

## SOLIDARITY FOREVER

### Music and the Labor Movement in the United States

*Benjamin Bierman*



*Figure 3.1* A.K. Bierman leading a strike of faculty member at San Francisco College, 1969. Permission granted by the photographer, Phiz Mezey.

This essay examines the history of the relationship between music and labor in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, an extremely active period for songs regarding the struggle for workers' rights. As an introduction, picture yourself doing some type of repetitive work, such as on an assembly line, running a textile loom, or, perhaps, in a coal mine. Then, imagine having the opportunity to sing with your colleagues as you work. It would lift your spirits and create a feeling of commonality and community. Your workplace and your job would become a shared social

experience, rather than an isolated one, and potential tedium would be alleviated, with time moving more quickly.

Let us escalate this scenario. Imagine you are in the midst of a labor strike due to sub-standard wages, dangerous working conditions, and lack of benefits. A strike is dangerous, frightening, isolating, and financially precarious, and you only resort to it because you feel that you absolutely must—there is no other choice. You do not strike alone, however, because you feel safer with others sharing the burden, as well as sharing the potentially devastating effects, such as not having money to feed your family and losing your job. Your negotiating is stronger in numbers, and you might have, or be fighting for, union representation. Imagine yourself on the picket line. Again—and I say this from personal experience—this is a daunting activity and interaction. There is often an intense police presence, because the threat of violence is frequent, and emotions run very high on both sides. Some workers take on the vacated jobs during a strike—these workers are pejoratively referred to as “scabs”—and this causes another level of tension, again with the potential for violence, perhaps as they cross the picket line. This is no joking matter, as people’s livelihoods on both sides are at stake. You and your fellow workers may be harboring years of resentment for what you feel is poor treatment or, perhaps, you are frustrated with what you believe is a poor and unfair wage; the organization you are striking against has its own perspective.

This is all to say that labor issues are fraught with intense emotions, and livelihoods are on the line. There are families to feed and rents to pay. So, you strike. You take a chance. Each striker is concerned about what will happen, but you all find some kind of solace and security in being in this situation with your fellow workers. On the picket line—not a fun activity in and of itself—the idea of fervently and joyfully singing songs to express yourselves, to help pass long tedious hours, perhaps in the heat or cold, to create community and solidarity, and even, perhaps, to allay your fears, is a wonderful and powerful thing. This can be seen in the faces of the strikers in the photograph that opens this chapter.

The striking professor at the front of the line happens to be my father, A. K. Bierman. I might very well have been on the picket line that day, as well. Look at the strikers’ faces as they sing on the line. They are vigorous, determined, and even joyful; yet I know the pressures that they were all living under. They all lost income, and some lost their jobs. Certainly, the stress on my father, who was one of the leaders of this faculty strike at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) in 1969, was intense for a wide range of reasons. Yet, there they are, walking the picket line and singing in a resolute and exuberant manner. Expressing your anger, frustrations, and goals through song is powerful, and the history of songs of labor and labor unions proves this.

Music connected to labor falls under the heading of protest music, but the amount of music in this genre, and its importance to the culture and heritage of

the United States, puts it in a category of its own. In fact, songs revolving around the labor movement dominated much of the protest music genre in the first half of the twentieth century. Additionally, the ties between labor protest music and the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam War protests, for example, are clear, and influence the Occupy movement even today.

There is a great deal of research on this topic, and it tends to be from at least some type of leftist perspective and generally focuses on the workers' point of view. There is good reason for this. Labor strikes and labor organizing have often been part of what is referred to as progressive politics, a term usually applied to left-leaning perspectives, so it appears to be primarily the province of left-oriented scholars, as opposed to those on the right. In this essay, I provide an overview of some of this research, as well as a consideration of important songs and artists, the context in which they were written, and how such songs and artists connected with the labor movement and radical politics. I examine two types of songs concerned with issues of labor and left-wing politics from the early twentieth century through the 1950s: music in a folk style, and works by art music composers.<sup>1</sup>

### Early Songs of Labor

Although I begin in the early 1900s, it is important to understand that the tradition of protest music in the US goes back to the pre-Revolutionary War era. In the nineteenth century, songs about labor protests were common, and there is some important scholarship in this area. Clark D. Halker discusses labor publications and musicians in the late nineteenth century in his book, *For Democracy, Workers and God: Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest 1865–1895*, and Philip S. Foner's *Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century* is a compilation of songs on a wide range of social issues—and which are primarily set, as with many labor songs, to existing popular tunes—as well as songs related to early unions, such as the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

Another union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or the Wobblies) is particularly crucial to the history of protest music in the early 20th-century. This important union, founded in 1905 and still extant today, was founded as an alternative to the AFL, with the goal of representing all workers, regardless of trade, in a struggle against the “employing class.”<sup>2</sup>

Music was always crucial to the IWW, beginning with the need to compete with those Salvation Army brass bands that were, at times, sent to drown out Wobbly speakers in the streets. In addition, their meetings were begun by singing, and “the IWW’s use of music as a direct organizing arm inspired later song agitators by offering song as a front-line device for building morale, recruiting new members, and garnering publicity.”<sup>3</sup> The songs also give a rich history of labor struggles, and David King Dunaway states that “the IWW probably employed the greatest range of

different types of protest songs.”<sup>4</sup> The importance of songs to the union manifested itself early, with the publication of the union’s own songbook, the *Little Red Songbook*, in 1909. Since then, there have been numerous editions, including as recently as 2010.

The *Little Red Songbook* primarily included original songs, often set to hymns—such as those used by the competing Salvation Army bands—and popular tunes, which Richard Reuss states “were grounded firmly in real labor experiences in contrast to the verse of other radical groups before 1930.”<sup>5</sup> The *Songbook* was the first publication to publish “Solidarity Forever,” one of the most popular American union songs.<sup>6</sup> Other important contributors were T-Bone Slim (1880–1940) and Harry McClintock (1882–1957).<sup>7</sup> McClintock was a professional musician, and his “Hallelujah I’m a Bum,” set to the hymn “Revive Us Again,” was a well-known tune of the day.<sup>8</sup> By far the best-known songwriter in this collection, however, was Joe Hill (1879–1915), whose lyrics were also generally set to popular tunes or hymns. His notoriety stems largely from the circumstances surrounding his controversial murder conviction for the killing of a grocer, as well as his subsequent execution by a firing squad in 1915. There was an international furor surrounding the trial and his execution, and, ironically, Hill is best known for a song that he did not write, but that instead memorializes him, “I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night.”<sup>9</sup> “There is Power in the Union,” set to the hymn “There is Power in The Blood,” is an example of Joe Hill’s work.<sup>10</sup>

As the Communist Party in America sought and gained influence in the area of workers’ rights and social justice, the IWW faded from prominence through the 1920s. While the US struggled through fierce economic woes, culminating in the Great Depression, the Marxist vision of the Soviet Union offered an alternative economic and social approach, and appealed to many intellectuals and artists who were intent upon social change. Many artists were intent on employing their art, whether music, painting, writing, or dance, towards that end.

### Communism in the United States

It is impossible to discuss early workers’ songs of protest without reference to socialism and the Communist Party, as its history is intertwined with the labor movement in the US, particularly in the period between the 1920s and the 1940s. During the 1920s, in the early and tumultuous stages of the communist movement in the US, the concept of proletarian music—music of and for the working class—was not a priority. The predominant musical vehicle was the revolutionary chorus. The vast majority of members of the Communist Party were native speakers of other languages, and a number of these various ethnic groups, largely eastern European, each “developed its own chorus, orchestra, or other musical unit, and some developed several.”<sup>11</sup> These choruses had both social and political functions and “occupied a position of central importance in the cultural life of the early communist movement and so influenced the direction of the movement’s musical activity for a considerable period.”<sup>12</sup>

The combination of the relative stability of the Communist Party during its Third Period (1928–1934), and the economic and social crises of the Depression, “broadened communism’s appeal to the urban middle class, especially to intellectuals and artists.”<sup>13</sup> From this came numerous cultural organizations, or clubs, whose goal was to create “proletarian art”: art for the workers. There were clubs for actors, such as the New Theatre League, and writers had the John Reed Clubs. Out of the New York John Reed Club grew the Workers’ Music League, whose primary goals were “the creation and performance of revolutionary music and . . . a forum for discussion of how modern music could be used to further the workers’ cause.”<sup>14</sup> The Pierre Degeyter Club was one of a number of leftist musicians’ organizations affiliated with the Workers’ Music League, and out of the Degeyter Club came the Composers’ Collective.<sup>15</sup>

### The Composers’ Collective

The Composers’ Collective was formed in 1932, and its members included numerous important composers, many of who were European-trained and worked in a modernist art music medium, such as Charles Seeger, Henry Cowell, Wallingford Riegger, George Antheil, Elie Siegmeister, and Marc Blitzstein. There were few models available for marrying contemporary composition with radical politics, and Hanns Eisler, an Austrian-German composer who studied with Arnold Schoenberg and collaborated with Bertolt Brecht, had a powerful influence on these composers. The Collective composed and performed new works as well as more established material, all intended as revolutionary music, and were also interested in establishing methods for composing proletarian music. To this end, the Composers’ Collective published a collection of their songs, the *Workers Songbook*, in 1934 and 1935.<sup>16</sup>

The first edition of the *Songbook* contained thirteen compositions by members of the Collective, including Charles Seeger and Elie Siegmeister (under the pseudonyms Carl Sands and L. E. Swift). Even at a cursory glance, much of the material is clearly for educated, or at least experienced, musicians, and frequently has challenging modernist elements that are problematic for untrained musicians. For two brief examples, Seeger’s first song, “Mount the Barricades,” is in the unusual time signature of 1/4, and Siegmeister’s “The Scottsboro Boys Shall Not Die” has a piano accompaniment based largely on fourths harmonies, as opposed to more traditional triadic chords. It appears that their attempts at a straightforward presentation revolve around their approach to melody, as the accompaniments are particularly tricky, while the melodies are generally more straightforward. The complex approach to music carries over into the language employed in the *Songbook*, and gives insight into the Collective’s overall approach.

In the Foreword they set out two types of revolutionary works: “popular bourgeois tunes to which revolutionary words have been set” and “original tunes by proletarian composers.” While referring to “bourgeois music” as containing “defeatist

melancholy, morbidity, hysteria, and triviality,” they admit, “we shall have to use, for some time to come, the basic elements of the old idiom.” They continue: “We can, however, and must subject these basic elements to revolutionary scrutiny with a view of finding which of them we cannot help but use, which must be discarded as unsuitable and which must be given a leftward turn that will yield us a recognizably revolutionary music for revolutionary words.”<sup>17</sup>

Even the language they use seems to have the potential to alienate the workers that they are striving to unite, just as the modernist language of their music was somewhat off-putting and disconnected from the musical experience of most in the workers’ movement. Consequently, workers did not effectively employ their compositions. The work of the Collective, however, represents an important movement of artists and intellectuals that felt impelled to engage and support the workers’ struggle during the difficult days of the Depression while remaining true to their artistic principles as well as their commitment to leftist causes. While most members were not communists, many were at the very least sympathetic to the Communist Party line. There was a significant split in the group regarding approaches to the use of music in service of the workers’ cause, however.

The *Workers Songbook* was not the only Communist Party music publication of the Workers’ Music League, as the *Red Song Book* preceded it. The *Red Song Book* included folk-oriented material such as songs by Aunt Molly Jackson (1880–1960) and Ella May Wiggins (1900–1929), two activist folk artists whose songs were drawn from the southern folk tradition. Their songs stemmed from extremely contentious workers’ strikes—the Harlan County, Kentucky, miners’ strike of 1931–32, and the Gastonia, North Carolina, textile workers’ strike of 1929, respectively—as opposed to the modernist compositional style of much of the *Workers Songbook*. Ray and Lida Auville, singer-songwriters in the folk tradition, also published workers’ songs in *Songs of the American Worker*. In *The Worker Musician*, a monthly publication of the Workers’ Music League, the *Red Song Book* and *Songs of the American Worker* were criticized for being overly simple. This set up a conflict between the Collective’s art music perspective and the Communist Party’s cultural critic, Mike Gold, who felt their attitude was elitist and lauded the Auvilles.

This split also reared its head with the performance of Aunt Molly Jackson at a Composers’ Collective meeting. Jackson was a radical organizer for the National Miners’ Union who adeptly and effectively set lyrics to traditional Appalachian tunes. After attending some Collective meetings which included debates over what it means to create a good workers’ song, Jackson performed some of her material. Reuss states that Charles Seeger recalled the Collective’s members “were more bewildered than inspired” by her performance, and that Aunt Molly Jackson was, in turn, unimpressed by the Collective’s works. Her performance is referred to as an important turning point in the discussion of the respective efficacy, as workers’ songs, of folk-style music versus art music.

The composers of the Collective responded to this controversy—art music versus folk and popular forms—in their own manner: they examined the communist movement’s revamped stance on folk and popular styles as they began to assess their own frustrations with their art music approach to reaching the masses. Their frustration with the latter is shown by the fact that the many of the songs in the Collective’s last songbook were set to well-known tunes. Reuss posits that their public split from the dogma of Hanns Eisler further exemplifies the Collective’s members’ separation from the party line. Along with these cultural workers’ movement towards popular and folk materials, New Deal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Music Project (of which Charles Seeger was assistant director), the work of folklorists such as John and Alan Lomax, and the work of Margaret Larkin and Mike Gold, who publicized and promoted activist artists working in a folk music idiom, propelled the movement away from the use of art music and in the direction of the use of folk-style material to promote workers’ causes.<sup>18</sup>

Labor politics had its place on Broadway as well. As the Composers’ Collective attempted to marry modernism with radical text, Marc Blitzstein (1905–1964), a member of the Collective, sought to do so through theatrical means. His 1937 musical *The Cradle Will Rock* owes much to the musical traditions of Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht as well as to the American musical theater.<sup>19</sup> Blitzstein was also involved in another Broadway production that was union-oriented, *Pins and Needles*. While the actors were amateurs drawn from the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) Players, the production team consisted of theater professionals, including composer-lyricist Harold Rome, Blitzstein, and the writer Emmanuel Eisenberg. Trudi Wright states: “*Pins and Needles* offered these leftist writers a creative vehicle in which to give voice to their political and social opinions.”<sup>20</sup> Its 1,108 performances make it the longest running musical of the Depression era.

As Charles Seeger’s vision of class-conscious composers began to prevail over the more modernist approach—towards song and the proletariat—of other composers, such as Henry Cowell, the Collective withdrew from the Pierre Degeyter Club in 1935. Weismann stresses the relationship between Charles Seeger<sup>21</sup> and Alan Lomax as crucial to protest music in general, as well as to the folk music revival, as they “created a vision of using folk songs as a tool for radical change.”<sup>22</sup> The Almanac Singers are an excellent representation of this tendency, and have strong familial ties to the Composers’ Collective.

### **The Almanac Singers, People’s Songs, Inc., People’s Artists, and The Weavers**

New York City was the hub of the music business in the United States, and it was there that the Almanac Singers (1941–1944) gradually came together, initially including Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, and John Peter Dawes. The Almanacs

were a small and fluid group that wrote and performed folk-style music in support of unions, particularly those in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) as well as the Communist Party USA. The group soon grew to include, at various times, Woody Guthrie, Josh White, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Cisco Houston, and the composer Earl Robinson, as well as others, most of whom had some type of radical background.

They formed a collective, even in their loft-living arrangements. It was in this shared space that the concept of a “hootenanny” was born. Admission was charged to hear a concert with an informal and casual air, making the performance almost like a gathering, as opposed to a paid performance. Some members went on to commercial success. Seeger and Hays were members of The Weavers (discussed below), Burl Ives became a popular folk singer and actor; Josh White created a genre-crossing style that mixed the blues and folk-style, Lead Belly’s rough-hewn yet sophisticated guitar and vocal style made him popular, and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee became an in-demand duo with a refined country blues style.

This New York City-based aggregation of socially conscious, leftist, musicians was committed to the use of music as a political and organizing tool. They collected material from songbooks, but also traveled extensively collecting songs; this eventually led to the publication of the important song collection *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People*, a collaboration between Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Alan Lomax. Seeger and Guthrie, both crucial musical figures in the leftist movement, were eventually at the center of the Almanacs.

Pete Seeger (1919) is the son of Charles Seeger, who, as we have seen, was a major figure both in the Composers’ Collective and in the collection and preservation of folk material. Pete Seeger is a wonderful guitarist and banjo player, with a powerful, emotional, expressive, and distinctive voice. His presence on various political scenes throughout his life sets him apart from all others as the most important musical figure in protest music in the United States. While there were certainly many that set the stage for him, Seeger’s importance to the left as musical support and inspiration for a variety of struggles, such as labor rights, civil rights, anti-war sentiment, and ecology, is unmatched.

Woody Guthrie (1912–1967) has a very different background from Seeger. Originally from Oklahoma, Guthrie was forced by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era to travel in search of work. These travels, along with the other “Okies” that traveled to California to find work, are frequent subjects of his songwriting. He became connected to the leftist community in southern California, and then went to New York where the burgeoning leftist music community quickly accepted him. The legend of the wandering hobo mixed with labor activist and singer-songwriter contrasts with more problematic aspects of his personality. He was a prolific writer of both prose and songs. Just a few of his well-known songs are “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know Yuh,” “Hobo’s Lullaby,” “Tom Joad,” “Talking Dust

Bowl Blues,” “Pastures of Plenty,” “Union Maid,” and the ubiquitous “This Land is Your Land,” which has been employed by both the right and the left. Beginning in the late 1940s, as a result of Huntington’s disease, an extremely debilitating genetic disorder that causes a loss of muscle coordination and cognitive and psychiatric disorders, Guthrie’s life became increasingly difficult and isolated until his death in 1967.

The political climate in the late 1930s was extremely complicated and fraught. The country was in the midst of a depression, labor strife was high, and the relationship of the United States to struggles abroad was complicated, including for those involved with, or sympathetic to, the Communist Party. The Party was initially firmly anti-fascist, evidenced by its involvement in supporting the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War who opposed the Francisco Franco-led fascists. After Hitler’s pact with Stalin in August 1939, however, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) favored non-intervention in Europe and World War II.

To support the stance of CPUSA, and in response to an anticipated US involvement in the war, the Almanacs wrote and recorded six original songs for *The Death of John Doe* in 1941, which powerfully attacked Franklin Roosevelt and protested against intervention in the war. With the United States joining the war effort shortly thereafter, and Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, the album’s subject matter took on a particularly incendiary—some said treasonous—tone and was withdrawn. After Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, the Almanacs could no longer sing anti-war material, and Pete Seeger’s “Dear Mr. President,” for the album *Dear Mr. President*, exemplifies the Almanacs’ shift to a pro-war stance. The Almanacs combined this stance with their union sympathies, and began to write songs that depicted the working man’s support for the war effort. As the war escalated, the Almanacs lost numerous personnel, with Seeger and Guthrie being drafted, and others involved in war relief work, and the Almanacs faded from sight.

In 1946, after World War II and out of the ashes of the Almanac Singers, Pete Seeger created a new organization, People’s Songs, Inc., to advance the tradition of radical protest music. The Board of Directors resembled the Almanacs, with Woody Guthrie, Millard Lampell, Lee Hays, and Earl Robinson, as well as Alan Lomax (1915–2002), and the singer-songwriter Tom Glazer. Members also included non-folk-based artists such as Harold Rome (who worked on *The Cradle Shall Rock*) and E. Y. “Yip” Harburg, a successful Tin Pan Alley lyricist (he wrote the lyrics for “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” and “It’s Only a Paper Moon”), in an attempt to be more broad-based, musically, than the Almanac Singers. Based in New York City, it eventually had branches in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago, as well as other cities. The organization published a monthly bulletin and educational pamphlets, booked musicians, and published *The People’s Song Book*. They performed in concert halls, on picket lines, and at demonstrations, and were heavily involved in the Presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, who was running on the

Progressive Party ticket. The organization lasted until 1949, when it disbanded after having financial difficulty.

As the People's Songs organization was dissolving, Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred Hellerman formed the quartet The Weavers. Following the demise of People's Songs, The Weavers were booked into the Village Vanguard, a Greenwich Village nightclub, and soon became a huge success, selling over four million records between 1950 and 1952. There are in essence two Weavers. Their live recordings, with Seeger on banjo and Hellerman on guitar, display their folk-style roots as they play original and traditional material. The other is in a much more commercial context, featuring orchestral and choral arrangements by Gordon Jenkins, an excellent arranger who wrote for Nat "King" Cole and Frank Sinatra, among others. All of the members sang, and The Weavers were known for their effective harmonies. They composed original material, and Hays and Seeger wrote numerous songs together, the most famous being "If I Had a Hammer (The Hammer Song)," one of the most known, popular, and effective songs of the period. An initial Weavers' recording of Lead Belly's "Goodnight Irene," and "Tzena Tzena," an Israeli popular song, reached numbers one and two on the *Billboard* charts. Originally a product of the left-wing movement, their popularity raised issues regarding their, perhaps—at times—reluctant, embrace of commercial success and its clash with their socialist ideology.

Seeger and Irwin Silber, along with others, had formed People's Artists to continue to provide support for radical causes through music. People's Artists initially booked The Weavers, but once they had professional management outside of the organization, because of the political climate and out of commercial considerations, The Weavers significantly softened their political stance, particularly in their recorded material, and distanced themselves from leftist politics. In 1950, People's Artists began to publish *Sing Out!*, a monthly magazine (it is still extant as a quarterly publication) with Irwin Silber as the editor. As the Communist Party declined, so did the work of musicians working for People's Artists. Between this and internal organizational strife, People's Artists was gradually dissolved so that, by 1957, its focus was solely on the publishing of *Sing Out!*

In addition, during this period, anti-communist sentiment was at its height and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was active in the persecution of those perceived to be affiliated with the Communist Party. Eventually, hundreds of artists were boycotted as a result. A 1950 pamphlet, "Red Channels," was part of this effort. Many from the Almanac Singers, People's Songs, and People's Artists were on this list, including Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax, Burl Ives, Oscar Brand, Josh White, and Earl Robinson. Composer Aaron Copland, who was earlier associated with the Composers' Collective, was also on the list, as was composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein. The blacklists altered people's lives in a significant manner, and many had difficulty resuming their careers.<sup>23</sup>

There are clear connections between the Almanac Singers, People's Songs, Inc., People's Artists, and The Weavers, but they are all also closely associated with the Composers' Collective, as Pete Seeger's father, Charles Seeger, was a driving force in that organization. Given this, it is not surprising that they shared the goal of creating and promoting radical music designed to effect social change; in addition, they shared the debate about which types of musical styles were appropriate for this purpose. It is fascinating to see these shared principles and practices a generation removed, with the emphasis having shifted predominantly towards a folk-oriented style: the direction in which Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger headed as the art music-oriented Collective disbanded. Clearly, the Seeger family influence has carried through, even to today's political movements—as evidenced by Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie (Woody Guthrie's son), marching with the Occupy Wall Street protesters in October 2011, as the crowd chanted and sang popular protest songs such as “We Shall Overcome” and “This Little Light of Mine.”<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

While these various organizations may not have directly achieved their goals of establishing a music that supported the struggle for workers' rights and engaging workers from the labor movement, a largely negative assessment seems misguided. The succession of the Composers' Collective, Almanac Singers, People's Songs, Inc., People's Artists, The Weavers, and the future success of many of their members—as well as their influence on the next generation of folk-style singers involved in music bent on social change, such as Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Joan Baez—is a significant legacy. The path they set, and the ideological commitment that they exhibited, had a powerful effect on the notion of music as a vehicle for social change in the United States. It also influenced the direction of the music business, while raising the profile of folk music as an important American genre. Much of this can be attributed to the relationship of music to the labor movement throughout the first half of the twentieth century in the United States.

## Notes

- 1 For this essay I particularly relied upon the following comprehensive sources, each with their own perspective: Richard A. Reuss with JoAnne C. Reuss, *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics, 1927–1957* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2000); Ronald D. Cohen, *Work and Sing: A History of Occupational and Labor Union Songs in the United States* (Crocket, California: Carquinez Press, 2010); Dick Weissman, *Which Side Are You On? An Inside History of the Folk Music Revival in America* (New York: Continuum, 2005); David King Dunaway, “Music and Politics in the United States” *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1987); and R. Serge Denisoff, *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Cohen presents the history of song

and labor through comprehensive research regarding song collections, the collectors, and the artists. Weismann examines these topics in relation to the 1960s folk music revival in the United States. Reuss offers perhaps the most comprehensive examination of the relationship between folk music and left-wing politics. Denisoff examines the relationship between the communists and these artists and their music. Dunaway examines the topic in the context of politics and music in the history of the United States.

- 2 “Preamble to the IWW Constitution,” <http://www.iww.org/en/culture/official/preamble.shtml>, accessed 1 June 2012.
- 3 Dunaway, “Music and Politics,” 283.
- 4 Dunaway, “Music and Politics,” 287.
- 5 Reuss, *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics*, 26.
- 6 For the lyrics to this song, see *Songs of the Workers to Fan the Flames of Discontent: The Little Red Songbook* (Limited Centenary Concert Edition. Philadelphia: Industrial Workers of the World, 2005), 4.
- 7 T-Bone Slim wrote “The Mysteries of a Hobo’s Life,” published in the 17th edition of *Little Red Songbook*, and McClintock’s most well known song is perhaps “Big Rock Candy Mountain.”
- 8 For the lyrics to this song, see *Little Red Songbook*, 12.
- 9 Lyrics by Alfred Hayes and composer Earl Robinson, written circa 1930.
- 10 For the lyrics to this song, see *Little Red Songbook*, 50.
- 11 *Little Red Songbook*, 41.
- 12 *Little Red Songbook*, 41.
- 13 *Little Red Songbook*, 43.
- 14 Barbara L. Tischler, “Modernists and Proletarian Music: The Composers’ Collective of the Early 1930s,” in David Castriota, ed., *Artistic Strategy and the Rhetoric of Power: Political Uses of Art from Antiquity to the Present* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 137.
- 15 In 1888, Pierre Degeyter, a French workers’ chorus director, composed the music for “L’Internationale,” a Eugène Pottier poem, creating one of the most widely known socialist songs.
- 16 A great deal of research has been done regarding the struggle of leftist modernist art music composers through the Workers’ Music League and the Pierre Degeyter Club, as these composers attempted to unite their artistic desires with their political goals. Judith Tick examines it through Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger (*Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer’s Search for American Music* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, Chapter 12]), and Elizabeth B. Crist through composer Aaron Copland (*Music for the Common Man: Aaron Copland during the Depression and War* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, Chapter 1]). Barbara L. Tischler concentrates on the Composers’ Collective itself (“Modernists and Proletarian Music: The Composers’ Collective of the Early 1930s,” in David Castriota, ed., *Artistic Strategy and the Rhetoric of Power: Political Uses of Art from Antiquity to the Present* [Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986]), and Ellie M. Hisama through a musicological and analytical examination of Ruth Crawford Seeger (“In Pursuit of a Proletarian Music: Ruth Crawford’s “Sacco, Vanzetti,” in Ray Allen and Ellie M. Hisama, eds, *Ruth Crawford Seeger’s Worlds: Innovation and Tradition in*

- Twentieth-Century American Music* [Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007]). Melissa J. de Graaf discusses it through Ruth Crawford Seeger's involvement in the Composers' Forum and the Composers' Collective ("The Reception of an Ultramodernist: Ruth Crawford's 'Sacco, Vanzetti,'" in *Ruth Crawford Seeger's Worlds*).
- 17 *Workers Songbook* (New York: Workers' Music League, 1934), 2.
- 18 Reuss, *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics*, 70.
- 19 Marc Blitzstein and *Cradle* are examined by Jonathan C. Friedman in this volume; Robert J. Dietz, "Marc Blitzstein and the 'Agit-Prop' theatre of the 1930s," *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical*, Vol. 6 [1970]: 51–66); John D. Shout, "The Musical Theater of Marc Blitzstein," *American Music*, Vol. 3, No. 4 [Winter 1985]: 413–428), and Carol Oja, "Marc Blitzstein's 'The Cradle Will Rock' and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 4 [1989]: 445–475.
- 20 Trudi Wright, "Labor Takes the Stage: A Musical and Social Analysis of *Pins and Needles* (1937–1941)," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 2010), 6.
- 21 Charles Seeger went on to hold a number of governmental positions during which he supervised fieldwork throughout the Americas. These positions included Deputy Director of the Federal Music Project, part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA), and chief of the music division of the Pan-American Union. He was later extremely active as an ethnomusicologist and musicologist. Alan Lomax and his father, John, did extensive fieldwork, recording local folk material and "discovering" local artists. Among other activities, Lomax compiled and edited folk song collections, conducted oral histories, and was a researcher and author. The multifarious collections (recordings, photographs, videos, etc.) assembled by the Lomaxes are now housed in The Alan Lomax Collection at the American Folklife Center, The Library of Congress.
- 22 Weissman, *Which Side Are You On?*, 43.
- 23 My father, A. K. Bierman, was also a leader in the fight against HUAC in San Francisco in 1959–1960. For an account of this struggle, as well as his own account of the grassroots organizing campaign that culminated in "Black Friday," see <http://www.notinkansas.us/#AKBierman>.
- 24 Cristian Salazar and Karen Matthews, "Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie Occupy Wall Street, Perform," *Huffington Post*, 22 October 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/22/pete-seeger-arlo-guthrie-occupy-wall-street\\_n\\_1026299.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/22/pete-seeger-arlo-guthrie-occupy-wall-street_n_1026299.html), accessed 13 June 2012.