

## A History of Sing

by Augusta Truell Wollheim '27

Sing began gently and genteelly in 1917. It resulted from a desire of Student Council for a spring activity. Back in those days sedate undergraduates used to rally to cheer on their bloomed sisters who dared desport themselves on the basketball court. They lent their voices to songs which would raise the spirits. Some members of the Class of 1918 who had observed "step-singing" at Vassar suggested the early form of Sing. In order to stimulate participation the Class of 1918 offered a silver-tipped baton to the winning class and continued this tradition throughout the life of Sing.

In its infancy Sing was mainly singing—a touch of color on the ubiquitous middy blouse the only costume. Later a theme for each class was reinforced by a full-fledged costume (which was to cost no more than 25¢) and pirates, jockeys, angels, convicts, Apaches and cavaliers made their appearance. Each class was required to present an ALMA MATER song, set to original music. That is how "FAME" presented by the Class of 1925 came into being.

In the early days each class made its entrance and when all four classes were assembled on the chapel floor, competition proceeded. Gentility and lady-like demeanor flew out the Gothic windows with the War of the Piano Stool, because, although there was a ritualistic order for required songs, retorts—boosts and knocks—were sung or chanted when the piano stool was captured by the most agile accompanist.



Props going up.



Pre-performance primping



Post-performance socializing



(l. to r.) Augusta Truell Wollheim '27; Rusty Jason Weill '51; Betty D. Fox '54, Alumni President; Rose Cannistraci '59, Centennial Coordinator.

Songs reflected the times but certain targets were constant throughout the years. Hunterites were clamoring for more space in the '20's even as they are today. The Class of '22 lyrics to the musical comedy tune "When You've Got the Ball and Chain Around Your Ankle" could express the current race for space at the College.

**Now that by  
 Magic art we've given you a building  
 And a campus just as big as Bowling Green  
 We will tell you how to use it  
 For you never must abuse it  
 Mustn't scandalize the Dean—!  
 Now don't you spend too many hours in your  
 theatre,  
 Nor your ballroom all equipped for social arts,  
 Nor in the hammocks snugly drawn  
 Beneath the trees out on the lawn;  
 All these glories must not tempt your heart.**

The classes of the '20's cannot be set aside without mention of the phenomenal Class of 1928 which holds the unequalled record of coming in second as Freshmen and then winning first place the next three years. Their lyrics to "Little Buttercup," written about 40 years ago, reflect the talent that led them to unique victories.

**They still call us teachers; they will call us  
 teachers  
 No reason for this we can see.  
 For we're taught that to preach is a terrible  
 breach  
 Of the pubescent psychology.  
 We're taught to suspect and to quickly detect  
 Myopia, small-pox and fleas  
 We watch them for pip and for symptoms of  
 grippe  
 And the audible knocking of knees  
 We pounce on kyphosis; we hunt down lordosis  
 We dote on the ones who are queer  
 And are they too lanky; and have they a hanky  
 And do they hear clocks with each ear.  
 So why call us teachers when we're merely  
 creatures  
 Who plot deviations on graphs.  
 To bring on conditions of social efficiencies  
 They might as well call us giraffes!**

In 1924 the enthusiasm of the audience could no longer be contained in the horseshoe-shaped balcony of the chapel. Sing had outgrown its birthplace and in 1925 the **WAN-  
 DERJAHRE** began. Sing moved out of the College and into the Central Opera House (now the home of WNEW-TV), Carnegie Hall, Madison Square Garden, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Hippodrome, and Radio City Music Hall.



Prohibition and the depression were major concerns in the '30's, even of the Sing-ing undergraduate. The depression, however, affected them more. License #1 was not given for several years and teaching appointments weren't made, so that many a B.A. wound up behind the sales counter instead of in front of a blackboard. The Class of '33 bewailed the financial situation with its "April Showers" lyrics.

**Though as wall paper  
Your stocks are sold  
Our city streets are  
Still paved with gold.  
Tho' we may mourn for  
Prosperity  
At last we have no Mussolini paying  
For posterity.**

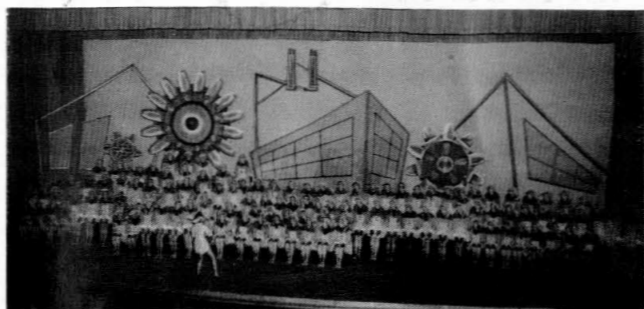
The '40's brought prosperity, then World War II and women on the assembly line, but these did not deflect the eternal search for a husband. The Class of '45 verbalized it succinctly (to the tune "The Lady is a Tramp"):

**We want careers  
With an eight hour week!  
Work interferes  
With the Hunt-er technique  
Let's all stop kidding  
It's marriage we seek,  
We want to B.A. "M.R.S."**

The possibility of co-education seemed remote in the mid-'40's. Then in 1948 the veterans came to Hunter and in 1949—tradition-shattering event—they participated in Sing! In the '50's co-education was in—if only in the Bronx—and men really became a part of Sing; in '53, a male leader!

The age of the Sing Extravaganza arrived in the '50's: scenery was *de rigueur*; costumes glistened and shone in the dark; mass motions were as essential as lyrics. Class themes became philosophical: Language, Power, Seven Deadly Sins and the Creation. The Class of '59 sang out for Brotherhood to the tune of "Soldier of God."

"Call Me Miss" was the theme of Soph-Senior Miscellaneous sing presented by the classes of June '53 and '55.



Senior Sing in 1953 introduced the first moving sets to the theme "Labor Pains" or "The Facts of Factory Life."

**The language of man  
Is linked by brotherhood.  
No matter the means  
Our thoughts, hopes and dreams  
Will ever be understood.  
Cling to the faith  
That one day we will see  
A civilization where man can live  
Together in unity.  
Rich or poor—without thought of rank or  
station  
East or west—disregarding state or nation  
Only so long as man sings the song  
That is deep within him  
Shall man  
Onward survive to strive for brotherhood;  
With justice and right for liberty's fight—  
The ideas of man march on.**

But Sing was doomed. In 1959 Sing made its last undergraduate appearance. Various unsuccessful attempts were made to revive it on campus. Now Centennial Fund has utilized Sing's magnetic potential among Alumni to produce a vivid reminiscence of a nostalgic Hunter Tradition. AND SING-PHOENIX-LIKE-IS WITH US in '67.

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