Fred Waring and the Use of Technology for Choral Singing

Cristopher Cayari
Purdue University, ccayari@purdue.edu

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Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians

"I hear mu-u-u-sic, I hear melodies, ---
Sparkling songs of love, tingling from your touch."

Anybody who loves choral music, and/or is old enough to have grown up listening to the radio in the '30s, immediately recognizes the song and can sing the melody. It was the theme song sung by the 12-man male glee club in the "Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians" organization. Those first lines, sung a cappella, opened every radio broadcast and live concert. He had many sponsors for both daily and weekly radio programs throughout the '30s and '40s decades, and turned out a steady stream of 78-rpm 10-inch singles and 12-inch albums.

--Bob Paulson, Assistant Director for Fred Waring General Electric TV show
The Importance of media and technology on music making, listening, and learning

Menace of Mechanical Soundf

There is a man in there playing the piano with his band!

"Will the infant be put to sleep by machinery?"

"With a gramophone caroling love songs from amidships."

Sousa
The celebrated "March King" with his band—the finest concert band in the world—makes records only for the Victor.

$10 to $100. At all leading music houses and talking-machine dealers.

Write for complete catalogues of Victors and Victor Records.

Victor Talking Machine Co.
Camden N.J., U.S.A.
Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians
Fred Waring’s America Catalogues

Fred Waring Papers

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<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Box 145</td>
<td>Waring, Virginia (Mrs. Fred Waring)</td>
<td>1977-2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 150</td>
<td>Glee Club Competition</td>
<td>1942</td>
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<td>Television</td>
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Fred Waring Collection

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<td>413</td>
<td>Audio Recordings</td>
<td>Music Education Tape #9: Patriotic Music Dub Master (DAT)</td>
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<td>431</td>
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<td>463</td>
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<td>Fred Waring Conducting (rough cut) DVD</td>
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Going through the archives
Going through the archives (cont.)
Dear Mr. Lewis:

I was very pleased to receive the zeroxed excerpt and the Who's Who Entry.

The reference to our association was quite correct; there were some other, I think, very interesting recallings that cannot be said in any history of our relationship with the Company.

1) Mr. Henry Ford's insistence that I appear in the morning at Greenfield Village to teach children how to sing.

2) The manner in which Edsel Ford prevailed on me to undertake the responsibility of writing articles and intimate commercial messages to which Mr. Lewins cleverly refers. The assignment was challenging and, certainly, rewarding but it also involved considerable work almost disastrous as we were unwittingly placed in the embarrassing position of having to face Ayer responsibilities.

I will be happy to meet with you and discuss anything practical time for us would be Wednesday, May 11th at 1:00 PM, as we must go to Grand Rapids for a concert in a few days, or perhaps if you could attend our Sturgis concert, it would even be simpler to meet after the concert.

(b) For a period of five years from the date hereof, we will perform and pay annual royalties for all phonograph records.

(c) The obligation of our rights and the obligation of our payments of royalties can be hereby granted and Decca accepts a reproduction and sale as commercial reproductions performed or recorded to the date hereof, subject to all terms of the agreement pertaining to the same.
Media and Technological Advances

The Pennsylvanians first records

1923 - Band recorded “Sleep” for Victor
When released, 40,000 records were sold the first day
1925 - Recorded “Collegiate” (Electronic Recording)

Pictures and Sound

1927 - “Talkie” shorts appearances
1929 - “Syncopation” was released (first musical motion picture)
1930 - “Rah Rah Daze” was released (Hollywood musical)
Media and Technological Advances (cont.)

**Radio**

- 1933 - Radio Auditions
  - “Old Gold Shows” (Milton Berle’s claim to fame)

**Live Audiences for Radio Broadcasts**

- 1934 - Live audiences at the Ford Radio show (2 years)

**Refusal to record**

- 1934 - Copyright disputes led to refusal of recording
Media and Technological Advances (cont.)

Expanding the Organization

1938 - Varsity Show begins
1939 - Glee Club separates from Orchestra

1939 - Chesterfield “Pleasure Time” occurs (5 weekly radio shows)
   Continues to 1944
   Radion continues in various sponsored shows

1942 - Signed recording deal with Decca Records
1944 - Founded Shawnee Press and began Waring Music Workshops
1949 - General Electric TV Show
Various TV shows including Colgate Christmas TV show, Chevrolet TV Show, Garry Moore TV Show.
Salient findings

Innovations

Learning

Limitations
Looking Forward

Stand alone article vs. More history for theory
[In 1923] their first record with the Victor Talking Machine Company, “Sleep,” was released. . . . It took two days to make that record because they had no facilities or techniques for combining singing and instrumentals. At that time they used a direct stylus which made an impression on wax. The sound went in at the large end of a megaphone and was reproduced on the record. They had to add a megaphone for us and we had to position ourselves carefully so we could get from our instruments to that damn megaphone without bumping into anything. And then we had to use the recording director to play the piano and he played too loud…. In those days, when you made a mistake you had to do the whole thing all over again, there was no cutting and pasting. By the time we finished, we had no throats left, we could hardly talk. ” But the recording of “Sleep” more than justified the agony it had taken to create it. It was released in Baltimore while the Pennsylvanians were playing there, and in just one day it sold more than 40,000 copies! Fred says, “Our fame was instant. We were the biggest vaudeville and movie theatre attraction of the time.”

-- Betty Bechtel 1979 from Fred Waring: Leader of the Band