as secular. Franz Josef Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli* (1796) was inspired by Austria's mobilization under the threat of war with France. Leonard Ratner has pointed out how mock-military passages "furnished material for humor" in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* (1786).[6] The colorful musical style called "Turkish" or "Janissary" grew out of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conflicts between Ottoman and European armies.[7] Because of the trumpets, timpani, bass drum, triangle, and cymbals employed in its second and fourth, quasi-"Turkish," movements, Haydn's Symphony No. 100 (c. 1794) acquired the nickname "military." Often, too, topically military music has taken the form of fully worked-out pieces such as marches.[8]

Throughout the nineteenth century, a few large-scale symphonic compositions celebrated international conflicts and incorporated pre-existing melodies to identify the antagonists. Ludwig van Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory*

[3]Ben Arnold, *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide* (New York and London: Garland, 1993), 54, 28.

[4]Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 6. See too Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 18–19. For an extended discussion of topical military music, see Monelle, *The Musical Topic*, 113–81.

[5]See Joshua 5:13–6:27.

[6]Ratner, *Classic Music*, 19.

[7]Ratner, *Classic Music,* 21.

[8]Ratner, *Classic Music,* 8.

(1809) is full of stock military figures, and its score calls for four horns, six trumpets, three trombones, and a large percussion battery. Beethoven employed "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King" to represent the triumphant English forces at the Battle of Vitoria, while "Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre" represented the French.[9] In his *Overture: 1812* (1880), Pytor Iliych Tchaikovsky used four national and religious melodies for programmatic purposes: "O Lord, Save Thy People," a Russian folk dance known as "At the Gate, At my Gate," and "God Save the Tsar!" to represent the victorious Russian forces; and the "Marseillaise" to represent the defeated French. As Ben Arnold has noted, Tchaikovsky's "Overture" became so popular that even during the "Red Scare" of the 1950s, when the Soviet Union threatened to annihilate Western civilization, American men and women "wholeheartedly endorsed" its performance for "festive celebrations, particularly … the Fourth of July."[10] Other large-scale works have been devoted to conflicts of the distant past. In *Hunnenschlacht* (1857), Franz Liszt employed quotations from *Crux fidelis*, a Gregorian chant, to represent the Christian forces that defeated an invading army of pagan Huns more than a thousand years ago.

Military musical gestures also appeared in "vernacular" as well as "cultivated" nineteenth-and early twentieth-century compositions.[11] A few American Civil War-era songs featured fanfares, march-like rhythms, familiar melodies and, occasionally, sacred textual references. Based on a traditional tune known as "John Brown's Body," the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1862) is cast in duple meter and contains fanfare figures, while its lyrics are full of Christian sentiment. Although initially associated with Union forces fighting under George Kimball's leadership, the "Battle Hymn" is sung and played today throughout the United States. Although *"St. Gaudens" in Boston Common (Col. Shaw and his Colored Regiment)*, a symphonic poem composed by Charles Ives sometime between 1903 and 1929, acknowledges the memorial designed by sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens in honor of Union officer Robert Gould Shaw, the piece also honors the regiment of African American soldiers Gould commanded and the Civil-War engagement they fought.[12]

Nineteenth-century battle pieces have often been dismissed as vulgar and trivial "pot-boilers"; Beethoven is said to have described his own

[9]Beethoven may or may not have been aware of a musical joke embedded in *Wellington's Victory*. "Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre" began life as a burlesque lament on the rumored death of the 1st Duke of Marlborough at the 1709 Battle of Malplaquet. The Duke survived, however, and his survival suggests England's victory over France.

[10]Arnold, *Music and War*, 94.

[11]For definitions of these terms, see H. Wiley Hitchcock, with Kyle Gann, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), esp. 55–65. Hitchcock also employs these terms in previous editions of his *Introduction*.

[12]Ives initially called his composition a "Black March." Full of "quiet dissonances," the "*St. Gaudens*" constitutes "a meditation on the Civil War and on the heart of the American racial dilemma" [Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1996), 218].

"Battle Symphony" as nothing more than "an occasional work."[13] Nevertheless, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and John Philip Souza's marches have been widely accepted as patriotic and popular. In 1897, Souza's *Stars and Stripes Forever* was proclaimed America's "national march" by the U.S. Congress. Unfortunately, Gould's Civil War soldiers lost their battle, reminding us that funeral music has long played a part in war-related compositions. The "solemn march" composed by Hector Berlioz's as the first movement of his *Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (1830) belongs to that tradition. So does the second movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* (1803–1804), subtitled "Marcia funèbre." Several of Liszt's 1840s and 1850s piano pieces and symphonic poems, including *Funérailles, Héroïde funèbre*, and *Hungaria*, commemorate fallen Hungarian patriots. Mock-solemn funerial passages have also appeared in programmatic contexts. Consider, among other examples, the "march-to-the-scaffold" passages in Berlioz's own *Symphonie fantastique* (1830), and in Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1894–95).

Twentieth-century military-musical innovations and experiments

More recently, stylistically experimental compositions, many of them employing peripherally "military" music, have won praise from discriminating critics. Some of these works have been devoted to depicting the horrors of war. Krzysztof Pendereki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) is a case in point. Arnold Schoenberg's *Survivor from Warsaw* (1947), a cantata scored for narrator, men's chorus, and orchestra, recalls that city's Jewish uprising against the Nazis—a hard-fought, ulimately tragic event, although not strictly speaking an "official" World War II battle.[14]

One quite different musical protest is Paul Hindemith's satiric *Minimax* (1921). Subtitled "Repertoire for Military Orchestra for String Quartet," Hindemith's little-known work satirizes World War I band music, an activity in which the composer himself took part, and which he loathed.[15] Another satiric statement appears in *Cabaret*, a musical comedy created by John Kander and Fred Ebb, directed on Broadway by Hal Prince (1966–69), and transformed into a rather different film directed by Bob Fosse (1972). Set in early 1930s Berlin, *Cabaret* has nothing directly to do with conflict or soldiers, but the words and quasi-patriotic style of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," a quasi-Nazi hymn to

[13]Quoted in Swafford, *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph – A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 616.

[14]See, for instance, Joy H. Calico, *Arnold Schoenberg's* A Survivor from Warsaw *in Postwar Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Among other subjects, Calico discusses the anxiety associated with and expressed in much post-World War II concert music.

[15]Unlike Tchaikovsky's "Overture" and Strauss's poem, *Minimax* long remained all but unknown. It appeared in print only in 1974.

power that appears in both the stage and screen productions, mocks the arrogance that inspired German aggression in World War II.

Film scores have combined topical and peripheral military-musical statements in a variety of contexts. During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, composers provided upbeat soundtracks for dozens of Hollywood "war" movies: entertainments intended to bolster confidence in America's armed forces, or to celebrate Allied World War II victories. Many of their soundtracks consist of existing popular songs, although a few introduced new hits of their own. *From Here to Eternity* (1953) mostly featured familiar popular numbers. "Re-Enlistment Blues," however, was composed for the film by Merle Travis, set to pre-existing words, and performed on-screen by Travis himself.[16] *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1944) dramatizes a real-life event: America's April 1942 air strike against Japan, in retaliation for that nation's December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The film's score was compiled by Herbert Stothart from pop songs as well as a few explicitly military and patriotic numbers—"The Star-Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful" and, of timely interest, "The Army Air Corps Song," composed in 1938 by Robert Crawford and better-known today as "Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder." *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), an animated short subject produced by Walt Disney, ridicules America's German enemies as incompetent band musicians. The soundtrack contains a few satirical but topically familiar musical gestures, but the cartoon avoids battle scenes and only a few imaginary bombs fall near the end of Donald Duck's nightmare. Nevertheless, the eponymous song became a war-time hit.

A few war movies were less explicitly martial. *Tender Comrade* (1943) was devoted to the "women left behind": the mothers, sweethearts, and wives of soldiers fighting in distant places. As noted by Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black, throughout the film these women "volunteer … for war work and mak[e] those little sacrifices which indicated to OWI [the Office of War Information] a cheerful acceptance of war's discomforts."[17] Some of the music employed in *From Here to Eternity* and *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* accompanies scenes of combat or soldierly life, but the music of *Tender Comrade* features neither patriotic or popular numbers, nor does any of it suggest battlefield suffering. Perhaps for these reasons the movie's depiction of comfortable domesticity was ultimately rejected by the OWI as "too lavish" for distribution "in [Allied] counties that had experienced war-time destitution."[18]

More recent war films have employed both conventional and highly unconventional military music. John Williams's score for *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) is full of topically traditional military signifiers. Jerry Goldsmith's score for *Patton* (1970) incorporates trumpet flourishes and marches as well as a few quasi-religious

[16]*From Here to Eternity* was based on a novel of the same title by James Jones, reprinted in 1998 by Delta.

[17]Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 166.

[18]Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 169–70.

passages for pipe organ, and a few jazzy "American" moments. On the other hand, much of Hans Zimmer's score for *The Thin Red Line* (also 1998) is quiet, thoughtful, and even sad: an appropriate accompaniment for the voiced-over personal musings of individual American soldiers fighting on Guadalcanal.[19] Occasionally too, existing concert works have become thoroughly militarized through association with entertainments. Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" is accepted today by many Americans as "military" because of its iconic use in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a film about the Vietnam War.

Victory at Sea and 1950s American television

Rodgers's and Bennett's twelve-hour musical soundtrack for *Victory at Sea* was designed to accompany documentary footage shot mostly in the Pacific Theater during World War II.[20] From its inception, the entire twenty-six-part series was undertaken as a "corporate" endeavor.[21] Working closely with the Department of the Navy, as well as with a team including editors, technicians, engineers, producers, directors, designers, and consultants, researcher Henry Salomon and his associate Richard Hauser put together one of America's first *infotainments*—a term not in use at the time, but from its inception a form of programming that probed "new possibilities of media entrepreneurship," sought to soothe American television audiences worried about the Korean Conflict and Soviet nuclear power, and provided indirect support for America's World War II veterans "fighting for [their] lives amidst radical postwar realignments."[22]

The series was created "exclusively for television"—itself, at the time, a groundbreaking endeavor on behalf of a medium so new and as yet little understood, that explaining its innovations to contemporary readers may have required an entirely new definition of what TV actually stood for.[23] The emerging medium was already understood as a venue principally for non-controversial diversion, no matter what its subjects and stories. *Air Power* (1956–1957), a similar if somewhat less successful, twenty-six-episode TV series, featured an "operatic" score by Norman Dell Joio.[24] Deliberately less

[19]America's conflict over Guadalcanal involved sea battles as well as the land battle depicted in *The Thin Red Line*. "As hard fought as the ground fighting on Guadalcanal was," though—and Zimmer's score underlines its difficulties—"four times as many sailors lost their lives in the naval battles fought in support of the ground and air forces on the island" (James F. Dunnington and Albert A. Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific* [New York: William Morrow, 1995], 19). For film and TV audiences, however, combat on land is more easily understood in terms of individual soldiers, weapons, and hand-to-hand fighting.

[20]A useful synopsis of the series' history and contents appears on Wikipedia at "Victory at Sea," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_at_Sea (accessed March 1, 2018).

[21]Philip D. Beidler, "Making a Production Out of It: *Victory at Sea* and American Remembering," *Prospects* 22 (1997): 522.

[22]Beidler, "Making a Production Out of It," 522.

[23]Beidler, "Making a Production Out of It," 523.

[24]See Norman Shavin, "Television Discovers Music," *Music Journal* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1957): 56. Shavin explains that Dello Joio worked carefully and ran episodes of the series "constantly while working on the score." In 1958, selections from his soundtrack were recorded for Naxos Records by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

attention-getting music accompanied episodes of *Industry on Parade* (1950–60), a project consisting of some 500 mini-documentaries devoted to American manufacturing and commerce.

The team that put *Victory at Sea* together recognized the need for appropriate, suitably varied music. Salomon, who launched the entire undertaking, understood there "was something the pictures [i.e., the documentary footage] by themselves could not convey … a subtle, spiritual dimension needed to give them—and the entire drama—its ultimate meaning."[25] Philip Beidler explains that the

> conceptualizing of an accompanying musical score … continued to engage … inspired, even visionary multimedia thinking that would pay immediately by bringing an added luster of both artistic seriousness and popular visibility to the project—not to mention pay enormous new material dividends, as with evolving video technologies, in entertainment markets created by other new sound reproduction technologies just down the road. [Thus], instead of mere musical "background," perhaps period material or a running accompaniment drawing on military and patriotic standards, *an exclusive, original work of serious musical composition*, they decided, should also be devised as dramatically and thematically integral to the film work and the narration.[26]

Salomon preferred an all-musical soundtrack, one that eschewed sounds of actual combat, and only a few explosions and other diagetic battle noises can be heard in any of the series' episodes.[27] Every episode also includes spoken commentary by Leonard Graves. Today, however, *More Victory at Sea*, a compact-disk recording of selected soundtrack numbers, includes a track devoted to "Special Effects Battle Sounds."

Consequently, the Rodgers/Bennett *Victory at Sea* soundtrack is anything but diagetic. Portions are conventionally topical, with powerful chords and occasional dissonances illuminating a few scenes of combat. As a whole, however, the series' soundtrack is peripherally military, sincere *and* entertaining. The lilting "Guadalcanal March," foregrounded in "Guadalcanal" (Episode 6 of the series), proved to be especially popular. The "Song of the High Seas," the series' instrumental theme song, sounds as if it were written for a cheerful travelogue. "Beneath the Southern Cross" (Episode 10) includes melodic material later reworked as a musical-comedy love song.[28] Still other, less exciting, passages accompany scenes of America's war-time and post-war industrial productivity.

[25]David Ewen, *Richard Rodgers* (New York: Henry Holt, 1957), 280.

[26]Beidler, "Making a Production Out of It," 525; italics added.

[27]Peter C. Rollins, "*Victory at Sea*: Cold War Epic," in *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, edited by Gary R. Edgerton and Rollins (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 114.

[28]"No Other Love" was recomposed by Rodgers, who dubbed its original iteration a "languid tango [composed] to accompany the activities of our Navy in South American waters" before it was set to words by Oscar Hammerstein II, Rodgers's lyricist-partner (Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* [New York: Random House, 1975], 281). The finished song found a home in *Me and Juliet*, which opened on Broadway in May 1953. The song became a hit after it was recorded by Perry Como.

Not all of *Victory at Sea* is devoted solely to the United States and its military forces; a few soundtrack passages suggest other nations and peoples, albeit stereotypically. The series opens in Europe with footage of German submarine warfare. "Mediterranean Mosaic" (Episode 5) depicts British naval forces guarding the seas around Gibraltar and Malta, while "Sand and Sea" (Episode 9) deals with Allied action in North Africa. "The Fate of Europe" (Episode 22), filled with images of post-war German cities in ruins, precedes installments devoted, in non-chronological order, to the 1936 Japanese invasion of China ("The Road to Mandalay," Episode 24) and, finally, to the atom bomb, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Japan's surrender to the United States ("Design for Peace," Episode 26).

In *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide*, Ben Arnold reviews the history and evolution of Western military music from Monteverdi's day to the 1990s.[29] Foregrounding concert works, however, Arnold identifies only a *Symphonic Suite* assembled from popular *Victory at War* soundtrack passages, and Arnold attributes that work exclusively to Rodgers—a widespread misconception, as we shall see below.[30] The Rodgers/Bennett score may not deserve the attention Arnold pays Penderecki's *Threnody*, "one of the most famous works of the [twentieth] century."[31] We should remember, though, that Penderecki lived and worked in Iron-Curtain Poland, and that his avant-garde, anti-war work won not a Grammy but a 1961 UNESCO Prize. *Victory at Sea* was created within and on behalf of a very different nation, and its soundtrack was designed to provide diverting music for a new medium, one just beginning to emerge as America's foremost entertainment venue.

In 1950, when *Victory at Sea* began to take shape, Rodgers was the most successful musical-comedy composer in American history. His commission to write "background music" for the entire series he later described as the "most ambitious solo undertaking" of his career.[32] Rodgers's contributions to the final soundtrack were scarcely "solo," however, nor do they seem especially "ambitious" for the composer of *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945)—the latter show identified in 1999 by *Time* magazine as the "Greatest Musical Comedy of the Twentieth Century."[33] Nevertheless, Rodgers took the assignment seriously. In his autobiography, *Musical Stages*, he explains

[29]See note 1.

[30]Arnold, *Music and War*, 313, item 1141.

[31]Arnold, *Music and War*, 235.

[32]Quoted in Stanley Green, "Not a Few of His Songs Were Left on the Cutting Room Floor," in *The Richard Rodgers Reader*, edited by Geoffrey Block (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77. From the beginning, journalists and scholars have credited Rodgers and only Rodgers as *Victory at Sea*'s composer. See, for instance, Jack Gould, "N.B. C. Video's *Victory at Sea* Is a Compelling Drama of Navy Action With Rodgers Score," *New York Times*, October 27, 1952, 35.

[33]See "The Sound of Money," *The Pop History Dig*, 2009, http://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/carousel-history/ (accessed March 1, 2018).

that he paid close attention to "written breakdowns—or logs—of all the action," and that he

> took those logs everywhere … Whenever I had some spare moments, I'd take them out and read, say, "Airplane carrier. Planes landing on deck," which would trigger the mental image I needed to write the music I thought appropriate to accompany the scene…. It was fragmented work, not like sitting down and composing a symphony, or even a score for a show…. As a result, what I composed were actually musical themes.… [After all, people] have an emotional need for melody.[34]

The results were tuneful but brief: a dozen piano pieces, none more than two minutes in length.[35] It was Bennett who, drawing upon Rodgers's themes, worked throughout the eight months that were needed to bring the music for *Victory at Sea* from Rodgers's first sketches to its final orchestration.[36] Bennett also composed the entire score of "The Turkey Shoot" (Episode 18).[37] Only Rodgers, though, received the Navy's Distinguished Public Service Award, and only Rodgers was honored with an award "from the class of 1923 at Columbia College for 'outstanding achievement.'"[38]

Victory at Sea was a stunning critical and popular success. The series won an Emmy for "best public affairs program," and in 1952—on behalf of NBC—Salomon received a Special Award from the Peabody Foundation. In 1954 Rodgers recorded a "symphonic scenario" of soundtrack excerpts with the New York Philharmonic, and Bennett conducted several money-making recordings: first with the NBC Symphony (1953), then with members of the Symphony of the Air (1954). Eventually RCA released four different LPs and CDs, including two re-mastered recordings: the first entitled *Victory at Sea* (13 tracks), the second —mentioned previously—*More Victory at Sea* (11 tracks). Although the series as a whole has been forgotten by twenty-first-century TV viewers, its music continues to be heard. An arrangement for wind band of the *Symphonic Scenario* was presented in December 2011 by the Austin Symphonic Wind Ensemble.[39] In April 2014, the Redlands Symphony of Redlands, California, programmed an orchestral version of the *Scenario* as part of a "Connect with the Heroes" concert.[40] Ensemble arrangements of the "Guadalcanal March" remain favorites of amateur and professional ensembles alike, and a keyboard arrangement was published in 1952 by Williamson Music of London.

[34]Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 279, 281.

[35]Quoted from an interview with Rodgers conducted by Kenneth Leish. See *The Richard Rodgers Reader*, 332.

[36]Ewen, *Richard Rodgers*, 281. "[M]uch of the … [soundtrack] music was created not by Rodgers but by his orchestrator … who not only provided the orchestral dress but also many of the transitional passages."

[37]A less erroneous but nevertheless incomplete explanation for the origins of the *Victory at Sea* soundtrack involves a completed score "assembled from Rodgers's melodies by the prolific and gifted orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett" (Geoffrey Block, *Richard Rodgers* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 174).

[38]Ewen, *Richard Rodgers*, 276.

[39]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz4gFGKw0cw (accessed March 1, 2018).

[40]See https://www.redlandssymphony.com/pieces/victory-at-sea-selections (accessed March 1, 2018).

Most of the critical attention devoted to *Victory at Sea* has dealt exclusively with its historical, political, and even military significance. At least one critic has praised the series, calling it one of a number of "limited-run, high-quality [1950s] documentaries produced by a military service with significant Hollywood involvement."[41] Most critics, however, have complained that the entire series—and therefore, by implication, the Rodgers/Bennett soundtrack—distorts military history. In Richard Bartone's opinion, no television history can be altogether truthful, because "mediation [itself] compromises historical validity," and "highly mediated products" such as *Victory at Sea* "often overlook causes of war, conflicts[,] and decisions as well as precluding a sense of balance in perceiving the motives of leaders or governments."[42] For Bartone, *Victory at Sea* fails to "isolate the strategic causes of a U.S. military victory," instead implying that our nation's triumphs "stem[ed] from the fact that America represents freedom," giving our nation "the right and strength to overcome unbelievable odds and a vicious enemy" in the Pacific Theater.[43] Other commentators, such as Peter Rollins, suggest the series presents its audiences with an America in which "no pressing social problems" exist, a nation that has "no real need for internal politics."[44] America, in other words, is a nation fond of diversion and unthinking patriotism.

Comparatively few scholars have commented directly on the music for *Victory at Sea*, but aspects of the Rodgers/Bennett soundtrack have not been entirely ignored.[45] Early reviewers praised the series' musical appeal. A critic for *Scholastic Magazine* observed of Episode 1 that "The entire ['Song of the High Seas'] sequence runs without spoken narration or sound effects; the Rodgers score comments on the situation far more effectively than the words could."[46] Nevertheless, later critics, including Rollins, have attacked the series and its soundtrack, disparaging its "real target" as the post-1945 "participant-observer [and, by implication, listener]" for whom World War II was understood as little more than "a masculine conflict," one "unlike the Super Bowl only in the sense that a certain amount of social relevance" was "added to the contest."[47]

For Rollins, the music itself

> supplies an unifying emotion that makes the disparate parts of the scene [i.e., Episode 6] cohere…. Even if we do see members of our fighting team "wasted" en

[41] Jeffrey Crean, "Something to Compete with 'Gunsmoke': 'The Big Picture' Television series and selling a 'modern, progressive and forward thinking' Army to Cold War America," *War & Society* 35, no. 3 (August 2016): 208. Crean also praises *Air Power* on the same page.

[42] Richard C. Bartone, "*Victory At Sea*: A Case Study in Official Telehistory," *Film and History* 21, no. 4 (December 1991): 115.

[43] Bartone, "*Victory At Sea*," 119.

[44] Rollins, "*Victory at Sea*," 108.

[45] See, for example, Val Adams, "Naval History: *Victory at Sea*," *New York Times*, October 26, 1952, II, p. 11; and Tony Perry, "War Story with Epic Staying Power," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1997. Neither author mentions music at all.

[46] Quoted in '"Victory By Installments," *Time Magazine* 60, no. 19 (November 10, 1952): 107.

[47] Rollins, "*Victory at Sea*," 111. NB: the first Super Bowl took place only in 1966.

> route toward the objective [i.e., the occupation of Guadalcanal], the music tells us that something larger is succeeding—indeed, living…. The music [also] has other important effects…. [With the rousing "Guadalcanal March" in his ears,] the participant-observer is flown back to the States for a heartening tour of the domestic mobilization … [and he] grows increasingly confident that [America] will eventually drown the enemy in the torrent of our material wealth.[48]

Rollins pronounced all this "egregious" and a few moments of it "unforgivable." In "Mare Nostrum" (Episode 8), he reports that listeners' ears are "caressed with a romantic lullaby as … an Italian cruiser plung[es] to the bottom of the Mediterranean."[49] Still other "unforgivable" scenes, although not necessarily their musical contents, might be excused "in a wartime propaganda film, but they are inexcusable in a documentary assembled in 1952."[50]

As noted by Colin Shindler, America's war with Japan has "always been the poor relation of the global [World War II] battlefield"—not only in fact, but on screen.[51] Save for Pearl Harbor, and the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, our nation's Pacific war remains obscure even today, and the atom bombs that ended that war still inspire controversy. Moreover, as Shindler has remarked, for many early 1950s American men and women, "the good life after the good war may have remained the not-so-good life," and even where happiness prevailed, "there was also plenty about [their daily routines] that remained dour, bland, insular, conformist, pedestrian, and joyless."[52] To be successful, especially during the Korean War-*cum*-McCarthy "Red Scare" Era—and with thoughts of thermonuclear destruction hovering in the background—a television series about global conflict called for pleasant music.

Victory at Sea was constructed with all this in mind. According to Rollins, what makes it successful as "an entertaining spectacle" involves not only Samuel Eliot Morison's naval history (Morison worked closely with Salomon and his collaborators), but also a "reel [*sic*] message … [about] the character and utility of war, the place of the military in our society, and America's international mission."[53] As propaganda, the series confirmed America's save-the-world mission on behalf of colonialist democracy and military supremacy. Finally, although Bartone discounts manufacturing and material progress as a partial explanation of the nation's war-time triumphs, Rollins mentions the series' many references to "domestic mobilization": a theme that *Tender Comrade* and a few other World War II Hollywood movies explored.

[48]Rollins, *"Victory at Sea,"* 112.

[49]Rollins, *"Victory at Sea,"* 114–15.

[50]Rollins, *"Victory at Sea,"* 115.

[51]Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society, 1939–1952* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 82.

[52]Beidler, *The Victory Album: Reflections on the Good Life after the Good War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 8.

[53]Rollins, "*Victory at Sea*," 104–105. Early installments of Morison's work were published as parts of *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 15 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947–62).

One interesting aspect of *Victory at Sea*, and one nowhere else remarked upon, is its intermittent resemblance to episodes of *Industry On Parade*. Almost forgotten today, *Industry* episodes begins with factory footage, followed by pictured piles of finished goods and accompanied by bland but earnest music. Entirely devoted to "domestic mobilization," the series temporarily captured the imagination of one 1950s child, who recalled years later that she felt both "pride and eager anticipation" as she watched

> tail-finned cars rolling off assembly lines, massive dams taming mighty rivers, and sleek, chrome appliances making life more convenient for all…. [L]ittle did I realize [at the time] that the big box in our living room was not just entertaining me [but] … stimulating an "image" in my head of how the world should work, that anything new was better than something old, that science and technology were the greatest of all human achievements, and that in the near future … everyone [would] live and work in a world free of war, poverty, drudgery, and ignorance.[54]

Consider the "Evaporative Cooling Air Conditioners" episode produced in 1954. The music, the voiced-over narration, and the use of film footage call to mind portions of *Victory at Sea*, including portions of "Guadalcanal," in which sailors load masses of consumer goods as well as military equipment onto American warships. To make its argument inescapable, "Evaporative Cooling Air Conditioners" concludes with a lecture about the greatness of our nation's employer–employee manufacturing "teams."[55] Throughout the *Industry* and *Victory* series, audiences were taught both that America's military triumphs were due in no small part to the nation's productivity and personal character, and that America will *always* triumph in these ways, leading the world to wealth and technological supremacy as well as democracy.

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[54]Elizabeth Thoman, "Rise of the Media Culture: Re-imagining the American Dream," published online by the Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/rise-image-culture (accessed September 15, 2018). On the other hand, Alex D. McRae pointed out before environmental issues were often discussed that "[t]wo recent issues of 'Industry on Parade,' the National Association of Manufacturers' weekly television series, have been featuring conservation of natural resources and reclamation of industrial wastes" (McRae, "Disposal of Alkaline Wastes in the Petrochemical Industry," *Sewage and Industrial Wastes* 31, no. 6 [June 1959]: 718).

[55]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddKjxnm1rn0 (accessed March 1, 2018).