

# ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

The Shedd's OFAM concludes with hits from the home front

When the United States went to war in 1941, music was in the arsenal. After Japan's catastrophic sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the country needed cheering up and troops needed cheering on. The nation's pop culture institutions were enlisted, going on tours and producing "V-discs" (records) and shortwave broadcasts for deployed soldiers and music about coming home and accentuating the positive for Americans.

With its usual thoughtful historical-contextual curation, this summer's **Oregon Festival of American Music (OFAM)** revives that World War II-era music, film and theater, beginning with last month's *On the Town* and continuing through this weekend with concerts, screenings, talks and more at The Shedd.

At a moment when our country seems especially divided, this summer's festival provides a much needed reminder of a time when Americans pulled together more than ever before — or since.

The afternoon concert on Thursday, Aug. 11, brings the **Emerald City Jazz Kings**, trumpet titan **Tim Clarke** and a quintet of veteran Shedd vocalists for a selection of standards like "As Time Goes By" ("Play it, Sam!"), "Blues in the Night" and "Moonlight Serenade." That night's big band concert (with a slew of singers including **Siri Vik**, **Ian Whitcomb** and **Shirley Andress**) features music from concerts for troops based at home and overseas, sponsored by the United Services Organization (USO), a coalition of religious and secular charities.



SIRI VIK

The biggest USO star, singer-actor-comedian-hooper Bob Hope, used one of those tunes, "Thanks for the Memory," as his theme song. It's on the bill along with "The Man I Love," as well as other tunes unfamiliar to most listeners who didn't hear them the first time around.

To build morale, the military even issued the *Army Hit Kit of Popular Songs* (including "A Wing and a Prayer," "I'll Be Seeing You," "G.I. Jive," "You Are My Sunshine," "Star Dust" and rarer gems), a songbook that'll be distributed free to attendees at The Shedd the afternoon of Friday Aug. 12 for a sing-along led by the institute's **Road Scholars**.

Friday evening's cabaret extravaganza recreates a February 1945 Armed Forces Radio Service Command performance, a variety show that included a complete radio theater production, *Dick Tracy in B Flat*, written by Meredith Willson (of *The Music Man*), jokes, songs ("The Very Thought of You," "Sentimental Journey," etc.) and other artifacts of the era. There's a bar, both cabaret and balcony seating and an (optional) invitation to dress up in period garb.

Saturday (Aug. 13) afternoon's jazz concert with Clarke, guitar ace **Howard Alden** and a rhythm section joining a quartet of top Shedd singers spotlights Johnny Mercer's immortal music ("That Old Black Magic," "Skylark," "Jeepers Creepers" and more). One of America's — and the 20th century's — greatest songwriters, Mercer also headlined a regular radio broadcast to the troops.

The concluding concert at 5 pm Saturday, Aug. 14, presents eight Shedd singers crooning tunes by the era's biggest hit-makers — Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters, and including Mercer's "Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy," "Victory Polka," "Accentuate the Positive" and more, wrapping up a festival that recalls some of the only bright moments of a dark time.

Visit [theshedd.org](http://theshedd.org) for details.

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