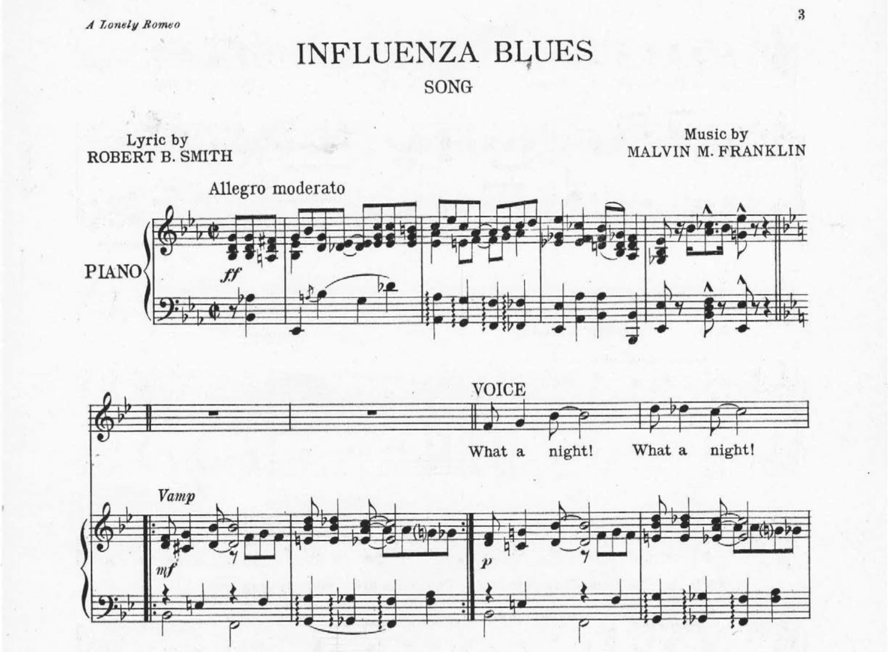
The 1918 Pandemic's Impact on Music? Surprisingly Little

Unlike the existential threat posed by the coronavirus outbreak, cultural life returned swiftly to normal after the flu.



During the 1918 pandemic, several different songs called "The Influenza Blues" were published as sheet music. Arizona State University Music Library Sheet Music Collection

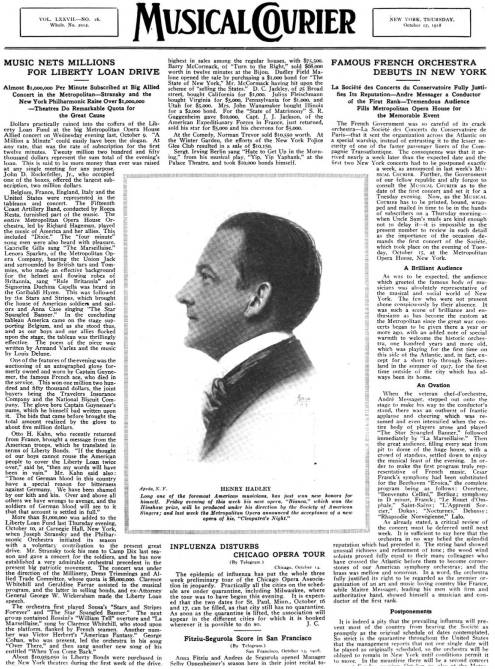
By William Robin

May 6, 2020

"Music Nets Millions for Liberty Loan Drive," proclaimed a front-page headline in October 1918. A major gala at the Metropolitan Opera had just raised more than $20 million for that World War I bond campaign. The New York Philharmonic had raised another million in its own patriotic concert, with George M. Cohan leading his hit "Over There."

But further down the page in Musical Courier magazine were bleaker notices: National tours of the Chicago Opera Association and the Paris Conservatory's orchestra had been put on hold because of quarantines in East Coast and Midwestern cities, a response to the influenza outbreak then sweeping the world.

"One thing can be said for the influenza," Musical America magazine noted a few months later. "It has taken away the certainty from symphony concerts, with the result that one never knows on starting forth these days whether it will be the soloist, the conductor or the entire personnel of the orchestra that will be unable to appear. The only sure thing is that someone will be ill."



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MUSICAL COURIER

NEW YORK, THURSDAY,
October 17, 1918

MUSIC NETS MILLIONS FOR LIBERTY LOAN DRIVE

Almost $1,000,000 Per Minute Subscribed at Big Allied Concert in the Metropolitan—Stransky and the New York Philharmonic Raise Over $1,000,000—Theatres Do Remarkable Quota for the Great Cause

Dollars practically rained into the coffers of the Liberty Loan Fund at the big Metropolitan Opera House Allied concert on Wednesday evening last, October 9. "A Million a Minute" could easily have been the slogan. At any rate, that was the rate of subscription for the first twelve minutes. Twenty million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars represent the sum total of the evening's loan. This is said to be more money than ever was raised at any single meeting for any purpose. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who occupied one of the boxes, offered the largest subscription, two million dollars.

Belgium, France, England, Italy and the United States were represented in the tableaux and concert. The Fifteenth Coast Artillery Band, conducted by Rocca Resta, furnished part of the music. The entire Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra, led by Richard Hageman, played the music of America and her allies. This included "Dixie." The "four minute" song men were also heard with pleasure. Gabrielle Gills sang "The Marseillaise." Lenora Sparkes, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, bearing the Union Jack and surrounded by British tars and Tommies, who made an effective background for the helmet and flowing robes of Britannia, sang "Rule Britannia" and Signorina Duchina Capella was heard in the Garibaldi Hymn. This was followed by the Stars and Stripes, which brought the house of American soldiers and sailors and Anna Case singing "The Star Spangled Banner." In the concluding tableau America came on the stage supporting Belgium, and as she stood thus, and as our boys and our allies flocked upon the stage, the tableau was thrillingly effective. The poem of the piece was written by Armand Varlez and the music by Louis Delune.

One of the features of the evening was the auctioning of an autographed glove formerly owned and worn by Captain Guynemer, the famous French ace, who died in the service. This won one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the joint buyers being the Travelers Insurance Company and the National Biscuit Company. The glove bore Captain Guynemer's name, which he himself had written upon it. The bids that came before brought the total amount realized by the glove to about five million dollars.

Otto H. Kahn, who recently returned from France, brought a message from the American troops, which he translated in terms of Liberty Bonds. "If the thought of our boys cannot rouse the American people to cover the Liberty Loan twice over," said he, "then my words will have been in vain." Mr. Kahn said also: "Those of German blood in this country have a special reason for bitterness against Germany. We have been shamed by our kith and kin. Over and above all others we have wrongs to avenge, and the soldiers of German blood will see to it that that account is settled in full."

More than $1,000,000 was added to the Liberty Loan Fund last Thursday evening, October 10, at Carnegie Hall, New York, when Joseph Stransky and the Philharmonic Orchestra initiated its season with a voluntary contribution to the present great drive. Mr. Stransky took his men to Camp Dix last season and gave a concert for the soldiers, and he has now established a very admirable orchestral precedent in the present big patriotic movement. The concert was under the direction of the Millinery, Dress Trimmings and Allied Trade Committee, whose quota is $8,000,000. Clarence Whitehill and Geraldine Farrar assisted in the musical program, and the latter in selling bonds, and ex-Attorney General George W. Wickersham made the Liberty Loan speech.

The orchestra first played Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" and "The Star Spangled Banner." The next group contained Rossini's "William Tell" overture and "La Marseillaise," sung by Clarence Whitehill, who stood upon the platform, flanked by French seamen. Another number was Victor Herbert's "American Fantasy." George Cohan, who was present, led the orchestra in his song "Over There," and then sang another new song of his entitled "When You Come Back."

About $10,959,050 in Liberty Bonds were purchased in the New York theatres during the first week of the drive.

highest in sales among the regular houses, with $75,500. Barry McCormack, of "Turn to the Right," sold $68,000 worth in twelve minutes at the Bijou. Dudley Field Malone opened the sale by purchasing a $1,000 bond for "The State of New York," Mr. McCormack having hit upon the scheme of "selling the States." D. C. Jackley, of 25 Broad street, bought California for $1,000. Julius Fleischmann bought Virginia for $5,000, Pennsylvania for $1,000, and Utah for $5,000. Mrs. John Wanamaker bought Illinois for a $2,000 bond. For the "State of Matrimony" S. R. Guggenheim gave $10,000. Capt. J. J. Jackson, of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, just returned, sold his star for $5,000 and his chevrons for $5,000.

At the Comedy, Norman Trevor sold $10,550 worth. At the Winter Garden, the efforts of the New York Police Glee Club resulted in a sale of $10,150.

Sergt. Irving Berlin sang "Hate to Get Up in the Morning," from his musical play, "Yip, Yip Yaphank," at the Palace Theatre, and took $10,000 bonds himself.

Apeda, N. Y.

HENRY HADLEY

Long one of the foremost American musicians, has just won new honors for himself. Friday evening of this week his new opera, "Bianca," which won the Hinshaw prize, will be produced under his direction by the Society of American Singers; and last week the Metropolitan Opera announced the acceptance of a new opera of his, "Cleopatra's Night."

INFLUENZA DISTURBS CHICAGO OPERA TOUR

(By Telegram.)

Chicago, October 14.

The epidemic of influenza has put the whole three week preliminary tour of the Chicago Opera Association in jeopardy. Practically all the cities on the schedule are under quarantine, including Milwaukee, where the tour was to have begun this evening. It is expected that the two dates for St. Paul, Minn., October 16 and 17, can be filled, as that city still has no quarantine. As soon as the quarantine is lifted, the association will appear in the different cities for which it is booked wherever it is possible to do so. J. C.

Fitziu-Segurola Score in San Francisco

(By Telegram.)

San Francisco, October 13, 1918.

Anna Fitziu and Andres de Segurola opened Manager Selby Oppenheimer's season here in their joint recital to-

FAMOUS FRENCH ORCHESTRA DEBUTS IN NEW YORK

La Société des Concerts du Conservatoire Fully Justifies Its Reputation—Andre Messager a Conductor of the First Rank—Tremendous Audience Fills Metropolitan Opera House for the Memorable Event

The French Government was so careful of its crack orchestra—La Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris—that it sent the organization across the Atlantic on a special warship, instead of entrusting it to the lesser security of one of the faster passenger liners of the Compagnie Transatlantique. The consequence was that it arrived nearly a week later than the expected date and the first two New York concerts had to be postponed exactly a week, as announced in last week's MUSICAL COURIER. Further, the Government of our fellow republic and ally forgot to consult the MUSICAL COURIER as to the date of the first concert and set it for a Tuesday evening. Now, as the MUSICAL COURIER has to be printed, bound, wrapped and mailed in time to be in the hands of subscribers on a Thursday morning—when Uncle Sam's mails are kind enough not to delay it—it is impossible in the present number to review in such detail as the importance of the occasion demands the first concert of the Société, which took place on the evening of Tuesday, October 15, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

A Brilliant Audience

As was to be expected, the audience which greeted the famous body of musicians was absolutely representative of the musical and social world of New York. The few who were not present shone conspicuously by their absence. It was such a scene of brilliance and enthusiasm as has become the custom at the Metropolitan since the great war concerts began to be given there a year or more ago, with an added note of special warmth to welcome the historic orchestra, one hundred years and more old, which was playing for the first time on this side of the Atlantic, and, in fact, except for a short trip through Switzerland in the summer of 1917, for the first time outside of the city which has always been its home.

An Ovation

When the veteran chef-d'orchestre, André Messager, stepped out onto the stage to make his way to the conductor's stand, there was an outburst of frantic applause and cheering which was resumed and even intensified when the entire body of players arose and played "The Star Spangled Banner," followed immediately by "La Marseillaise." Then the great audience, filling every seat from pit to dome of the huge house, with a crowd of standees, settled down to enjoy the musical feast of the evening. In order to make the first program truly representative of French music, Cesar Franck's symphony had been substituted for the Beethoven "Eroica," the complete program being as follows: Overture, "Benvenuto Cellini," Berlioz; symphony in D minor, Franck; "Le Rouet d'Omphale," Saint-Saëns; "L'Apprenti Sorcier," Dukas; "Nocturnes," Debussy; "Rhapsodie Norvégienne," Lalo.

As already stated, a critical review of the concert must be deferred until next week. It is sufficient to say here that the orchestra in no way belied the splendid reputation which had preceded it. The string band showed unusual richness and refinement of tone; the wood wind soloists proved fully equal to their many colleagues who have crossed the Atlantic before them to become cornerstones of our American symphony orchestras; and the brass was mellow and sonorous. In a word, the orchestra fully justified its right to be regarded as the premier organization of an art and music loving country like France, while Maitre Messager, leading his men with firm and authoritative hand, showed himself a musician and conductor of the first rank.

Postponements

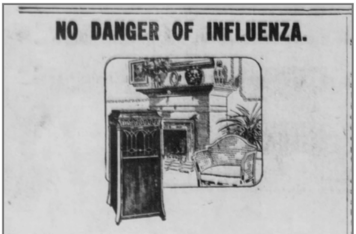
It is indeed a pity that the prevailing influenza will prevent most of the country from hearing the Société as promptly as the original schedule of dates contemplated. So strict is the quarantine throughout the United States that the management reports that not one single date will be played as originally scheduled, so the orchestra will be obliged to remain in New York until conditions permit it to move. In the meantime there will be a second concert

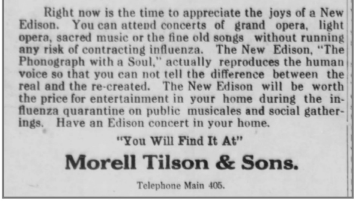
A front page of Musical Courier magazine in October 1918 discusses both patriotic benefit concerts and flu-related tour cancellations. University of Chicago, via HathiTrust

Millions of Americans were sickened and 675,000 died in the 1918 pandemic, among at least 50 million deaths worldwide. And yet, perhaps surprisingly, the effects on musical culture in the United States ended up being relatively mild: merely a few weeks of delayed and canceled concerts.

The flu did not transform the American cultural scene, as the new coronavirus threatens to; when the outbreak eased, in 1919, musical life returned swiftly to normal. A columnist in Musical America back then estimated that the financial damage to music from the influenza outbreak amounted to around $5 million nationwide, the equivalent of approximately $85.5 million today. In 2020, the Met alone stands to lose that much, or more, if the coronavirus outbreak keeps it closed into the fall.

The pandemic was seen "more as a temporary inconvenience than anything else," E. Douglas Bomberger, the musicologist and author of "Making Music American: 1917 and the Transformation of Culture," said in an interview. "The war was the major thing."


NO DANGER OF INFLUENZA.



Right now is the time to appreciate the joys of a New Edison. You can attend concerts of grand opera, light opera, sacred music or the fine old songs without running any risk of contracting influenza. The New Edison, "The Phonograph with a Soul," actually reproduces the human voice so that you can not tell the difference between the real and the re-created. The New Edison will be worth the price for entertainment in your home during the influenza quarantine on public musicales and social gatherings. Have an Edison concert in your home.

"You Will Find It At"

Morell Tilson & Sons.

Telephone Main 405.

Capitalizing on a potential trend toward listening at home, the nascent record industry marketed Edison phonographs. via Newspapers.com

"Influenza Closes Many Concert Halls" was a typical headline in October 1918. It was the beginning of the cultural season, and major ensembles such as the Philadelphia Orchestra suspended their opening weekends. For the most part, though, the classical industry remained sunny about its prospects; an impresario told Musical America that it was "always a good season for a good attraction, so we are not worried." The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra held rehearsals in a nearby village to circumvent the ban on gatherings in its home city.

In New York, which did not close theaters or halls, concert life mostly continued apace. "The huge reaches of Carnegie Hall," read one description of a piano recital, "held an audience which seemed to know neither the lure of the Liberty Loan doings outside or the fear of Spanish influenza among the throng inside."

But some patrons expressed caution; a symphony concert for children was called off at the request of subscribers. The Met delayed several productions because of the illnesses of some principal singers. The eminent violinist Jascha Heifetz and the pianist Leo Ornstein backed out of performances because they were both stricken with the flu.

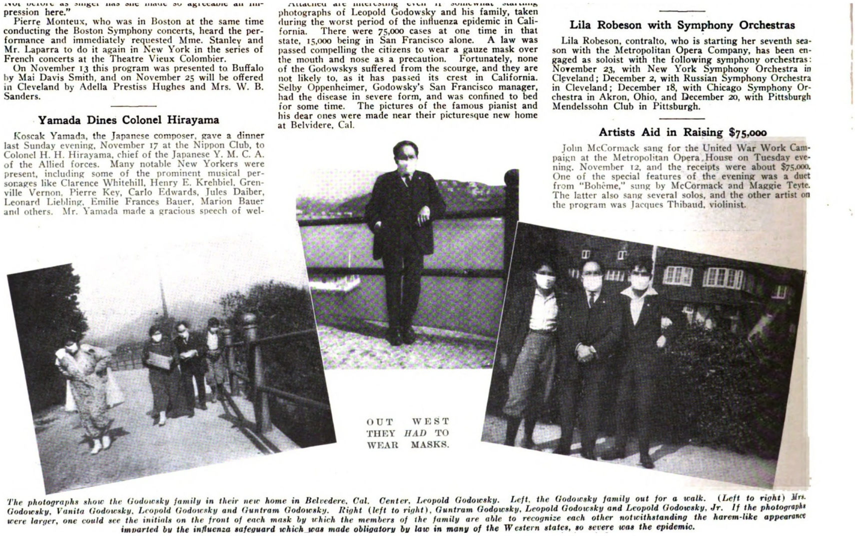
And serious havoc was played on touring orchestras and opera companies. The orchestra of the Paris Conservatory had traveled to the United States by warship for a 60-city tour and made a splashy Carnegie Hall debut in mid-October. But as the flu spread, the ensemble's plans were scrambled. "So strict is the quarantine throughout the United States," Musical Courier reported, "that the management reports that not one single date will be played as originally scheduled, so the orchestra will be obliged to remain in New York until conditions permit it to move."

Editors' Picks

Rusty Travelers Regain Their Sea Legs

Can't a Person Get a Little Privacy Around Here?

Bare Feet, Beer and Heavy Metal Bangers: Golf Chills Out and Gets Cool



Not before as singer has she made so agreeable an impression here."

Pierre Monteux, who was in Boston at the same time conducting the Boston Symphony concerts, heard the performance and immediately requested Mme. Stanley and Mr. Laparra to do it again in New York in the series of French concerts at the Theatre Vieux Colombier.

On November 13 this program was presented to Buffalo by Mai Davis Smith, and on November 25 will be offered in Cleveland by Adella Prestiss Hughes and Mrs. W. B. Sanders.

Yamada Dines Colonel Hirayama

Koscak Yamada, the Japanese composer, gave a dinner last Sunday evening, November 17 at the Nippon Club, to Colonel H. H. Hirayama, chief of the Japanese Y. M. C. A. of the Allied forces. Many notable New Yorkers were present, including some of the prominent musical personages like Clarence Whitehill, Henry E. Krehbiel, Grenville Vernon, Pierre Key, Carlo Edwards, Jules Daiber, Leonard Liebling, Emilie Frances Bauer, Marion Bauer and others. Mr. Yamada made a gracious speech of wel-

Attached are interesting even if somewhat startling photographs of Leopold Godowsky and his family, taken during the worst period of the influenza epidemic in California. There were 75,000 cases at one time in that state, 15,000 being in San Francisco alone. A law was passed compelling the citizens to wear a gauze mask over the mouth and nose as a precaution. Fortunately, none of the Godowskys suffered from the scourge, and they are not likely to, as it has passed its crest in California. Selby Oppenheimer, Godowsky's San Francisco manager, had the disease in severe form, and was confined to bed for some time. The pictures of the famous pianist and his dear ones were made near their picturesque new home at Belvidere, Cal.

Lila Robeson with Symphony Orchestras

Lila Robeson, contralto, who is starting her seventh season with the Metropolitan Opera Company, has been engaged as soloist with the following symphony orchestras: November 23, with New York Symphony Orchestra in Cleveland; December 2, with Russian Symphony Orchestra in Cleveland; December 18, with Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Akron, Ohio, and December 20, with Pittsburgh Mendelssohn Club in Pittsburgh.

Artists Aid in Raising $75,000

John McCormack sang for the United War Work Campaign at the Metropolitan Opera House on Tuesday evening. November 12, and the receipts were about $75,000. One of the special features of the evening was a duet from "Bohême," sung by McCormack and Maggie Teyte. The latter also sang several solos, and the other artist on the program was Jacques Thibaud, violinist.

OUT WEST THEY *HAD* TO WEAR MASKS.

The photographs show the Godowsky family in their new home in Belvedere, Cal. Center, Leopold Godowsky. Left, the Godowsky family out for a walk. (Left to right) Mrs. Godowsky, Vanita Godowsky, Leopold Godowsky and Guntram Godowsky. Right (left to right), Guntram Godowsky, Leopold Godowsky and Leopold Godowsky, Jr. If the photographs were larger, one could see the initials on the front of each mask by which the members of the family are able to recognize each other notwithstanding the harem-like appearance imparted by the influenza safeguard which was made obligatory by law in many of the Western states, so severe was the epidemic.

Magazines circulated pictures of the famed pianist Leopold Godowsky in a protective mask at his home near San Francisco. University of Chicago, via HathiTrust

The pandemic's effects on pop music are less well documented, though Mr. Bomberger found records of early jazz bands having tours canceled. When New Orleans shut down, Louis Armstrong, then 17, apparently took gigs playing country dances outside of town. Several different songs called "The Influenza Blues" were published as sheet music.

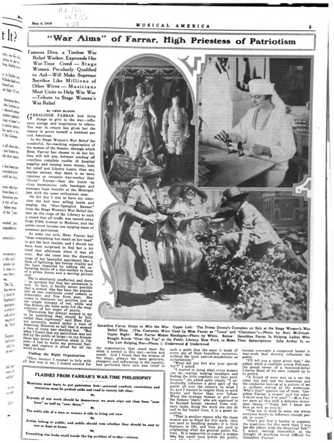
Capitalizing on a potential trend toward listening at home, the nascent record industry marketed Edison phonographs with advertisements that declared, "You can attend concerts of grand opera, light opera, sacred music or the fine old songs without running any risk of contracting influenza." And magazines circulated pictures of the famed pianist Leopold Godowsky in a protective mask at his home near San Francisco.

"Like a good citizen, he wears his mask," stated one caption, "and, like the rest of the community, thinks it quite likely he'll be lonely without it when the quarantine has passed."

Such photo-ops were typical of an era in which music was mobilized for wartime propaganda, and artists molded into symbols of heroic self-sacrifice. Earlier in 1918, Musical America had called the soprano Geraldine Farrar the "high priestess of patriotism," with photos of her sewing bandages and hawking war bonds.

It seems likely that wartime fund-raising concerts, including that Met gala, helped spread the disease. Philadelphia infamously refused to call off a huge Liberty Loan parade, and many cities continued to hold open-air pageants.

"They seem to have had a mistaken impression that doing concerts outdoors was not a problem, because the germs wouldn't be communicated as easily," Mr. Bomberger said. "But when you see these crowds of tens of thousands of people, packed in like sardines, you know that they were passing the germs around."



May 4, 1918 MUSICAL AMERICA 3

"War Aims" of Farrar, High Priestess of Patriotism

Famous Diva, a Tireless War Relief Worker, Expounds Her War-Time Creed — Stage Women Peculiarly Qualified to Aid—Will Make Supreme Sacrifice Like Millions of Other Wives — Musicians Must Unite to Help Win War —Tribute to Stage Women's War Relief

By VERA BLOOM

GERALDINE FARRAR had three things to give to the war—influence, energy and inspiration to others. The war in return has given her the chance to prove herself a hundred per cent American.

At the Stage Women's War Relief the wonderful, far-reaching organization of the women of the theater, through which Mme. Farrar has chosen to do her bit, they will tell you, between sending off countless complete outfits of hospital supplies and raising more money, both for relief and Liberty Loans, than any similar society, that there is no more vigorous or versatile war-worker than "Gerry" Farrar—that she hunts up stray harmonicas, rolls bandages and manages huge benefits at the Metropolitan with the same enthusiasic ease.

On the day I was to have my interview she had been selling bonds and singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" from the Stage Women's War Relief theater on the steps of the Library to such a crowd that all traffic was turned away from Fifth Avenue to Madison, and the entire street became one surging mass of generous patriotism.

As some one said, Mme. Farrar had "done everything but stand on her head" to get the best results, and I should not have been surprised to find her a bit tired that afternoon when it was all over. But she came into the drawing room of her beautiful apartment like a flash of lightning, her breezy vitality not the least impaired by adding the exhausting duties of a war-worker to those of a prima donna and a moving picture star.

She is absolutely unaffected, and there is no question but that her animation is real. In fact, it hardly seems possible that a woman who has been the popular idol of two continents could remain so democratic and free from pose. She seems to dominate her position just as the simple nosegay of red, white and blue flowers she wore quite hid the magnificence of her ropes of pearls.

"Patriotism has always seemed to me to be something that should be felt, rather than expressed," said Mme. Farrar earnestly, seated under a vase of American Beauties so tall that it seemed a tree of roses was shading her. "But when I found that my patriotism was not felt by the public at large—to my friends there was never a question about it, I'm sure—I had to waive my personal feelings and express it aloud for all the world to hear.

Finding the Right Organization

"Then, because I wanted to help with all that was in me, I looked around for the organization that stood most for what is needed in this war—action and result. And I found that the women of the stage, always the most generous, energetic and influencing in the country, had perfected their own war relief to such a point that the most is made of every one of their boundless resources, without the least narrow-mindedness or sectarianism."

"What did you feel was your special 'bit'?" I asked.

"I started in doing what every woman can do—sewing, making bandages and finding the little comforts our boys need, because," she added quite simply, "I undoubtedly influence a good part of the public all over the country by what I do, and I wanted to inspire them to work harder and faster than ever before. When the average woman or girl sees the famous 'stars,' who are supposed to be favored beings, excused from ordinary tasks, doing the work she can do and in far busier lives, it is a great incentive.

"That is another reason why the stage women are so fitted for this work—they are used to handling people; it is their business in life, and they are used to originating what the general public follows. It is impossible to expect a woman who has never been before the public, become overnight a competent leader in war-work that directly influences the public.

"I'll tell you a story about that," she added, while a confident young Pekinese, the proud owner of a thousand-dollar Liberty Bond of his own, jumped up to be petted.

"A friend of mine was on a car the other day and saw the motorman and the conductor looking at a picture of me in uniform sewing at the workroom. 'Who's that?' queried one of them. 'Geraldine Farrar, a singer,' said the other. 'I never seen her, h've you?' "—Miss Farrar gave all this with a delicious motorman twang—" 'Nope, but I know her face as well as your'n.'

"You see, it must be some one whom everyone knows to influence enough people to count."

"Don't you find it harder to organize the musicians for this work than it was for the others with the theatrical folk?" I asked, smiling meanwhile at the thought of anything being difficult for Geraldine Farrar!

Geraldine Farrar Helps to Win the War. Upper Left: The Prima Donna's Costumes on Sale at the Stage Women's War Relief Shop. (The Costumes Were Used by Miss Farrar as "Tosca" and "Cherubino")—Photo by Burr McIntosh. Upper Right: Miss Farrar Makes Bandages—Photo by White. Below: Geraldine Farrar Is Helping Ladies Who Bought Bonds "Over the Top" at the Public Library, New York, to Make Their Subscriptions. Julia Arthur Is on The Left Helping Her—Photo © Underwood & Underwood

FLASHES FROM FARRAR'S WAR-TIME PHILOSOPHY

Musicians must learn to put patriotism first—personal comfort, convictions and resources must be pushed aside and road to victory left clear.

Keynote of war work should be democracy; we must wipe out class lines "over here" as well as "over there."

The noble side of a man or woman is side to bring out now.

Artists belong to public, and public should vote whether they should be sent to war or kept at home.

Everything else looks small beside the big problem of to-day—victory.

In 1918, Musical America called the soprano Geraldine Farrar the "high priestess of patriotism," with photos of her sewing bandages and hawking war bonds. University of Minnesota, via HathiTrust

Some of the obituaries in the musical press were wrenching. In early October 1918, the young soprano Belle Godschalk, who had just started her international career when war broke out, died of influenza. Along with volunteering to work at the Bethlehem Steel plant in Pennsylvania, she had toured troop encampments, and contracted the illness after singing seven times in a single day at Camp Dix, in New Jersey.

“The frail body burnt itself out working with feverish enthusiasm in the munition plant, and then singing for the boys in the camps,” a local conductor wrote in the Musical Courier. “She literally gave up her life for her country.”

Even if they survived, musicians lost significant income; in San Francisco, the musicians’ union fought to rescind a monthlong theater ban. But by November, the East Coast and Midwest had begun to reopen as new cases declined, and concert halls were more packed than ever. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra resumed its season, albeit with “threat of pains and penalties for the patron who should cough or sneeze without smothering the explosion in a handkerchief,” according to Musical America. Touring opera companies that resumed their seasons apparently saw extraordinary ticket sales.

What made the 1918 flu so lethal also made its impact on the arts less dire: It moved with stunning swiftness. The pandemic was ultimately a horrific blip in musical history. It is not clear if any cultural institutions faced the kind of long-term financial consequences that are being predicted today.

And live performance was already being challenged in the 21st century, even before the coronavirus. With the multitude of streaming options available, many people may remain at home even when it is safe to return to theaters and concert halls.

“In that time, they hadn’t even instituted commercial radio yet, let alone television or the internet, and the phonograph industry was still in its infancy,” Mr. Bomberger said of 1918. “Truly, there wasn’t an alternative to live concerts. People knew that after this was over, they would get back to live concerts full blast.”

In November 1919, Musical America predicted that the new concert season would be “of record-breaking proportions,” with increased audiences both because the war was over and “to compensate for schedules blasted to nothingness a year ago by the influenza ravages.”

“Musical interest everywhere,” it added, “appears to be at a fever heat.” The pages that followed detailed a rich array of upcoming performances, from band concerts in Mankato, Minn., to the opening of a new opera house in Bangor, Maine.

“The thing that was really heartening to me to read in these 1918 sources,” Mr. Bomberger said, “is how much people appreciated music, and needed music, and loved music. It was something that they couldn’t live without.”

A version of this article appears in print on May 7, 2020, Section C, Page 3 of the New York edition with the headline: The 1918 Flu’s Impact on Music? Not Major. Order Reprints | Today’s Paper | Subscribe