



After her history-making journey along the Lincoln Highway in 2013, An American Songline® creator Cecelia Otto embarks on her next adventure: a program of songs commemorating America's involvement in World War I.

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**News Hook:** With the centennial of America's entry into World War I coming in 2017, 21st-century vaudeville singer Cecelia Otto will commemorate the anniversary with an album and concert tour of songs from the era, performed in her proven crowd-pleasing style.

In 2017, Portland-area singer and composer Cecelia "Cece" Otto will embark on her newest project: recreating the music that entertained America as it went to war. Otto will commemorate the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I with an album of standards (tentatively titled *An American Songline: Songs of World War I*) popular in the mid-teens, which she plans to record this summer for release next year.

To finance the recording, Otto is launching a fundraising drive on popular crowdfunding platform Indiegogo. The campaign begins May 2, 2016, and runs for thirty days.

Following the release of the album, Otto is planning a concert tour aimed to help modern-day Americans remember a simpler yet troubled time, when people turned to popular songs for relief from their worries and fears.

"Bringing history to life through music is my calling," she says. "You can learn so much about a place and time through its songs, and the songs people sang during World War I really speak to the patriotism, the determination and the fears everyone felt at the time."



## About Cecelia Otto

Cecelia Otto (AKA "Cece") is a classically trained singer, composer, and author who has performed in venues all over the world as both a soloist and in ensemble. In 2013, she completed her cross-country musical journey *An American Songline*, performing 30 concerts of vintage music on venues along America's first transcontinental road, the Lincoln Highway. She has written a book and recorded an album based on her travels. She is an in-demand performer and crowdfunding consultant who tours all over the U.S., and donates her time to help others in the gluten-free community.

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## A 21st-Century Vaudeville Star Is Born

Singing vintage music is nothing new to Otto. In 2013, she created An American Songline, an outlet for the singer to perform, travel, write and share historical music across the country. That year, the classically trained vocalist and composer celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln Highway, America's first cross-country road, by traveling it from one end to the other, performing concerts in every state along the way.

### Recording Her Travels

Her album, *An American Songline: A Musical Journey Along the Lincoln Highway*, was released in March 2015. The album included many of the standards enjoyed by audiences on her tour, including "Secondhand Rose," "In My Merry Oldsmobile" and her crowd-pleasing singalong finale, "When You're Smiling."

She also put her compositional talents to work writing several new songs inspired by her journey, including the jaunty "I Always Wear My Amber Shades" and the elegiac "Land of Lincoln."

Following the album's release, Otto published her book *An American Songline*, a detailed, vivid account of her six-month journey

along America's first transcontinental road.

"This isn't a travel diary; it's not, 'I ate a sandwich and then played a concert,'" Otto jokes. "It's about the journey and the people. My time on the road was something lots of people dream of doing and I wanted to give them that experience through my book."

### A New Project

Once her book and album were complete, Otto cast her sights about for her next project. It didn't take her long to come up with the right idea. "The songs of World War I just fit perfectly," she says. "I learned a lot about singing the music of that era for the original American Songline project, so it was right up my alley. There was the anniversary of America entering the war coming up, so I knew there'd be an audience out there that was ready to hear it. And I've really come to see myself as someone who uses music to bring history to life, and I think the story of World War I is something all Americans should know about."

Otto has chosen a wide range of songs for the upcoming shows. "Of course, there are a lot of patriotic songs that encouraged people to join up and fight," she notes, "songs like 'Keep the Home-Fires Burning'

## America in World War I

Sparked in 1914 by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, World War I pitted the Allied powers of France, Russia and Great Britain against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. While the United States attempted to maintain neutrality, the country was pulled into the conflict in April 1917 and fought with the Allies until the Armistice in November 1918.



and 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary.' Some songs poked fun at military life, like 'Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning' and 'How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm.'

"Something else I noticed when I was researching the music of this period," says Otto, "was this note of melancholy and longing in the songs people sang. Sure, there were the usual patriotic numbers, like

### Indiegogo Campaign

Cecelia Otto is financing her next album with a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo.com. Launching May 2, the campaign will run for 30 days with the goal of raising \$3,000. This will allow her to record an album of 15 songs — and for each additional \$500 she raises, she will record an extra tune. Project backers can also claim a variety of fun rewards, from a digital download of the album to a chance to sing backing vocals on a song.

Her campaign can be reached by visiting  
<https://igg.me/at/songsofWW1>





‘You’re a Grand Old Flag,’ and those are great tunes. But there were also a lot of songs about absence and separation, about not knowing what the future was going to bring. There’s a lot more to the songs of that time than just ‘Over There.’”

### **A Grassroots Effort**

To raise the \$3,000 needed to finance the recording of the album, Otto is using crowdfunding platform Indiegogo. “When I traveled across the country in 2013 for the original American Songline tour,” she explains, “I wanted it to remain a grassroots effort. So I used Kickstarter and was able to raise more than \$15,000. I want to maintain those close ties with my audience and involve them in this new project.”

### **What Is a Songline?**

A songline is a trail followed by Australian Aborigines, who follow these paths singing songs that they believe bring their ancestors back to life. Cecelia Otto learned of songlines and wanted to adapt the idea for America. She created An American Songline in 2013 and in 2016, was granted a trademark for the term.

But crowdfunding for her is about more than the money. “Since my first campaign,” she says, “I’ve actually embarked on a second career as a crowdfunding consultant, and later this year, I’ll be publishing my second book, *The Ten Commandments of Crowdfunding*. I love the opportunity to help other people launch their businesses

or turn their dreams into reality, which is what crowdfunding is really all about.”

### **Cross-Country Tour**

Once the album is released in early 2017, Otto will return to the road, kicking off her national tour with a show in Portland, Oregon the week of April 6, 2017, the 100th anniversary of the United States officially entering the war. She is currently in talks with museums and veterans’ associations across the country, planning dates for her performances.

“I can’t wait to get the album out there,” she says, “and then get back on stage, singing these songs.”

