

## MINDING THE SCORE: THE MUSIC OF HARRY L. ALFORD—America’s Pioneer Arranger

*By Rick Benjamin*

*This man Alford can slip unobserved into almost any theater in America . . . and be sure that somewhere in the musical part of the program he is going to hear several of his arrangements. In this, he takes his pleasure.*

—The Musical Messenger

There never was a musician quite like Harry L. Alford. He did not aspire to a career as an instrumentalist or conductor, although he excelled at both. He was not a singer, although many of America’s leading vocalists sought him out. Nor did he teach, although his work inspired and informed an entire generation of musicians. And while he was a composer of rare talent and imagination, the creation of melodies was only of peripheral interest. No; Harry Alford yearned for something quite different and new—a musical path that had not yet been blazed by anyone else: that of expert sound-sculptor, ensconced in a modern office, sophisticated yet keenly attuned to the popular, working exclusively as an “*arranger of music.*”

In the 1890s, when Alford formed this ambition, no such profession yet existed. For centuries the creation of a finished musical composition (a “score”) naturally had been part of the composing process. In the few instances it was not, arranging was part-time work, often viewed as drudgery, taken on by the under-employed or students. Harry Alford’s vision of a large-scale independent *bureau* serving publishers, producers, theatrical stars, conductors, composers, and songwriters with ingenious, instantaneous, made-to-order musical arrangements had no precedent. And his execution of this dream succeeded beyond anyone’s expectations, resulting in over *thirty thousand* scores which formed a repertoire played by virtually every American band and orchestra and heard by millions.

Harry L. Alford arrangements were commissioned by almost all of the nation’s music publishers, ranging from the major firms (Carl Fischer, Witmark, Remick, Feist, Schirmer, Sam Fox, Waterson, Berlin & Snyder) down to the one-song outfits like Whitefish, Montana’s Nixon Music Co. Alford’s songwriter and composer clients formed a virtual “who’s who” of American popular music of the early twentieth century; his “A-list” included Irving Berlin, Joe Jordan, Scott Joplin, Charles L. Johnson, Percy Wenrich, W.C. Handy, Carrie Jacobs-Bond, Louis A. Hirsch, Wilbur Sweatman, J. Russel Robinson, Isham Jones, Shelton Brooks, Chris Smith, Abe Olman, Leo Friedman, Fred Fischer, and Harry Carroll. Dozens of the biggest pop hits of the 1910s and ’20s were first introduced to the public as “clothed” by Harry Alford. Vaudeville was America’s leading form of entertainment, and during its golden age Alford was the composer/arranger of choice for every top vaude act. His headliners included Eva Tanguay, Sophie Tucker, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Harry Houdini, Elsie Janis, Raymond Hitchcock, Nora Bayes, Blanche Ring, Emma Carus, and Eddie Foy, Sr. Harry L. Alford was also the arranger for several renowned theaters and ballrooms, and his sparkling concert band scores made him a perennial favorite of bandmasters John Philip Sousa, Arthur Pryor, Patrick Conway, Merle Evans, Edwin Franko Goldman, Frank Simon, and A.A. Harding.

Harry Alford's influence on American music was powerful, not only because of his massive output, but through his innovations. His distinctive "chromatic counterpoint," promotion of the brass and woodwind instruments as absolute equals of the strings, and brilliantly conceived percussion writing stood America on its ear. And through his once widely celebrated achievements, arranging came to be a recognized and a highly respected branch of the musical arts.

## BIOGRAPHY

At the core of Harry Alford's personality was a fascination with "the new." He relished novel sounds, the latest technologies, and new modes of living. He entered adulthood as a vigorous Progressive, but went much further: Alford was a true *modernist*. But because of this tendency, he expressed little interest in the past, including his own. Although he was featured in music magazine articles during the 1910s and '20s, few biographical details were offered. And shortly after Alford's 1939 death, a fire destroyed most of his personal effects and family papers, erasing much information on his early life. To tell the story of this unique artist, I have gathered thousands of bits of information from hundreds of sources, including government records, newspapers, trade journals, publisher's catalogs, scores, and (best of all) the vivid recollections of several people who actually knew him.

Harry LaForest Alford was born in rural Lenawee County, Michigan in the first days of August 1875. (His birth year has been erroneously stated by many sources—including his own tombstone—but 1875 is now known to be irrefutably correct.) He was the first child of Henry Alford (c. 1846–1912), a Civil War veteran from Seneca Falls, New York, and his wife Arvilla (née Locey, 1853–1915) of Hudson, Michigan. The couple was married in Adrian, Michigan on October 1, 1874. Their union also produced a second child, Earl W., born in 1878.

Henry Alford was a wagon and carriage maker, and frequently moved his family between the small southeastern Michigan villages of Hudson, Blissfield (Harry Alford's probable birthplace), and Morenci. All of these were very small and recently settled farming communities. Yet there, somehow, young Harry discovered a passion for music. His first musical encounter seems to have been with a pump organ, an instrument (due to its relative portability) that was extremely popular with the farming families of that place and time. Through this instrument, the child became enthralled with a new world of imagination found only within "the concord of sweet sounds." His fascination deepened when he discovered that it was possible to write down sequences of these sounds on paper for future reproduction. And through this process—scoring—he could change and manipulate how those sounds were produced. There is no account of young Harry receiving anything in the way of formal music lessons at this time. Indeed, the very quirkiness of his later work seems to support the thought that he had not been subject to the rigid Victorian regime of musical study. Instead, he had something better: the town band (something of which Charles Ives would have approved). Since 1860 Hudson had enjoyed its brass band, and this became the focus of life for this intensely musical child. When he was big enough, Harry took up the trombone and joined in. Soon he was writing marches and waltzes for the Hudson Band using his own methods. In this way, his amazingly acute ear and sharp powers of observation surely taught him more than any local teacher could have.

As in many small country towns, one of the highlights of life in Hudson was the arrival of a touring theatrical company (usually a minstrel or melodrama troupe). One company that made annual visits to Hudson had its own fine band. To Harry, it made the sweetest, grandest sounds

he had ever heard. Each year he mourned its departure and longed for its return. He even daydreamed about it playing one of his pieces. Finally he decided to turn fantasy into reality: devoting many hours, Harry composed his very best effort—a new march, which he fervently hoped he could convince the visitors to try. When at long last the company returned, the slight, bespectacled teenager—scores under his arm—nervously approached its bandmaster. Fortunately, this kindly gent was at once impressed with Alford’s fine “hand” (music penmanship) and passed out the parts to his musicians. The greenhorn composer’s anticipation flared into ecstasy as the band stepped off and paraded down Main Street blaring *his* music. This was Harry Alford’s defining moment.

Energized, the lad increased his experiments with the Hudson Band, and was encouraged by its members, “the local tinsmith, blacksmith, and shoemaker.” Naturally, Harry began to wonder about a musical career. Was he really good enough? Here, he found less support—solid and sensible, his father wanted the boy to be a pharmacist; Mrs. Alford allowed that bookkeeping would be a fine occupation too. But Harry Alford had ambition and curiosity, and small town Michigan could no longer hold him. Sometime around 1890 he gathered up his nerve and his trombone and made tracks for the nearest large city—Toledo, Ohio.

In Toledo, the teenager supported himself by clerking in a downtown store while trying to break into the city’s small circle of musicians. Somehow Alford landed a job as substitute trombonist in the city’s best playhouse. But his first time in the pit was a “nervous nightmare” covering an operetta matinee without rehearsal. That would have challenged even a seasoned musician, but Alford had almost no experience and struggled to just follow the conductor and keep his place in the “book.” He also did not like the show’s trombone part (it “hurt his ears”) and he provoked the conductor’s further ire by re-writing it for the evening performance! Alford may have never played another show in Toledo, but his first attempt provided the eye-opening jolt that forced him onward to greater things.

Acting on the belief that “a failure is only a man who quits trying,” Alford sought to correct his deficiencies. He knew that one of America’s first conservatories—Dana’s Musical Institute—was in nearby Warren, Ohio. Founded in 1869 by the distinguished American educator William Henry Dana (1846–1916), by the 1890s the Musical Institute enjoyed a national reputation. Alford made up his mind to enroll. The exact years of his attendance are no longer known, but he is present in a class photo taken between 1890 and 1894. Even then he stands out: as the rest of the co-ed student body stares solemnly into the lens, Alford (smiling enigmatically) pince-nez glasses glinting, holds both arms straight out and balances his bowler hat on outstretched fingertips. This whimsical pose was in contrast to the serious, almost scientific atmosphere of the Institute; Dr. Dana ran a tight ship, expectations were high, and the workload heavy. Each and every day students were required to attend classes in music theory, composition, and solfège, take a private lesson on their major instrument, practice that instrument a minimum of four hours, *and* attend rehearsals for the Institute’s orchestra and band. But Alford apparently thrived in this intensity, and benefitted greatly from his studies at the Institute. Doubtless too, he valued his interactions with Dana, who was renowned as the author of the first American text on orchestration—*Practical Guide and Study to the Secret of Arranging Orchestra Music* (J.W. Pepper, 1879).

Harry Alford left Dana’s Musical Institute armed with the theoretical “whys and wherefores” of music and vastly improved trombone playing skills, ready to begin in earnest his career. This began with a post as organist and choirmaster at the Christian Science church in Hudson, New

York. While there, Alford was also put in charge of the town band and orchestra. But by the fall of 1896 he was back again in Michigan, now as a travelling show musician. His first bit of trouping was with a local variety act, the Wyrina Specialty Company. A few months later, Alford signed on with the Six Nation Medicine Company. This was an under-canvas carnival outfit that plied the upper Midwest, providing free shows as ballyhoo for its patent medicine business. On the road Alford continued to compose. In August 1897, his hometown newspaper proudly announced what may have been his first published work, the “Michigan Club Two-Step.” (In a proprietary touch, the paper also added that, “Like all of Harry’s compositions, the music is very pretty and catchy.”) By the fall of 1897 Alford had moved to another regional outfit, Bryan’s Comedy Company. But he had also moved up, from the lowly “tent show” into a higher (and indoor) branch of show business—vaudeville. In March 1898 Harry Alford was promoted to the orchestra leader for the Bryan Co., serving as pianist-conductor. As a touring musical director, he had to direct the local house orchestra in each city, an activity that made him acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses of typical American ensembles.

In September 1898 he became music director for a nationally-known touring “musical farce comedy”—*A Breezy Time*. This twenty-five-member New York troupe had toured coast to coast for eight years, playing the “big time” as well as the “provinces.” While it had some old-fashioned elements (like a pre-show street parade), by the time Alford was hired the show was featuring plenty of newfangled ragtime. He stayed with *A Breezy Time* for several years, and also reportedly conducted other touring productions, including Charles H. Hoyt’s enormously successful musical comedy *A Trip to Chinatown*.

*A Breezy Time* also brought Harry Alford to New York—the absolute center of the American music and theater industries. He lost no time fully immersing himself in those worlds, with special attention paid to the music publishers. Between tours he found employment as a copyist and general factotum with one of them—Howley, Haviland & Co.—a pioneering Tin Pan Alley firm. New York took little notice of Harry Alford, but he wisely used his time there taking stock and solidifying his own ideas. He had been aware that nearly all of the band and orchestra music played throughout the country originated in New York. Most of it he had come to regard as technically outdated, ineffective for the latest styles, and crafted without an understanding of actual working conditions. Sizing-up the New York publishing scene, Alford discovered why: nearly all of the arrangers there were older German immigrant string players who worked part-time to supplement their incomes. As the twentieth century dawned these starchy, be-whiskered “authorities” still controlled all the work, despite the fact that what they had learned in Munich or Leipzig in the 1860s and ’70s had little relevance outside of New York, Philadelphia, or Boston, and was of diminishing value even there.

Harry Alford knew how reforms could be initiated. One central problem for American music makers was a shortage of string players. (Violists and cellists were particularly scarce.) This made the New York–Teutonic penchant for scoring for large string sections (flowing from the Romantic Era symphonic tradition) an exercise in futility. Practical experience had shown Alford that American orchestras employing just five string instruments (first and second violins, viola, cello, and bass) were considered more than adequate. Rather than challenge or ignore that reality, Alford decided to embrace it. His solution was simple: to reinforce the strings, the winds and brasses would play with them continuously. This meant that the American popular orchestra would actually be a miniature wind band using the strings more for color and soloistic effects than as the foundation of ensemble tone.

In July 1899 *A Breezy Time* relocated its center of operations to Chicago, and Harry Alford came along with it. Always hustling, between tours he broke into Chicago's large music scene as a freelance trombonist. Alford played everywhere—from roller-skating rinks to neighborhood theaters. And he played very well: soon he was known as one of the city's best players. Things ran smoothly until February 1901, when *A Breezy Time* abruptly disbanded. This was a considerable setback for Alford. But there was a compensation—he was in love with a Canadian milliner named Lucille Teetzal, and life on the road had made their courtship difficult. Now “at liberty,” Alford forged ahead with the romance, and the happy couple was soon married. Together they made Chicago their permanent home. Alford continued his trombone freelancing, but also began to make arrangements and orchestrations for a few small music publishers and theaters. He had no serious competition in Chicago, and his clever scores began to attract attention.

In 1904 Harry L. Alford put away his horn and made an astounding announcement: in Chicago he planned to start the world's first full-time *bureau for music arranging*; one keeping an up-to-the-minute eye on new trends and techniques, and big enough to function on a nearly industrial scale. He would accept commissions from anyone, in person or by mail. He would write for any combination of instruments or voices, in any style, for any purpose. Scores would be finished and ready for performance or publication within hours. He would be supported by a large and efficient staff that would assist him and undertake every kind of music preparation task, from “copying” to transpositions, to dictation. All this would be done in a centrally located office building, near the principal theaters, express messenger agencies, telegraph offices, and equipped with a long-distance telephone!

The type of enterprise Alford was describing had never before existed. And it was such an outlandish idea that most of Chicago scoffed. “You'll starve at that game,” was the general reaction. But Alford was unfazed: he had been quietly laying the groundwork and was now implementing the plan. With paper and pens on his modest dining room table, he got to work. And he *got* the work too. Within weeks, Alford had the business of Will Rossiter, Chicago's largest music publisher, and one of the largest in the United States. Then he was able to rent the back room of a music shop and hire an assistant. Alford's multifaceted duties for Rossiter were on the “intake” side of the business: he was a “song mechanic”—harmonizing and notating compositions for non-music-reading “composers.” He also prepared piano solo and piano/vocal scores for publication. But his favorite job was developing all types of attractive concert band and orchestra arrangements of the firm's tunes. These were needed not only for sale, but were the only way in those days to “broadcast” music. Live ensemble performances in theaters, ballrooms, and bandstands drove piano-sheet sales, which was the core business. So all sorts of ensemble arrangements (called “stocks”) were always needed.

As Harry L. Alford's fine work for Will Rossiter created a stir, other Chicago publishers were surprised and delighted to learn that his services were available to all. It did not take long for the many who had ridiculed Alford's “arranging bureau” concept to find themselves relying on it. Within months, Alford added more local publishers to his client list: Arnett-Delonais Co., Victor Kremer, W.C. Polla Co., Windsor Music, Carl Laemmle, Lyon & Healy, Thompson & Co., and the M.L. Carlson Co. Eventually, *every* music publisher in Chicago used his services.

By 1906 the Alford Studio was a “going” and growing concern. Its founder was finally able to lease a real office and take on a few more assistants. He also began to advertise in a novel manner

by composing and self-publishing his own deluxe band and orchestra pieces for free distribution to the trade. These handsomely engraved, glossy-paged editions were covered with photos and ads for the Studio:

**DID YOU EVER SEE OR HEAR**  
**OF AN OFFICE OF THIS KIND BEFORE?**  
*An Entire Floor of a Centrally Located City Building*  
*Devoted to Arranging, Copying and*  
*Transposing Music*

This is the day of specialists. In the music world but few of the popular composers arrange their own melodies; they are **Specialists in melody writing** and prefer to entrust the orchestrations and harmonization of their productions to people who have made a life study of these branches—in other words, who are **Specialists in arranging**.

Owing to the strong competition in the music publishing business it is necessary to have the **best possible** arrangements procurable for every number placed on the market, as live leaders will no longer waste time on mediocre orchestrations and it stands to reason that **really high grade** work can only be obtained from men with original ideas, a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the various instruments, and who have had years of practical experience.

Bear in mind you will get nothing DEAD out of this office. If the melody does not possess the qualities essential for a solid arrangement, let the other fellow do it. I'm too anxious to be successful.

In 1910 Alford moved again, this time taking the entire floor of a building at 123 North Clark Street. He now had thirteen full-time assistants and in keeping with his Progressive views, several were women. More importantly, Alford had finally found the perfect right-hand man to help him run the operation—cellist and organist Carleton L. Colby (1881–1937). Alford also brought some clever innovations to the studio: one was an in-house, experimental orchestra. Each Studio assistant had been hired not only on the basis of technical ability, but also as a first-class instrumentalist. At several times during the workday, everyone put down their pens, grabbed their instruments and played through the stack of outgoing orchestrations. This was of incredible help in testing new effects, sorting out technical problems with the writing (“Wow, that’s an awkward string crossing, Harry!”), and catching misprints. As Alford proudly advertised, “This is something that has never been attempted before because no arranger has ever had enough work to keep such a force busy day in and day out.”

Increasingly, the Harry L. Alford Studio focused on the musical needs of vaudeville, a field with which its proprietor had great experience and expertise. At that time vaudeville was by far America’s favorite form of entertainment and a huge, dynamic industry. Tens of millions of Americans went weekly to vaudeville shows to see thousands of different touring acts. Each of these required musical accompaniment, and each purchased its own scores and carried them from venue to venue for use by the house orchestras. This was another vast market for arranging, but one that had not been taken seriously by anyone before Harry Alford. His sparkling scores generated excitement, which in 1908 exploded into industry-wide recognition when the “Queen

of Vaudeville”—Eva Tanguay—engaged him. In turn, Alford’s whimsical settings of her racy repertoire made him the king of vaudeville musicians. After this, every act in the business longed for his services and soon he had hundreds of clients, including many of the headliners. Some sought brand new, original music. Others wanted custom arrangements of pre-existing material. The latter simply stopped by the Studio for a consultation; for original music, Alford insisted on seeing the “turn” before agreeing to compose. In this mode he was often a valuable theater critic and coach. In one instance, an aspiring comic named Burns asked Alford to write new music for his “two-act.” After seeing it, Alford advised Burns—George Burns (1896–1996), “It would be better if you’d let Gracie handle the funny stuff.”

In 1916 the Alford Studio moved once more into larger quarters, this time in Chicago’s Grand Opera House. He again leased an entire floor—3,125 square feet—and staffed with eighteen assistants. Here another innovation was instituted: to increase efficiency, a Dictaphone machine was installed so that clients could drop by to record their melodies at any time, rather than wait for a personal meeting with “Harry.” Transposition was also a core activity for the firm. Today this is an obsolete chore; a click of a computer key is all that is required to print out parts in a new key. But in Alford’s era transposition was real drudgery; and a single set of orchestra parts could take a person an entire day to scratch out. But not at the Studio: “When a rush order for a transposition comes into the office, one part is given to each member of the staff and in five minutes the complete orchestration of the song is ready for the performer. As a time saver this is unique as well as practical. Singers as a rule want their orchestrations in a hurry.”

By the early 1910s Harry Alford was so well regarded in the music profession that something else unprecedented happened: publishers began to use his name in the advertising of their new music. Many ads for new songs and instrumentals appeared in trade magazines proclaiming “*Arranged by Harry L. Alford*,” sometimes omitting the composer’s name entirely! (The ads of one Midwestern publisher simply read, “Arranged by Alford. NUF SED.”) It was now recognized that an arranger’s *treatment* of a melody was at least as valuable as the melody itself. This was a breakthrough, not only for Alford, but for his new profession.

World War I called forth an incredible flood of patriotic, morale-boosting music, and the American music industry prospered. Harry Alford’s business thrived along with it, and once again he needed larger premises. Since 1917 he had been watching a magnificent new office building rise on State Street. Twelve stories high, state of the art, and (best of all), built around a twenty-eight hundred-seat vaudeville theater, the State-Lake Building would be an ideal location for the Studio. The paint was hardly dry in March 1919 when Alford plunked down \$18,000 (over \$300,000 in 2013 dollars) for the first year’s rent for a large suite there. At last, the Studio had a worthy setting—State-Lake Suite 616. It was a fascinating place, as cornetist and conductor Hale Vandercook (1864-1949) related in 1921:

It is an interesting visit to one who enters the splendid suite of rooms in the big theater building that Harry Alford now occupies. Here are the outer offices, the “Information” desk, the parlors and the sound-proof trial room. Then Alford’s private office and at last the big, airy, light “copying” room—where there are seated, busily at work at rows of desks, an able and schooled body of arrangers and copyists. To these offices come the people from the concert halls, opera, chautauquas, vaudeville and “movie” houses, as well as the “composer,” to have their “arrangements” made. Everybody seems to know Alford. Everybody seems

to call him “Harry.” In comes a “team” from one of the vaudeville houses. One of them calls for “Harry,” and, getting his attention, the performer will sing the usual vaudeville words in Harry’s ears: “Dome—dome—domecity, dome—.” Alford understands. The man has a “new tune” running in his mind and wants it arranged for his act. Inviting him into the sound-proof room, where the piano is situated, Alford seats himself, hears the “artist” hum over the melody, and takes this tune down from the voice as rapidly as the court reporter will write in shorthand. Using great diplomacy here and there, Alford will “rub out” this and “change that,” and soon will make a presentable melody out of a mere nothing. “Can I have that arranged by five o’clock, Harry?” he asks of Alford. “Sure,” says Harry, and he will make one of his famous shorthand scores of it all, hand it to the foreman of the copying room, and—it’s done—on time.

In comes a man with a phonograph record under his arm. “Harry, put this on your phonograph and run ’er over. There’s a melody along in the middle of it I wanta ‘cop’ for the act. . . . There, that’s the beginning of it, see?” Harry listens, grabs a piece of music paper and a pencil, takes it down precisely and quickly as it is given on the record and says: “Now, let’s see what key is best for you . . . . No-o-o. Sing it higher, so you can get it over. . . . There, that’s it. Key of A-flat. All right, you can have the arrangement at four o’clock this afternoon.” Then he makes the shorthand score, slips it to the head copyist, and, there you are; all ready at four o’clock.

The real estate man, with offices on the same floor, goes to the theater with his wife that night and hears a wonderful arrangement played by the house orchestra. If you would tell this business man that “Alford, the man across the hall, arranged that,” the chances are that he wouldn’t know what you were talking about. He doesn’t even know that music has to be “arranged.”

The 1920s saw remarkable changes in American music. Harry Alford and his team facilitated some of these and stayed energetically abreast of others. The “Jazz Age” was now underway. This improvisational and blues-based music had replaced ragtime as the dominant popular style. As he had with earlier syncopated music (including the blues), Alford guided the new jazz trend into codified, arranged forms. At the same time, dance orchestra instrumentation was also radically changing. The basic “Eleven & Pno.” ensemble that had been heard everywhere for years was finally obsolete. The new dance “orchestra” was even more band-like, with the string section pushed out almost entirely in favor of saxophones, tenor banjo, and tuba. Embracing these new trends, Alford was a pioneer of “Symphonic Jazz” (a term he was using in 1920), experimenting with it several years before the better-remembered efforts of Paul Whiteman (1890–1967) and Ferde Grofé (1892–1972). As Alford explained in April 1923, “A tone poem in fox-trot time may be as artistic and complete as a Strauss waltz, and as far above the popular dance tunes of a few years ago as Hamlet is above the comic supplement of a Sunday paper. . . . The taste of the public is improving. People are no longer satisfied with mere ‘tunes.’ They still want ‘melody,’ but it has to be embellished with dainty figurations, tricky rhythmical effects, modern harmony, and constant shifting of tone color. In other words, the public wants good music—real music. . . .”

During the 1920s the Alford Studio was a leading source of performing material for thousands of American dance orchestras, both through publishers' "stock" arrangements, and "specials"—scores custom-written for a specific band or venue. Business boomed: in 1925 Studio manager Carl Colby remarked that Alford was ". . . personally acquainted with practically every publisher and composer of note in the U.S., and is in correspondence with twenty thousand orchestra leaders. . . ." The most famous clients for his custom arrangements were the Isham Jones Orchestra, The Oriole Terrace Orchestra, The Benson Orchestra, and Roy Bargy and his Orchestra. Of these, Alford's closest relationship was with songwriter-saxophonist-bandleader Isham Jones (1894–1956), who had been a client since 1918. Over time Alford scored most of Jones's hits, including "It Had to Be You" and "I'll See You in My Dreams" (both 1924). Through the phonograph and the new medium of radio broadcasting, the Isham Jones Orchestra became one of the most famous dance bands in the nation. And its success was due in no little way to Harry Alford's colorful and ingenious contributions—a fact duly noted by the press of that time.

The Alford Studio roared along with the '20s, and interesting and innovative work continued to flow from it. But in retrospect we can see that changes in popular music and technological advances were gradually lessening its relevance. The phonograph and then radio had cut deeply into all forms of sheet music publishing. Motion pictures were draining away the vaudeville audiences. In the dance orchestra field, improvisation was becoming the central focus of big band jazz; also emerging was a generation of talented young bandleaders whose celebrity flowed in part from their ability to create their own distinctive scores. Although in March 1929 Alford wrote, "I'm working constantly to improve my arrangements. Keeping them right up-to-the minute . . . so they will always 'hit the mark,'" it was becoming clear that fewer of them were needed or wanted.

By the late 1920s vaudeville was clearly dead, finished off by the arrival of talking pictures. Curiously, Hollywood was one massive music-consuming entity that Harry Alford did not attempt to serve. Instead, he turned his attention to the developing field of music education. Public school and college band programs were growing and had a tremendous need for good music. This suited Alford perfectly; his work had been long been featured by the great touring concert bands—Sousa, Pryor, and Conway. And like those grand old organizations, Alford too was now something of an "institution." Happily, this was recognized by several young, brilliant Midwestern university band directors, who were eager to have Alford share his unique expertise. In this refreshing setting, he became one of the originators of the football "halftime show," a convergence of sport and entertainment that Alford graced with some of his most thrilling scores.

By the time of the Great Depression, almost everything about the American music industry had changed. Yet Alford soldiered on, keeping the Studio open with a smaller part-time staff. Most of the work now centered on amateur songwriters and supporting high school and college drama departments. Alford's last true love was his composing and arranging for the big university bands—Purdue, Northwestern, University of Michigan, and his favorite, the University of Illinois. He spent much of the 1930s happily driving from campus to campus interacting with young musicians and enjoying their concerts and football pageants. On March 4, 1939, Harry L. Alford was planning another visit to the University of Illinois when he suffered a fatal heart attack. On his desk was a brand-new march which he had hoped to have them try.

## THE MUSIC

The selections heard on this recording are all published compositions and arrangements for the standard American “Small Orchestra.” Thus, only one segment of Harry L. Alford’s creative output is represented. It is my hope that someday his music for other forces—concert band, jazz orchestra, and chorus—can receive similar attention. The pieces included were written between the years 1905 and 1925, the twenty-year period that I believe offers the best overview of Alford’s influence and artistic legacy.

Throughout his life Harry Alford adored marches. Of his sixty or so original compositions, nearly half were in this form. Thus, it is appropriate to open our program with one, **“The Hustler.”** It is a musical tribute to another of his loves—Chicago. With it, Alford taps into the striving energy and power of the “The City of the Big Shoulders” in much the same way as Carl Sandburg. Musicians and audiences of 1911 would have found “The Hustler” a strikingly modern work, with its chromatic melodies, augmented chords, rapid “crosstalk” between treble and bass, and exceedingly fluid trombone lines. Twenty-first-century listeners may be surprised to hear this kind of music performed by a small orchestra, but in fact marches were absolutely standard fare for these groups in both the theater and ballroom. “Hustler” became a favorite of vaudeville musicians, finding its place in the repertoires of thousands of orchestras and bands across the land.

“Jazorient,” “Jazette,” and “Jazz Elite” are numbers from an extraordinary 1919 publication known as *The Earl Fuller Collection of Jazz Classics*. One of New York’s leading orchestra directors, Earl Fuller (1885–1947) provided music for Manhattan’s toniest restaurants, nightclubs, and hotels. He had grown dissatisfied with the lackluster arrangements used by his orchestras; it all sounded the same. When the Original Dixieland Jass Band invaded Gotham in 1917 Fuller was intrigued. He wanted his own Celebrated Orchestra at Rector’s Restaurant to be able to offer the rhythmic excitement of the ODJB but with more textures, colors, and elegance. (The music would also have to be fully notated for his classically trained, non-improvising players.) Fuller was a fan of Harry Alford’s scores, and believed only Alford could give him precisely what he was seeking. Accordingly, in the summer of 1919 Alford was brought to New York to create fifteen special new dance orchestra numbers along these lines. Surprisingly, Fuller did not keep a proprietary hold on the results. Instead, he published the set in a beautiful edition of bound folios, complete with his own picture on the cover. Fuller announced this event with a series of full-page ads in *Metronome* magazine: “Alford was at his best with this work and all who hear these numbers will agree . . . that Alford has surpassed even himself, and that is a BIG statement, for every musician knows his ability. HARRY L. ALFORD positively built EARL FULLER’S COLLECTION OF JAZZ CLASSICS.”

**“Jazorient”** is a pseudo-oriental fantasy built on three melodies by Lou Gold. Here Alford summons a surprising array of sounds from the venerable “Eleven & Pno.” instrumentation. Obvious first is his trademark mastery of the muted brasses. Most interesting is Alford’s treatment of the third theme, which receives four different variations. **“Jazette,”** based on two insipid tunes by Harry Potter (Fuller’s pianist), is transformed into some kind of kinetic “sound sculpture.” Alford’s arrangement is so elaborate that Potter’s original melodies become quite superfluous. His writing for the drums and mallets is most extraordinary, requiring the single performer to play nine different instruments, including the xylophone. **“Jazz Elite”** is a most charming syncopated waltz. Only the first sixteen-bar melody comes from Potter; the rest of the number sprang from the ever-fertile imagination of Harry Alford. Incredibly, all fifteen numbers

in *The Earl Fuller Collection* are of the same caliber, making them important works in the transition from ragtime to jazz.

**“Some of These Days”** is included because it recalls Alford’s critical role as creator of the debut arrangements for thousands of new songs and pieces. Naturally not all became hits, but many did, and Alford’s skillful presentations had much to do with these successes. “Some of These Days” also reminds us of Alford’s position as America’s foremost arranger for vaudeville. Sophie Tucker (real name: Sonya Kalish, 1887–1966) was a top client, and in July 1910 brought him an exciting new tune by Afro-Canadian songwriter Shelton Brooks (1886–1975). Working from a lead sheet, in forty minutes Alford crafted a splendid orchestration for Tucker’s act. (It is also heard in her 1911 recordings of the number.) The song’s publisher, Will Rossiter, liked Alford’s arrangement so much that he asked him to reuse it for a separate medley two-step version. That score, recorded here, demonstrates another of Alford’s signatures—having the orchestra musicians sing or shout. Within months of its introduction two million copies of “Some of These Days” song sheets had been sold, making it one of the era’s biggest hits.

An Alford original, **“Roll ’Em Up”** also has a strong vaudeville connection: it was dedicated to Al. Sweet (1876–1945), leader of the famous “White Hussars” stage band act. Harry Alford was the first arranger to truly understand and support the new concept of the single-player “drum set” as it was developing in the early 1900s. He consulted with the best players and the most innovative manufacturers (Ludwig, Leedy, and Slingerland—all Chicago-based) and became an expert on the technique of set drumming. Even his earliest arrangements reflect this interest; in an era of unremitting “boom-chick, boom-chick” parts, Alford called for a wide palette of figures and a plethora of cymbals, blocks, gongs, chimes, bells, and (literally) whistles. As Elden “Buster” Bailey once said to me, “You’d never want to ad lib on his stuff; there are so many terrific ideas on the page that to be great, all you have to do is read it.” Alford spotlighted the drum set with two special solo compositions, “Drumology” (1914), and a 1922 sequel, “Roll ’Em Up.” Both became proud showpieces for hundreds of American drummers, a tradition Mike Dobson continues on into the present with this truly electrifying performance on track 4.

Carrie Jacobs-Bond (1862–1946) was a beloved figure in the pantheon of American music. She was a singer, composer, lyricist, and the first American woman to found a successful music-publishing firm. Her simple, beautiful art songs remain among the best-known music ever written. Harry Alford played a part in her phenomenal rise. Mrs. Jacobs-Bond and the young conductor first crossed paths while touring in vaudeville in the 1890s. They became friends, and once both had settled in Chicago, Jacobs-Bond turned to Alford as musical advisor and editor. He also arranged and orchestrated all of the ensemble versions of her many works. The ballad **“Just A-Wearyin’ For You”** appeared in 1901, and quickly blossomed into worldwide fame. Alford enjoyed playing it as a trombone solo. When in 1908 he made this beautifully understated orchestral setting, he also chose to highlight that instrument. **“A Perfect Day”** was Carrie Jacobs-Bond’s most popular effort. Within a year of its publication, eight million copies of the sheet music were sold, along with five million phonograph records. This was truly music known in *every* home. And it still speaks to us: cornetist Paul Murphy’s deeply moving account of “A Perfect Day” is played from Alford’s 1910 arrangement for small orchestra.

Much of Harry Alford’s career involved building fully realized musical compositions from mere fragments. Leadsheets with only sixteen or thirty-two bars of a melody and songwriters banging out “one finger” tunes filled his days at the office. So he was happy indeed when a good,

complete piano piece only needing orchestration crossed his desk. That was the case with Percy Wenrich's piano rag, "**The Smiler.**" As usual, for fuller promotion the publisher sent it to Alford for conversion into separate pieces for orchestra and concert band. Here, to illustrate his methods, first I play Wenrich's original piano solo (track 6). Immediately following is Alford's arrangement of it, underscoring his view of the arranger's role as inventor and co-composer. He has made the fullest possible use of the available instruments to make "three-dimensional" what had been only "two," all to enhance the composer's musical aims. While respecting "The Smiler's" basic contours, Alford makes many artistic alterations: he changes several melody notes and much of the bass line. The simple eighth-note afterbeats become syncopated double-stop "riffs" for the second violin and viola. Similarly, the snare drum is kept busy playing imitative figures and several strategically placed rolls. Alford also invents compelling countermelodies for the cornets and trombone, as well as much fanciful woodwind filigree. Extraordinarily, he changes the arrangement and instrumentation on the repeats, something no other arranger in 1907 would have troubled to do for a "stock" orchestration.

"**Fiancée: The Bride to Be**" is a miniature tone picture or "descriptive" piece. It was a part of Alford-Colby Music Library, a sixteen-title catalog of ingenious small-orchestra pieces composed by Alford and his associate Carleton L. Colby from 1912 to 1916. These filled a real musical void: unlike concert bands, the main function of most orchestras was accompanying. Thus, very little music was written to showcase the orchestras themselves. Alford's response to this need, and part of the A-C series, was "Fiancée," which he explained, ". . . is one of the classiest constructed arrangements ever put on the market. It has a haunting melody that anybody can remember and the theme is arranged in three different ways. The big climax at the finish with orchestra chimes or bells is bound to bring applause. The trio where the tolling of the chimes is introduced is very rich; full of brilliant harmony; and is very interesting to listen to. The arrangement has been very carefully made; much time and thought given, every theme has a meaning. This number was played in Mss. six months by the different leading orchestras in Chicago before it was published and the requests for it are enormous at the different places of amusement. Now, here is your chance Mr. Leader; be the first in to give your patrons this unique novelty."

Harry Alford had a well-earned reputation as a specialist in the new and unusual. And in 1912 something quite unusual was emerging: the "blues." This African-American folk music had existed in the Deep South for centuries. But it had remained there, isolated and obscure. Finally, in 1912 the blues broke into print as piano music, and efforts were made to transform it into the next big mainstream pop style. One of the first of these pieces to appear was W.C. Handy's "**Memphis Blues.**" To further promote it, publisher Theron C. Bennett had an orchestral arrangement made by minstrel bandleader Eddie Cupero (1878?–1939). This score worked well enough for Cupero's own performances, but otherwise generated little interest. Bennett decided to try again, and turned this time to "that Chicago arranger." When a copy of the Handy piano solo reached Alford, he diagnosed its challenges: the blues' exotic tonality, twelve-bar phrases (as opposed to the customary sixteen or thirty-two), unusual melodies, rhythmic inflections, and "breaks" were all quite alien to American musicians—black and white. Enticing them into playing and *enjoying* this extremely ethnic music would require some very shrewd arranging. Fortunately, Alford was up to the task: he understood at once the "essence" of the blues, and was able to translate this into musical terms appealing to the profession. For most, his arrangement of "Memphis Blues" was their first encounter with this "new" form of African-American music.

It did not take long for wide-awake early-twentieth-century showmen to realize that motion pictures would become the “next big thing” in entertainment. Chicago theater owner Carl Laemmle (1867–1939) was one of them. Just after the turn of the century he moved from bookkeeping into the nickelodeon business; by 1906 he owned several small theaters and was doing a bit of producing and music publishing. All this brought him into contact with Harry Alford. In 1909 Laemmle decided to enter the filmmaking business as well, founding the Independent Moving Picture Company—IMP. As a promotion, he commissioned Alford to compose a special piece to be given away to theaters screening IMP films. The resulting **“Independent Moving Picture March”** was highly cinematic: a series of stirring fanfares gives way to a sinister first theme. The woodwinds and first violin take the next strain, accompanied by comic *glissandi* in the strings and cornets, underpinned with a lively trombone “commentary.” The lyrical trio features dashes of triple-tongued woodwind “Morse code” (a favorite Alford device); the “dogfight” simulates the laughter of happy photoplay audiences, while the *finale* is clearly a thrilling “happy ending.” Cinema musicians loved this, and for years “IMP” rang through movie houses as “Overture” or “Exit” (“Outro”) music. Indeed, the march proved more durable than the company it commemorated: in 1913 Laemmle merged IMP into his new, larger firm—Universal Pictures.

Harry Alford’s arrangements launched many successes, and there were even rare occasions when he was hired to revisit hits he had worked on years previously. That was the interesting case with Leo Friedman’s blockbuster **“Let Me Call You Sweetheart.”** The song appeared in 1910, and Alford’s fine vocal and instrumental waltz settings helped usher it into the hearts of millions. Fifteen years later, its publisher decided to rekindle public interest in the tune, and Alford was put back on the case. Simple verse/chorus pop songs like “Sweetheart” were not long enough for dancing, so a typical dance arrangement of such numbers introduced a second, similar tune as “filler.” But by the early ’20s that old convention had given way to “variations” —the verse and chorus repeated several times using modulations with changing harmonization and instrumentation. This was not an Alford innovation, but he embraced it enthusiastically, as demonstrated with his charming 1925 arrangement of “Sweetheart.” Another of Alford’s enthusiasms was the saxophone—heard here to great effect. By the early ’20s a two- or three-sax section was mandatory, replacing the strings in nearly every American dance orchestra. In a 1923 article Alford explained why: “Although this instrument [the saxophone] had long been known to musicians as ‘filler’ in brass combinations or for an occasional solo, our principal acquaintance with it was in the hands of vaudeville musical acts. But when we discovered its capabilities in the hands of a skillful performer, it rapidly took its place in dance combinations; and, when the usual prejudice against any innovation is overcome, it will be welcomed into theatre and concert orchestras. Is it any wonder that an instrument that can play a sustained melody with the suavity and grace of a violin or cello, rapid figuration with the agility of a flute and yet ‘carry’ well enough to be heard clearly above the brass section (or blend with it if desired), has become popular? Add to these qualities the fact that it has a range of two octaves and a half, of practically uniform timbre, without noticeable breaks; and above all, that the performer can continue playing for long stretches without tiring, its value in small combinations becomes obvious.”

Harry Alford’s “Characteristic March” **“The Peacemaker”** harkens back to his first years in Chicago. Published there in 1905 by Will Rossiter, the piece celebrates President Theodore Roosevelt’s role in ending the bloody Russo-Japanese War. Although an early-period work,

Alford's iconoclastic and theatrical style is in full evidence. It opens with the "Japanese Battle Song" (better known through Arthur Sullivan's use of it in *The Mikado*) and then introduces Roosevelt with a soft, swaggering, rag-inflected theme. (Unlike most marches, much of this one is marked *piano* and *pianissimo*). Finally the combatants have at each other, only to be interrupted by a slightly louder restatement of the Roosevelt theme. After a volley of American patriotic tunes, "Roosevelt" appears one last time—a colossus now—astride a trombone-powered "Star Spangled Banner"! All of this "action" delighted audiences and phonograph owners, making "The Peacemaker" one of the most successful of Alford's own compositions.

Alford's interest in having an orchestra "become the show" (rather than merely accompany the show) was expressed in many of his original pieces. Appearing in 1914, "**Spooks: A Midnight Chase,**" is one of the most elaborate. Here the composer demonstrates his masterful command of the small orchestra. With just twelve players he creates an amazing number of moods, sounds, and effects. (And when necessary, an enormous amount of ensemble sound.) Here the viola finally gets its due, playing the ghostly main theme in unison with the cello and clarinet and in the trio, a florid "wind imitation" (both played with gusto here by Tom Rosenthal). Clever brass and string effects abound, but most amazing is Alford's percussion scoring: arranged for one player, "Spooks" includes passages for snare and bass drums, cymbals, timpani, wind whistle, woodblock, ratchet, bells, *and* xylophone! Further, the drum part also contains lighting cues, and assigns a second drummer to the electric panel to flash the house lights on and off! "Spooks" was another whimsical offering of the Alford-Colby Music Library.

Harry Alford's foxtrot treatment of the Egbert Van Alstyne 6/8 ballad "**Memories**" raises some intriguing musicological questions. Listening to it, we hear many of the tricky "licks" and "breaks" commonly associated with 1920s jazz and dance band recordings. Yet, Alford made this arrangement in 1915, using most of the same "licks" that he had been writing since 1912! This brings us to a startling realization: somehow, Harry L. Alford was creating jazz-like syncopated music well before "real," improvised jazz had become a nationally known. Had he made clandestine trips to New Orleans to "steal their stuff"? We know that he did not. To some extent the *opposite* is true: many early jazz musicians grew up listening to and/or playing Alford's ubiquitous stock arrangements, and those experiences influenced *their* later performing styles. Some may discount this idea, but after spending the past thirty years collecting, studying, and performing tens of thousands of historic orchestrations, I certainly see the powerful effect published arrangements had on the development of early jazz.

The collection and study of scores also reminds us of a number of publisher-devised musical formats that are now extinct, yet which once formed a significant portion of the orchestra and band literature. One of these is the "medley overture," an extended instrumental piece developed by Tin Pan Alley in the early 1900s as a sonic advertisement. Typically these pieces were nine or ten minutes in duration and bore sales-slogan titles like "Haviland's Happy Hits No. 7," or "Bits of Remick Hits No. 12." The latter notwithstanding, most of the tunes incorporated in medley overtures were *not* hits. The medley overture recipe called for a mix of brand-new numbers with ones that were selling well, along with a true hit or two (if possible). The resulting piece was then distributed free to every possible performance outlet, and they were widely used. It took an exceptional musician to create a decent medley overture—management generally picked the tunes, leaving to the hapless arranger the considerable problem of how to create a unified

“composition” from a jumble of disparate styles, meters, tempos, keys, and moods. Harry Alford was one of the few true masters of this format, as his imaginative work on **“Shapiro’s Song Successes No. 4”** reveals. Using excerpts from eight songs by Melville J. Gideon, Herbert Ingraham, John H. Flynn, and Jean Schwartz, he creates real music that is not only stirring and beautiful, but also delightful to perform.

Our tribute to Harry L. Alford concludes in a manner that we think would please him—with a march. And this is one of his grandest, **“Call of the Elk.”** Although Alford composed it in early 1920 for the Elks Club, every phrase and measure is distinctly his own. It is a sound sculpture through which you can sense the inexpressible fullness of life—love, joy, *bliss*—felt by a Michigan schoolboy on a warm summer afternoon as the band began to play. . . .

\*\*\*

Based in historic Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra** is the world’s only year-round, professional ensemble specializing in the authentic recreation of “America’s Original Music”—the sounds of early musical theater, silent cinema, and vintage ballroom dancing. PRO came into being as the result of Rick Benjamin’s 1985 discovery of thousands of historic orchestra scores of the legendary Victor recording star Arthur Pryor. This extraordinary collection sparked Mr. Benjamin’s formation of his “Paragon Ragtime Orchestra” at The Juilliard School the following year. In 1988 the Orchestra made its formal debut at Alice Tully Hall—the first concert ever presented at Lincoln Center by such an ensemble. Since then PRO has toured extensively across forty-eight states and several countries overseas. These travels have taken the Orchestra to more than seven hundred performing arts centers, including the Ravinia Festival, the Smithsonian Institution, Chautauqua, Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center, the Brucknerhaus (Austria), the American Dance Festival, and in New York at the 92nd Street Y and City Center. In 1999, PRO’s music inspired master choreographer Paul Taylor’s new dance, *Oh, You Kid!*, which was premiered at The Kennedy Center jointly by the Paul Taylor Dance Company and the Paragon and has since toured the world. In 2003 the Orchestra premiered Rick Benjamin’s reconstruction of Scott Joplin’s 1911 opera *Treemonisha* to acclaim at the Stern Grove Festival in San Francisco. More recently, PRO had the honor of appearing twice as special guests of the Minnesota Orchestra in Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis.

In addition to its worldwide concert hall, university, and festival appearances, PRO has acquired a considerable following both here and abroad through its radio programs on National Public Radio, the *New York Times’* WQXR, the BBC, WWFM Classical, and the *Voice of America* networks. Since 1989 the Walt Disney Co. has relied on the Orchestra for the recorded “area music” heard on *Main Street, U.S.A.* at Disneyland, Disney World, and Disneyland Paris, and in 1992 PRO proudly served as “Ambassador of Goodwill” for the United States at the World’s Fair in Seville, Spain. Over the years the Orchestra has been heard on the soundtracks of several feature films and television programs, including productions for PBS, HBO, and Turner Classic Movies. The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra’s widely praised discography includes fifteen albums and two DVD sets of historic Hollywood films with authentic scores. All of these achievements have been widely praised and considered instrumental in rekindling interest in the rich history and tradition of the American theater orchestra.

***www.paragonragtime.com***

Conductor **Rick Benjamin** has built a singular career on the discovery and performance of American music from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. He is the founder and director of the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, which uses his extraordinary 20,000-title collection of historic theater and dance orchestra scores (c. 1870–1925) as the basis of its repertoire. In addition to his work with Paragon, Mr. Benjamin maintains active careers as a pianist, arranger, and tubist. As a conductor, in addition to the PRO he has led the National Orchestra of Ireland (Dublin), the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the Aalborg and Aarhus Symfoniorkesters in Denmark, the Olympia Symphony (Washington State), the National Orchestra of Iceland, the Erie Philharmonic, the Anchorage Symphony (Alaska), and the Virginia Symphony. Mr. Benjamin is also one of the foremost researchers of early cinema music; he has unearthed the original orchestral accompaniments to many great motion pictures of the 1910s and '20s, and he has conducted for more than six hundred silent film screenings across North America and Europe. Mr. Benjamin has written many articles on American music, and lecture tours have taken him to over a hundred colleges and universities. He is continuing work on his books *The American Theater Orchestra* and *Encyclopedia of Arrangers & Orchestrators: 1875–1925*. Rick Benjamin is a member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and was educated at The Juilliard School in New York City. [www.rickbenjamin.com](http://www.rickbenjamin.com)

### **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra**

Rick Benjamin, conductor and piano soloist

Caroline Chin, first violin and concertmaster

Bryony Stroud-Watson, second violin

Thomas Rosenthal, viola

Alistair MacRae, cello

Troy Rinker, bass

Leslie Cullen, flute and piccolo

Alicia Lee, clarinet

Paul Murphy, cornet

Michael Blutman, cornet

Tim Albright, trombone

Mike Dobson, drums, timpani, mallets, and effects

Additional Players for “Roll ’Em Up” & “Let Me Call You Sweetheart”:

Dan Block, alto saxophone

Peter Anderson, tenor saxophone

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

#### **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra on New World Records**

*Black Manhattan: Theater and Dance Music of James Reese Europe, Will Marion Cook, and Members of the Legendary Clef Club*. New World Records 80611-2.

*Black Manhattan; Volume 2*. New World Records 80731-2.

*From Barrelhouse to Broadway: The Musical Odyssey of Joe Jordan*. New World Records 80649-2.

*Midnight Frolic: The Broadway Theater Music of Louis A. Hirsch (1881–1924)*. New World Records 80707-2.

*Scott Joplin: Treemonisha*. New World Records 80720-2 [2 CDs].

*You’re a Grand Old Rag: The Music of George M. Cohan*. New World Records 80685-2.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alford, Harry L. "The Make-up of a Modern Orchestra." *The Metronome*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 7, July 1923, p. 73.
- Benjamin, Rick. "Harry L. Alford: An Arranger's Story." *The Mississippi Rag*, Vol. XX, No. 4, March 1993, pp. 24–27.
- Erdmann, Ernest F. "Famous Architects of Melody: Harry L. Alford." *Jacobs' Orchestra Monthly*, Vol. No., pp. 84–85, March 1916.
- The Harry L. Alford Studio. *Sharps & Flats*. Vol. I, No. 2. Chicago: Harry L. Alford. April 1923.
- The Harry L. Alford Studio. *Sharps & Flats*. Vol. I, No. 7. Chicago: Harry L. Alford. October 1925.
- The Harry L. Alford Studio. *Sharps & Flats*. Vol. III, No. 1. Chicago: Harry L. Alford. March 1929.
- The Harry L. Alford Studio. *Sharps & Flats*. Vol. I, No. 10. Chicago: Harry L. Alford. 1935.
- Smith, Leonard B. "Remembering Harry L. Alford." *The Band Fan*, Early Fall 1975.
- Uncredited. "Harry Alford: Something New Under the Sun." *Musical Dixie*, Vol. II, No. 4, May 1921, p. 5.
- Uncredited. "Harry Alford Has Contributed to the Success of Many Orchestras." *The Metronome*, Vol. XXXIX, No.9 September 1923, p. 142.
- Vandercook, Hale. A. "Harry L. Alford." *The Musical Messenger*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, March 1921, pp. 1–4

**INTERVIEWS:**

- Interviews with Ruth Bottoms, daughter of Harry L. Alford. Arlington, Virginia. May, June 1990; August 1991.
- Interview with Dr. Earl A. Slocum, associate of Harry L. Alford. Via telephone. September 1992.

Album concept by Rick Benjamin

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman

Engineering and editing assistant: Jeanne Velonis

Recorded May 23–24, 2013, at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City.

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions Inc., NYC

Design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc.

Piano by Steinway & Sons

All orchestrations, photos, and historic graphics from the Rick Benjamin Collection.

Special thanks to the late Dr. Mark Foutch for sharing his research and reminiscences of Harry Alford, and to the late Dr. Leonard B. Smith for his encouragement and support.

Dedicated to Paul Taylor and the Paul Taylor Dance Company, who dance so splendidly to the music of Harry L. Alford.

**This recording was made possible by a grant from the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trust.**

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Lisa Kahlden, President; Paul M. Tai, Vice-President, Director of Artists and Repertory; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper; Paul Herzman, Production Associate.

ANTHOLOGY OF RECORDED MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Herman Krawitz, Chairman; Amy Beal; Thomas Teige Carroll; Robert Clarida; Emanuel Gerard; Lisa Kahlden; Fred Lerdahl; Larry Polansky; Paul M. Tai; Blair Weille.

Francis Goelet (1926–1998), *In Memoriam*

For a complete catalog, including liner notes, visit our Web site: [www.newworldrecords.org](http://www.newworldrecords.org).

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

E-mail: [info@newworldrecords.org](mailto:info@newworldrecords.org)

© & © 2013 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION OF A.R.M., INC.**

MINDING THE SCORE: THE MUSIC OF HARRY L. ALFORD (1875–1939)  
 AMERICA'S PIONEER ARRANGER

The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra  
 Rick Benjamin, musical director

80743-2

1. *The Hustler* (march, 1911) (Harry Alford) 2:21
2. *Jazorient* (fox trot, 1919) (melodies by Lou Gold, arr. Harry Alford) 3:18
3. *Some of These Days & My Ever Lovin' Southern Gal* (medley two-step, 1910) (Shelton Brooks, arr. Harry Alford) 2:45
4. *Roll 'Em Up* (drum solo, 1922) (Harry Alford) 2:15  
 Mike Dobson, drums
5. *Just A-Wearyin' For You* (1908) (Carrie Jacobs-Bond, arr. Harry Alford) 2:19  
 Tim Albright, trombone
6. *The Smiler* (rag, 1907) (Percy Wenrich, original piano solo) 1:43  
 Rick Benjamin, piano
7. *The Smiler Rag* (two step, 1907) (Percy Wenrich, arr. Harry Alford) 3:08
8. *Fiancée: The Bride to Be* (descriptive intermezzo, 1913) (Harry Alford) 5:41
9. *Jazette* (one step, 1919) (melodies by Harry Potter, arr. Harry Alford) 2:34
10. *The Memphis Blues* (1912) (W.C. Handy, arr. Harry Alford) 2:57
11. *Independent Moving Picture March "IMP"* (1910) (Harry Alford) 2:44
12. *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* (waltz, 1925) (Leo Friedman, special recording orchestration by Harry Alford) 3:58
13. *The Peacemaker* (descriptive march, 1905) (Harry Alford) 2:56
14. *Jazz Elite* (waltz, 1919) (melodies by Harry Potter, arr. Harry Alford) 3:38
15. *Spooks: A Midnight Chase* (descriptive novelty, 1914) (Harry Alford) 3:52
16. *A Perfect Day* (1910) (Carrie Jacobs-Bond, arr. Harry Alford) 2:58  
 Paul Murphy, cornet
17. *Memories* (ballad, 1915) (Egbert Van Alstyne, original piano score) 1:31  
 Rick Benjamin, piano
18. *Memories* (fox trot, 1915) (Egbert Van Alstyne, arr. Harry Alford) 2:13
19. *Shapiro's Song Successes No. 4* (medley overture, 1909) (compiled & arr. by Harry Alford) 9:53  
 Introducing "Oh! That Yankiana Rag," "When I Dream in the Gloaming of You," "I Want A Home, That's All," "Tittle, Tattle, Tattle, Tale," "The Billikin Man," "Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay," "Whitewash Man Rag," and "Meet Me in Rose Time Rosie"
20. *Call of the Elk: The Official B.P.O.E. March* (1920) (Harry Alford) 3:28

TT: 66:11