

# ARSC New York Chapter

## SEPTEMBER 2018 Meeting

**7:00 P. M. Thursday, 9/20/18**

→At the CUNY Sonic Arts Center←

West 140<sup>th</sup> Street & Convent Avenue, New York

Or enter at 138<sup>th</sup> Street off Convent Avenue (N.B. not always open)

Shepard Hall (the Gothic building) – Recital Hall (Room 95, ground floor)

An elevator is located in the center of the building

### **“You’re a Grand Old Rag”**

George M. Cohan, Billy Murray, and the History of  
“You’re a Grand Old Flag”

It took a rewrite, a world war, and a blockbuster film to solidify “You’re a Grand Old Flag” as an American patriotic standard. First written in 1906 and introduced in the Broadway musical *George Washington, Jr.* as “You’re a Grand Old Rag,” the song could have met an early demise had it not been for a popular phonograph singer whose records prevented the song from fading. While the song initially met with minor outrage in referencing the flag as a “rag,” the phonograph records by Billy Murray, selected for the National Recording Registry in 2003, remained on sale long after copies of the sheet music went out of print, despite receiving public objections of their own.

Acoustic recording historian and Billy Murray researcher Ryan Barna will share his primary research in the chronology of the song, the first-hand accounts of the criticism it received, plus a recently rediscovered interview of Cohan detailing his idea for the song. The presentation will include period recordings by Murray ranging from 1906 to 1942, progressing the changes in lyrics, and how Murray contributed to its longevity before James Cagney immortalized it in the 1942 film *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

**Ryan Barna** is a Grammy-nominated album notes writer who specializes in early popular music and acoustic recording in America. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Writing from the University of Colorado at Denver. He formerly served as a park guide with National Park Service, including Rocky Mountain National Park and the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt. His book contributions include ABC-CLIO's *Music in American Life*, and he has written for *ARSC Journal*, *Vintage Jazz Mart*, and *In the Groove*. His liner notes for Archeophone Records include *Songs of the Night: Dance Recordings by Joseph C. Smith's Orchestra, 1916-1925*, which he was nominated in the Best Album Notes category for the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Grammy Awards. He is the webmaster of the Billy Murray website, [www.denvernighingale.com](http://www.denvernighingale.com).

**Our next meeting will be on October 18, 2018**

**Dennis Rooney will present  
A Centennial Tribute to two great Wagnerians:  
Astrid Varnay and Birgit Nilsson**



### **DIRECTIONS TO THE SONIC ARTS CENTER**

**Subway:** Take the 1 train to 137<sup>th</sup> Street City College and walk north to 140<sup>th</sup> St. & Broadway, then go east to 140<sup>th</sup> St. & Convent Avenue. Take the A, B, C, or D trains to 145<sup>th</sup> St, go west on 145<sup>th</sup> St. to Convent Avenue, then south on Convent Ave. to 140<sup>th</sup> St. **Bus:** M4 and M5 on Broadway; M 100, 101 on Amsterdam Ave. (one block West of Convent Avenue)



*The Sonic Arts Center at CCNY offers 4-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Music with a concentration in Music and Audio Technology. Their program provides an in-depth curriculum emphasizing real-world skills with a project-based approach. Students enjoy a well-rounded program, with emphasis on audio technology, music theory, orchestration, and history to help them compete in a field that today demands an ever-growing and highly diverse skill set.*

All ARSC NY Chapter meetings are free and open to the public.  
**Voluntary contributions to help defray our expenses are welcome!**

To join ARSC, visit <http://www.arsc-audio.org>

