Domestic Harmonies:
Musical Activity in Southwestern Ontario, 1880-1920

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies domestic musical activity in Southwestern Ontario between 1880 and 1920. It argues that home musical activity was linked to social, cultural, commercial, and even political influences in the public realm. Using Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Guelph as sample communities, it investigates the prescriptive discourses surrounding music making as well as the more variegated realm of actual behaviour. The structure of the chapters mirrors the study's overall argument, moving back and forth over the culturally constituted public-private divide. The discussion considers the influence of parlour spaces, gendered prescriptions, ideals of refinement, and the mediating influence of individual personality and situation. It also examines instrument purchase, music education, sheet music repertoire, and the introduction of the player piano. The final two chapters of this study address the Great War's effect on the status quo, stressing themes of continuity as well as change in musical practices. The dissertation concludes with a short summary of the post-war decline of both the Canadian piano industry and amateur music making in general. Unbeknownst to contemporaries, by the year 1920, domestic musicianship had passed its peak.

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ARCHIVAL SHORT FORMS

AO = Archives of Ontario
GCM = Guelph Civic Museum
GPLA = Guelph Public Library Archives
HPL = Hamilton Public Library, Local History & Archives
KPL = Grace Schmidt Room of Local History, Kitchener Public Library
LAC = Library and Archives Canada
LPL = Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library
McM = William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster
University
TRL = Toronto Reference Library
UGA = University of Guelph Archives
UWOA = University of Western Ontario Archives
UTA = University of Toronto Archives
WCA = Wellington County Archives
WPL = Whitby Archives, Whitby Public Library

Music is more definite than words, and to seek to explain its meaning in words is really to obscure it. There is so much talk about music, and yet so little really said. For my part I believe that words do not suffice for such a purpose, and if I found they did suffice, then I certainly would compose no more music. People often complain that music is so ambiguous that what they are to think about it always seems so doubtful, whereas everyone understands words. With me it is exactly the reverse, not merely with regard to entire sentences, but also to individual words. These, too, seem to be so ambiguous, so vague, so unintelligible, when compared with genuine music, which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words. What any music I love expresses to me is not thought too indefinite to be put into words, but, on the contrary, too definite.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Quoted in the *Conservatory Bi-monthly*, September 1903.

The Gods have made me most unmusical,
 With feelings that respond not to the call
 Of stringed harp, or voice – obtuse and mute
 To hautboy, sackbut, dulcimer and flute;
 King David's lyre, that made the madness flee
 From Saul, had been but a jew's-harp to me:
 Theorbos, violins, French horns, guitars,
 Leave in my wounded ears inflicted scars;
 I hate those thrills, and shakes, and sounds that float
 Upon the captive air; I know no note
 Nor ever shall, whatever folks may say,
 Of the strange mysteries of Sol and Fa;
 I sit at oratorios like a fish,
 Incapable of sound, and only wish
 The thing was over. Yet do I admire,
 O tuneful daughter of a tuneful sire,
 Thy painful labours in a science, which
 To your deserts I pray may make you rich...

Charles Lamb (1775-1834), "To Clara N.," Quoted in the *Conservatory Bi-monthly*, May 1908.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On Christmas Eve in the year 1910, a man named Bert from Winona, Ontario, withdrew for a few minutes from the festivities of the season in order to write a letter. In four days' time, his niece Marjorie Pringle of Hamilton, Ontario, would be boarding the *S.S. Venezia* from New York City, bound for advanced vocal training in Florence, Italy. After offering his congratulations and a healthy dose of advice regarding the merits of hard work, Bert gave vent to some of his own feelings: "Oh! Music is a perfect passion with me & I cannot bear to see it lightly treated. You have a chance that I would gladly give all I possess if I could, only [to] start again & go through it with you. But such things are not to be ... I hope you wont [*sic*] think I am given too much to sermonizing but you know that music is not simply a fad with me."¹

Bert's avowal is captivating both for the intensity of its emotional language as well as the frustrated ambition it conveys. It demonstrates the bewitching power of music in one man's life, a man whose path of employment had led him in a different direction and who indulged in his "perfect passion" only during moments of leisure. It also

¹ Uncle Bert to Marjorie Pringle, December 24, 1910, Box 8, Pringle Papers, HPL. The receipts for Marjorie's voice training in Florence are found pp. 98-140, Envelope 3, Box 1 of the same collection.

contradicts prescriptive notions of music, particularly the amateur variety, as the feminine art *par excellence*. In short, Bert's letter reminds the historian to look beyond outer appearances: that musical interest could dwell in unlikely places without obvious outward signs, enriching even the most unremarkable lives.

This dissertation seeks to pay tribute to Bert and the many others for whom music played a transformative role. It focuses not upon the shining celebrities, most of whom left Canada in pursuit of fame and fortune, but rather upon the quotidian musicians who performed mainly in their own parlours and sitting rooms. This study investigates domestic musical activity in Southwestern Ontario during the period 1880 to 1920. It considers the prescriptive discourses that invested domestic musical practices with so much significance. At the same time, it tries to peer beyond the veneer in order to see how everyday households conformed to, modified, or rejected these same ideals. This study argues that domestic musical activity was indelibly linked to social, cultural, commercial, and even political influences in the public realm. As such, the chapters demonstrate how the history of home music intertwines with that of instrument retailing, music education, sheet music publishing, and the First World War home front.

While home music may not have radically altered the trajectory of Canada's national development, contemporaries believed that it had significant powers. Music, they insisted, contributed to the happiness and stability of the family unit. It taught girls important lessons in preparation for their eventual roles as wives and mothers. It provided a creative outlet at the end of a long workday thus ensuring productivity on the morrow. Finally, musical abilities constituted an essential ingredient in the cultivation of refinement, which on a collective scale would foster a culturally mature Canadian nation.

The power dynamic between domestic music and public life may have been skewed in favour of the latter, yet influences flowed in both directions.

Parameters of the Project

This project does not seek to illuminate all aspects of musical life in Ontario at the turn of the twentieth century. Instead, it concentrates on musical activities in the home and the related spheres of music retail, music education, and music publishing. Other forms of musical activity such as marching bands, church music, ladies' music clubs, professional concerts, and public school music are beyond the scope of the study. Even the phonograph, though influential during the last six or seven years of this time period, is too complex a phenomenon to discuss within the confines of this dissertation. Each of these aspects was researched during the project's initial stages, but as the topic narrowed, they did not make the final cut. Though not discussed at length, this broader knowledge of contemporary musical life has framed my thinking every step of the way.

The chronological period of 1880 to 1920 represents the zenith of amateur music making in Canada. Indeed, musical activities were a ubiquitous presence in the country's social landscape. Industrialization meant that instruments such as pianos and organs were becoming cheaper to produce and therefore more accessible to consumers. Musical education, though still a bit haphazard, was starting to become institutionalized with the creation of conservatories starting in the late 1880s. The invention of the player mechanism in 1897 meant that even those with little or no musical training could spend their leisure time at a keyboard instrument. The phonograph became commercially

available during the Edwardian period, but the poor sound quality and the limited disk catalogue restricted its popularity during its early years. After the Great War, however, the exponential rise of recorded music created a sharp decline in both sheet music sales and amateur music in general.² Most of Ontario's once thriving piano and organ manufacturers faced serious financial difficulties throughout the 1920s, and the onset of the Great Depression forced many into bankruptcy.³ It is therefore appropriate to end this study in 1920, since the rest of the inter-war period belongs to a different musical era.

The geographical region of Southwestern Ontario is intended to serve as a regional case study for domestic musical habits in English Canada during this time.⁴ At the turn of the twentieth century, the area was a vibrant, diverse region, including farmland, industry, small towns, and urban centres. A dense network of railways linked various communities, creating new markets but also new sources of competition for local economies. The region was chosen partly on the grounds of familiarity, and partly due to its imbrication in mainstream Anglo-Canadian musical influences. The area moreover served as the heart of the Canadian keyboard manufacturing industry, as well as the crucible for nation-wide developments in private music education. Thus, while allowing for considerable local and regional variation, I maintain that my findings for Southwestern Ontario will have some relevance for how we think of music in English Canada at large.

² Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 9, 123; James Parakilas, ed., *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 283-285.

³ Wayne Kelly, *Downright Upright: A History of the Canadian Piano Industry* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1991), 42-92.

⁴ For the purposes of this study, Southwestern Ontario will be defined as the peninsular region bounded by Toronto to the east, Barrie to the north, Lake Huron to the west, and Point Pelee to the south.

The project's geographical boundaries are not entirely rigid, however. Sometimes an excellent primary source hailed from another part of the province such as Whitby, Orillia, or Ottawa. At times, a source's provenance could not be pinpointed. Published sheet music, for instance, did not always disclose the composer or lyricist's community of origin. Consequently, the historical narrative occasionally wanders beyond the confines of Southwestern Ontario, though never to the point of losing its sense of place.

This study pivots around four communities: Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Guelph. A comparative local approach made the research more feasible by giving it focus. It furthermore reflects the largely local orientation of the Canadian musical scene prior to the radio broadcasting era.⁵ Ontario social historians such as Joy Parr, Lynne Marks, Nancy Bouchier, Ian Miller, and Robert Rutherford have ably demonstrated the interpretive possibilities of comparative local studies.⁶ Locality has been successfully deployed as a frame of analysis in the field of music history as well.⁷ These four cities are not intended to be representative of Southwestern Ontario writ large. They simply offer four different lenses through which to consider the interplay between musical activity and community. Urban centres were chosen on the grounds that the higher concentration of people, retailers, and educational institutions increased the likelihood of finding relevant primary sources. It soon became apparent that the cities' local archives also contained

⁵ Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 265-266.

⁶ See for instance Nancy B. Bouchier, *For the Love of the Game: Amateur Sport in Small-Town Ontario, 1838-1895* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, Studies in Gender and History Series, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

⁷ See for instance Howard L. Sacks, "From the Barn to the Bowery and Back Again: Musical Routes in Rural Ohio, 1800-1929," *Journal of American Folklore* 116, no. 461 (2003): 314-338.

collections from the surrounding agricultural hinterland. London and Guelph in particular maintained close connections with a number of neighbouring towns, leading to a flow of evidence from smaller settlements such as St. Thomas, Elora, and Fergus.

The cities of Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Guelph were selected because of their contrasting backgrounds. Toronto nurtured the most developed musical community in English Canada, with numerous performers, educators, and critics of note. The majority of Canada's English language musical journals were published in Toronto, giving these sources a strong Toronto-centrism. Toronto, moreover, operated as a cultural metropolis for the region. Music lovers could travel by train to attend concerts. Professional musicians could also abandon their local communities and move to Toronto in the hopes of furthering their careers.⁸ London and Hamilton each have a strong, well-documented history of musical involvement. Guelph, meanwhile, presented the prospect of a smaller city whose proximity to Toronto produced a concert scene alternating between the parochial and the cosmopolitan.⁹ Finally, all four are twenty-first-century university towns, boasting university archives as well as public libraries for research.

Historical Background: General Trends

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Southwestern Ontario underwent its industrial revolution. The first stage, beginning in the 1870s, involved the proliferation

⁸ For examples of audiences travelling to Toronto for concerts see Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 14, 1887, pp. 141-144 and Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, March 28, 1887, pp. 235-238, Ambrose Collection, HPL. For an example of musicians moving to Toronto see C. Sharp, "Ottawa," *Musical Journal* 8 (August 1887): 131.

⁹ The Guelph Presto Music Club Collection, XR1MSA405, at the University of Guelph Archives gives an impression of this oscillation between illustrious visiting performers and local talent.

of small and mid-sized manufactories under the ownership of an individual, a partnership, or a single family. The so-called ‘second’ industrial revolution, from the 1890s onward, involved the consolidation of smaller factories into larger corporations, the increased mechanization of production, and a greater reliance on unskilled workers.¹⁰

Industrialization spurred urbanization, as migrants from surrounding rural communities and newly arrived immigrants drifted to the cities in search of work. The cities’ geographical limits stretched so far that they began to annex nearby hamlets. Horse-drawn streetcars appeared during the 1870s, followed by the telephone near the end of the decade. Larger cities experimented with electric lighting in the 1880s, and by the 1890s many streetcars operated on electricity.¹¹ For smaller communities such as Guelph, electricity did not come until the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario began offering cheap and reliable power from Niagara Falls in 1910.¹²

Industrial cities’ rapid growth put a strain on municipal councils. Local governments struggled to expand or improve services such as water, sewage removal, and public transit, all the while confronting the more flagrant public health abuses within their

¹⁰ T. Melville Bailey, *Hamilton: Chronicle of a City* (Windsor, ON: Windsor Publications, 1983), 64; J.M.S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History*, The History of Canadian Cities Series, ed. Alan F. J. Artibise (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1984), 149; R. Louis Gentilcore, “The Beginnings: Hamilton in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Steel City: Hamilton and Region*, ed. M.J. Dear, J.J. Drake, and L.G. Reeds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 116-117; Peter G. Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850 to 1900: Pattern and Process of Growth*, University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper no. 127 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), 64-67; Leo A. Johnson, *History of Guelph: 1827-1927* (Guelph, ON: Guelph Historical Society, 1977), 294-296.

¹¹ Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London, Canada* (Windsor, ON: Windsor Publications, 1986), 105-107, 118, 128, 133, 135-137; Frederick H. Armstrong and Daniel J. Brock, *Reflections on London’s Past* (London, ON: The Corporation of the City of London, 1975), 9-10; Bailey, *Hamilton*, 64-67; Careless, *Toronto*, 112, 120-122, 136-138, 147, 155, 179-183; Gentilcore, “The Beginnings,” 117; Orlo Miller, Miriam Wright, Edward Phelps, and Glen C. Phillips, *London 200: An Illustrated History* (London, ON: London Chamber of Commerce, 1992), 119, 136-137, 146, 154.

¹² On November 1, 1910, Guelph received its first current from the Niagara Falls hydro-electric power corporation. See Johnson, *History of Guelph*, 283-285. For more on the hydro-electric commission see H.V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forest, Mines & Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941*, 2nd ed., Carleton Library Series 200 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

boundaries.¹³ Their partial success in such matters resulted in a high degree of social stratification in the urban landscape. Traditional elites and self-made wealthy capitalists lived opulent lives in central yet serene neighbourhoods. The middle classes occupied comfortable houses, many of them fleeing to the suburbs in order to enjoy a domestic life freed from the noise and smell of the downtown core. The working classes enjoyed no such luxury, living amidst the urban bustle and frequently battling overcrowding, poor sanitation, and a lack of household amenities.¹⁴ Heightened immigration during the Laurier years placed a further strain on working-class districts. While the majority of these immigrants were of British origin, a significant minority came from continental Europe. The arrival of so many visibly ‘foreign’ newcomers on their city streets challenged many Anglo-Canadians’ already narrow sense of ethnic tolerance.¹⁵

The historian Keith Walden has aptly described the turn-of-the-twentieth-century process of “[b]ecoming modern” as a gradual, disjointed, and thoroughly puzzling time for contemporaries. Deprived of the powers of hindsight, they did not interpret these changes as a grand overarching narrative of modernization. They simply noticed the minutiae of their daily lives altering, which gave them the impression of inhabiting a “state of flux.”¹⁶ At the same time, the scholar Alison Prentice rightly reminds us that everyday Canadians were “active participants” and not merely the “passive victims” of

¹³ Armstrong, *Forest City*, 172; Bailey, *Hamilton*, 83; Careless, *Toronto*, 141-147, 187; Johnson, *History of Guelph*, 273-277, 297-298; Harold A. Wood, “Emergence of the Modern City: Hamilton, 1891-1950,” in *Steel City: Hamilton and Region*, ed. M.J. Dear, J.J. Drake, and L.G. Reeds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 121-128.

¹⁴ Careless, *Toronto*, 169; John C. Weaver, *Hamilton: An Illustrated History*, History of Canadian Cities Series, ed. Alan F.J. Artibise (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1982), 103; Wood, “Emergence of the Modern City,” 121, 127.

¹⁵ Weaver, *Hamilton*, 93.

¹⁶ Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 333-334.

industrialization. They promoted and participated in some elements of the new order, even if they feared and resisted other aspects.¹⁷

Musical activity in Southwestern Ontario during this time was vigorous and very much a part of a community's cultural fabric. The region had a reputation for the quantity and quality of its vocal ensembles. Most cities boasted numerous choral groups and a constellation of church choirs. Smaller towns similarly prided themselves on the accomplishments of their local choirs.¹⁸ Orchestras required more resources and therefore proved harder to sustain, even in the larger urban centres. In particular, orchestras needed musicians skilled on unusual instruments such as the oboe or the bassoon in order to create a balanced sound. Locals were accustomed to hearing popular instrumental music performed by community bands (civilian or regimental), small theatre orchestras, and private ensembles hired to play at social functions. Classical orchestral groups, however, for the most part languished. Larger cities such as Toronto compensated by recruiting visiting American orchestras to play at semi-regular intervals throughout the year.¹⁹ Smaller communities simply did without, relying on their vocal groups, solo performers, and occasional short-lived attempts at string ensembles.

Musical activity in Southwestern Ontario was therefore selective in terms of its emphases. Some enthusiasts found their tastes perfectly satisfied; others admitted frustration when comparing their local offerings to those of larger musical centres. Ellen Ambrose, a thirty-five-year-old piano teacher from Hamilton, saw her cousin Paul depart

¹⁷ Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, 1996), 115.

¹⁸ See for instance J.E. Middleton, "Choral Music in Ontario," in *The Year Book of Canadian Art 1913: Literature, Architecture, Music, Painting, Sculpture* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1913), 71-74; "Choral Conductors," *Canadian Courier*, October 12, 1912, p. 15. For the excellence of the choir in the small community of London Junction see "Splendid Concert," *London Free Press*, April 5, 1907, p. 3.

¹⁹ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 209.

for New York City in 1886. News of his activities made her musical surroundings appear lackluster by comparison:

Your accounts of the music you are hearing makes me hungry – you are a very fortunate boy and I don't grudge you it – but would dearly like to share it. I have got back now to my normal condition of not being *discontented* but I confess that for some time after you settled down there [in New York] I felt very strong leanings that way. Hamilton got very small & one-horsey, the pupils seemed unusually stupid & *unmusical*, the musical attractions could not possibly seem less but the worst of them pressed more heavily & a great deal that had had a certain charm before suddenly grew flat, stale & unprofitable. However it's all right now & I know that everybody can't have everything...²⁰

Levels of satisfaction with Ontario's musical offerings could therefore vary, depending on one's aesthetic preferences, educational background, frame of comparison, and mood at the time of reckoning.

In spite of the Ontario musical community's limitations, or perhaps because of them, professional musicians and critics reflected with pride on the 'progress' their district, their province, and indeed their country had made. Though content to rail against lingering provincialism in their weekly columns, these writers became society's champions when penning pieces for a more general readership. Indeed, these critics loved nothing more than to compare their contemporary achievements with what they perceived to be the rudimentary musical activity of twenty, thirty, or forty years earlier. Such narratives cast previous generations as Canada's economic pioneers, settlers whose efforts had built a nation confident of its agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing prowess. The time had now come for Canada's cultural pioneers to do their work. By patient toil, trained musicians would raise the tastes of the masses to the point that the latter instinctively desired classical fare. Prestigious music schools, composers, and

²⁰ Ellen Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, November 17, 1886, pp. 64 - 77, Ambrose Collection, HPL. Emphasis in original.

ensembles would inevitably follow. The more idealistic of these visionaries even predicted that Canadian cities would someday rival the musical attractions of their European counterparts. Once these lofty goals were achieved, Canada would be able to take her place among the top of the world's nations.²¹ These hopes should give some sense of the stakes cultural uplifters perceived in their attempts to foster musical understanding. Musical activity, in their minds, contributed to a project simultaneously local and national in scope.

Historical Background: The Four Cities

The communities of Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Guelph are similar in that they all served as economic metropolises for a surrounding hinterland. As the cities grew in size and influence, their hinterlands came to encompass not only forests and farmers' fields but villages and towns as well. Toronto's influence, however, extended even further. By the turn of the twentieth century it had become the second most powerful Canadian city after Montreal, with a hinterland that spanned the nation. London, Hamilton and Guelph were all metropolises of their own specific areas, but they equally served as hinterlands to the all-mighty Toronto behemoth.²²

²¹ See for instance Augustus Bridle, "Forty Years Ago and Now: Canadian Music from 1876 to 1916," *Canadian Courier*, December 9, 1916, pp. 12-13, 24; Thurlow Fraser, "A Canadian Singer," *Canadian Magazine* 29, no. 1 (May 1907): 31; H.H. Godfrey, "Canadian Celebrities. No. XXVIII – F.H. Torrington, Chorus Leader," *Canadian Magazine* 17, no. 6 (October 1901): 540-541; Katherine Hale, "Musical Awakening in Canada," *Canadian Magazine* 30, no. 6 (April 1908): 546-549; Katherine Hale, "Music of the Season," *Canadian Magazine* 33, no. 1 (May 1909): 42-46; Victor Marsh, "Music in Hamilton," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 7 (November 1913): 172, 174; E.R. Parkhurst, "Canada's Champion Choir," *Canadian Magazine* 28, no. 4 (February 1907): 346.

²² For a discussion of metropolis and hinterland relationships, see J.M.S. Careless, *Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada Before 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). Regarding the metropolitan identity of the four cities see Armstrong, *Forest City*, 8, 123; Careless,

The history of Toronto, the region's metropolis, tells of a settlement growing from strength to strength. This success owed at least partly to an advantageous geographical location. The site consisted of a gentle harbour offering access to the St. Lawrence River as well as the Great Lakes of the interior.²³ Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe found himself so impressed with the site in 1793 that he proposed it be developed as a military settlement. Though Simcoe envisioned a garrison town, the Governor of British North America insisted that the new community of York should also serve as Upper Canada's political capital.²⁴ Despite its grand pretensions, the area remained no more than a village until the end of the Napoleonic wars brought a flood of immigrants from Britain, providing a labour pool as well as a market for merchants' goods. York's population skyrocketed: in 1831 it equalled that of Kingston, and by 1834 York had twice as many residents as its venerable older rival.²⁵ Though the capital of Upper Canada was transferred to Kingston in 1841, York (now renamed Toronto) had become such a thriving commercial centre that it easily survived the exodus of its political officials.²⁶ The city's population reached 30,775 in 1851, and the construction of several railway lines during that decade reinforced Toronto's status as a major transportation hub.²⁷ Toronto began to industrialize during the 1870s, spurred at least in part by the new markets the railway lines had opened up. In 1871 the city had roughly 530 manufacturing companies, and by 1891 there were 2,401. The industrial workforce rose from 9,400 to

Toronto, 17, 112-114; Johnson, *History of Guelph*, 13-14; Miller et al., *London 200*, 65-66; Weaver, *Hamilton*, 23.

²³ Careless, *Toronto*, 11-13.

²⁴ Goheen, *Victorian Toronto*, 44-47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 48, 50.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-56.

²⁷ Careless, *Toronto*, 17; Goheen, *Victorian Toronto*, 49, 61-63.

26,242 during this same time frame.²⁸ By the beginning of the twentieth century, Toronto had also emerged as a financial centre with banks, investment companies, and stock exchanges spreading their influence across the country.²⁹ By 1911, the bustling city housed a total of 375,000 residents.³⁰ Nevertheless, the historian Keith Walden contends that Toronto “was in many respects a typical North American provincial city: though it was not in the first rank of urban places, it was ambitious to prove that it belonged there and was convinced that it would soon arrive. It was a little too impressed by its own sophistication, a little too insistent about its own virtues.”³¹

Toronto’s musical scene hosted numerous ensembles, particularly vocal groups. The Toronto Philharmonic Society (f. 1872), the National Chorus (1903-1928), the Oratorio Society (c. 1910-1914), and the internationally renowned Mendelssohn Choir (f. 1894), were only some of the better-known mass choirs during this time.³² A few unsuccessful attempts at homegrown orchestras emerged in the later nineteenth century, yet nothing stable transpired until the Toronto Symphony Orchestra began in 1906. A mixture of amateur and professional players, this organization lasted until the end of the Great War before resurfacing in a new form in 1922.³³ Toronto also organized ambitious public music festivals in 1886 and 1894, featuring mammoth adult and children’s choirs as the city’s showpiece. The effort proved very popular with locals, although the visiting German prima donna Lilli Lehmann grew so frustrated with the accompanying local

²⁸ Careless, *Toronto*, 109, 111.

²⁹ Careless, *Toronto*, 124, 128, 149; Goheen, *Victorian Toronto*, 67.

³⁰ Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 7-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³² Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 144, 205.

³³ Richard S. Warren, *Begins with the Oboe: A History of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 5-11.

orchestra that she publicly cursed the conductor.³⁴ Toronto fostered the province's first successful music conservatories. The most famous of these schools, the Toronto Conservatory of Music, survives today as the Royal Conservatory of Music. As for musical appreciation, the city hosted eight women's music clubs in the year 1900 alone.³⁵ While the Canadian elite did not usually sponsor musical organizations or cultural projects, Toronto's Hart Massey proved a significant exception. He donated over \$100,000 for the construction of the Massey Music Hall. Opening on June 14, 1894, the hall gave Torontonians an acoustically splendid concert venue.³⁶

The history of London, Ontario, is one of colonial patronage gradually giving way to mid-scale capitalist industry. The narrative begins in 1793, when Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe pinpointed a location on the Thames River as the ideal spot for Upper Canada's provincial capital. Simcoe's superiors, however, wanted a capital at York (Toronto) so the Thames River site languished for several years as an unoccupied Crown Reserve. In 1826, the colonial government decided to develop the site as an administrative centre for the larger London District. District officials, lawyers, and other functionaries moved to the area, along with merchants, innkeepers, and retailers intent on servicing their needs. The population passed the 1,000 mark by the mid 1830s, and the community soon boasted a Tory elite with close connections to the Family Compact at York.³⁷ London received a considerable boost in 1838 when the colonial government, wary after the recent Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, chose it for the location of their new military garrison. The arrival of British soldiers injected a significant amount of

³⁴ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 145, 175-176.

³⁵ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 120. See also Robin Elliott, *Counterpoint to a City: The First One Hundred Years of The Women's Musical Club of Toronto* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1997).

³⁶ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 145-146.

³⁷ Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 8; Miller et al., *London 200*, 3, 5-7, 10, 12, 24.

money into the local economy, and even more goods and service industries appeared in the commercial core. The British officer class, moreover, established a new cultural tone with events such as private concerts, balls, and amateur theatrics.³⁸ London achieved town status in 1840, by which time it exerted economic influence over the agricultural lands that surrounded it.³⁹ In 1853, the Great Western Railway Company line to London opened, reducing the journey to Hamilton from a matter of days to a mere six hours.⁴⁰

By the middle of the nineteenth century, London was becoming known as an agricultural market hub. Canadian Confederation meant a permanent withdrawal of the British troops in the local garrison, yet the city's commercial economy proved so strong that it weathered the loss without difficulty.⁴¹ The discovery of oil wells in nearby Lambton Country provided a further economic boost during the 1860s and 1870s, and several entrepreneurs grew rich by establishing modest-sized oil refineries in the downtown core. By 1880, however, technology had advanced to the point where the smaller refineries could no longer compete with the powerful American rivals. Some of these local companies joined together into larger conglomerations. Others disappeared entirely.⁴² The London economy began to reorient itself during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, by which time its population neared the 20,000 mark. In addition to its agricultural market bounty, London boasted healthy industries in cigar and biscuit manufacture.⁴³ The end of the century brought paved asphalt roads, electrified city streets, a Grand Opera House, and the amalgamation of surrounding hamlets into the city

³⁸ Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 8-9; Miller et al., *London 200*, 35-37, 41. London was actually known as "the Forks" up until the late 1830s. In the early 1840s the British army started to call it "New London" and the name London eventually stuck. See Miller et al., *London 200*, 35.

³⁹ Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 9; Miller et al., *London 200*, 35, 39.

⁴⁰ Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 9; Miller et al., *London 200*, 50-51, 63.

⁴¹ Miller et al., *London 200*, 109.

⁴² Armstrong, *Forest City*, 99, 121, 128.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 105, 120, 126.

proper.⁴⁴ While predominantly British, London had nurtured a small Italian and Jewish population since the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁵ London was the ninth largest city in Canada with a population of 39,059 by the year 1900, a rank it would never again recapture in light of the prairies provinces' exponential rise.⁴⁶

London had been strongly influenced by the thirty-year presence of the British regulars and their military musical traditions. The city also boasted a strong history of civilian bands, dating back to the 1840s. Early music teachers such as Elizabeth Raymond and St. John Hyttenrauch began working in the mid-nineteenth century, and by the turn of the twentieth century London had acquired seventy-six musical educators. Institutional music instruction was available at the Hellmuth Ladies' College (1869-1899), the London Conservatory of Music (f. 1892), and the Harding Hall College and Central Conservatory (1902-1911). The city's vocal organizations included the London Philharmonic Society (f. 1870), the London Arion Club (f. 1885), the London Oratorio Society (c. 1905), and various church choirs.⁴⁷ The *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* estimates that London's church choir membership may be conservatively pegged at 2,000 out of a total population of 40,000 during the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Musical clubs included the Women's Morning Musical Club (f. 1894), the Musical Art Society (f. 1916), and the Institute of Musical Arts (f. 1919). These groups hosted regular concerts

⁴⁴ Armstrong, *Forest City*, 128, 133, 135, 139-140; Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 10.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Forest City*, 134; Miller et al., *London* 200, 146.

⁴⁶ Armstrong, *Forest City*, 327; Armstrong and Brock, *Reflections*, 10.

⁴⁷ Jane Baldwin, Philip G. Downs and Philip M. Wulfs, "London, Ontario," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter *EMC*], <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/london-ont> (accessed September 5, 2013). For more information on musical life in London during the nineteenth century see: Frances R. Hines, "Concert Life in London, Ontario, 1870-1880" (M.Mus. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1975); Daniel B. Payne, "Social Music in London, Upper Canada/Canada West: Establishing a 'Sort of Colonial Nobility'" (M.Mus. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1998).

⁴⁸ Baldwin et al., "London, Ontario."

using local talent, plus occasional concerts featuring visiting artists.⁴⁹ Once in a while, international celebrities would stop in town as part of a lengthier North American tour.⁵⁰

The community of Hamilton dates back to 1816, when the wealthy George Hamilton purchased a tract of land at the head of Lake Ontario. Originally intended as a replacement for personal losses sustained at Queenston during the War of 1812, Hamilton soon became aware of the area's commercial possibilities. He bought up more land, in the hopes of developing and then selling it at a profit.⁵¹ At this time, the colonial government had just established the District of Gore and was looking for a locale in which to house the district's administrative buildings.⁵² George Hamilton consequently offered the Crown land on which to build a courthouse and a jail. He went on to design the town along a grid pattern, selling lots to land speculators as well as merchants and lawyers.⁵³ The village developed at a rapid rate over the 1830s, achieving town status in 1833 and emerging as a commercial centre of some note. Merchants from Montreal, the United States, and Scotland shipped household goods to Hamilton. Hamilton merchants, in turn, distributed these goods to settlers throughout Upper Canada. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the town had gained some local industries, including iron foundries for the manufacture of ploughs, threshing machines, and cast-iron stoves.⁵⁴ Waves of immigration from England, Scotland, and particularly Ireland provided the city with a working-class labour pool.⁵⁵ Hamilton acquired city status in 1846 and the early

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The Polish pianist and composer Ignace Jan Paderewski, for instance, performed in London in April 1905 (Armstrong, *Forest City*, 140). Czech violinist Jan Kubelik performed in London in March 1914 ("Kubelik Coming," *London Free Press*, February 21, 1914, p. 8).

⁵¹ Weaver, *Hamilton*, 15-16.

⁵² Gentilcore, "The Beginnings," 101-102.

⁵³ Bailey, *Hamilton*, 31-33; Weaver, *Hamilton*, 16-17.

⁵⁴ Weaver, *Hamilton*, 18-19, 23, 26-27.

⁵⁵ Bailey, *Hamilton*, 38; Gentilcore, "The Beginnings," 107; Weaver, *Hamilton*, 45.

1850s saw the building of a long-awaited railway line. The ensuing years, however, were ones of economic hardship as the completion of the railway and declining capital investment forced many businesses to close.⁵⁶

Starting in the 1870s, Hamilton began to reinvent itself as an industrial city. Smaller companies such as the iron foundries and textile factories consolidated into corporate-run entities. American firms began setting up branch-plants in the city, in the hopes of circumventing the federal government's protectionist economic policies.⁵⁷ The 1890s brought crucial changes to the city's industry and social life. Hamilton acquired its first blast furnace in 1896, setting off a new trend toward the local production and refinement of iron and steel.⁵⁸ During the boom years of the early twentieth century, employment in manufacturing rose 24.2% between 1900 and 1905, 67.0% between 1905 and 1910, and another 22.6% between 1910 and 1915.⁵⁹ In 1910, a merger created the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco).⁶⁰ The population of the city expanded rapidly, leading to overcrowding particularly in the poorer districts. In 1901 the population stood at 56,254, in 1911 it had jumped to 86,479, and by 1921 it was 124,316.⁶¹ Already, the grounds were being laid for Hamilton's twentieth-century identity as "The Steel City."⁶²

Hamilton had acquired a thriving amateur music community by the end of the Victorian era. Its brass band dated back to 1837, and the Hamilton Philharmonic Society had been performing oratorios since the 1850s. Newer ensembles included the highly regarded Elgar Choir (f. 1905) and the Ladies String Orchestra (f. 1908). The city hosted

⁵⁶ Bailey, *Hamilton*, 47, 50, 60; Weaver, *Hamilton*, 49, 54, 69.

⁵⁷ Weaver, *Hamilton*, 79.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 82, 87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶² M.J. Dear, J.J. Drake, L.G. Reeds, eds., *Steel City: Hamilton and Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

a public music festival in 1887, and the local Germania club hosted a Sangerfest (“singers’ festival”) in 1891.⁶³ Smaller clubs for musical appreciation and performance included the Duet Club (f. 1889), where lady amateurs learned to overcome stage fright by giving small recitals either alone or in pairs.⁶⁴

Like Hamilton, the city of Guelph originated as a planned community. The colonial government had set Guelph Township aside as Crown reserve in 1792, and as a result the area remained unsettled. Fortuitously, the government began looking into selling off the reserves just as the Scottish novelist John Galt became interested in land speculation. Between 1823 and 1824, Galt founded the Canada Company and raised over a million pounds in capital. Galt purchased the land and moved to Upper Canada in January 1827. He spent the next few years ordering the construction of roads, schools, and public buildings, reasoning that capital expenditure was needed in order to increase the value of the land.⁶⁵ Disputes with the Canada Company’s board of directors led to John Galt’s dismissal and departure in the spring of 1829. The town, however, continued to grow as working-class British immigrants flocked to the area.⁶⁶

Guelph gradually became a milling town, with grist and saw mills on the Speed River. By second half of the nineteenth century, it possessed a handful of industries including the Sleeman Silver Creek Brewery, the Raymond Sewing Machine Company, and the Bell Piano and Organ Company. The Guelph market also served as a commercial

⁶³ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 72, 101, 150, 175-176, 203, 213.

⁶⁴ Frederick A. Hall, “Hamilton, Ontario,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/hamilton-ont> (accessed September 3, 2013); Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 186. See also Duet Club of Hamilton Scrapbook, vol. 1 (1907–), R780.72971352, HPL; Duet Club Archives File, R.G.1-R.G.12, Series A, HPL.

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Guelph*, 4-9, 13-18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32, 36-37, 42.

hub for the surrounding farmers to sell their wares.⁶⁷ The community achieved city status in 1879, and by the turn of the twentieth century was considered a mid-sized urban area in Ontario's landscape.⁶⁸ Its advantageous position on the railway tracks made it an important spot for the movement of goods between cities such as Toronto, Hamilton, and Windsor.⁶⁹ Census figures place Guelph's population at 9,890 in 1881, at 10,537 in 1891, at 11,496 in 1901, and at 15,175 in 1911.⁷⁰ Despite such growth, Guelph remained an ethnically British community during this period.⁷¹

Guelph fostered brass bands from the mid-nineteenth century onward, culminating with the founding of the City Band in 1880, later known as the Guelph Musical Society Band. Church music was alive and well, fostering talents such as composer Roberta-Geddes Harvey who played organ and directed the choir at St. George's Anglican Church for over fifty years. The local musical appreciation society, the Presto Music Club, was founded in 1898 and continued unabated until 1959.⁷² Though the smallest of the four cities, Guelph's proximity to Toronto meant that it sometimes managed to acquire well-known artists for local concerts. Guelph's musical scene moreover provided the backdrop for the childhood of Edward Johnson (1878-1959), an operatic tenor who went on to achieve international fame.

⁶⁷ Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons*, 15, 18.

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Guelph*, 245, 261; Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons*, 3.

⁶⁹ Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons*, 3, 18-19.

⁷⁰ Cited in Johnson, *Guelph*, 254.

⁷¹ Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons*, 3, 16-17.

⁷² Kenneth Winters, Edith Kidd, and Patricia Wardrop, "Guelph, Ontario," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/guelph-ont> (accessed September 5, 2013). For more on Roberta Harvey see Envelope 2, Box A13, GCM.

Historiography

The disciplines of history and music have thus far made uncomfortable bedfellows.

Despite their obvious linkages, the scholarly traditions have been fairly distinct. Some efforts to alter this trend have recently appeared, namely Jeffrey H. Jackson and Stanley C. Pelkey's edited collection *Music and History: Bridging the Disciplines*.⁷³ The empirical essays in this volume are, however, merely a start to an interdisciplinary conversation. Further cooperation is needed in order to probe the relationship between music and history on a more theoretical footing.⁷⁴

To wit, Canadian historians have been curiously reluctant to analyse music's powerful and historically specific social and cultural implications. Such reticence stems from many historians' inability to read musical notation as well as the aforementioned lack of dialogue with musicologists. The past several years have seen a flurry of scholarly interest in non-textual sources, resulting in a number of historical studies that incorporate photography, painting, sculpture, commercial art, architecture, and film as pieces of evidence.⁷⁵ Musical works make occasional appearances in this oeuvre, but in a limited sort of way. Maria Tippett and Jonathan Vance have provided some illuminating

⁷³ Jeffrey H. Jackson and Stanley C. Pelkey, eds., *Music and History: Bridging the Disciplines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

⁷⁴ Edward Said for instance notes that history and live music both unfold according to a linear time frame. When attending a performance, we find ourselves "compelled to a rigorous linear attention by the sheer unfolding quality in time of the music... To know a piece of music, then, is always to acknowledge the ineluctable temporal modality, or one-timeness, of the audible; you cannot experience it, as you can, say, when you pause before or walk around a painting or a sculpture, without also submitting to the tyranny of its forward logic or impulse." See Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations*, Welles Library Lectures at the University of California, Irvine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 76.

⁷⁵ See for example Paula Hastings, "Branding Canada: Consumer Culture and the Development of Popular Nationalism in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 134-158; H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997).

glimpses of musical life in their broader surveys of Canadian cultural history, but detailed monographs remain few and far between.⁷⁶ Historians of leisure have investigated a range of recreational pursuits such as sports, church socials, and cottaging, yet studies of music making are still wanting.⁷⁷ On the rare occasions that Canadian historians have taken an interest in musical matters, they have largely confined themselves to the colonial era or the mid-twentieth century.⁷⁸ As a result, the later Victorian and Edwardian periods languish in obscurity, a puzzling oversight since Canadian amateur music making was reaching its peak during this time.

Nevertheless, a handful of Canadian historians have produced some helpful works. Kristina Marie Guiguet's *The Ideal World of Mrs. Widder's Soirée Musicale* (2004) meticulously dissects a concert programme from an elite musical gathering in 1844. Guiguet argues that the choice of music, the order of the pieces, and the identity of the performers were deliberate programming decisions which in turn reveal some of the

⁷⁶ Maria Tippet, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Jonathan F. Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Nancy B. Bouchier, *For the Love of the Game: Amateur Sport in Small-Town Ontario, 1838-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, Studies in Gender and History Series, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Donald G. Wetherell and Irene Kmet, *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945* (Regina, SK: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism / Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1990) contains a chapter about music, but it emphasizes description to the virtual exclusion of analysis.

⁷⁸ For the colonial era see Kristina Marie Guiguet, *The Ideal World of Mrs. Widder's Soirée Musicale: Social Identity and Musical Life in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, Mercury Series Cultural Studies Paper 77 (Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2004); Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), ch. 4. For the twentieth century see Graham Carr, "Visualising 'The Sound of Genius': Glenn Gould and the Culture of Celebrity in the 1950s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2006): 5-41; Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Jeff A. Webb, "Repertoire and Reception: Radio and Music in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1930-45," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, no. 2 (2008): 117-139.

political issues, gender relations, and class distinctions in Upper Canadian society.⁷⁹

Barbara Lorezkowski's *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America 1850-1914* (2010) employs the insights of sound history in order to investigate how both spoken language and music proved crucial ingredients in the performance of ethnic identity as it evolved over time. Lorezkowski's study makes a powerful argument for music's pivotal role, not only in constituting ethnic groups but also in facilitating cross-cultural encounters with the Anglo-Canadian mainstream.⁸⁰ While her 'history of sound' approach brings new insight into the historical study of music, she inadvertently reduces the history of music to the history of sound. This compromises her otherwise excellent study in two respects. First, the chapters would benefit from more background about the musical life of mainstream nineteenth-century North America. Second, Lorezkowski employs musical terms such as 'classical' and 'popular' unquestioningly, without considering them as historically dynamic, contested, and permeable categories.⁸¹

Geoffrey Booth achieves a more equitable balance between music history, sound history, and social history in his 2012 dissertation on public school music in late nineteenth-century Toronto. Drawing on bureaucratic records as well as contemporary music textbooks, Booth argues that public school music catered to progressive pedagogies of child-centered learning while at the same time reinforcing mid-Victorian notions of art as a civilizing influence. The presence of music in the school was thus "demonstrating to anxious late-Victorians that despite all of the uncertainty and chaos being wrought by modernity, schools could infuse in their children the necessary

⁷⁹ Guiguet, *Mrs. Widder*, 11, 102-107. For an interpretation of musical life using Habermas' idea of an elite pre-industrial "representative sphere," see Payne, "Social Music in London," 4-5.

⁸⁰ Barbara Lorezkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 6, 10-12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 124-126.

intellectual, physical and moral qualities” needed for the future.⁸² Further afield, communications professor Jody Berland applies Marshall McLuhan’s idea of technological obsolescence to the rise and fall of the player piano. Berland makes useful observations, yet her attempt to graft McLuhan’s theories onto empirical historical evidence becomes strained at times.⁸³

Canadian musicological interest in turn-of-the-twentieth-century domestic musicianship has been similarly sparse. Music history as a discipline has traditionally concerned itself with the creative output of the classical masters, selecting and assessing famous works according to criteria of beauty, complexity, and originality. History forms a backdrop to understanding how composers laboured and how their work was received, but the prime consideration remains a composition’s artistic worth. These conventions have posed problems for Canadian musicologists who feel, not unjustly, that their country’s record of classical composition pales next to the output of the European masters.⁸⁴ As Canadian musical scholarship began to develop over the third quarter of the twentieth century, scholars worked to establish a modest pantheon of ‘great’ Canadian composers. Their chosen representatives tended to be those penning classical or academic avant-garde music. Volumes such as *Aspects of Music in Canada* (1969), *Canadian*

⁸² Geoffrey James Booth, “‘Managing the Muses’: Musical Performance and Modernity in the Public Schools of Late-Nineteenth Century Toronto” (Ph.D. diss, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 2012), 216-217.

⁸³ Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009), ch. 5. Moreover, her historical findings are largely gleaned from older secondary source survey texts.

⁸⁴ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 4-7.

Music of the Twentieth Century (1980) and *The Music of Canada* (1985) therefore contain little to nothing about popular musical production and consumption.⁸⁵

A further consequence of Canadian musicologists' colonial inferiority complex was a tendency to interpret Canadian musical history according to Whiggish narratives of progress. Such 'progress' was defined aesthetically as a shift from naïve to sophisticated (read: classical) compositional styles, from 'poor' to 'high quality' musical performance, and from narrow local or regional outlooks to more cosmopolitan cultural views. These sensibilities inform Helmut Kallmann's magisterial *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (1960). Kallmann employed a metaphor of the "seeds" of musical interest being planted, tended, and gently reared over the second half of the nineteenth century until an eventual flowering after the First World War. The gardeners of these delicate plants were Canada's musical "pioneers", a variation on the Great Man Thesis. A few idealistic yet stalwart British and European professional musicians came to North America, where they laboured long and hard to instill musical taste and consciousness against the odds.⁸⁶ As lingering feelings of colonial backwardness mingled with the heady nationalism of the 1967 Centennial era, musicologists began to define 'progress' in nationalistic terms as a shift away from imported European musical fare to a 'national' Canadian compositional style inspired by geography or the country's folk music traditions. This second narrative frames works such as Clifford Ford's *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (1982).⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Timothy J. McGee, *The Music of Canada* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985); George A. Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Arnold Walter, ed., *Aspects of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 3-4.

⁸⁶ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 121, 122, 199. See also J. Paul Green and Nancy F. Vogan, *Music Education in Canada: A Historical Account* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 66, 74, 131.

⁸⁷ Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Agincourt, ON: GLC Publishers Ltd, 1982), 2-3. See also Walter, *Aspects of Music*, viii. For a critique of Kallmann and Ford, see Beverley Diamond

The scholar Beverley Diamond has repeatedly called for historians of music in Canada to relinquish their hold on nineteenth-century notions of historical positivism and to embrace the newer cultural theories of the past forty years. In particular, Diamond suggests questioning the power dynamics that have led us to privilege nation over region, Euro-Canadian over Aboriginal, urban over rural, amateur over professional, and classical over popular.⁸⁸ Despite her call to arms, no widespread theoretically radical departure has yet materialized. A rare exception is Elaine Keillor's survey *Music in Canada* (2006). Her introduction engages some of the recent international scholarship, leading her to broaden her definition of what constitutes musical activity, to complicate historical divisions between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow,' and to ponder the role of geography and place in music making.⁸⁹

The field of Canadian musical history is therefore helpful more for its empirical findings than its theoretical innovation. For all the limitations of his broader heroic narrative, Helmut Kallmann recognized the historical significance of grassroots musical activity.⁹⁰ His work contains detailed descriptions of amateur, popular, and informal music making during the later nineteenth century. Moreover, his exhaustive bibliography remains the foundational reference work for published primary sources relating to music in Canada. In addition, J. Paul Green and Nancy F. Vogan (1991) have compiled a tidy

"Narratives in Canadian Music History," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 273-305.

⁸⁸ Beverley Diamond, "Introduction: Issues of Hegemony and Identity in Canadian Music," in *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity*, ed. Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1994), 1-9; Diamond, "Narratives," 287-289, 300. This critique is hardly unique to Canadian music history writing. For a discussion of positivism in international musical scholarship see Christopher Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*, Musicology Series, ed. F. Joseph Smith (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1984), 14.

⁸⁹ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 3-4, 7-12. Her discussion of music as an activity is a response to Christopher Small, and her discussion of highbrow versus lowbrow music is a response to Lawrence Levine.

⁹⁰ See for instance Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 3.

synthesis of secondary source findings in their survey of the history of Canadian musical education.⁹¹ A handful of other authors have written descriptive studies about various aspects of turn-of-the-twentieth-century music in Canada.⁹²

Few scholars have written in any detail about domestic aspects of the country's musical history. Exceptions include Mickey Vallee's Master's thesis "Piano as Domestic Technology: An Interpretive History of the Canadian Piano Industry ca. 1880-1920," which offers a cursory account of piano advertisements in the *Canadian Magazine*.⁹³ Frances Roback addresses the topic more comprehensively in her article "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs, 1850-1914," though she too abstains from any discussion of the ways in which consumers may have negotiated these messages.⁹⁴ Lytton Naegele McDonnell performs a wide-ranging, incisive analysis of the musical repertoire marshaled both for and against the Temperance movement in Canada.⁹⁵ Finally, Elaine Keillor's survey text *Music in Canada* (2006) and her online article "Writing for a Market: Canadian Musical Composition before the First World War," each contain a

⁹¹ Green and Vogan, *Music Education*.

⁹² John Becker, "The Early History of the Toronto Conservatory of Music" (M.F.A. thesis, York University, 1983); John Beckwith, "Tunebooks and Hymnals in Canada, 1801-1939," *American Music* 6, no. 2 (1988): 193-234; Elliott, *Counterpoint to a City*; Lian Goodall, "Wanted: 'A Two-Fisted, Temperance Man': Beatty Brothers Factory, the Fergus Brass Band and the 1919 Bandmaster Search," *Wellington County History* 13 (2000): 21-39; Rebecca Green, "Gaudeamus Igitur: College Singing and College Songbooks in Canada," in *Three Studies*, CanMus Documents 4 (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1989), 3- 57; Hines, "Concert Life in London"; Gaynor G. Jones, "The Fisher Years: The Toronto Conservatory of Music, 1886-1913," in *Three Studies*, CanMus Documents 4 (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1989), 59- 145; Kelly, *Downright Upright*; Dale McIntosh, *History of Music in British Columbia 1850-1950* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1989); Carl Morey, "Musical Education in Nineteenth-Century Toronto," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 113- 124; Daphne Overhill, *Sound the Trumpet: The Story of the Bands of Perth 1852-2002* (Toronto: A. Rosenthal, 2002); Marilynn J. Smiley, "Across Lake Ontario: Nineteenth-Century Concerts and Connections," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 149-165.

⁹³ Mickey Vallee, "Piano as Domestic Technology: An Interpretive History of the Canadian Piano Industry ca. 1880-1920" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 2002).

⁹⁴ Frances Roback, "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs, 1850-1914," *Material History Bulletin* 20 (1984): 31-43.

⁹⁵ Lytton Naegele McDonnell, "Singing Wet and Dry: Exploring Alcohol Regulation through Music, 1885-1919" (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 2008).

valuable, though brief, overview of domestic sheet music during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁶ The preceding patchwork of scholarship consequently demonstrates the need for a historically informed, analytically rigorous book-length study of late Victorian and Edwardian domestic musical activity in Canada.

The British and American writing on Victorian domestic music splits into two camps. The first is occupied by literary scholars, who address the theme of music as depicted in the nineteenth-century novel. These scholars show how, depending on character, manner, and context, music could signal spiritual purity, domesticity, superficiality, courtship, seduction, ambition, or mesmerism.⁹⁷ From a historical point of view, Phyllis Weliver offers the most valuable interpretation, since she contextualizes her literary findings within a larger body of periodical and newspaper sources. She goes on to show how music was associated with ‘Otherness’ in Victorian Britain, often being seen as the special preserve of women, foreigners, and other “marginal figures.”⁹⁸ Welliver also includes an intriguing chapter about music and Victorian scientific discourse,

⁹⁶ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 110-116, 144-165, 187-190; Keillor, “Writing for a Market: Canadian Musical Composition before the First World War,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/sheetmusic/028008-3200-e.html> (accessed September 3, 2013).

⁹⁷ For Britain see Emily Auerbach, *Maestros, Dilettantes and Philistines: The Musician in the Victorian Novel*, American University Studies Series (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Alisa Clapp-Intyre, *Angelic Airs, Subversive Songs: Music as Social Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); Mary Burgan, “Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,” in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, Athlone History of Music in Britain Series (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 42-67; Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, eds., *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction, Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Series*, ed. Bennett Zon (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Donna Sue Parsons, “Their Voices Sing True and Clear: British Women Musicians and their Literary Counterparts 1860-1920” (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2001); Cynthia Ellen Patton, “Common Tunes: The Uses of Domestic Music in Victorian Literature and Culture” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1994); Laura Vorachek, “Instruments of Desire, Women’s Domestic Music-Making in Victorian Literature and Culture” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004); Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000). For America see Petra Meyer-Frazier, “Music, Novels, and Women: Nineteenth-Century Prescriptions for an Ideal Life,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 10 (2006): 45-59.

⁹⁸ Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 20-21.

detailing how contemporaries came to associate heightened musical abilities as characteristic of individuals in a state of hypnosis.⁹⁹

The second scholarly camp investigates domestic music from a more explicitly historical angle. These writers are interested not only in the prescriptive images that helped frame domestic musical activity, but also the actual practices of nineteenth-century homes. The first generation of authors writing on this theme during the 1950s to 1970s focused, sometimes obsessively so, on determining how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ such amateur music truly was. Usually, they leaned toward the latter, and their otherwise valuable accounts are somewhat marred by passages about mediocre parlour songs poorly executed by doe-eyed damsels trying to catch a husband.¹⁰⁰ These negative impressions derive from dated gender stereotypes, judging women harshly for their socially appointed role as economic dependents. The authors furthermore engaged in a fruitless effort to assign absolute value to the music of the past, a problematic intellectual practice that will be discussed later in this chapter. At the same time, these works offer vivid historical nuggets about home entertainments at this time, including Victorian audiences’ habit of talking almost continuously throughout musical performances.¹⁰¹

Intellectual developments in gender studies, cultural theory, and musicology since the late 1970s have produced nuanced works that wisely avoid questions of aesthetic

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8, 80, and chapter 2 generally.

¹⁰⁰ See for instance Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (1954; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 267-283, 291-292, 361-362, 392-395; Ronald Pearsall, *Edwardian Popular Music* (Vancouver: Douglas David & Charles, 1975), 129; Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1973), 91-97; Sandra Perry, “Sex and Sentiment in America or What Was Really Going on Between the Staves of Nineteenth Century Songs of Fashion,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 6, no. 1 (1972): 32-47. Nicholas Temperley tries for historical relativism, although absolute terms such as ‘good,’ ‘bad,’ ‘false,’ and ‘true,’ do slip into his vocabulary. See Temperley, “Ballroom and Drawing-Room Music,” in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, Athlone History of Music in Britain Series (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 109-134.

¹⁰¹ Pearsall, *Victorian*, 78-88.

value and instead seek to understand the past on its own terms. Ruth Solie's *Music in Other Words* (2004) makes a powerful argument for "music's actual ubiquity, its iconic centrality in this [Victorian] reading culture ... Music is invoked as a signifying system at every level from probing exploration to the most casual of metaphoric references."¹⁰² In her chapter on adolescent girls and domestic music, Solie employs Judith Butler's term 'girling' to talk about a dual process whereby prescriptive notions of femininity were often reinforced by adolescent girls themselves. Young women at the family instrument enacted (or performed) their "girlhood, both to satisfy familial and social demands on them and ... to satisfy needs of their own either to resist those demands or to reassure themselves about their own capacity to fulfill them."¹⁰³ Crucially, Solie is one of the only scholars to investigate what adolescent girls actually thought about music by consulting diaries and letters, an approach that has influenced the third chapter of this dissertation.¹⁰⁴ Paula Gillett and Judith Tick meanwhile offer excellent social histories of late nineteenth-century female musicians who navigated social conventions that defined amateur musicianship as female, professional musicianship as male, and public women upon unconventional instruments as sexually disturbing.¹⁰⁵ Richard Leppert's *The Sight of*

¹⁰² Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 63.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 98-116. Solie's otherwise excellent study does present a few weaknesses. First, she only uses published diaries. Second, her nineteenth-century time frame is too broad. Finally, she uses the anachronistic term 'teenager.'

¹⁰⁵ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Judith Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 325-348. See also Beth Abelson Macleod, "'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?' Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990," *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (1993): 291-308.

Sound (1993) offers another brilliant analysis by linking female musicianship to the visibility of the female body under the male voyeuristic gaze.¹⁰⁶

Other contributors to histories of Victorian domestic music concentrate on questions of production. Cyril Ehrlich offers a detailed history of piano manufacture and music education as they developed over the long nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Jon W. Finson, Nicholas Temperley, Nicholas Tawa, and Derek B. Scott have conducted formal analyses of drawing-room sheet music from the time period.¹⁰⁸ Finally, Craig Roell's *The Piano in America 1890-1940* (1989) and Derek B. Scott's *The Singing Bourgeois* (1989) crisscross between the public and private spheres, showing how developments such as industrialization, capitalism, class formation, and mass consumerism impacted and were in turn affected by the supposedly insulated realm of domestic musical activity.¹⁰⁹

This dissertation seeks to expand upon Roell and Scott's work by theorizing their instinctive awareness of the permeability of the public-private divide.¹¹⁰ First articulated in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's landmark work *Family Fortunes* (1987), the concept of separate spheres has long influenced discussions of historical activities within

¹⁰⁶ Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁷ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976). Oddly enough, a new volume of essays about the piano in Victorian Britain does not devote a single chapter to the private sphere. See Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg, eds., *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, Instruments, Performers and Repertoire, Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Series, ed. Bennett Zon (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Jon W. Finson, *The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989); Nicholas E. Tawa, *A Music for the Millions: Antebellum Democratic Attitudes and the Birth of American Popular Music*, Sociology of Music Series no. 3 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1984); Nicholas E. Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990); Temperley, "Ballroom and Drawing-Room Music."

¹⁰⁹ Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890 - 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*.

¹¹⁰ See also Jennifer C. Post, "Erasing the Boundaries between Public and Private in Women's Performance Traditions," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 35- 51.

the nineteenth-century home.¹¹¹ Further scholarship has pointed out that the separate spheres idea denotes a middle-class ideal rather than a strict empirical reality. It is also a static model that poorly accounts for change over time.¹¹² Nevertheless, the notion of a comforting, feminine domestic realm was a culturally powerful ideal, and one in which many Victorians (both male and female) were emotionally invested.¹¹³ The separate spheres model should therefore be problematized rather than jettisoned as an analytical framework for conceptualizing the nineteenth and early twentieth-century home. Instead of an inflexible transhistorical yoke, we may instead understand it as a fluid, historically dynamic discursive frame, influential yet perpetually defining and redefining itself through repetition in order to maintain its cultural viability. Victorian and Edwardian girls and women would have been familiar with its prescriptive dictates, as they (consciously and unconsciously) accepted, negotiated, modified, or resisted its limitations via tiny impulses of action and inaction.¹¹⁴ At the same time, I would like to echo Antoinette Burton's appeal to historicize domestic spaces, to assert their right to be regarded as proper topics of and lenses for historical analysis. Burton's provocative notion of the "home as both a material archive for history *and* a very real political figure" asserts the agency of domestic space as both constituted by and constitutive of the public realm.¹¹⁵ The notion of a trail of influence running back and forth across the domestic

¹¹¹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 13, 29. Davidoff and Hall admit that the separate spheres boundaries are permeable, a concession their critics often seem to forget.

¹¹² Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988) 9-39.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹¹⁴ The notion of gender identity consisting of small discrete behaviours combining to make a larger pattern or code derives from Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 45.

¹¹⁵ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5. Emphasis in original.

threshold, linking factories, piano shops, conservatories, and printing presses to the family parlour, is fundamental to my project.

In spite of the foregoing suggestion to alter rather than abandon the separate spheres framework, I part company with much of the historiography by defining domestic music (at least in the abstract) in gender-neutral terms. While female musicality accounted for the lion's share of prescription and practice, it is crucial not to underestimate men's musical involvement. Male musicians in the home were a minority, but nonetheless a significant one, particularly as mid-Victorian warnings of music as emasculating began to weaken by the end of the century.¹¹⁶ Moreover, if professional musicianship was gendered male, it stands to reason that concert performers, educators, composers, and church musicians must have begun as amateurs in their student days. Finally, if we expand the definition of musical involvement to include not only the performer, but also the audience who sang along with choruses or helped turn pages, the presence of boys and men multiplies. In short, the historiography on Victorian domestic music making has underestimated the extent of male participation through its reliance on prescriptive sources. The following study consequently attempts not only to contribute to the Canadian literature, but to complement British and American historiography as well.

Theoretical Influences

Early on in my research, I discovered that I was going to have to abandon a question that had preoccupied music historians as well as my historical actors: how 'good' was their music? Despite the volumes of ink devoted to the topic, it proved a flawed premise

¹¹⁶ This topic will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

leading to an intellectual dead end. In addition to the usual problems of assigning absolute values to subjective processes of listening, the difficulties are multiplied when conducting historical investigations.¹¹⁷ By and large, Ontario's musical community did not produce any audio recordings of its activities, forcing the researcher to work from written descriptions of performances.¹¹⁸ As the music historian Nicholas Temperley laments, "Victorian music is a Lost Chord: the sound of it is out of our reach, in a way that the sight and message of other Victorian arts is not."¹¹⁹ Even if such recordings did exist, they would represent merely the echoes of a live performance, devoid of the sensual impressions of bodies filling culturally charged performance spaces. More fundamentally, it is impossible for the twenty-first century researcher to judge music according to the listening habits of audiences one hundred years ago. R. Murray Schaefer and other scholars of sound have shown that listening is a deeply historical process. Contemporaries inhabited an entirely different "soundscape" from today. In other words, their aural environment encompassed a historically contingent assortment of sounds and musical experiences, which in turn influenced their appreciation.¹²⁰ This is not to say that everyone had the same aural experiences or reacted to music in the same way, but rather that these soundscapes provided a discursive frame within which agency flowed.

¹¹⁷ See for instance Peter J. Martin: "In short, what people say about music and the claims they make for it must be treated by the sociologist not as objective descriptions of it but as data which are an indication of their beliefs about it." Martin, *Sounds in Society: Themes in the Sociology of Music*, Music and Society Series, ed. Peter J. Martin and Tia DeNora (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 12. See also p. 31.

¹¹⁸ Canadian brass bands were rare exceptions to the rule. See Library and Archive Canada's Virtual Gramophone database at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/gramophone/index-e.html> for these historical recordings.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Temperley, "Introduction," in *The Lost Chord: Essays on Victorian Music*, ed. Nicholas Temperley (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14.

¹²⁰ R. Murray Schaefer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994), 7. For an excellent practical application of this concept see Booth, "Managing the Muses."

Keeping these factors in mind, I have become far more interested in the cultural and social discourses influencing contemporary pronouncements about ‘good’ or ‘bad’ music. Why were Canadian musical circles so keen to read narratives of progress into their musical history? What do criticisms of female amateurs tell us about gender relations? In other words, conversations about music were mediated by historically dynamic discourses revealing a great deal about the values of society at the time.

The above approach is indebted to the insights of a field known as the sociology of music. This line of scholarship developed in the 1980s as a reaction against traditional musicology’s long-held assumption that music (invariably defined as ‘Western classical music’) represented pure aesthetic truths beyond the mediating influence of society, culture, time, and place. Conventional musicologists simply analysed a composition according to its formal musical properties, without any reference to nonmusical influences.¹²¹ Using theories borrowed from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, philosophy, and other disciplines, a handful of musicologists have since started to recognize “the plenitude of music’s extra-musical relationships and ... the social and human context that gives music its meaning.”¹²² Much of the scholarship in this field has been dedicated to tracing socio-historical discourse as embedded in the formal elements of canonic classical compositions.¹²³ It has also, however, pondered the relationship between composition, performance, and reception.

¹²¹ Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, “Introduction,” in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), xi-xiii.

¹²² Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*, 18.

¹²³ See for example Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, California Studies in 19th Century Music, ed. Joseph Kerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*.

Tia DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) provides a sophisticated, empirically grounded theoretical model for assessing how individuals and groups interact with music. DeNora argues that music has agency, providing us with a "resource" that can increase our heart rate, motivate us, alter our mood, help regularize our bodily rhythms, stir memories, and even alter our perception of time passing.¹²⁴ Music and society are not concrete 'things'. Rather, they are made manifest in an ever-shifting relation to each other, and the directionality of this influence goes both ways. As humans, we do not respond passively to music's impact; we engage with it and interpret it before reacting, even if this negotiation sometimes occurs unconsciously.¹²⁵ These interactions between music and listener produces a net result that may prove either "enabling" or "constraining," depending on the type of music, its dominant social meanings, the setting, and the subjectivities of the listener.¹²⁶ This complex interaction has two important consequences. First, music plays a role "in the construction of the self as an aesthetic agent," influencing actions that mark us as individuals or as members of a particular social group. Music even plays a role in how we envision ourselves, in the narratives we use to transform patches of remembered experiences into a personal life story.¹²⁷ Second, music can be used as a tool of "social power" by harnessing a work's dominant social meanings to encourage certain patterns of desired behaviour.¹²⁸

DeNora's present-minded theoretical insights are supported by historians' findings about nineteenth and early twentieth-century English-speaking societies.

¹²⁴ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xi, 5, 8, 53-55.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 5, 20, 26-27, 31, 74.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 7, 36, 42-43, 74, 151.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 7, 46-47, 70-73.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 13, 20. DeNora uses the example of calming music being used for passengers watching airplane safety videos prior to takeoff.

Victorians believed that musical preferences and individualized responses to music offered a window into one's inner character. In an age of increasing anonymity, particularly in urban settings, the ability to induce internal character from external evidence became a valuable asset. Linear associations between music and character were not always accurate, but they provided contemporaries with a code of identification and hence a sense of security.¹²⁹

While Tia DeNora focuses primarily upon musical consumption, Peter J. Martin tackles the relationship between music and society from the perspective of musical production. Drawing upon the writings of Leonard Meyer, Martin posits that music cannot exist *a priori* outside of culture. Music is a cultural form of communication, with its own auditory equivalent of grammar, style, and syntax. Like language, it is continually developing, and exists in a dialectical relationship with society.¹³⁰ Therefore, the sounds that the composer envisions, the musician produces, and the listener interprets as aesthetically meaningful are culturally and socially constituted. In the case of Western society, this socio-cultural aesthetic is characterised by tonality, based on major and minor scales and diatonic harmonies. Even listeners who do not possess any formal musical training exhibit these cultural proclivities as they effortlessly distinguish the difference between sounds they interpret as either consonant or dissonant.¹³¹ “It follows that the meanings of music are neither inherent nor intuitively recognised,” observes Martin, “but emerge and become established (or changed or forgotten) as a consequence of the activities of groups of people in particular cultural contexts. The way that we ‘make sense’ of music is not innate but depends on our acquisition of commonsense,

¹²⁹ Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 58, 72.

¹³⁰ Martin, *Sounds in Society*, 49-53, 57, 164.

¹³¹ Ibid., 7-9.

taken-for-granted ideas about how it *ought* to sound.”¹³² While socio-cultural discourses play a significant role, their influence is mediated by individual agency as well as by the heterogenous, dynamic, nature of ‘society’ itself. Composition, performance, and even listening are therefore active endeavours, as people interpret sounds in a subjective manner employing the language of Western aesthetics.¹³³

Finally, the scholar Richard Leppert insists that the history of live music is intertwined with cultural practices of looking. “When we consume music, we also consume a sight – embodied, active, and situated, all qualities that mediate musical meanings,” he observes.¹³⁴ It is impossible to separate the sounds emitted by a musical performer with the sight of that performer’s gendered body. Consequently, audience members use visual indicators such as clothing, gesture, and facial expressions to comprise a set of assumptions regarding the performer’s identity. Roland Barthes forwards a variation on this theme in his discussions of “the grain of the voice”, defined as a visceral relationship between the singer and an audience. The criteria for a successful relationship depend on the subjectivities of each listener. For Barthes, it consists not only of beautiful sounds but also a sensual awareness that the singer is producing those sounds from deep within his or her body.¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid., 57. Emphasis in original.

¹³³ Ibid., 56, 162-163, 167-168. ‘Society’ is placed in inverted commas because Martin sees society as the organic product of human interactions, rather than an abstracted thing or force operating from above. One weakness of Martin’s model is that his focus on specific cultures does not address the globalization of the music industry, and our increasing ability to appreciate the music of non-Western cultures as ‘beautiful’ even though they differ from our own. Edward Said offers an important corrective by observing that there is such a thing as “Western classical music” but it isn’t as stable or concrete as it appears at first glance. See Said, *Musical Elaborations*, xviii, xx.

¹³⁴ Leppert, *Sight of Sound*, 68.

¹³⁵ Roland Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice,” in *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 188-189.

As the above discussion implies, music's symbiotic relationship with society means that it necessarily becomes entangled in power dynamics. The capitalist music industry helps propel certain artists to fame, while others languish in obscurity.

Professional musicians, both stars and unknowns, cannot entirely ignore the need to support themselves financially by pleasing critics, agents, and audiences.¹³⁶

Asymmetrical gender relations reproduced themselves in strong Victorian dictates about when, where, and how women should be producing and consuming music. Echoes of these influences persist today, as seen in the low number of female conductors, a position traditionally seen as 'dominant' and therefore male.¹³⁷ White racial privilege has supported claims about Western classical music as the most sophisticated musical tradition, and the highest plane to which music can aspire.¹³⁸ Elite preferences for classical music have similarly been responsible for investing the genre with unrivaled cultural authority, placing it in a hierarchical relationship to 'popular' musical forms. Academics, concert artists, critics, and other professionals tell the rest of society what works may be considered iconic, and what meanings may be derived from them.¹³⁹

As the cultural authority of Western classical music entrenched itself, it soon became a valuable resource for acquiring and reinforcing one's social status. Thus, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital constitutes another pillar of the ensuing discussion. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as knowledge of the codes of representation that structure music, art, literature, drama, and history, and are essential to an appreciation of

¹³⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 199-201; Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*, 9-10.

¹³⁷ Macleod, "'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?'" 300.

¹³⁸ Martin, *Sounds in Society*, ix; Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 3-4, 14.

¹³⁹ Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*, 30-31 and passim; Martin, *Sounds in Society*, 182-186; Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 59-60. Beverley Diamond calls this phenomenon the power of representation, following Pierre Bourdieu. See Diamond, "Introduction," 11-12.

the above. Only those possessing the basic cultural tools to comprehend high culture are able to enjoy its products and to seek advanced understanding of the same.¹⁴⁰ Cultural capital is related to, though not identical with, economic capital in that the higher echelons of society tend to possess it in greater quantities. Nevertheless, lower-ranking members of the traditional professions such as teachers and civil servants show a greater interest in cultural activities than the nouveaux riches heads of big business.¹⁴¹ Bourdieu contends that cultural capital's most important site of dissemination is the family, via "imperceptible apprenticeships" acquired during one's formative years. The educational system, in spite of its claims to the contrary, reinforces the hierarchy of difference by enabling the culturally literate pupils to succeed while discouraging the rest.¹⁴² The concept is relevant to this dissertation, since contemporaries knew instinctively that cultural capital existed and that it bore the markings of social prestige. This, in turn, helps explain why so many unmusical Victorians and Edwardians tried to acquire the trappings of musical skill. Cultural capital's links with the family also explains the perceived importance of raising musically articulate offspring.

Recognizing music's role in the representation, the reinforcement, and even the constitution of power is essential; however, certain concessions must be made. First, these various forms of power are always contested, and alternate musical interpretations may exist and even proliferate in some settings.¹⁴³ Second, music also possesses the potential to emancipate, to provide people with the energy and the inspiration to push

¹⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in *Power and Ideology in Education*, eds. Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 492-493.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 488.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 495-496. For a lengthier discussion see Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁴³ Diamond, "Introduction," 11; Martin, *Sounds in Society*, 70-71; Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 71.

against prevailing social conventions. Music, for instance, gave a handful of gifted late nineteenth-century female performers the technical skill, the artistic inspiration, and the ambition to perform as professionals.¹⁴⁴ Third, I sometimes worry that the otherwise fine literature on power dispersal occasionally suffers from a bit of myopia. It is certainly important to take up Foucault's challenge to render visible the deceptively innocuous structures that marginalize subjugated knowledges.¹⁴⁵ It is nonetheless also important to acknowledge the presence of happiness in past lives, whether this happiness existed in spite of, in ignorance of, or even in tacit acceptance of one's position of submission. I am, in short, championing a reflective attitude that acknowledges the possibility of happiness yet never assumes it as a given, and is always cognizant of the multifarious threads of power through which wove throughout such contentment. Domestic music charmed, enlivened, and inspired many Victorian and Edwardian families, even as it contributed to discourses that sought to bind their members into hierarchical relationships.¹⁴⁶

On a final note, it bears remembering that musical involvement is not the same thing as enjoyment. Music is a chimerical beast: it can bore and even pain just as easily as it can entertain and motivate. The type of music, subjective impressions regarding its quality, the context in which it is produced, the type of participation required, one's social situation, and of course individual preferences are only some of the variables complicating neat pronouncements on collective musical attitudes.

¹⁴⁴ See Gillett, *Musical Women*, passim.

¹⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press, 1980), 84-108.

¹⁴⁶ Regarding the nuclear family as a series of hierarchical relationships, see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 220.

Consequently, the following study of domestic musical activity hinges on the notion of music as a form of discourse and hence a powerful arena for the articulation of gender, class, ethnic, and community identities.¹⁴⁷ Music making is not an innocuous leisure pursuit: it is a means of constituting identity, of delineating who belongs and who does not. It can embrace and emancipate, yet it can also exclude and limit.

Definitions and Limitations

Musicologists have traditionally defined music “as some sort of pattern of organised sounds, deliberately created in order to produce certain effects.”¹⁴⁸ Such older definitions have increasingly come under fire for being Eurocentric and for failing to account for experimental forms of musical production. Today, musicologists would simply designate music as sounds recognized as aesthetically meaningful; in short, that the naming of any sounds as ‘music’ somehow constitutes them as such.¹⁴⁹ The scholar Peter J. Martin indeed defines art “not as a specific quantity which we will one day be able to agree is present or absent in an object or a performance, etc., but as a *claim* that such things should be accorded special status.”¹⁵⁰ While Victorians and Edwardians would certainly have subscribed to more traditional notions of music as ordered, pleasing sounds, the precise boundaries of this definition were neither stable nor widely agreed upon. Classical purists, for instance, debated whether novelties such as ragtime even counted as music. Their refusal eventually turned to grudging acceptance as the syncopated genre

¹⁴⁷ In saying this, I am conceptualizing identity as a dynamic, continual process rather than a completed product.

¹⁴⁸ Martin, *Sounds in Society*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Schaefer, *Soundscape*, 5. See also Small, *Musicking*, 3-4, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, *Sounds in Society*, 122. Emphasis in original.

inched its way towards the popular mainstream. These trends support Martin's notion that music (and art in general) is culturally defined, dynamic, and perpetually contested.

The musicologist Christopher Small prefers to think of music as a verb rather than a noun. He defines musicking as any form of participation "in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing."¹⁵¹ Small observes that his concept of musicking does not impose a hierarchy on the level of participation: whether active or passive, whether voluntary or involuntary, whether one enjoys oneself or not, all forms of involvement are worthy of scholarly interest.¹⁵² Small's notion is useful because it shows various participants engaged in an organic, mutually constitutive dialectic. It also recognizes that the boundaries between performer and audience can be permeable. For example, an audience may sometimes join a singer during the chorus of a well-known song. This dissertation employs *musical activity* as a more user-friendly iteration of Small's term. As the following chapters show, the term encompasses composers, performers, and listeners, as well as publishers, manufacturers, retailers, critics, and educators.

At the same time, some parameters on the definition of musical activity are needed for the purposes of setting reasonable research limits. For the purposes of this study, domestic musical activity is defined as musical production and consumption occurring within the home space in general, and the parlour in particular. It is the purpose of this work to show that domestic musical activity existed in dialogue with other types of musical activity, namely those occurring in retail, publishing, and educational spaces.

¹⁵¹ Small, *Musicking*, 9.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Domestic musical activity technically includes such spontaneous outbursts as whistling, humming, and singing while doing work. This study, however, focuses upon the more structured forms of performance whereby one rehearsed, performed, or musically amused oneself during discrete segments of time with a clear beginning and end. The definition includes any instrumental or vocal combination, although the following pages will show that the keyboard, the voice and the violin proved most popular by far.

Two final terms require explanation. *Musical community* will be used broadly to encompass anyone interested in or accustomed to engaging in musical activity. It includes performers, audiences, amateurs, professionals, critics, educators, retailers, manufacturers, and publishers. Though the term is singular, it was in fact an ill-defined, heterogeneous body composed of different, sometimes even opposing, interests. By contrast, the term *musical establishment* refers to a narrow, more homogenous group of classically trained professional performers, critics, and educators.

Inevitably, this project encountered some problems. While I consulted a few music columns in the larger Toronto newspapers, a quick survey of the other local dailies did not yield enough evidence to merit a more thorough sampling. Music columns, where present, tended to be concise factual accounts about who performed what, where, and when. As Chapter Eleven will show, the later war years form an exception to this trend, and as a result local newspapers were investigated more rigorously for that time period.

Furthermore, the dissertation is selective as regards ethnicity and class. It depicts predominantly Anglo-Canadian historical actors, partly because the vast majority of Southwestern Ontarians self-identified as such, but also because I lack the reading skills for decoding primary sources in languages other than English and French. I am

nonetheless adamant about depicting Anglo-Canadian behaviours as ethnic affiliations rather than some universal norm against which all Others are measured. Wherever possible, the following chapters have tried to highlight evidence of ethnic pluralism, while acknowledging that such analyses does not do justice to the nuanced cultural practices of such groups. Although class analysis plays a pivotal role in this dissertation, the available primary source evidence tends to privilege the concerns of the middle and the “respectable” upper-working classes.¹⁵³ Poorer families who lacked the time, the literacy, or the resources to have their oral musical activity captured and preserved in textual, notational, visual, or other media, enter the archival record mostly in whispers and silences. Time has unfortunately muted their music as well as their stories.

The final set of limitations is of a more personal nature. Though I have a strong background in music history, I am not a trained musicologist. While the following analysis is hopefully not devoid of musicological insight, this dissertation is first and foremost a piece of historical scholarship. It is also worth noting that I am an amateur pianist and an ardent lover of both classical and non-classical music. I have tried to recognize indifference and antipathy to music on the part of my historical subjects, but I inevitably see myself as a champion of music rather than its detractor. As a pianist, I have been drawn to sources describing pianos, particularly when the discussion takes a technical turn. Pianos were the most popular instrument during this period; however, a violinist, a cellist, or a flautist may have approached these sources and found insights that I overlooked. If this is the case, then I welcome their alternate perspectives.

¹⁵³ For ‘rough’ versus ‘respectable’ social divisions, see Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, ch. 4.

A Digest of the Work

This dissertation is of some length and detail, so the following paragraphs are intended to provide the reader with an initial overview of the flow of its argument. The study contends that domestic musical activity was embedded in a web of social, cultural, economic, and political discourses, many of which extended far into the public realm. The chapter organization emphasizes these connections by considering the objects and skills one needed in order to cultivate a musical home. *Chapter Two* studies the buying and selling of pianos and organs, and particularly the shifting power dynamics between retailers and consumers. Pianos and organs were the only musical instruments Canadians manufactured in large quantities. Indeed, the industry maintained a solid presence as a source of employment for skilled workers, particularly in Southwestern Ontario. For much of the nineteenth century, the elite and middle-classes had clamoured after keyboards, wielding them as icons of cultural competency. As piano and organ building industrialized over the later nineteenth century, production costs dropped, making the instruments accessible to farmers and the upper reaches of the working classes. Though business relied upon closing sales, retailers equally needed to size up their clients' ability to meet instalment payments on an instrument. Failure to pay one's instalment on time created an uncomfortable situation for both retailers and consumers. Retailers did not relish the prospect of pressuring clients, particularly when the offending party was a personal acquaintance. Consumers, in turn, often resisted retailers' attempts to extract payment. Once defaulters admitted defeat, they faced the humiliating prospect of having their instrument removed in a public ceremony of repossession.

Chapter Three comprises the heart of the dissertation. It investigates prescriptive discourses about domestic musical activity and the ways in which contemporaries accepted, negotiated, or resisted these conventions. Music in the home was intimately bound up in discourses of refinement, the spatial politics of the parlour, ideal womanhood, and the coherence of the family unit. In spite of all the time, energy, and money contemporaries invested in cultivating musical daughters, reality often fell short of the ideal. Disappointed critics vented their displeasure by mocking these ‘lady amateurs’ in the press. Such satires magnified stereotypically feminine traits such as vanity, frivolousness, and superficiality. The chapter ends with an investigation of the ways in which lived experience both reinforced and deviated from the imagined dichotomy of musical angel and warbling damsel.

Chapters Four and Five discuss music education in Ontario during a transitional phase from private teachers and ladies’ colleges towards a conservatory system. By the 1880s, the professional musical establishment had begun airing their grievances over the sorry state of Canadian music education. Standards were lax, charlatanism was rampant, and students were spending significant amounts of time and money only to emerge as indifferent performers. These critics began to insist upon greater professionalism in the field of music teaching, casting themselves as the personification of these principles and classifying all others as lowly amateurs. The establishment’s grievances were generally well founded, and the conservatories they built certainly did effect an increase in the quality and consistency of teaching practices. Nevertheless, their stark discourse of professionalism versus amateurism privileged urban, masculine, elite interests at the expense of alternate teaching practices. These debates are addressed in *Chapter Four*,

followed by a discussion of music in women's private colleges. Women's college music departments were the predecessors of musical conservatories, boasting many of the same teaching personnel and involving students in the same recital rituals. These departments became redundant after the founding of music conservatories and an expanded public secondary school system robbed colleges of many students. These new conservatories, and the changes they wrought, are the subjects of *Chapter Five*.

Chapter Six discusses the production and consumption of sheet music. It begins by describing contemporary definitions of 'classical,' and 'popular' music, classifications that were both dynamic and contested. It goes on to describe the motley assortment of composers, lyricists and publishers who laboured (sometimes at cross purposes) to get a composition into print. Consumers are then introduced, along with their idiosyncratic habits of copying, borrowing, and even smuggling pieces of sheet music over the Canadian-American border. To further complicate the picture, Canadian regulations regarding international sheet music copyrights were arcane and virtually incomprehensible. Pirated editions of British works circulated freely throughout the Dominion, most of them so similar in appearance to the authorized versions that even music dealers could not always tell the difference. Finally, the items of sheet music are considered as objects of material culture, as consumers inscribed names, dates, and technical markings upon the pages.

Chapters Seven and Eight focus on Canadian popular songs for the period 1880-1913. *Chapter Seven* addresses popular song as a prescription of and a vehicle for English-Canadian identity. This identity is analysed at the imperial, the national, and the local level. The discussion equally considers the ways in which Anglo-Canadian identity

could exclude as well as include, by investigating popular songs' depictions of ethnic and racial Otherness. *Chapter Eight* looks at popular songs' lessons about living, loving, and behaving during different stages in the life cycle. While conceding that youth needed time for fun and courtship, these popular songs stressed the importance of family responsibility, particularly as children were born and as parents aged. This genre engaged with themes of sadness and death just as easily as joy and frivolity. It reminded consumers that time passed all too quickly, and nostalgic remembrances of vanished homes and loved ones could not replace the real thing.

Chapter Nine provides a bridge to the later part of this period by discussing an early twentieth-century phenomenon: the player piano. Scholars have emphasized that this new device allowed a piano to virtually play itself with the simple push of a few air bellows. While this was technically true, I argue that piano manufacturers and retailers envisioned the player as a support rather than a replacement for the human performer. The player, they insisted, simply took care of technique, leaving the untutored practitioner free to unleash his or her creative powers of expression. The player is also discussed in terms of the new gender and class discourses it inspired. Player pianos, so the argument went, were a man's instrument, ideal for the busy breadwinner who had no time for years of lessons and musical toil. Players were also described as a democratic instrument, giving every consumer instant musical technique regardless of educational background. This mass-friendly rhetoric struck a hollow note given that the player piano cost roughly double the price of a regular keyboard.

The final two chapters address the ways in which the Great War influenced the musical activity of Southwestern Ontario and Canada at large. *Chapter Ten* discusses the

war's impact on musical repertoire. It begins with an introductory discussion of the musical community's cosmopolitan prewar outlook, and how the European conflict prompted a renegotiation of aesthetic interests in light of wartime patriotism. It goes on to analyse Canadian war songs aimed at a home front audience: from the experienced songwriters penning well-known 'hits,' to the more grassroots efforts circulating between acquaintances and local war charities. *Chapter Eleven* focuses on the fate of the music trades. The outbreak of hostilities dealt a harsh blow to the previously thriving piano industry. Consumer reticence originated as a knee-jerk reaction to war's economic uncertainties. By the middle years of the conflict, however, the music trades had begun battling a negative public image that portrayed musical products as luxuries and music tradesmen as shameless profiteers. In response, the music trade launched a powerful public relations effort, founding a representative body known as the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music. The Bureau, in turn, started the "Music in the Home" campaign in 1917, writing articles aimed at the masses. These articles insisted on music's role as a necessity of life, particularly during wartime. While the members of the music trade met the challenges of war head on, they wrongly assumed that the end of conflict would mean a return to the status quo. This proved not to be the case, as recorded music and eventually radio threw the industry into a long, painful decline starting in the 1920s.

Nonetheless, let us start our narrative by investigating the Canadian piano and organ industry as it was in its prime. When retailers fanned out across Southwestern Ontario, eager to catch a whiff of the slightest hint of musical inclination, cultural pretension, or material desire. When instruments, not radio or recordings, provided the soundtrack to contemporary musical life.

CHAPTER TWO
SHOPPING FOR MELODY:
THE BUYING AND SELLING OF PIANOS AND ORGANS

Pianos and parlour organs played a dominant role in domestic musical activity during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Sometimes, the household musician played solo selections. Other times, he or (more commonly) she discretely accompanied human voices bent on singing parlour songs and hymns. The keyboard's versatility was one of many factors that contributed to its broad appeal. Ever since the rise of industrialism in turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Europe, bourgeois families of musical pretensions had flocked to purchase keyboards and especially pianos for their daughters.¹

By the 1880s, the piano had solidified its iconic status in the Western cultural imagination. As we will shortly see, the purchase of an instrument resulted from an extended series of encounters between buyer and seller. This chapter argues that the customer-retailer relationship was a complex one, underscored at every point by the retailer's unshakeable faith in his expertise. This assumption guided his actions and helped him to interpret and react to others. Whether accepting or resisting the retailer's

¹ Arthur Loesser contends that the piano "was a product straight from the loins of nineteenth-century industry and business, a direct issue of the technology, the transportation, and the finance of its time. It was more than their mere image; it was in itself a small unit of the age-substance, a very cell of the dominant life that made it," Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (1954; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 391.

lofty self-designation, customers could not ignore a discourse that downplayed their own forms of knowledge. Customer-retailer interactions were not necessarily unpleasant. Some pianos and organs changed hands under harmonious conditions; other transactions were fraught with conflict. Even pleasant exchanges, however, involved a contest of opposing interests.

It must be noted that what follows is not a business history of Canadian piano and organ manufacturing. A handful of authors have already laid the foundation for that narrative.² Instead, this chapter charts the movement of pianos and organs between seller and buyer, and considers the consumer desires awakened and the relationships forged. Making music, particularly the fashionable keyboard music prized by contemporaries, required access to certain social, economic, educational, and cultural resources. As these pages will show, retailers helped excite longings for keyboard instruments, while also mediating access to them. The ways in which customers and retailers interacted shows the variety of people aspiring to piano or organ ownership, and the accommodations they made in order to secure an instrument. Furthermore, the chapter illuminates some of the power structures that deemed some people more fit for ownership than others.

For purposes of simplicity, the term *retailer* shall refer to anyone who derived their living wholly or partly from the sale of keyboard instruments. Retailers came from a variety of economic backgrounds: from the travelling salesman, to the shop assistant, to

² Ladislav Cselenyi-Granch, *Under The Sign of the Big Fiddle: The R.S. Williams Family, Manufacturers and Collectors of Musical Instruments* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1996); John Hall, "One Hundred Years of Piano Making in Kingston," *Historical Kingston* 39 (1991): 36-51; Wayne Kelly, *Downright Upright: A History of the Canadian Piano Industry* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1991); Frances Roback, "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs, 1850-1914," *Material History Bulletin* 20 (1984): 31-43; James Andrew Ross, "'Ye Olde Firme': Heintzman & Company, Ltd., 1885-1930: A Case Study in Canadian Piano Manufacturing" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1994); Mickey Vallee, "Piano as Domestic Technology: An Interpretive History of the Canadian Piano Industry ca. 1880-1920" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 2002). Many of these authors have done prodigious amounts of detailed research, but I find Ross' scholarship to be the most analytically insightful.

the branch store manager, to the independent storeowner. Manufacturers could step into the role of retailer either directly, by occupying the booths at industrial exhibitions, or indirectly by hiring employees to oversee their retail stores. There is some evidence to imply that music retailers had not enjoyed much respectability for the greater part of the nineteenth century. Popular prejudice considered the hawker of instruments little better than a peddler, an image that cutthroat competition in the music trade did nothing to refute. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the musical retailer's had improved and the public had come to accept him as a respectable businessman.³

In addition to the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* (see Appendix B), this chapter hinges upon the personal accounts of three contemporary retailers. Two accounts consist of notebooks filled with onionskin duplicates of business correspondence. William Swinton of Orillia (1859-1924) was a cabinet-maker by trade who worked eighteen years at T.B. Mitchell's furniture store before buying out the sewing machine and musical instrument section of the shop in stages between 1897 and 1898.⁴ His correspondence book of over two hundred pages covers the period 1898 to 1907 and contains letters to both customers and suppliers, the latter being chiefly the Heintzman & Company of Toronto and the Bell Piano and Organ Company of Guelph.⁵ Less is known about A.B. Bond of Hamilton, a piano tuner and retailer who operated an establishment called Bond Brothers before relinquishing his shop in January 1913 in order to sell pianos directly from his lodgings. Bond's correspondence book runs from 1912 to 1913, and mainly

³ "London Dealers Hold 3rd Annual Banquet," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 14, no. 9 (February 1914): 52-53, 56-57.

⁴ Retailers frequently sold pianos and sewing machines in tandem, both being considered as household objects of significant size and value. See Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos*, 560-561.

⁵ William Swinton to the Bradstreets Co., November 30, 1898, p. 39, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO.

consists of letters to his suppliers, the Karn-Morris Piano and Organ Company of Woodstock, Ontario.⁶ Aware of the importance of reputation, Swinton and Bond tried to frame their actions in a positive light, currying sympathy and favour wherever possible. The third account consists of the 1887 diary of George Heintzman, superintendent and general manager of Heintzman & Company of Toronto. The twenty-seven-year-old Heintzman wrote terse accounts about his daily activities on the retail side of the manufacturing firm. These operations included tending to customers entering the retail store, as well as making evening calls at the homes of prospective clients. Heintzman carefully noted the name and contact information of everyone he encountered during these interactions, using the diary to remind him when to make follow-up visits.⁷

Historians indicate that the period between 1880 and 1920 marked a transition in the North American economy from a producer-oriented society to a consumer-oriented one. Prior to this, manufacturers had been overwhelmingly concerned with maximizing production and had delegated distribution matters to wholesalers. Retailers occupied the opposite end of the spectrum, purchasing generic bulk goods from the wholesalers, which they in turn sold to their local clientele. Most were small, independent merchants, though a significant disparity in wealth and social status distinguished the established storeowners from the more itinerant peddlers.⁸ While several factors prompted the shift to mass consumerism, the expansion of the railway network provided a crucial impetus by

⁶ A.B. Bond to Karn-Morris Piano and Organ Company, January 8, 1913, p. 49, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC.

⁷ George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, Folder 18, Theodore Heintzman Fonds, S171, TRL. George C. Heintzman (1860-1944) was the son of company founder Theodore Heintzman. He became superintendent and general manager of the company in 1885, and upon his father's death in 1899 he became president. See Helmut Kallmann and Patricia Wardrop, "Heintzman & Co. Ltd.," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter *EMC*] <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/heintzman-co-ltd> (accessed September 16, 2013).

⁸ David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 30-32.

enabling the distribution of goods to smaller cities, towns, and rural communities. The geographical expansion of markets proved a mixed blessing for local producers; some prospered from the ability to tap new regions of consumers, while others languished from the increased competition.⁹ Piano makers belonged to the fortunate ranks, largely because railways facilitated the transportation of their heavy loads.

Meanwhile, urban and (to a lesser extent) rural North America began a gradual transition from a society of producers to a society of consumers. Over the second half of the nineteenth century, cash entered the economy to an unprecedented degree and wealth, rather than land, became the new benchmark for economic status.¹⁰ Moreover, the rising numbers of waged workers provided for unprecedented access to disposable income. As manufacturers began to produce items more cheaply, and retailers rushed to offer the lowest possible prices, consumer spending increased to unprecedented degrees.¹¹ Indeed, historian William Leach argues that beginning in the 1890s, America began to take on the trappings of “a society preoccupied with consumption, with comfort and bodily well-being, with luxury, spending, and acquisition, with more goods this year than last, more next year than this ... a future-oriented culture of desire that confused the good life with goods.”¹² Leach points out that in spite of the increase in consumer spending, what was taking place was not so much a democracy of wealth as a democracy of desire. Capitalists and advertisers, in collusion with other institutions of power, encouraged the public to think of desire as a commendable determination to better one’s lot. It mattered not

⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁰ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 5-8; Thomas J. Schlereth, “Country Stores, County Fairs, and Mail-Order Catalogues: Consumption in Rural America,” in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 342-346.

¹¹ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 28-29.

¹² Leach, *Land of Desire*, xiii.

whether the goods were immediately attainable: anyone had the liberty to dream of ownership and its intangible social rewards. Such dreams would encourage them to scrimp and save towards larger purchases and – because the cycle was never ending – to set their perpetually deferred hopes on still greater purchases after that.¹³ In other words, business leaders perceived a need to educate the average citizen on how to be a consumer of mass-produced goods, which they justified on the altruistic grounds that the increasingly affordable luxuries contributed to a better quality of life.¹⁴

Supply and Demand: A History of Piano and Organ Manufacturing in Canada

The manufacture of pianos and organs in Canada began out of necessity, as culture-hungry settlers found European musical imports utterly impractical for the New World. Keyboards' delicate internal mechanisms suffered greatly under the duress of a stormy Atlantic voyage. Even assuming the instruments survived the journey intact, once on shore it became apparent that European woods could not weather the capricious Canadian climate. Dry winters and humid summers wreaked havoc on the wood casing and the soundboard, warping them (and consequently the instrument's sound) beyond all recognition. Not to be dissuaded, early nineteenth-century colonists experimented with Canadian lumber and found that indigenous wood proved much more resistant to climatic changes.¹⁵ One of the earliest piano builders in Canada was Frederick Hund, who operated a workshop in Quebec City by 1816. G.W. Mead holds the distinction of

¹³ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁴ Simon Bronner, "Introduction," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 2.

¹⁵ Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 16, 24.

organizing the first piano firm on record, having founded Mead, Mott & Company in Montreal circa 1827. The inaugural generation of Canadian piano builders consisted by and large of English and German immigrants who plied their artisanal skills in workshops with the aid of a few assistants. They constructed their pianos by hand, a time-consuming process with an output of one to two instruments per month. These pre-industrial pianos were fragile, finicky, and the strict preserve of the wealthiest inhabitants.¹⁶

The history of organs in Canada dates back to the mid-seventeenth century, when two prominent churches in Quebec City imported instruments from France. Canadian-built church organs existed at least as early as 1723, and by the 1820s the Canadas boasted a few organ craftsmen such as the English-born Richard Coates and the French-born Jean-Baptiste Jacotel. The arrival of another immigrant, New Englander Samuel Russell Warren, in 1836 set a new standard for organ construction. Warren practiced his craft with a degree of skill hitherto unseen. Canada's first native-born organ builder was Joseph Casavant (1807-1874) who completed his first organ in 1840 for a Montreal-area church.¹⁷ By the 1840s, workmen started to make smaller reed organs for use in middle-class homes, although it would take another twenty to thirty years for an industry to establish itself.¹⁸ At a fraction of the price of a piano, the domestic organ was the preferred option for music lovers of more moderate financial means. At mid-century, a buyer could expect to pay roughly \$400 for a mid-range piano (a figure which exceeded the average skilled workman's yearly income), while a reed organ could be purchased for

¹⁶ Florence Hayes and Helmut Kallmann, "Piano Building," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002797> (accessed July 7, 2011).

¹⁷ Antoine Bouchard, "Organ Building," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/organ-building> (accessed March 14, 2012 and December 14, 2013).

¹⁸ John Hall, "One Hundred Years," 38; Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 127.

a mere \$75. The price disparity between pianos and organs persisted well into the twentieth century. Even so, as the public's purchasing power rose over the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, the piano came to represent the growing Canadian middle classes.¹⁹

Up until the mid-nineteenth century, piano companies and the fledgling organ firms grew in number across the Canadas and the Maritimes. According to scholars, the end of imperial preferential trade laws in the late 1840s and the economic fallout of Confederation in 1867 permanently blighted the vitality of the Maritime keyboard industry. The manufacturing locus therefore shifted to central Canada.²⁰ The recession of the 1870s proved a challenging time for the trade, forcing many of the smaller companies out of business. At the same time, the spread of railways and lower freight fees encouraged surviving companies to chase markets beyond their immediate locality. Gradually, they abandoned their workshops in favour of larger urban factories, armed with a greater workforce, and investing higher amounts of capital. Though skilled labour remained pivotal to piano building, companies started to use some newer industrial technologies and materials. Indeed, some firms had started to import ready-made piano parts such as actions, frames, soundboards, and strings from the new parts industry, which specialized in the manufacture of particular piano components.²¹

The Canadian keyboard trade received a welcome boost when the federal Conservative government introduced a 17.5% protective tariff on musical instruments as part of its National Policy in 1879. The policy shielded the trade from what could have

¹⁹ Frances Roback, "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs," 37-38.

²⁰ Roback, "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs," 32; Mickey Vallee, "Piano as Domestic Technology," 40-41.

²¹ John Hall, "One Hundred Years," 47; James Andrew Ross, "Ye Olde Firme," 8, 13. Companies imported these piano components from the United States, Great Britain, Germany, or France. Canadian piano parts manufacturing firms began to emerge at the turn-of-the-twentieth century (Hall, 47).

been a formidable rival: inexpensive American pianos circulating north of the border. Significantly, the tariff did not apply to instrument parts but only to finished products. Canadian manufacturers could therefore continue to import actions, soundboards, veneer and other materials. The combination of the National Policy and the economic recovery of 1880-1881 caused the numbers of factories, the size of the workforce, and the levels of production to skyrocket. An increasingly affluent population in central Canada helped foster a healthy demand at home, while the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 facilitated transportation on a large scale to markets in the west.²²

The 1890s proved another watershed in the development of piano construction, both in terms of quality and quantity. The W. Doherty and Company of Clinton, Ontario, perfected a precise method of kiln drying its wood, resulting in an optimal surface for projecting sound vibrations. This innovation represented the culmination of decades of trial and error on the part of various piano companies.²³ Moreover, a second wave of piano and organ companies began to establish itself during this decade, profiting from the sky-high consumer demand that lasted until the First World War. Existing piano firms started to grow or merge into large corporations. These structural changes contributed to a significant rise in output. By 1894, for instance, Heintzman & Company produced ten times as many pianos as it had in 1875.²⁴ Between 1900 and 1912, the production levels of the Canadian piano industry rose from 12,000 to 30,000 pianos per annum.²⁵ As late as 1918, Canada could boast thirty-two piano or organ manufacturers plus a further seven

²² Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building"; Monod, *Store Wars*, 103-106; Ross, "Ye Olde Firme," 9, 13.

²³ Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 24.

²⁴ Ross, "Ye Olde Firme," 40.

²⁵ Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building."

companies making specialized keyboard parts. The majority of these companies occupied the corridor between Western Quebec and Southern Ontario.²⁶

A myriad of technological, economic, and cultural factors fueled the growing consumer fetish for organs and pianos during the final decades of the nineteenth century. The selective introduction of industrial manufacturing techniques, such as iron frames cast in one piece, created instruments that were not only more durable but also cheaper to produce.²⁷ Older “square” pianos, shaped like large horizontal boxes, were being eclipsed by the newer vertical-oriented “upright” models, which proved practical for families with limited living space. By the late Victorian era, industrialization had also effected a new type of modern consumer, armed with disposable income and a growing awareness of leisure time as a discreet temporal entity. This consumer nursed a hopeful yet conflicted faith in commercial products as a means of achieving both upward social mobility as well as a comforting sense of stability in the swiftly changing social world.²⁸ Pianos and organs were perfectly equipped to meet this need, being already embedded in a mid-Victorian symbolic vocabulary of material abundance, cultural sophistication, and social respectability. For the economically and socially ambitious, these instruments marked the rise of one’s fortunes while also providing reassurance that the rules of the game had not changed. Though urban Canada stood at the forefront of these transformations, rural areas felt the ripple effects. Farmers in Southwestern Ontario began to enter into the rituals of keyboard buying en masse during this time period. Meanwhile, several pioneers in the

²⁶ “Piano and Organ Manufacturers and Piano and Organ Accessories Statement for Fuel Controller,” September 20, 1918, p. 134, Minute Book, Canadian Piano and Organ Manufacturers’ Association Fonds, MUS 140, LAC.

²⁷ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), 50-51. Other technological innovations included stronger hammers, stronger felt, and more responsive action mechanisms.

²⁸ Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 124-126.

newly opened Prairie regions transported their precious piano westward even before the arrival of the railway lines.²⁹

This is not to say that consumers saw keyboard instruments merely in terms of social and cultural brokering. Keyboards offered the musically literate a leisure activity as well as a source of entertainment during social gatherings. The somewhat smaller ranks of musically sensitive practitioners found in them a source of aural beauty and aesthetic inspiration. Piano consumption is an intriguing topic for analysis precisely because of this dialectic between two seemingly opposite trajectories: the piano as a material object to possess (an end in itself) and the piano as an instrument (or a means to an end). It is useful to think of the wide array of keyboard consumers as existing along a spectrum between opposing poles of materialism and aesthetic appreciation. Certainly, many bought a keyboard without the requisite skills or even a wish to learn to play it. Others purchased a keyboard purely out of a desire to incorporate music into their lives. For most people, however, it was some combination of the two.

Regardless of their motives, by the 1880s and especially by the 1890s consumers were clamouring for keyboards. The parlour organ, powered by the pumping of air using foot pedals, remained the cheaper option. It furthermore possessed the benefit of being easier to keep in tune. At the same time, the constant foot pumping could be bothersome and its range of expression was limited compared to that of the piano.³⁰ The piano, which works upon the principle of a weighted hammer mechanism striking metal strings, proved far more responsive to the subtleties of the performer's touch on the keys. As pianos

²⁹ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 128. See also Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 108-109.

³⁰ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 127-129. I am using the phrase 'parlour organ' as a generic term for domestic reed organs, but there were actually two different models: the melodeon and the harmonium. See Keillor (above) and Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos*, 518-519, for the difference between the two.

became more affordable, they quickly emerged as the instrument of choice. By 1910 domestic organs had become so obsolete that production was largely becoming limited to church models.³¹ It is for these reasons that scholars pinpoint the late Victorian and Edwardian eras as the great “heyday” of the piano.³² While the cultural associations described above did apply to the parlour organ, the piano embodied them to an even greater degree.³³ The ensuing discussion will therefore be weighted towards the piano, the domestic instrument of greater numerical and symbolic importance.

Appropriate Surroundings: Piano Showroom Spaces

Piano and organ retailers aimed to reach a wide clientele that encompassed the street-wise shoppers of bustling cities, the townsfolk of smaller communities, and the isolated farmers on rural roads. In order to position themselves in proximity to each of these groups, music tradesmen had to adapt to widely different settings. The physical spaces they inhabited ran the gamut from the opulent to the makeshift. Regardless of the particular environment in which they found themselves, retailers displayed an acute awareness of spatial politics. They tried to manipulate their individual surroundings, with varying degrees of success. If possible, one could experiment with fashionable displays and decorations. In other cases, the retailer had to make do with verbal descriptions and

³¹ Roback, “Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs,” 39.

³² James Parakilas and Atsuko Hirai, “1870s to 1920s: The World’s the Limit,” in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 224. See also Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos*, 548-549; Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 32. By 1910 there were roughly two to four million pianos in Britain, which translates to one owner for every ten to twenty people (Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 91).

³³ In his typically vivid if hyperbolic prose, Loesser observes: “Socially, the domestic function of the melodeon was similar to that of the piano; yet the surroundings in which it mostly lived differed in certain shades of flavor... Little atmosphere of fashion or of showiness hovered around a melodeon, few Parisian odeurs ... In European phraseology, it was a lower, rather than an upper, middle-class instrument” (*Men, Women, and Pianos*, 520).

sheer force of personality. A good salesperson also needed to encourage the customer to forge an imaginative link between the retail spaces of purchase and the home spaces of consumption. In other words, buyers had to perceive something in the retail spaces that they believed would fit with their own home once the coveted instrument arrived.

Needless to say, the largest and most opulent piano and organ emporiums in the province were located in Toronto. Mason & Risch, Nordheimer, Heintzman & Company, and Gerhard Heintzman were Toronto-based manufacturers who built retail establishments in the downtown shopping district in order to attract the local clientele.³⁴ Others, such as R.S. Williams & Sons and the Bell Piano and Organ Company, produced their wares in smaller urban centers but recognized the importance of a retail establishment in the metropolis.³⁵ The combined result was a plethora of music stores in downtown Toronto, serving as a showpiece for manufacturers' wares as well as a prime site of communication with the public. Many of the older companies had inherited moderate-sized shops from the early days of the business. By the turn of the twentieth century, with aging buildings and facing unprecedented levels of demand and competition, they wanted to upgrade. King Street (downtown's traditional retail music Mecca) had moreover transformed into a business and financial district. Consequently, a host of firms set their sights on Yonge Street, the up-and-coming spot for sophisticated shoppers.³⁶ Eaton's and Simpson's, Toronto's burgeoning department stores, had occupied Yonge Street since the early 1880s. Both companies had undergone lavish

³⁴ Despite being the nephew of Heintzman & Company founder Theodore Heintzman, Gerhard Heintzman ran his own separate piano manufacturing firm. See Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 60-62.

³⁵ See Kelly, *Downright Upright* for a list of the various manufacturers and the locations of their factories. The Bell Company was centered in Guelph, while R.S. Williams produced its pianos in Oshawa.

³⁶ "House of Nordheimer to Remove After Seventy Years on King Street, Toronto," *CMTJ* 14, no. 12 (May 1914): 52.

expansions in subsequent years, and their multi-storied facades and splendid interiors likely served as inspiration for the music trade's new Yonge Street hopefuls.³⁷

According to the historian William Leach, the rise of department stores and their aggressive pursuit of the consumer dollar had spearheaded a new aesthetics of retail space. With department stores leading the way in the 1880s, retailers gradually abandoned older practices of cluttered shops with goods piled haphazardly around the premises. Wide open aisles, streamlined displays, modern light fixtures, mirrors and (in the large urban stores) elevators and escalators contributed to the impression of an expansive and easily accessible retail space. Interior designers started to covet richer materials such as marble, which replaced functional wooden plank flooring. Decorative colour schemes became popular as well. These efforts catered to the sensibilities of a bourgeois clientele in search of leisure and luxury. Working-class patrons would also have marveled at the opulent surroundings; however, the spaces were not designed with them in mind. Instead, proprietors deemed “bargain basements” and other sparsely decorated corners the working-class area *par excellence*.³⁸

The Bell Organ and Piano Company was one of the first to launch a new Yonge Street premises in April 1901, where it received a staggering 10,000 visitors on the final day of its grand opening. Storeowners pursued a dual-pronged campaign to evoke spaces that were both lavish and comfortable. Lavishness was deemed necessary for getting visitors to come in the first place. At the same time, lush surroundings operated on a far deeper level. They confirmed the financial stability of the company while sending subliminal signals to consumers that they, too, could achieve a piece of this luxury by

³⁷ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 21, 24.

³⁸ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 72-79.

purchasing an instrument of their own. Visitors who entered the Bell building moved through a sequence of rooms beginning with large, awe-inspiring spaces to titillate the senses, to impress the discerning mind, and to fan the flames of material desire:

On entering the store you look through a vista of pianos and exotic plants to the handsome plate-glass offices in the rear, rich in their polished cherry, silk-draped windows and business-like aspect. The waxed floor gives back the reflections of the art pianos. Before each instrument lies a rich rug, while from a cornice running down both sides of the room above an eight foot deep, crimson ingranation, brilliant incandescent lights, aided by big Manhattan arcs depending from the ceiling, shed a ruddy radiance over all. The quiet tints of light green high on the walls, and a green-tinted ceiling, relieved by a green and pink plastic frieze and green and pink ceiling panels, add a subdued but brilliant effect ...³⁹

As this excerpt shows, the office spaces were every bit as much on display as the pianos themselves. Though quietly located behind the main instrument show floor, they remained an integral part of the visual perspective, with their glass partitions and “business-like” furnishings.⁴⁰ While elements such as the cumbersome chandeliers and the electric lighting were conceived on a massive scale, the green colour scheme injected a note of serenity to the surroundings to counteract the likelihood of sensory overload.

The largesse of the Bell showroom gave way to an area of more modest proportions. Medium sized spaces such as the “Amber Room” and the rear room offered settings that were at once sumptuous yet intimate. The former featured “handsomely rich plush curtains” while the latter offered “[h]andsome chairs, settees and tables” for customers’ comfort as they inspected the wares.⁴¹ Lest such opulence strike anyone as too worldly, the Amber room boasted a stained glass window featuring portraits of Mozart,

³⁹ “Bell Co’s Toronto Home,” *CMTJ* 2, no. 6 (May 1901): 24. English sheet music publishers Novello and Company pursued a similar aesthetic when their renovated retail store opened on November 26, 1906. See Michael Hurd, *Vincent Novello and Company* (London: Granada, 1981), 100-101.

⁴⁰ William Leach argues that department store managers tried to make their stores appealing by keeping the less glamorous areas such as the bookkeeping departments out of public view. The Bell Company, however, provides evidence of an alternate view that offices in full public view connoted stability and transparency in business dealings. See *Land of Desire*, 75.

⁴¹ “Bell Co’s Toronto Home.”

Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Handel. The rear room enshrined a similar panoply of musical masters in oils and engravings. The last set of rooms on the first floor consisted of four sitting rooms, with two pianos each: the “Pink Room”, the “Olive-green Room,” the “Pearl and Gold Room,” and the “Blue Room.”⁴² These sorts of model showrooms represented another innovation of the department store era, with the first tentative experiments taking place in department stores in the 1880s. Inspired by theatrical effects such as tableaux and pantomime, model showrooms tried to demonstrate how an item could be both useful and desirable by placing it in a setting that emphasized its helpful and artistic qualities.⁴³ In this case, the small, cozy spaces helped visitors aurally and visually imagine the piano in a domestic setting. One could shut the door, listen to the instrument’s tone, and forget the presence of the wider store. The rooms’ various colour schemes increased the likelihood of visitors finding something in one of these spaces that matched the style of their own parlours. This, in turn, would help them to visualize more distinctly how the addition of an instrument would contribute to home decoration.

Bell was not the only store to embark on such grand refurbishments. R.S. Williams & Sons opened its glorious ten floor premises in late January 1913. Company officials arranged for staff to greet patrons at the door and to direct them to the “electric elevators, which whisked them to the tenth floor,” whereupon they received a guided tour of each level in descending order. This included an inspection of the managerial offices, the stock rooms, the repair rooms, the piano showrooms, the fourth floor recital room, and the affable Mr. Williams’ personal collection of valuable antique and rare

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 80; Monod, *Store Wars*, 154.

instruments.⁴⁴ The press coverage of the grand opening of Mason & Risch's seven story building a few months earlier reveals another motive propelling the manipulation of retail spaces: "The Main Reception room... is finished with the richness and yet the simplicity that is always so admirable in a well finished Piano. Every line is made to tell, and it is evident at once that the ones whose taste rendered possible so charming a room as this are the ones to whom one would readily entrust the task of designing an artistic instrument."⁴⁵ Heintzman & Company's promotional literature concurred, reasoning that, "[a] perfect gem deserves a perfect setting."⁴⁶ Thus the logics of space design also constituted an attempt to equate the modernity and the lushness of the furnishings with the quality of the instruments being modeled. Competition between the piano magnates was fierce, and setting up shop in proximity to each other soon became the *sine qua non* of smart management. By 1914, a recognizable piano district had developed on Yonge Street. All except three of Toronto's "piano houses" inhabited this commercial strip.⁴⁷

Piano and organ salesmen in the smaller cities and towns engaged in similar tactics, despite on a reduced scale. There were two types of music shops in these communities. The first consisted of independently run music stores whose proprietor chose one or two lines of pianos or organs to display. The second type consisted of manufacturers' branch stores, with employees hired by the firm to sell the company's product to a local audience. Piano branch stores represent a uniquely Canadian development, emerging during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly,

⁴⁴ "10 Storey [*sic*] 'Home of Music' Formally Opened," *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 30.

⁴⁵ *CMTJ* 13, no. 3 (August 1912): 30.

⁴⁶ "Ye Olde Firme": 1850-1913," booklet, Box 1, MU 3594, Heintzman and Co. Fonds, F224, AO.

⁴⁷ Of those exceptions, Gerhard Heintzman Co. lay only a short distance to the west, Frank Stanley was preparing a move to Yonge Street, and William Long was contemplating a similar action, "House of Nordheimer to Remove After Seventy Years on King Street, Toronto," *CMTJ* 14, no. 12 (May 1914): 52. For a discussion of the Canadian industry's turn-of-the-twentieth-century competitiveness, see Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 27-29.

the new branches tended to infiltrate larger communities first, using them as “regional distribution depots” for the surrounding hinterland.⁴⁸ Heintzman & Company proved one of the most zealous advocates of branch store expansion throughout Ontario. It opened its first branch in London in 1895, followed by Hamilton (1896), Chatham (1907), Fort William (1908), Stratford (1911), Sarnia (1913), Windsor (1914), St. Catharines (1914), Peterborough (1916), Niagara Falls (1918) and Brantford (1919).⁴⁹

Whether branch store or independently owned, a prominent city such as London or Hamilton would have possessed roughly eight to twelve piano and organ stores. A smaller community such as Orillia may have had something in the region of five.⁵⁰ Like their Toronto counterparts, then, provincial salesmen faced stiff competition and those that were able to do so tried to achieve a cutting edge with stylish showroom design. London’s Mason & Risch branch provides an excellent example of the type of refurbishments taking place in piano and organ stores of the smaller and mid-sized communities. Mason & Risch had built their first London store back in 1893.⁵¹ Their updated building, launched in the spring of 1913 (Fig. 2.1), could not boast large hallways or splendid vistas. Nevertheless, the store balanced elements of tradition with their mahogany finishings, solid hardwood floors, and framed pictures of the great composers, as well as innovation with their pictures of up-and-coming artists and their electric bell communication system. The store featured a cluster of prettily decorated individual rooms, each fitted with a charming “cluster of snowdrop lights.”⁵² Independent

⁴⁸ “House of Nordheimer to Remove.”

⁴⁹ Ross, “Ye Olde Firme,” 44-45.

⁵⁰ For Orillia, see William Swinton to Bell Organ & Co., October 16, 1900, p. 98, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO. Estimates for London and Hamilton are based on City Directory listings (see bibliography).

⁵¹ Ross, “Ye Olde Firme,” 44.

⁵² “New Mason & Risch Store at London,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 54.

merchants equally tried to evoke aesthetically pleasing surroundings. Fig. 2.2 shows the interior of E.J. Wilson's musical shop in Hamilton. Wilson had been manager at Hamilton's Nordheimer branch store before deciding to form his own establishment in 1909.⁵³ This photograph from 1913 shows a modern, well-lit interior, clean and free of clutter. The pages of sheet music are neatly arranged and displayed on a rack to the left. Glass cases to the right and behind the counter hint that Wilson had incorporated the progressive display techniques being advocated in retail trade journals. The floral wallpaper conveys a comforting, homey atmosphere.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the ornate arabesques of the gleaming Mason & Risch arch injected the necessary tone of grandeur.

It was not enough, however, for customers to be awed once they entered the shop. Storeowners knew that customers had to be lured in from the streets, hence the importance of window displays. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* contained numerous articles on how to write eye-catching window cards. By the mid-1910s, however, newer architectural elements such as plate glass windows became the last word in innovative display in Ontario (Fig. 2.3). The popularity of plate glass displays signaled a change in the wider history of advertising, which increasingly privileged the visual in contrast to the text-based methods prior to the 1890s. The public response to plate glass was immediate and visceral; spectators found themselves transfixed and unnerved by its hypnotic properties. Plate glass also constituted an exercise in power. It captivated viewers with its visual immediacy, while physically removing them from the musical instrument's other sensory pleasures such as touch and sound. To experience those

⁵³ "Sudden Demise of Esteemed Retailer," *CMTJ* 14, no. 6 (November 1913): 66.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of retailing in general, see Monod, *Store Wars*, 151-157 and Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 246-248. Monod (p.155) elaborates on local retailers' attempts to create 'feminized' store spaces for female customers.

qualities, one would need to enter the store as a bona fide customer.⁵⁵ The September 1915 issue of the *CMTJ* explained the mesmerizing influence of the new glass: “The effect of the plate glass front is as if no glass stood between the spectator and the object in the window... The natural impulse of the spectator is to reach out and touch the piano or phonograph.”⁵⁶ As William Leach observes: “Glass was a symbol of the merchant’s unilateral power in a capitalist society to refuse goods to anyone in need, to close off access without being condemned as cruel and immoral ... At the same time, the pictures behind the glass enticed the viewer. The result was a mingling of refusal and desire that must have greatly intensified desire, adding another level of cruelty.”⁵⁷ Granted, not all of the local piano and organ tradesmen could afford to keep pace with the push for visual display. Many would have been forced to content themselves with the simpler one or two room shops and the smaller windowpanes of their forefathers, as exemplified in this image of a downtown Guelph merchant’s store in the early 1920s (Fig. 2.4).

The humbler shopkeeper may have been somewhat disgruntled, but he was fortunate at least in having a fixed space to sell his product. The itinerant sales agent possessed no such luxury. He spent his days roaming the countryside by train, by horse and buggy, or later by motorcar to different communities. His was a highly mobile retail universe. Bell Piano and Organ Company travelling agent James Dooley found himself in transit almost daily between November 1892 and July 1893 on a circuit that included: Woodstock, Hamilton, Simcoe, Teeterville, St. George, Harrisburg, Oakville, Smiths Falls, Campbellville, Dundas, Milton, and Hagersville. Not possessing his own mode of transportation, he usually journeyed by train to the communities, whereupon he would

⁵⁵ Leach, *Land of Desire* 39, 42-43, 55, 61-63.

⁵⁶ “Gourlay Salesrooms Rebuilt,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 4 (September 1915): 37.

⁵⁷ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 63.

hire livery to reach his more isolated prospective clients. His expense book reveals that it was rare for an interested party to purchase an expensive item like a keyboard on the first visit. Often, he would make one or two return visits to an individual before securing a contract, frequently making a special trip over from a different locality.⁵⁸

Travelling salesmen were especially important because they tapped the rural districts. By the turn of the twentieth century, farmers had become the new target market. Indeed, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* kept a regular eye on the fluctuations in the prices of wheat, knowing full well the music trade's reliance on farmers' custom.⁵⁹ While many farmers made their purchase by visiting the piano or organ shops in the nearest town, manufacturing companies knew that house calls constituted a more potent weapon for reaching isolated, busy, or reluctant rural residents. House calls meant that the travelling salesman was effectively entering the home space of the farmer and trying to transform it into an imagined retail space through the use of verbal descriptions and engraved 'cuts' of various piano models. R.S. Williams & Sons salesman R.B. Allen of Napanee noted how domestic surroundings could form a handy jumping-off point for a sales pitch: "If invited indoors, do not fail to show your liking for what is there ... Be prepared to converse on the general news of the day. But do not forget what you came for – to sell him something."⁶⁰ Such advice was easier given than followed. Many calls were not brief doorstep conversations but rather full-fledged visits involving food, drink, and lengthy conversations. A dealer needed to negotiate this permeable boundary between

⁵⁸ Monthly Expense Report for Travelling Agent James, Bell Organ and Piano Co. Folder, XRI MS AO140, UGA.

⁵⁹ See for example, "Caution is Still the Word," *CMTJ* 14, no. 2 (July 1913): 25; "If War is Hell Be a Christian and Talk Business," *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 50; "Canadian National Exhibition Patriotic Year," *CMTJ* 16, no. 4 (September 1915): 50.

⁶⁰ "Handling a Customer," *CMTJ* 14, no. 7 (December 1913): 32.

salesmanship and sociability. Travelling sales agent Arthur Baxter described the process as follows: “A piano traveller gracefully insinuates himself into the domestic affairs of a family, usually discovers the ‘family skeleton,’ finds out their social aspirations, discovers what creed they support and gets a pretty good idea of how much money is lying loose at the bank, to their credit.”⁶¹ The lack of an instrument for demonstration purposes constituted a further challenge. Clients were necessarily denied the sensory pleasures of seeing the keyboard’s size and design, feeling the weight of the keys, and listening to the tones produced. Travelling salesmen not only tried to invoke an imagined retail space; they also conjured visual, tactile, and aural impressions of their product.

The final type of retail space for pianos and organs was in the temporary displays produced for the region’s various expositions or other public events. The Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto and the Western Fair in London were two of the most important venues in Southwestern Ontario for manufacturers to display their wares. Generally, each of the manufacturing companies would set up a stand and transport a few piano or organ models for demonstration. Gathering together in this way brought them a captive audience of fairgoers while also giving the firms a chance to explore what sort of products their rivals were trying to sell. Nevertheless, the exhibition spaces presented their own sorts of obstacles. Manufacturers regularly complained about the lack of exhibition space allotted them, and the discomfort caused by overcrowding.⁶² Keith

⁶¹ Arthur Baxter (‘Bax’), “Tales Told by Travellers,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 3 (August 1912): 38. Arthur Beverley Baxter (1891-1964) moved to Britain after the First World War, becoming a journalist and eventually a politician. For more on his career see Neville Thompson, *Canada and the End of the Imperial Dream: Beverley Baxter’s Reports from London through War and Peace, 1936-1960* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶² Minute book entries for November 15, 1915, February 4, 1916, March 21, 1916, April 17, 1916, and April 26, 1917, Folder 2, Canadian Piano and Organ Manufacturers’ Association, MUS 140, LAC. By this time, piano exhibition spaces at the CNE had become so precious that only Canadian Piano Manufacturers’ Association members were entitled to receive one.

Walden describes the frustrations of the Toronto Exhibition's management's committee during the late nineteenth century. Every year, they tried to mediate between the piano manufacturers' insistence on being grouped together and the sheer cacophony of noise that resulted from so many instruments being played in such close proximity. The din not only threatened to drive away visitors; it made it hard for a potential client to judge the merits of an instrument's tone.⁶³ Though blaming the C.N.E. management for the Annex Building's 1893 debacle, the *Canadian Musician* conceded: "To the unsuspecting visitor it must have seemed Pandemonium let loose, a veritable council-hall of evil spirits[.] Almost back to back each exhibitor had his set of piano players whose ambition was to make the utmost noise in competition. Some, not considering this sufficient, added cornets, banjos and other instruments of torture."⁶⁴ Particularly enterprising businessmen took advantage of smaller events to hawk their product in the absence of other competitors. Ernest Wright, owner of the Wright Piano Company of Strathroy, toured the local church and garden party circuit during the 1900s and 1910s with young family and trusty piano in tow. In earlier years, he would sing comic songs while his wife accompanied him on piano. Later, he let his four young sons demonstrate their talents by interspersing the programs with their Hawaiian guitar and vocal pieces. A natural performer, Wright hoped to raise awareness for his company's brand of pianos.⁶⁵

⁶³ Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 76-77.

⁶⁴ *Canadian Musician* (September 1893): 4.

⁶⁵ Mary Jean Wright, *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (London, ON: Mary J. Wright, 1997), 59-60.

The Importance of Being Expert: The Retailer Posing as Authority

In spite of falling prices, pianos and organs remained substantial purchases for the average family. For the retailer, this meant that every sale counted, and he was prepared to invest significant time and energy with a prospective buyer. Such interactions involved a considerable element of performance, for seller and buyer each tried to project an image most likely to win them the upper hand.

Retailers posed as authorities, not only in opposition to the untutored customer but also compared to rival salesmen. Competition between local piano dealers could be fierce. Each contract landed was a victory in the face of one's competitors; however, deals for instruments in churches and schoolrooms held the added advantage of introducing the brand name to a whole group of potential clients. Orillia salesman William Swinton, for example, spent three months trying to secure a contract with the local high school's literary society over the winter of 1898-1899. From the outset, he knew that "almost every representative from all the Piano firms are chasing after this sale, so it will be hard fighting to capture it."⁶⁶ Swinton eventually succeeded when the literary society bought one of his Heintzman "Oak Special" pianos for \$275.00.⁶⁷ His competitors would have gained no such consolation for their time and effort.

Piano and organ selling was especially complex because the instruments were not sold on a fixed price system. Firms generally advertised their upright pianos between \$175 to \$350 dollars, depending on the model. It would, however, be up to the customer to hammer out a bargain with the salesmen, and sometimes the retailer would be prepared

⁶⁶ Swinton to Messrs. Heintzman & Co., November 4, 1898, p. 30, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO.

⁶⁷ Receipt dated February 1, 1899, p. 49, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907.

to slash the price just to secure a deal. In February of 1887, for instance, George Heintzman offered Mr. Percival a reduced price on a piano in order to outdo a rival offer from the Mason & Risch firm.⁶⁸ That same year Lily Ambrose of Hamilton noted that a local family had recently purchased a glorious new piano, reputed to be the finest in the area. Although the instrument was worth \$900.00 (one presumes it was a grand, not an upright), Mrs. Ambrose assumed that the parties had settled upon a lower price.⁶⁹ Most manufacturers and retailers inflated their list prices in order to offset the expected drop in figures during the retail negotiations. Sometimes, however, the retailer had to sell the instrument at cost and therefore made no money off the sale.⁷⁰

Indeed, competition became so fierce that some of the more talented salesmen pulled eleventh-hour efforts to rescue a customer from the clutches of a rival. George Heintzman's diary reveals that on several occasions he convinced customers to let him place a Heintzman piano in their parlours on trial, even if a competitor had already installed one of theirs for the same purpose. George left the two pianos side by side in the parlour for a few days so that the customer could compare. To his immense satisfaction, he often returned to find that the customer's allegiance had shifted in favour of his model. He would then help the client make arrangements to have the rival piano taken away.⁷¹ Another salesman's trick would be to 'knock' or make negative comments about a competitor's line of instrument. Trade journals tried to discourage this habit, claiming

⁶⁸ George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, February 19, 1887, Folder 18, Theodore Heintzman Fonds, S171, TRL. Heintzman & Co. pianos generally sold for a bit more money than those of other firms.

⁶⁹ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 18, 1887, pp. 193-194, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

⁷⁰ For efforts to reform the price cutting practice, see C.W. Lindsay, "The One Price System," *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 27-29; "What Dealers Say About The One Price System in Piano Retailing," *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 72-73.

⁷¹ George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, entries for June 1, June 2, August 4, August 6, August 11, Folder 18, Theodore Heintzman Fonds, S171, TRL. See also Ross, "Ye Olde Firme," 33-34.

that it reeked of bad grace and lowered the standing of the industry as a whole.⁷² By the early 1910s, retailers gradually started to realize that co-operation with their fellow tradesmen would ultimately be more profitable than these roughshod selling methods. The piano and organ salesmen of London, Ontario, pioneered the concept of a local music trades association in 1912. By the time the association celebrated its first anniversary, it had managed to regulate prices for piano rentals and packing costs.⁷³

Another factor complicating the retailer-client relationship was the common habit of trading in an older instrument against the price of the purchase of a new one. This was particularly the case when families started to jettison their parlour organs in favour of pianos. In theory, the retailer would fix up the rejected instrument and sell it second-hand to buyers of more limited means. Retailers complained, however, that customers came with greatly inflated ideas of what their hackneyed parlour organ would fetch. Even so, some retailers capitulated to the customer's asking price rather than risk losing the piano contract to a rival, a practice that resulted in storage rooms full of worthless instruments in various states of disrepair.⁷⁴

As if bona fide piano and organ retailers were not enough to contend with, general store and furniture store owners also tried to get in on the music selling game. The proliferation of mass-produced, ready-made goods and the increasing tendency of manufacturers to guarantee product quality had effected a change in Canadian retailing. Theoretically at least, a retailer who sold ready-made factory goods with national brand name recognition did not need to possess expert knowledge about the product in question.

⁷² "The Habit of Knocking," *CMTJ* 14, no. 10 (March 1914): 24.

⁷³ "London Piano Merchants Celebrate First Birthday of Association," *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 27-29.

⁷⁴ "Those 5-Octave Parlor Organs," *CMTJ* 20, no. 12 (May 1920): 40.

As the historian David Monod explains: “By the mid-1890s, border wars were erupting all through distribution. It was never enough for merchants simply to watch their own trades; the vigilant retailer had also to keep an eye open for competition by outsiders. Overhanging much of the inter-trade rivalry was the hostility which the specialist felt for the dilettante.”⁷⁵ Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, it would not be unusual to find dry goods or furniture merchants dabbling in the sale of violins or cornets, a few phonographs, or perhaps one or two piano models. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* periodically expressed its fury over these “retailers of furniture who take on a music department, in the superficial way some do, [and] could not be called real music dealers for they are merely branching out, perhaps temporarily, to get the profit on the ‘thousands of sales that are just waiting to be gobbled up.’”⁷⁶ In 1898, the Bell Organ & Piano Company wrote William Swinton asking him to investigate rumours of a certain World Furniture Company selling organs in Orillia. Swinton’s response is an interesting one because the language of his letter downplays the threat, yet his actions betray a greater level of worry. He takes on an air of hauteur against his upstart rivals: “I am on friendly terms with them and went in to see them today... My store and there’s [*sic*] are near each other... and I am under the impression they would like to catch one or two of my sales by my customers mistaking the place which has been the case in every sale they ever made.”⁷⁷ His use of the term “my customers” shows that he considered these patrons his by right. This is curious, since Swinton would have been competing with the other local

⁷⁵ Monod, *Store Wars*, 24.

⁷⁶ “Are Music Dealers Alive to the Influences at Work Endeavoring to Interest Outside Retailers in Pianos and Talking Machines?” *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 20. See also “Merchants in Other Lines,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 3 (August 1917): 113, 115.

⁷⁷ Swinton to Bell Organ & Piano Co., October 6, 1898, p. 26, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO.

music retailers even without the presence of the furniture store; but perhaps he felt that his proprietary claims were superior to the more spurious rights of a general furniture salesman. The argument about customer misdirection is nevertheless far fetched, since customers seeking Mr. Swinton's establishment would have easily realized their mistake upon entering a store crowded with other types of furniture. Those who lingered to buy an organ from the World Furniture Company were evidently not swayed by any particular ties of loyalty to the disgruntled music merchant. Swinton communicated the quantity of World Furniture Company sales in phrases carefully couched with negative pronouns: "they never sold but two organ[s] to my knowledge," and at the moment had "no sale but told me they started one with a prospect of selling."⁷⁸ His disdain did not, however, prevent him from taking precautionary measures. He cut a deal with the World Furniture Company whereby he offered them his expertise in return for a commission. In small communities, where business and social networks regularly intertwined, it might have been easier in some cases to forfeit a small source of profit rather than risk the enmity of a fellow neighbour. By and large, however, furniture salesmen continued to hawk musical items, sometimes with astonishing success. H. Wunnenberg & Son's furniture store of Hanover, for instance, did a splendid business selling New Scale Williams instruments in the early 1910s.⁷⁹ Piano and organ retailers insisted that their annoyance at these incursions did not only derive from lost business. They felt insulted by the implication that pianos and organs were mundane pieces of furniture, as opposed to sensitive musical instruments designed for a loftier purpose.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 49.

⁸⁰ "London Dealers Hold 3rd Annual Banquet," *CMTJ* 14, no. 9 (February 1914): 52-57.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, department store mail order catalogues had become another thorn in the side of piano retailers. The department store menace was arguably more invidious since the opponent was depersonalized, geographically distant, and therefore impossible to confront personally. The Timothy Eaton Company had launched its first mail order catalogue back in 1884 and soon found it a recipe for success. By 1895, seventy-five thousand Canadian homes had a copy of the catalogue and in 1904 that number had increased to nearly 1.3 million.⁸¹ Musical instruments ordered via catalogues tended to be the cheaper, generic models and therefore cost less than those bought from a bona fide sales agent.⁸² Mail order catalogue competition proved a particular threat in smaller towns and rural areas where the divine trinity of cheap prices, varied selection, and convenient ordering made them a kind of Holy Grail for the isolated and the penny-pinched. Music sellers could only retaliate by emphasizing the importance of a respected brand of piano and an expert agent providing services essential for the full enjoyment of one's purchase.⁸³

Such reasons are ironic for a number of reasons. First, piano and organ salesmen were genuinely threatened when other stores carried keyboard instruments, but they stretched the truth when they railed against the appearance of other musical items. Piano and organ shops were by no means general music stores. Some managers certainly stocked their shop with a variety of musical merchandise, but a fair number abstained

⁸¹ Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 48.

⁸² The Fall-Winter Eaton's catalogue for 1908-1909 advertised an upright piano for \$185.00 (p. 256B). Of all the name brand manufacturers, the Goderich Organ Company alone decided to try offering their wares via the Eaton's catalogue (Roback, "Advertising Canadian Pianos and Organs," 35).

⁸³ "Handling the Customer Who Puts Forward the 'Mail Order' Argument," *CMTJ* 18, no. 2 (July 1917): 29. See also "Overcoming the Bubagoo of Mail Order Competition," *CMTJ* 19, no. 3 (August 1918): 120. Opposition to mail order catalogues was widespread throughout other branches of the retail trade. See Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 201; Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 215-216; Schlereth, "Country Stores," 349, 364-372.

from the small goods trade. ‘Small goods’ was an umbrella term that included anything from brass, woodwind and string instruments to general supplies such as violin bows, music cases, and music stands. The naysayers denied that there was any use in selling such trivial low-priced items. The supporters, meanwhile, maintained that these sorts of smaller purchases helped get customers in the store.⁸⁴ Piano and organ salesmen usually stocked sheet music, but few of them made any effort on this front. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* routinely complained that “Many piano men are naturally predisposed to consider the sheet and book music department an unimportant tag-end admitted to the store in a moment of weakness...”⁸⁵ The cheapness of the commodity, hence the slimness of perceived profits, was only one of the many excuses offered. Retailers also complained about the uselessness of ordering many copies of the newest popular songs, since today’s greatest hit would soon be tomorrow’s unsellable stock.⁸⁶

Second, piano and organ sellers’ claims of expertise were somewhat deceptive. Sales agents might know a fair bit about the inner mechanical workings of a piano or organ, but that did not necessarily mean that they possessed musical skills. Mr. A.R. Blackburn, manager of the Nordheimer store in Toronto, constituted a rare example of a retailer who doubled as the accomplished organist at Holy Trinity Church.⁸⁷ A large

⁸⁴ “Says Mail Order Houses Were Allowed by Dealer to Cut in on Sales” *CMTJ* 16, no. 10 (March 1916): 51. For attempts to boost the small goods trade, see “Piano Sales Helped by having a Small Goods Department,” *CMTJ* 20, no. 1 (June 1920): 31; “‘On More Than One Occasion Lately I Have Urged Our Dealers to Put In a Stock of Small Goods’ Said a Piano Man to the Journal,” *CMTJ* 20, no. 11 (April 1920): 49-51.

⁸⁵ “Stinting the Sheet Music Department,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 4 (September 1913): 30.

⁸⁶ For some of the many articles about sheet music problems see: “The Sheet Music Business,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 2 (July 1913): 28; *CMTJ* 14, no. 7 (December 1913): 27; “Developing Canada’s Sheet and Book Music Trade,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 30; “Around the Sheet Music Counter,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 26-28; “The Sheet Music Department’s Prices,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 29; “Killing is Not the Solution,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 51; “Is the Music Entering Canada Duty Free in the Form of ‘Supplements’ in Monthly Magazines Fair Competition for the Canadian Trade?” *CMTJ* 15, no. 8 (January 1915): 43, 45.

⁸⁷ “Our Church Organs, Organists and Choirs,” *Musical Journal* 18 (June 1888): 84.

swath of retailers likely acquired some moderate skills in keyboard playing over the years. Others, however, could only fake their way through a couple of simple tunes for demonstration purposes.⁸⁸ Ernest Wright, the manufacturer and salesman from Strathroy, Ontario, was a man whose sense of showmanship far exceeded his meager technique. His daughter Mary remembered that she and her brothers “were all amused at Dad’s salesman tactics. He could not play the piano, but Mother had managed to teach him a few bars of one composition. He would sit down at the piano, start this piece with a flourish, like a true virtuoso and then trail off when he could go on no longer, but in a way which never revealed his limitations.”⁸⁹

The Customer is Always Right? Identity and the Retailer-Client Relationship

The retailer’s image of himself as an expert relied upon someone else in the complementary role of naïve recipient. The prospective piano or organ customer was often slotted into this position during such interactions. These customers tend to be shadowy figures in the archive, but by reading between the lines one may obtain a sense of not only who they were, but also the stereotypes they had to combat when trying to lay claim to an instrument of their own.

Retailers believed themselves superior in terms of technical knowledge of a keyboard, as well as aural perception of musical tone. Addison A. Pegg, from the Nordheimer Piano Company, observed that the majority of his clients could not

⁸⁸ At Willis & Co. of Montreal’s annual banquet of 1913, Mr. Willis gave a speech where he proclaimed that the ideal piano salesman should have a basic knowledge of how piano is constructed and “should be able to play a little.” See “Annual Banquet of Willis Staff,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 10 (March 1913): 57.

⁸⁹ Wright, *Zestful Lives*, 60.

distinguish an “artistic” piano from a merely “commercial” one.⁹⁰ Indeed, many assumed that the public’s primary consideration in buying an instrument was the external appearance of the case. The layman’s presumed ignorance became such a familiar trope that the Dougall Varnish Company of Montreal once used it as a selling point for its product: “After all, not many people are very good judges of tone. It takes an expert to detect the fine instruments underneath a poor or shabby finish. So the average buyer wisely nods his head when you talk about tone, and makes up his mind on what he can see.” Instrument producers and retailers were not entirely inaccurate in these assessments. Craig Roell argues that late nineteenth-century pianos did look, superficially at least, remarkably similar in sound and visual appearance. Some dealers could not even distinguish between models of a similar quality and price range.⁹¹ Even so, retailer connoisseurship was not confined to the merely technical qualities of sound production. Sellers further assumed that they possessed a finer musical appreciation than that of the general public. Some advocated subtly introducing the higher types of music to one’s customers, reasoning that it would foster a deeper, longer-lasting musical allegiance. Others simply accepted the need to cater to popular taste, however “banal and insipid.”⁹²

Needless to say, customers were not the willing dupes retailers imagined them to be. Many lacked familiarity with the mechanics of instrument construction, but this did not mean that they considered such matters unimportant. One journalist described some of the frustrations when trying to get a straight answer out of piano salesmen:

You are received with open arms at each place, and each dealer shows you what is without a doubt the best piano made. You believe it yourself, when he says it that

⁹⁰ “What’s in Vogue in Pianos,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 11 (April 1913): 49. See also “The Piano— Artistic and Commercial,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 7 (December 1912): 27-28.

⁹¹ Roell, *Piano in America*, 80.

⁹² “Sheet Music Man’s Ideas on Buying Novelties,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 10 (March 1915): 49.

way. Besides, he shows you an inferior piano that is just as good as the better one... But you'd be foolish to buy one of the cheaper ones. It is decidedly inferior, though it has the same workmanship and material and guarantee as the other. Don't waste your time trying to understand how this can be, but it must be.⁹³

Although all customers ran the risk of being pigeonholed, farmers, women and the working classes proved particularly vulnerable. Sales negotiations constituted delicate performances, and retailers wanted these scenes to proceed in a predictable fashion. Rural, gender, and class stereotypes offered a clumsy but effective method of classifying prospective customers. These categories, in turn, helped retailers assess which arguments would be most likely to succeed, and to anticipate any probable reactions or demurrals.

As previously mentioned, farmers emerged in the last two decades of the nineteenth century as the latest target market for keyboard instruments. Music retailers submitted numerous articles on the subject of farmers to the *Canadian Music Trades Journal*. Some framed their items as general advice pieces for dealing with country inhabitants. Other authors wrote in an anecdotal vein, with the aim of giving readers a smile and a laugh. In both types of writing, the farmer emerged as a blunt caricature. This stereotypical farmer was a wealthy yet miserly man who could easily afford a piano, yet recoiled from a purchase because he could not anticipate the aesthetic beauty that a musical instrument would bestow. He spoke in heavy country bumpkin dialect, and betrayed a childish wonder at the piano's advanced scientific mechanisms. Though not intelligent, he possessed cunning as he held on tight to his purse strings. Witness, for instance, the manner in which a Southwestern Ontario retailer related his encounter with one of these parsimonious sons of the soil:

"What d'ye want fur yon one,' queried the farmer singling out one of our real good instruments.

⁹³ "Buying a Piano," *CMTJ* (January 1913): 30.

I said ‘Four hundred and twenty-five.’ ‘O come off,’ said he. ‘I kin beat that by seventy-five to one hundred and fifty over at so-in-so’s. I’d hate to shake three hundred and fifty in yur face. Quit yur dickerin’ and spit out yur lowest figure — spot cash.”⁹⁴

Generally, only the repeated entreaties of a wife and daughter, aided by the persuasive wiles of the retailer, convinced the stereotypical farmer to surrender his pocketbook.⁹⁵

While paying lip service to the farmer’s economic prosperity, the slant grossly underestimated his levels of intellectual and aesthetic appreciation. Ontario agriculturalists in fact valued literary and cultural accomplishments.⁹⁶ It is also hard to imagine a farmer overwhelmed by the technology of a musical instrument, given that he worked with sophisticated farm machinery on a daily basis. Granted, not all of the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* readers would have taken these stories at face value. A few retailers, such as C.M. Kelly of Guelph, had been farmers themselves in their earlier days.⁹⁷ It was, however, rare to find a manufacturer such as J.M. Sherlock of London who could easily converse with agriculturalists at length about livestock, equipment, and crops.⁹⁸ Sherlock insisted that most salesmen misjudged the modern farmer’s ability to understand pianos and their pricing: “the farmer of to-day is not to be bulldozed into signing and order. His confidence has to be secured in a way that does not force a sale onto him.”⁹⁹ Sherlock likely represented a lone voice in the retail wilderness.

Farmer stories formed the core of a general depiction of rural people as quaint, old-fashioned philistines. One of the earliest issues of the *Canadian Music Trades*

⁹⁴ “A Sale Without Dropping in Price,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 24.

⁹⁵ For other examples see: “A Country Dealer’s Experience With Mail-Order Competition,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 37-41; “That Infernal Wart,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 3 (August 1918): 35.

⁹⁶ The *Farmer’s Advocate* contains numerous articles about art, literature, and contemporary events.

⁹⁷ *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 31.

⁹⁸ “Musical Instrument Display at London Exhibition,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 4 (September 1918): 74.

⁹⁹ *CMTJ* 16, no. 2 (July 1915): 56.

Journal featured a humorous story about a rural woman who insisted upon buying a “pianer” for her niece. Drawing upon stereotypes of older farmwomen as physically unattractive, the author described her as “a dumpy, sawed-off woman with a double chin and compressed lips” who tapped on the radiator with her umbrella in order to emphasize her guttural speech.¹⁰⁰ Her rural slang contrasted with the salesman’s elegant command of language. She trumpeted her faulty knowledge of music in a bid to ensure that the piano possessed the features she and her niece demanded. The depiction of the niece as a girl who loved to thump her piano further underlines the crude form of culture that one would presumably find in rural areas. In the end, the aunt proposed paying in “butter and eggs” and was predictably shocked to discover the instrument’s price of \$350. She stomped off saying that a \$35 bicycle would do just as nicely.¹⁰¹

What was the purpose of such hyperbolic depictions? On the one hand, the authors simply followed well-known popular literary conventions for depicting the clash of rural and urban cultures.¹⁰² On the other hand, the tradesmen offered a sympathetic portrayal of the piano seller’s burden. First, by mocking the cultural pretensions of rural customers, the text emphasizes the sophistication of music tradesmen. Such assurances of cultural superiority would have helped many a retailer brandish the servile exterior so necessary in a commercial universe where fistfuls of cash in a client’s hand exerted such

¹⁰⁰ M. Quad, “Buying a ‘Pianer,’” *CMTJ* 1, no. 6 (November 1900): 7. For examples of elder rural women’s supposed lack of physical beauty see Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 202-203.

¹⁰¹ Quad, “Buying a ‘Pianer,’” 7-8. This particular story has darker undertones with its reference to the entrance of cheaper leisure items into the market at the end of the nineteenth century. In England, music tradespeople became so infuriated by the bicycling craze of the 1890s that they penned diatribes against the item. See Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 201.

¹⁰² Writers could look, for example, to American author George W. Bagby’s “Jud Brownin Hears Ruby Play” for inspiration. This comic sketch of a rural man’s introduction to the great pianist Rubinstein became an instant hit when it first appeared in the 1870s. It remained popular for decades. See Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos*, 516-518.

a powerful claim. Moreover, while rural people were unfairly scapegoated, it does betray a wider truth that music retailers often had to sell beautiful instruments to clients who would not truly appreciate them. Finally, these writings represent an attempt to control and to make comprehensible a muddled modern world where not only urban capitalists but now farmers entered shops with full wallets and cultural ambitions to match.¹⁰³

The second sort of vulnerable customers were women. As the historian Joy Parr contends, consumption has traditionally been gendered a feminine, passive activity and one in which the presumably male retailer has been able to exert his persuasive authority.¹⁰⁴ The majority of music retailers were men, although some women did work as shop assistants or music demonstrators. Female shop workers generally, however, found themselves confined to the lighter tasks, such as tending the sheet music and player piano roll departments.¹⁰⁵ The gender hierarchy implicit in a male retailer / female consumer relationship underscored the buyer-seller negotiations at every point.¹⁰⁶ When women appear in the trades press, they are generally mocked for their supposed economic naïveté. Prescriptive discourse dictated that men engaged in worldly matters, while women ruled the realms of spirituality and emotion. Selling a piano to a man therefore involved appealing to his head, while selling to a woman involved appealing to her heart. G.D. Crain Jr., for instance, explained that when a married couple came into a shop, the man's presence simply helped seal the financial deal, while the woman exhibited interest in the musical instrument for its own sake. Crain argued that a woman would assume the most economically sensible arrangement to be a series of instalment payments with little

¹⁰³ Walden, *Becoming Modern*, 210.

¹⁰⁴ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁰⁵ "Women Sell Perforated Rolls," *CMTJ* 14, no. 2 (July 1913): 29.

¹⁰⁶ For the male retailer / female consumer dynamic see Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 93-94, 99, 129.

cash down. She would surely forget to calculate factors such as interest rates. Men, by contrast, would instantly recognize that the commercial deal best suited to both the retailer and the client was a full cash purchase or at least a strong initial down payment.¹⁰⁷ Another article entitled “Wives Who Are Busybodies in Business” mocked women who longed to get involved in their husband’s business affairs, assuming it derived from a love of meddling rather than intellectual curiosity: “Though by training and by nature they have no idea whatever of what’s best in such matters, they must have a finger in everything.”¹⁰⁸

Gender stereotypes likely influenced William Swinton in his negotiations with the Cook family over the purchase of a piano in 1906. Mrs. Cook had been the one to visit his shop, yet when Swinton wrote a letter with a revised price list he addressed Mr. Cook instead. The wording of the letter implies that Swinton laid greater store in the husband’s ability to comprehend money matters. Upon Mrs. Cook’s earlier visit Swinton had given her a price list “to make it easy for her to remember.” He added that by presenting an updated list he wanted “to make sure I have not confused her and to save misunderstanding.”¹⁰⁹ Certainly, there may have been other reasons for Swinton’s maneuver. Mrs. Cook may have been a trifle dim witted, or perhaps Swinton — having won over the wife — shifted the focus of his energies onto the husband. Still, contemporary gender discourse would have made it seem logical to talk financial terms with the male breadwinner. George Heintzman’s diaries support this perspective. Husbands and fathers usually made initial inquiries about an instrument, and then

¹⁰⁷ “When You Have Two to Convince,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 11 (April 1916): 23.

¹⁰⁸ “Wives Who Are Busybodies in Business,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 24.

¹⁰⁹ Swinton to Mr F. Cook, October 23, 1906, p. 267, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO.

returned with a female relative to test its tone. Having obtained the wife or daughter's approval of the keyboard's artistic merits, the man would then enter into negotiations.¹¹⁰

For Richer or for Poorer: Buying and Selling Under the Instalment Method

The final factor influencing the customer's relationship with dealers was one's economic standing. Pianos and organs were sizable purchases, so one would usually buy them on instalment plans. Once again the retailer, not the parent manufacturer, set the terms of payment. As one dealer expressed it: "Piano business is a sort of class business always. We go only after people who can afford pianos."¹¹¹ Sellers knew, however, that the keyboard's hefty price tag could be a significant drain on a family's resources. The wise retailer needed to assess his client's likely ability to follow up with instalment payments.

The ideal type of prospect was one like Mr. Barthwick of Toronto, a man willing to pay for an instrument upfront in cash.¹¹² Retailers also coveted men of prestige and influence, such as Mr. Angus McKay, a man whom William Swinton described as "in the employ of the Ontario Government and Gilt edged."¹¹³ Though McKay purchased his Heintzman piano on instalment, he provided a hefty down payment of \$75.00 and Swinton expressed no hesitation about any future ability to meet fee deadlines. A.M. Bond felt similarly comfortable endorsing Abraham Aaron, informing his suppliers that

¹¹⁰ George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, February 22, March 4, March 10, May 31, November 5, November 8, December 3, December 5, Folder 18, Theodore Heintzman Fonds, S171, TRL. Often, this practice was at the women's behest. Many wives did not feel comfortable making a financial decision of this magnitude without the permission of their husbands.

¹¹¹ "Piano Selling a Great Business" *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 23.

¹¹² George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, February 18, Folder 18, Theodore Heintzman Fonds, S171, TRL. See also entry for December 6.

¹¹³ Swinton to Heintzman & Co., December 2, 1898, pp. 41-42, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO. See also George Heintzman Daily Journal, 1887, November 12, where he noted regarding a Mr. Wilson "[I] will have to sell this man right, as he has great influence."

Aarron was “a jew, conducting a large tailoring business on Barton St, and owns considerable property, through investigation I find he is very cautious, prudent and fairly honest.”¹¹⁴ On rare occasions, a dealer trusted in ties of friendship. In 1899 Swinton’s old chum, Harry Swain, wrote to inquire about a piano. Swinton was only too glad to respond: “As regards terms. I dont [*sic*] like to mention any cast iron terms with you. [Y]ou know what would suit you and whatever you agree to do I know you will do it.”¹¹⁵

More commonly, however, dealers had to mediate the conflicting desire to secure a sale with the more pragmatic realization that one had to sell to a customer who would actually be able to pay. The *CMTJ* reminded its readership that while an initial cash deposit certainly brightened up one’s account book, a sale could prove a hefty liability if money was still owed on an instrument and a customer was not forthcoming.¹¹⁶ Therefore, class assumptions did underscore the customer screening process. An article in the *Journal*’s May 1913 issue complained: “instead of being interested in pianos there are people who should be buying themselves washing machines or paying their grocery debts, and these people always seem to find some dealer who is either misled by their statements, or is willing to take a costly chance.”¹¹⁷ This statement cannily ignored any culpability on the part of the sales agent. Moreover, the author made interesting suggestions of alternate purchases for the person of modest income. He did not recommend satisfying one’s artistic longings with a smaller, cheaper instrument such as a violin or a guitar. The image of the washing machine, in particular, located the working

¹¹⁴ A.M. Bond to Karn-Morris Piano & Organ Co., March 2, 1913, p. 58, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC.

¹¹⁵ Swinton to G.H. Swain Esq., March 24, 1899, pp. 53-54, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Switky, “Handling Collections of Instalment Accounts,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 37, 39. See also “Avoid the Lame Ducks,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 23.

¹¹⁷ “Neglect of Collections,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 31.

classes squarely within a world of menial activity. Another illuminating statement comes from the November 1914 issue: “Pianos are too costly and the cost of selling them is too great to have them get into the hands of people who not only abuse and cause damage to the article, but are hopelessly incompetent to make regular payments.”¹¹⁸ The presumed linkage between one’s ability to pay and one’s ability to take proper care of a piano is significant. It shores up stereotypes of a rough working-class culture where vulgar maidens thump the keyboard, as if subtlety and delicacy of touch constituted the unique preserve of the genteel classes.

In 1898 a farmer named Samuel Taylor decided to purchase a high quality second-hand square piano from William Swinton for \$175.00. Taylor agreed to pay \$20.00 up front and then \$25.00 every six months on instalments. Swinton immediately wrote the Heintzman manufacturing company to explain the intricacies of the situation:

They are Farmers and more convenient to pay this way[.] I left it over until I got your approvall [*sic*] and I give you an idea of what kind of people they are and leave it to yourselves if you care to take the sale[.] They are Farmers I think they generally pay for what they get but are slow and might want continually pressing for prompt payments. They assure me that they will have no difficulty in making payments as stated. If I had a number of S-H [second hand] Pianos on hand I would risk it myself ... and they would make payments to you more promptly than they would to me.

Write your letter so that I can read it to them and I think I would mention that it is usual for the cash payment to accompany the order ...¹¹⁹

This letter is intriguing in that Swinton offered his assurances on behalf of the farming family, yet he still wanted the manufacturer to bear the brunt of the loan repayment.

Swinton’s request to have the letter written so that he could read it aloud to Mr. Taylor

¹¹⁸ “Scrutinize the Customer,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 23.

¹¹⁹ Swinton to Heintzman & Co., June 23, 1898, p. 9. Swinton sent another letter following up on his inquiries: Samuel Taylor possessed 100 acres, half of which was mortgaged. See Swinton to Heintzman & Co., June 28, 1898, p. 10, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907.

reveals much about the difficulties of doing business in a small community. Having a parent agency like Heintzman responsible for demanding payments represented a preferred alternative to the embarrassment of hounding one's neighbours for money in one's own name. A.M. Bond's correspondence with the Karn-Morris Piano and Organ manufacturers reinforces this impression. In November 1912, he asked the company to pen individual letters to six customers who had thus far eluded his attempts to secure payment. A few weeks later, he wrote Karn-Morris with the happy news that the letters had been fairly successful in garnering some sort of reply. One customer in particular had decided to relinquish the piano and Bond "told him I would write my firm about the matter. I trust you will write him a letter that will show him *business is business*."¹²⁰

Polite reminders, if unheeded, would inevitably give way to stern warnings and in extreme circumstances the repossession of an instrument. It is difficult to tell exactly how many customers fell behind with their instalment payments, and of these individuals how many eventually had to forfeit their keyboard. A music dealer from Western Canada estimated the figure of late payments at 10% in May 1920, but this was more of a general impression than a precise calculation.¹²¹ The rate could ebb and flow, depending on wider economic circumstances or competing consumer distractions. In early September of 1913, Bond admitted: "the Hamilton Centennial has put not only collections behind but to use a vulgar term it has put the city on the bum financially."¹²² Bond did not exaggerate in his appraisal: between February 1912 and November 1913, he recorded no less than

¹²⁰ A.M. Bond to Karn-Morris Piano & Organ Co., November 25, 1912, p. 44; Bond to Karn-Morris, December 12, 1912, p. 45, both in Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC. Emphasis in original.

¹²¹ "Concentrate on the 10 per Cent," *CMTJ* 20, no. 12 (May 1920): 46.

¹²² A.M. Bond to Karn-Morris, September 5, 1913, p. 93, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC.

seven reposessions. Sometimes the same instrument made the rounds from one customer to another in cycles of repossession, as was the case when a piano originally belonging to Mrs. George Dickens came to Mr. George Summers only to be later confiscated and sold to Mr. George Brions. Even when recalcitrant clients formed a minority, the level of worry and discomfort they caused music dealers far exceeded their actual numbers. If the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* is to be believed, dealers in the smaller communities felt particularly uncomfortable taking a forceful stance. In the closely-knit town or village, the clients they pressed may have been the village grocer, the local schoolteacher or a family friend. One author peevishly complained that in cases of instrument repossession, fellow villagers tended to side with the poor family and considered the dealer as the villain akin to a rent collector.¹²³ Nevertheless, this account overlooks the perspective of the customer. Being the recipient of neighbourly pity could hardly atone for the embarrassment of having the bailiff haul away one's instrument in full public view. As Andrew Heinze has shown for early twentieth-century New York's Jewish tenements, the arrival of a piano to a neighbourhood signaled nothing less than a "social event." Crowds of onlookers flocked to witness the triumphal procession move through the streets.¹²⁴ Repossession cruelly re-enacted these public ceremonies of private ownership in reverse. Pianos were simply too heavy to be spirited away quietly in the night; when the authorities took an instrument, everyone would have known about it.

Swinton and Bond's letter books confirm the awkwardness both parties faced when business relationships began to crumble. Swinton had spent years building up a

¹²³ "Cash or Bankable Paper in Farming Districts," *CMTJ* 16, no. 5 (October 1915): 20. See also "Taking a Firm Stand on Collections," *CMTJ* 14, no. 9 (February 1914): 23; "Collecting Instalment [*sic*] Accounts," *CMTJ* 14, no. 1 (June 1913): 27.

¹²⁴ Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 143.

reputation in Orillia, and he went out of his way to adopt a sympathetic stance towards his clients. He frequently explained that as a humble merchant his own financial means were limited, and that sheer necessity compelled him to seek overdue payments. Sometimes he even struck a compromise by negating some or all of the interest charges in return for an immediate balance payment.¹²⁵ When pressing the more obstinate clients, he made sure to position himself as their last best source of empathy before surrendering the account to the impersonal court system.¹²⁶ It also appears that Swinton gave his clients a large margin of leeway before actually beginning proceedings to press charges. For instance, by July 1906 he had sent G.W. Barlett five or six letters demanding the balance owing on an instrument purchased four-and-a-half years earlier.¹²⁷

Sometimes, Swinton's displays of sympathy constituted downright deception. In 1898, Mr. C.C. Pilkey begged Swinton to intervene on his behalf with the Bell Piano and Organ Company. Pilkey had bought an organ some years earlier and when he could not pay the remaining balance of \$55.00, the Bell Company informed him that the bailiff would confiscate the instrument. Swinton promised to attend to the matter, but his communication with the Bell Company did not exactly demonstrate unequivocal support:

Mr Pilkey wishes me to write to say he will not be able to raise the money, but promises faithfully to pay over to me \$5.00 every month until it is paid up. Personally I would not credit him \$5.00 but as the organ is here and the fact is that he has been pressed so tight on this occasion he might pay up promptly he says he will let everything else go and meet the payment as stated. I would not interfere in the matter if Pilkey had not wished me to do so but I cannot [*sic*] affor[d] to have

¹²⁵ Swinton to Andrew Tucker, October 13, 1903, p. 188; Swinton to Tucker, October 17, 1903, p. 189; Swinton to F.L. McNab, November 21, 1904, p. 228; Swinton to McNab April 22, 1905, p. 236, William Swinton Business Papers Letterbook, 1898-1907, Envelope F4290-1-0-1, William Swinton Fonds, F4290, AO.

¹²⁶ Swinton to George W. Bartlett, July 1, 1902, p.158; Swinton to Tucker, October 13, 1903, p. 188; Swinton to Bartlett, January 15, 1906, p. 240.

¹²⁷ Swinton to Bartlett, July 16, 1906, p. 253.

him against me as he is a general repairer. [H]e knows I represent the Bell, and expects me to do something for him.¹²⁸

Swinton's letter reveals a muddle of conflicting sentiments. He expresses sympathy for his cash-strapped acquaintance, and attests that Pilkey has honourable intentions. Swinton also acknowledges the ties of obligation that bind him to Pilkey. This is not only because Pilkey is the local repairman. The phrase "he expects me to do something for him" implies some sort of existing business or social relationship between the two men, one that gave Pilkey some degree of leverage. Swinton's assessment of the repairer's likelihood of eventually paying up is particularly complex. He is willing to give Pilkey the benefit of the doubt, but admits that he would not stake any of his own money on it. In the end, Swinton advocates neither for nor against the customer and instead leaves it up to the Bell representatives to decide. The letter further demonstrates that having the manufacturer take the responsibility of ensuring payment was not always a foolproof method of avoiding personal appeals. Pilkey knew that Swinton sold instruments for Bell. Indeed, having such threats come from a large company likely encouraged his belief that it would be wise to seek out a familiar face to advocate on his behalf.

Customers in straitened circumstances therefore exhibited a degree of agency when facing off against irritable music tradesmen waiting to be paid. In smaller communities, especially, they could draw upon the locality's closely woven networks. They may have called in a favour, reminded the retailer of ties of obligation, appealed to his pity, or even capitalized off his embarrassment by ignoring his summons. In 1913, for instance, a Mr. Beaverstock refused to submit his next instalment payment until a representative from Bond Brothers came round to tune his piano as originally

¹²⁸ Swinton to Bell Organ & Piano Co., September 13, 1898, p. 21.

promised.¹²⁹ Another customer, Mr. S. Cobourne, saw an advantage when a recuperating Mr. Bond left an assistant named A.E. Wright in charge of the business for a few months. When the assistant came knocking for collection money, Mr. Cobourne disavowed all knowledge of a transaction. Subsequent communication with the Karn-Morris Company revealed the tale to be a falsehood. A disillusioned Wright made plans to repossess the piano, only to find himself stymied by Cobourne's unavailability. Cobourne claimed to be home only on Sundays, so it took a nearly a month to repossess the piano.¹³⁰

As the above example indicates, many ingenious maneuvers ended up merely delaying the inevitable. Moreover, not all financially strapped customers exerted the same degree of leverage. Socially marginalized groups were particularly vulnerable, as shown in a rare recorded instance of a piano repossession involving a member of the First Nations during the spring of 1900. John Chechock, a prominent and eloquent member of the Mississauga Band had experienced a recent change in fortunes. He could no longer honour the lien notes that his daughter held on a R.S. Williams & Sons piano. When the manufacturer threatened repossession, Chechock wrote to a lawyer and later to the local Hagersville Indian Agent for advice. Betraying a keen awareness of his supposedly protected status as ward of the state, he reasoned:

I am well aware that an Indian can be sued but *his* goods cannot be seized under an execution. I am at a loss however to know what the status of my daughter is under those lien notes. If she is not the owner then I think another question arises as to the right of the Manufacturer of the Piano to remove *his* piano without repaying and returning the money and [older] instrument obtained from my

¹²⁹ A.E. Wright to Karn-Morris, July 14, 1913, p. 80, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC.

¹³⁰ A.E. Wright to Karn-Morris, July 2, 1913, p. 78; Wright to Karn-Morris, July 5, 1913, p. 79; A.E. Wright to Karn-Morris, July 27, 1913, p. 81, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913.

daughter she being recognized in law as an infant, and the Vendor being well aware of the fact[.]”¹³¹

In other words, if his daughter was indeed the owner of the piano, then the manufacturer could not forcibly seize it. If the manufacturer was considered the owner until full payment had been made, then there was nothing to prevent the repossession. Chechok simply expected reimbursement for the earlier piano his daughter had traded towards the cost of a new one, as well as the partial cash payments made thus far. Despite a sympathetic endorsement from the local Indian Agent, Ottawa’s Department of Indian Affairs refused to intervene. The Department insisted that it remained a matter for Chechok and his lawyer and that the only way of deciding whether the Indian Act applied in such an instance would be to test the case in the courts. The correspondence ceased after this; in all probability, Chechok lacked the funds to pursue the recommended legal action.¹³²

On rare occasions, customer resistance escalated into downright conflict. Some customers simply fled town without paying the balance. Mr. A.S. Taylor of Galt faced this challenging situation when his client, Mrs. Heaps, already behind on her instalment payments, moved to Toronto without settling her account in full. After five months he managed to trace her to a new address. Mrs. Heaps did not give up without a fight, even when movers arrived to repossess the piano. First, she locked the door against them, only to have it forced open. Perhaps aware that her gender gave her some privileges of

¹³¹ John Chechok to Hugh Stewart Esq. (Indian Agent), May 11, 1900, Correspondence Regarding Seizure of a Piano Sold to Fannie (Chechok) Johnson by R.S. Williams and Son Ltd., File 222, 320, Volume 3020, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, LAC. Emphasis in original.

¹³² Hugh Stewart to Secretary Department of Indian Affairs, May 12, 1900; Department of Indian Affairs Memorandum, May 18, 1900; Hugh Stewart to Secretary Department of Indian Affairs, May 28, 1900; Hugh Stewart to Secretary Department of Indian Affairs, June 28, 1900; Department of Indian Affairs Memorandum, June 30, 1900; J.M. McLean to Hugh Stewart, July 6, 1900, Correspondence Regarding Seizure of a Piano Sold to Fannie (Chechok) Johnson by R.S. Williams and Son Ltd.

protection, she caused a great commotion by trying to block their way to the piano. When that failed, she collapsed in either a real or a staged faint. Mr. Taylor and his men eventually succeeded in taking the piano, but Mrs. Heaps was still not vanquished. She proceeded to sue Mr. Taylor for assault, a charge he vehemently denied. The Toronto jury nevertheless found him guilty and fined him a sum of \$5.00.¹³³

A.M. Bond met with a similar dramatic incident in August 1912 when he tried to collect a \$20.00 instalment payment on a piano held by a lawyer named George Alexander. According to Bond's account, "I was no sooner inside his apartment when he slammed the door shut locking me in, he struck me over the head with a club knocking me unconscious and then punched me many times, also tried to gouge my eyes out with his fingers. He then unlocked the door and dragged me to the stairway trying to throw me down. I hung on, he punching me all the way down the stairs and out onto the sidewalk where I was able to secure three witnesses..."¹³⁴ Some days later, Bond continued his diatribe against Alexander, whose crimes apparently included the improper servicing of the disputed piano. In doing so, Bond placed his finger on the crux of the problem: "The piano does not belong to Alexander till it is paid for, what right has he to go and ... to tamper with what does not belong to him?"¹³⁵ The thorny issue of ownership may have been clear to Bond and his fellow piano dealers, but it is questionable whether the bulk of piano purchasers understood it precisely that way. Status-conscious families, proudly wielding the instrument as the crowning glory of their parlours, would not have internalized the notion that the piano was not yet truly theirs.

¹³³ "Galt Piano Man Accused of Assault in Toronto," *CMTJ* 14, no. 5 (October 1914): 45.

¹³⁴ Bond to Karn-Morris, August 10, 1912, pp. 28-29, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913, MG 28 III 28, LAC.

¹³⁵ Bond to Karn-Morris, August 20, 1912, p. 31, Letter Book, Volume 1, Bond Brothers Fonds 1912-1913.

In sum, the musical retailer and customer relationship was a complex, dynamic one that depended heavily upon factors such as the identity of the client, the size of the community, and the specific arrangements for payment. Purchasing a piano or organ was hardly a straightforward process. Competition could be fierce, and prices were not only substantial but highly malleable. Retailers guarded the fortress of these musical idols, dropping honeyed phrases to encourage a purchase while simultaneously sizing-up the prospective client's economic and cultural standing.¹³⁶ The instalment purchase system made pianos and organs more accessible to those of modest incomes, but financial hardship could easily reveal the sweet promise of ownership to be a mere illusion. At the same time, customers knew how to exploit the various community ties that bound themselves and the retailers together. Clients could easily take their business elsewhere, or threaten to do so in the hope of forcing the retailer's hand. Even those hard pressed to find the money for instalment payments had methods of resistance at their disposal. The consumer-retailer relationship therefore involved constant negotiation on either side. Each party tried to calibrate how much he or she could push to his or her advantage before the risk of dissolving the relationship. A breakdown of business relations was possible in desperate situations, invariably followed by unpleasant consequences for both.

All in all, this was a relationship framed by notions of expertise. Retailers designed their spaces, explained their wares, offered their services, and evaluated their clients secure in the belief that they held valuable knowledge not possessed by the average person. Regardless of whether a client accepted or resisted these knowledge claims, notions of expertise appeared at every turn.

¹³⁶ Arthur Loesser calls the piano a musical idol during this period. See *Men, Women, and Pianos*, 236, 391.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESCRIPTION AND PRACTICE: DOMESTIC MUSIC IN THE HOME

Sarah Jeannette Duncan's iconic Canadian novel *The Imperialist* (1904) features two contrasting female characters living in the town of Elgin, Ontario. The first is the "bookish and unconventional" Advena Murchison who so dislikes the prospect of piano lessons that she climbs upon the roof, drawing the ladder after her, when her music teacher comes calling.¹ The other, Dora Milburn, is a beautiful but vapid young woman who enchants visitors by playing pretty tunes on the family piano.² Duncan's treatment of domestic musicianship here is deliberate. The 'musical daughter' trope had become such a familiar ideal by Duncan's time that she employed it as a shorthand way of showing adherence or resistance to the *status quo*. Indeed, turn-of-the-twentieth-century society held very definite views about who should play music, for what purpose, and in what sort of setting. Musical activity was ostensibly a leisure pursuit, offering both musician and

¹ Sarah Jeannette Duncan, *The Imperialist*, New Canadian Library Edition Series, ed. David Staines (1904; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

² *Ibid.*, 56.

listeners an escape to a higher realm of aesthetic beauty. This chapter will argue, however, that musical activity was a loaded practice, deeply imbued in earthly discourses of cultural refinement, familial harmony, and female domesticity. It will begin by probing prescriptive representations of music making, as articulated in advice literature of the day. It will conclude by considering the ways in which individuals and families negotiated these ideals on a daily basis, using letters, diaries, and memoirs.

Domestic music making has inspired its fair share of caricature, at least partly due to its association with women and amateurs. As a feminized pursuit, it has become saddled with the attendant vices of the female ‘Other,’ such as superficiality, vanity, and mindless consumption. As an amateur activity, it has appeared mawkish and bumbling by comparison with the smooth, superior musicianship of professionals.³ The following discussion tries to restore domestic music making to its legitimate (though not unproblematic) place as an expression of popular musical activity. It endeavours to overturn hierarchical assumptions of male over female, professional over amateur, urban over rural, and bourgeois over worker, while still recognizing the influence of asymmetrical power relationships. This chapter focuses upon music making as an activity, and it considers the significance of setting, performers, and bodily action.

³ See Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) for a discussion of how dichotomous notions of amateur vs. professional history have resulted in the marginalization of nineteenth-century traditions of amateur history writing. Wright shows the gendered impact of this shift, with men exerting a monopoly on professional knowledge and power.

“Instruments of the Cultured”: Musical Literacy as a Discourse of Refinement

Cultural advocates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries firmly believed that music possessed the power to elevate the mind and the soul. A musical person supposedly exhibited a greater sensitivity to art, beauty, and religion, in addition to an improved capacity for abstract thinking. Contemporaries used the terms ‘cultured’ and ‘refined’ to describe people belonging to this exalted circle, terms all the more appealing because of their vague relationship to economic notions of class. On the one hand, music’s uplifting properties offered listeners a means of transcending the limitations of their material circumstances. As music became an increasingly affordable luxury, even modest families could use it to constitute themselves imaginatively in the ranks of the aesthetically elect. For such practitioners, the notion that culture represented a state of mind rather than the state of one’s pocketbook would have been distinctly appealing.

On the other hand, those who considered themselves ‘cultured’ and ‘refined’ could easily exploit the term’s class connotations in order to enhance their own social status. Musical instruments and lessons may have been relatively more affordable, but they still represented a substantial investment.⁴ Thus, a musically proficient family showed that it possessed both the funds to devote to leisure pursuits and the cultural intelligence to value such activities. While contemporaries harboured a (sometimes patronizing) respect for cheaper instruments such as the harmonica and the banjo, by and large, they associated home music with the hefty parlour organ or piano. In other words,

⁴ See Chapter Two for price estimates for instruments, and Chapters Four and Five for the price of music lessons.

music offered its disciples a conduit to an imagined community of the cultured and refined, where the policy of admittance always conveniently included themselves.⁵

A 1906 essay competition on music in the *Farmer's Advocate* of London, Ontario, encapsulates the ambiguous relationship between refinement and economic class. It also demonstrates how rural women rhetorically deployed this ambivalence to their advantage. The prize-winning submission came from M.W. Breese of Grey County, who observed that: “we find the love of music is being developed on every side. From this refinement, others put forth shoots; for instance, the simple beautifying of the home inside and out, the cultivation of flowers, etc., and so those shoots gradually strengthen and twine around our country homes, till in no place can they be surpassed for beauty and refinement.”⁶ Breese employed an organic metaphor to position musical appreciation as the seed of wider aesthetic understanding. Her definition of the term refinement did not hinge upon ostentatious possessions. Rather, it turned on “simple” means of decoration, accessible to all. It asserted rural inhabitants’ admission to the ranks of the ‘cultured’ in spite of their physical and economic distance from the urban elite. Breese’s comment on the peerless beauty of country homes moreover made a subtle dig at urban snobbery, as if to inform city dwellers that they did not have a monopoly on refinement. Therefore, the discourse of musical awareness offered Breese the opportunity to pursue aesthetic development from a modest farmhouse, while also satisfying more earthly ambitions to perceive herself on a foot of social equality with urban elites.

⁵ The term ‘imagined communities’ derives from Benedict Anderson’s now classic text *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

⁶ M.W. Breese, “Essay on Music,” *Farmer's Advocate*, June 7, 1906, p. 929. I am assuming that Breese was a woman, since the essay comes from the women’s pages of the paper and discusses domestic furnishings.

The other prizewinner, Mary James of York County, proved even more direct in stating her belief that “ennobling and elevating” musical appreciation straddled the economic divide. “Taking it from a mercenary point of view,” James argued, “music should, in no sense, be considered as being confined to the homes of the rich. It is a luxury no longer; it is a necessity in these days. If the parents make an effort to secure the acquirement of music for their children ... the money that would otherwise be foolishly spent will be utilized in beautifying the home.”⁷ James’ socially progressive views on class were tempered by her assumption that musically solicitous parents already possessed a discretionary sum to devote to leisure purposes. Her musical democracy rested upon decidedly bourgeois foundations, ignoring the possibility that a family might need to scrimp and save for an instrument and lessons.

As the most expensive yet also the most widely practiced instrument, the piano played a crucial role in the discourse of musical refinement.⁸ The image of the piano was in fact so prevalent that contemporary texts frequently betray slippage between discussions of domestic music in general and the piano in particular. Advertisements for pianos therefore provide another key source for locating the ambiguous but nonetheless integral link between refinement and class. The ambivalence of the terms refinement and culture proved particularly useful in attempts to market pianos as both economically accessible and socially pretentious.

⁷ Mary James, “Essay on Music,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, June 7, 1906, p. 929. See also Theresa, “When Mary Wrote Me About Music This is the Letter I Sent Her,” *Everywoman’s World* (May 1916): 32, particularly the line “If a room had nothing in it but a table, a few chairs and a piano, that room would have a refined atmosphere because it would suggest art.”

⁸ For the dominance of the piano see “Canada is Particularly Lacking in the Variety of Musical Instruments Used in the Home,” *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 18, no. 9 (February 1918): 69.

As previously mentioned, pianos were becoming increasingly affordable by the last decade of the nineteenth century and had begun to permeate as far as the upper echelons of the working classes. Though the keyboard remained an important symbol of middle-class respectability, the working-class consumers who bought a piano in the hopes of attaining or imitating this respectability unconsciously “tested the nature, value, and durability of [these] cultural identities.”⁹ In other words, the growing ubiquity of the piano threatened to undermine the instrument’s traditional role as a Victorian status symbol. This altered cultural landscape did not escape the notice of elites, who deplored the notion of such highly prized instruments gracing the homes of ordinary people. The piano industry responded with high-end art pianos, festooned with painted designs and carvings designed to distinguish visually the elite’s chosen instruments from those of the other ranks.¹⁰ What about those pianos aimed at the middling and working classes? How did advertisers negotiate the unpalatable truth that purchasing a piano was becoming less and less an exclusive rite? James Parakilas and Craig Roell’s otherwise perceptive analyses of the *fin-de-siècle* “democratization” of the pianoforte underestimate the degree to which piano advertisers continued to push traditional Victorian associations of prestige. They correctly observe that advertisements started to employ the egalitarian rhetoric of music being a necessary part of every happy home.¹¹ Paradoxically, in Canada at least, this did not entail abandoning the lucrative appeal to social ambition. Organs and especially pianos were therefore advertised as both prestigious and accessible. One could, in other words, have one’s cake and eat it too.

⁹ James Parakilas and Atsuko Hirai, “1870s to 1920s: The World’s the Limit,” in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 226.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹¹ Parakilas and Hirai, “The World’s the Limit,” 231; Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890 – 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), ch. 2.

Terms such as culture and refinement were so useful to advertisers because they created the impression of superiority without directly referencing wealth. Copywriters relentlessly exploited consumers' imagined social pretensions while at the same time ensuring that the prescriptive ideal did not prove too economically intimidating. Mason & Risch, for instance, employed the tag line "the instruments of the cultured" numerous times during the late 1890s. One advertisement appearing in the November 1896 issue of the *Canadian Magazine* elaborated by noting that the company's pianos graced the nation's top musical conservatories as well as "the homes of the most refined and cultured people throughout the land."¹² The latter included not only university presidents but also doctors and members of the clergy. This wide definition of refined persons, ranging from the highest echelons to the more middling professional ranks, gives a subtle nod to the piano's growing democratization. The university president and the music conservatories function as symbols of elitism while the clergymen and the doctors assure the reader that this dream of prestige does not lie beyond his or her grasp.

Different advertisements placed varying degrees of emphasis upon these twin pillars of eminence and accessibility. The Wright Piano Company, for instance, preferred to focus upon the second theme by placing prominence in a comforting local context: "Every town has its prominent citizens whose opinions on all subjects carry weight with the mass. Your town has its men and women whose taste in art, in literature, in music is regarded as correct ..."¹³ Other companies pursued the more fantastic, romantic elements of an imagined elite lifestyle. While this strategy would have appealed to social climbers, the content was just fictional enough to avoid intimidating the more modest consumer.

¹² *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 8, no. 1 (November 1896): xlv.

¹³ *CMTJ* 14, no. 3 (August 1913): 6.

The Newcombe Company described its wares as “The Aristocracy of Musical Instrument,” evoking an image of nobility comfortably distant from the reality of non-titled Canadian society.¹⁴ Gourlay, Winter & Leeming exploited the courtly myth by dubbing its pianos “the highest and noblest form of musical instruments the world has known.”¹⁵ The image that accompanied the ad showed a medieval man and woman reading under a tree in a pastoral setting, in the manner of a pre-Raphaelite depiction.

Granted, some advertisements leaned perilously close to socio-economic descriptors. The Bell Organ and Piano Company of Guelph, for example, trumpeted its pianos as “Canada’s High-Class Instruments.”¹⁶ A few other advertisements focused solely on the piano’s modest instalment price. In the spring of 1909, R.S. Williams & Company used the tag line “Buy a New Scale Williams Piano And Pay For It As it Suits Your Convenience.” The ad went on to inform the reader that “Instead of ‘saving up to buy a piano,’ put your savings in the piano itself, and have the enjoyment of the piano at home all the time you are paying for it.”¹⁷ Even Mason & Risch temporarily abandoned its pianos-of-the-cultured line to proclaim: “Fifteen Dollars Cash [down payment] Will Put This Piano in Your Home.”¹⁸ These forms of “bargain advertising”, however, drew the ire of many members of the piano industry. As the editor of the *Musical Courier Extra* astutely observed: “The placing of a piano in the home is an ambition to indicate prosperity. If the impression is created that any one can own a piano or player, then there is nothing in this thing of ambition to show the neighbors that there is at least some

¹⁴ *CMTJ* 13, no. 7 (December 1912): 4.

¹⁵ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 21, no. 3 (July 1903): 72.

¹⁶ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 22, no. 4 (February 1904): back cover.

¹⁷ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 32, no. 5 (March 1909): 73.

¹⁸ *Saturday Night*, February 28, 1914, p. 7.

prosperity in the money-making of the head of the house.”¹⁹ Consequently, advertisements preferred to invoke the discourse of refinement as a means of negotiating between these two poles. A 1910 advertisement for Heintzman asserted that: “Heintzman & Co. is the choice of the cognoscenti the world over, treasured as one of the most precious Household Gods, a necessary essential of the refined home. Its very possession puts the seal of supreme approval upon the musical taste of its owner, for it denotes the highest degree of culture and musical education.”²⁰ Terms such as ‘precious,’ ‘seal of supreme approval’ and ‘education’ convey impressions of prestige. In particular, the Italian term ‘cognoscenti’ gives the text a cosmopolitan air and flatters the readers by assuming that they understood the word’s meaning. The phrase ‘necessary essential,’ meanwhile offers a broader appeal. Even the notion that one could attain the summits of society by consumption alone denoted a new style of therapeutic mass advertising born during the consumer revolution of the late nineteenth century.²¹

In sum, the discourse of culture/refinement proved successful because it harnessed contemporaries’ social and artistic ambitions while remaining conveniently vague about the boundaries of class. A member of Toronto’s uppermost elite could easily imagine the ranks of the cultured as a rarefied circle of his or her own social acquaintance. Yet somehow farm wives and other humbler practitioners imagined that culture and refinement were valuable to and attainable by themselves. If culture was a state of the mind, then belief and honest effort were all that were required to effect a glorious transformation in one’s own eyes. Nonetheless, the acceleration of capitalist

¹⁹ “More About Pianos vs. Talking Machines,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 12 (May 1916): 21. Reprinted from the *Musical Courier Extra*. See also Roell, *Piano in America*, 142.

²⁰ Untitled booklet, February 1910, p. 1420, Envelope 8, Box 3, Pringle Papers, HPL.

²¹ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 69.

production meant that instrument manufacturers and retailers were always on hand to ensure that ideas of musical effort increasingly hinged upon consumption.

Spaces for Performance: Domestic Music and the Cultural Politics of the Parlour

Another characteristic of the texts on music in the home is the extent to which such discussions invoked the cultural politics of domestic space. The *Farmer's Advocate* essays in the preceding section vividly illustrate this phenomenon. Both M.W. Breese and Mary James drew explicit links between music and beautified homes. Spatial awareness also permeated the editor's short introduction to the two essays: "We think the point is well put that music in the home tends to create outshoots of refinement in other directions. Put a piano in a home, and see how soon other things are made to 'correspond' with it..."²² The last sentence may be interpreted on two levels. First, one may read it in a literal sense whereby the presence of a beautiful piano leads to a harmonious decoration aesthetic. Second, one may read it in terms of the family's leisure activities altering due to the piano's beneficial influence. These two interpretations are not unrelated, for as the scholar Andrea Tange asserts, the physical and social meanings of spaces mutually reinforce each other.²³ Victorians in particular invested spaces, and the furniture within them, with considerable symbolic value.²⁴

²² "Our Music Competition," *Farmer's Advocate*, June 7, 1906, p. 929.

²³ Andrea Kaston Tange, *Architectural Identities: Domesticity, Literature, and the Victorian Middle Classes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 15.

²⁴ Karen Halttunen, "From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 189; Tange, *Architectural Identities*, 76.

More particularly, contemporaries positioned musical objects and musical practitioners in relation to the parlour. Again, the *Farmer's Advocate* home columns are instructive on this point. When asked for a description of the ideal farm home, a rural woman who merely styled herself “A Farmer’s Wife” submitted the following:

My Ideal of a farm home is a small, convenient kitchen, a large, airy dining-room ... and a good-sized parlor, with a good Brussels or Wilton carpet and a suite of upholstered furniture, with not too much bric-a-brac, some nice cushions and pictures, and a musical instrument – a piano, if possible – for, as you know, some of our farmers’ daughters and sons too make very good musicians. And who can enjoy a good comfortable room and music better than a farmer, who comes in tired and hot from his work in the fields and dons slippers and dressing-gown.²⁵

The author’s train of thought flows seamlessly from the physical characteristics of the parlour space to the social activities taking place within it. Proper furnishings provide a leisured atmosphere conducive to the production and reception of music. According to the text’s logic, it is unimaginable that a family of music-lovers could be so aesthetically and socially insensible as to neglect their parlour’s physical appearance. Musical activity, meanwhile, represents an active manifestation of gentility, complementing the messages radiated by the room’s material features.

As Katherine Grier argues, the Janus-faced Victorian parlour simultaneously symbolized a private space of retreat as well as a public showroom for a household’s pretensions to respectability.²⁶ Ostensibly a room for recreation and familial interaction, the parlour needed to portray the impression of bourgeois comfort. Musical objects such as instruments, stands, and sheet music provided physical relics of leisured, culturally improving activities. While a solitary musician was commendable, the preference was for

²⁵ “Inglennook Chats,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, January 14, 1904, p. 68.

²⁶ Katherine C. Grier, *Culture & Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Rochester, NY: The Strong Museum, 1988), 1-2. See also Tange, *Architectural Identities*, 19, 64; Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 153.

the involvement of multiple family members either as performers or as listeners. Participatory forms of musical activity would, its pundits believed, teach important lessons in familial bonding. As Mrs. Richard May of Collingwood Mountain, Ontario, observed in 1885: “I have heard it said that a singing family is always a happy family, and I think there is never any want of affection in a family where young and old try to make home happy in the evenings by their combined performance, their skillful blending of voices and instruments.”²⁷ The historian Andrew Heinze argues that the notion of piano playing as a ritual of family togetherness proved particularly appealing to early twentieth-century Jewish immigrants. For these newcomers, the piano stood as an antidote to the centrifugal forces threatening to pry them apart, such as the absence of loved ones left in the Old Country, the stress of adapting to new lives, and generational conflicts between parents and their more acculturated offspring.²⁸

By the same token, musical objects and activities contributed to the antithetical notion of the parlour as the showroom for visitors. On a practical level, the room displayed a family’s economic prosperity, decorating sensibilities, and cultural pretensions. On a symbolic level, it operated as an idealized microcosm of the public sphere it supposedly eschewed. Grier observes that furnishings, textiles, and other objects offered distilled representations of the best and brightest things the public world had to offer.²⁹ A viewer could consult the mundane parlour objects to derive important lessons on broader themes such as religion, aesthetics, empire, and industrial innovation.

²⁷ Mrs. Richard May, “Music and its Influence,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, February 1885, p. 53.

²⁸ Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 133-134.

²⁹ Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 88-89.

Curiously, the historiography of parlour spaces is silent about the symbolic contributions of musical instruments. At most, historians mention the piano as a significant piece of parlour furniture, ignoring its heightened cultural capital as a means of producing music.³⁰ Contemporaries, by contrast, were well aware of the distinction between domestic object and musical instrument. An advertisement for Gourlay Pianos, for example, admonished readers that: “It is a poor way to value a piano as a decorative piece of furniture ... Such noble instruments as the Gourlay Pianos are designed for higher purposes.”³¹ The scores of purchasers who bought a piano and never played it certainly used it as an object, but this does not mean that they failed to comprehend its symbolic importance as a musical instrument. Indeed, they were likely banking on visitors’ assumptions that a piano was in the room in order to make beautiful music. Therefore, the specific role of the piano as a marker of not only socio-economic respectability but cultural literacy is essential.³²

Applying Grier’s idea of parlour furnishings as windows into the public sphere, one may elucidate musical instruments’ particular contribution to the project of investing domestic space with meaning. There is no denying that the piano did play an important role as a particularly elegant and substantial household object. Its complex design represented a triumph of industrial prowess, while its ivory and ebony keys stood as evidence of the commercial benefits of empire. Later Victorians’ sensitivity to the

³⁰ Katherine Grier and Andrea Tange mention pianos only in passing, as does Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003). Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900*, McGill-Queen’s/Hannah Institute Studies in the History of Medicine, Health and Society, ed. S.O. Freedman and J.T.H. Connor (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996) does not discuss them at all.

³¹ *London Free Press*, April 6, 1907, p. 4.

³² An R.S. Williams advertisement confirms this link by using the following tag line: “The Finer Your Home and Your Musical Tastes, the More Likely You Will Want to Possess the Williams Piano.” See *Toronto Star Weekly*, November 10, 1917, p. 31.

piano's visual and tactile properties is evident in their admiration for the instrument's size, weight, and increasingly ornate case carvings. It is also apparent in their disdain for the visual monotony of the piano's large, flat wooden surfaces. Consumers remedied this defect by purchasing silk piano scarves of various attractive colours.

Musical items and instruments were, however, far more than simply decorative items. As objects of musical culture, they symbolized glorious achievements of the Western musical canon in particular and Western artistic traditions in general. The presence of classical sheet music demonstrated the influence of urban cosmopolitanism. A parlour organ and hymn books indicated a family's religiosity.³³ A violin could inhabit one of two roles depending on the quality of the instrument, the occasion, and the repertoire. As the violin, it embodied a classical tradition of solo, chamber, and symphonic music. As the fiddle, it invited associations with earthier folk musical traditions. The piano, meanwhile, possessed an aura of prestige that no other instrument could rival. Musicologist Richard Leppert interprets the piano as a site of tension between competing discourses of materiality and eternal ideals: "Its physical presence commonly fetishized materiality, a materiality that had nothing to do with musical sonority and in some instances might well have detracted from it; at the same time, the music to be played on the instrument was valorized precisely because of its immateriality, to the nineteenth century the *sine qua non* of music's supposedly socially transcendent autonomy."³⁴ Leppert's appraisal is astute; however, it ignores the possibility that the material and the Ideal could be viewed as mutually reinforcing. The physicality of the piano, with its multitude of functioning parts, was necessary for the production of sounds

³³ Halttunen, "From Parlor to Living Room," 161.

³⁴ Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 155.

the ear could interpret as music. Furthermore, the piano gained its supreme position as a purveyor of musical culture not in spite of its materiality but because of it. Its majestic size and hefty price made it an item of grandeur, and therefore something to be coveted. Mundane as it seems, the sheer number of people purchasing and longing after a piano contributed to the perceived significance of the instrument's ethereal musical meanings.

Pianos, and the parlours that housed them, held a special cultural resonance for immigrant families. These newcomers viewed parlours and especially pianos as tangible signs that they had achieved North American standards of respectability. New York's Jewish immigrants, for example, made a priority of creating a parlour as soon as possible in their tiny tenement apartments. This desire was so pervasive that even those who could not manage to sacrifice badly-needed sleeping space often redecorated one of the bedrooms so that it could double as a parlour by day. While the fiddle embodied the traditional musical cultures of the Eastern European Jewish ghetto, the piano (all but inaccessible to Jews in Central and Eastern Europe) represented their joy at their improved prospects in North America.³⁵ Meanwhile, a 1910 study of Slavic families living in the mining and steel-working towns of Pennsylvania discovered that even those families without a parlour still coveted and bought pianos. In these cases, a household usually wedged the bulky instrument in between various beds in the family sleeping quarters.³⁶ Other immigrant groups, particularly the Poles and the Italians, revered the piano as a means of connecting them with the music of their homelands. It did not matter that they had been completely unacquainted with the works of Chopin or Verdi before coming to North America. Once settled in their New World households, the music of

³⁵ Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance*, 133-136, 139.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

their illustrious countrymen invested them with a pride powerful enough to forge memories of, and nostalgia for, songs they had previously never heard.³⁷

Parlour function and design altered over the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. The contribution of musical objects to the articulation of domestic space nonetheless remained crucial. The discourse simply adapted itself to suit the evolving needs of domestic audiences. During the late nineteenth century, the formality of the parlour began to relax. Contemporaries marked the shift by indulging in a flurry of eclecticism. Upright pianos from this period became progressively ornate in order to contribute to the riot of parlour patterns and designs. Symbolically, the idea of the parlour as a room for leisure and relaxation began to outweigh the notion of a prim space for company alone.³⁸ Supporters of music in the home had only to stress the fun, recreational aspect of music making in order to accommodate the change. By the first decades of the twentieth century, the term 'living room' had started to enter into circulation. Design experts insisted that the room should cultivate an aesthetic of simplicity, disdaining the cluttered decorating sensibilities of the late Victorian era.³⁹ Piano manufacturers responded to the shifting trends by employing a newer streamlined decorating aesthetic. A speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Toronto Retail Piano Dealers' Association in April of 1918 interpreted this change as a sign of progress, claiming: "It must be admitted that the [piano] designs of twenty-five years ago, that were solemnly represented as works of art, were often heavy and even grotesque... when compared with the graceful and correct models of to-day..."⁴⁰ Another design transformation of the mid-to-late 1910s was a

³⁷ Parakilas and Hirai, "The World's the Limit," 228-231.

³⁸ Karen Halttunen, "From Parlor to Living Room," 162-163, 165, 169.

³⁹ Ibid., 171, 175.

⁴⁰ "A Suggestion as to How to Still Further Stimulate the Demand for Oak Cases," *CMTJ* 18, no. 11 (April

reduction in the size of upright pianos in order to accommodate the growing numbers of clients living in apartments. As one writer observed near the end of the decade: “Modern living, tending as it does so much to flats and apartments, renders a small piano an actual necessity. Housewives, too, are beginning to show a preference for a little piano that can be more easily moved when sweeping and house-cleaning.”⁴¹

Indeed, the entire logic behind parlour decorating underwent a significant change. The discourse moved away from Victorian notions of objects as symbols of abstract truths to a newer logic of objects demonstrating personality.⁴² Though both perspectives encouraged conspicuous consumption and the representational power of household goods, they stressed different aspects of that representation.⁴³ Musical items in a late Victorian parlour highlighted the family’s fidelity to ideals such as artistic beauty and respectable femininity. Conversely, the presence of music in the newer living rooms demonstrated an artistic, cultured personality. Both discourses ultimately saw objects as a means of satisfying the self and impressing others; they simply diverged on the question of whether the attribute was eternal or personal.

Taken together, these shifting layers of meaning tied the representational power of parlour spaces indelibly to the discourses of domestic musical activity. Musical objects thus took on a dual role as impressive objects of beauty in their own right, as well as material markers of a family’s engagement in music making. Music reinforced the

1918): 23.

⁴¹ “Almost Million and a Quarter People Attend Canadian National Exhibition,” *CMTJ* 20, no. 4 (September 1919): 65. For advertisements of smaller uprights see *Saturday Night*, April 11, 1914, p. 26; *Toronto Star Weekly*, September 29, 1917, p. 27; *Everywoman’s World* (September 1919): 30.

⁴² Halttunen, “From Parlor to Living Room,” 172, 189.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

parlour's role as a theatre for leisured elegance. The parlour, in turn, helped frame musical activity as an ideal manifestation of bourgeois gentility and family togetherness.

The Angel in the House: Gender and Domestic Music Making

Another significant feature of prescriptive accounts is their emphasis on domestic music as a typically feminine pursuit. An early advertisement for Dominion Pianos (Fig. 3.1) provides a particularly striking example of the gendered dichotomy of male producers and female consumers. The caption "A Grand Holiday Present" indicates the man's earning power to provide for his lady, a message reinforced by his paternal gesture as he leans over the woman. The lavish carpets, curtains, and chairs and the profusion of decorative objects demonstrate that this is a couple who appreciate domestic comforts, an atmosphere that the presence of a piano will only heighten.

The link between femininity and domestic music, however, ran far deeper than a mere male-producer woman-consumer ethos. Ideas of music in the home nestled alongside the Victorian discourse of separate spheres, so ably described by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall.⁴⁴ As strong and rational beings, men possessed the intellectual equipment to work in the busy public realm. Women, by contrast, were weak and irrational, though their piety and their gift for nurturing made them spiritually and morally superior to men. A woman's realm was the private domestic sphere, where she provided a haven for her family. The separate spheres ideal faced a series of challenges by the end of the nineteenth century, as the result of women's growing presence in

⁴⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

factory work, white-collar service jobs, and urban sites of commercial leisure.⁴⁵ Many people nevertheless responded to the bewildering pace of change by clinging fast to what they knew. Commenting on the British context, Deborah Gorham remarks that even those prepared to accept some of the trappings of the modern girl did so selectively and co-opted them into their pre-existing notions of Victorian womanhood. As a result, even the “ideal modern girl” became “an adaptation, not a repudiation of the older values.”⁴⁶

Music contributed to the separate spheres ideal since it constituted a culturally improving leisure pursuit for women to pursue in the sanctity of the private home.

Richard Leppert observes that the separate spheres ideology was “imagined not only as physical and spiritual but also as sonoric. In essence, the man’s world was silent and the woman’s sonorically fecund; her ideal essence, in sonoric terms, was harmony.”⁴⁷

Leppert raises an insightful point, but one which requires modification. Man’s world was not so much silent as governed by the cacophony of city: noises of business, of industry, of politics, of the rough and tumble world of the public sphere. Women’s realm constituted not more sound but rather more pleasing sounds, sounds harnessed into perfect order to soothe and rejuvenate the weary soul.

As previously mentioned, contemporaries designated the parlour or living room as the prime site for musical activity. Certainly, the sheer weight of a piano or organ confined keyboard players to the room for the duration of their practice sessions.

⁴⁵ See for example Kate Boyer, ““Miss Remington’ Goes to Work: Gender, Space, and Technology at the Dawn of the Information Age,” *Professional Geographer* 56, no. 2 (2004): 201-212; Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Popular Cultures Everyday Lives Series, ed. Robin D.G. Kelly and Janice Radway (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930*, Studies in Gender and History Series, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 58.

⁴⁷ Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 186.

Contemporaries supported this link on a figurative level by describing the piano as inherently wedded to the environment of the home. As teacher and musician W.O. Forsyth (1859-1957) of Toronto mused while discoursing on his favourite instrument: “What an ardent, and entirely intimate companion in the home is the piano! ... Of all instruments of whatever class, the piano is preeminently the one which belongs to the home. It is one of the family as it were – and impresses its beautiful individuality on each member of the household.”⁴⁸ Singers and violinists possessed a greater degree of mobility; however, they often relied upon a keyboard for accompaniment purposes. Furthermore, the symbolic associations between piano and parlour proved so strong that they exerted a centrifugal pull on other types of music making. Most forms of musical activity did indeed take place in the parlour. Women’s musical pursuits therefore bound them firmly within the physical and spiritual boundaries of the home.

Craig Roell observes that music’s supposed qualities of moral uplift dovetailed nicely with women’s role as the spiritual guardian of the family abode. Music was thought to offer her female disciples an outlet of aesthetic beauty while also protecting their minds from “sensual and vicious indulgences.”⁴⁹ A series of Bell Piano and Organ Company advertisements from the late 1890s reinforces these understood meanings by highlighting the beauty and virtue of the female performer. Fig. 3.2, from November 1897, shows a lady entertaining at a small domestic gathering. The advertisement’s caption “Pure as the Notes of a Bird” ostensibly refers to the much-heralded singing quality of the Bell instruments. It also, however, denotes the moral purity of the dainty

⁴⁸ W.O. Forsyth, “The Piano as a Companion,” MS, p. 22R, Envelope 1, Box 10, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC.

⁴⁹ Roell, *Piano in America*, 21. Music was gendered female during this era, see Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: “Encroaching on All Man’s Privileges”* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 28-29; Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 147.

woman clothed in white at the keyboard. Fig. 3.3, from June 1898, depicts a long-necked young lady gazing upwards as if in supplication. Although it appears that she is reading the sheet music in front of her, her sight line actually extends somewhat above the printed copy, reinforcing the notion that she is in a beatific reverie. These sorts of poses came from a well-established genre of paintings depicting St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music.⁵⁰ The ubiquity of Cecilia as an icon was no accident; her conventional portrayals mingled seamlessly with the ideal of true womanhood. The Saint generally appeared “limited, by her sex, to a passive role of idealized, even swooning, muse or performer, but not as an active creator.”⁵¹ This accorded well with nineteenth-century notions of women as sensitive yet passive interpreters of male composers’ creative genius.

Contemporaries furthermore credited music with offering young women critical lessons in the benefits of hard work and discipline. In Victorian ideology, practicing not only signaled the means to an end; it constituted an end in itself. Practicing helped develop one’s powers of physical control and mental concentration, qualities deemed essential for proper character building. James Parakilas notes that the entire notion of amateur piano practicing underwent a revolution in the early nineteenth century. As industrialization transformed the piano from an instrument for the aristocracy to an instrument for the middle-classes, the suggested time commitment for amateur practicing rose dramatically from a few hours per week to a few hours per day. The method books providing instruction on how to practice became more exacting, detailing proper positions for the wrists, the fingers, and the back with a degree of precision unheard of in

⁵⁰ Roell, *Piano in America*, 5.

⁵¹ Susan McClary, “Ode to Cecilia,” in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 1. See also Petra Meyer-Frazier, “Music, Novels, and Women: Nineteenth-Century Prescriptions for an Ideal Life,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 10 (2006): 54.

the previous century. While the notion of young pupils requiring discipline in the pursuit of their music was not new, the minute inscription of discipline onto tiny, repetitive bodily actions was certainly novel.⁵² As Parakilas observes: “These students are given endless scales and studies to practice each day before they may begin work on musically interesting pieces. Their practicing no longer simply reinforces – or undermines – what they learned in their lessons; instead it turns them into their own most important audience, because in their hours of daily practicing they are performing their domestic virtuosity, not even to family or suitors, but endlessly to themselves.”⁵³ Such notions of practicing relied on the assumption that physical discipline required mental concentration, and that where the first two were present then other virtues would inevitably follow. Effective practicing does indeed require mental focus, but there can be little doubt that many amateur pianists simply went through the physical motions without committing their hearts or minds. Ironically, that new icon of industrial time, the clock, helped perpetuate the cycle. It offered musical pupils the deceptive promise that the quantity, rather than the quality, of practice time held the key to improvement.⁵⁴ Musical educators recognized this danger and did their best to rectify the false impressions. W.O. Forsyth insisted on the importance of technical exercises but cautioned that:

By hand work is not meant so many hours spent at the piano each day with only a small part of the faculties employed, but intelligent effort applied with enthusiasm in every form of study ... To listlessly play over and over a passage in one unintelligent sort of repetition is absolutely a waste of time. Results which are

⁵² James Parakilas, “A History of Lessons and Practicing,” in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 116-117. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 135-194, for the disciplinary revolution’s effect on military training and educational institutions.

⁵³ Parakilas, “A History of Lessons and Practicing,” 115.

⁵⁴ Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009), 165.

worthy can only be attained by the quality of the practice and *not* by the number of hours actually spent at the keyboard.⁵⁵

Wise words in theory, but it is likely that the rank and file of domestic music-makers retained at least the vestiges of faith in the transformative power of physical regulation.

Later nineteenth-century prescriptive texts reinforced the earlier Victorian faith in the inherent worth of practice as a means of physical discipline and character formation. Nevertheless, they tended to couch their message in mellower language, perhaps guided by a more modern sensibility that pleasure and duty could be mutually reinforcing. Forsyth, for instance, observed that piano practice offered: "... such a wonderful amount of genuine pleasure, and contributes greatly to their personal comfort and aesthetic enjoyment. In this way it is questionable if any form of study is more beneficial to character building, and true refinement of taste..."⁵⁶ English aristocrat Lady Lindsay of Balcarres' rhapsodies went even further, conjuring the image of an ideal disciple who relished slow improvement over easy showmanship:

Beginners are not fond of practicing: but to a musician it is an absolute delight. No one knows really what practicing means until he has come to enjoy it; it is a pleasure far greater than playing over in society what has been already learned ... when we practice hope spurs us on: it does not matter what faults we commit, we are only practicing, and it is encouraging to feel that, as time goes on, our difficulties are conquered and overcome.⁵⁷

The link between domestic music and women was reinforced by its presumed applicability to multiple stages in the female life cycle. A daughter learning to sing or play an instrument was essentially rehearsing her femininity in preparation for eventual

⁵⁵ W.O. Forsyth, "How to Practice the Piano," MS, pp. 34R-35R, Envelope 1, Box 10, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁶ W.O. Forsyth, "The Piano as a Companion," MS, p. 25R, Envelope 1, Box 10, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC.

⁵⁷ Lady Lindsay of Balcarres, "On Practicing Music," *Farmer's Advocate*, September 1882, p. 239. This article originally appeared in the *Girl's Own Paper*. See also Jessie Lord, "Music, and its Relation to the Other Arts," *Musical Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1887): 4.

marriage and motherhood. Practicing music allowed her to acquire not only the technical skills for adult music making but also the mindset that a woman's duty was to calm and beautify the home sphere. Widely read authorities such as England's H.R. Haweis meanwhile contended that music making offered growing girls an appropriate outlet for their inherently emotional natures.⁵⁸ Ruth Solie describes this brand of young female musical activity as "girling." In other words, girls who engaged in music were staging "their own enactment ... of girlhood, both to satisfy familial and social demands on them and ... to satisfy needs of their own either to resist those demands or to reassure themselves about their own capacity to fulfill them."⁵⁹

Prescriptive texts furthermore described music as conducive to heterosexual courtship. Music characterized a woman as elegant, nimble, and aesthetically sensitive, desirable attributes which supposedly increased one's marital prospects. As Mrs. Frances J. Moore of London, Ontario, affirmed: "Music is such an essentially charming accomplishment that for a young lady to possess a knowledge of it gives her a powerful attraction."⁶⁰ Toronto Conservatory of Music staff member Edmund Hardy even offered a poetic tribute to the appeal of a musical lady:

When Phyllis plays
She casts a spell o'er me. It seems
When Phyllis plays
As if her slender fingers raise
The heads of flowerets from their dreams.
Then all the air with perfume teems

⁵⁸ Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 94-95.

⁵⁹ Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 86. See also Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 33.

⁶⁰ Frances J. Moore, "Woman as a Musician," in *Woman, Her Character, Culture and Calling: A Full Discussion of Woman's Work in the Home, the School, the Church and the Social Circle*, ed. B.F. Austin (Brantford, ON: Book & Bible House, 1890), 86.

When Phyllis plays...⁶¹

Musical activity moreover offered young lovers a convenient yet morally upright medium for flirting. The ideal maiden played and sometimes sang sentimental songs to her beau, while her suitor turned pages for her and admired her gentle bodily movements.⁶² A Gourlay piano advertisement from 1906 addressed “All Lovers of Music” (Fig. 3.4), but the intimate couple in the heart-shaped frame forming the targets for cupid’s arrow are obviously lovers in the more romantic sense. The woman appears as the object of the man’s admiration. She is at least superficially focused on her music, showing the female dedication to art while the man gazes upon the more earthly beauty of her countenance. A 1910 postcard template (Fig. 3.5) traded in on well-known associations between music lessons and romance for comedic purposes. The woman’s piano instructor rests one insouciant hand on the keyboard, while the other clasps her waist in a firm protective grip. She, meanwhile, seems to have been caught by surprise with both hands still on the keyboard. In rapture, she passively returns the embrace.

A woman’s musical talents proved equally important after marriage. Another element of music’s prodigious moral capital was its supposed “socializing effect” upon listeners. Hence a wife who performed for her tired husband employed not only her spiritual charms but also the power of melody for moral regeneration, “to integrate man socially and restrain him from antisocial behavior.”⁶³ The *London Advertiser* made the gendered association explicit, when it remarked, “Music is like a nice girl. It can bring comfort to a man’s heart. It can make his home a place he longs to see. It can broaden his

⁶¹ Edmund Hardy, “Phyllis Plays and Sings,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 6 (November 1904): 173.

⁶² Roell, *Piano in America*, 26-27. For the voyeuristic tendencies of this male gaze see Meyer-Frazier, “Music, Novels and Women,” 53-54.

⁶³ Roell, *Piano in America*, 14.

sympathies. It can prevent him from being a mean dog, hated by all the world.”⁶⁴

Music’s power to promote domesticity so convinced writer Frances Moore that she judged it “every woman’s *duty* to keep up the music she knows, however little.”⁶⁵

While the ‘music as spiritual regeneration’ theory retained the importance it had achieved in the halcyon days of high Victorianism, late nineteenth-century portrayals of domestic music making focused increasingly upon a related theme. These later iterations emphasized music as not merely a source of leisure but of entertainment, with the capacity to make the home a more appealing space for one’s husband and children. This element became increasingly crucial as alternate public spaces of commercialized leisure started to appear by the turn of the twentieth century. Champions of domestic music claimed that musical parlours could help prevent young people from fleeing the home and engaging in mass leisure activities away from parental supervision.⁶⁶ A Mason & Risch advertisement from January 1900 featured a woman in evening dress at the piano surrounded by a dapper male page turner on one side and a young maiden and prim little girl holding songbooks on the other. The caption read: “The Happy Homes of Canada.”⁶⁷ The Dominion Organ & Piano Company meanwhile insisted that “Musicless homes, according to the results of investigation, are in the majority of circumstances those forgotten by the son and daughter after a few years in the business world.”⁶⁸ H.G. Stanton, vice-president and general manager of R.S. Williams & Sons, believed that

⁶⁴ *London Advertiser*, September 1, 1917, p. 4

⁶⁵ Moore, “Woman as a Musician,” 86. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁶ Roell, *Piano in America*, 25.

⁶⁷ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 14, no. 3 (January 1900): xxxiii.

⁶⁸ “Commercial and Industrial Edition of Port Hope, Bowmanville, Orono and Newcastle, Ontario: A Descriptive Review of a Number of Manufacturing and Mercantile Interests Doing Business in the Above Named Live Wire Towns,” Bowmanville Museum Historical Reprint Series 1 (1916, repr. 1987), 9, Dominion Bowmanville folder, Canadian Piano Museum, Napanee, Ontario.

musical homes gave rural youth motivation to remain on the farm.⁶⁹ At the other end of the social spectrum, an anonymous Ontario farmer's wife thought that a comfortable parlour, with a musical instrument in tow, could keep boys away from the tavern.⁷⁰ Mary James expounded similar views in the *Farmer's Advocate*:

Music is a magnet which attracts young people to home, there will be less attraction outside – in the saloons, on the street-corners, and worse – and if parents would strive to cultivate the minds of their children by good music when they are young, as they grow to be young men and women they will appreciate it, and will prefer the home music and entertainment to that which is vainly sought at dancing halls and cheap theatres or 'shows,' and which is the ruin of so many young lives. Young people must have fun, and if they cannot find it in their homes they will seek it elsewhere.⁷¹

James drew a stark opposition between the moral, educative effects of "good" music and the fleeting, sensual pleasures of commercialized leisure. Her notion of such pleasures as "vainly sought" betrays a belief that such merrymaking could never truly satisfy one's thirst for entertainment. Rather, it was a deceptive façade that lured the gullible into a life of dissipation. Although her awareness that youth needed leisure signals the early twentieth century's growing acceptance of recreation, her views remained rigidly bound to notions of home – and community – based gatherings.

By the early twentieth century, the archetypical child standing in wait of musical development was increasingly described as either male or female. Even so, subtler threads in the discourse continued to stress music's particular importance for young girls. For instance, musical children supposedly inherited their tastes from a mother or elder sister. Kate Robinson's essay "The Child Musician" painted a rosy portrait of a girl whose own preliminary musical efforts unconsciously inspired a younger sibling: "The

⁶⁹ "Canada's Tide of Gold— Much Spent in Luxuries," *CMTJ* 18, no. 6 (November 1917): 27.

⁷⁰ "Inglennook Chats," *Farmer's Advocate*, January 14, 1904, p. 68.

⁷¹ Mary James, "Our Music Competition," *Farmer's Advocate*, June 7, 1906, p. 929.

little one is imbibing the taste the elder sister shows, and the songs now sung in lisping accents will become a part of that little one and their spirit will be inculcated, and through life their influence will ever be there. So elder sister, choose only the sweetest and the best, let your voice never be heard in that which is not musical, maidenly and sweet.⁷² Such depictions proved particularly compelling when both the giver and the recipient of music were designated female, showing generational continuity powered by the cycle of feminine fulfillment. A Mason & Risch advertisement for 1898 for example showed a mother playing piano while her daughter danced along to the music. The image implied that the girl of today would become the mother of tomorrow, and that her musical development would enable her to play a similarly formative role in the musical sensibilities of her own child.⁷³

To be sure, the widespread association between women and music making contained some elements which contemporaries found troubling. Music's association with morality, discipline, and uplift existed alongside a contradictory undercurrent of distrust. A few writers feared that females caught in the rapture of music's emotional and sensual effects teetered dangerously close to sexual arousal.⁷⁴ Mid-Victorian parents sometimes worried that daughters who became too adept at their music making would aspire to a career as a professional musician, a life path not in keeping with bourgeois codes of respectability. Other parents feared that musical daughters overly eager to perform for visitors were indulging in personal vanity. Still others thought that an avid

⁷² Kate Robinson, "The Child Musician," *Farmer's Advocate*, May 1890, p. 157.

⁷³ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 11, no. 6 (October 1898): xxxvii.

⁷⁴ Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 155. See also Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 114-116; Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 5.

young female's desire to learn music might cause her to neglect other domestic skills.⁷⁵

These lesser fears, however, had dwindled by the end of the nineteenth century. As professional lady musicians rose in number, dour pronouncements on female self-effacement began to relax. By and large, music's perceived benefits with regards to discipline, marriage prospects, domesticity, and child rearing far outweighed its supposed darker side. Provided that girls played proper songs in proper ways, music contributed in crucial ways to definitions of respectable femininity.

A Sight for Sore Eyes: Gender-Appropriate Musical Instruments

The discourse of female musicality was moreover very specific about the types of musical instruments women could play. Contemporaries disliked the prospect of a woman blowing a wind instrument, on the grounds that her red face and full cheeks compromised her beauty. They deemed the keyboard, the guitar, and the harp appropriate 'female' instruments since one could play them without needing to contort the body or to alter one's facial expression. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, the harp's prohibitively expensive price and increasingly complex repertoire diminished its popularity in the home. With only two instruments to all intents and purposes left within their reach, it is no wonder that Victorian women took to the keyboard in such droves.⁷⁶

Beginning in the 1870s, a few female violinists began to appear on the international

⁷⁵ Gillett, *Musical Women*, 146; Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 114-116.

⁷⁶ Jennifer C. Post, "Erasing the Boundaries between Public and Private in Women's Performance Traditions," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 40; Gillett, *Musical Women*, 3-4; Beth Abelson Macleod, "'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?' Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990," *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (1993): 292.

recital stage and after the initial outcry began to wear off, prejudice against female violin playing began to decline. The number of female violinists, both amateur and professional, rose so quickly over the next two decades that by the 1890s writers scoffed at the earlier level of censure as ridiculously old-fashioned.⁷⁷ One of the first prominent female violinists in Ontario was Edinburgh-born Mrs. Bertha Drechsler Adamson (1848-1924), a woman active in the province as far back as the late 1870s. The rising fame of Nora Clench (1867-1938) in the late 1880s and 1890s gave Ontario's would-be lady violinists a second powerful role model.⁷⁸ On a local level, sisters Edith and Lillian Littlehailes of Hamilton started learning string instruments as children in the 1870s. As Lillian later recalled, "No other little girl had ever yet been put to work on the 'ungodly little fiddle'." Surprisingly enough, Mother received ever so many letters from protesting people, asking if she did not know that she was sending her child [Edith] to perdition!"⁷⁹ The changing times became increasingly apparent in 1887, when Toronto conductor F.H. Torrington assembled a new amateur string orchestra. Six of the fifty members were female.⁸⁰ By the first decade of the twentieth century, one writer took great amusement in remembering the degree of shock Mrs. Adamson's appearance had once caused. The author proudly stated that the modern times had proven far more accepting of lady violinists "and doubtless the frank and graceful personality of our artist [Mrs. Adamson],

⁷⁷ Gillett, *Musical Women*, 77. For the objections to women's violin playing see Gillett, ch. 4 and 5; Macleod, "Lady Tympanist," 293-294; Judith Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 327-329.

⁷⁸ E.R. Parkhurst, "Music and the Drama," *The Globe (Toronto)*, April 30, 1904, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Lillian Littlehailes, "A Musical Upbringing in the Eighteen Eighties: A Story of Family Harmony in Life and Music" (1938; printed 1967), p. 18, Littlehailes Family File, Hamilton Biography Clippings File, HPL. See also "Death of Miss Edith Littlehailes," *Dominion Musical Journal* 1, no. 2 (August 1891): 24; C.L.M. Harris, "Chamber Music in Hamilton," *Canadian Journal of Music* (July-August 1914): 48.

⁸⁰ *Musical Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1887): 1. See also the photograph in "Toronto Orchestral School Fifth Season Statement 1894-5," Item 2, Toronto Orchestral School Collection, AR PAM 785.06271.T587, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

and her unaffected but always feminine demeanor, has had much to do with this enlightenment.”⁸¹ Mrs. Adamson had achieved acceptance and acclaim, but her reputation ultimately hinged upon her ability to perform as a genteel, respectable female.

The Globe music critic E.R. Parkhurst similarly championed female violinists in Ontario as a welcome change from the monotonous ranks of amateur female pianists. He proved, however, unable to distinguish the music they made from the gendered politics of the female body. He pronounced women “much more graceful performers on the instrument than men; one might almost say that the violin affords rich opportunities for displaying the charm and poetry of feminine movement.”⁸² Parkhurst’s view confirms the arguments of scholars Paula Gillett and Richard Leppert that much of the censure against female instrumentalists hinged upon the visual prospect of their sexualized bodies rather than the aural sound of the music they were making.⁸³ Parkhurst, moreover, absorbed the medical discourse of his day which deemed women physically and mentally more fragile than men. He admonished that only sturdy, healthy young women should take up the violin on account of the instrument being “a much greater strain on the nervous system and physical strength than that of the piano.”⁸⁴

Once the battle for the violin had been won, critics and audiences began to ponder the prospect of women attempting other stringed instruments. Although the viola posed no particular problem, the cello proved troublesome because the female musician would

⁸¹ *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 6, no. 1 (January 1907): 15. See also “Miss Lina Drechsler-Adamson,” *Conservatory Monthly* 11, no. 1 (January 1912): 9-10.

⁸² E.R. Parkhurst, “Music and the Drama,” *The Globe*, April 30, 1904, p. 18.

⁸³ Gillett, *Musical Women*, 80-82. Richard Leppert sees music and the body as mutually constitutive, since “the slippage between the physical activity to produce musical sound and the abstract nature of what is produced creates a semiotic contraction that is ultimately ‘resolved’ to a significant degree via the agency of human sight. Music, despite its phenomenological sonoric ethereality, is an embodied practice, like dance and theater,” (Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, xxi).

⁸⁴ E.R. Parkhurst, “Music and the Drama,” *The Globe*, April 30, 1904, p. 18.

have needed to place the instrument between her legs. Salvation arrived in the form of the cello end-pin, a device dating back to the 1860s which consisted of a long thin piece of metal attached to the rounded base of a cello in order to raise the instrument off the ground. This fortuitous attachment allowed women to play cello using a “side-saddle” position. The introduction of the safety bicycle and less restrictive clothing styles by the turn of the twentieth century, however, made it increasingly acceptable for a woman to place the cello between her knees. Indeed, an American cello manual from 1915 considered the demure side-saddle cellist a relic of the past.⁸⁵ The number of lady cellists in Ontario is difficult to determine, but it was likely smaller since the instrument’s popularity never rivaled the wave of enthusiasm for the violin.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Lillian Littlehales of Hamilton became a professional cellist, achieving fame on international concert stages.⁸⁷ In 1894 amateur performance at the Pavilion Music Hall in Toronto included a female cellist named Miss Massie.⁸⁸ In 1904, E.R. Parkhurst mentioned two talented female cellists in the Toronto area: Miss Lois Winlow and Mrs. Franklin Dawson (née Hilda Richardson).⁸⁹ Ten years later, C.L.M. Harris noted the recent formation of the Howard Ladies’ String Quartet of Hamilton, with a Mrs. Robert Jex on cello.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Macleod, “Lady Tympanist,” 295. See also Gillett, *Musical Women*, 101.

⁸⁶ Ray G. Edwards, “The Violoncello,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 3 (August 1913): 59 argued that people considered the violin a beautiful solo instrument, while undervaluing the extent of the cello’s solo range and repertoire.

⁸⁷ Littlehales, “A Musical Upbringing,” 4.

⁸⁸ *Canadian Musician* 6, no. 4 (May 1894): 7.

⁸⁹ E.R. Parkhurst, “Music and the Drama,” *The Globe*, April 30, 1904, p. 18.

⁹⁰ C.L.M. Harris, “Chamber Music in Hamilton,” *Canadian Journal of Music* (July-August 1914): 48.

Critiquing the Lady Amateur

Polite society did women a double disservice in that it pressured them to cultivate musical skills while simultaneously pronouncing itself unimpressed with the results of their compliance. The pretty young thing rattling away at her piano or screeching out a song became a prevalent stock character for the joke columns of the press.⁹¹ Edmund Hardy, whose poem “Phyllis Plays and Sings” began so sentimentally, embraced a rather different tone in the second stanza:

When Phyllis sings
I feel bewitched. It is my care
When Phyllis sings
To fix my thoughts on solemn things,
Devoutly praying not to swear:
Such caterwauling fills the air
When Phyllis sings.⁹²

Poor Phyllis may have been the willowy piano maiden of the narrator’s dreams, but as a singer, her shrieking grated heavily upon his nerves.

More serious critics of the female musical imperative attacked the practice from a number of different angles. While sympathetic to the plight of unmusical lady amateurs engaged in the uninspiring rigmarole of daily practice, writers worried far more about the wastefulness of such efforts. What irked them was not so much that women were labouring joylessly, but rather that such labours yielded no concrete rewards. Despite the Victorian faith in a virtuous work ethic, women of little aptitude or interest in music could practice mechanically for years and achieve only the flimsiest of results. This was, of course, assuming that a family had actually wanted to produce a bona fide musician in

⁹¹ See for instance *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 5 (October-November 1914): 115; *The Musician* (January 1907) 7; Lee Pape, “Little Benny’s Note-Book,” *Toronto Daily Star* October 5, 1917, p. 21.

⁹² Edmund Hardy, “Phyllis Plays and Sings,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 6 (November 1904): 173.

the first place. Many simply wanted their daughters to acquire the barest trappings of musical skill by a cultivating a handful of “[b]rilliant but not difficult” pieces in order to impress visitors.⁹³ To make matters worse, money had been wasted as well as time. The purchase of an expensive instrument was just the beginning; years and years of music lessons had also been paid. When one genuinely wished for artistic enlightenment then all was well and good, but to expend such resources for social ambition added insult to injury. Witness for instance the following diatribe from 1878:

In countless towns the acquisition of the proper rank in gentility involves the necessity of ‘piano lessons’ for the girls. The instrument is bought after much saving and stinting in other matters. Nelly is brought, through sore tribulation, to hammer out a half dozen dashing marches or waltzes, and that is the end of it. After she marries she neither plays for her own pleasure nor for her husband’s, and she is not competent to teach her own daughter. But the piano is there, a big assertant token of social rank. If any such ambition as this urges our correspondent, we can only assure her that no greater outlay can be made of money or time for such small reward. If a boy or girl evince decided musical ability ... let no money, labor or time be spared in its culture ... But, in Heaven’s name, not a note for the sake of gentility.⁹⁴

Hamilton musician Robert Ambrose expressed similar reservations over his swelling ranks of female students, even while acknowledging their importance for his economic survival. His confession demonstrates that not all young women practiced as assiduously as legend would have it: “what with painting & gymnastics & visiting with ‘taking the course’ there is very little chance left for music. And it may be questioned whether after all the universal piano playing that is taking place is not a mistake. This I know that ‘Classical’ music wont [*sic*] grow in the stony soul of most of my pupils [*sic*] hearts...”⁹⁵

⁹³ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (1954; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 291. While agreeing with the substance of Loesser’s argument, I think he carries his point too far. He veers into an anti-female interpretation by equating femininity with consumption and superficiality.

⁹⁴ “Music and Drawing at Home,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, August 1878, p. 187. For a more sympathetic depiction see W. Werner, “Two Violins,” *Toronto Daily Star*, January 31, 1918, p. 19. For other examples in the British context see Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 88-89.

⁹⁵ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 19, 1888, p. 527, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

Another problem with the lady amateur ideal was the difficulty that even talented women faced in trying to keep up with their music after marriage. Depending on one's circumstances, household management and parenting could consume inordinate amounts of time and energy. Female writers admitted that many musical skills acquired in youth lay dormant once adult responsibilities arrived to replace them. "Where do all the girls who take music lessons go to?" wondered *Farmer's Advocate* contributor Kate Robinson, "For who of us can find among our married lady acquaintances the sweet singers and tasteful players of the girls we used to know?"⁹⁶ Some years later, another article offered a possible answer:

When you have finished renovating [cleaning] the parlor, do you put on your prettiest gown, after brushing your hair until it shines and pinning a rose behind your ear, do you sit down to the organ and play one of the 'old songs' as you go back in thought to girlhood days? ... Not a bit of it! ... The rose behind the ear, the old song, etc., make nice filling for pretty stories, but in real life we too often find a weary soul in a weary body, too tired to care for flowers, songs, or sunlight...⁹⁷

To a certain degree, the disdain for so-called musical daughters had much to do with concurrent attempts to distinguish between the professional and the amateur musician. As Kristina Guiguet's research attests, although early nineteenth-century women were encouraged to play music on an amateur level, they risked losing their respectability if they tried to turn professional.⁹⁸ The sanctions against female professional musicians had softened by the later Victorian era, yet amateur music continued to be gendered female, an attitude that the hoards of lady performers at local recitals did nothing to dispel. Thus, to some degree the Canadian musical establishment's

⁹⁶ Kate Robinson, "The Child Musician," *Farmer's Advocate*, May 1890, p. 157.

⁹⁷ "Piazza versus Parlor," *Farmer's Advocate*, July 15, 1902, p. 534. See also "Transferred Affection," *Hamilton Herald*, August 4, 1917, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Kristina Marie Guiguet, *The Ideal World of Mrs. Widder's Soirée Musicale: Social Identity and Musical Life in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, Mercury Series Cultural Studies Paper 77 (Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2004), 20-24, 83-102.

scorn over lady amateurs represents an articulation of their contempt for amateur musicianship in general. In an oft-quoted article from Toronto's *Musical Journal* of 1887, the writer calling himself 'Tetrachord' moaned: "...what awful trash do we constantly hear! What wild scamperings across the long-suffering piano! What silly, sentimental stuff is wailed forth by some of our 'very musical' young ladies! I cannot blame them, for how can you expect people who have never, perhaps, heard one note of good music in all their lives, to perform and appreciate what they cannot understand? ...Who, then, is to blame? *Chiefly the teachers.*"⁹⁹ Tetrachord's furor over the lady amateur in many senses represented a thinly veiled critique of what he perceived to be the failings of local music educators. Tetrachord's other bone of contention was again not so much the girls themselves as the quality of music they performed. Like many musical connoisseurs of his time, Tetrachord classified pieces in terms of a vertical hierarchy, with 'light music' placed ignobly on the bottom and 'art music' glimmering from the ethereal summits. While admitting that the average young woman would likely learn popular dance songs for the entertainment of herself and her friends, she should not confine her repertoire to such worldly tunes. "It is astonishing how a girl will scramble through a set of brilliant (?) variations, regardless of time and incorrect chords, or sing a rapid song (playing vilely the accompaniment the while), while she might, with one half the trouble she has expended on this trash, charm her audience with some simple melody, offspring of the pure art, thus elevating her own taste and that of her friends."¹⁰⁰ This passage demonstrates not only elitist notions of "pure" high culture, but also a Victorian anxiety over false appearances. Splashy chords with little substance was not true music any more

⁹⁹ Tetrachord, "Musical Culture in Canada— A Few Words About Amateurs," *Musical Journal* 1, no. 6 (June 1887): 84. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 85. Question mark in parentheses is original.

than a finely dressed rogue was a true gentleman. Yet how were the masses to distinguish the difference? They would certainly be unable to do so without the aid of Tetrachord and other heralds of the musical elect.

For all that gender did not constitute the main ‘point’ of these diatribes, it provided critics with a discursive language to bolster their arguments. Besides the mere fact of large numbers of female amateurs, feminine associations with consumption, frivolity, and superficiality made them an easy target for the cheap music and breezy showmanship that cultural elites wished to marginalize. Moreover, male amateurs did not receive a fraction of the bad press endured by their female counterparts, despite their lower numbers. It is difficult to tell how many men contemplated music as a leisure pursuit or a profession. Historians of the British and American contexts argue that for much of the nineteenth century, musical boys and men risked being labelled effeminate. By the final years of the century, however, this prejudice seems to have waned.¹⁰¹

The Canadian case requires more research, yet the historical record gives little evidence of musical males facing discrimination during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Conventional wisdom held that a boy who demonstrated an interest in and aptitude for music would be encouraged, but those who did not were rarely forced to take lessons. The memoirs of journalist Hector Charlesworth, conversely, imply that personal inclinations did not solely guide male bourgeoisie’s musical fates. “Forty years ago [in the mid 1880s] the sons as well as the daughters of gentlefolk were supposed to study music and drawing,— often much against their will. An old lady gave me a quaint reason why I should practice my piano lessons. If I acquired music, she said I would be able to

¹⁰¹ Gillett, *Musical Women* 5-6; Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 186-187; Joan Berman Mizrahi, “The American Image of Women as Musicians and Pianists, 1850-1900” (Ph.D. diss, University of Maryland, 1989), 107; Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 59.

turn the leaves for young ladies who played and sang, and thus become a youth of true social accomplishments. But at the pianoforte I could never accomplish anything that really sounded like music to me.”¹⁰² As Charlesworth’s statement attests, music equipped men to participate in the rituals of bourgeois heterosexual courtship. Like women, musical men also found their services requisitioned against their will when visitors wished for entertainment. Lily Ambrose described one evening when a few friends had gathered and “just as we were comfortably settled who should arrive but Mr. Gregory & his violin & a pile of music & Herby.” Although Lily’s musician husband Robert considered the group’s mute supplication “the last straw,” he nonetheless “bore it manfully and played his accompaniments” as required on the pianoforte.¹⁰³ Lily’s pairing of the terms ‘manliness’ and ‘accompaniments’ provides a fascinating example of the limits of mainstream cultural stereotypes. Domestic music, particularly the playing of accompaniments, may have been traditionally gendered female, yet here was a wife who deemed her husband’s submission to duty a sign of masculine fortitude.

Nor were demure young women the only ones committing assaults upon their neighbours’ ears. Edward Crombie, addressing his fiancée from his new urban lodgings in 1904, observed: “As I am writing this there is a man a few houses away who is singing (?) “Mona” at the top of a very harsh voice. I do hope it does not quite sound quite like that when I attempt it. Wow! He is simply *fierce*!!!”¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, much of the

¹⁰²Hector Charlesworth, *Candid Chronicles: Leaves from the Note Book of a Canadian Journalist* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1925), 317. As a child in Hertfordshire, England, Gerald Moore (b. 1899) recalled his mother insisting on his learning music in order to compete with the neighbour’s musical daughter. See Gerald Moore, *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), 16-18.

¹⁰³ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 20, 1888, p. 489, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Rubidge Crombie to Hilda Georgina Atkins, August 7, 1904, Envelope 7, Box 5, Series 2, Crombie Family Fonds, 45-2004, 37-2007, 23-2008, McM. Question mark in parentheses and emphasis are original.

research on Victorian and Edwardian domestic music making has not adequately probed the possibility of subverted gender norms. Certainly, there were plenty of bad female amateurs, and yet their numbers may have been inflated and their ineptitude exaggerated due to gendered discourses. Moreover, as Elijah Wald reminds us, what classifies musical execution as either poor or competent depends upon the aesthetic proclivities of the individual listener.¹⁰⁵ Music that may have caused a connoisseur such as Tetrachord to wince may have delighted and amused the average household. This is not to say that families and friends unanimously enjoyed the impromptu amateur concerts that formed the warp and weft of their musical lives. Nevertheless, it would be equally inaccurate to claim that such entertainments were universally despised.

Musical Activity in Diaries, Letters, and Memoirs

If we accept that both the ideal and the criticism of the domestic musical goddess are exaggerations, then what lies beneath such tangled representations? Trying to isolate prescription from practice is a chancy endeavour at best, partly due to the sheer variation of people and circumstances, and partly because experience cannot be separated from the web of discourse that surrounds it.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, the following evidence from diaries, letters, and other sources is not representative of what society was ‘actually’ doing. Nor is it intended to show some untouched realm of ‘real’ experience. Rather, the following section is simply intended to show the room for variation as different subjects accepted, resisted, and negotiated the social mores dictating music making practices.

¹⁰⁵ Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock’N’Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17-24.

¹⁰⁶ Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773-797.

The diaries of young women mention their music lessons and practicing regimes in a perfunctory, matter-of-fact tone, listing them alongside other chores such as schooling and sewing. Many girls wrote daily entries (usually brief ones), with lists of duties completed on the dull days and lists of the visits paid and received on the more interesting days. The endlessly repetitive references to duties performed likely served as a memory tool for how much one had practiced, as well as a written record of time spent in a useful fashion. Amelia (Milly) Harris, a fourteen-year-old girl from a wealthy family in London, Ontario, was an aspiring lady of accomplishments only too aware of her artistic limitations: “Practiced. School. drew [...] played on the piano, I would give anything to play well but I suppose I can only practise. sewed.”¹⁰⁷ Some months later, she recorded having “Mapped & practiced all evening. I do so want to get on with my music. I must practise 1. hour at scales every morning.”¹⁰⁸ Although Milly had internalized the ideal of the cultured female, her efforts at the pianoforte ebbed and flowed. At best she would dedicate herself to daily practice, although traveling and other seasonal activities could easily interfere with these plans. Seventeen-year-old Vida Smythe of Cataraqui, Ontario, took music lessons in nearby Kingston in 1911, although her diary never specifies whether she learned voice or an instrument. Smythe simply recorded that she had taken her regular music lesson, saving the bulk of her description for more interesting matters such as fashions, friends, and flirtations with local suitors.¹⁰⁹

Fanny Marion Chadwick of Toronto was a young woman of prosperous family for whom musical lessons came as a matter of course. At the age of nineteen in 1892, Marion

¹⁰⁷ Amelia “Milly” Harris diary, February 15, 1883, Box 1451, Harris Family Fonds, UWOA. Milly was in England on a lengthy visit at the time this entry was written. Milly tended to be inconsistent in her spelling of the word ‘practice’, thus explaining the two different spellings in the entry above.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., October 5, 1883.

¹⁰⁹ Vida Smythe Diary 1911, entries for May 25, June 3, June 6, F4484-2, AO.

studied the violin with a private teacher. She also played the autoharp, sang the occasional ditty at domestic entertainments, and dabbled at the banjo. The witty, high-spirited Marion found her violin practicing less of a bane than poor Milly Harris hammering at the piano, yet music hardly formed the most important facet of her life. An aspiring playwright, her first love was the theatre. Marion relished the opportunity to watch professional productions downtown and to craft her own amateur theatrics among her circle of acquaintances. Whenever she had a play to rehearse or direct, her violin studies simply took a back seat.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Marion generally enjoyed her lessons and comprehended the entertainment value in having an instrument to play at social gatherings. In particular, she relished musical collaborations with friends. Most of the literature on nineteenth-century musical entertainments presumes a warbling soloist performing before a languorous audience. Marion Chadwick's diaries, however, reveal a more rollicking, participatory musical universe. She played duets with her chums Pack and Mac, small ensemble pieces with her friends the Sweatmans, and often joined impromptu rounds of fiddle music at get-togethers.¹¹¹ Cultural improvement did not always provide the impetus for these gatherings. For instance, Chadwick spent one evening with her friend Mac learning to play the popular tune "Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ay." A few months later, she placed a question mark next to the word "music" in her diary entry describing a jolly violin, banjo, and piano session with the Preston family.¹¹² On special occasions, the hilarity would reach fever pitch. For the Queen's Birthday in 1892,

¹¹⁰ Fanny Marion Chadwick Diaries, March 3, 1892, p. 36; May 25, 1892, p. 76, MS 573, AO. Chadwick preferred to use her middle name, Marion.

¹¹¹ Ibid., February 2, 1892, p. 22; April 11, 1892, p. 53; April 14, 1892, p. 54; April 15, 1892, p. 54; May 5, 1892, p. 62; May 7, 1892, p. 64; June 4, 1892, p. 80; June 6, 1892, p. 81; June 9, 1892, p. 82; June 24, 1892, pp. 90-91.

¹¹² Ibid., June 6, 1892, p. 81; August 19, 1892, p. 145.

Chadwick and her circle travelled to a hotel in Barrie where “We girls Ricked up a terrific row— The men a terrific-er & that *fiddle* the most terrific-est. It went on till 12. am.”¹¹³ Music in these instances provided not only a source of entertainment, but also a language of bonding between existing friends. Rehearsing and performing together gave them the opportunity to co-operate in something visceral, which complemented their more quotidian forms of verbal interaction.

Chadwick recognized the discrepancy between the stately musical soirées as reported in the press, and her own experience of lively musical merrymaking. While visiting friends in Albany, New York, in November 1892, Chadwick and the ladies of the house organized a “Dramatic Operatic and Burlesque-a-tic Entertainment” one evening in the parlour. Marion reviewed the performances in her diary in a delightful satire on contemporary musical reportage: “The opening piece on the programme was a violin solo by Signora Mariona..... etc. for sweetness of touch, & tenderness of tone Signora may be reckoned with the greatest musicians of the Father Land..... The violin is like a rippling brook in the hand of nature.....”¹¹⁴ Marion’s entry pokes fun at the mock elegance of her musical soirée, but it also shows a keen awareness of the solemn yet hyperbolic conventional language surrounding such events. While not intended as a serious social commentary, Chadwick’s entry raises the question of whether reporters tried to invest concerts with more dignity and formality than they actually possessed.

Finally, domestic music played a crucial role in families where one or more members exhibited strong musical inclinations. To some degree, practice did mirror prescription in that musical mothers frequently played a crucial role in imparting musical

¹¹³ Ibid., May 24, 1892, pp. 72-74. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., November 16, 1892, pp. 220-21. Longer marks in original.

appreciation to their offspring. Pianist Louise McDowell (b. 1872), for instance, had been “from infancy surrounded by rare musical influences to which I must have instinctively responded.”¹¹⁵ The daughter of a minister who moved frequently between various congregations in Peterborough and Peel counties, Louise’s sense of home likely hinged on the people within it as opposed to a specific locale.¹¹⁶ She remembered her mother lending her skills on the keyboard and her “glorious voice” to family entertainments. Louise later suspected that the life of a minister’s wife and mother of six children must have been an arduous lot. Still, she cherished the memories of her musical family raising their voices in song: “And when night fell, and [sister] Jessie and I were tucked into bed over the parlour, mother seated herself at the piano, my brother and sisters surrounded her, and to her accompaniment they sang ballads, operatic airs, anthems, etc., and listening, I was lulled to sleep long before the music ceased.”¹¹⁷

Musical sensibilities could, however, just as easily pass down to a male child. Musician, conductor, and composer Ernest Macmillan (1893-1973) traced his musical beginnings to his parents. His father possessed a thorough knowledge of hymnology. His mother, meanwhile, played piano and “though her training had been the then customary one of an ‘accomplished’ young lady, she played, as I recalled, tastefully and fluently; in later life however she refused to play while I was in the house.”¹¹⁸ Macmillan’s statement depicts the negative perceptions under which many lady amateurs laboured, and to which he himself was not entirely immune. Interestingly, Mrs. Macmillan appears to have

¹¹⁵ Louise McDowell, *Past and Present: A Canadian Musician’s Reminiscences* (Kirkland Lake, ON: 1957), 12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vii, 4.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8, 13.

¹¹⁸ Ernest Macmillan, unpublished memoir, p. 2, Box 126, Ernest Macmillan Fonds, MUS 7, LAC.

absorbed some of the prejudice over her lifetime, as indicated by her later refusal to perform in front of her professionally trained adult son.

When another young woman, Mamie Clark (1882-1955), found her dream of becoming a pharmacist thwarted by her conservative father, she resigned herself to a life of domesticity by indulging in her other love, music. She played the piano and possessed a pleasant contralto singing voice. Though she embodied the image of the musical wife after her marriage to Ernest Wright, she was hardly the domestic goddess propounded in etiquette books. As her daughter Mary recalled, Mamie could not sew very well, nor did she worry much about tidying. While Mary's earliest early memories drew close connections between music and spaces of family leisure, this space was more eccentric than tastefully proper: "My memories of the living room, which was not the parlor, are of a place where the piano and a variety of musical instruments and music stands occupied almost all of the space and nothing was ever put away. They stood ready to be played morning, noon and night and somebody was always doing so. We lived and breathed music. To sing harmony was as natural as breathing."¹¹⁹ Mamie's five children all inherited her love of music, and she took a personal interest in teaching her four sons as well as her daughter the rudiments of singing and staff notation.¹²⁰

The Littlehales family of Hamilton exemplifies a musical family headed by a father (Fig. 3.6). Thomas Littlehales, whom daughter Lillian later described as "the most ardent lover of music I think I have ever known in all my many days," was a self-taught double-bass player and chamber music aficionado.¹²¹ He insisted on giving his six

¹¹⁹ Mary Jean Wright, *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (London, ON: Mary J. Wright, 1997), 73-75.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75-76, 82.

¹²¹ Littlehales, "A Musical Upbringing," 7.

children (four girls and two boys) the musical training he had yearned for during his youth in England. In addition to its aesthetic benefits, Thomas believed that ensemble playing would help foster ties amongst his offspring. Lillian recalled that her father

... could nearly always succeed in getting a four-part group together for at least half an hour or so, for we all six had been put to work on some one stringed instrument, – piano lessons were thrown in just for good measure. Father himself could take a cello part when necessary – could ‘play at it’ as he used to say – and in times of violent need even Mother would be pressed into service, playing in the most elementary fashion on one of the children’s violins. Dear long-suffering mother, who not only had to keep us all up to our daily practisings [*sic*], but never complained at having to hear the unholy noises that issued from different parts of the house at all times, week in and week out. There were six of us, you must remember, and we had two pianos in the house going constantly.¹²²

Lillian’s narrative depicts a household where the mother alone could not play an instrument or even read staff notation.¹²³ Though her father could be zealous in imposing his passion, Lillian remembered him as a warm-hearted man whose enthusiasm proved infectious. All of his children absorbed his love of music, and all but one pursued careers in the field.¹²⁴ Lillian recalled many a happy evening when men from the local band came to perform the flute, the clarinet, and the oboe along with the family string ensemble: “these men, too, becoming infused with the spirit of love for the soul satisfying discourse in sound which even we could not entirely eliminate from the simplified scores of those heavenly symphonies! ... The violinists, however, always refusing to be covered up, would accept no such defeat of their good intentions, and would wax *forté* and *forté-er* – zeal, nay, abandon, oozing from their every pore!”¹²⁵ Lillian’s depiction of band

¹²² Littlehales, “A Musical Upbringing,” 11. The six children were: Edith, Sydney, Lillian, Cecil, Florence, and Ethel.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²⁴ Cecil proved the sole exception because he sustained a hand injury that hampered his attempts to play an instrument. See Sylvia Littlehales Nichols, Preface to Littlehales, “A Musical Upbringing,” 4.

¹²⁵ Littlehales, “A Musical Upbringing,” 9.

musicians joining in symphonic fare, of she and her sisters performing with the men, of vivacity overtaking elegance, stands as a stark contrast to the era's prescriptive literature.

Furthermore, immigrant families cherished ethnic musical traditions where men as well as women performed in the home. Violinist Maurice Solway (1906-2001) recalled glorious evenings as a child making music with his father, his brothers, his sister, and his cousins in their "cramped quarters" in Toronto's Jewish district. Though his father had been a bandleader in the Old Country, Solway insisted that the other Russian-Jewish men in the neighbourhood "were, like my father, capable on more than one instrument and passable singers besides." Pianos remained the purview of daughters, but otherwise Russian-Jewish men prided themselves on their musical skills.¹²⁶

The symbiotic relationship between music and family bonding helps explain why musical interests so often followed kinship lines. Mary Wright, Louise McDowell, Lillian Littlehales, and Maurice Solway were admittedly remembering events from several decades past. Nevertheless, even rose-tinted nostalgia may be regarded as evidence of the ways in which music can help constitute memory. Victorians and Edwardians were well aware of this notion, though they often expressed it in sentimental language. As one writer of the *Farmer's Advocate* enthused: "What memories are sometimes conjured up by 'old songs!' There is a subtle charm and power in music which seems to belong to it alone... Often *one* special air or chord will recall, with almost cruel force, some lost scene or loved one, whist other airs, reminiscences of the same time, will make but a faint impression."¹²⁷ In addition to providing an emotional backdrop for memories of times

¹²⁶ Maurice Solway, *Recollections of a Violinist* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1984), 16-17.

¹²⁷ "Old Songs," *Farmer's Advocate*, February 15, 1899, p. 101. Emphasis in original. For more on music and memory, see Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 63-68.

past, music could equally serve as a form of communication between family members at great distances from each other. Particularly as memories of daily interactions with an absent family member became fainter, music could help establish a common point of interest between lives that had started to diverge.¹²⁸ The correspondence of the highly musical Ambrose and Saunders families represent two iterations of this phenomenon.

The Ambroses of Hamilton boasted three generations of musical practitioners. The patriarch of the second generation was Robert Steele Ambrose (1824-1908), a musician and composer who earned the bulk of his income by teaching piano. Though his elder three sons lacked any musical enthusiasm, a beloved fourth child named Paul followed in his father and grandfather's footsteps to become a pianist, organist and composer. Due to a dearth of local prospects, Paul took a position as organist of a church in New York shortly before his eighteenth birthday. His departure resulted in a voluminous correspondence between him and his family, in which music formed a constant subject of discussion. Robert would regularly ask Paul for information about the latest concerts and publications from the metropolis. Paul's mother, Lily, was not a musician herself, but over the course of her marriage she had developed a discerning ear and kept Paul up to date about the various Hamilton concerts she had attended. Meanwhile, Paul's younger siblings Howard, Nora, and Essie, would occasionally dictate a letter for their parents to write. Nora and Essie, in particular, were mere children when Paul went away. Though the girls' messages would prattle on about dolls and visitors, one can sense the pride with which they clung to music as an interest held in common

¹²⁸ Sarah Katherine Gibson explores how Scottish identity became a shared language for families separated by emigration in "Self-Reflection in the Consolidation of Scottish Identity: A Case Study in Family Correspondence, 1805-50," in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 30-31.

with a brother who no longer formed a part of their daily lives. Nora and Essie also used their musical accomplishments as a shorthand means of communicating to Paul information about their intellectual and creative development. As their mother wrote in one family missive: “I always forget to give you Essie’s message ‘Does Paul know where I am in [the music book] Jean Manns: Am I as far as the “Shepherd’s song” does he think’ — she has just finished it.”¹²⁹

The Saunders family of London, Ontario, were an eminent clan who spent their professional lives as scientists and their leisure time as musicians. The family consisted of five brothers (William, Henry, Charles, Percy, and Fred) as well as a sister named Annie. Their mother, an amateur pianist, ensured that the children received elementary training on the keyboard. In addition, Henry learned to play the cello and the violin. Charles played the flute, sang tenor, and later in life learned the viola. Percy played the violin.¹³⁰ The spectrum of instruments likely represented a concerted strategy on behalf of their parents to encourage the siblings to practice together as an ensemble.¹³¹ Annie, the sole daughter, was ironically the least active musician of the lot. As she grew older, she contented herself with organizing family musical events and listening enthusiastically from the sidelines. Four of the brothers embarked on scientific careers, which led them to

¹²⁹ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, March 28, 1887, p. 235. See also Auntie to Paul Ambrose, January 29, 1888, pp. 499-502; Nora Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, November 18, 1886, pp. 78-79; Essie Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, November 18, 1886, pp. 80-83, Ambrose Collection, HPL. Paul’s own letters to his family are not in the collection, and have likely not survived. The Ambrose and the Littlehales families knew each other and occasionally met for musical evenings. Lily Ambrose found the Littlehales clan a tad informal for her tastes, though she admired their jollity and kindness. See Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 8, 1889, pp. 771 - 772; Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 22, 1889, pp. 785-786.

¹³⁰ “Biennial Reunion of Saunders Clan,” unplaced clipping July 1928; Isobel C. Armstrong, “Music One of Strong Magnets for Saunders Family Reunion,” unplaced clipping; Fred Landon, “The Saunders,” *London Free Press*, October 2, 1952, p. 4; Rose Macdonald, “Saunders is Artist Also ‘Cellist, At 85,” *Telegram*, June 10, 1950; Lawrence Mason, “Distinguished Canadian Family Sets Ideal Example in Habitual Playing of Chamber Music in the Home Circle,” *The Globe*, July 2, 1932, p. 14. All in Envelope 3 (Newspaper Clippings—Biographical Sketches), Box 5429, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

¹³¹ Musical authorities encouraged teaching one’s children a variety of instruments for this very reason. See Gillett, *Musical Women*, 101.

far-flung laboratory and academic postings in Ottawa, London (Ontario), and New England. The fifth, Henry, became a cellist. The family members kept up a regular correspondence, and in spite of four of the brothers' common scientific backgrounds, they wrote on musical topics far more frequently. They discussed their favourite compositions, sent each other piles of sheet music, and shared the concert news of their respective communities. The family held reunions once every two years, which gave the brothers the opportunity of performing their beloved chamber music together. These reunions became increasingly elaborate: the musical portion alone involved lengthy arrangements to set up a programme, to distribute sheet music in advance to the geographically distant performers, to rehearse the individual parts, and to select local musicians to cover whatever instruments they lacked. William, who relished the role of the bossy eldest brother, often spearheaded the first round of planning: "The list of concerted music which we have here follows, and a specially urgent message for Percy to bring an unstated quantity of sonatas for violin and piano. I should judge by the enthusiasm exhibited at this end that a bushel and a half would be about right."¹³² These chamber concerts were crucial to the perceived success of the wider event. As Charles attested in 1919, "A reunion without music would be a fraud."¹³³ The reunions thus enabled the siblings to indulge their creative energies through musical ensembles, which required co-operation and arguably a level of bonding that transcended the spoken word.

The darker side to music working as a language of familial bonding was the likelihood of non-musical offspring feeling left out. Robert Ambrose admitted to his wife

¹³² William E. Saunders, "Family Circular" letter, May 28, 1917, Envelope 14 (Special Letters: 1886-1943), Box 5434, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

¹³³ Charles Saunders, "Circular letter," March 29, 1919, Envelope 14 (Special Letters: 1886-1943) Box 5434, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

that Paul was his favourite child and worth more to him than all the others combined.

Paul's three elder brothers Herby, George, and Percy did not inherit the family musical gene, and Mrs. Ambrose often complained about their infrequent correspondence.

Although this parental frustration did not entirely result from the boys' lack of musical ambitions, it likely played a role. The three eldest Ambrose brothers could not have been entirely insensible of their parents' partialities. Indeed, their avoidance of home may have derived at least partially from a lack of engagement in the family's constant round of music making.¹³⁴ Though music could act an emotional language of family bonding, it drew lines of exclusion as well as inclusion.

In sum, domestic music making was never simply an innocent leisure pursuit. It was an activity saturated with the weighty ideological baggage of the not-unrelated discourses of refinement, parlour space, gender roles, and family relations. Prescriptive expectations regarding who performed which types of music for what purposes exerted significant forces on everyday thinking. Many who wished to appear cultured, prosperous, respectable, or feminine felt prompted to cultivate musical habits, even in the absence of strong personal inclination. At the same time, musical practitioners were not totally imprisoned by these constructs. Evidence from diaries, letters, memoirs and other personal documents complicates the picture in many ways. Refinement ostensibly referred to the urban bourgeoisie, but the term was flexible enough for immigrants and farmers to consider themselves elegantly leisured. Gender prescriptions deemed home

¹³⁴ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, April 29, 1887, pp. 274- 278, Ambrose Collection, HPL. See Auntie to Paul Ambrose, January 29, 1888, pp. 499-502 regarding Percy, George, and Herby's lack of interest in music. Of the three elder sons, Herbert proved the most dutiful. He kept up a fairly regular relationship with his parents, and even (along with Paul) provided them with long-term financial support. Percy and George, however, kept their distance except in times of dire need.

music women's domain; yet plenty of men indulged their musical talents and plenty of women did not. Domestic music encouraged family and social bonding in the respectable sanctity of the parlour, although such entertainments could be lively and boisterous. Moreover, if some family members responded to the music's pull, others just as surely pushed away. What unites this fragmented historical portrait is the fact that passive acceptance, active engagement, and even downright rejection of music held deeper social and cultural meanings. For better or for worse, music mattered.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT ONE MAY TEACH ANOTHER MAY LEARN:

MUSIC LESSONS UNDER PRIVATE TEACHERS AND LADIES' COLLEGES

Some householders purchased an instrument without the slightest intention of playing it; however, the majority of consumers at least attempted to produce some kind of music. One could not perform notated music, at least not in any significant way, without instruction. In 1880, the average Southwestern Ontario music student had recourse to two options: the private teacher or the private ladies' college. Beginning with the opening of The Toronto Conservatory of Music in 1887, music conservatories came to dominate musical instruction across the nation. This chapter will investigate the private teacher conundrum: who they were, how they taught, and why certain segments of the musical population wished to enact reforms. Chapter Five will go on to discuss the conservatory era and the changes that occurred as musical education shifted to specialized institutions.

The primary source corpus for musical education is in some ways exceedingly rich, and in other ways vexingly sparse. Leading musicians penned numerous articles to the press elaborating favourite pedagogical principles, complaining about ignorant peers, and congratulating themselves on their own reforming efforts. Their writings privilege

exceptional and infamous teachers over the less newsworthy deeds of the average or even the fairly good ones. By contrast, one rarely finds accounts detailing the everyday tedium of giving or receiving a lesson. Conservatories are well represented in the historical record, while the informal practices of private teachers, family members, and autodidacts languish. Memoirs contain the fallacies of retrospective accounts, yet they are crucial at shedding light on practices that would otherwise lie shrouded in darkness. The citing of personal accounts does not imply that these experiences were universal. It simply demonstrates a range of attitudes that public sources do not adequately capture.

As a final note, the following analysis breaks down musical instruction into separate headings for the purpose of simplicity. It must be stressed, however, that these various divisions were not mutually exclusive. A music teacher could easily alternate between a ladies' college, private students, and a conservatory in order to garner enough students to secure a living wage.¹ The one area into which private music teachers did not tread was the public school system. Public schools in Ontario provided, at best, basic lessons in group singing and note recognition and, at worst, no instruction at all. For these reasons, the tumultuous narrative of public music will not be discussed in these chapters.²

¹ Toronto Conservatory of Music instituted a rule whereby conservatory staff could not teach privately, but these regulations had possibly become a dead letter as early as 1893. See Gaynor G. Jones, "The Fisher years: The Toronto Conservatory of Music, 1886-1913," in *Three Studies, CanMus Documents no. 4* (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1989), 88, 93, 96-97, 102.

² J. Paul Green and Nancy F. Vogan, *Music Education in Canada: A Historical Account* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 57- 68; 70-71.

The Great Chain of Being: Types of Private Music Instructors

For the purposes of this chapter, *private music lessons* will be defined as any lessons taking place outside the auspices of an educational institution. The term is a loose one and encompasses a wide range of practices. Lessons could take place in the student's home, the teacher's home, a private studio, or even a church. Instructors came from a variety of backgrounds and practiced their *métier* with varying degrees of success. Many combined teaching with some other type of musical activity, be it performance, accompaniment, conducting the local band or choir, or even retailing musical instruments. For these multi-tasking practitioners, "teaching was just one facet of their endeavours in a society which reveled in amateur artistic pursuits."³

The first type of private instructor was the highly trained, performance-driven musician. Celebrated concert artists took a handful of students in order to supplement their income. Other musicians, by necessity or by choice, relinquished the concert circuit in favour of full-time teaching and enlivened their schedule with the occasional performance. Though the number of male teachers was not insignificant, the field contained a high proportion of female practitioners. Having been encouraged to cultivate musical skills in their youth, many of the more gifted lady performers were shocked to discover that they had "won readier access to pupils than to platforms."⁴ The life of a professional musician was already economically precarious, but gender proved a further impediment to success. Social censure against female musicians appearing in public had

³ J. Paul Green, "Music Education," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (hereafter *EMC*) <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/music-education> (accessed January 24, 2012).

⁴ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 77.

declined over the final decades of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the challenge of negotiating (or choosing between) marriage and a career remained.⁵ For women, teaching offered the prospect of employing one's skills to achieve a measure of financial independence without the personal sacrifices that a performing life would entail.

A second type of private instructor included those for whom a performing career had never been a serious consideration. Lacking the educational opportunities, the prodigious gifts, or the ambitions of performance-bound musicians, they advanced to a point in their studies at which they felt sufficiently competent to teach in their local communities. Lest one underestimate the sacrifices required for pursuing higher education in music, it should be emphasized that such endeavours usually involved a lengthy foreign sojourn. Before the flowering of Canadian conservatories in the late 1880s, and indeed for several decades thereafter, it was generally considered necessary for aspiring concert artists to spend a couple of years studying in Europe. Canadian musicians who could not manage to leave the country therefore faced limited career prospects of which teaching usually proved the best alternative. The skill set of this disparate sub-group of teachers varied considerably. Some were extremely proficient musicians. Others were more moderately experienced, preferring to teach novice and intermediate pupils. Some worked long hours, while others taught only a handful of students per week. The latter included violinist Harry Adaskin (1901-1994) of Toronto, who began teaching at the tender age of fourteen and travelled between students' homes

⁵ Paula Gillet, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), chapters 4 to 7; Beth Abelson Macleod, "'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?' Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990," *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (1993): 291-308; Judith Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 325-348.

on his bicycle.⁶ Organ prodigy Ernest Macmillan (1893-1973) started at a similar age, giving lessons to a minister's daughter for ten cents apiece: "these [lessons] did not net me much after deducting car-fare but I felt that I had gained in dignity and importance. Probably I was a very bad teacher, for my own instruction had been deplorably casual."⁷

Women also formed a considerable portion of this homegrown teaching community, looking to kin and community networks to ensure a steady stream of pupils. Ellen Ambrose (1851-1936) was a Hamilton spinster who taught piano both privately and under the auspices of Mrs. Thomas Chestnut's Ladies' School. Ellie had received the bulk of her music education from her uncle, Robert Ambrose. Despite her lack of formal qualifications or a performance career, she was by all accounts a very competent teacher.⁸ Aware that Ellie did not always receive the credit she deserved, Robert once decided to give her one of his advanced students. When Ellie hosted a student recital some months later, Robert convinced his niece to showcase this student in order to prove to the community "that it was not only beginners she was competent to teach."⁹ Robert's other niece Maggie Ambrose (1860-1938) alternated between teaching and playing organ at weddings and at church services in order to support herself and her widowed mother.¹⁰

The final group of private teachers consisted of charlatans who, armed with a superficial knowledge of music, tried to reap money from a gullible public. Aware that

⁶ Harry Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938* (Vancouver: November House, 1977), 69.

⁷ Ernest Macmillan, unpublished memoir, pp. 6-8, Box 126, Ernest Macmillan Fonds, MUS 7, LAC. The author inadvertently skipped page 7 when numbering the pages of his draft.

⁸ One of Ellie's pupils won a gold medal for music at a nearby ladies' college and another received the highest music examination results in the city of Brantford. A former student later recalled that Ellie Ambrose "had a great wealth of knowledge about the music we were going to hear on a programme. She impressed me as being a fine teacher with unlimited patience for the sincere student and no use for a lazy one. Her gifts of insight and understanding for the young people she taught, have left them with a great love for her," Duet Club 75th Anniversary Booklet, Box 6, R.G. 12 Series B, Duet Club Archive File, HPL.

⁹ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, June 9, 1887, pp. 326-327; Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹⁰ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, April 11, 1887, pp. 253-257. The Ambrose family tree states that Maggie's father had died in 1876.

Canadians tended to worship foreign musicians at the expense of native talent, many pretenders adopted exotic-sounding names.¹¹ These musical highwaymen formed the stuff of legend in the cautionary tales of the musical press. In 1890, the music editor of *Saturday Night* noticed an advertisement for a voice teacher using the “Old Italian Method” acquired from the brother of a famous singer. The editor observed that the teacher’s blatant misspelling of the famous singer’s surname provided a good indication that the enterprise may not be all that it claimed.¹² A decade later, a disgruntled letter writer complained to *Saturday Night* about the “musical tramps” who descended upon Toronto during the summer months while regular music teachers took their vacation. These charismatic fakirs used big-city American origins, flattery, and self-professed innovative methods to steal pupils from Toronto’s bona fide instructors. The culprits fled after a short series of mediocre lessons, leaving a “barrenness of results or positive injury” by way of strained vocal chords or fingers. Worse still, the pupils returned to their regular teachers “puffed up with the false conceit and superciliousness taught them by these prophets from a strange land.”¹³ This hyperbolic depiction almost certainly came from the pen of one of the city’s respectable music educators, for its tone reeks of self-injury. Still, it contains grains of truth. As the historian Keith Walden affirms, late-nineteenth-century Toronto harboured a variety of visiting confidence artists whose web of activities extended far beyond the music profession. Shoddy goods, false credentials, and forged bank notes frequently appeared during large events such as the Industrial Exhibition. The authorities’ warnings and the public’s own morbid fascination, however,

¹¹ Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 187.

¹² Metronome, “Music,” *Saturday Night*, January 4, 1890, p. 6.

¹³ Honor, “Music,” *Saturday Night*, July 14, 1900, p. 10.

inflated the influence of such tricksters out of proportion with their actual numbers.¹⁴ Nor were all itinerant music teachers necessarily frauds. Some were genuine practitioners motivated by a self-styled moral quest to educate the populace. The choirs they assembled and led became known as singing schools, its members acquiring a basic knowledge of musical notation in the process. A successful endeavour would produce a choir capable of continuing on its own after the teacher's departure. Ontario had enjoyed a strong tradition of singing schools during the early nineteenth century, and the custom persisted into the later Victorian era.¹⁵ Louise McDowell recalled that during her childhood in the early 1880s near Bolton, her small community witnessed the memorable visit of a Mr. Ketchum. Originally hailing from Peterborough, Mr. Ketchum traipsed throughout the hinterland offering music in the form of a few short lessons.

His approach was to visit the schools and ... gather the school children together after school every day for a week, and to teach them a program of songs, asking no fee, but permission to have them give a concert for which a modest fee would be asked to be remitted to him as recompense for his trouble. He would provide all the music for the venture, but reclaim it afterwards ... [the concert] was a great success, and as Mr. Ketchum drove away next day a group of us gathered to cheer his departure.¹⁶

Although a definitive measurement is impossible, the musical fakir phenomenon seems to have declined as Ontario's musical education became more standardized and the public more cognizant of the qualities of a good teacher. Even so, it was not unusual to find advertisements in the local press promising musical proficiency in a few easy steps. An advertisement for the Numeral Method Music Company of Canada in the *London*

¹⁴ Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 107-118.

¹⁵ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 84-86, 99, 121; Elaine Keillor, written comments to author, December 12, 2013.

¹⁶ Louise McDowell, *Past and Present: A Canadian Musician's Reminiscences* (Kirkland Lake, ON: 1957), 16-17.

Free Press in 1914 urged the reader to send away for their Numeral Method invention, priced at \$5.00. The “Invention” was never precisely described; was it a mechanical device or merely a new learning method? At any rate, the invention would enable the purchaser to learn to play the piano in “an hour or two,” even if he or she had no prior experience.¹⁷ Another too-good-to-be-true advertisement appeared ten days later, offering “Music Lessons Free in Your Own Home” courtesy of the generically titled U.S. School of Music, New York. Once again, the reader had only to send away for “Ninety-six lessons ... for Piano, Organ, Violin, Banjo, Cornet, Sight Singing, Mandolin or ‘Cello...” Assuming the company was legitimate, the probable source of profit would have derived from the purchase of sheet music as well as the requisite instruments themselves, which the school generously sold.¹⁸ The *Guelph Mercury* mocked these schemes in 1917, observing: “It is amazing to think that in an age comparatively enlightened so many people are fooled by Royal Roads to Learning.”¹⁹

Ontario’s musical establishment believed that the root of the charlatan problem lay in the utter absence of a professional music educators’ association or even any recognized standards for music teachers. Accreditation of some kind did boost a teacher’s reputation and those with the resources to do so clamoured to acquire the right to place initials after their names. This usually required looking out of province, since Ontario had no formal music schools (other than the music departments attached to ladies colleges) until well into 1880s. Music diplomas or certificates from British institutions were generally thought quite prestigious. Some instructors, however, brandished laurels from

¹⁷ *London Free Press*, February 9, 1914, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Weekly Free Press and Farm and Home*, February 19, 1914, p. 6. See also “Learn Music Free! In Your Own Home. New, Easy Method,” *Everywoman’s World* (January 1917): 39.

¹⁹ *Guelph Mercury*, May 5, 1917, p. 11.

non-existent or third-rate institutions, banking on the public's implicit faith in an impressive sounding name. The music editor of *Saturday Night* bemoaned the occasions when an aspiring teacher presented "some flummery in the form of an appendage of capital letters after his name which, when dissected and analyzed, have as much significance as the letters K.O.R.A.M., ... signifying Kicked Out of the Royal Academy of Music!"²⁰ Even those in possession of genuine certification did not necessarily excel at teaching. The Toronto musician F.H. Torrington argued that one could garner foreign conservatory titles for composition, theory, or music history while having lackluster performance or pedagogical skills.²¹ By the same token, plenty of capable music teachers did not hold diplomas, particularly in the years before Ontario possessed conservatories.

Consequently, the field of private musical instruction was highly diverse. Teachers from a variety of backgrounds took on pupils for a variety of different reasons. While musical and pedagogical experience offered a useful way of distinguishing between the effective teacher and the poseur, such methods were by no means infallible.

Tricks of the Trade: Life as a Private Music Teacher

If one was fortunate enough to obtain a regular supply of pupils, teaching music offered the prospect of a steady, if modest, income. A host of factors could, however, easily hamper one's chances of earning a living wage. One had to be careful to offer a skill for which there was some demand. Piano, violin, organ, and voice tended to be safe options,

²⁰ Moderato, "Music," *Saturday Night*, October 26, 1895, p. 10. See also Moderato, "Music," *Saturday Night*, September 17, 1898, p. 10.

²¹ Metronome, "Music," *Saturday Night*, January 11, 1890, p. 6. See also Ehrlich, *Music Profession*, 136-137.

partly because these instruments possessed a wide repertoire, and partly because female students could play them with impunity. Teachers of unusual instruments such as the oboe or the euphonium would have had a much harder time attracting disciples. Adopting a popular instrument did not guarantee success, however. The supply of music educators in late nineteenth-century Canada far exceeded even the high levels of public demand for their services.²² Social ties within the locality proved important for a prospective teacher, and instructors from afar often faced a hard road in gaining public interest. Mary Jean Wright, daughter of piano manufacturer Ernest Wright, recalled that many would-be instructors lacked both a marketable instrument and local ties when seeking a clientele in her hometown of Strathroy, Ontario. As a child in the late 1910s, she witnessed the arrival and departure of numerous teachers who rented studio space in the rooms above her father's music store: "The lessons were sometimes on exotic instruments such as the Hawaiian guitar, occasionally they were for dancing. Father was aware these teachers were not likely to recruit many pupils, so, he would provide them with space at no cost, if they would just give his children a few lessons."²³ Sometimes even local roots and a popular instrument could not guarantee success. Charles Saunders, the Ottawa chemist who later achieved fame for the discovery of Marquis wheat, originally embarked on a career as a music teacher. Saunders tried to establish a practice for himself in his native London in 1894, but his efforts failed. Brought up on a steady diet of classical music, he refused to teach popular songs. As he later recalled: "I was doomed to fail because my

²² Regarding the oversupply of music teachers see *The Globe*, April 30, 1904, p. 18. The same problem also occurred in Great Britain. Between 1870 and 1930, the British population doubled yet the number of musicians during this period grew by seven hundred percent (Ehrlich, *Music Profession*, 51, 70, 123-124).

²³ Mary Jean Wright, *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (London: Mary J. Wright, 1997), 59.

standard was too high, and I had no friends. I was not a popular young man and one has to be that or to sing well. I was not fitted to beat up recruits.”²⁴

Another problem facing the private music teacher was the difficulty of obtaining payment from one’s pupils. Many families paid for music lessons on an informal personal credit system, leaving lump sums quarterly or whenever they happened to have the funds ready. Paul Ambrose of Hamilton offered music lessons at thirty cents each and had garnered a number of students by the time he moved to New York City late in 1886. For months after his departure, Paul’s mother Lily and cousin Ellie collected outstanding accounts that came trickling in.²⁵ Paul’s father Robert managed a full teaching schedule between his private students and those at the local ladies’ college. The elder Ambrose, however, constantly fretted about his finances. By Christmas of 1888 the college owed him \$1400.00 in pay, a significant drain on a man at the head of a large family.²⁶ As Robert once remarked, “With regard to the future I shut my eyes, & dont [*sic*] bother. It is of no use worrying about what one cannot control.”²⁷

Teaching music was often hard work, particularly when one’s pupils did not possess strong musical sensibilities. Eminent teachers could afford to be more discerning. Singer and vocal teacher Arthur Blight, for instance, insisted upon an audition from prospective students upon the grounds that his “time and reputation were valuable.”²⁸ Most instructors did not possess this luxury. Ellie Ambrose took over a number of Paul’s

²⁴ *New York Herald Tribune* clipping, September 15, 1929, p. 13, Envelope 3 (Newspaper Clippings—Biographical Sketches), Box 5429, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

²⁵ See for instance Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, December 17, 1886, pp. 105-107; Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, March 14, 1887, pp. 219-222, Ambrose Collection, HPL. Lily also reported on April 18, 1887, that Ellie was having trouble collecting money from a student.

²⁶ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, December 23, 1888, p. 741.

²⁷ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 27, 1887, p. 208.

²⁸ Kathleen (Blight) Beamer, “Remembering Arthur Blight,” p. 5, Envelope 1, Box 1, Arthur Blight Collection, MUS 31, LAC.

students after his departure, and wrote to her cousin detailing the successes (or lack thereof) of his former charges. “Lucy Ghent is a credit to you & I just hope her parents will be kind enough to let her finish the year with me – the worst of it is they are delighted with Lizzie who I believe scrambles thro [*sic*] everything ... The others are not nearly so interesting. Gracie being lazy & Gertie to put it mildly – slow...¹⁸ Robert Ambrose would have supported his niece’s views on teaching youngsters of varying abilities. Harboured a collection of pupils that ranged from the “peculiar” to the “very quick & pleasant” Robert felt that “these young pupils do take it out of you & I sometimes feel pretty tired. I am however thankful for employment & if I do sometimes get a little too much I prefer it to too little.”²⁹ Novice students were not the only ones guilty of lackadaisical musicianship. As teacher Paul Wells remarked in 1919,

A pupil of mine once replied, after I had been appealing to her musical nature, that she had no real interest in music, that she was only studying in order to win a degree to give her more prestige as a teacher, and that after she had won her degree she intended never to touch the piano again!! ... This is an extreme case, to be sure, but I sometimes become quite discouraged over the way in which pupils bring pieces to me – accurately prepared as far as time and notes go, but painfully lacking on the musical side.³⁰

Sometimes, however, the pupils grew frustrated with their instructors. Private music teachers being self-employed, most arrangements with students occurred in the absence of any written contract. While the system fostered countless productive working relationships, a lazy instructor could easily squander a student’s time and money. In November 1898, one disgruntled pupil wrote to *Saturday Night* complaining about his teacher’s propensity to end half-hour lessons two minutes early.³¹ The following week, the paper received a second missive from a student who confessed to having similar

²⁹ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, November 14, 1886, p. 53, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

³⁰ Paul Wells, “The Aesthetic Aspect of Musical Study,” *Conservatory Quarterly Review* (May 1919): 63.

³¹ Moderato, “Music,” *Saturday Night*, November 12, 1898, p. 10.

problems with his or her piano instructor. “I have a teacher just now who reads his newspaper every morning while he is giving me a lesson,” lamented the letter writer, “and a friend of mine tells me that he suspects his teacher of going around the corner once in a while to get a schooner of beer.”³² Even some of the more talented pedagogues displayed unorthodox teaching styles. Ernest Macmillan had comic memories of his childhood organ lessons with Arthur Blakeley, despite the latter’s respected status in Toronto musical circles.³³ “Blakeley was a curious, eccentric character – fundamentally musical but with a touch of the charlatan,” remembered Macmillan. “Lessons were a bit irregular; my teacher owned a motor-boat on Toronto Bay and was apt to turn up an hour or two late, soaking wet, after a duck-shooting expedition. However, I was always able to practise [*sic*] in the interim. Blakeley was a good shot and I remember occasions when, busily practising [*sic*] in his absence, I would be startled by an explosion from the basement of the church where he was engaged in shooting at rats.”³⁴

Depending on one’s attitude, the teaching of music could involve either painstaking toil or reckless gallivanting. Indeed, some instructors may have embraced eccentric practices at least partly as a means of coping with the repetitiveness of student lessons and repertoire. Little did they know that the tolerance for irregular habits was coming to an end. Armed with a new spirit of professionalism, a stalwart group of elite teachers embarked on a crusade to bring uniformity to the field of musical instruction.

³² Moderato, “Music,” *Saturday Night*, November 26, 1898, p. 10.

³³ H.H. Godfrey described Blakeley as one of the city’s musical luminaries in *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (Toronto: s.n., 1897), 18.

³⁴ Macmillan, unpublished memoir, 5-6.

The Trouble with Amateurs: The Stirrings of a Professionalizing Impulse

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Ontario's top musical educators began issuing a clarion call for consistent standards in the teaching of music. They argued that music was a profession, and as such it needed specific criteria for admittance and for the continued practice of one's craft. At a time when the legal and medical ranks had started to form professional societies, it galled elite musical educators to observe that nothing similar had been attempted in on their own turf.³⁵ In doing so, they sought to safeguard the rights of all pupils to receive solid lessons and fair dealing from a qualified instructor. They equally tried to protect their own reputations and those of their hardworking colleagues from being sullied by the practices of their less principled peers. Certainly, the musicians' complaint about lax instructors and uneven standards was a valid one. It is also true that these men and the institutions they created succeeded in improving the overall quality of Canadian musical education. At the same time, their efforts simplified the spectrum of private music instruction into two stark categories: the amateur and the professional. The amateur represented the epitome of everything that was bad in music teaching – the professional, everything that was fine and proper. These writers defined the professional as one whose backgrounds mirrored their own urban, male, elite identity. Their disciplining of musical education thus marginalized alternative teaching practices, denouncing them as unhelpful at best and damaging at worst.

³⁵ For comparisons to the science and medical professions see: Edward Fisher, "Talks with Teachers," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 2, no. 3 (May 1903): 72-73; "Science and Singing," *Musical Canada* 6, no. 9 (January 1912): 296; "Put Restriction on Teaching of Music in Ontario," *London Free Press*, April 14, 1914, p. 5; Peter C. Kennedy, *The Searchlight of Reason, Kennedy-Columbian Conservatory of Music*, AR 780.72971 C578 K25, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

While decrying the antics of here-today-gone-tomorrow charlatans, critics expressed even more concern about the large number of regular music teachers who were either innocently or wilfully incompetent. These teachers, critics argued, committed a host of sins every day of their working lives. First, the miscreants cheated their clients, exacting “a maximum of pay for a minimum of knowledge.”³⁶ John J. Hattstaedt considered musical instruction an honourable way to make a living, yet maintained, “To begin a professional activity ... before one is thoroughly fitted, is a crime. Thousands upon thousands of music students are constantly musically ruined, fraudulently imposed upon.”³⁷ Second, such teachers took business away from deserving professionals. Third, their improper teaching methods turned out students who possessed only a superficial musical knowledge. Critics dubbed the latter process learning to play “pieces.” In other words, students could rush through a handful of pretty songs without much regard to technique, tone, or expression. They could not, however, sight-read, improvise, or understand any of the underlying principles of that which they were so blithely performing.³⁸ Vocal singers were deemed particularly vulnerable. Improper singing methods, the writers claimed, could permanently damage the vocal chords: “You must have noticed how often a singer appears with a great flourish of trumpets as the pupil of Mr. So-and-so, and with a really pleasing fresh voice. She sings for a year or so, and the voice give[s] out. It has lost the grace and charm of youth and freshness, and has no attributes which can replace these. She has been taught by one of those gentlemen, and

³⁶ *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter CMTJ] 7, no. 4 (October 1903): 9.

³⁷ John J. Hattstaedt, *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 2, no. 3 (May 1903): 83.

³⁸ Frank Pineo, “False Art,” *Musical Journal* 5 (May 1887): 66; “Music,” *Saturday Night*, January 28, 1888, p. 7.

has learnt songs, not singing; exercises, not method.”³⁹ Dr. Albert Ham of Toronto, founder and conductor of the city’s National Chorus, owned that he worried over the voices of young singing pupils. He believed that many teachers encouraged talented children to push their voices too early, thus ruining their vocal chords prematurely.⁴⁰

Critics isolated two sorts of amateur teacher, both harmful but each possessing a different level of intent. The first type of wrongdoer was the unconsciously incompetent music teacher. This practitioner possessed some slim musical knowledge that he or she hawked in the hopes of earning a little extra money for creature comforts. Although motivated by money rather than a love of music, the unconscious incompetent was at least honest in the sense of being unaware of the damage he or she inflicted. As Edward Fisher of Toronto expressed it, “The old maxim ‘Learn to do by doing,’ has comforted and consoled many incompetent teachers, and assisted to confirm them indefinitely in their mechanical and irrational methods. ‘Learn to do by knowing’ should always precede and accompany the other maxim...”⁴¹

Almost invariably, critics depicted the unconsciously incompetent teacher as a woman. This was partly in acknowledgment of the large number of lady teachers inhabiting the musical hinterland. It also, however, betrayed the influence of binary thinking which positioned the rational, professional, idealistic male as diametrically opposed to the emotional, amateur, materialistic female. Negative gender stereotypes are

³⁹ “Music,” *Saturday Night*, January 28, 1888, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Albert Ham, “The Study of Singing and Voice Culture,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 2, no. 5 (September 1903): 134-138. Born in England, Ham received his F.R.C.O. (Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists) in 1883, a D.Mus. (Dublin) in 1894, and an honorary D.Mus. (Toronto) in 1906. See Ruth Pincoe, “Albert Ham,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/albert-ham> (accessed January 30, 2012).

⁴¹ Edward Fisher, “Talks with Teachers,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 2, no. 3 (May 1903): 73.

rife in Frank Pineo's 1887 depiction of the unconsciously incompetent music teacher.

Pineo described the typical perpetrator as a

young woman, – lady she would say – who has had a good deal of instruction from some one of about her own standing ... This she trades upon, and people knowing little or nothing about music themselves, employ her. It is cheap, *they think* ... Never was there a greater mistake. This young lady does not mean to be dishonest; in fact, she never gives the matter a thought. She wishes to make a living with as little labor as possible. She would rather teach for a dollar a month than take a place in domestic service. She thinks it is respectable, and will raise her to the rank of a lady.⁴²

This loaded critique asserts that young women take on music students out of social pretension instead of a need to earn a living. The writer assumes that these women hail from working-class backgrounds and that they have chosen music lessons as an alternative to domestic service. Their disdain for the honest toil of manual labour comes out of a combination of laziness, self-importance, and an impudent desire to better themselves. Pineo ignores the possibility that many young women of lower-middle and middle-class origin also needed employment. For those in search of “remunerative but respectable independence,” domestic service did not present a viable option.⁴³ The author moreover downplays the drudgery and constant surveillance that caused even the most hardworking of women to shun the thought of becoming a maid.⁴⁴ By the same token, Pineo downplays the mental and physical strain involved in teaching music for long sittings. Nettie Reesor of Hamilton, for example, was a talented and conscientious piano student doubling as a lady teacher at the local ladies' college in the late 1880s. Nettie's

⁴² Frank Pineo, “False Art,” *Musical Journal* 5 (May 1887): 66. Emphasis in original.

⁴³ Ehrlich, *Music Profession*, 105.

⁴⁴ Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930*, Studies in Gender and History Series, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 50-51.

heavy teaching duties often left her exhausted and unable to devote time to her own musical studies, a fact she frequently bemoaned.⁴⁵

Frank Pineo's second example of female pedagogical incompetence appeared in the form of "the decayed gentlewoman" wishing to ameliorate her distressed financial circumstances. Pineo observed that the gentlewoman in question had likely received her musical training at some sort of "fashionable boarding-school, where, as every one knows, music is taught a little as part of a fashionable education."⁴⁶ The "fashionable boarding-school" reference is inaccurate for late nineteenth-century Ontario where ladies' colleges provided a high standard of musical education. Both of Pineo's sample women obtain their clients for reasons that have nothing to do with their musical abilities. Parents hire the young miss because her half-hourly rate is cheaper than that of a professional. Similarly, they hire the mature gentlewoman out of sympathy. Pineo's article not only castigates the teachers, but the parents who send a child to a mediocre instructor for the first few years on the mistaken belief that anyone could teach the basics. Critics maintained that it was essential for a child to learn correct methods from the start, for a house built upon a shoddy foundation was no house at all but merely a shell.⁴⁷

A missive appearing in the *Canadian Musician* in 1893 focused on the economic competition that lady amateurs introduced into the music education field. It admonished such teachers not only for the harm they wrought upon students, but also for "crowding

⁴⁵ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 5, 1887, pp. 169-176; Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 11, 1887, pp. 180-185; R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, March 12, 1888, pp. 532-535, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

⁴⁶ Frank Pineo, "False Art," *Musical Journal* 5 (May 1887): 66.

⁴⁷ *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1890-1891*, pp. 21-22, Toronto Conservatory of Music—Programs & Misc Items Relating to the Activities of the C.C.M., AR780.7291, Art Room Special Collections, TRL; "Some Stones— Not Moss Covered," *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, p. 27, Toronto College of Music Calendars, AR 780.72971 T59, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

out some worthier and better teacher who depends on teaching for a living.” The article never explicitly named the lower sort of teacher as female, yet the gendering is apparent in the complaint about there being “altogether too much of this ‘teaching for pin money,’ teaching till meeting one’s ‘destiny.’”⁴⁸ The reference to ‘pin money’ evokes the image of a woman earning a little extra income here and there for creature comforts. The reference to meeting one’s ‘destiny’ draws upon the common belief that women entered the workforce merely to bide their time until marriage. Since women did not envision work as a long-term commitment, it was argued, they had no motivation to advocate for better wages or better teaching standards. Both of these images demean female economic efforts as selfish and superfluous. Adopting the tone of a father lecturing a daughter, the *Canadian Musician* told women to “Give place to your betters, and if you must earn ‘pin money,’ do it outside of the music teaching profession.”⁴⁹

The second type of miscreant teacher was the consciously incompetent variety. Gendered male, these musicians either taught below their full capacities or grossly exaggerated their qualifications. Their overriding interest consisted of making money as easily as possible. Some were genuinely knowledgeable in their craft, and had simply become sloppy in the exercise of their duties. The writer Tetrachord admonished those teachers “... who *do* know what is right, and yet do not insist upon their pupils discarding at once all the wretched apologies for music to which they have been accustomed ... *These* are the teachers who are to blame – and that heavily ... Teachers who are really competent, but who do not care to take the trouble.”⁵⁰ Other teachers were guilty not so

⁴⁸ *Canadian Musician* 5, no. 11 (December 1893): 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Tetrachord, “Musical Culture in Canada — A Few Words About Amateurs,” *Musical Journal* 6 (June 1887): 84. Emphasis in original.

much of a lack of ambition, but rather of overextending themselves. These instructors possessed a basic level of musical education, yet they tended to portray themselves as multi-talented marvels. Many banked upon the impressiveness of foreign credentials, as exemplified by Frank Pineo's portrait of "the *master* who has been educated abroad, *for how long* he does not inform us."⁵¹ Others assumed that quantity was better than quality, and sought to become a sort of musical jack-of-all-trades. As the editor of *Saturday Night* quipped, "These are the men who 'study' music until they can tickle the piano a little and write out a few incorrect examples in harmony, play a scale or two on the violin, and learn to play the organ or a piano with pedal attachment...."⁵²

At the upper end of the spectrum were teachers who displayed genuine talent in one branch of music yet, lulled by the promise of money or enhanced personal renown, considered themselves equipped to teach other branches. Instrumental teachers claiming to teach voice seems to have been the most frequent misdemeanour. Aspiring voice teacher Charles Saunders later recalled that "singing is one of the most obscure subjects taught, because the singing effort is so intangible. There is more charlatanism in the teaching of singing than in any other subject."⁵³ Another authority poetically observed that "A vocal teacher of true standing lives and dies by his colors, while there exist a host of self-styled Singing Teachers who suddenly bloom out from the rank and file of such as had hitherto imparted the art of playing, the 'cello, violin or flute."⁵⁴ The professionalizing impulse among the upper echelons of the musical community thus

⁵¹ Frank Pineo, "False Art," *Musical Journal* 5 (May 1887): 66. Emphasis in original.

⁵² "Music," *Saturday Night*, January 28, 1888, p. 7.

⁵³ *New York Herald Tribune* clipping, September 15, 1929, p. 13, Envelope 3 (Newspaper Clippings — Biographical Sketches), Box 5429, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

⁵⁴ Mme Evans Von Klenner, "The Evolution of the Singing Teacher," Part Three, *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 4 (July 1904): 105.

included a plea for greater specialization in teaching. As one teacher phrased it in 1904, specialization represented a higher evolutionary form of the generalist's efforts.⁵⁵

Critics conceded that consciously incompetent music teachers at least partly responded to a series of pressures from without. Tetrachord admitted that many students came to a teacher with "bad habits" so entrenched that they appeared "past all redemption." Eliminating such errors was not a matter of a few well-placed corrections, but rather a slow, painful process of rebuilding a students' technique. Worse, such students did not relish the idea of starting over from scratch; they simply wanted to give their existing skills a final polish.⁵⁶ Parents emerged as another source of blame, for a solicitous Mamma and Papa often wanted to see a tangible return for their investment and frequently favoured the teacher that produced quick results.⁵⁷ Critics believed that with a little persuasion, parents and students would come to appreciate the superior virtues of a "plain, practical musical religion."⁵⁸ In the cases where parents and students could not be made to see reason, they should seek another teacher. Maintaining one's standards for the sake of art was more important than pandering to the vanity of the philistine.

At its most extreme, the push for professionalism resulted in proclamations that teaching music constituted a scientific activity. Taking a cue from Herbert Spencer's evolutionary models of organic social progress, one author charted "The rise of mere singing to the state of formalized vocal science" in a lengthy three-part article in 1904.⁵⁹ In addition to prodigious musical talents, the "modern Singing Teacher" needed a strong

⁵⁵ Mme. Evans Von Klenner, "The Evolution of the Singing Teacher," Part One, *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 2 (March 1904): 40.

⁵⁶ Tetrachord, "Musical Culture in Canada— A Few Words About Amateurs," *Musical Journal* 6 (June 1887): 84-85.

⁵⁷ "Music," *Saturday Night*, January 28, 1888, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mme Evans Von Klenner, "The Evolution of the Singing Teacher," Part One, *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 2 (March 1904): 39.

intellectual grounding in several subjects such as psychology, languages, elocution, as well as the “anatomy and physiology of the vocal organs.”⁶⁰ William G. Armstrong was another scientific singing advocate who believed that: “Science in connection with the voice was unknown to the old masters; voices produced by them were only those to whom nature had been especially kind in bestowing a more equally balanced vocal apparatus, making them quick to respond under the one rule for all voices. Not so to-day; where there existed one great voice in their time, there are many in ours.”⁶¹ Dr. Wesley Mills and William H. Sherwood were other educational authorities whose views on scientific singing influenced a number of Canadian musical educators.⁶²

For this homogeneous group of educated, predominantly male, urban music instructors, the argument for professionalization appeared self-evident. Subjecting music teachers to a code of conduct would ensure an improvement in the quality of teaching and hence the abilities of Canada’s next generation of musicians. As valued members of the white-collar bourgeoisie, professionalization advocates equally wished to protect the reputation of their field. Despite good intentions and a number of valid criticisms, advocates sacrificed nuance in favour of dramatic exposés. They reduced the mottled landscape of private musical education into a clear-cut battle of good versus evil. Men like them posed as the heroes, while all others became obstacles to the march of progress.

⁶⁰ Mme Evans Von Klenner, “Evolution of the Singing Teacher,” Part Two, *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no.3 (May 1904): 74.

⁶¹ William G. Armstrong, “Method,” *Conservatory Monthly* 12, no. 7 (July 1913): 209. See also Armstrong, “Taking Vocal,” *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 2 (June 1915): 30; *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 8 (December 1915): 123.

⁶² “A Plea for More Scientific Habits of Music Study and Piano Practice,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 1, no. 3 (May 1902): 72-73; *Musical Canada* 6, no. 9 (January 1912): 296.

Unmasking the Villains: Alternate Perspectives on Professionalization

Toronto's elite group of musical critics dominated the musical press and later the province's conservatories, and it is easy to be swayed by their impressive words. There were, however, musical practitioners who entertained alternate perspectives on what constituted a good teacher. Less powerful and less coherent than the professionalization pundits, their voices leave gentler traces in the archive. Nonetheless, such authors provide a corrective to simplistic notions of a linear journey to musical progress.

To begin, even some of the supporters of professionalization drew the line at attempts to reduce music to an exact science. Dr. Albert Ham, who had written so passionately about incompetent teachers ruining young voices, refused to embrace scientific teaching. He considered such methods a hindrance to intelligent pedagogy because they encouraged a single, cure-all solution. Vocal teachers would do far better to labour long and hard at their craft in the manner of an artisan, and in so doing obtain an instinctual sense of the voice's capabilities and limits.⁶³ An anonymous author in Toronto's *Musical Journal* of 1888 similarly contended that the best method of teaching music was simply to accommodate the unique needs of individual students.⁶⁴ Later in life, Charles Saunders (the would-be vocal teacher turned scientist) scoffed at the recollection of scientific singing as a turn-of-the-century fad: "Any one with a grounding in science who approaches singing soon finds that among the worst teachers are those who pretend to be scientific." In Saunders' opinion, most scientific singing books simply offered "explanations in unintelligible language which give the reader the impression that

⁶³ Albert Ham, "The Study of Singing and Voice Culture," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 2, no. 5 (September 1903): 134-138.

⁶⁴ *Musical Journal* 16 (April 1888): 54.

he could understand if he took lessons from that teacher.”⁶⁵ Mrs. Lily Ambrose of Hamilton provided a perceptive account of the conceit which underlay scientific methods after listening to an address on the subject by R. Thomas Steele at a local musical soirée in 1887: “really it would have made your hair stand on end to hear the abundantly egotistical address Mr. Steele gave [;] according to him Madame Stiler was the *one person who ever lived* who really understood *how to teach singing* & before she died she wrote to him expressing her satisfaction that she could leave behind her at least one man & (only one) who could carry out her system ...”⁶⁶ Detractors of scientific teaching were thus not deceived by the flurry of elegant rhetoric. They knew that pronouncements about perfect, objective methods could often provide a cloak for individual ambitions.

The general push for professionalism in music education was more widely respected, and the mission for consistent teaching standards did benefit the province overall. Its portrait of the sensible professional in contrast to the clumsy amateur is nevertheless too blunt. First, the eccentric teacher was not necessarily a poor one. Ernest Macmillan, perhaps chastened by his disdain towards his former mentor, remarked:

I hope I am not doing an injustice to Mr. Blakeley’s memory. Casual though he was with regard to such matters as fingering and general technique, he taught me a great deal and above all I learned to treat the organ as a genuinely musical instrument and not a mere machine to be manipulated. It is a lesson that not all organists learn. Moreover, having a considerable mechanical genius, he was able to teach his pupils a good deal about the instrument itself; at an early age I learned how to tune the various types of pipes and to make minor repairs to the action. I only wish I could remember all I knew at that time.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *New York Herald Tribune* clipping, September 15, 1929, p. 13, Envelope 3 (Newspaper Clippings—Biographical Sketches), Box 5429, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

⁶⁶ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, June 2, 1887, p. 316, Ambrose Collection, HPL. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Macmillan, unpublished memoir, 6. In fact, Blakeley doubled as a teacher at the Toronto Conservatory of Music circa 1898 to 1904. He began teaching Macmillan in 1901 and therefore, for all his eccentricities, he was considered ‘professional’ enough to merit a position at the conservatory. See John Becker, “The Early History of the Toronto Conservatory of Music” (M.F.A. thesis, York University, 1983), 205.

Second, experience and credentials were not the only aspects that parents considered when engaging a music teacher. Critics insisted that parents chose amateur teachers either out of gullibility, misplaced sympathy, or parsimony. The Rychman family of Hamilton exemplifies a completely different set of criteria. The Rychmans sent their daughter, Irene, to Paul Ambrose for piano lessons and when Paul moved away, Irene took lessons from his father Robert. Though Robert had more experience and a more prestigious name, the Rychmans longed for Paul to return. Robert was getting older and simply did not have his son's degree of patience for wayward youngsters. He considered Irene an indifferent pupil, and would often berate her for being a "goose" – to the great annoyance of Mrs. Rychman, who witnessed these exchanges.⁶⁸

Third, professional teachers charging professional rates did not always reflect the values or needs of a particular community. Hattie Rhue Hatchett, for instance, lived in the largely African-Canadian town of North Buxton, twenty kilometers southwest of Chatham. From about 1906 onwards, she taught singing and piano to local children, charging a modest fee or sometimes nothing at all for her services. Lessons ranged from one-on-one weekly half-hours in her home, to occasional school visits, to group singing sessions during the summer holidays. Although a graceful and educated musician, she was prevented by her race from obtaining professional status. Hattie did not teach the classics to her students and eschewed formal exercise books of any sort. She taught largely from hymnals, books of sacred or patriotic songs, and her own compositions.⁶⁹ Hattie avoided training concert artists, for racism would have stymied the efforts of any

⁶⁸ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 27, 1887, p. 156; Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, March 10, 1887, p. 218, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

⁶⁹ Richard George Stewardson, "Hattie Rhue Hatchett (1863-1958): An Interdisciplinary Study of her Life and Music in North Buxton, Ontario" (M.A. thesis, York University, 1994), 62-63, 84-106, 266, 293.

African-Canadian classical music hopefuls at the turn of the twentieth century. Hattie moreover considered classical methods ill-suited to her pedagogical purpose. She saw her mission as twofold: to create good Christians, and to enrich young lives with artistic pursuits. It did not matter if the musical learning was elementary or occasional so long as the broader goals of artistic enjoyment, friendly interaction, and moral upbringing were achieved. As biographer Richard Stewardson contends, simplistic models of amateurism versus professionalism do not adequately describe Hattie's mix of activities and motivations.⁷⁰

In his study of music in Victorian Britain, Dave Russell offers a balanced assessment of contemporary teaching standards. He describes the vast numbers of part-time and student teachers as semi-professional musicians, thus removing much of the stigma of the term amateur. While admitting that the group likely included some incompetents, Russell argues that the large swaths of average instructors did have an overall positive effect in giving the public a basic sense of musical knowledge. Finally, he acknowledges that a portion of these instructors would have been extremely talented, and highly successful at their work. Russell therefore envisions semi-professional teachers on a spectrum rather than castigating them wholeheartedly.⁷¹

The previous analysis does not seek to discredit fully the complaints of the elite musical educators. Discrepancy in the quality of teachers and even downright crookedness did exist. Rather, it subjects the professionalization pundits to critical analysis, revealing that they were prone to exaggerate. Arguing from the perspective of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 68, 117-118. Stewardson observes that music was one of the few jobs available to African Canadians in early twentieth-century Ontario, but that such musicians were usually ghettoized into stereotypically 'black' genres such as jazz or popular music. See Stewardson, 264-265, 283.

⁷¹ Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: A Social History*, 2nd ed., Music and Society Series, ed. Peter J. Martin and Tia DeNora (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 172.

educated, urbane, male Anglo-Canadians, they cast themselves in the roles of professional protagonists and all others as amateurs beyond the pale. They similarly assumed that the classically trained professional best suited the needs of Ontario's students. As the alternate narratives have shown, this was not always the case.

More than Mere 'Accomplishment': Ladies' Colleges and the Birth of Formalized Music Education

While most scholars credit the founding of music conservatories in the late 1880s as marking the beginnings of institutionalization, ladies' colleges in fact provided the province with its first taste of formalized music instruction. Largely forgotten among the subsequent flood of self-congratulatory conservatory paraphernalia, ladies' colleges provided a crucial testing ground for the institutional practices conservatories later embraced. Faculty departments, curricula, and student recitals all characterized these private colleges. Ladies' colleges and conservatories furthermore shared much of the same personnel. Many of the more competent music instructors of the day combined their private teaching, and later their conservatory teaching, with a position on the staff of a ladies' college. Despite popular stereotypes of finishing schools as breeding grounds for flimsy feminine accomplishments, by the late nineteenth century Ontario's ladies colleges offered quality musical education facilities.

Ladies' colleges represented a private education initiative aimed at the daughters of elite and middle-class families. These schools had frequently been established under the auspices of a religious denomination, though for the most part students retained the

freedom to worship in the congregation of their choice.⁷² In spite of their denominational affiliations, many schools received no direct funding from the church. They relied instead upon donations from private citizens as well as income derived from tuition fees.⁷³ Rising educational standards across the province over the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in a concomitant growth in the colleges' academic scope. These later incarnations boasted more elaborate buildings, larger staff lists, broader curricula, and sounder intellectual training than their early nineteenth-century predecessors.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, ladies' colleges faced unprecedented levels of competition by the late 1880s as a result of the increasing accessibility of public secondary schools, the development of music conservatories, and the opening of the University of Toronto to female students. As the historian Johanna Selles observes, ladies' colleges justified their continued existence by finding a niche in the educational market. Principals argued that their institutions guaranteed a solid Christian education, developing the moral characters of young ladies to a greater extent than in the public system.⁷⁵ For all this, ladies' colleges faced almost continual financial difficulties. Some, such as the Wesleyan Female College of Hamilton, eventually succumbed. Others, such as Alma College of St. Thomas

⁷² Bert Den Boggende, "'The Vassar of the Dominions': The Wesleyan Female College and the Project of a Women's University, 1861-97," *Ontario History* 85, no. 2 (1993): 97-98, 100; Johanna M. Selles, *Methodists and Women's Education in Ontario, 1836-1925* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen University Press, 1996), 8, 84, 108; Johanna Selles-Roney, "'Manners or Morals'? Or 'Men in Petticoats'? Education at Alma College, 1871-1898," in *Gender and Education in Ontario: An Historical Reader*, ed. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991), 256, 263. Ottawa Ladies' College was Presbyterian. Loretto Abbey was Catholic. Wesleyan Ladies' College (Hamilton), Ontario Ladies' College (Whitby), Alma College (St. Thomas) and Albert College (Belleville) were Methodist.

⁷³ Den Boggende, "Vassar of the Dominions," 97; Selles-Roney, "Manners or Morals," 261-263; Selles, *Methodists*, 7-10, 129.

⁷⁴ Selles, *Methodists*, 80-81, 102.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 82, 97, 256-257, 260, 263.

and the Ontario Ladies' College of Whitby, survived by negotiating for university affiliations and government recognition, often at a cost to their independence.⁷⁶

Ontario ladies' schools began offering music lessons during the 1840s, prompted by the growing public perception of music making as the *sine qua non* of feminine elegance. Music lessons flourished in these colleges over the middle decades of the nineteenth century, in some cases expanding to entire music departments of roughly three to seven staff members.⁷⁷ Prior to the founding of conservatories, ladies' colleges provided the only institutionalized form of musical instruction in the province. The Brantford Ladies' College generated the province's first stable music conservatory upon the receipt of a royal charter in 1874. Albert College in Belleville (f. 1866) offered music diplomas and after 1879 doctoral degrees in musical studies. Hellmuth Ladies' College of London and Alma College of St. Thomas were two other prominent schools with diploma-granting music programs by the early 1880s.⁷⁸ These music schools formed appendages to the existing ladies' colleges and their reputation was regional rather than national. Still, their staff lists contained the names of the province's top performers and educators, many of whom later achieved fame during the music conservatory mania.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., 103, 120-124, 130, 133, 154-157, 257-258.

⁷⁷ Doreen R. Allison and Hélène Plouffe, "Music at Ladies' Colleges and Convent schools," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/music-at-ladies-colleges-and-convent-schools> (accessed March 20, 2012). The estimate of the size of music departments comes from my own impressions of various ladies' college calendars.

⁷⁸ Green and Vogan, *Music Education in Canada*, 69; George Smale, "Brantford, Ont.," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/brantford-ont> (accessed March 20, 2012). The music department at Brantford Ladies' College was renamed the Brantford Conservatory of Music in 1900.

⁷⁹ Edward Fisher, future founder of the Toronto Conservatory Music, worked as musical director for the Ottawa Ladies' College from 1875 to 1879 and the Ontario Ladies' College in Whitby for several years thereafter. Fisher's rival, Frederick Herbert Torrington, was musical director in Whitby between 1874 and 1881. He went on to form the Toronto College of Music in 1888. W. Waugh Lauder, sole Canadian pupil of the great Franz Liszt, worked at Hellmuth College in London from 1883 to 1885. Canadian composer Clarence Lucas worked as music director at the Hamilton's Wesleyan Ladies College from 1889 to 1890. Lucas' wife, a former pupil of Clara Schumann and a formidable pianist in her own right, contributed her talents to the institution during her husband's tenure. See Allison and Plouffe, "Music at Ladies' Colleges,"

As Kathleen McCrone explains with respect to the British context, some late nineteenth-century ladies' college principals regarded the music departments of their schools with a degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, principals wished to relegate musical study to the sidelines in order to demonstrate their increased commitment to 'serious' academic subjects. On the other hand, parents continued to demand music lessons for their daughters. Since an institution's financial health relied upon keeping parents happy, principals arrived at a happy medium whereby they offered music as an optional course of study.⁸⁰ The Moulton College of Toronto calendar confirms this impression. It insisted that while the study of music and art would serve as "a valuable auxiliary in strengthening character, and securing the development of higher spiritual impulses," such subjects would not be permitted "to interfere" with a student's core academic studies.⁸¹ By contrast, schools such as Alma College publicly reveled in the success of their music departments as a method of attracting pupils.⁸² While music lessons had a substantial presence as an optional course of study in ladies' colleges, they rarely appeared in male colleges during this time period. Though Toronto's Upper Canada College and London's Hellmuth College constituted rare exceptions, by and large college authorities deemed music a female pursuit.⁸³

EMC; Helmut Kallmann and Lindsay Moore, "W. Waugh Lauder," EMC, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/w-waugh-lauder> (accessed March 20, 2012); Carl Morey, "Frederick Herbert Torrington," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, 1911-1920*, vol. 14, published 2000, http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=7739 (accessed May 4, 2012); "Conservatory of Music," *Portfolio* 10, no. 2 (October 1889): 27-28, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL; *Portfolio* 10, no. 8 (June 1890): 135; *Portfolio* 11, no.1 (November 1890): 13.

⁸⁰ Kathleen E. McCrone, "'Playing the Game' and 'Playing the Piano': Physical Culture and Culture at Girls' Public Schools, c. 1850-1914," in *The Private Schooling of Girls: Past and Present*, ed. Geoffrey Walford, Woburn Education Series, ed. Peter Gordon (London: Woburn Press, 1993), 37, 39.

⁸¹ *Moulton College Calendar, 1898-1899*, p. 18, Moulton College Calendars, 373.71354 MOU, North York Central Library. This statement remained on the annual calendar for several years.

⁸² Selles, *Methodists*, 154-155.

⁸³ Jane Baldwin, Philip G. Downs, and Philip M. Wulfs, "London, Ontario," EMC, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/london-ont> (accessed March 20, 2012); Clifford

The founding of the Toronto Conservatory of Music in 1886, and the host of imitators that followed in its wake, did not compromise the prestige of the ladies' college music departments at least in the short term. Many members of the new conservatories' teaching staff simultaneously taught part-time at the colleges. These were not lowly assistant teachers trying desperately to eke a living, but such illustrious talents as W.O. Forsyth, J.W.F. Harrison, A.S. Vogt, Mrs. J.W. Bradley, F.H. Torrington, and G.D. Atkinson.⁸⁴ By the 1910s, however, private women's colleges became obsolete as adolescent girls began to favour the public secondary school system. This broader trend, combined with the defection of music students to the conservatories, accounts for the gradual decline of the venerable ladies' college music departments.⁸⁵

Jangling Keys and Warbling Misses: The Role of Music at Ladies' Colleges

Private college directors often rhapsodized about their school's superior buildings, grounds, and facilities. Whatever their personal views on the importance of musical study, directors knew that the number of practice rooms and the impressiveness of one's concert hall contributed to the impression of lavish college spaces. The quality and quantity of monumental instruments such as pianos and organs provided additional evidence of abundance. The Wesleyan Ladies' College of Hamilton, for instance, proudly announced that it had used twenty-three pianos during the 1881-1882 academic year. By

Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Agincourt, ON: GLC Publishers Ltd, 1982), 54; Fred Landon, "Young Dane Brought Love of Music to Pioneer London," *London Free Press*, October 10, 1967, unplaced clipping, vol. 11, p. 104, Historical Series Scrapbooks, LPL. An 1865 calendar of the Hellmuth boys' college does not, however, contain any mention of music courses. See *Hellmuth Boys' College Calendar 1865*, Box 128, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, LPL.

⁸⁴ Allison and Plouffe, "Music at Ladies' Colleges," *EMC*; H.H. Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (Toronto: s.n., 1897), 14-16; *Musical Canada* 9, no. 12 (April 1915): 279.

⁸⁵ Green and Vogan, *Music Education in Canada*, 69.

1889, the college boasted two Steinway concert grands and one Steinway upright for recitals in a concert hall with a seating capacity of six hundred.⁸⁶ An informal survey of Toronto's music scene in 1897 revealed that Miss Veals' Ladies Seminary possessed ten pianos, while Bishop Strachan School and Moulton Ladies' College each had twelve.⁸⁷ Some schools such as the Ontario Ladies' College of Whitby and Bishop Strachan School of Toronto commissioned their own pipe organs. These sorts of purchases could be extremely costly, ranging from several hundred to a few thousand dollars (Fig. 4.1).⁸⁸

Canada's piano and organ manufacturers, in turn, trumpeted their lucrative ladies' college contracts as evidence of their instruments' prestige. A Mason & Risch advertisement from April 1898 observed, "The greatest test to which a piano is ever subjected is when it has to stand the strain of constant use in a Ladies' College. In the first place, it must pass the most severe criticism as to tone and touch before it is accepted. After that it has to stand from ten to twelve hours of heavy wear every day for years. It is a case of 'one off, another come on,' all the time. The piano stool is never vacant."⁸⁹ Swelling ranks of music students created good publicity, not only for the schools but for the music trade as well.

For students, however, the never-vacant piano stool could sometimes be more of a bane than a boon. Wesleyan Ladies' College residents tended to complain about the cacophony of sounds emanating from the music corridors. One graduating student's poetic ode to the class of 1888 referred to the

⁸⁶ Insert leaflet dated July 1883, *Wesleyan Ladies' College 1882-83 Circular and Catalogue*, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL; "Conservatory of Music," *Portfolio* 10, no. 2 (October 1889): 27-28, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL.

⁸⁷ Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (1897), 14-16.

⁸⁸ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 8, no. 2 (December 1896): unpaginated; B.J.T., "Girls' Colleges," *Canadian Magazine* 24, no. 4 (February 1905): 378. Cost estimates are based on my own findings for church and concert hall organs during this period.

⁸⁹ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 10, no. 6 (April 1898): xl.

Streams of music never ceasing,
 Sounding much like 'slips tries over;'
 Music not from the professors
 Nor from angel tongues above us.
 'Tis the humdrum and the turmoil,
 And the never ceasing wailing,
 And the roaring and the pounding,
 And the groaning of the students
 Over octaves; and the discords...⁹⁰

The following year, another student writer humorously declared that "... the more I think of it, the more firmly am I convinced that music is at the bottom of fully one-half of the miseries of human life. Who can be comfortable, who can enjoy one hour of mental serenity, whose peace is being everlastingly invaded by the thump of pianos all around them, organ-grinders under your window, in addition and the various vocal noises that pass under the name of 'singing.' ”⁹¹

The amount of practicing one actually did depended on one's level of imbrication in the music programme. Music, along with art, foreign languages, and horse riding, was an optional course of study, requiring an extra outlay of money in addition to the basic tuition fees. The price of lessons varied, depending on the length of the academic term, and whether one studied with an assistant Lady Teacher or a (usually male) professor. Costs for private piano, organ, voice, or violin lessons at Wesleyan Ladies' College in 1888 ranged from \$8.00 to \$15.00 per term. Piano students paid an additional \$2.00 per term in order to access a piano room for one hour of daily practicing. By comparison, French, German or Italian lessons cost \$4.00 per term and horse riding \$5.00 per term.⁹²

⁹⁰ Beza, "Song of Class '88," *Portfolio* 8, no. 10 (June 1888): 22, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL.

⁹¹ "Philosophy in Room 5," *Portfolio* 9, no. 5 (March 1889): 71, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL.

⁹² *Wesleyan Ladies' College 1888 Circular and Catalogue*, p. 18, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL. These prices are comparable with those charged by the Ontario Ladies' College of Whitby during this

During the 1895-1896 academic year Hellmuth College offered piano, singing, organ, and violin lessons. One weekly lesson cost \$45.00 to \$60.00 for the year, and twice weekly lessons cost \$75.00 to \$100.00. Students wishing to take the theory and harmony course paid an additional \$25.00. Pianists paid \$8.00 for use of a rehearsal instrument, while organ players paid \$27.00 for theirs.⁹³ The popularity of these add-ons may be judged from the Wesleyan Ladies' College's 1871-1872 academic year, when out of a total of 242 students, 158 studied instrumental music and 48 received vocal lessons.⁹⁴

In spite of such promising figures, educators such as J. Davenport Kerrison frowned at the very notion of music as an optional pursuit. First, it placed college music teachers in a precarious financial position, forcing them to privilege commercial instincts.⁹⁵ Ellie Ambrose, who taught private students in addition to those at Mrs. Thomas Chestnut's Ladies' School, confirmed some of these pressures in a letter to her cousin Paul in 1889. "Considering it's barely a week old this year is promising ever so much better for your father & myself than I dared hope. I had resigned myself to a few pupils whom I meant to teach *awfully* well. I hope I may do the same now that they are more than a few."⁹⁶ Too few students raised the grim prospect of financial hardship, yet too many students could sap even a good teacher's energies. Paul's father Robert worked as music director for Wesleyan Ladies' College and described a busy and repetitive

time. See *Thirteenth Annual Calendar of the Ontario Ladies' College, Whitby, Ontario, for the Collegiate Year, 1887-1888*, p. 46, WPL.

⁹³ *Hellmuth College Announcement 1895-1896*, p. 25, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL. Moulton College of Toronto's rates by contrast were unusually high. Private lessons with the musical director A.S. Vogt cost \$105 per annum, with the second highest instructor in the department charging \$70.00 per year. See *Moulton College Calendar, 1899-1900*, Moulton College Calendars, 373.71354 MOU, North York Central Library.

⁹⁴ *Wesleyan Ladies' College 1871-72 Circular and Catalogue*, p. 13, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL.

⁹⁵ J. Davenport Kerrison, "The Study of Music: Not as Optional," *Musical Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1887): 6.

⁹⁶ Ellen Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 9, 1889, pp. 775-776, Ambrose Collection, HPL. Emphasis in original.

weekly schedule: “College pupils this year are almost exclusively 101 Exercises pupils and I have uttered the same advice in nearly the same words so many times since Sep 5th that I am ashamed to look a new pupil in the face ... Fourteen on Monday, Fifteen on Tuesday, and varying quantities on Wednesday, with my outside [private] pupils leave scant time for meditation & prayer, but I am sincerely thankful to be employed.”⁹⁷

J. Davenport Kerrison’s other major critique of optional music education was that it promoted the false belief that music constituted a flimsy accomplishment rather than a valid intellectual pursuit. Kerrison perceptively contended that if the study of chemistry were to become an elective, then the science would likely languish for want of care. Under such a regime, an education in chemistry would become nothing more than the superficial attainment of a few cheap tricks “for the amusement of his friends.” This had been the sorry fate of musical education in Canada thus far. If raised to the level of core requirement, though, music would garner greater respect as a discipline of the brain which “calls into play and tends to develop judgment, proportion, accuracy, and many other faculties and emotions of the mind.”⁹⁸

Mr. Kerrison’s teacher-centered critique overlooked another hazard of optional music lessons. From a student’s perspective, the decision whether or not to take ladies’ college musical courses often depended whether one’s parents could afford the extra cost. The 1893-1894 diaries and letters of Hellmuth College pupil Maggie Bell offer a window into some of the class nuances among student peer groups. As the daughter of a prosperous farmer from Essex County, Maggie recognized that her parents were only too happy to pay any additional expenses in her education. Grateful and trifle embarrassed at

⁹⁷ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, October 9, 1888, p. 640, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

⁹⁸ Kerrison, “The Study of Music: Not as Optional,” *Musical Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1887): 6.

such indiscriminate generosity, the daughter felt morally responsible for ensuring the money they spent on her did not go to waste. Whenever compelled to miss a music lesson, Maggie recorded it in her diaries and correspondence. Later entries scrupulously noted the date her teacher had made up for the lost lesson time. These little stock taking practices reassured her that she had indeed received every hour of instruction for which the yearly music fee entitled her. Maggie often felt guilty about canceling a regular music lesson, as demonstrated by her excessive rationalizations to herself and her family about the reasons that had forced her to reschedule. She was also, however, painfully aware that her family's class status paled by comparison with the wealth of some girls from Toronto. Feeling self-conscious about the garment she regularly wore at music rehearsals, she wrote home asking for a "pretty, light dress" decorated "with lots of frills."⁹⁹

Particularly adept students could choose to specialize in musical studies, receiving accreditation for their efforts. Alma College in St. Thomas decided that pupils finishing what they termed "the fourth period of the music course" would obtain a second-class certificate. Fifth period graduates would receive a first-class certificate, and those completing the entire course of study would receive diplomas as well as a reference for employment as a music teacher.¹⁰⁰ At Hellmuth College, a student could obtain a certificate by completing a three-year course in piano, voice, organ, violin, or musical theory. She would earn a diploma if she supplemented her major field with theory courses and "a moderate degree of knowledge" of another instrument. Between 1885 and

⁹⁹ Maggie Bell Diary, February 16, 1893, February 17, 1894; Maggie Bell to Papa, Mamma, and Harry, October 1, 1893; Maggie to Papa, April 29, 1894; Maggie to Harry, May 13, 1894, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL. A handwritten librarian's note states that Margaret Bell came from Oxley-Colchester South, in Essex County.

¹⁰⁰ Unplaced clipping, Alma College Scrapbook ca. 1881–1902, St Thomas, Elgin County, Ontario, Canada, Microfilm reel M1531, UWOA.

1895, thirty-nine students graduated from Hellmuth's music stream.¹⁰¹ Maggie Bell was one of Hellmuth's growing ranks of music students. She took twice-weekly piano lessons, weekly violin, weekly harmony and (eventually) weekly voice lessons. In addition to the copious amount of time she spent in lessons, she practiced her music two to three hours per day in fifty-minute time slots. English Literature, Bible studies, French, sewing, mending, dancing, and riding filled the rest of Maggie's busy schedule.¹⁰²

Another music-stream student, Maud Southam, took courses in organ, piano, music history, harmony, English literature, Bible studies, and physical culture. Maud's enthusiasm for her musical studies may be gauged by the top grades she regularly received. By contrast, her grades for English literature were almost uniformly poor, and her grades for Bible class, though generally high, were inconsistent.¹⁰³ For students ill-suited to traditional book learning, music offered an outlet for academic success and social acceptance. Wesleyan Ladies' College student Miss E. Robertson was another student who, according to the school newspaper, could have excelled in all her subjects had she made the effort. Robertson compensated by achieving splendid success in the music programme, winning a gold medal during her junior year.¹⁰⁴

Beyond the rigmarole of regular lessons, colleges encouraged musical appreciation by arranging outings. Mr. Dickson, director of St. Margaret's College on Bloor Street, Toronto, affirmed that: "Our college goes in a body to hear all the big musical things that come to the city. When possible, we get a programme beforehand,

¹⁰¹ *Hellmuth College Announcement 1895-1896*, p. 32, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

¹⁰² Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL. Maggie was supposed to practice in fifty-minute blocks, and she wrote the exact number of minutes she practiced onto her schedule in pencil. The numbers of actual practice time range from thirty-six to forty-seven minutes.

¹⁰³ *Hellmuth College School Reports*, Envelope 7, Box 247, Southam-Waugh Family Papers, LPL.

¹⁰⁴ *Portfolio* 7, no. 10 (June 1887): 139, Wesleyan Ladies' College Archive File, HPL.

and the numbers are explained to the students. Then they go prepared. Afterwards they write criticisms, which are published in the *Chronicle*.”¹⁰⁵ Hellmuth College of London arranged outings to hear performers that ranged from the local orchestra and chorus, to the visiting Sousa’s Band, to the stunning Canadian violinist Nora Clench.¹⁰⁶ In the 1910-1911 academic year alone, students of Havergal Hall in Toronto attended concerts by the Mendelssohn Choir, the National Chorus, and England’s Sheffield Choir. They also heard recitals by Canada’s other violin sensation Kathleen Parlow as well as prima donnas Nellie Melba, Lillian Nordica, and Luisa Tetrazzini.¹⁰⁷

Music therefore played a significant role in the daily workings of ladies’ colleges. Though an optional programme available only at additional cost, music fulfilled a number of functions. College principals turned to the music department to exemplify their school’s abundant resources. Music lessons also gave students an indication of whether or not one’s parents could afford extra expenses. For some, the repetitive practicing and wafting noises proved more of an annoyance than an artistic release. For others, however, music provided an outlet for academic success and peer admiration.

Performance Rituals: Ladies’ College Student Recitals

Pupils’ musical efforts culminated in the display of their skills through frequent public performance. Ladies’ colleges organized numerous student concerts, including smaller rehearsals throughout the term as well as larger end-of-term recitals. Colleges were not

¹⁰⁵ B.J.T. “Girls’ Colleges,” *Canadian Magazine* 24, no. 4 (February 1905): 377.

¹⁰⁶ Grace Darling, “Amusements,” *Hellmuth Union Jack* 2, no. 6 (June 1895): 5; Claribel Lidstone, “Music,” *Hellmuth Union Jack* 1, no. 8 (November 1893): 105, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

¹⁰⁷ *Ludemus 1911*, p. 68, 272.71354LUD, North York Central Library.

alone in their enthusiasm for recitals. Plenty of private teachers staged their own student concerts, yet the sheer variety of instructors and teaching methods meant that the practice was far from universal.¹⁰⁸ Colleges, by contrast, proved more consistent in their efforts to display their students' abilities. Given the range of student experience, dedication and proficiency, the success of ladies' college concerts could vary depending on personnel, nerves, and the time of year. As a result, such concerts had become something of a running joke in professional music circles over the middle decades of the nineteenth century. These stereotypes persisted, even as journalists recognized that improved educational standards rendered such portrayals increasingly inaccurate. Student concerts remained an enticing cliché for occasional indulgence because they bolstered the comedic potential of poor music by coupling it with humourous stock depictions of feminine vanity. The comments of *Saturday Night* columnist 'Moderato' in 1895 are telling in this regard. While extolling the noticeable amelioration of student concerts over the past ten years, Moderato could not resist a dig at the old stereotype.

[A] young lady pupil of a local fossil, who upon being asked to play a solo at an impromptu musical gathering replied haughtily: 'Oh dear, no! I never play solos. I only play concertos!' A wag present questioned her whether she had ever played Donnerwetter's last concerto in F double flat minor, to which the serious reply was that she had played all other concertos, but not the one mentioned. She stated that she would, however, request her teacher to procure it for her without delay. These ghosts of an extinct regime will still occasionally rise up to remind us of the progress being made during the present ...¹⁰⁹

Moderato flatters the reader by assuming the latter possesses a degree of musical knowledge. There is no need to explain that solos are unaccompanied pieces whereas concertos have backing accompaniment, and that neither genre is more difficult or merits

¹⁰⁸ For examples of private teachers' recital programmes, see Collection of Music Programmes 1849–1900, Mrs. Edmond Raymond (Wintermute) Collection, Box 4543, UWOA.

¹⁰⁹ Moderato, "Music," *Saturday Night*, July 27, 1895, p. 10.

a higher status than the other. Similarly, it is patently obvious to the reader that there is no such composer as Donnerwetter and that the key of F double flat minor does not exist. The young lady's ignorance appears even more laughable in light of her arrogance. She wishes to play only splashy, important-sounding pieces and falsely believes that she has mastered every composition of her chosen genre. By framing the anecdote as an obsolete practice, Moderato can tickle his readers' funny bone without compromising his broader narrative of musical progress. Twenty years later, Luigi von Kunits continued to mock recitals as a vacuous display of female vanity. Though von Kunits directed his ire towards conservatories, he could just as easily have been discussing ladies' colleges. "As the majority of pupils are girls," von Kunits announced, "the question of dress is the paramount issue: 'how she looks' is more important than 'how she plays'."¹¹⁰

More sober reviews of ladies' college concerts recognized that such events represented sincere and sometimes remarkably proficient musical efforts. At the same time, professional (and predominantly male) press reporters only partially understood that student recitals comprised a ritualized site of power. First, college directors regarded recitals as yet another means of advertising the excellence of their institution. "The schools have made their closing efforts, in which music has occupied no mean position," remarked one journalist in 1888, "Pianos are played and songs are sung, and very largely by these results the schools are measured."¹¹¹ Not much had changed by 1915, when Luigi von Kunits dubbed recitals "a practice that compels our students to a periodic display of more or less successful 'stunts,' thereby to judge the extent and degree of their

¹¹⁰ Luigi von Kunits, "Our Students," *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 2 (June 1915): 19.

¹¹¹ Metronome, "Music," *Saturday Night*, June 30, 1888, p. 11.

musical training.”¹¹² Some college directors even tried to impose their will on the musical proceedings, in the hopes of showing off the school to its best advantage. This occurred in Mrs. Thomas Chestnut’s school as Ellie Ambrose prepared her students for a concert in 1887. According to Ellie’s Aunt Lily, “Miss Chestnut told Ellie last week in the coolest manner that she would like a couple of solos as well as choruses at the closing & a duet for two pianos not to speak of various other little &cs – poor Ellie was rather staggered & declined having such little trifles thrown in.”¹¹³

Second, the recital ritual objectified the pupils it paraded onstage. Some girls did worry about their onstage appearance, but their motivations just as likely originated from self-consciousness. Maggie Bell related her emotional upheavals during her initiation into the Hellmuth College concert regime. On February 22, 1894, she confided to her diary, “I have to play to-morrow night at rehearsal, I wish it was over.” The following day’s entry noted: “I played at rehearsal this evening. I don’t know how I ever got through.”¹¹⁴ By late April, a letter to her Father announced that she had “played two pieces last Friday night, at rehearsal. I did better this time, I think than ever before.” Still, her anxiety had not entirely evaporated, for she “had to go back and make a bow, after I got through, and that was nearly as bad as playing...”¹¹⁵ By May, Maggie wrote in her diary that “I played a piece on piano at rehearsal this evening. Do not mind it much now.”¹¹⁶ She had learned to quell her nerves, although she could not yet bring herself to enjoy the occasion.

¹¹² Luigi von Kunits, “Our Students,” *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 2 (June 1915): 19.

¹¹³ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, May 9, 1887, p. 294, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹¹⁴ Maggie Bell Diary, February 22, 1894, February 23, 1894, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

¹¹⁵ Maggie Bell to Papa, April 29, 1894, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

¹¹⁶ Maggie Bell Diary, May 18, 1894, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

Maggie was far from alone in her stage fright. Fellow Hellmuth student Claribel Lidstone admitted that “Naughty nerves will sometimes try hard to get the best of us” during musical performances, even though “common sense” usually restored a girl to reason.¹¹⁷ After a large mid-term recital in February, 1894, Lidstone summarized her impressions as follows: “Fate dealt kindly with us, and doubtless all feel doubly repaid for both the amount of work done and nervous energy expended, by the hearty praise and congratulations which were so generously showered upon us.”¹¹⁸ These are hardly the words of someone expecting praise as a matter of course. Meanwhile, the Ontario Ladies’ College student newspaper noted that the music teachers were “endeavoring to encourage a sense of self assurance among those receiving their instruction, by having recitals which all except the performers enjoy. Only those who have had the experience can sympathize fully with the girls who are unfortunate enough to have to take part in these programs.”¹¹⁹

Though students rarely questioned the forces pushing them to such frequent and public exhibitions of their musicality, they coped by offering each other emotional support. Claribel Lidstone’s reviews of student concerts in the Hellmuth newspaper were unfailingly generous, praising each and every girl individually for her effort. Lidstone did not act out of ignorance, for she did not hesitate to critique professional performances with a far keener eye. Maggie Bell’s diaries provide further evidence of positive peer feedback and soothing words after those first intimidating recitals.¹²⁰ By contrast, an outside audience member such as Lily Ambrose could afford to be more honest in her assessments. After attending the end-of-year recital at Wesleyan Ladies’ College in 1888,

¹¹⁷ Claribel Lidstone, “Music,” *Hellmuth Union Jack* 1, no. 8 (November 1893): 105.

¹¹⁸ Lidstone, “Music,” *Hellmuth Union Jack* 1, no. 10 (February 1894): 129.

¹¹⁹ “Music,” *Sunbeam* (April 1900): 9, Vox Collegii 1900-1931 Box, WPL.

¹²⁰ Maggie Bell Diary, February 23, 1894, Various Items Relating to Hellmuth College, Box 8, LPL.

she wrote to her son that “the concert was a great success, I think the best they have had for some years. Katie & Edith played splendidly so did most of them but the singing was dreadful...”¹²¹ The next year, she observed that the recital “wasn’t a grand success, the audience was very small and the girls were all nervous ... one piece they had to leave out altogether as Miss Janie Hobbs was weeping.”¹²²

In sum, ladies’ college students did not relish the prospect of public performance nearly as much as legend would have it. Recitals codified the act of performance into elaborate rituals upon which listeners sat in judgment. While informal, spontaneous musical acts did occur within the walls of ladies’ colleges, these were framed as entertainment devoid of educational value. The recital constituted the true test of ability, the teleological goal of a term’s worth of practice and lessons. The reputations of students, their teachers, and the college itself was at stake, a heavy load to place upon the shaking fingers and warbling voices of those awaiting their turn on the platform.

The field of private music education at the end of the nineteenth century was both fertile and diverse. In the absence of widespread standards, teaching practices varied depending on the training, the dedication, and the ambitions of one’s particular instructor. The variety of instructors paralleled the sheer diversity of pupils. Musical study requires talent, interest, and a strong work ethic; some students found themselves blessed with all of these qualities, while many possessed only one or two of the above. The best teacher could achieve only limited results with an indifferent pupil, just as a fine student could

¹²¹ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, June 15, 1887, p. 335, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹²² Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, December 21, 1888, pp. 738-739.

not triumph under an incompetent teacher. Some instructor student pairings proved remarkably fruitful, others less so. Teachers annoyed pupils with sins such as unpunctuality, inattention, and impatience. Students, meanwhile, tested the mettle of instructors by poor practice habits, cancelling lessons, or non-payment.

The fluctuating state of affairs frustrated the province's close-knit group of elite musicians who subsequently embarked on a campaign to raise public awareness regarding slipshod teaching methods. Professionals, implicitly defined as those whose social and educational backgrounds mirrored their own, represented the only appropriate choice for a solid musical education. While the elite contingent raised some excellent points, their narrow definition of 'professional' alienated some competent teachers whose gender, class, race, or lack of formal training disqualified them from these lofty ranks.

Ladies' colleges offered an alternative to the private teacher model and represented the province's earliest attempts to formalize musical instruction. Their music departments featured many of the elite instructors who would later fill the ranks of Ontario's first music conservatories. While music remained an optional course of study in the colleges, students from families able to afford the additional expense embarked on a busy timetable of lessons, practicing, and written theoretical requirements. Music departments elaborated curricula and diplomas designed to equip students with credentials and references. They also formalized the act of public performance in the form of recitals, ostensibly in the interests of improving student confidence but equally in order to showcase the success of the college. Conservatories would soon adopt many of these practices in their efforts to reform musical education on a more intense scale.

In conclusion, the field of musical education was incoherent, but by no means worthless. Incompetents abounded, but so did clever, dedicated, committed instructors. Gender, class, race, geographical locale, and even formal education by no means offered fail-safe indicators of one's teaching abilities or lack thereof. Talent, even genius, grew in unlikely places while 'official' credentials could easily provide a foil for mediocrity.

CHAPTER FIVE
BRAVE NEW WORLD:
MUSIC EDUCATION AT THE CONSERVATORIES

Professionalizing efforts in the field of music education reached their apotheosis in the inauguration of Ontario's first conservatories. The elite music instructors that fumed in press columns at the prospect of unsightly amateurs began to alter their tactics in favour of something more concrete. Fired by the runaway success of the Toronto Conservatory of Music's 1887 opening, they reasoned that the best way to alter teaching practices was to lead by example. Over the next few years, conservatories of varying sizes emerged throughout the province. Some triumphed as stable institutions. Others appeared and disappeared with considerably less fanfare. Taken as a whole, though, this movement represented an effort to standardize the teaching of music through institutionalization.

Conservatories' activities appear in a range of documents such as advertisements, newspaper columns, calendars, programmes and scraps of ephemera. Even so, the archival record is decidedly uneven. Larger conservatories, such as the Toronto Conservatory of Music and the Toronto College of Music, occupy the lion's share of the

surviving documents. Consequently, they appear overwhelmingly in the following pages. This is appropriate to a certain extent, since these two conservatories exhibited a wider influence than their peers, due to elevated numbers as well as their distance-education examination networks. The Toronto Conservatory of Music (TCM) in particular bears the distinction of being the first, the largest, the longest-lived, and the most famous of the Ontario conservatories. While details about the other schools seep through in press notices and the occasional conservatory calendar, TCM's records have been preserved in their entirety at the University of Toronto.

The precise definition of a *conservatory* is open to question, since many studios tried to dignify their endeavours by using the term. The largest conservatories were incorporated companies with a board of directors. The smallest ones consisted of loose associations between a few private teachers who happened to work at the same premises. The distinction between a small conservatory and a large private studio is a slippery one. In this chapter, a conservatory shall be defined as any conglomeration of teachers joining under an institutional name for the purpose of teaching music. The conservatory movement may be envisioned as a continuum of bureaucratic intensity. Larger schools had the funds and the prestige to adopt the trappings of institutionalism. Smaller schools aped these behaviours on a reduced scale and to varying degrees of success.

Background

Educators fond of complaining about the Canadian music scene had largely received their training abroad, and would often invoke the strong educational systems they had

encountered in Europe and Britain.¹ While the first American conservatories dated back to the 1860s, efforts in Ontario floundered for another two decades. Two Toronto musicians, Ferdinand Griebel and John Carter, had tried to form small musical academies in 1856 and 1862 respectively, yet both institutions proved short-lived.² J. Davenport Kerrison founded Toronto's first lasting music conservatory with his wife in the late 1870s, using the apartments of the Grand Opera House Building as an operational base. The institution, variously known as the Royal Canadian Conservatory of Music, Toronto College of Music, and the Canadian Conservatory of Music, lasted for roughly a decade, after which time Kerrison retired to the United States.³

The fate of the conservatory movement altered dramatically with the 1886 founding of the *Toronto Conservatory of Music* (TCM), known today as the Royal Conservatory of Music.⁴ Although not the first conservatory in Canada, TCM had a knack of advertising itself as a fearless trailblazer. As one of its early calendars insisted, "The Toronto Conservatory of Music may justly claim the honour of being the pioneer institution of its kind in the Dominion of Canada. It is true the name 'Conservatory' has in some instances been applied to private institutions which, however, possessed none of the distinctive features of a genuine *Conservatory of Music* in the sense that term is

¹ Ann Babin, "Music in Canada and the Piano Examination System for the Preparatory Student: A Historical Survey and Comparative Analysis" (M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 2005), 33-34; Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 123. The Paris Conservatoire, the Leipzig Conservatory of Music, or a London institution such as Trinity College, the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music or the Guildhall School of Music were the most popular choices for Canadians seeking to study abroad.

² Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 123; Carl Morey, "Musical Education in Nineteenth-Century Toronto," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 120.

³ There is some discrepancy among scholars regarding the exact founding date for Kerrison's conservatory. I am inclined to favour primary evidence from the *Musical Journal* 7 (July 1887): 116, which states that Kerrison's conservatory was finishing up its tenth year at the time of writing.

⁴ The Toronto Conservatory of Music changed its name to the Royal Conservatory of Music upon the receipt of a royal charter in 1947.

understood in European countries, and therefore the name has been in those cases a misnomer.”⁵ TCM’s avowed mission was to raise the standards of teaching and playing of music in the country. Armed with a strong advertising campaign, solid financial backing, and a heady climate of public anticipation, it opened its doors to students on September 5, 1887. During that first year, the school boasted roughly fifty teachers, six hundred students, and fifteen departments.⁶ The Conservatory originally occupied the upper two floors of number three Wilton Avenue, near present-day Dundas Square. Numbers grew so steadily over the next decade, however, that the Board of Directors purchased a vacant lot at the corner of College Street and Queen’s Avenue (now University Avenue). With the aid of an architect, Board members designed a larger building, which they opened to great fanfare on November 22, 1897.⁷ By 1909, the number of conservatory students had risen to seventeen hundred, and three years later the registration list exceeded two thousand.⁸

Though keen to assert itself as a modern educational and business institution, TCM equally promoted itself as the personal vision of founder and musical director Edward Fisher. Born in Jamaica, Vermont, in 1848, Fisher had studied piano, organ, harmony, and counterpoint in Boston and later in Germany. He returned to North America in 1875, working as musical director of the Ottawa Ladies’ College for four

⁵ *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1890-1891*, p. 9, Conservatory Calendar Box, AR780.7291, Toronto Conservatory of Music: Programs & Miscellaneous Items Relating to the Activities of the C.C.M. [henceforth TCM Programs & Misc.] Art Room Special Collections, TRL. Emphasis in original. The Académie de musique du Québec bears the distinction of being the first Canadian conservatory, having been founded in 1868. Mount Allison College in Sackville, New Brunswick boasted a conservatory of music as early as 1885, Ann Babin, “Piano Examination,” 4-5.

⁶ Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 188; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 124.

⁷ John Becker, “The Early History of the Toronto Conservatory of Music” (M.F.A. thesis, York University, 1983), 33; Gaynor G. Jones, “The Fisher Years: The Toronto Conservatory of Music, 1886-1913,” in *Three Studies, CanMus Documents 4* (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1989), 74-75, 114.

⁸ Mrs. J.W.F. Harrison, “An Educationist in Music,” *Canadian Magazine* 33, no. 2 (June 1909): 120.

years before moving to Toronto in 1879. Once established in the Queen's City, Fisher busied himself as organist and choirmaster of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, conductor of the Toronto Choral Society, and musical director of the Ontario Ladies' College at Whitby. He also helped create the Royal Canadian Society of Musicians and served as vice-president for the Ontario contingent of the Music Teachers' National Association.⁹ At the time of TCM's founding, Edward Fisher moved in the upper ranks of Toronto society. By all accounts a sociable man, Fisher plied his wealthy contacts when seeking members for his new conservatory's board of governors.¹⁰ Fisher's public image achieved heroic proportions after the founding of TCM. Much as department store retailers of the late nineteenth century projected a friendly, paternal figurehead, Edward Fisher made the institutional personal.¹¹ TCM's fondness for advertising Fisher was not merely a calculated publicity bluff. He oversaw all the musical operations of the school and, moreover, insisted on meeting all new pupils upon their admittance.¹² Still, his personal virtues became linked to the success of the institution. In 1908, Fisher's colleagues fondly referred to him as the "Mendelssohn of Canada," likening his founding of TCM to Mendelssohn's launch of Leipzig's Conservatorium of Music in 1843.¹³

TCM's influence expanded geographically when the Board decided to institute local examination centers across Ontario in November 1898. Under this system, students

⁹ Harrison, "An Educationist," 119-120; *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 9, Conservatory Calendar Box, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

¹⁰ Jones, "The Fisher Years," 69; Ezra Schabas, *There's Music in These Walls: A History of the Royal Conservatory of Music* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2005), 17-18. For more details on the financial arrangements and the share prices see Jones, "The Fisher Years," 70-71.

¹¹ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 84-85. For heroic depictions of Fisher see for instance H.H. Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (Toronto: s.n., 1897), 11-12; Harrison, "An Educationist," 121-122; "Toronto Conservatory of Music," *Canadian Magazine* 10, no. 2 (December 1897): xxviii.

¹² *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1890-1891*, p. 63, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL; Jones, "The Fisher Years," 103.

¹³ Harrison, "An Educationist in Music," 120. See also Jones, "The Fisher Years," 60.

living outside of Toronto would not have to take up residence in the city in order to receive a conservatory education. Instead, they would study with a private teacher in their own locality, using the list pieces and technical requirements elaborated in TCM's syllabus. A few times a year, conservatory examiners would travel through the district, spending a few days at each local center. Organizers chose Belleville, Berlin, Brampton, Dunnville, Georgetown, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Lindsay, London, Perth, Peterborough, Port Hope, St. Catharines, St. Thomas and Woodstock as examination centers that first year.¹⁴ The death of Edward Fisher from a heart attack on May 31, 1913, dealt a grievous blow to the Toronto Conservatory. Fortunately, a strong successor emerged in the shape of Augustus Stephen Vogt, the celebrated conductor of Toronto's Mendelssohn Choir. As TCM's musical director, Vogt's efforts helped the institution survive the lean years of the Great War to reach the more prosperous 1920s.¹⁵

The *Toronto College of Music* (not to be confused with Davenport Kerrison's earlier incarnation of the same name) was the brainchild of another Toronto musical luminary, Frederick Herbert Torrington. Born in 1837 near Birmingham, England, Torrington came to North America in 1856, settling in Montreal and then Boston before moving to Toronto in 1873. During these years, he worked as organist and choir director of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, conductor of the Toronto and Hamilton Philharmonic Societies, and music director of the Ontario Ladies' College. In addition to these labours, he founded various "amateur or semi-professional" orchestral groups and

¹⁴ Becker, "Early History," 88; Jones, "The Fisher Years," 116-117. According to Becker, Britain's national conservatories pioneered the tradition of external examinations. They began by targeting the British provinces but eventually travelled across the Empire (pp. 86-87). The first colony to benefit from these travelling examinations in musical performance was South Africa in 1894. See "Musical Examinations," *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* (December 1, 1899): 802. By contrast, American conservatories did not institute external examinations. The Toronto Conservatory of Music's own system of external examinations later expanded to encompass the entire Dominion.

¹⁵ Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 38-39, 42, 49.

mounted two ambitious citywide music festivals in 1886 and in 1894.¹⁶ Like Fisher, Torrington's fame acquired Olympian proportions in contemporary accounts. The personalities of the two men differed considerably; whereas Fisher was poised and diplomatic, Torrington was dynamic and temperamental. Nevertheless, Torrington's insatiable energy garnered him deep praise. One writer dubbed him "a pillar of the Toronto musical fabric... In character he might be likened to some rugged, sturdy oak, the pioneer of the forest, under whose kindly sheltering branches many a younger tree has grown up to independence of support."¹⁷

Torrington founded the Toronto College of Music in 1888, situated at 12 and 14 Pembroke Street. Unlike TCM, which focused on developing solo artists, Toronto College of Music stressed the merits of performing in ensemble and orchestral settings. In its first year, the teaching staff included such well-known names as John Bayley, A.T. Cringan, Arthur E. Fisher, W.O. Forsyth, and W. Elliott Haslam.¹⁸ By 1890, Toronto College boasted four hundred students and a staff of roughly fifty. The school continued to expand over the next two decades, gaining branches in the West End, Dovercourt, and the East End. Toronto College began offering its own examinations outside the Toronto area at least as early as 1904. By the 1907-1908 academic year, the college had instituted nineteen local exam centers throughout the province.¹⁹ So closely associated with its

¹⁶ Ruth Pincoe, "F.H. Torrington," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter EMC], <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/fh-torrington> (accessed March 8, 2012).

¹⁷ Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (1897), 9. For another heroic depiction, see *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1889-1890*, p. 15, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL. For an anecdotal reminiscence of Torrington see Hector Charlesworth, *Candid Chronicles: Leaves from the Note Book of a Canadian Journalist* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1925), 320-323.

¹⁸ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1888-1889*, pp. 1, 3-4, 7, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

¹⁹ *Toronto College of Music Syllabus 1907-1908*, p. 15, Box 85, Royal Conservatory of Music Fonds [henceforth RCM Fonds], A1975-0014, UTA.

herculean founder, the Toronto College of Music did not long survive Torrington himself. A year after the latter's death in 1917, the college joined the Canadian Academy of Music, which TCM subsumed in 1924.²⁰

Other Toronto conservatories included the *Metropolitan College of Music*, founded in 1893, ostensibly in order to serve pupils from the west-end of the city. Two years after its opening, the college acquired W.O. Forsyth (1859-1937) as its musical director. Forsyth had gained a reputation in Toronto circles as “a musician of superior talent, a pre-eminently fine teacher of piano playing, and an excellent harmonist” as well as a composer of considerable abilities.²¹ A native of Aurora, Ontario, Forsyth had studied in Germany and upon his return to North America penned articles for some of the continent's most prestigious musical journals. The Metropolitan Conservatory thrived under his guidance, boasting a staff of thirty teachers in 1899. In 1912, the institution joined forces with the Canadian Academy of Music (1911-1924).²²

Another prominent institution was the *Hambourg Conservatory of Music* (1911-1951), a sprawling Victorian residence nestled at the corner of Wellesley and Sherbourne streets. Russian-born pianist Michael Hambourg, an alumnus of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Conservatories as well as the London Academy and Guildhall School of Music, had taken up residence in Toronto in 1910. Along with his sons Jan (violin) and

²⁰ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, pp. 7-8; *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1904-1905*, pp. 1, 83-84, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL; Clifford Ford, “Toronto College of Music,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/toronto-college-of-music> (accessed February 10, 2012); Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 124-125; Carl Morey, “Musical Education,” 121.

²¹ Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (1897), 13.

²² “Metropolitan School of Music,” *Musician* 1, no. 1 (May 1899): 4; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 125; Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (1897), 13. The Metropolitan School was located at 1494 and 1496 Queen St. West.

Boris (cello), he built his conservatory into a widely respected enterprise.²³ Eldest son Mark, a famed piano virtuoso, continued to tour the globe but he lent prestige to the family business by association. The Hambourgs awed the public with their glittering list of professional contacts, for they knew virtually everyone worth befriending in the European musical scene.²⁴ In 1914, the Hambourg Conservatory listed fifty-seven teachers on its staff roll, including twenty for piano, eleven for voice, and eight for violin. In spite of their sizable operation, the Hambourgs avoided the bureaucratic measures that characterised larger institutions such as TCM. They gleefully accepted teachers considered “too unorthodox to be acceptable at the Toronto Conservatory,” creating an enriching, if bohemian, atmosphere of instruction.²⁵ The Hambourgs equally refused to institute a set curriculum or hold examinations. After Michael’s sudden death on June 18, 1916, sons Jan and Boris took over stewardship of the school. Jan moved to Paris four years later, whereupon Boris became sole manager of his father’s legacy.²⁶

The Columbian Conservatory of Music also emerged in 1911, changing its name to the *Canadian Academy of Music* the following year. The Academy took up residence on 12 Spadina Road, north of Bloor Street. It too, relied on financial backing from Toronto’s business elite, namely Colonel Albert Gooderham. Together with musical director Peter C. Kennedy, Gooderham worked hard to recruit renowned faculty. One of his biggest triumphs was the acquisition of Luigi von Kunits, a star violinist and conductor who turned down a conductorship at the Philadelphia Orchestra in favour of

²³ “Professor Michael Hambourg,” *Musical Canada* 8, no. 9 (January 1914): 239; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 125; Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 38, 51.

²⁴ Eric Koch, *The Brothers Hambourg* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1997), 117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-130.

²⁶ Koch, *Brothers Hambourg*, 114, 124, 132; Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 51.

the Toronto position.²⁷ The Canadian Academy of Music persisted as a rival to TCM until the latter purchased it in 1924 for a price of \$115,000.²⁸

In addition to the institutional heavyweights, a host of smaller conservatories dotted Toronto's urban and suburban landscapes. Its directors and musicians did not possess the star power of the city's top musical celebrities, but they nonetheless garnered respect in musical circles. Significantly, some of these smaller conservatories were directed by women, providing these enterprising females with a measure of autonomy they would not have obtained as a staff member of one of the larger schools. The Balmy Beach College of Music and Art (f. 1907) for instance named Mrs. A.C. Courtice as its principal and founder. Its staff included Mrs. von Kunits, wife of violinist-conductor Luigi von Kunits, and a talented violinist in her own right.²⁹ The Toronto Junction College of Music (f. 1897) served a peripheral town of six thousand under the stewardship of Miss Via Macmillan.³⁰ Margaret Florence Langrill founded the Forsyth Studio (later the Forsyth Academy of Music) in Hamilton in 1913, heading a small but illustrious staff that included Luigi von Kunits and Paul Moreno.³¹ Mrs. L.B. Carter meanwhile formed an Academy of Music in North Bay, styling herself "Musical Directress."³²

²⁷ *Musical Canada* 6, no. 8 (December 1911): 240; *Columbian Conservatory of Music Calendar 1912-1913*, Box 29, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA; Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 37-38. Von Kunits went on to become the conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra during the 1920s. He chose Toronto over the more prestigious Philadelphia offer on account of health concerns, judging that the Toronto position would cause him less stress. See Clifford Ford, "Luigi von Kunits," *EMC* <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/luigi-von-kunits> (accessed May 22, 2012).

²⁸ Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 52. The Canadian Academy of Music appears to have organized its own system of external examinations, judging from an advertisement for the North Bay Academy of Music, which states that exams could be taken under the auspices of the Canadian Academy, (unplaced clipping, c. 1914-1915, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC 108, KPL).

²⁹ *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 6 (December-January 1914-1915): 129.

³⁰ "Toronto Junction College of Music," *Musician* 1, no. 1 (May 1899): 3-4.

³¹ "Hamilton Institution Changes," *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 4 (October-November 1914): 109.

³² Unplaced clipping, c. 1914-1915, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC 108, KPL.

In all, Toronto's multiple conservatories collectively serviced roughly two thousand local pupils at a time when the city's entire population swelled at just under three hundred thousand.³³ Official TCM publications note that Edward Fisher greeted the founding of rival conservatories with equanimity. During a talk in June 1912, he observed that the competition demonstrated Toronto's growing musical sophistication and moreover, would force the conservatories to maintain high standards and efficient operations.³⁴ In spite of these noble sentiments, rivalries between schools could be quite intense. The *Canadian Musician* enshrined some of these jealousies in a cartoon entitled "A Toronto Medley," (Fig. 5.1). F.H. Torrington (top left) and Edward Fisher (top right) each employ a fishing reel to pull a hapless student towards their respective schools. Behind each of them stands a blackboard, which mocks the conservatories' penchant for self-aggrandizement by listing Toronto College's number of teachers at 175,000 versus TCM's 175,000 and-a-half. Below them stands W.O. Forsyth, fist raised and threatening to open his own music school, which he eventually did in 1895.³⁵

With the triumph of the major Toronto institutions, other urban centers began to enter the conservatory game to varying degrees of success. Edouard Hesselberg's "A Review of Music in Canada" (1913) lists twenty-five Ontario conservatories in total.³⁶ In Hamilton, two early attempts to found conservatories in the late 1880s failed before C.M.L. Harris started a music school in 1890. A British emigrant living in Canada since

³³ Carl Morey, "Musical Education," 121.

³⁴ "The T.C.M. Alumni Association," *Conservatory Monthly* 11, no. 6 (June 1913): 170-172.

³⁵ The other pontificating local musicians include Arthur E. Fisher (middle row, center) offering a harmony lesson at the blackboard, Signor d'Auria twirling a conductor's baton, Augustus Stephen Vogt telling all who will listen "What I know about Oratorio," and E.W. Schuch boasting about his twin choral groups the Harmony Club and the Vocal Society. The final figure in the bottom right corner is Mr. Torrington again. An explanation of the various cartoon figures appears in a *Saturday Night* clipping pasted alongside the cartoon in W.O. Forsyth's scrapbook, Envelope 15, Box 12, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC.

³⁶ Becker, "Early History," 13.

1869, Harris possessed the lofty Doctorate of Music degree. His fledgling institution eventually became the Hamilton Conservatory of Music. Beginning with a roster of twenty-three faculty members, by 1906 it had acquired nearly six hundred pupils studying under twenty-eight teachers. The Hamilton Conservatory remained in operation until 1980.³⁷ *Musical Canada* of September 1913 contained an advertisement for another Hamilton school named the Wagnerian Conservatory of Music. Its three directors had Russian credentials and seemed to be administering the conservatory as part of a wider system of academies from a distance. The school was short-lived, for no mention of it appears in subsequent years.³⁸ The Berlin Conservatory of Music was founded in 1913, and one year later boasted three hundred and fifty students and seventeen teachers. Under the helm of director George Ziegler, the school taught a range of courses, including violin, voice culture, theory, and even a “vocal kindergarten” for small children.³⁹ William Caven Barron formed the London Conservatory of Music, which lasted from 1892 to 1922 upon which time the school merged with the newer London Institute of Art.⁴⁰ Even smaller towns such as Guelph and Peterborough launched conservatories in 1887 and 1905 respectively. It is not known how long the Guelph Academy of Music lasted; however, the Peterborough conservatory persisted until the 1930s.⁴¹

³⁷ Babin, “Piano Examination,” 35; Becker, “Early History,” 15; Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 189.

³⁸ *Musical Canada* 8, no. 5 (September 1913): 128.

³⁹ *Musical Canada* 9, no. 4 (August 1914): 102-103; “The Berlin Conservatory of Music,” unplaced clipping, April 18, 1914, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC 108, KPL. George Ziegler was a multi-talented musician, teacher, and conductor. He graduated from TCM for piano in 1909 and for organ in 1912 (Becker, “Early History,” 199).

⁴⁰ Lenore Crawford, J. Paul Green, and Emily-Jane Orford, “Western Ontario Conservatory of Music,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/western-ontario-conservatory-of-music> (accessed February 14, 2012).

⁴¹ *Musical Journal* 9 (September 1887): 137; Joseph Wearing, “Peterborough, Ont.,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/peterborough-ont> (accessed February 14, 2012).

Ontario's prominent conservatories usually chose to affiliate themselves with one of the province's two music degree-granting institutions: the University of Toronto or Trinity College.⁴² Conservatory directors hoped that such an alliance would heighten both the prestige and the financial resources of their own institutions. Advanced conservatory students would also benefit, since they could count their upper-level courses towards partial fulfillment of the B.Mus. requirements. The University of Toronto and Trinity College profited as well. Despite having a B.Mus. degree on their books, neither school wished to devote the time and money necessary to offer regular courses. Musical study at both schools had traditionally consisted of irregular lectures and perhaps a few private lessons in performance, but that was all. Students interested in pursuing a music degree had needed to fend for themselves to ensure that they received adequate instruction for the degree requirements.⁴³ Affiliating with a music conservatory signaled a renewed interest on the part of UofT and Trinity towards developing their music programs. Generally, the universities taught a few of the academic courses, set the degree requirements, and administered the B.Mus. exams, while delegating practical instruction in voice or an instrument to the conservatories. TCM began the trend by affiliating with Trinity in 1888 and the University of Toronto in 1896. The Toronto College of Music and the Hamilton Conservatory of Music affiliated with the University of Toronto in 1890

⁴² Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 192. The other Canadian music degree-granting institutions were McGill, Dalhousie, and Bishop's. According to John Becker, the Brantford and London Conservatories of Music affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, but he does not reveal whether the university bestowed degrees as part of this partnership. See Becker, "Early History," 19.

⁴³ The University of Toronto had awarded its first B.Mus. degree back in 1846, but it did not produce a music syllabus or examination system until the 1890s. Trinity College (which joined the University of Toronto in 1904) had a music professor by the name of George Strathy from 1853 to 1883. Strathy remained a shadowy figure on campus, offering no courses or exams or lectures. Shortly after Strathy's retirement, Trinity created a music syllabus consisting of a yearly exam for three years in order to obtain a B.Mus. Its administrative energies did not, however, extend to any course offerings for students. See J. Paul Green and Nancy F. Vogan, *Music Education in Canada: A Historical Account* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 72-73; Morey, "Musical Education," 121-122.

and 1906 respectively.⁴⁴ TCM solidified its association with the University of Toronto by placing itself under the jurisdiction of the university's Board of Governors in 1918.⁴⁵

What we Have to Offer: The Advantages of a Conservatory Education

Conservatories offered a number of advantages in the interests of gaining a distinct edge over the private teacher. First, directors guaranteed assured quality standards for all their staff, thus eliminating the risk of receiving an incompetent instructor. The Toronto College of Music calendar for 1897-1898 asserted: "In the College you are sure of the ability of your teachers; in private instruction, sometimes."⁴⁶ The Toronto Conservatory of Music elaborated upon this theme in its calendar of 1895-1896:

The advantages of Conservatory over private instruction are so numerous and varied and so obvious to anyone giving the matter serious thought, that it is sufficient merely to suggest the more important aspects of the subjects ... Unfortunately the musical profession embraces more or less incompetent teachers, no one being debarred from entering it, whether properly qualified or not. It therefore rests with each individual, when seeking the services of a private teacher to form his judgment as best he can on that person's fitness for his vocation. A Conservatory of Music worthy of its title, presents no such uncertainty ... It is morally certain that the teachers of a Conservatory are selected mainly on account of their ability, as it would not be in the interests of any institution to sacrifice its reputation by employing other than good teachers.⁴⁷

In describing these truths as self-evident, the excerpt projects a strident common sense tone. The reader is strongly encouraged to discard his or her existing impressions in

⁴⁴ Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Agincourt, ON: GLC Publishers Ltd, 1982), 114; Green and Vogan, *Music Education in Canada*, 69; Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 192; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 124; Morey, "Musical Education," 122; Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 26, 28.

⁴⁵ See Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 45-47, for more information.

⁴⁶ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, p. 28, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁴⁷ "Advantages of Conservatory Over Private Instruction," *Toronto Conservatory of Music Calendar 1895-1896*, Box 4, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA. See also *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, pp. 15-16, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

favour of the institution's superior worldly knowledge. After years of fuming against the public's credulous attitude towards musical self-promoters, conservatory leaders now harnessed the powers of persuasive advertising on their own behalf. Nor were the Toronto conservatories alone in exhibiting such strong disdain for private teachers. The Peterborough Conservatory of Music, for instance, struck a similar tone in one of its early calendars: "Of the salient advantages offered by tuition in a well equipped Conservatory little need be urged, it being very generally recognized that there are substantial benefits to the pupil over a method of individual instruction. Having the means to engage instructors of the highest attainments, the pupil benefits from such instruction..."⁴⁸ The Berlin Conservatory of Music ran advertisements boasting a "staff of specialists" and schooling "under qualified teachers after the best methods of foremost European and American Conservatories." One insert even featured a lengthy quotation about the degenerative effects of poor teaching upon children's mental development.⁴⁹

Critiques of the innate superiority of conservatory educators were infrequent, though pointed. *Saturday Night* music columnist Metronome observed that all but one of TCM's faculty members had taught privately before the conservatory's founding, and that private studios would continue to furnish many more talented musicians. Metronome aimed to dispel the notion that incorporation into a conservatory had some sort of magical transformative effect on the quality of musical education.⁵⁰ Another author, who described himself as "an English degree-holder of many years' standing," argued that many conservatory teachers did not actually hold music degrees. Although committed to

⁴⁸ *Peterborough Conservatory of Music Calendar*, pp. 5-6, c. 1905-1915, CIHM no. 86449.

⁴⁹ Unplaced clipping, scrapbook 5.1; *Berlin Telegraph*, December 14, 1914, scrapbook 5.1; unplaced clipping, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC 108, KPL.

⁵⁰ Metronome, "Music," *Saturday Night*, March 3, 1888, p. 10.

the notion of “scholarly musicianship” in teaching practice, this writer believed that such qualities did not constitute the strict preserve of the conservatory affiliates.⁵¹

Second, conservatories’ extensive resources enabled them to offer free incentives to their students. Private teachers simply could not compete with these extras, a fact that conservatory pundits did not hesitate to point out. Student privileges included performance opportunities at student recitals, free lectures and concerts from faculty and visiting musicians, an extensive musical library, discounted fares to local musical events, and complimentary lessons in beginner theory, harmony, sight singing, or violin.⁵²

Conservatory directors grew frustrated when students did not avail themselves of these privileges. After months of raising funds to institute a well-stocked musical library, TCM issued a gentle reminder to students in December 1890: “Students are reminded that the Books in the Reference Library are intended expressly for their use, and that access can be had to them at all times [during] the day. This does not seem to have been sufficiently understood by some of the students, and it is hoped that this announcement will remove any difficulty that may have existed in their minds which prevented them from making use of the Books.”⁵³ Eleven months later, Conservatory administrators informed students once again that they: “should bear in mind that a careful perusal of the various works in the Conservatory library, bearing on their course of study, will greatly aid them in their

⁵¹ *Saturday Night*, March 10, 1888, p. 3.

⁵² Edward Fisher, “The General Condition and Progress of the Institution up to the Present Time,” *Report of the Board of Directors*, 1888, Toronto Conservatory of Music Folder, AR PAM 780.72971 R598.3, Art Room Special Collections, TRL; *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 23 and *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1889*, pp. 8-9, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL; *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1888-1889*, pp. 10-12, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL; *Peterborough Conservatory of Music Calendar*, CIHM no. 86449; “Music and the Drama,” *Toronto Mail*, August 16, 1890, unplaced clipping, Envelope 1, Box 1, RCM Fonds, A1975-001, UTA.

⁵³ *Matinee Musicale Programme*, December 20, 1890, scrapbook p. 40, Box 92, RCM Fonds, A1975-001, UTA.

progress.”⁵⁴ TCM violin student Murray Solway remembered that the faculty and visiting artist concerts did help him to develop a discerning ear and to ponder a career in performance. Nevertheless, he and his adolescent chums tended not to treat them “too seriously.” The slightest slip up on the part of a performer would be enough to send his group into “a round of snickers and muffled convulsions.”⁵⁵

Third, unlike the private teacher who taught students individually, conservatories offered the option of classroom instruction. Originating in prestigious American institutions such as the New England, Peabody, and Oberlin conservatories, class lessons represented the pinnacle of progressive music education in the late 1880s.⁵⁶ The classes were usually quite small, often consisting of two to six students each, and encompassed both theory as well as practical (performance) courses. Students were welcome to study one-on-one with their chosen instructor; however, class instruction represented a cheaper option. Therefore, families who could not otherwise afford to give their children a musical education could obtain a competent teacher at a fraction of the price.⁵⁷ Ontario’s conservatory directors believed that students would benefit from a little healthy competition from their peers. TCM considered the classroom model a “mode of instruction [which] excites emulation; ambition is aroused; the student is spurred on to greater efforts by observing the proficiency of those who have attained to a higher degree of perfection...”⁵⁸ The Metropolitan School of Music championed class lessons on

⁵⁴ Matinee Musicale Programme, November 21, 1891, scrapbook p. 56, Box 92, RCM Fonds, A1975-001, UTA.

⁵⁵ Maurice Solway, *Recollections of a Violinist* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1984), 21.

⁵⁶ Becker, “Early History,” 70-72, 80.

⁵⁷ “A Conservatory of Music,” *Musical Journal* 1, no.1 (January 1887): 3; *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 12, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL; Jones, “The Fisher Years,” 79-80.

⁵⁸ *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, pp. 10-11, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL. See also *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory*

the grounds that “[t]he incentive of competition – *one of the strongest in human nature* – is invaluable and is almost necessarily wanting among those who study privately.”⁵⁹ The Toronto College of Music, meanwhile insisted: “There is an inspiration in association with others engaged in the same work; an *esprit du corps* in connection with school duties which occasions mutual emulation ... you may receive your own proportional share of attention in the class and at the same time you may listen to all the criticisms made upon the efforts of your mates. Your own ability to criticize is enlarged.”⁶⁰ The class lessons vogue proved to be short-lived. While class lessons for theory courses enjoyed a measure of success, students preferred individual instruction for practical lessons on their instrument. At TCM, for instance, performance classes petered out throughout the 1890s before being eliminated from the curriculum in 1900.⁶¹

Finally, conservatory directors appealed to nationalist sentiments. No longer would advanced students need to pursue a musical education in America or Europe, perhaps never to return. For the first time, Canada had produced top-notch institutions that would foster a self-perpetuating crop of native talent. TCM promoters observed that students electing to study in Toronto would save themselves the discomfort of adjusting to the living conditions of the Old World. These authors showcased Toronto as a beacon of healthful living with superior material comforts, commodious living spaces, and abundant food. Teachers portrayed themselves as more sympathetic and more solicitous

of Music 1890-1891, p. 13, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL; “Advantages of Conservatory over Private Instruction,” *Toronto Conservatory of Music Calendar 1895-1896*, pp.19-20, Box 4, RCM Fonds, A1975-001, UTA.

⁵⁹ Two concert programmes, Metropolitan School of Music Folder, AR PAM 780.72971 M26.2, Art Room Special Collections, TRL. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁰ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, p. 28, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁶¹ Becker, “Early History,” 80-81.

for the student's wellbeing than the egotistical masters of the European conservatoires.⁶²

Another TCM teacher remarked that "for the acquirement of a thorough technical groundwork and the additional advantage of the close personal attention which one expects of teachers ... the average of work done in Europe offers no advantage to our students."⁶³ Indeed, in their more optimistic moments, conservatory educators believed that their respective institutions had achieved such heights that students no longer needed to go abroad "except for the pleasure of seeing distant lands."⁶⁴

Thus, one could pursue one's entire musical studies from beginner to diploma level without the financial and emotional sacrifice of leaving the country. TCM ran an advertisement in the *Canadian Magazine* of 1897, insisting that the cost of completing musical training at their institution was roughly half of what it would cost to study at one of the big American conservatories.⁶⁵ In practice, however, attitudes did not change overnight and the public largely retained their belief in the superiority of foreign training. Many Canadian conservatory students decided to continue their studies in Europe after the completion of their diplomas at home. Louise McDowell, for instance, finished her Associate diploma at TCM, yet she wished to immerse herself in the European musical scene. "Towards the Conservatory of Music I felt deep gratitude," she noted "for it left me with a healthy desire to continue studying, but in a wider field, where more opportunities of hearing great music superbly performed would be open to me." She eventually chose Leipzig, dubbing it "the Mecca of my dreams." Music director Edward

⁶² "Advantages of Musical Study in Canada," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 7, no. 4 (July 1908): 116.

⁶³ A.S. Vogt, "Piano Study at Home and Abroad," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 1, no. 1 (January 1902): 10-11. See also "New Institute of Music Opened," unplaced clipping, November 28, 1919, p. 98, London Room Associations Clipping Roll #1, Historical Series Scrapbooks, LPL.

⁶⁴ "Banquet to Dr. Fisher," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 7, no. 3 (May 1908): 77. See also *Toronto College of Music Calendar and Syllabus 1912-1913*, pp. 18-19, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁶⁵ *Canadian Magazine* 10, no. 2 (December 1897): xxv-xxx.

Fisher greeted Louise's wanderlust with good-humoured patience. McDowell recalled that, "sometime before, during a lesson period, I had jokingly said to Mr. Fisher, 'I am going to Leipzig someday', and smilingly he answered, 'but you will finish here first, will you not?'"⁶⁶ Fisher would have been consoled by the fact that McDowell indeed finished her diploma at TCM, but it must have been galling to witness bright-eyed students still longing for Europe. Despite his efforts to craft a prestigious school, Canada's musical landscape simply could not compete with that of the Old World.

Conservatory teachers' nationalist sentiments reached their peak in a lengthy conflict known as the Associated Board dispute. The fracas began in 1893, when the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in London, England, received a request from Percy J. Illsley of Montreal, asking for an Associated Board examination outpost in that city. The Board dithered on the issue until the middle of 1896 when the recently appointed Honorary Secretary Samuel Aitken happened upon the request. Aitken spent the next six months marshaling resources for the creation of an ambitious examination system throughout Canada. Unfortunately, by that time, Illsley had already collaborated with two colleagues to found the Dominion College of Music, complete with its own examination system. Canada no longer needed a helping hand from Mother England. Undeterred, Aitken notified the press of his great scheme, a move that sent alarm bells sounding throughout Canadian musical circles. Resistance in Ontario proved particularly strong, since TCM and the Toronto College of Music already administered their own exam systems and feared the arrival of a fierce imperial competitor. Toronto College's F.H. Torrington tried to negotiate a co-administered examination system for both

⁶⁶ Louise McDowell, *Past and Present: A Canadian Musician's Reminiscences* (Kirkland Lake, ON: 1957), 29-30.

countries' mutual benefit, but Aitken refused. Ignoring the Canadian desire for partial autonomy, he insisted that the Associated Board take full control. By the fall of 1898, leading Ontario musicians joined forces in protest. What had begun as an economic argument evolved into a full-fledged political debate about imperial interference.⁶⁷

The issue reached a boiling point on February 23, 1899, with the creation of the Associated Musicians of Ontario, a rare instance of musical educators from competing institutions rallying together. The group's one-hundred-and-twelve members drafted a detailed examination syllabus and begged the University of Toronto to administer it on their behalf, hoping that the University's elevated standing would render it a worthy opponent for the Associated Board. The University eventually agreed in 1902, although the conservatories did not relinquish their own examinations as a result. Vanquished, the Associated Board retreated. The Board did in fact achieve its coveted foothold in Canada when the newly founded McGill Conservatorium of Montreal invited it to administer some exams so that the school could gain some legitimacy. Thus, the conflict never reached a definite conclusion. The conservatories, the University of Toronto, and the (diminished) Associated Board all offered competing examination systems in the Dominion, yet the prospect no longer galvanized musical circles as it had only a few years before.⁶⁸ The significance of this tangled series of events lies in the fact that Ontario's musical educators, many of whom were British-born and educated, grew to resent incursions from the Mother Country on their turf. TCM theory professor J. Humfrey Anger, for instance, wrote to the *Musical News* of London, England, in defense of Dominion musicians: "As a Canadian by adoption, having now spent some five years

⁶⁷ Green and Vogan, *Music Education in Canada*, 71-72; Jones, "The Fisher Years," 120-121, 130-132. For a detailed blow-by-blow account, see Jones pp. 120-132 and Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 30-32.

⁶⁸ Babin, "Piano Examination," 6.

in Toronto ... I may say, first of all, that these outside examiners are not wanted ... To every Englishman who knows the meaning of fair play it will be clear that the old cry of 'Canada for the Canadians' is only right and just; we are old, stable and experienced enough to do our business.'⁶⁹

In all, conservatories did offer pupils benefits beyond the means of the private teacher, but it is questionable whether such efforts gained the widespread influence originally envisioned by directors. Conservatories certainly achieved the goal of attracting students, for registration rates climbed steadily. Nevertheless, broader visions of transforming students into cosmopolitan intellectuals, and Ontario cities into vibrant musical spaces to rival those of Europe, proved less successful. Students decided which advantages appealed to them, and disregarded those that did not. Though keen to obtain a conservatory education, they did not embrace all the benefits laid at their feet.

A Rational Course of Instruction: Disciplining the Study of Music

While conservatory students may have felt comfortable refusing their school's cornucopia of optional benefits, other institutional dictates proved harder to ignore. Conservatory directors instituted a series of curricula, regulations, and ceremonial rituals in order to discipline the process by which music was taught and learned. Teachers, students, and even the public found themselves subjected in varying degrees to prescribed codes. Fueled by a powerful narrative of progressivism, the conservatory leader's gaze may have been benevolent but it was equally watchful.

⁶⁹ Reprinted in *Saturday Night*, September 10, 1898, p. 10.

To begin, each conservatory articulated its own preferred method for musical study, which it claimed most perfectly conformed to the natural laws of science. Peter C. Kennedy of the Columbian Conservatory of Music (later the Canadian Academy of Music) named his 1912 information booklet *The Searchlight of Reason*. He argued that “[i]t has been thoroughly demonstrated that the science of music, *when taught as it should be taught*, is so simple that anyone with ordinary intelligence may readily grasp its theory. They may *easily* learn as much of the fundamental theory of music as the greatest masters ever knew.” Full of praise for the Columbian system’s “rational graded course”, Kennedy immodestly bragged that it constituted “the only ideal method, and is far superior to any musical course in existence today...”⁷⁰ Columbian Conservatory instructors, privy to this ideal pedagogy, would ensure pleasing results for every reasonably bright pupil that walked through their doors. Just as modern technology rendered a factory more efficient, scientific teaching methods would improve student’s rate of retention. With the Columbian Conservatory, the risk of individual defeat had been all but eliminated. The Toronto College of Music similarly claimed to follow “a well-regulated and scientific plan” in the design of its curriculum.⁷¹ In particular, the college cited its young children’s kindergarten programme as illustrative of courses “conducted in accordance with the most advanced educational and psychological principles.”⁷² The Berlin Conservatory also mentioned systematic learning and efficiency in several advertisements posted in local newspapers during the 1910s.⁷³

⁷⁰ Peter C. Kennedy, *The Searchlight of Reason*, c. 1912, Kennedy-Columbian Conservatory of Music Fonds, AR 780.72971 C578 K25, TRL. Emphasis in original.

⁷¹ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1904-1905*, p.36, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁷² *Toronto College of Music Calendar and Syllabus 1905-1906*, p. 36, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁷³ Various clippings, scrapbooks 5.1 and 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC 108, KPL.

Conservatory directors insisted that since their curriculum was designed on a logical progression of skills, it should be mastered sequentially rather than by leaps and bounds. Peter Kennedy argued that while it may appear gratifying to play challenging pieces, such skills were worthless unless one had mastered the easier levels. To ensure this, the Columbian Conservatory dictated that a pupil receive a grade of 90% for every lesson he or she recited before being allowed to proceed to the next topic. Failure to achieve this standing would compel the student to repeat the lesson, at no added cost. Columbian students could join the school at any point in their education; however, they needed to complete their exams in “regular consecutive order” thereafter.⁷⁴ TCM’s calendar of 1887-1888 expressed an identical mantra: “Students may chafe under ‘exercises’ and rudimentary instruction generally, and long for brilliant compositions which may afford them opportunities for display; in brief, yearn to read before acquiring the alphabet; but foolish or ignorant indulgence in this respect on the part of incompetent teachers only too surely will ruin natural abilities of the brightest promise in any student.”⁷⁵ Toronto College of Music’s 1904-1905 calendar similarly pronounced it “desirable that students enter the College at an early age and develop the necessary technique and musical knowledge on modern lines. A systematic course of training is adopted throughout all the grades, and pupils are thereby steadily advanced...”⁷⁶ In addition, conservatories outlined strict requirements for completing theoretical co-requisites, ensuring that pupils would not be able to continue to the next performance level without a solid grasp of musical rudiments and form.

⁷⁴ Kennedy, *The Searchlight of Reason*.

⁷⁵ *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 15, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁷⁶ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1904-1905*, p. 51, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

If teachers needed to conform to a professional standard, then it only seemed fair to demand that students behave in a considerate manner. Conservatory calendars displayed long lists of “Rules and Regulations” to guard against possible infractions. These rules generally included advance payment of term fees, one to two weeks’ advance notice prior to withdrawal at the end of a term, punctual arrival for lessons, and a warning not to expect a refund for missed lessons except for validated cases of illness. TCM and Toronto College of Music liked to keep tight control of the daily goings-on in their institutions and further stipulated that any discussions regarding scheduling, courses, fees, etc. be taken up with the director rather than one’s individual teacher.⁷⁷

The most salient evidence of conservatories’ disciplining of musical education took the form of the elaborate examination systems they devised. With the exception of the Hambourgs, who as recent Russian immigrants stood somewhat apart from the overwhelmingly Anglo-Canadian professional music teaching community, Ontario’s Conservatory directors adopted the British model of graded examinations from beginner to advanced levels of study.⁷⁸ The exam structured nearly all aspects of the lesson experience. One spent months learning and polishing pieces and technical exercises for performance before an outside examiner. The results in the practical performance exams and the written theory examinations usually determined whether one could proceed to a more advanced course of study.⁷⁹ The social theorist Michel Foucault describes examinations as a “highly ritualized” disciplinary process involving “a normalizing gaze,

⁷⁷ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, p. 33, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL; *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 13, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL. See also *Peterborough Conservatory of Music Calendar*, pp. 12-13, CIHM no. 86449.

⁷⁸ Becker, “Early History,” 164; Koch, *Brothers Hambourg*, 124.

⁷⁹ Granted, TCM instituted a system whereby students of harmony with excellent grades throughout the term could use their high standing to offset a poor examination performance. See *Toronto Conservatory of Music Calendar, 1895-1896*, pp. 43-44, Box 4, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them.”

Foucault further contends that the examination process facilitates modern bureaucratic reporting on students, describing their skills minutely and thereby exerting power through a “meticulous archive constituted in terms of bodies and days.”⁸⁰ Peter Kennedy expressed particular pride over the Columbian Conservatory’s efforts in this capacity, observing that the school kept copious records for students from day one and that any time a student or his or her parents wished to do so, they could consult these records to see exactly how learning had progressed. While Kennedy’s policies stemmed from a desire to make teaching more open and accountable, students ultimately experienced bureaucratic surveillance.⁸¹ Moreover, Kennedy considered the examination process paramount for demonstrating the abilities of a pupil, claiming: “We start you at the point where your examinations unfailingly indicate you should begin.”⁸² Thus, nervous students who did not perform well under pressure faced a longer course of study.

The TCM also adopted the examining imperative. In general, the school’s curriculum did allow for an element of flexibility. Staff could teach from technical exercise manuals of their own choosing, and students selected their concert pieces from a long list of options. In the early days, examinations were optional for academic stream students, in contrast to the collegiate stream pupils for whom exams formed a core requirement. In 1901, however, TCM ended the bifurcated academic-collegiate system in favour of a single graded curriculum. This new system placed increasing emphasis on

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 184, 189.

⁸¹ Kennedy, *The Searchlight of Reason*.

⁸² Ibid.

mandatory examinations for students of all ages and at all levels of study.⁸³ Louise McDowell was a member of that first generation of TCM students learning to adapt themselves to the examination rituals. Prior to her enrollment, McDowell's musical education had consisted of lessons from her mother, supplemented by exercise books mailed to her from a musical aunt living in Winnipeg.⁸⁴ Louise therefore approached her Junior Piano Examination with considerable trepidation. She wrote a letter to her mother, confiding her feelings as she performed before her teacher Edward Fisher and external examiner William H. Sherwood of Chicago.

I went down to the Examination room after being considerably laughed at by Miss Ferguson [the registrar] and Mr. Drysdale, the Secretary, for nervousness. I took off my hat before going and Miss Ferguson gave me a comb to fix my hair, in the office ... Shortly afterwards, I had to go in. I shook hands with Mr. Sherwood, then went and sat down at the Grand Piano. While Mr. Sherwood was examining the slip on which I had written my list of pieces, Mr. Fisher asked him if I should play something. Mr. Sherwood said, 'Yes', and Mr. Fisher turned over my music. When he turned up those abominable 'Caprices' by Schumann, I said, 'Oh, Mr. Fisher, don't give me those', and he smiled and turned them down. Then I said, 'Let me play Fantaisie-Impromptu', and he did.

Fortunately, Louise's agitation did not hamper her achievement as a pianist. She earned a first-class standing on her exam and Mr. Sherwood pronounced her "a very talented young lady."⁸⁵ As a final disciplinary act, conservatories such as TCM and the Berlin Conservatory of Music often published examination results in their own school papers or in the local press. Students would find their names listed in descending order of merit, categorized into first-class, second-class and pass standings for the entire world to see.⁸⁶

⁸³ Becker, "Early History," 75-76, 83-84, 101. The Academic stream consisted of novice and intermediate students as well as advanced pupils wishing to study music out of general interest. The Collegiate stream consisted of advanced students who were either very dedicated amateurs or (more commonly) wishing to study in preparation for a professional musical career.

⁸⁴ McDowell, *Past and Present*, 15-16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁸⁶ Second Quarterly Concert Programme, February 4, 1892, scrapbook p. 58, Box 92, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA; *The Globe*, July 14, 1917, p.12. For Berlin Conservatory see "Results of Exams at Berlin

Ritualized discipline proved equally important during conservatories' written examinations. Fig. 5.2 shows a theory exam in progress from the 1904-1905 Calendar of the Toronto College of Music. An overwhelmingly female group of students sits in desks arranged in straight rows. The setting is the University of Toronto (a room likely rented for the occasion), which gives the proceedings an atmosphere of institutional sterility. The sunlight pouring in through the arched windows shines down upon each of the women in the center row, as if to highlight their visibility as well as their imprisonment into individualized capsules of disciplinary space. The Toronto Conservatory of Music also adhered to a rigid theory examination process, insisting that, "In no case ... do candidates attach their own names to their papers, they being known to the examiner only by numbers which have been assigned by the Registrar."⁸⁷

Music historian John Becker rightly points out that TCM director Edward Fisher entertained doubts as to the efficacy of the examination as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. In a 1902 issue of the *Conservatory Bi-Monthly*, Fisher mused that music exams were "perfectly legitimate and, at proper times desirable, serving as they do to measure approximately the distance traversed by the student on the road of knowledge. This highway of knowledge, however, is extremely broad. Many things may escape the student wayfarer's notice, and the fact that he has reached a certain point in his journey, does not necessarily imply that he has learned all that is to be known concerning the

Conservatory," unplaced clipping, c.1914, scrapbook 5.1; "Results of Music Exams of the Local Conservatory," unplaced clipping, scrapbook 5.1; "Successful at Con. Exams," unplaced clipping, scrapbook 5.2; "List of Those Who Were Successful," *Berlin News-Record*, August 14, 1915, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC108, KPL.

⁸⁷ "Music Exams: Mr. Aitken Answered by the Conservatory of Music," *Toronto World*, March 20, 1899, unplaced clipping, Newspaper Advertisements 1893-1903, Envelope, Box 17, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

country through which he has passed.”⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Fisher critiqued not the exam system itself but rather the attitudes of parents and students who pushed for an exam as soon as possible in order to compile more accolades. Fisher proposed that students wait until their playing had reached a level likely to secure an honours standing. “[T]o barely secure a ‘pass,’” Fisher reminded readers, “is to publish the fact that they did not excel in their nominally completed course.”⁸⁹ Fisher accepted the examination system as a necessary component of modern education; he simply advocated that students place it in proper perspective. In 1917, the *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* expressed a similar view. In an article entitled “The High Standard of the Conservatory’s A.T.C.M. Examination,” the author warned readers the Conservatory would not lower its standards. One should only attempt an examination with “due regard for its serious character.”⁹⁰ Provided that one possessed the talent and the work ethic, one would someday obtain an Associate Diploma of impeccable prestige.

Examinations not only bolstered the reputation of students; they solidified the professional claims of teachers and conservatory authorities. The *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* for September 1914, interpreted TCM’s local examination system as a progressive mission “to discover and reward good teaching and to detect and expose instruction of an inferior and harmful kind.”⁹¹ A year later, the *Gazette* reflected with satisfaction that “There has, not at any time, been a desire on the part of the Conservatory to popularize these examinations at the expense of their efficiency; nor is it

⁸⁸ Edward Fisher, “Talks with Teachers,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 1, no. 2 (March 1902): 40. See also Becker, “Early History,” 89-90.

⁸⁹ Fisher, “Talks with Teachers,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 1, no. 2 (March 1902): 41.

⁹⁰ “The High Standard of the Conservatory’s A.T.C.M. Examination,” *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* (August 1917): 6, scrapbook p. 164, Box 20, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁹¹ “Local Centre Examinations of the Toronto Conservatory of Music,” *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* (September 1914): 12, scrapbook p. 84, Box 20, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

intended that careless or weak teachers should find in them a safe refuge for ill-prepared pupils.”⁹² Clearly, the issue was not the difficulty of TCM’s standards but rather the foibles of teachers unable to help their students meet the requirements. Thus, the surveillance of students also served as a means of judging the merit of private teachers.

Finally, conservatories disciplined performers and audiences during a school’s frequent student recitals. Conservatory student recitals closely mirrored the rituals undergone at ladies’ colleges. Contemporaries believed that recitals gave students incentive to perfect their work as well as a valuable lesson in the art of self-discipline. The Peterborough Conservatory, for instance, insisted that all students, except the very youngest, could expect to perform regularly in public in order to attain “confidence and self-control.”⁹³ A reviewer of a Toronto College of Music recital enthused that “many of the little ones performed their numbers with an amount of self-possession that would have done credit to some of the older students.”⁹⁴ Audiences, meanwhile, learned to sit quietly and to listen to classical programmes. Silence proved a considerable challenge since Victorians listeners were infamous for their loquaciousness during musical performances.⁹⁵ The sins committed by Toronto spectators in particular included late arrivals, early departures, large hats obstructing the view, talking, demanding encores after every number, indiscriminate applauding and, in exceptional cases, stomping and

⁹² “Graduation and Local Centre Examinations for 1915,” *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* (July 1915): 13, scrapbook p. 87, Box 20, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁹³ *Peterborough Conservatory of Music Calendar*, p. 40, CIHM no. 86449.

⁹⁴ “Music and the Drama,” unplaced clipping, Subscriptions, Invitations and Press Clippings 1889-1902 Envelope, Box 1, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA. Though gathered in the TCM archival collection, this article refers to a Toronto College of Music Recital.

⁹⁵ For examples of audience behaviour during concerts see Christopher Bruhn, “Taking the Private Public: Amateur Music-Making and the Musical Audience in 1860s New York,” *American Music* 21, no. 3 (2003): 264, 270; Ronald Pearsall, *Edwardian Popular Music* (Vancouver: Douglas David & Charles Ltd., 1975), 107-108; Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles Ltd., 1973), 78-79.

jeering.⁹⁶ Consequently, a TCM recital programme for June 20, 1889, announced that latecomers would be required to wait outside the concert hall until an appropriate break in the music. A week later, another TCM programme contained a warning that the recital would end with a Mendelssohn concerto of considerable length. Anyone wishing to leave early was kindly requested to do so before the piece began so as to avoid disturbing other listeners. TCM's Fourth Quarterly Concert leaflet on June 29, 1891, even included a postscript in bold asking for "Strict Silence" for the duration of the musical numbers.⁹⁷

Conservatory authorities equally wished to expose audience members to the elevating influence of classical music. After attending a recital at the Toronto College of Music, Governor General Lord Aberdeen proclaimed: "I cannot help thinking it is refreshing ... to find a programme with such names as Beethoven, Bach, Chopin, Handel and Schumann; for, as we all know, we sometimes go to concerts, and find that these names are conspicuous by their absence."⁹⁸ TCM's Calendar from 1890-1891 noted that it devised its numerous concerts "for the purpose of assisting in the formation of a refined and elevated musical taste," using only "the choicest works of the great masters."⁹⁹ A few years later, TCM President G.W. Allan reflected with pride that the institution's concerts had "become largely instrumental in cultivating and developing an intelligent

⁹⁶ For instance, see "The Music and the Drama," *The Globe*, January 24, 1880, p.8; as well as the following *Saturday Night* articles: "A Season of Opera," January 7, 1888, p. 4; February 11, 1888, p. 6; March 24, 1888, p. 2; "Canadian Audiences," June 16, 1888, p. 6; December 6, 1890, p. 6; November 18, 1899, p. 10; "During the Overture," April 18, 1914, p. 36. Also see "Editorial Comments," *Conservatory Quarterly Review* 1, no.1 (November 1918): 2, TCM *Quarterly Review* 1918-1922 vols. I-IV Envelope, Box 43, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁹⁷ TCM Piano Recital of W.H. Sherwood, June 20, 1889, scrapbook p. 18; TCM Fourth Quarterly Concert, June 27, 1889, scrapbook p. 19; Fourth Quarterly Concert, June 29, 1891, scrapbook p. 52, all programmes in Box 92, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁹⁸ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1904-1905*, p. 32, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

⁹⁹ *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1890-1891*, pp. 15-16, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

appreciation and love of music in the community generally.”¹⁰⁰ Maurice Solway’s recollections of muffled laughter, cited earlier in this chapter, shows that audience members could resist the serious tone set by recital organizers. Still, one should not entirely dismiss claims that such concerts offered a broader appeal. Members of the general public did indeed attend these concerts, and larger institutions such as TCM regularly garnered large audiences. In April 1907, *Saturday Night* reported that roughly three thousand spectators had come to see TCM’s year-end commencement recital.¹⁰¹ Mid-term concerts would have garnered a smaller following; for instance, a student recital at the Berlin Conservatory of Music took place before an audience of two hundred.¹⁰² By and large, though, these types of events did establish themselves as highlights of the local musical scene.

Conservatories’ ardent championing of rational curricula of study, behavior regulations, examinations, and concert participation contributed to a broader attempt to discipline both students and the public at large. Directors interpreted their efforts as a sacred mission to improve the quality of music education and appreciation in their local, provincial and even national environs. In doing so, they subjected pupils and at times the public to a range of surveillance and testing practices. Musical proficiency and docile bodies, it would seem, went hand in hand.

¹⁰⁰ “Eighth General Annual Meeting of Shareholders,” *Toronto Conservatory of Music Calendar 1895-1896*, p. 17, Box 4, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA. See also “The Closing Concert,” *Conservatory Monthly* 11 no. 6 (June 1912): 165-166, Box 16, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA. G.W. Allan was president of the board of shareholders. Edward Fisher was musical director and therefore in charge of the daily running of the school.

¹⁰¹ *Saturday Night*, April 6, 1907, unplaced clipping, scrapbook p. 199, Box 87, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

¹⁰² “Music Recital by Young Artists,” *Berlin Telegraph*, March 31, c.1914-1915, scrapbook 5.1, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC108, KPL.

Class and Gender at the Conservatorium

Conservatory authorities prided themselves on their democratic approach to musical education. The lack of entrance requirements ensured that all interested candidates, regardless of talent or experience, could gain admission. Such open entrance policies reflected the realities of the Canadian musical scene; without patrons or state support, a conservatory needed to be economically viable in order to survive.¹⁰³ Conservatory promoters, however, stressed that their schools heralded a new age of mass musical enlightenment. Now, a modest fee comprised the only obstacle between ignorance and cultivation. This rhetoric of inclusiveness did not, in fact, produce a haven of social equality. Class and gender divisions continued to lurk innocuously among both students and teachers. Nevertheless, conservatories offered working-class, immigrant, and female students a rare (and eminently respectable) opportunity for higher education in an era when such avenues were few and far between.

Conservatories advertised themselves as accessible institutions able to educate talented musicians without prejudice towards class background. Such attitudes likely stemmed from romantic portrayals of gifted musicians' rags-to-riches ascent in fictional stories and biographical sketches. These sorts of sentimental tales captured the public imagination, appearing frequently in both musical and literary journals of the day.¹⁰⁴ Mrs. Torrington, wife of the director of the Toronto College of Music, betrayed the influence of these narratives during a speech at a National Council Conference in 1896 in which

¹⁰³ Arnold Walter, "The Growth of Musical Education," in *Aspects of Music in Canada*, ed. Arnold Walter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 251; Becker, "Early History," 77.

¹⁰⁴ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 64-72.

she described the pauper class as exotic, ragged figures of pathos: “In the distribution of talent God knows no distinction between high and low-born humanity ... Instances of the discovery of extraordinary voices among the Italians, with scant clothing and bare feet, organ grinders, coachmen, quarry men, colliers and the like, who, being assisted, rise to prominence in the artistic world, – are too numerous to require more than a passing allusion.”¹⁰⁵ A few months later, the music columnist for the *Canadian Home Journal* offered a sentimental portrayal of homegrown musical prodigies: “Sometimes a little girl in a faded frock will show the divine touch, even on her cheap little wooden violin; or, again, it is some rough young lad, whose future salvation lies in this spirit of music, hidden somewhere within. To see these develop beneath skilled guidance; to note the educative and refining power upon them as they advance, – surely this is worth while.”¹⁰⁶ The prospect of raising such talents out of the grime of their ignoble beginnings gave reformers a source of continued delight.

Conservatories appealed to humble families by stressing their affordability. As previously discussed, directors touted the class instruction model as an inexpensive alternative to private lessons. The cost of a conservatory education depended on a number of factors: weekly or bi-weekly lessons, class or individual learning, the particular instructor one obtained, and the number of weeks per session. Private lessons at the Toronto Conservatory of Music ranged from \$10.00 to \$35.00 per term of twenty half-hour lessons.¹⁰⁷ A smaller institution such as the London Conservatory of Music charged

¹⁰⁵ Mrs. F.H. Torrington, “The Musical Education of Our People,” *Canadian Home Journal* 2, no. 2 (June 1896): 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Canadian Home Journal* 2, no. 4 (August 1896): 8.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, “The Fisher Years,” 79-80.

fees ranging from \$4.50 to 12.50 for weekly individual lessons over a ten-week period.¹⁰⁸

So long as a family had some discretionary income, these prices were fairly moderate.¹⁰⁹

Conservatory scholarships furnished another option for students of limited means. Directors generally gave prizes on the basis of talent rather than financial need, but precocious students short on money at least had an even chance at obtaining one of these awards. By 1906, TCM had given out a cumulative total of \$23,600 in scholarships, valued between \$5.00 and \$50.00 each.¹¹⁰ A year after its inauguration, Berlin Conservatory announced a scholarship fund of \$500.00 for capable students.¹¹¹ Scholarship student memoirs tend to support the heroic image of progressive, munificent conservatories with their rose-tinted recollections of paternalist music directors. Still, these youngsters received a first-rate musical education that may otherwise have lain beyond their reach. Fourteen-year-old Harry Adaskin won a prize violin from TCM valued at \$350.00 in 1915, a staggering sum for a working-class immigrant family such as his.¹¹² Even smaller institutions such as the Hambourg Conservatory made generous offers to disadvantaged students. Patriarch Michael Hambourg considered himself a socialist and even cultivated links with Toronto's labour organizations. Piano student Gerald Moore remembered Michael as a "dear old gentleman ... a picturesque personality with his big benevolent presence, his white moustache and imperial," who had offered him a scholarship on terms "extraordinarily generous." Moore, a newly-arrived English immigrant, pledged to repay this kindness by offering the Hambourgs ten

¹⁰⁸ *London Conservatory of Music and School of Elocution*, c. 1900, CIHM no. 62003.

¹⁰⁹ Becker, "Early History," 80-81; Jones, "The Fisher Years," 79-80.

¹¹⁰ Becker, "Early History," 58.

¹¹¹ Unplaced clipping, c. 1914, scrapbook 5.1, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC108, KPL.

¹¹² Harry Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938* (Vancouver: November House, 1977), 74.

percent of his earnings during his first two years as a professional musician.¹¹³ Michael's son Boris continued the family's tradition of philanthropy. According to the historian Eric Koch, Boris frequently gave scholarships to talented students who could not afford lessons and, in cases of extreme poverty, provided for their room and board.¹¹⁴ Piano manufacturers donated scholarships as well. Heintzman & Company, for instance, offered a \$30.00 scholarship each year to the Toronto Junction College of Music.¹¹⁵ A final source of funds was wealthy philanthropists such as Mr. Alexander Cameron. In 1894, Cameron offered a one hundred dollar cash prize plus \$160.00 in conservatory scholarships for the top singers at the Massey music festival competition.¹¹⁶

Though the evidence is sparse, the Toronto Conservatory of Music (and possibly other institutions) welcomed students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. TCM for instance advertised in the local Hebrew press.¹¹⁷ Russian-Jewish immigrant Harry Adaskin recalled the relief he felt at entering TCM on a foot of equality, having endured years of anti-Semitic slurs at his regular public school.¹¹⁸ The Toronto College of Music 1897-1898 calendar even mentioned that aspiring organists could find plenty of employment opportunities among the city's churches and Hebrew congregations, which may have been a subtle way of announcing its acceptance of Jewish students.¹¹⁹

Conservatories' inclusive ideals did not, however, entirely eliminate the markers of class. Indeed, by pointing out the rough characteristics of the working classes, Mrs.

¹¹³ Gerald Moore, *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), 23-24. See also Koch, *Brothers Hambourg*, 132.

¹¹⁴ Koch, *Brothers Hambourg*, 114-116.

¹¹⁵ "Toronto Junction College of Music," *Musician* 1, no. 1 (May 1899): 4.

¹¹⁶ *Canadian Musician* 6, no. 4 (May 1894): 2.

¹¹⁷ October 1916 advertisement clipping, Box 13, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

¹¹⁸ Adaskin, *Fiddler's World*, 63.

¹¹⁹ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, pp. 67-68, Toronto College of Music Calendars, AR 780.72971 T59, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

Torrington and her peers rendered them as caricatures, in need of the enlightening influence of classical music. When small-town girl Louise McDowell first arrived at TCM's headquarters, she felt out of place among her more sophisticated urban peers. Although she liked her instructor, Edward Fisher, "[r]egarding the school, I wasn't quite happy. I felt very much like the country mouse. But the feeling of strangeness wore off."¹²⁰ Furthermore, the concern for classical music meant that popular music traditions were not encouraged at the conservatories. TCM authorities, for instance, decided against hiring Mr. Bert Kennedy as a banjo teacher in 1892 because they felt that the instrument did not reflect the stature of their institution. The banjo crept into the TCM syllabus only gradually, when an existing guitar instructor added it to the list of instruments some years later.¹²¹ Brass and wind instruments, with their military and working-class band connotations, went underrepresented in the majority of the conservatory syllabi. Even orchestral-based schools such as the Toronto College of Music favoured high-class instruments such as those of the string family. Brass and wind students would have needed to seek either a mentor from one of the local bands, or a self-instruction book.¹²²

Unlike contemporary colleges and universities, women formed a significant proportion of the conservatory population. A number of female teachers joined the staff lists, working respectable though fairly thankless positions. While conservatory directors vouched for the quality of every staff member, a hierarchy of prominence existed along with a corresponding spectrum of half-hourly rates. Assistant teachers occupied the

¹²⁰ McDowell, *Past and Present*, 20.

¹²¹ Jones "The Fisher Years," 99-100. Jones writes that banjo lessons appeared in the programme by 1901. Becker, by contrast, claims it was 1895 ("Early History," 113).

¹²² Babin, "Piano Examination," 33. For an example of self-instruction books see the *Musician* (January 1907): 1-2. One exception to the widespread reluctance to teach band instruments was the Berlin Conservatory. See "Additions to Faculty of Conservatory" unplaced clipping, scrapbook 5.1, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC108, KPL.

bottom of the scale. In later years, these tended to be former students who had risen through the ranks to join the staff upon completion of their diplomas. Most assistant teachers were women, a trend due in part to widespread practices of ghettoizing female labour. It also derived, however, from the fact that women formed the vast majority of Ontario conservatory graduates. Indeed, 92% of TCM's graduates between 1887 and 1912 were female.¹²³ Near the top of the teaching ladder perched the star faculty members: acknowledged masters in their respective fields and handpicked by the musical director to add prestige to the institution. These upper echelons of the teaching faculty were overwhelmingly male; however, a few highly qualified lady teachers such as Bertha Dreschler Adamson (TCM, violin), Mrs. J.W. Bradley (TCM, voice), Mrs. F.J. Moore (London Conservatory, voice), Mrs. Gerard Barton and Miss Laura Newman (both Columbian Conservatory, piano) did attain the outer reaches of these circles. Musical directors invariably placed their own names at the pinnacle of this great chain of being, guiding the most advanced students and charging the highest fees.¹²⁴

Since the vast majority of conservatory students were female, directors tried to create an institution sensitive to what they termed feminine sensibilities. Particularly in the early years before travelling examinations, non-local students wishing to study under the auspices of a particular conservatory needed to seek boarding accommodation. Larger schools such as TCM and Toronto College of Music offered ladies-only residences for

¹²³ Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 23. Ladies' College music departments used a similar hierarchy.

¹²⁴ *Columbian Conservatory of Music Calendar 1912-1913*, pp. 34-35, Box 29, RCM, A1975-0014, UTA; *Fourth Annual Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1890-1891*, p. 9, Conservatory Calendar Box, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL; London Conservatory of Music and School of *Elocution*, c. 1900, CIHM no. 62003. Prominent female faculty members tended to congregate in the vocal departments, since authorities needed a blend of male and female vocal teachers, as opposed to instrumental music where male 'masters' easily obtained the top teaching positions. Around 1900 Fischer's earnings as music director increased from \$2500 to 3000 per year, a figure that does not include the \$2000 income he obtained as a teacher at the conservatory (Schabas, *Music in These Walls*, 32).

their fair pupils, in the hopes of creating a sanctuary for female respectability.¹²⁵ A 1907 article in the *TCM Conservatory Bi-Monthly* argued that the prospect of young women leaving the home in search of higher education contained “a spice of novelty,” dubbing them “heroines in shirt-waists.” The author insisted, however, that “we look for in them a continuation of all the sweet and ladylike graces of tact, consideration, politeness and amiability which up to their student period were doubtless daily present in their characters...”¹²⁶ Prettily decorated and spaciouly proportioned, the student Residence would evoke the comforting atmosphere of home. The building would, moreover, provide a refuge every bit as safe as the familial hearth. TCM’s inaugural calendar assured readers that “As it is proper and necessary that parents should have the fullest assurance that their children will not be lead into undesirable company,” the school would require “satisfactory references” from those seeking admission to the residence.¹²⁷ TCM authorities contended that, far from being overprotective, the “little restraints imposed upon this band of students are slight indeed compared to their privileges” of obtaining a level of education unthinkable in the days of their mothers and grandmothers.¹²⁸

Since music directors were almost invariably men, their wives played the role of hostess and matron. Though many of these wives exhibited considerable musical talent, their performance skills functioned as a social accomplishment rather than a professional calling. In an attempt to draw attention to Mrs. Fisher’s respectability, TCM’s *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* once described her as bearing a resemblance to Queen

¹²⁵ For a discussion of female residential spaces at the University of Toronto during this time, see Alyson E. King, “Centres of ‘Home-Like Influence’: Residences for Women at the University of Toronto, *Material History Review* 49 (1999): 39-59.

¹²⁶ “Personally Conducted,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 6, no. 5, (September 1907): 146-147.

¹²⁷ *Calendar of the Toronto Conservatory of Music 1887-1888*, p. 25, AR780.7291, TCM Programs & Misc., Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

¹²⁸ “Personally Conducted,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 6, no. 5, (September 1907): 146-147.

Alexandra. Mrs. Fisher's duties included presiding over tea parties and social occasions with the female students.¹²⁹ Toronto College of Music channeled similar messages about the respectability of both its residence and its matron. "The ladies connected with the College appreciate the wants of young ladies studying away from their homes," one source observed, "and Mrs. Torrington will do all in her power to make the ensemble of your daily life conform to the Divine harmonies; so that mothers may feel that the atmosphere surrounding the College of Music is pure, healthy, musical— Ozone."¹³⁰

In spite of such traditional rhetoric, it is undeniable that the conservatories offered women a rare opportunity to obtain higher education, degrees, and a relative amount of professional respect. The Dallas sisters exemplify some of the possibilities that a talented, ambitious woman could seize if she tried. Miss Sarah Dallas specialized in piano and organ, while Miss Eleanor Dallas played piano and violin. Both completed their Associate diplomas at TCM and, later, their B.Mus. degrees from Trinity College. Both embarked on modestly successful careers as local musicians and teachers. Sarah worked as organist and choir director of the Central Presbyterian Church in Toronto for nine years, played piano for the Toronto Choral Society, and worked as a teacher at TCM and the Presbyterian Ladies' College. Eleanor, who had received a gold medal from Trinity for her achievements, taught at TCM, Ontario Ladies' College, and Havergal Hall.¹³¹ Eva J. Taylor of Guelph began her studies at TCM in 1894, graduating in piano and theory in 1897. She received her B.Mus. from Trinity College in 1898, and in 1903 obtained a Doctoral degree. In doing so, Miss Taylor became the first woman in the Empire to

¹²⁹ "Conservatory Events and Announcements," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 4, no. 1 (January 1905): 17.

¹³⁰ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, p. 67, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

¹³¹ Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto* (1897), 19-20.

obtain a Mus.Doc., apart from a Dublin woman and Queen Alexandra who had each received honorary doctorates. Eva Taylor spent her postgraduate years working as organist and choir director in London, Ontario, a post for which she was admittedly overqualified. Nevertheless, most educated musicians electing to stay in Canada, whether male or female, faced limited prospects in their chosen field.¹³²

While music conservatories were not social utopias, they did offer working classes and women the opportunity to obtain a higher education at a time when the path for such groups was rarely strewn with roses. Determined students could garner professional diplomas, university degrees, and even teaching positions. The career prospects may not have been glorious, but they were respectable nonetheless.

A Room of One's Own: Conservatory Spaces and Self-Presentation

Ontario's early conservatories persistently emphasized physical space. Directors understood that their conservatories offered an esoteric service to a public often mystified about exactly what distinguished a fine music teacher from a mediocre one. Recitals offered one way to showcase an institution's pretensions to excellence. At the same time, focusing on recitals involved certain risks, namely that students, parents, and occasionally instructors would favour dazzling public results over the acquiring of a thorough musical grounding.¹³³ Conservatory spaces offered a second medium for relating the stability and quality of the institution. The aesthetic deemed most appropriate for conveying these

¹³² "A Lady Musical Doctor," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* 7, no. 4 (October 1903): 10; "Eva J. Taylor, Mus.Doc.," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no. 6 (November 1904): 180.

¹³³ Luigi von Kunits, "Our Students," *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 2 (June 1915): 19; von Kunits, "Mise en Scene," *Canadian Journal of Music* 6, no. 3 (December 1919): 35-36.

messages represented a combination of prestigious cultural signifiers and middle-class restraint. The presence of objects d'art designated the conservatory space as a homage to classical music. A bourgeois ethic of simplicity, meanwhile, implied financial conservatism and a devotion to quality over showmanship.

The concert hall often provided the focal point for the most ambitious designs, since the public entered this space most frequently. TCM's original premises on Wilton Avenue proved too small to accommodate a large concert hall, so the Conservatory used YMCA's nearby Association Hall. With the opening of its new buildings in 1897, TCM at last possessed its own concert space.¹³⁴ A 1906 photograph of the hall (Fig. 5.3) reveals a lofty area of ecclesiastical proportions. The stained glass windows, exposed rafters, and snowdrop chandeliers lend an air of monumentality. The grandeur of the architecture is offset by the chaste decor, likely an effort to avoid superfluous ostentation. A careful glimpse of the left and right pairs of stained glass windows, however, reveals that each contains a portrait of a classical composer.¹³⁵ A photograph of Toronto College of Music concert hall (Fig. 5.4) reveals a moderately sized rectangular room, with window and door openings arranged in classical symmetrical fashion. The gently sloping ceiling features a crown molding design of simple yet elegant arches. What Toronto College lacked in architectural magnificence, it made up with musical signifiers. Despite the limited dimensions of the performance platform, the space contains an upright piano (left), an organ (centre), and a grand piano (right). A double bass leans nonchalantly in

¹³⁴ Jones, "The Fisher Years," 112-124. The TCM organ in Association Hall was transported to the new concert hall for a cost of \$300, and other repairs to the organ brought the total bill to \$1830. See TCM Matinee Musical Programme, April 6, 1889, scrapbook p. 11 regarding the agreement with YMCA to use the Association Hall. The Quarterly Concert Programme, April 13, 1889, scrapbook p. 11 mentions that Association Hall had a seating capacity of 1500. Both programmes in Box 92, RCM, A1975-0014, UTA.

¹³⁵ "The Conservatory Music Hall. View from the Platform," *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 5, no. 5 (September 1906): frontispiece. For more images of the interior of TCM's new buildings see "The Toronto Conservatory of Music," *Canadian Magazine* 10, no. 2 (December 1897): xxv-xxx.

the right corner, while a round object resembling a drum rests in front of the grand piano. The double bass and drum are portable instruments, and one supposes that their presence on stage between performances is largely decorative. At the very front and centre of the stage stands a large bust of a composer (Beethoven, judging by the outline) which gazes upon the rows of invisible spectators. Framed portraits of the classical masters festoon the stage and the walls, as if religious icons in a shrine. For all the objects crammed onto the stage, there are very few domestic ornaments. Sharp-eyed critics, such the poet Susie Frances Harrison, considered their absence crucial to the maintenance of a professional performance setting. She believed that “for the ordinary concert there is surely no necessity to introduce carpets, Chippendale or Sheraton furniture and an entire jungle of palms and pointsettia [*sic*] ... if the performers are professional artists of trained capacity, we submit that these village methods are a trifle unworthy.”¹³⁶

The Hambourg Conservatory was unusual in that it doubled as both institutional building and family home. Various members of the Hambourg clan lived in domestic apartments on the third floor of the large Victorian mansion, renting out additional space to the occasional teacher or family friend in search of lodgings. They converted their attic into the conservatory recital hall, a room that tended to be boiling hot in the summer and freezing cold in the winter.¹³⁷ In spite of these constraints, the Hambourgs proved adept at injecting a touch of Old World glamour to their surroundings. The main foyer featured over fifty framed pictures, mostly “photographs of musical celebrities with flattering dedications to one or more of the Hambourgs” as well as “letters, posters, caricatures,

¹³⁶ “Conservatory Announcements and Events,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 6, no. 2 (March 1907): 57-58.

¹³⁷ Koch, *Brothers Hambourg*, 93, 128.

concert programs, reviews and other mementos.”¹³⁸ Maurice Solway later described entering the Hambourg building as something akin to “stepping across the ocean.”¹³⁹

The presence of an organ was one instance where restraint did not apply. Music schools worked hard to secure the most magnificent organ they could afford, and boasted about its massive proportions. The 1897-1898 Toronto College of Music calendar devoted an entire page to a list of the stops on its three-manual pipe organ, terminology indecipherable to all except the organ connoisseur.¹⁴⁰ TCM meanwhile raved about the \$4,225.00 organ it commissioned for the Association Hall in September 1889. The scholar Gaynor G. Jones contends that the organ was in fact “a good conservative three-manual church organ” and that director Edward Fisher exaggerated its superiority in his public statements.¹⁴¹ Modern conveniences constituted another source of pride. For all their appeals to pure art, conservatories were first and foremost businesses. TCM’s new buildings used steam heating, a combination of electric and gas lighting, electric bells, and speaking tubes for communication between rooms.¹⁴² Physical descriptions of the smaller conservatories are rare, partly due to a paucity of evidence but also because their facilities were less splendid. Peterborough Conservatory noted, however, that its buildings stood in “the most desirable residential part of town” and were “commodious, with modern equipment, well lighted, heated and furnished.”¹⁴³ After a year’s residence in temporary chambers, the Berlin Conservatory of Music established itself in “a

¹³⁸ Ibid., 128-129.

¹³⁹ Maurice Solway, *Recollections of a Violinist*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ *Toronto College of Music Calendar 1897-1898*, pp. 45-46, AR 780.72971 T59, Toronto College of Music Calendars, Art Room Special Collections, TRL.

¹⁴¹ Jones, “The Fisher Years,” 90, 93.

¹⁴² “The Toronto Conservatory of Music,” *Musical Courier*, undated clipping, p. 13, Newspaper Advertisements 1893-1903 Envelope, Box 17, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA. Information in this article reveals the date to be c. 1899.

¹⁴³ *Peterborough Conservatory of Music Calendar*, p. 7, CIHM no. 86449.

splendid, capacious building” on Foundry Street North with “studios and class rooms which are so arranged as to prevent confusion and conflict of sound so often met with in the older institutions of the kind.”¹⁴⁴

Physical spaces made significant contributions to conservatories’ promotional discourse. They solidified the school’s public image as progressive and splendid yet also respectable and efficient. In direct opposition to the itinerant private teachers of yore, instructional space became pivotal to the success of the modern conservatory enterprise.

By the end of the Great War, conservatories had become an influential part of Ontario’s musical landscape. Ladies’ colleges had begun a gradual decline, and private teachers (though still abundant) increasingly used the examination requirements circulated by the largest Toronto schools. A new generation of graduates, armed with Associate Diplomas and sometimes B.Mus. degrees, scoured the province in search of work and in doing so transformed the ways in which music was sung and played. Keen to chart a narrative of musical progress, conservatory directors, staff, and journalists looked back at the triumphs of the past few decades with satisfaction. The conservatories’ legacy, however, is neither wholly good nor wholly bad. They standardized music education throughout the province and the country, yet they also subjected students to disciplinary rituals. Women and the working classes benefited from the higher education that conservatories offered, but their tenure as students and teachers was not wholly free from discrimination. In sum, conservatories institutionalized the field of music education, unleashing the benefits and drawbacks that accompany such fundamental changes.

¹⁴⁴ “The Berlin Conservatory of Music,” unplaced clipping, April 18, 1914, scrapbook 5.2, G.H. Ziegler Collection, MC108, KPL.

CHAPTER SIX

“AS PLENTIFUL AS THE SANDS OF THE SEASHORE”:

SHEET MUSIC PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Having obtained an instrument and the requisite education, the domestic performer equally needed a repertoire. Although those with a strong sense of pitch could and did improvise tunes by ear, the bulk of domestic consumers depended upon visual cues provided by music in written form. Innovations in production techniques during the mid-to-late nineteenth century had caused international sheet music quantities to soar and prices to plummet.¹ While the new commercial climate helped standardize production and consumption, eclectic practices persisted well into the new century. Canadian composers and lyricists came from a range of backgrounds and sought out a variety of publishing options. Consumers employed numerous methods to acquire their music, taking advantage of new commercial avenues of availability when it suited them but also falling back on older informal modes of exchange. Once in receipt of the coveted piece of

¹ For a discussion of rising production and falling prices in the British context, see Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: A Social History*, 2nd ed., Music and Society Series, ed. Peter J. Martin and Tia DeNora (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 172-174; Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 124.

sheet music, they engaged with it in very personal ways, proving that identical copies of a song could undergo diverse patterns of use.

Historical research on sheet music is enthusiastic but uneven. Scholars prefer to study the eras prior to 1850, on the grounds that earlier time-intensive techniques such as engraving, lithography, and moveable type constitute more artistic modes of production than the mass printing methods used in the later part of the century.² The Canadian scholarship mirrors this disparity, the only book-length study being Maria Calderisi's *Music Publishing in the Canadas, 1800-1867* (1981).³ More recently, Elaine Keillor has written two short pieces on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century sheet music in Canada.⁴ The following pages, therefore, attempt to sketch the barest outlines of sheet music production and consumption in the absence of lengthy secondary scholarship. No doubt, future studies will provide a fuller portrait of this fascinating yet neglected topic.

Background

During the colonial era, British North America's musical inhabitants had relied on imports from Mother England. What small amount of music publishing existed in the Canadas during the early nineteenth century generally took the form of hymnbooks. It

² Marian Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music: A Pictorial History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975), 6, 11; D.W. Krummel, "Music Publishing," in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, Athlone History of Music in Britain Series (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 55. For a technical discussion of early nineteenth-century printing techniques see Maria Calderisi, *Music Publishing in the Canadas, 1800-1867* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1981), 82-86.

³ Calderisi claims that pre-Confederation sheet music "was naive but not vulgar as it tended to become toward the end of the century with increased mass production and a larger 'nouveau riche' population," (p. 92).

⁴ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 159-160, 187-204; Keillor, "Writing for a Market: Canadian Musical Composition Before the First World War," <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/sheetmusic/028008-3200-e.html> (accessed November 1, 2012).

was not until the 1840s that the Canadas began to produce sheet music designed for leisure purposes. Even then, most of it came from regular book publishers who included musical works as a small subset of their regular catalogue. The A. & S. Nordheimer Company of Toronto, which began publishing music in 1844, was the first firm to specialize in printing musical items. Nevertheless, Nordheimer was mainly a piano retailer (and later manufacturer) so publishing did not constitute its primary economic activity. Nordheimer went on to become the largest pre-Confederation music publishing firm, boasting 272 pieces by the year 1870. Many music retailers followed Nordheimer's example and took up publishing as a sideline. Though it did not yield profits, it increased customer awareness by featuring the company name prominently on the cover page.⁵

As Canadian sheet music publishing continued to evolve, developments south of the border influenced the ways in which popular songs were produced and consumed. Modern music publishing began during the early 1880s, gaining ground over the next decade as firms began to join the rising momentum. Most of these companies tended to congregate on New York's 28th Street between 6th Avenue and Broadway. In time, the area obtained the nickname Tin Pan Alley due to the rattling sound of pianos as composers laboured away in their cubicles.⁶ This new style of publisher differed from its predecessors in several significant ways. First, Tin Pan Alley firms devoted themselves to popular song, a change from earlier music publishers who had merely included the genre as a part of a wider catalogue that also covered hymnals, choral pieces, solo piano music,

⁵ Calderisi, *Music Publishing in the Canadas*, 1-2, 40, 48, 78, 92.

⁶ Leonard Feist, *An Introduction to Popular Music Publishing in America* (New York: National Music Publishers' Association, 1980), 33; Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 284-286.

and instructional books.⁷ Second, the new ventures established New York as the new locus for American music publishing. Earlier hit songs had hailed from firms across the country. With the advent of Tin Pan Alley, however, it became very difficult for a non-New York music publisher to obtain a nationwide hit.⁸ Third, modern publishers were rabidly and unashamedly commercial. Tin Pan Alley publishers invented a style of promotion known as plugging, which tried to create a musical hit by virtue of repeated exposure. Publishers obtained this by parading selections of songs before famous vaudeville artists in the hope that the performer would choose one for use in their concert circuit.⁹ Outstanding hit songs were occasional but extremely lucrative, making up for the scores of low and moderate sellers. In the decade from 1900 to 1910, a total of 25,000 songs were registered for copyright per year. Roughly one hundred of these became massive hits, each having sold over one hundred million copies.¹⁰

Classifying Sheet Music: The Classical versus Popular Debate in Canada

One of the primary ways of classifying sheet music during this period was to distinguish between ‘classical’ and ‘popular’ titles. Although scholars disagree about the precise dating of the change, they collectively acknowledge that mid-to-late nineteenth-century America witnessed a growing bifurcation between ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ notions of culture. The elite began to envision classical (highbrow) music as ennobling works of

⁷ Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 287.

⁸ Ibid., 284, 286.

⁹ Feist, *Popular Music Publishing*, 28, 31-34. For a description of the trials and tribulations of getting a vaudeville artist to take up a song, see “On the Road from Ontario to Tin Pan Alley,” unplaced clipping, Box 1, Lenore Stevens Keillor Fonds, MUS 155, LAC.

¹⁰ Feist, *Popular Music Publishing*, 33.

genius that needed to be rendered in a manner faithful to the composer's original intentions.¹¹ Classical music, also known as 'good' or 'high class' music, encompassed a distilled canon of past masters such as Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel, as well as the more recent output of the nineteenth-century Romantic school.¹²

'Classical' and 'popular' are challenging descriptors, since they are not only constructed categories, but historically specific ones.¹³ The definition of classical music at the turn of the twentieth century differed from its present-day incarnation in important ways. Chamber music (music composed for a small instrumental ensemble) represented the pinnacle of the classical ideal. Given the genre's limited number of performers, each player needed to be extremely skilled at rendering his or her own part, while also blending seamlessly into the musical whole. In Canada, the opportunity to hear musicians of high caliber perform chamber music constituted a rare treat. This rarity made the genre all the more sacred in the eyes of music lovers.¹⁴ Chamber music's historical association with the private salons of aristocratic patrons further accounted for its lofty standing. Symphonies (multi-movement pieces for mass orchestral ensembles) came next on the list. The large number of performers meant that not every individual was exposed so prominently and unforgivingly, yet these still represented grand works of formalized

¹¹ According to Lawrence Levine, the term 'highbrow' first came into use during the 1880s and the term lowbrow began appearing around 1900. The nomenclature came from terms used in phrenology, whereby a higher brow corresponded to a higher stage of racial development. See Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 167-168, 221-222. Paul Charosh posits that contemporaries recognized a division between popular and classical music as early as the mid-nineteenth century. See Charosh, "'Popular' and 'Classical' in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *American Music* 10, no. 2 (1992): 117-135. William Weber notes a growing division between classical and popular music in Europe during the 1840s in *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 235-237.

¹² See Weber, *Great Transformation*, 29-35, regarding how musical canons are culturally constructed.

¹³ Russell, *Popular Music in England*, 1-3.

¹⁴ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 160.

dimensions. Most of all, chamber music and symphonies were revered because they constituted prime examples of abstract music; in other words, music which did not derive its inspiration or meaning from any other artistic form.

Program music, by contrast, comprised classical music that sought to evoke a picture, a drama, or a narrative. Overtures, operatic medleys, and lyrical pieces constituted the most prevalent forms of program music and they occupied the lower rungs of the classical canon. Another reason for program music's relatively low rank was the fact that orchestras generally found it easier to compile a programme of single-movement overtures and descriptive pieces.¹⁵ Certain famous works of program music, such as Rossini's "William Tell" overture and Strauss' *Vienna Woods* waltzes circulated widely via amateur orchestral concerts, band concerts, and even piano transcriptions. This handful of pieces achieved such ubiquity that it occupied a liminal space between classical and popular music. The symphony orchestras that played these standards were deemed to be offering listeners popular fare, in something akin to the 'Pops' concert of the twenty-first century. These "medium classical" works nevertheless stood head and shoulders above popular genres such as the folk song and the commercial ballad.¹⁶

Opera occupied a muddy place within the classical music canon. For much of the nineteenth century, opera had been relegated to the popular music camp. Tragic opera had enjoyed a higher status than the light Italian comic operas of composers such as Donizetti and Rossini. Still, as program music *par excellence*, it could not approximate

¹⁵ On account of its newness and limited resources, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (f. 1906) performed mostly program music, punctuated by the occasional symphony, during the first decade of its existence. See *Musical Canada* 5, no. 2 (June 1910): 43; *Musical Canada* 8, no. 9 (January 1914): 266; *Musical Canada* 9, no. 1 (May 1914): 23.

¹⁶ "Growing Orders for Player Music of Medium Classical Class," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 15, no. 3 (August 1914): 117.

the sublime abstract genres. The rise of Richard Wagner during the mid-to-late nineteenth century changed all this. Wagner's lengthy German operas employed daring new orchestrations that remained influential into the Edwardian period.¹⁷ Opera, or more particularly tragic opera, began to acquire a prestige it had not previously possessed. Opera's shift to highbrow culture in North America moreover reflected the sheer expense of putting on an operatic production. For all that opera arias and overtures constituted familiar fare, the public proved reluctant to go hear a costumed opera in its entirety.¹⁸ A 1911 player piano advertisement spoke volumes about the change when it insisted that its instrument could "instantly satisfy a mood for any kind of music, grave or gay, 'popular' or soul stirring opera."¹⁹ For average listeners of the early twentieth century, opera represented a familiar but increasingly elevating influence in their midst.

Cultural elites defined popular or 'light' music as all the tuneful flotsam and jetsam that remained. This popular music circulated in a variety of iterations which included folk music, old standards such as the mid-nineteenth-century songs of Stephen Foster, and the more transitory fame of the latest commercial hit tune. The musical establishment held some residual respect for the first two genres as genuine expressions

¹⁷ For evidence of the popularity of Wagner in late-nineteenth-century Canada see *Saturday Night*, December 31, 1887, p. 2; *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 6, no. 3 (May 1907) special issue dedicated to Wagner; "National Chorus Concerts," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 9 (January 1913): 314-315; J. Cuthbert Hadden, "Passing Notes," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 4 (August 1912): 125-126; "Wagner's 'Opera and Drama,'" *Musical Canada* 8, no. 8 (December 1913): 229, 231; Angelo M. Read, "Progressional and Conventional Attitudes in Music," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 12 (April 1915): 280-281.

¹⁸ *Musical Canada* reported on a Montreal-based attempt to start up a National Opera Company production group in the fall of 1910. Though critics praised the shows, ticket sales in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa lagged. Financial woes and the outbreak of war in 1914 conspired to bring the venture to an inglorious end. See "Canada's Grand Opera Enterprise," *Musical Canada* 6, no. 8 (December 1911): 239-241; "The Montreal Opera," *Musical Canada* 6, no. 8 (December 1911): 242-243; "Novelties by the Montreal Opera Company," *Musical Canada* 6, no. 9 (January 1912): 286-287; L.W.H., "From the Capital," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 11 (March 1913): 382; H.P.F., "Music in Montreal," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 8 (December 1913): 207; L.W.H., "At the Capital," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 9 (January 1914): 254; H.P.F., "Music in Montreal," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 5 (September 1914): 114-115.

¹⁹ *Canadian Magazine* 36, no. 3 (January 1911): 39.

of musicality, though devoid of the classics' capacity for uplift.²⁰ The establishment reserved the bulk of its ire for commercial music, depicting it as an insubstantial confection that tantalized but never satisfied the musical palate. While conceding that parlour ballads and popular fare derived their fame "not because of their inanity, but because of their tunefulness," Herbert Antcliff refused to consider them more than temporary diversions.²¹ Other writers proved less conciliatory, condemning commercial music as mindless drivel for the artistically stultified masses. John Melville believed that for over twenty years, listeners "seem[ed] to have been afflicted with a lot of unfeeling and short-lived twaddle, in the way of popular songs ... Also mere fashion seems to have affected songs. Hats of yester year are old this: songs of last year – nobody sings them now."²² To some degree, Melville was censuring the tastes of a younger generation with whom he could not identify. The nostalgic workings of memory presented to him a rarefied glimpse of the musical past. Tunes such as "Nellie Gray" and "Banks of the Wabash" formed part of his musical upbringing and therefore possessed a resonance for him that newer tunes such as "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" lacked. Melville conveniently forgot the reams of inferior music that had circulated alongside the memorable songs of Foster and others.

Melville was far from alone. The list of offenses charged against popular music usually included its simplicity (or paradoxically, its overt displays of showy technical flourishes), its repetitiveness, and its mediocre lyrics. Critics believed that writing popular songs required limited effort and minimal talent. The Toronto Conservatory of

²⁰ See for instance Herbert Antcliff, "Popular Taste in Music," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 1 (May 1913): 58; Arthur B. Farmer, "Will my Daughter be a Great Singer?" *Everywoman's World* (June 1917): 8; John Melville, "A Writer of Popular Songs," *Canadian Courier*, October 12, 1912, p. 16.

²¹ Antcliff, "Popular Taste in Music."

²² Melville, "A Writer of Popular Songs."

Music instructor Edmund Hardy observed that the lyrics of a piece mattered not at all to its uncultured listeners. “[T]he public is not philosophic. It cares not at all whether the composer sets a lyric or a lunar eclipse, so long as its little palate is agreeably tickled with a tune.”²³ The American writer E.M. Wickes meanwhile considered popular music’s appeal to derive from the public’s sheer laziness: “[L]overs of popular music take to the ‘line of least resistance’; as a rule they do not care for music that taxes voice, memory, or playing ability. Nor does a hit need to be original. In fact, many of the most successful hits are merely rehashes of other hits, with a little different tempo or rhythm thrown in to disguise the relationship.”²⁴ The popular song composer Irving Berlin exposed the lie in this belief in an interview for the *American Magazine* in 1920. He considered his work a labour-intensive process, particularly comic songs which required one “to dig and sweat until you have unearthed or invented a humorous situation.” Any old lyrics simply would not do. In order to garner impact, lyrics required what Berlin referred to as “punch.”²⁵

Another bone of contention for popular music critics was the genre’s tendency towards sentimentality. The TCM teacher Edmund Hardy indicated the runaway hit “Oh Promise Me” as an example of the lengths to which the public remained captivated by a “saccharine melody.”²⁶ The vocal instructor Alexander T. Cringan moaned about how audiences “tolerate morbidity equally with the most hopeless inanity or empty passion if only coupled with sufficiently brilliant vocal gymnastics, or a piano accompaniment so spiced with chromatic harmonies as to be destructive of all sense of tonality.” Cringan

²³ Edmund Hardy, “The Song Composer,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 3, no.3 (May 1904): 85.

²⁴ E.M. Wickes, “‘Putting Over’ Popular Songs,” reprinted in *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 75.

²⁵ “Irving Berlin on the Writing of Popular Songs,” reprinted in *CMTJ* 21, no. 6 (November 1920): 77.

²⁶ Hardy, “The Song Composer.”

defined sentimentality quite simply as “false sentiment,” deploring its morbid and melodramatic excesses as an insult to God’s gift of life.²⁷

Class prejudice against the so-called ‘masses’ constituted the most frequent discourse in the negative assessment of commercial music, but gender discrimination played a supporting role. E.M. Wickes, for instance, recommended that aspiring popular songwriters acquaint themselves “with the evanescent fancies and shifting emotions of young women. For they buy practically all the music, and what they do not buy is usually purchased by some admiring friend or repentant relative.”²⁸ Tetrachord’s 1887 criticism of female amateur musicians in Canada equally constituted an attack on the fashionable dance tunes that ladies supposedly purchased.²⁹ Racial bigotry also reared its ugly head in popular music appraisals. An editorial from 1913 considered white songwriters’ adoption of non-Western musical influences as symbolic of the depths to which lowbrow music had sunk. The author heaped scorn upon ‘coon’ songs and Oriental melodies— not because of their racist depictions, but rather because such musical “monstrosities” charmed nice white listeners who should have known better.³⁰

Particularly after the turn of the twentieth century, the term ragtime became a shorthand substitute for commercial music and its perceived ills. The ragtime genre had developed from African American influences and by 1897 had been distilled into published sheet music. With the significant exception of Scott Joplin, the majority of ragtime composers were white, channeling a streamlined understanding of African American music into an almost unrecognizably altered commercial product. This product,

²⁷ A.T. Cringan, “The Words of Songs,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 1, no. 6 (November 1902): 174-175.

²⁸ E.M. Wickes, “ ‘Putting Over’ Popular Songs,” reprinted in *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 77.

²⁹ Tetrachord, “Musical Culture in Canada— A Few Words About Amateurs,” *Musical Journal* 6 (June 1887): 84-85.

³⁰ “Editorial Notes,” *Conservatory Monthly* 12, no. 7 (July 1913): 214.

ragtime, featured comic lyrics, brisk paces, syncopated rhythms, and catchy melodies.³¹

Ragtime was a genre inextricably associated with urban environments, youth, and commercialization.³² Many critics professed to despise ragtime on purely aesthetic grounds. A New York courtroom judge, for example, thought that the tunes possessed “a monotonous similarity which only adds to the general degradation of the style of music which they represent.”³³ Gender and race concerns did, however, creep into the public rhetoric. Contemporaries often described ragtime in terms of sensual bodily imagery. According to Joseph E. Weber, president of the American Federation of Musicians, the genre appealed “to the legs instead of the head” and had an effect similar to that of “a passing fever.”³⁴ Ragtime confined to working-class watering holes was contemptible but not immediately threatening. What confounded contemporaries was the notion of the “provocative” rhythms of African American music invading the white bourgeois girl’s piano repertoire.³⁵ Commercialization had thus threatened to expose the fiction of the home as a private bastion of morality against the whirling dervish of the public sphere. As early as 1900, Toronto’s *Saturday Night* proclaimed: “Young women of refinement who had been trained in the school of Beethoven and Mozart and Chopin cast aside their sonatas and symphonies and nocturnes and gave themselves up to unbridled indulgence in rag-time. The effect of all this upon popular musical taste has been anything but

³¹ Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 317-318, 321; Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 91.

³² Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'N' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

³³ “‘Rag-Time’ Music,” *Musical Canada* 4, no. 12 (April 1910): 431.

³⁴ “Standard Music vs. Ragtime,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 1 (June 1913): 29.

³⁵ David Joyner, “The Ragtime Controversy,” in *America’s Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society*, ed. Kenneth J. Bindas (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 239-244.

elevating.”³⁶ According to this nostalgic narrative, classical tastes had reigned supreme until ragtime infiltrated the parlour’s musical precincts.

Alternative musical discourses did indeed exist. Unabashed defenders of popular music do not appear frequently in the rarefied discourse of music journals. Glimmers do, however, surface in other quarters. Popular songs were seen to offer a direct route to the reader’s emotions, while classical music was often depicted as an intellectual delight passing over the heads of the non-elect. The authors of such pieces usually invoked elderly sages exhibiting a preference for the homely tunes of yesteryear, thus relying on a healthy dose of nostalgia to prove their point. Susie Frances Harrison’s short story “On Old Music Books” featured an old man who begged his relatives not to throw out a folio of popular songs from his youth. “Had lots of tune and a sort of style in them,” insisted the geriatric philistine. “I like them better than all your Chopin and Grieg and Beethoven put together...”³⁷ Those were the days, he claimed, when people enjoyed themselves instead of trying to be cultured. More arresting was an impassioned diatribe from a *Saturday Night* reader of a certain age.

We seldom hear the grand, if simple, old tunes that stirred the heart and awoke divine harmonies in the soul in youth. It was not classical music, its technique was not difficult, but its power was unsurpassed as a lever to the human emotions. It was the glad, triumphant music of nature ... But it wasn’t classical.

It seems to me, and I humbly acknowledge that I have never been educated to a proper conception of the so-called classical music, that we subjugate harmony now to fashion. We work up a hypocritical rapture over some superficial conception that has about as much real music in it as has a bull-dog with a bad cold ...³⁸

³⁶ “Decline of Rag-Time Music,” *Saturday Night*, July 28, 1900, 8.

³⁷ S. Frances Harrison, “On Old Music Books,” *Musical Canada* 6, no. 10 (February 1912): 362.

³⁸ “Singers of Sacred Song,” *Saturday Night*, December 31, 1887, p. 7.

The anonymous author cleverly turns the tables on the dominant notion of musical progress as a direct indication of classical music's rate of diffusion among the populace. He or she similarly breaks the association between fashion and popular fare. Fashion's negative associations with fickleness and insincerity instead relate to the avowed devotees of classical music. Nearly thirty years later, Eddie Leonard and Ted Neun of Toronto struck a chipper tone in their defense of the popular. On the cover page of their self-published song "I'll Steal a Little Love From You" (1918) they included a poem:

You'll like this song a little bit
It's worth the price you'll pay for it,
It may not be a work of Art
But still it reaches every heart.³⁹

In spite of the vigorous public debate, one must be wary of ascribing too much cultural power to the prescriptive highbrow-lowbrow model. The very notion of lady musicians being familiar with both Beethoven and the latest ragtime tune demonstrates a catholicity of taste among large swaths of the populace. High culture pundits tended to describe classical and popular music as hermetically sealed entities, yet the preferences of many composers, performers, and listeners easily straddled the divide.⁴⁰ According to Elaine Keillor, a vague notion of "highbrow" versus "lowbrow" culture had begun to take shape in Canada by the late nineteenth century; however, the lines did not emerge as clearly as they did south of the border.⁴¹ In fact, nineteenth-century home entertainments could easily feature popular ballads or at least middlebrow art songs alongside 'serious'

³⁹ Eddie Leonard and Ted Neun, "I'll Steal a Little Love From You" (Toronto: Neun & Leonard, 1918), Envelope 3, Box 10, Canadian Sheet Music Collection [hereafter CanSheet], McM.

⁴⁰ Keillor, "Writing for a Market"; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 160.

⁴¹ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 6-8; 362-363.

classical compositions. In this context, popular songs gave the audience a chance to relax with something light and familiar in between the heavier classical works.⁴²

A few aesthetes did maintain an Olympian detachment from popular music of any sort. The Saunders family of London, Ontario, for instance, indulged a strictly highbrow enthusiasm for chamber music.⁴³ Arthur Grieves, a thirteen-year-old musical prodigy in 1909, similarly declared himself impervious to the charms of anything except “classical or good music.”⁴⁴ The majority of late Victorian and Edwardian households, however, exhibited far more eclecticism. Ernest Macmillan remembered that:

Beethoven’s sonatas and other standard works were always on or near the piano – along with many now forgotten pieces of Gottschalk, Raff and other salon composers. In addition to the piano we had in our home an ‘American Organ,’ as a harmonium was then called. On this was always found a hymn-book or two, as well as copies of a few Handel oratorios, an assortment of arrangements from a wide variety of composers, good, bad and indifferent and – strangely enough – settings of the Mass ... A very unorthodox beginning this, for a musical education and one which I would not recommend to a student. However I devoured all the music I could find and must have learned (though in a very unsystematic way) to read notes before I could read words.⁴⁵

Macmillan’s disdain for some of the music that engulfed his childhood is evident here.

The distance of time, conservatory training, and an illustrious professional career had all intervened to jaundice the memories of a more miscellaneous musical upbringing.

A strict highbrow-lowbrow dichotomy furthermore ignores the possibility of stylistic overlap. Plenty of works occupied a sort of no man’s land between classical and popular fare. *Musical Canada* termed this genre the “Art Song” in October 1914, describing it as “that kind of song which can hardly be classed with the popular ‘ballad,’

⁴² For a discussion of early nineteenth-century programming that oscillated between weighty numbers and lighter pieces, see Kristina Marie Guiguet, *The Ideal World of Mrs. Widder’s Soirée Musicale: Social Identity and Musical Life in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, Mercury Series Cultural Studies Paper 77 (Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2004), 29-30.

⁴³ Misc. Family Letters, Box 5434, Saunders Collection, UWOA.

⁴⁴ *Musical Canada* 4, no. 8 (December 1909): 247.

⁴⁵ Ernest Macmillan, unpublished memoir, p. 2, Box 126, Ernest Macmillan Fonds, MUS 7, LAC.

nor yet is old enough to have challenged the verdict of time, which alone determines the classic...”⁴⁶ The *Musical Courier* of New York preferred the term “Melody Ballad” to describe the emerging middlebrow genre, which it deemed a way of bridging the chasm between cultured patricians and syncopation-loving plebeians.⁴⁷ In addition, public reception could prompt a piece’s shift from one level on the hierarchy to another. The American composer Reginald de Koven wrote “Oh Promise Me” (1889) as middlebrow art song, but its popularity was such that the public eagerly consumed it as popular music.⁴⁸ Scott Joplin, an educated man with training in advanced harmony, considered himself a classical composer neglected by elite circles on account of his race.⁴⁹ The scholar James Parakilas further reminds us that Victorians indiscriminately transcribed music into various forms in an effort to render it more suitable for home consumption. Symphonies, overtures, opera selections, string quartets and other genres could thus easily be played in piano duet form or for piano and voice.⁵⁰ In sum, it is still possible to discuss domestic sheet music in terms of simpler “amateur” and complex “connoisseur” pieces with the understanding that the boundary between the two was a permeable one.⁵¹

Chasing the Muses: Sheet Music Composers and Lyricists

Canadian sheet music composers and lyricists came from a wide range of backgrounds.

Some composers were aspiring classical musicians who turned to commercial music as a

⁴⁶ “Some Songs of To-Day,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 6 (October 1914): 154.

⁴⁷ “The Melody Ballad,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 7 (December 1918): 75, 77.

⁴⁸ Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 321-322.

⁴⁹ Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 82-83; Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'N' Roll*, 29.

⁵⁰ James Parakilas and Charlotte N. Eyerman, “1820s to 1870s: The Piano Calls the Tune,” in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 161.

⁵¹ Keillor, “Writing for a Market”; Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 160.

way of supplementing their income.⁵² Others only composed commercial pieces. Still others did not possess advanced musical education yet fancied that they harboured some talent when it came to penning the occasional simple piece. According to one American publisher, the prospect of setting one's thoughts to music held such widespread appeal that "the composer and the would-be composer" had become "as plentiful as the sands of the seashore."⁵³ Frank Pineo of the *Musical Journal* similarly bemoaned that "Music stores are filled with meaningless rubbish, the compositions and arrangements of men who never had a thought capable of inspiring the feelings of the student to any better or nobler action in life..."⁵⁴ The ranks of lyricists varied significantly as well. Some composers simply borrowed the text of a famous hymn or poem and set it to music. Other composers wrote both the music and the lyrics, and still others consigned the task to a friend or colleague who may or may not have possessed literary abilities. Another category of lyricist consisted of local poets who submitted poems to music publishers under the assumption that the firm would commission someone else to set it to music.⁵⁵ At the other extreme were professional authors and poets who wrote the occasional song lyric, as well as lyricists who made a living writing for the popular song genre.

A significant number of women wrote music and lyrics, though men dominated the field. Sometimes, these women attached the prefix 'Miss' or 'Mrs.' to their name, and occasionally they used a pseudonym. The composer Ethel Clive Holmes of London,

⁵² Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 235-236, 253.

⁵³ Walter M. Bacon, "Over-Production Dealt With— Method of Introducing Novelties," *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 27-28.

⁵⁴ Frank Pineo, "False Art," *Musical Journal* 5 (May 1887): 66.

⁵⁵ See for instance Whaley, Royce & Co. to Miss M.E. Pace, July 8, 1915, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. Fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

Ontario, for instance wrote popular pieces under the pen name Ethelbert Clive.⁵⁶ Mrs. Charles G. Moore, also of London, published her work as F. J. Hatton, an appellation that appears to have been her maiden name. Since Mrs. Moore frequently listed her married name alongside her professional sobriquet, anonymity was evidently not her motive.⁵⁷ By and large, there seems to have been no serious barriers preventing women from entering the compositional field by the final decades of the nineteenth century— provided, of course, that they confined themselves to writing popular songs and short lyrical pieces. The common sense of the day dictated that women lacked the creative and rational faculties to compose large-scale classical works, and various critics invoked the pantheon of male classical masters to prove their point. Even Canada's early feminists admitted themselves perplexed, and wondered if classical composition constituted a particular stumbling block to feminine sensibilities.⁵⁸ The rare Canadian woman who dared to compose larger-scale classical works did receive praise, though her fame paled by comparison with that of her male colleagues. Roberta Geddes-Harvey, Mus.Bac., (1849-1930) of Guelph, was one such composer. Her oeuvre ranged from parlour songs, piano pieces, and hymns to more complex genres such as opera and oratorio. In spite of her lofty accomplishments, Mrs. Harvey does not appear to have garnered much renown

⁵⁶ Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394A, LPL.

⁵⁷ *Saturday Night*, February 23, 1895, p. 7. See also Music Scores by Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

⁵⁸ Frances J. Moore, "Woman as a Musician," in *Woman, Her Character, Culture and Calling: A Full Discussion of Woman's Work in the Home, the School, the Church and the Social Circle*, ed. B.F. Austin (Brantford, ON: Book & Bible House, 1890), 79-89; "Women Composers Few, Women Inspirers Many," *Toronto Star Weekly*, March 2, 1918, p. 26. In England, it became respectable for women to publish music under their own names during the 1840s and 1850s. For more information see Paula Gilett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 18-27; Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, 60-65. For examples of some Canadian female composers of the time see "With Canadian Song Writers," *Everywoman's World* (October 1917): 38.

beyond her own locality.⁵⁹ Eva Rose York (1858-1938) composed a number of works, including an oratorio entitled *David and Jonathan* in 1887, but she languished in obscurity during her last few decades. No known copies of her compositions survive.⁶⁰

Whether male or female, significant economic obstacles stood in the way of Canadians seeking a living as a composer. It was a rarity, in Canada at any rate, for a composer to be able to support him or herself solely off royalties.⁶¹ Many would-be composers doubled as musicians and teachers in order to supplement their incomes, which in turn consumed vast amounts of time that could have been spent writing music.⁶² Father and son Robert and Paul Ambrose each composed hundreds of original works in between their other musical duties. Robert had achieved a minor degree of fame for his song “One Sweetly Solemn Thought” (1876), yet his subsequent works never rivaled that earlier success. In a letter to Paul in October 1888, Robert related how he had lately come across some of his old compositions “and it made me very mournful to see how many bubbles I have blown ... Very few popular songs go over two seasons without bursting or slipping sneakily away without the formality of an adieu.”⁶³ Others composers worked a

⁵⁹ Roberta Geddes-Harvey, “Salvator (The Saviour) A Sacred Oratorio” and unplaced 1926 news clipping, 973.23.16, Roberta Geddes-Harvey Envelope, Box A13 (Literature, Theatre Music), GCM. For biographical information on Geddes-Harvey, see Helmut Kallmann, “Roberta Geddes-Harvey,” *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter *EMC*], <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0001335> (accessed October 4, 2011). For a contemporary review of Geddes-Harvey’s *Salvator* composition, see “Conservatory Announcements and Events,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 5, no.1 (January 1906): 21-22.

⁶⁰ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 137; Elaine Keillor, “Eva Rose York,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/eva-rose-york> (accessed November 6, 2012). See also Gena Branscombe’s admission that “My ideal lies in symphonic forms ... and sometimes motifs for a northern opera surge through my mind,” in Katherine Hale, “Canadian Musical Composition: Are We Developing a Musical Literature of Our Own,” *Everywoman’s World* (February 1918): 25.

⁶¹ For evidence of the Canadian public’s indifference to so-called ‘serious’ composers within their own country see J.D. Logan, “Canadian Creative Composers,” *Canadian Magazine* 41, no. 5 (September 1913): 486-487; “Native Canadian Music,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 43, 45.

⁶² Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 235-236.

⁶³ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, October 9, 1888, p. 643, Ambrose Collection, HPL. See also R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, February 27, 1887, pp. 206-209.

non-musical day job, relegating their musical efforts to their spare time. Llewellyn A. Morrison was a Toronto mechanical and mining engineer who published compositions as a side career.⁶⁴ Chatham youth Geoffrey O'Hara found himself "tremendously fond of music and had naturally drifted towards creation and self-expression in it," despite the economic necessity that compelled him to work clerical and bookkeeping jobs.⁶⁵

Composers who genuinely sought to make a living through their writing talents usually emigrated. Clarence Lucas (1866-1947) tried to survive as a composer in Ontario for a handful of years before embarking on a career in the United States during the early 1890s. In a letter to his Hamilton friend Bruce Carey in 1915, Lucas explained his situation: "If I went back to Canada I am afraid I should have to teach piano and play church organ, and for neither of these honorable professions am I qualified ... I am at pains to explain this to you clearly, for I want you to know that I am none the less a Britisher in general and a Canadian in particular, in spite of my temporary sojourn in the United States..."⁶⁶ Laura Lemon (1866-1924) was another composer who found life in Canada ill-suited to her career prospects. A former pupil of Roberta Geddes-Harvey, Lemon lived in Guelph and Winnipeg before moving to England in 1890.⁶⁷ More than two decades later, she wrote to her contacts in Guelph in the hopes of drumming up sales for her new composition. In what was perhaps a calculated move to elicit local patronage, Lemon waxed poetic about her memories of home. Lemon insisted that "many *many*

⁶⁴ Llewellyn A. Morrison to Whaley, Royce & Co., June 20, 1903, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁶⁵ "On the Road from Ontario to Tin Pan Alley," unplaced clipping, Box 1, Lenore Stevens Keillor fonds, MUS 155, LAC. Geoffrey O'Hara later moved to New York, penning famous Tin Pan Alley hits such as "Tennessee, I Hear You Calling Me" and "K-K-K-Katy."

⁶⁶ *Hamilton Spectator*, February 1915, unplaced clipping, Envelope 28, Box 2, Clarence Lucas fonds, MUS 8, LAC.

⁶⁷ Helmut Kallmann, "Laura Lemon," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002037> (accessed October 4, 2011).

times I have longed to see... the dear old home again” and anticipated that her new ‘Cassandra’ waltz would prove useful “at dances &c— It has had a good deal of success already (but has only been *out* a short time), and as an old Guelphite I should *so* much like it to be done at home.”⁶⁸ Assuming that Lemon’s sentiments did not derive wholly from an attempt to sell her song, her career as a composer had come at some sacrifice.

Composers felt motivated to put pen to paper for a number of reasons, not all of them strictly musical. Henry Herbert Godfrey, for instance, considered the musical merits of his efforts secondary to the loftier cause of patriotic pride.⁶⁹ For others, composition provided a form of catharsis for the turbulent emotions of youth. In an 1890 *Saturday Night* article reprinted from the *Dramatic Mirror*, one author recalled the musical outpourings of her tender years: “I have always been very fond of music. In the wild fever of sweet fifteen I was guilty of several songs, which faithfully responded to my soulful ardor. I have sincerely repented of them but my sin is eternally finding me out...”⁷⁰ Gordon V. Thompson, meanwhile, started writing songs out of economic precociousness. As an adolescent with only an elementary grasp of music, he read an advertisement with the beguiling (if misleading) headline “A successful song will make your rich” and instantly resolved on penning a tune of his own.⁷¹

Canada’s ranks of composers and lyricists therefore held a motley assortment of part-timers ranging from regular contributors to occasional dabblers. Some boasted

⁶⁸ Laura Lemon to unknown recipient, December 12, 1911, 973.23.20, Laura Lemon Envelope, Box A13 (Literature, Theatre Music), GCM. Emphasis in Original. See also Alice Higinbotham to William Thain, 973.23.21, December 22, 1911, Laura Lemon Envelope, Box A13 (Literature, Theatre Music), GCM.

⁶⁹ H.H. Godfrey, *A Souvenir of Musical Toronto: Second Annual Issue 1898-1899* (Toronto: s.n., 1898), 33.

⁷⁰ Ecirpac, “When We are Girls,” *Saturday Night*, February 15, 1890, p. 7.

⁷¹ Gordon V. Thompson, “My First 50 Years of Music Publishing in Canada,” *Builder*, June 8, 1965, p. 1, Gordon V. Thompson vertical file, LAC. This particular tune of Thompson’s did not become a success. See also “Address Given by Gordon V. Thompson,” February 4, 1960, typescript, p. 1, Gordon V. Thompson Ltd. vertical file, LAC.

extensive training in composition, harmony and counterpoint. Others could perform and read music, and had veered into the act of composition without the benefit of formal training. Still others had caught hold of a catchy tune or lyric and sketched the basics out on paper. While the Canadian scene could not economically support an illustrious crop of composers, creative effort (both original and hackneyed) still surged in its crevices.

The Publishing Game

Canadian composers had recourse to a number of publication options. Many decided to submit their works to American or British firms in the hope of reaching a wider audience. W. Caven Barron, Gena Branscombe, and Cora B. Ahrens were only some of the Ontario composers who sought out this method.⁷² Nevertheless, a host of Canadian publishers did exist in larger urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg. Toronto's roster included the Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers Association, Whaley Royce & Company, and Harry H. Sparks. Larger music retailing houses such as R.S. Williams & Sons and I. Suckling & Sons (both of Toronto) published sheet music on a regular basis as well. Unlike Great Britain, Canadian publishing companies did not have agents stationed in various localities armed with a mission to plug the firm's songs. Local music dealers and composers themselves bore the brunt of this responsibility, forcing them to tap into a range of social, cultural, and economic contacts in an effort to spread the word.

⁷² Cora B. Ahrens, "Paddy from Cork" (New York: Ted Snyder Co., 1911), Envelope 2, Box 1, CanSheet, McM; William Caven Barron compositions, Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394A, LPL; Elaine Keillor, "Gena Branscombe," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/gena-branscombe> (accessed November 5, 2012).

A second type of big-city music publisher existed, one whose commercial *raison d'être* was not to sell hit songs but rather to service a clientele of unknown songwriters willing to pay for the gratification of seeing their work in print. These companies actively solicited submissions from the general public. If all one had to offer were song lyrics, then the company's crew of "tune-smiths" would handily compose an attractive melody and piano accompaniment to match. The company would then copyright the work under the name of the lyricist, print a batch of copies and send them to the client along with an invoice.⁷³ These sorts of enterprises likely included H. Kurkus Dugdale Company of Washington, D.C. In 1911, it placed an ad in *Canadian Magazine* announcing: "SONG POEMS WANTED WE PAY 50 per cent. Thousands of dollars in successful songs. Send us your work, with or without music."⁷⁴ The Murray Music Company of Toronto, in an attempt to capitalize off patriotic songs during wartime, offered to set one's poem to music for the low price of \$5.00 in June 1917. It described a team of songwriters standing by, ready to turn poems into hit songs. The firm professed honesty; however, its image of songwriters effortlessly acquiring wealth was overly hopeful at best.⁷⁵

A third option for aspiring composers was to simply ask their local printer to produce a limited run of their work for local consumption.⁷⁶ These grassroots ventures annoyed the larger American publishers who complained that this enabled yet more trash

⁷³ Michael Taft, "The Bard of Prescott Street Meets Tin Pan Alley: The Vanity Press Sheet Music Publications of John Burke," *Newfoundland Studies* 6, no. 1 (1990): 57.

⁷⁴ *Canadian Magazine* 38, no. 2 (December 1911): 113.

⁷⁵ *Everywoman's World* (June 1917): 50. For evidence of the financial precariousness of popular song composition see "The Insidious Evil of Over-Production," *CMTJ* 16, no. 10 (March 1916): 50; E.M. Wickes, "'Putting Over' Popular Songs" *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 75, 77.

⁷⁶ For example see Bertie Aikin Green, "In the Way of Duty," (Hamilton: Mrs. David Green, 1916), Envelope 3, Box 1 (First Accrual), War Songs from the First Half of the Twentieth Century Collection [hereafter War Songs], McM; A.S.L. May, "Don't You Hear the Call Laddie," lyrics by A.H.M. Reed (Goderich, ON: Independent Publishing Company, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 1 (First Accrual), War Songs, McM; William Shire Wilson, "The Crimson Leaf Song" (Homeside, ON: William Shire Wilson, 1918), Envelope 3, Box 14, CanSheet, McM.

to compete for space in an industry already saturated with titles.⁷⁷ The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* agreed, arguing that: “in the popular music field there are scores of songs that should never have been published let alone foisted upon the dealer.”⁷⁸

Finally, Canadian manufacturing companies published the occasional song or piano piece as a form of advertising for their products. Piano companies proved the most active practitioners, since it enabled them to attract new customers while simultaneously helping to satisfy the musical wants of their existing clientele. The “Bellolian Fantasie,” the “Heintzman & Company March,” and the “Newcombe Melody” all exemplify compositions intended to serve the interests of the brand. One could, however, just as easily find a song plugging a non-musical product. The Canada Flour Mills Company of Chatham commissioned a rendition of Sir Walter Scott’s “Young Lochinvar” set to music. Similarly, the W. Strachan & Co. of Montreal enlisted Frank Jimerson to compose the “Strachan’s Gilt Edge March” in order to advertise its lye soap.⁷⁹ The Ever-Ready Dress Stay Company of Windsor issued a composition entitled “Dorothy Waltz for the Piano” for the price of a penny, with proceeds dedicated to Canadian women’s groups.⁸⁰

The correspondence files of Whaley, Royce & Company of Toronto indicate two types of financial arrangements between publisher and composer. The first entailed a venture where the publisher took on most of the production costs, an arrangement usually reserved for established and successful composers such as Gena Branscombe.⁸¹ Other

⁷⁷ “Over-Production Dealt With — Method of Introducing Novelties,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 27-28. See also “The Insidious Evil of Over-Production,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 10 (March 1916): 49-50; E.M. Wickes, “‘Putting Over’ Popular Songs,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 75, 77.

⁷⁸ “Overproduction Again,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 8 (January 1915): 43.

⁷⁹ For these and other examples see the Canadian Sheet Music Collection at the McMaster archives.

⁸⁰ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 10, no. 4 (February 1898): lii.

⁸¹ Gena Branscombe to Whaley, Royce & Co., January 31, 1902, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC. No mention is made in the letter of Branscombe taking on the costs of production herself; indeed, Whaley, Royce & Co. wanted to obtain more of her work because it sold very well.

times, Whaley, Royce & Company insisted that the composer pay the printing and copyright costs in something akin to a vanity-publishing project.⁸² Author-funded sheet music may often be identified by the inscription “Printed for the Composer” followed by the publisher’s name. The following examples of Whaley, Royce & Company author-funded publications illustrate the variety of grassroots composition in English Canada.

James G. Smith of Bagot, Manitoba, wrote to Whaley, Royce & Company on December 27, 1912, with a mind to having some violin dance tunes printed. He announced that he was “a Composser [*sic*] of Music and I want to know how to get my music published so that no other company could print and sell the same music with out permishion [*sic*]...”⁸³ Employee Mr. Beesley replied that a regular three page composition with a plain title page would cost roughly \$28.00 for two hundred copies, half paid in advance and the rest Cash on Delivery.⁸⁴ A delighted Smith sent in the money, the music, and a supplementary \$2.00 for the purchase of Canadian and American copyrights.⁸⁵ Mr. Beesley wrote back ten days later, having viewed the manuscript and finding that the pieces were extremely short and all written on separate pages. Placing each piece on its own page would be a shocking waste of space, Beesley attested. He enclosed some blank manuscript paper, asking that Smith recopy them according to the requested layout specifications.⁸⁶ A chastened Smith replied that he would abide by the new format though he instructed Beesley to “Make a kind of a book of it as I have more selections to put on

⁸² The Novello Publishing Company of London, England, employed a similar tactic called the “author’s property” arrangement. See Michael Hurd, *Vincent Novello and Company* (London: Granada, 1981), 106.

⁸³ James G. Smith to Whaley, Royce & Co., December 27, 1911, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁸⁴ Smith to Whaley, Royce & Co., December 27, 1911; Smith to Whaley Royce & Co., February 15, 1913, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁸⁵ Smith to Whaley, Royce & Co., February 5, 1913, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁸⁶ Beesley to Smith, February 15, 1913, Folder 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

the market if these take or sell good.”⁸⁷ All seemed pretty well in place, with a revised price of \$25.00 for two hundred copies until an anxious missive from Smith appeared on March 13. “I think it would be best not to put a name on the out side [*sic*] of the book as it will be to [*sic*] expencive [*sic*] for that amount of music print it and send it to me as I dont [*sic*] care to put any more cost to it untill [*sic*] I see how it is going to take.”⁸⁸

Smith’s simple syntax and his idiosyncratic spelling imply an author possessing a rudimentary level of education. His sudden concern for the cost of the work (he had gladly sent \$16.00 previously) suggests either a reversal in fortunes or a discretionary income with strict limits. His compositional output of short violin dances indicates that his musical roots lay in an informal culture of popular music making. Meanwhile, his reference to a market for his wares demonstrates that he saw this publication as a business venture and not simply an attempt to glorify his name in print. Whaley, Royce & Company happily produced these sorts of pieces for circulation in the Bagot vicinity, so long as it did not involve any financial commitment from themselves.

By contrast, Llewellyn A. Morrison, a Toronto engineer and part-time composer, adopted a more peremptory attitude with Whale, Royce & Company. His brisk tone and his appeal for a swift response may be due to the fact that he hoped to have his patriotic number “Fair Canada” on hand to sell in time for the first of July. Still, his precise directions reveal an acute knowledge of how to navigate the maze of musical publishing.

You are to charge me \$35.00 for the four plates (three of music and one frontispiece) and one thousand copies of the song, published on usual good, heavy paper in good style of work. Proofs are to be submitted to me at the earliest moment possible and are to [be] approved before running off ... My purpose is to

⁸⁷ Smith to Whaley, Royce & Co., February 21, 1913, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁸⁸ Smith to Whaley, Royce & Co., March 13, 1913, Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

have you push the sale of them (if it goes) and have no one else trouble with them among the trade but I reserve perfect freedom in every respect. I would like to have these ready by 30th at latest.⁸⁹

As the above correspondence indicates, Morrison was able to anticipate the questions that would come up regarding the publishing process. He knew exactly what layout would best suit his new composition, as well as what safeguards to take in order to ensure his intellectual freedom. His desire to “reserve perfect freedom in every respect” demonstrates a man wise to the pitfalls of collaborating with a large firm.

Surprisingly, some sheet music composers possessed only limited musical skills. Mrs. Amelia P. Stroud, wife of a hotel proprietor in Milford Bay, Muskoka, hired Whaley, Royce & Company to print copies of a song she intended for local distribution. Over the summer of 1900, she discovered to her distress that none of the music dealers in her locality wished to stock her work. Upon application, a hotel guest informed her that the musical arrangement of the tune was “faulty.” Mrs. Stroud reminded Whaley, Royce & Co. that she had warned them of her own musical ignorance when she had originally submitted the piece: “Now you must remember I told you it was a first attempt and asked you to please correct it and make your charge for so doing. Why did you not do so or have written me it was not fit to print?” What is interesting here is Mrs. Stroud’s belief that all she needed to do was to pen a catchy melody and that someone else could easily be hired to rework the song’s chords and harmonies. Whether Mrs. Stroud erred in her assumption, or whether Whaley, Royce & Co. overlooked its responsibility is difficult to determine. The letter also speaks poignantly to the amateur composer’s reliance on social networks in order to garner a clientele. Mrs. Stroud begged for a new printing with the

⁸⁹ Llewellyn A. Morrison to Whaley, Royce & Co., June 20, 1903, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

offending passages reworked. “I have sold several copies and feel bound to make them good in proper form,” she observed before admitting rather pathetically, “I never was so humiliated in my life.”⁹⁰ Mrs. Stroud registered her failure in terms of acute embarrassment, implying that she had a standing to uphold in the community. Whaley, Royce & Company complied with her request for reprinting, though they cannily ignored her suggestion that they keep some copies to sell themselves.⁹¹

Mrs. Stroud was not the only gentlewoman to rely upon community networks for support. Mrs. George Torrance of Toronto, whom *Saturday Night* described as “an untiring and popular leader of society,” published a waltz entitled “Rêve d’Amour” in 1890. The waltz was to receive its premiere at a concert in May where the celebrated English tenor Mr. Edward Lloyd would also be appearing. One surmises that Mrs. Torrance’s elite connections helped her ensure both the early press coverage as well as the coveted performance slot.⁹² Community links proved equally if not more important for songwriters belonging to minority groups. Such networks formed a niche market for composers whose works were likely to be neglected by the Anglo-Canadian mainstream. African-Canadian musician Hattie Rhue Hatchett for instance circulated her songs through the Chatham region’s network of black churches. Hattie’s husband Millard later remembered how the pair ordered a thousand copies of her composition “Jesus Tender Shepherd” (c. 1916) from a printing company. They sold the song to members of their religious community until it permeated every black congregation in the area.⁹³

⁹⁰ Amelia P. Stroud to Whaley, Royce & Co., August 3, 1900, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁹¹ Stroud to Whaley, Royce & Co., August 15, 1900, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

⁹² “Social and Personal,” *Saturday Night*, April 19, 1890, p. 2.

⁹³ Richard George Stewardson, “Hattie Rhue Hatchett (1863-1958): An Interdisciplinary Study of her Life and Music in North Buxton, Ontario” (M.A. thesis, York University, 1994), 109-110.

Once more, the field of music publishing appears as a variegated spectrum of relationships and practices. As the examples from Whaley, Royce & Company demonstrate, unknown composers did not necessarily gravitate to smaller publishers. Their actions could be varied and unpredictable, to the chagrin of firm employees charged with the task of maintaining an orderly business correspondence.

Copyists, Correspondents, and Customs Officers: Acquiring Sheet Music

The average musician could obtain sheet music in one of a number of forms: as individual pieces, in collected anthologies, or as inserts in periodicals. Similarly, Canadians in search of sheet music had several options, of which the local music store was only one. According to an estimate from 1913, music dealers handled less than twenty percent of sheet music purchases in the Dominion.⁹⁴ Bookshops, general stores, and newsstands sold the items as well. Department stores and mail order catalogue companies in particular offered cheap prices with which the average retailer struggled to compete.⁹⁵ The Toronto firm of Charles E. Musgrave & Brother, for instance, boasted an extensive music catalogue servicing customers throughout the Dominion. “There are thousands of readers ... living in towns and cities in Canada where the music dealer’s stock of sheet music is very small,” lamented one advertisement. “The firm of Chas. E.

⁹⁴ “Sheet and Book Music Dealers Organize,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 4 (September 1913): 61-62.

⁹⁵ See “Developing Canada’s Sheet and Book Music Trade,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 30-31; “Letter to the Editor from a Music Dealer in Western Canada,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 65. Sometimes, department stores and large music publishers even competed with each other for retail business. See Isidore Witmark and Isaac Goldberg. *From Ragtime to Swingtime: The Story of The House of Witmark* (New York: Lee Furman, 1939), 287-293 for an illuminating though highly partisan account of how New York Tin Pan Alley publishers challenged Macy’s and Siegel-Cooper’s price cutting measures during the fall of 1907.

Musgrave & Brother was formed to meet just such conditions ... With all Canada to serve we can fill any order of any music in print within one hour of receipt of the order.”⁹⁶

A second source of sheet music was music teachers, who would purchase items directly from publishers at a discount and then sell them to students. Instructors engaging in these sorts of activities as a side-business annoyed music retailers to no end. As discussed in Chapter Two, music retailers sold sheet music with reluctance, deeming it a cheap commodity incapable of generating profits. Dealers nevertheless considered the sale of sheet music their province by right, and fumed over the prospect of commercial exchanges that cut them out of the loop.⁹⁷

A third option for obtaining sheet music was to contact the publishing firm directly. Canadian, British, and American music publishers regularly advertised in the country’s music journals as well as the mainstream newspapers and periodicals. *Canadian Magazine* featured ads from the likes of C.M. Myrex Music and Book Company of New York announcing “50 Cent Sheet Music at 17 Cents Or any Six for One Dollar, Postpaid.”⁹⁸ John Dicks of Effingham House in London, England, also offered “British Songs”, “Gems from the Great Composers”, and “Favourite Songs and Duets From Celebrated Operas” available to the public by mail order.⁹⁹ Once again, such activities drew the ire of Canadian sheet music dealers who mulled over rumours that American publishing houses hired scores of employees solely for the purpose of

⁹⁶ *Canadian Courier*, October 12, 1912, p. 36.

⁹⁷ “The Sheet Music Business,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 2 (July 1913): 28; “Sheet and Book Music Dealers Organize,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 4 (September 1913): 61-62.

⁹⁸ *Canadian Magazine* 21, no. 2 (June 1903): 78. For another American example see *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 11, no. 4 (August 1898): lxviii.

⁹⁹ *Canadian Magazine* 21, no. 2 (June 1903): 8.

processing mail orders to Canada.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the problem of mail order competition was not unique to the Dominion. American and British retailers faced similar competition as the publishing firms blithely mailed off parcels directly to inquiring consumers.¹⁰¹

Savvy customers sometimes went to great lengths in order to ensure a best price for their music. One popular tactic involved asking friends south of the American border to purchase and send up a handful of pieces. Packages mailed from one individual to another seemed less likely to raise customs officers' suspicions as opposed to shipped items bearing the label of a publishing company. Lending and exchanging music with friends and family offered another way to save money, though here again the border guards needed to be circumvented. The Saunders clan, for instance, regularly swapped sheet music with each other by wrapping it in nondescript parcels. Matriarch Sarah Saunders learned that such maneuvers required finesse during one failed attempt to send music from Ontario to her son Percy in New York:

You know how I enjoy sorting and packing music, so with great gusto I made a very fine selection from your musical library and this afternoon took the parcel to this Am. Ex. Co. as it was too large for the post, but alas I was disappointed on enquiring into details—I couldn't value the parcel less than \$5.00 so this man gave me the items duty 1.25, entry fee .30, carriage .45 ... The 'man' also said that if any of the music was copyrighted it would be *confiscated* ...

Now I am making up a small p[ostal] parcel which I think will go through without question as such things have often done before.¹⁰²

The Ambrose family also engaged in cross-border musical exchanges. Robert would regularly lend sheet music from his copious personal collection to his son Paul in New

¹⁰⁰ "Sheet and Book Music Dealers Organize," *CMTJ* 14, no. 4 (September 1913): 62. See also "Sheet Music Complaints," *CMTJ* 14, no. 6 (November 1913): 63.

¹⁰¹ For the United States see, "Developing Canada's Sheet and Book Music Trade," *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 30; for Great Britain see R.W. Pentland, "Sheet Music Problems Under Review," *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 28-29.

¹⁰² Sarah Saunders to Percy Saunders, undated, Envelope 5 (Misc. Family Letters), Box 5434, Saunders Collection, UWOA. Emphasis in original. This letter is not signed, but the handwriting matches that of Sarah's other letters.

York. Paul in return would search for American music as well as specialty items such as a “pocket metronome.”¹⁰³ Even the best subterfuge methods did not always succeed, however. In October 1888, one of Paul packages ran into trouble upon entry into Canada. “The blessed, ever blessed Custom House seized them,” quipped Robert, “and claimed a duty of ten cents to help buy up John A’s opponents.”¹⁰⁴

Musical journals formed another resource for avid consumers, particularly for rural inhabitants who lived far from retail stores.¹⁰⁵ These periodicals usually included several pages of sheet music intended for drawing-room pianists, violinists, or vocalists of intermediate abilities. Toronto’s *Musical Journal*, for instance, increased its sheet music inserts to between eight to ten pages by the popular demand of its readership. Although the journal privileged Canadian compositions, it guaranteed that all choices would consist of accessible yet high quality works with “trash of any and every description” being “rigidly excluded.”¹⁰⁶ Dailies such as the *London Free Press* and the *Toronto Star* also printed the occasional song. In fact, astute collectors such as Charles M. Allan of Elora, Ontario, garnered a sizable collection of sheet music simply by cutting and pasting newspaper pieces into scrapbooks.¹⁰⁷

Periodical readers enjoyed their sheet music supplements so much that a few American magazine inserts began to reach between sixteen and thirty-two pages in length. Eagle-eyed Canadian music retailers pounced on the issue. These periodicals,

¹⁰³ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, April 10, 1888, p. 553, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹⁰⁴ R.S. Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, October 9, 1888, p. 639, Ambrose Collection, HPL.

¹⁰⁵ Calderisi, *Music Publishing in the Canadas*, 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Musical Journal* 1, no. 3 (March 1887): 34. See also *Musical Galaxy* 1, no. 2 (February 1876); *Dominion Monthly Journal of Music* (c. November 1876); *Musical Journal* 1, no. 3 (March 1887): 37-44; *Canadian Musician* (September 1893): 7-14; *Canadian Journal of Music* 2 no. 11 (March 1916); *Canadian Home Journal* [hereafter *CHJ*] 3, no. 7 (November 1897): 14; *CHJ* 7, no. 1 (January 1900): 16-17; *CHJ* 7, no. 9 (December 1900): 14-15; *CHJ* 7, no. 10 (January 1901): 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Musical Scrap Book Compiled by Charles M. Allan of Elora, Ontario, A1975.3.68 and A1975.3.69, MU212-oversized, WCA.

retailers argued, constituted nothing more than song collections enlivened by the occasional article or advertisement. By identifying their products as magazines, however, American music publishers deviously avoided any sheet music customs fees. Canadian music dealers worried that consumers would develop bad shopping habits as the result of the glut of complementary music that accompanied one's regular reading material. As the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* complained in 1915, "'Free music' offers, music with magazine, dirt-cheap copies, and other methods have put an unthinking public into such a frame of mind that it became very difficult for the dealer to obtain a reasonable price. Many a person paying 30 cents for a song [nowadays] thought he was being robbed."¹⁰⁸

As a result of the frenzied competition, sheet music (however obtained) rarely sold for the price marked on its cover. Average list prices for an individual piece of music ranged from roughly ten cents to seventy-five cents. Cheap editions, such as Irving's Canadian Series of Five Cent Music, used inexpensive paper, small type, and plain formatting in order to decrease the cost of well-known popular songs.¹⁰⁹ Publishers also sold bound collections known as folios. The music selected for folios usually consisted of old favourites (which would always have a market) or the publishing company's hit songs from the previous year (in the hopes of stimulating a second wave of sales).¹¹⁰ Nicely bound folios of classical masterworks sold for higher than newer, popular compositions. Ashdown's Music Store in Toronto, for example, retailed Chopin, Schubert, Liszt, and Schumann folios at a price of \$1.00 each.¹¹¹ By and large, though,

¹⁰⁸ "Is the Music Entering Canada Duty Free in the Form of 'Supplements' in Monthly Magazines Fair Competition for the Canadian Trade?" *CMTJ* 15, no. 8 (January 1915): 43, 45. See also "What Importation of Music via the Monthly Magazine Means to the Canadian Trade," *CMTJ* 15, no. 9 (February 1915): 45, 47, 49.

¹⁰⁹ Examples may be found in the Canadian Sheet Music Collection at the McMaster archives.

¹¹⁰ Feist, *Popular Music Publishing*, 46, 49; Witmark and Goldberg, *Ragtime to Swingtime*, 113.

¹¹¹ *Musical Canada* 7, no. 8 (December 1912): 294.

music retailers rampantly cut prices as low as they dared, in a futile effort to compete against the large mail order houses.¹¹² Toronto composer Llewellyn A. Morrison thus well understood the state of affairs in 1903, when he instructed the publishers of his new song that they had “Better put “50¢” on as the sales price, it being understood that the price is 25¢ retail, 18¢ wholesale and 12, 1/2 ¢ each to you.”¹¹³

One final way of obtaining music was to copy it out by hand, particularly if one was arranging it for a different set of instruments or for a different voice range. Some scribes copied from an original score, while others tried to figure out the tune for familiar songs out of their own heads. The Ambrose correspondence makes repeated mention of Robert copying out sheet music parts for the various people he knew and taught. As his wife Lily informed their son Paul: “your Father spends a great deal of time copying music, he is now writing ‘Sometime somewhere’ he talks a good deal at the same time & consequently makes mistakes so you may be sure he doesn’t say pretty words.”¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, fellow Hamilton resident Thomas Littlehales rewrote sophisticated classical pieces into simpler form so that his children could perform beautiful music even from a very young age.¹¹⁵ Hattie Kelly of Guelph was another musical enthusiast who enjoyed writing out sing-a-long medleys compiled of various popular songs of the day. To all appearances, she would guess the melody on the piano and having secured that, she would then transcribe it onto staff paper with a pencil. After a few more revisions, she would write over top of her penciled efforts in ink. The medleys, which included “After

¹¹² “Developing Canada’s Sheet and Book Music Trade,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 30-31.

¹¹³ Llewellyn A. Morrison to Whaley, Royce & Co., June 20, 1903, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

¹¹⁴ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, October 23, 1887, p. 400, Ambrose Collection, HPL. See also R.S. Ambrose to Paul, November 14, 1886, pp. 53-57; Lily to Paul, April 7, 1887, pp. 248-252; Lily to Paul, October 30, 1887, pp. 407-409; R.S. Ambrose to Paul, April 10, 1888, p. 553.

¹¹⁵ Lillian Littlehales, “A Musical Upbringing in the Eighteen Eighties: A Story of Family Harmony in Life and Music” (1938; printed 1967), 7, 12, Littlehales Family File, Hamilton Biography Clippings File, HPL.

the Ball,” “Comin’ Thro the Rye,” “Meet Me in St. Louis,” and “Rule Britannia,” contained a melody line with Kelly presumably improvising a piano accompaniment.¹¹⁶

In sum, contemporaries acquired sheet music in a variety of forms and through diverse methods. Mail order catalogues and aggressive advertising tactics made sheet music increasingly affordable and accessible. At the same time, consumers found ways to circumvent official channels in order to acquire more pieces at a fraction of the cost. Thrift was only one factor motivating these alternate practices. Aficionados knew that the more money they saved, the more music they would be able to enjoy.

“Who is going to prosecute us?”: Legal and Illegal Editions

Canada’s reservoir of published sheet music consisted of a steady stream of compositions hailing from the United States, Britain, and (to a lesser extent) France and Germany. Domestic publishers such as Whaley, Royce & Company tried to capitalize on the popularity of musical imports by offering printed copies of their own bestselling songs in exchange for some of the top titles from foreign publishing houses. This arrangement bucked an existing trend, while ensuring that they had a chance to flog Canadian compositions at European markets in return. After a couple of months promoting each other’s wares, each firm would mail their trading partner the royalties.¹¹⁷ Another practice

¹¹⁶ “Medleys Arranged by H. R. Kelly,” notebook, Kelly Music Envelope, Box A13 (Literature, Theatre Music), GCM. The booklet is undated, but I estimate it to be circa 1913.

¹¹⁷ See for instance Carl Rühle Company to Whaley, Royce & Co., February 20, 1913; Whaley, Royce & Co. to Carl Rühle Music Publisher, n.d. [1913], Envelope 3, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

was simply to negotiate with foreign publishers for the rights to reprint their hit song for Canadian audiences.¹¹⁸

While improved transportation ensured that legitimate sheet music copies could traverse oceans and borders with ease, pirated editions still flourished. In particular, Canadians consumed large numbers of illegal American reprints of British material. British copyright laws forbade the unauthorized publication of British compositions within the Mother Country, yet they did not specify whether this protection extended throughout the Empire. Pirated editions certainly prospered from the vast informal networks of exchange across the Canadian-American border, yet illegal copies circulated through official channels as well. Musical piracy within the Dominion had become so rampant that when English publisher Frederick Harris visited Canada on business in 1910 and 1911, he came armed with powers of attorney from several of his London colleagues who hoped that he would prosecute infringers in their stead.¹¹⁹ By April 1913 delegates from the major British publishing firms met in London at a conference specifically designed to address the Canadian quandary. They vowed a crackdown on the illegal trade and began raising a fund in order to finance a series of lawsuits.¹²⁰

By that point, Canadian laws pertaining to international sheet music copyrights were severely out of date and so mangled that even Canadian customs officers and music retailers confessed their bewilderment. As Thomas Anderson of Hamilton affirmed, they had no access to any register detailing which international compositions had secured a

¹¹⁸ Publisher Frederick Harris employed this tactic in Britain during the first decade of the twentieth century. Harris later established a branch in Toronto c. 1910, so it is likely that his Canadian enterprise followed a similar practice. Wayne Gilpin, *Sunset on the St. Lawrence: A History of the Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited 1904-1984* (Oakville, ON: Frederick Harris Music Co., 1984) 2, 4-5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹²⁰ "To Prosecute Copyright Infringements in Canada," *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 42; "Sheet and Book Music Dealers Organize," *CMTJ* 14, no. 4 (September 1913): 62.

copyright applicable to Canadian circulation.¹²¹ Since customs officers did not know what to confiscate, they let many pirated editions pass through. Music dealers consequently faced the choice between stocking pirated editions, or standing by as other parties gleefully reaped the sales.¹²² Even scrupulous honesty could not ensure immunity. Some pirated editions proved easy to distinguish, but others looked extraordinarily similar to the genuine article. Without a copyright register to check, many sheet music retailers unwittingly purchased infringed copies and sold the stock in full public view. Fred H. Wray of Winnipeg vented the frustration the music trade when he exclaimed

We hear from all sides that so-and-so is illegal, and yet, as Mr. [Thomas] Anderson says, no one seems sure of it, and we are in the dark. We are told that if we import from the U.S. such-and-such a book or piece we will be put in jail, etc., etc. Now we have been doing this for 25 years to my knowledge, and I have not heard of a case of jail yet. Who is going to prosecute us? Is it the Dominion Government, the British publishers, or the foreign houses? ... There are none of us who want to break the law or be put in jail, but we do want to know what the law is.¹²³

Nor were American firms the only ones responsible for issuing dubious reprints. Whaley, Royce & Company of Toronto constantly looked for British and American compositions that did not possess international copyrights. In the absence of a Canadian register, the firm asked their contacts abroad to investigate whether or not one could fashion a Canadian-made copy of a song with impunity. Such confusion abounded that in December 1907 Whaley, Royce & Company reprinted two British compositions a little too precipitously. Upon further enquiry, the firm's London associates, Laudy & Company, discovered both compositions listed on a register held at the British Museum. A Laudy staff member dashed off a reply, recommending that the Toronto firm pull their

¹²¹ Thomas Anderson, "Why Not Now," *CMTJ* 13, no. 11 (April 1913): 56.

¹²² J. Kellestine, "An Organization Again Suggested," *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 41.

¹²³ Fred H. Wray, "By All Means Organize," *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 41.

editions from circulation. “Of course it would have saved you all this trouble had [British publisher] Mr. Schirmer printed on his edition a note saying ‘International Copyright secured’ but he is in no way obliged to do so and the omission of this does not make his copyright any the less secure. In future,” the staff member cautioned “it would be as well to make quite sure that a work is free in your country before reprinting it.”¹²⁴

In 1914, the London Music Publishers Association finally decided to compile a reference book of British compositions holding copyrights in Canada, warning Canadian dealers that thereafter ignorance would no longer constitute an adequate defense. After a series of delays, the seventy-eight page tome went to press during the summer of 1915.¹²⁵ Even then, infringements did not come to a complete stop. In 1916, Frederick Harris noticed that Toronto firms R.S. Williams & Son and Whaley, Royce & Company were selling pirated editions of a work called “Langley Tutors,” a piece with a British copyright held by Harris’ business partner Oliver Hawkes. A warning from Harris subdued R.S. Williams, who quickly returned the pirated copies. Whaley, Royce & Company contested the issue in court, where Harris won and was awarded costs.¹²⁶

Personal Inscriptions and Patterns of Sheet Music Consumption

Despite its reputation as ephemera, sheet music may be mined in complex ways for clues about the past. Indeed, much may be gained by observing the personal traces left by

¹²⁴ Laudy & Co. to Whaley, Royce & Co., December 9, 1907, Envelope 4, Box 1, Whaley, Royce & Co. fonds, MUS 231, LAC.

¹²⁵ “To Prosecute Copyright Infringements in Canada,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 42; “Developing Canada’s Sheet and Book Music Trade,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 12 (May 1914): 28-29; “Delayed but Enlarged,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 51; “Canadian Reference Book on Copyrights Now Practically Ready for Printing,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 12 (May 1915): 45.

¹²⁶ Gilpin, *Sunset on the St. Lawrence*, 10.

former owners upon their property. Music tradespeople claimed that most consumers harboured a here-today-gone-tomorrow attitude towards popular music. Nevertheless, a glance at surviving archival collections shows that many consumers gathered, individualized, and preserved their sheet music with a considerable degree of affection. The sheer magnitude of archival sheet music holdings is one indication that some owners either kept or passed down their musical collections instead of jettisoning them at the first whiff of a new hit tune. Personal inscriptions upon the pages further support the notion of meaningful, rather than transitory, consumption.

Roughly a third to a half of the era's surviving songs emerge from their archival boxes festooned with the previous owner's name. Writing one's name was likely first and foremost a manner of keeping track of one's property, given the extent of musical borrowings between friends. Still, the action can also signify an attempt to transform a mass consumer product into a personal item. Avid musicians, or those with some money to spare, liked to have their favourite pieces gathered together and formally bound into a single volume, with their name or initials engraved on top.¹²⁷ These compendiums represent both an assertion of individual musical taste and a wish to preserve it in durable form. Other consumers favoured a cheaper alternative: penning personal information directly on the loose-leaf sheets. Typical messages on title pages include the name of the owner, his or her address, the name of the city or town, a line of dedication from the sender if the item was a gift, and sometimes a date.

Some handwritten dedications commemorate a particular moment in time. Mary A. Harris for instance received the "Coronation Medley March and Two-Step" for

¹²⁷ Keillor, *Music in Canada*, 160. The University of Toronto Faculty of Music Library possesses an extensive collection of individually commissioned bound music folios.

Christmas in 1911.¹²⁸ Rhea Hall acquired a copy of the song “O Perfect Love” on June 21, 1913. Below this inscription, a different hand records that the piece was sung at Grace Nolan’s wedding to Edward Taylor, though it does not elucidate when or by whom.¹²⁹ For students learning a particular work one section at a time, the date at the end of a line of music indicated how far they had progressed in their efforts. The pianist learning to play the “Silver Slipper Waltz” had for instance reached the top of page three on June 22, 1906. By June 29, he or she had managed as far as page four.¹³⁰ During the years of the Great War, inscribing the month and year on the title page war-themed song often took on added significance. It could reference a specific stage in the wider conflict or a more intimate moment on a personal timeline of loss.¹³¹ Ironically, the very notion of popular music as prey to changing times may have reinforced the instinct of inscribing and remembering. As discussed in Chapter Three, Victorians displayed an acute awareness of the associations between music and memory. Thus if a tune had passed its prime, what it lost in currency it gained in nostalgic power. One might thenceforth perform the piece only irregularly, but doing so conjured up impressions of a moment when the music had been new and exciting.

Title page inscriptions could also commemorate a relationship at a particular point in time. These brief messages relied on a shared code of meaning between giver and

¹²⁸ Fred R. Weaver, “Coronation Medley March and Two-Step” (Toronto: Charles Musgrave & Brother, 1911), Envelope 1, Box 14, CanSheet, McM.

¹²⁹ Albert Ham, “O Perfect Love,” lyrics by Dorothy Blomfield (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1902), Envelope 3, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

¹³⁰ Arley Wentworth, “Silver Slipper Waltz” (Toronto: A. Cox & Co., 1906), Envelope 2, Box 14, CanSheet, McM.

¹³¹ M.F. Kelly, “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” lyrics by Albert E. MacNutt (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1915), Envelope 4, Box 1 (First Accrual), War Songs, McM, which has the inscription “Rhea Hall 11/8/15”; Edward W. Miller, “Call of the Motherland” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers Association, 1914), Envelope 2, Box 1 (First Accrual), War Songs, McM, which has the inscription “Charles F. Daly Oct 1914.”

receiver, making it difficult for the outsider to interpret. For instance, a copy of “The Nightingale and the Rose,” reveals it to be a gift from the composer Robert Stuart Pigott, given with “admiration” to a Mrs. Clyde Green on March 10, 1906. It is impossible to determine whether Mr. Pigott was a suitor addressing a married lover or widow, a friend or acquaintance offering a token of respect, or merely a savvy composer trying to get a singer to ‘plug’ his latest work.¹³² Roberta Geddes-Harvey presented a copy of her composition “Victoria the Rose of England,” to a woman named Miss Rolph, signing it “With the composer’s love, May 15th/99.” While the message implies a degree of affection, one does not know how much or under what circumstances. A copy of “The Princess Bonnie Waltzes” contains the simple message “To Jessie from Viola.” The brevity of this inscription could result from a close familiar relationship between the two women, or conversely a more distant degree of acquaintance where succinctness formed a preferred alternative to hollow emotional declarations.¹³³

Deciphering the exact relationship between giver and receiver may be a fruitless effort, yet personal embellishments reveal other important clues. Most of the names on title pages are female, showing the influence of prescriptions about domestic music making as women’s proper sphere. Male names constitute a significant minority, however, demonstrating that men with an interest in and aptitude for music certainly indulged their leanings. Marked up copies of music also complicate simplistic notions of consumption. For example, a copy of “The Pearly Gates and Golden” contains the same

¹³² Robert Stuart Pigott, “Nightingale and the Rose,” lyrics by Alice Williams Brotherton (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1906), Envelope 3, Box 11, CanSheet, McM. For biographical information, see “Robert Stuart Pigott,” *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* 5, no. 5 (September 1906): 142-144 and frontispiece photo.

¹³³ Willard Spenser, “The Princess Bonnie Waltzes” (Toronto: Pugsley, Dingman & Co., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 12, CanSheet, McM.

name written a number of different times on the cover and the first page. The names range from A.E.W.S. Mern (in larger more childish writing), to Aggie E.W. Sands (in round script of a young adolescent) to A.E. Sands and Aggie E. Wawanosh Sands in elegant adult script.¹³⁴ It is difficult to tell whether Aggie herself wrote all of the names at different points in her life, or whether other writers older or younger than herself had taken it upon themselves to inscribe her sobriquet upon the copy. Still, the clues remind us that sheet music could be kept over long periods of time by multiple users and for different purposes. A gap between a song's copyright date and date of purchase also illustrates the fallacy of studying a song only in relation to the moment of its production. Howard W. Warner, for example, inscribed his copy of "Nights of Gladness," with the date December 27, 1919. Warner's post-war world was a very different one from that encountered by the composer, who had copyrighted the song back in 1912.¹³⁵

Finally, a marked up piece can often reveal some aspect of the consumer's music making habits. Pieces with copious hints and corrections imply that it was a work played frequently and seriously, possibly with a view to performance. By contrast, unmarked pieces may indicate that the performer was enjoying them for fun, or simply not playing them at all. For example, the piece "Dance Characteristique" contains numerous instructions such as "Lift Arm," "Smoothly Time," "Remember Phrasing," "Better Rhythm," "Count Aloud," "Sustain every Bass note," "Special Practise [*sic*] from here for time", and so forth. The declamatory tone, and the reference to practice regimes

¹³⁴ Jules Faber, "The Pearly Gates and Golden," lyrics by Llewellyn A. Morrison (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1902), Envelope 3, Box 5, CanSheet, McM. Aggie Sands was from Sarnia, Ontario. Her name and hometown are inscribed on Charles E. Baer, "The Song I Heard in Heaven," lyrics by Arthur J. Lamb (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, n.d.), Envelope 1, Box 2, CanSheet, McM.

¹³⁵ Charles Ancliffe, "Nights of Gladness" (Toronto: Hawkes & Harris Music Co., n.d.), Envelope 6, Box 17, CanSheet, McM.

indicate that the comments are from a teacher to a pupil. The references to arms, touch, and fingerings show this to have been a keyboard student.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, the marginalia on a copy of the song “The City Eternal” address a vocalist, since the author has penciled in breath marks. The writer has also taken into account limitations in the singer’s range, since he or she has indicated some alternative lower notes to hit in the final line.¹³⁷

Meanwhile, a copy of the famous song “Silver Threads Among the Gold” contains a handwritten second, lower, vocal line in order that two singers could perform a duet. The lower voice runs in parallel motion with the upper voice, hinting that the arranger was not schooled in harmonic principles of contrary motion and the avoidance of parallel fifths.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, the evidence gleaned is too fragmentary to form firm conclusions. It does, however, offer a blurry window into the world of sheet music consumers.

These various sorts of personal embellishment make sheet music an emotionally compelling source of analysis. This makes printed music dangerous in some ways. Just as it is a mistake to assume that all sheet music constituted throwaway ephemera, it is similarly misguided to assume that consumers unanimously cherished their pieces. While the above analysis attempts to offer a corrective to the dismissive orthodox approach, it does not seek to invalidate it entirely. Sheet music was published and marketed as a disposable commodity, and many consumers accepted this interpretation. Those who did not mediated new discourses of capitalist consumption, accepting the notion that a

¹³⁶ Paul Ambrose, “Danse Characteristique” (London: J.H. Larway, 1905), Envelope 3, Box 1, CanSheet, McM.

¹³⁷ Jules Faber, “The City Eternal,” lyrics by Llewellyn A. Morrison (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1905), Envelope 3, Box 5, CanSheet, McM.

¹³⁸ H.P. Danks, “Silver Threads Among the Gold,” lyrics by Eben E. Rexford (Toronto: F. Harris Co., 1910), Envelope 3, Box 4, CanSheet, McM.

consumer product (sheet music) would form part of the warp and weft of their emotional lives, yet resisting the notion that one had to constantly replace it with the next best thing.

By the late nineteenth century, improved technologies of production and transportation rendered sheet music cheaper and easier to obtain than ever before. Nonetheless, everyday behaviour could show a dizzying degree of variety as producers wrote and hawked, publishers designed and printed, and performers acquired and consumed these items. Sheet music may have been “as plentiful as the sands of the seashore,” yet contemporaries still dedicated time and energy to this supposedly ephemeral cultural artifact.¹³⁹ Producers laboured to ensure that publishers respected their vision for the final musical product, publishers tried to minimize the cost of production in order to reap greater profits, and consumers subverted authorities in order to avoid paying additional fees. Consumers furthermore transformed a standardized commercial product into a personal site of memory as they inscribed their copies with names, dates, technical suggestions, and expression markings. These narratives form the frame in which we may analyse the content of the songs themselves. The next two chapters take up this challenge, investigating how the messages embedded in the musical copy reflect the society in which it was produced and consumed.

¹³⁹ Walter M. Bacon, “Over-Production Dealt With— Method of Introducing Novelties,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 27-28.

CHAPTER 7

COMMUNITIES IN SONG:

POPULAR SONGS AND ENGLISH-CANADIAN IDENTITY, 1880-1913

Commercialized popular music is a functional genre, inextricably tied up in the politics of consumer appeal. Songwriters composed music not merely for their own benefit; they equally needed to consider the preferences of parlour musicians at large. While intended for performance in the private sphere, the literature is startling for the extent to which it engages with broader public concerns.¹ Indeed, popular songs meditate on core aspects of contemporary English-Canadian identity: from imperial-nationalism, to domestic-nationalism, from civic pride to notions of ethnic and racial ‘otherness’.² The songs’ lyrical and musical tropes are frequently repetitive, even hackneyed. This in itself is

¹ Some parts of this chapter and the next, namely the sections on imperialist-nationalism, domestic-nationalism, and courtship, draw upon my unpublished Master’s research essay “Longing for a Maple Land: National Visions in English Canadian Parlour Songs, 1900-1913,” Queen’s University, 2007. Chapters 7 and 8 of this dissertation expand the chronological period as well as the primary source base, and discuss a range of themes not addressed in the earlier study. For the purposes of simplicity, the term “Canada” in these chapters will be understood to mean “English Canada.”

² This chapter conceptualizes English-Canadian identity by widening Benedict Anderson’s classic definition of the nation as “an imagined political community” in order to embrace imperial and local identity as well. Empire, nation, and larger cities and towns would have been too populous to foster a personal acquaintance with each community member. The idea of imaginatively constituted communities holds true for small towns and villages, since contemporaries envisioned their local community as consisting of not only the current generation, but also the generations that had preceded them. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

significant, for it demonstrates a powerful orthodoxy of which songwriters (whether seasoned or inexperienced) were instinctively aware. Textual analysis will form the bulk of the discussion, but the musical score and cover art will also be considered to the degree that they enhance or contest the meaning of the text. In doing so, the following analysis seeks to elucidate the aesthetic elements of a commercial music genre, while also providing insight into turn-of-the-twentieth-century Anglo-Canadian society at large.

The Components of Canadian Popular Sheet Music

Canadian popular music intended for domestic consumption overwhelmingly falls into one of two sub-genres. The first is popular song, defined as works scored for voice(s) and keyboard accompaniment. The second is the instrumental solo, consisting of music written for a single instrument, usually the piano or parlour organ but occasionally the violin. Using the standard combinations of keyboard, voice, and violin ensured that the piece would appeal to the widest market. Consumers proficient in other, more unusual instruments would simply adapt or rewrite the melody to suit their own particular needs.

Popular songs feature a vocal line that is fairly straightforward, using simple rhythms and a limited pitch range. The piano line is easy in some areas, but more difficult in others. The pianist rarely encounters fast finger work; however, a number of passages feature heavy chords, which require quick hand-eye co-ordination. Popular song melodies tend to be highly repetitive, with waltz themes, martial themes, and hymn-like themes being especially prevalent. As the scholar Nicholas Tawa observes, “To be daring and innovative was out of place in this context. On the other hand, the composition had to

sound as if its ideas were neither exhausted nor fatigued.”³ By contrast, the lyrical content varies widely. Some pieces are comic, some tragic, some religious, and some patriotic.

The instrumental solo tends to consist of dance music (such as waltzes or polkas and eventually ragtime), brisk marches, or short descriptive pieces conveying an emotional mood. Without lyrics to suggest a narrative, composers often chose generic titles for their works. A common trick was to include the genre of the composition in the title, prefixed by the name of a woman, a landscape, or any other sort of pleasing image to distinguish it from the hundreds of other works of this type. Thus, one will find the “Leonora Waltzes,” the “Viola Waltzes,” the “Hazel Waltz,” the “Autumn Waltzes,” and the “School Days Waltz,” to name only a few. Similarly, one finds the “Varsity March,” the “Toronto Exposition March,” the “Hamilton Carnival March,” and the “Queen City March.”⁴ The music for solo instrumental pieces may be simple or, conversely, fairly difficult in a showy sort of way with leaps and flourishes. Popular composers’ tendency to privilege flashy maneuvers, sometimes at the expense of melody, constituted the main grievance of the highbrow critics who vented their frustrations in the musical press.⁵

Individual pieces of sheet music appear in the form of small booklets of roughly two to seven pages in length. All but the very cheapest editions have a cover page listing the title, lyricist, composer, and publisher. By the late nineteenth century, printed title pages had almost completely replaced the lithographed covers of earlier days. While the techniques of rendering had changed, cover art designs remained relatively unaltered during the 1880s and the early 1890s. The simplest title pages consisted of black or rust-

³ Nicholas E. Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 87.

⁴ All of these may be found in in the Canadian Sheet Music Collection at McMaster University Archives.

⁵ See for example Leander Fisher, “Robin’s Return” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., n.d.), XM2MSA003015, Canadian Sheet Music Collection, XM2A003, UGA.

coloured lettering on plain white ground; more elaborate covers used ornate fonts or black and white images derived from a drawing or a photograph (Figs. 7.1, 7.2).⁶ Cover art design began to evolve during the last years of the old century, as the largely anonymous squadron of commercial artists started creating eye-catching colour renderings. The unheralded hero of this change was American commercial artist Gene Buck (1885-1957) whose glorious “posterlike” illustrations for Tin Pan Alley publishers Whitney & Warner inspired many imitators. The new aesthetic did not usher in an age of unfettered creativity, for music publishers demanded cover art that was not only visually appealing but also inexpensive to print. While coloured ink became popular, many cover artists had to restrict themselves to the deployment of two contrasting hues (Fig. 7.3).⁷ In some cost-cutting quarters, the plain black-letter title page persisted well into the Edwardian era.

Sheet music covers employing photographic images usually depict the composer or, more frequently, a prominent singer in the hopes of harnessing the power of celebrity name recognition.⁸ Music publishers meanwhile promoted their wares by including advertisements for other songs on the sheet music itself. Sometimes, they provided a list of popular tunes in their catalogue on the back cover. Other times, they gave the first few lines of a new song for the consumer to try on his or her instrument. Cheaper editions, such as those of the five or ten cent variety, are easily distinguishable from regularly

⁶ Marian Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music: A Pictorial History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975), 11, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4, 11-12.

⁸ “New Music,” *Musical Canada* 8, no. 2 (June 1913): 53-55; Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 92; Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 127. Publishing houses in London and New York so relied upon the celebrity system that they even bribed performers to endorse a song. Further study is needed to determine whether music publishers in the Dominion pursued similar tactics, though “War Has Inspired the Bards, 1,000 Songs in Canada Alone,” *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p.7 implies that they did.

priced publications. The paper and ink are of a lower grade, and the lines of music are smaller in order to fit more content per page. Cheap editions include numerous advertisements for local goods and services, likely in order to offset the cost of printing. By contrast, regular editions of sheet music restrict their advertising to other titles in the publisher's catalogue or ads for musical items. Cheap editions moreover tended to consist of reprints of British or American hits, the per unit price being so low that only a guaranteed large volume of sales would ensure a profit.⁹

The Canadian popular music field was in a state of flux at the end of the nineteenth century. As the piano started to gain more democratic associations, commercial music evolved in response to the changing consumer market. The result was a "cross-fertilization of musical styles" from a variety of social and ethnic groups, making commercial music a more diverse field than ever before.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the rise of New York's Tin Pan Alley district during the 1890s shifted the main locus of Anglo musical innovation from Britain to the United States. According to Derek Scott, British drawing room music had "exhausted" itself by the turn of the twentieth century, as compositions became needlessly complex and affected.¹¹ By contrast, American composers discovered a distinct national style inspired to no small degree from the rich musical tradition of African Americans. Whereas the waltz fad of the 1890s represented the height of sensual daring in its day, by the beginning of the twentieth century it looked staid and distinctly Old World by comparison with the latest American trends.¹² Creations such as ragtime,

⁹ Examples of cheap editions include: Irving's Canadian Series of Five Cent Music, Evans' Standard Sheet Music, and the Saalfeld Series of Five Cent Music.

¹⁰ James Parakilas and Atsuko Hirai, "1870s to 1920s: The World's the Limit," in *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 238.

¹¹ Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, 201.

¹² For the sensual implications of the waltz see Jon W. Finson, *The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 68, 72.

the cakewalk, and eventually the blues provided consumers with infectious new musical influences. Even the more conventional sentimental ballads employed a simpler, more direct style than had formerly been the case.¹³ Canadian composers did not embrace the American trends wholeheartedly, yet their work betrays some of the new music's more straightforward sentimentality as well as the occasional ragtime flourish. In other ways, Canadian popular music remained rooted in middle-class Victorian social values. The scholar Craig Roell notes that Victorian beliefs did not come to a sudden end with the death of the Queen in 1901. Instead, these convictions continued alongside the newer currents until they eventually faded away.¹⁴ Popular songs had indeed grown more commercial and democratic, yet they could simultaneously encompass traditional ideals.

Singing for Mother England: Imperial-Nationalism in Popular Music

Canadian songwriters produced hundreds of patriotic airs, many of which contain overt displays of imperial pride. The presence of British themes coincided with, and was likely inspired by, an upswing of imperial music in the Old Country. Though patriotic tunes had been popular in England throughout the nineteenth century, those from the later decades proved significantly different. This reflected the rise of "new" imperialism between 1880 and 1914 as rival European nations began accumulating as many far-flung colonies as possible. Imperial sentiment at home became more intense, and music kept pace with this rising enthusiasm. First, popular songs began praising Britain as a whole instead of

¹³ Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, 198-203; Alec Wilder, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950*, ed. James T. Maher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3-17.

¹⁴ Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890-1940* (Chapell Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 3-4.

England in particular. Doing so encouraged a broader sense of loyalty linking not only the British Isles, but also the colonies overseas. Second, song themes became militaristic to an extent unheard of since the Napoleonic wars. No longer content with merely praising the flag, these tunes now boasted of the Empire's global supremacy.¹⁵ British militarism often expressed itself through two popular narratives: triumphant marching songs and tales of personal sacrifice. What united both accounts was their absolute faith in the justness of the imperial cause.¹⁶ English-Canadian popular music adopted both the conventions and the confidence of these British models.

Imperialism in Canada reached a climax at the turn of the twentieth century and while it owed much to the British version, it offered unique elements as well. Imperialism was an intellectual movement led by an elite but nonetheless influential group of military officers, scholars, clergymen, writers, and artists from central Canada and the Maritimes. A nebulous ideology, it could be tailored to suit the interests of the individual espousing it. For instance, military-minded men such as George Taylor Denison emphasized Canada's duty to defend the Empire. Others, such as George Grant and George Parkin, focused on the Anglo-Saxon mission to mould the world in a Christian image.¹⁷ The historian Carl Berger argues that imperialists did not advocate perpetual Canadian colonialism. Rather, they considered themselves nationalists seeking to augment Canada's power and prestige within the orbit of Empire. Fearful of possible integration with the United States, imperialists believed that Canada needed to become a strong nation and to garner Britain's respect as an equal partner. This partnership would not only

¹⁵ Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, 170-171.

¹⁶ Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: A Social History*, 2nd ed., Music and Society Series, ed. Peter J. Martin and Tia DeNora (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 157-158.

¹⁷ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 12-43.

protect Canada from American encroachment; it would give Canada greater control over its foreign policy and a leading voice in the Empire at large.¹⁸ Entering into war on Britain's behalf therefore constituted not a precedent for further subjection, but merely an "initiation rite" proving Canada's fitness for a stronger voice on the international stage.¹⁹ Berger notes that Canadian imperialists betrayed surprisingly little of the "deferential spirit."²⁰ They venerated Britain for her history, her institutions, and her role as the ancestral home of many Canadians. Still, they felt troubled by industrial Britain's social problems, its rigid class system and slavish regard for formalities.²¹

More broadly, imperialism represented a sense of identification with Britain, its history, its political institutions, and the Anglo-Saxon civilization. Recent historical studies have built on Berger's arguments by expanding the scope of inquiry to the realm of popular culture. Though the exact nature of imperial attachment varied according to region, social position, and individual personalities, the British-Canadian elite by and large succeeded in fostering public displays of loyalty through their control of community institutions. As a result, contemporary English Canadians were steeped in British values from a very early age. They read patriotic literature and engaged in patriotic exercises at school. Their churches preached the value of the Anglo-Saxon missionary efforts. They celebrated holidays such as Dominion Day and Empire Day. Young people joined clubs such as the Boys' Brigade.²² The loyalty may have been somewhat vague, but it had a

¹⁸ Ibid., 45, 61-62, 66, 119-120.

¹⁹ Carman Millar, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902*, Canadian War Museum Historical Publication no. 281 (Montreal & Kingston: Canada War Museum and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 440.

²⁰ Berger, *Sense of Power*, 260.

²¹ Berger, *Sense of Power*, 53, 67-68, 116-117; Millar, *Painting the Map Red*, 437.

²² Millar, *Painting the Map Red*, 3-4, 6-7; Robert A. Wardhaugh, "'Gateway to Empire': Imperial Sentiment in Winnipeg, 1867-1917," in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, ed. Colin M. Coates (Edinburgh: The

powerful emotional appeal.

Canadian popular song composers absorbed these influences in order to produce a voluminous repertoire of imperial tunes. The very notion of Canadian autonomy was entirely absent from English-Canadian songwriters' lexicon. Tellingly, contemporaries used the catch all term "patriotism" to describe songs invoking imperial or national pride. The patriotic song genre is thus best envisioned as a spectrum with Empire at the one end and Canada at the other. One theme usually dominated to a moderate degree, but the other never disappeared entirely. Indeed, British and Canadian references were often seamlessly interwoven. This evidence demonstrates that Carl Berger's thesis regarding imperialism as a form of Canadian nationalism holds true on a grassroots level, at least as expressed in popular song. The term "imperial-nationalist" will be used throughout this chapter in order to underline the above argument.

The musical language of imperial-nationalist songs tended to be fairly narrow, consisting of one or more of the following elements: a stately march tempo, heavy chords, simple rhythms, short military fanfares, and an emotional climax of sustained high notes sung at full volume. Songwriters aimed above all to project a level of majesty appropriate to the loftiness of their subject matter. Popular songs evoking imperial-nationalist pride frequently took the form of commemorative pieces recognizing a visiting dignitary or an important moment in the history of the empire. The Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada from 1878 to 1883, offered a particularly compelling subject for composers as the husband of Queen Victoria's fourth daughter, Princess Louise. The vice regal couple's link to the monarchy was therefore literal as well as

University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997), 207-210. See also Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2001).

symbolic, and songwriters responded enthusiastically. Mrs. Charles G. Moore of London, Ontario, wrote a “Song of Welcome” (c.1878) in anticipation of the Governor General and the Princess’ arrival.²³ Scored for four-part harmony with a piano accompaniment, the music struck a stately tone with its steady march of solid chords. The dynamics, though generally loud, swelled to *fortissimo* (very loud) at climactic moments. Thomas Jones of Hamilton wrote “The Marchioness” (c. 1881-1883) in honour of Lorne and his lofty mission. Jones opted for a lyrical waltz meter, and dynamics that alternated between loud and soft. The piece nonetheless projected an air of grandeur, with a militaristic fanfare in the introduction and a broad, declamatory conclusion.²⁴

Music dedicated to the British monarch proved another popular theme, particularly when a jubilee or a coronation approached. John Imrie and John Francis Johnstone marked Victoria’s Golden Jubilee with an 1886 song commending her exemplary efforts as Queen, wife and mother.²⁵ Ten years later, Guelph composer Roberta Geddes Harvey penned “Victoria the Rose of England,” in anticipation of the Queen’s sixtieth year on the throne. In addition to the usual praise for the monarch’s sterling qualities, Harvey expressed the particular perspective of a loyal Dominion geographically distanced from its head of state:

Though ocean billows roll between,
Our country and our country’s Queen,
They cannot quench our love so leal,
Canadian hearts are true as steel!²⁶

²³ Mrs. Charles G. Moore, “Song of Welcome” (London, ON: Advertising Steam Presses, n.d.), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

²⁴ Thomas Jones, “The Marchioness,” lyrics by R. Evans (Toronto & Clifton: Toronto News Company, n.d.), Amicus 5374928, LAC.

²⁵ J.F. Johnstone, “Queen Victoria’s Jubilee” (Toronto: Imrie & Graham, 1886), Amicus 5283239, LAC.

²⁶ Roberta Geddes Harvey, “Victoria the Rose of England” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1897), Envelope 4, Box 6, Canadian Sheet Music Collection [hereafter CanSheet], McM.

Kate Mackintosh of Halifax, N.S., also used the Diamond Jubilee as an opportunity for poignant reflection on the devotion of a population to a monarch it had never met. Her song “Mother-land Beyond the Sea” used broken piano chords during the verses in order to create an effect of rippling water. The vocal line consisted of a simple melody in hymn-like two-bar phrases:

Distant hearts may love as well
As do those who see her face,
And with pride our bosoms swell,
That we are of British race.²⁷

Such tributes by no means expired with the end of Victoria’s reign. Otto M. Heinzman wrote a “Coronation Waltz” for solo piano upon Edward VII’s accession, while J.M. Hall wrote marches dedicated to both Edward VII and the Duke of York.²⁸ A decade later, Roland C. Barwell and Charlotte Bonnycastle’s “When George V is Crowned” showed the monarch continuing to give imperial-national loyalty a personal face.²⁹

The Union Flag and British liberties provided other rallying points, thus illustrating some of the tangible images that Canadians conjured up when fashioning an idea of Britain. Though the flag and freedom dominated the entire period, they proved especially visible in the 1880s and early 1890s when there were no imperial wars to divert songwriters’ immediate attentions. “England’s Flag and Canada” (1880), “Up with the Union Jack” (c. 1889), “Hurrah for the Flag” (1891), “We’ll Fight for the Grand Old Flag” (1897), and “The Story of the Flag” (1897) are only some examples of the flag’s perennial popularity during these years. References to British constitutional liberties,

²⁷ Kate Mackintosh, “Mother-Land Beyond the Sea” (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1897), Amicus 5375135, LAC.

²⁸ J.M. Hall, “Duke of York March-Two-Step” (Toronto: Imperial Edition of Popular Music, n.d.), Envelope 3, Box 6, CanSheet, McM; J.M. Hall, “Edward VII March” (Toronto: Imperial Music Publishing House, n.d.), Envelope 3, Box 6, CanSheet, McM; Otto M. Heinzman, “Coronation Waltz” (Toronto: s.n., c. 1901), Envelope 1, Box 7, CanSheet, McM.

²⁹ Charlotte Bonnycastle, “When George V is Crowned,” lyrics by Roland C. Barwell (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1911), Envelope 1, Box 3, CanSheet, McM.

though more abstract, also permeated popular song literature. “Hail! Mighty Empire” (1913) mentioned heroes fighting “For precious freedom’s liberty ... God bless those isles, land of the free.”³⁰ “Dear Canada” (1913) noted that “Joyous and free thy people sing/ the praise of empire land and king.”³¹ “When George V is Crowned” concurred:

A great and glorious Empire
Shall shew the wond’ring world;
‘That Loyalty’s the watchword,
Where e’er the Flag’s unfurl’d
How liberty and justice
Which British rule will bring
Has taught e’en savage Chieftains
To honor Britain’s King.³²

The unapologetic patriot H.H. Godfrey sounded a more elaborate note in “John Bull’s Children” (1898), explaining that John Bull guaranteed the protection of his subjects all across the globe,

and where e’er you hear that sound,
and where e’er that flag is found,
there Justice, Peace and Liberty
in fullness all abound.³³

Godfrey drew attention to these crucial lines by making them coincide with the musical climax of the piece. The verses were fairly jaunty, but the chorus became slower and more majestic. The vocal line hit a *fortissimo* high note on the word “Justice” while “Liberty” was to be sung in slow, deliberate notes. The song gracefully came to a close with the final line “in fullness all abound.” Lyricists equally invoked the imperial model when speaking of Canada as “Sweet home of liberty,”³⁴ and “a land that breeds the

³⁰ A.C. Murray, “Hail! Mighty Empire” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1913), Amicus 22138791, LAC.

³¹ Frederick Fenton, “Dear Canada” (Toronto: Musgrave Bros. & Davies, 1913), Amicus 17646911, LAC.

³² Charlotte Bonnycastle, “When George V is Crowned,” lyrics by Roland C. Barwell (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1911), Envelope 1, Box 3, CanSheet, McM.

³³ H.H. Godfrey, “John Bull’s Children” (Ottawa: J.L. Orme & Son, 1898), Amicus 5372168, LAC.

³⁴ John W. Gray, “Canada My Native Land,” lyrics by G. F. Gould (Toronto: Canada Music Publishing Co., c. 1907), Amicus 19326479, LAC.

stalwarts and the free.”³⁵ This was not empty rhetoric, for British liberties figured prominently in Canadian political and legal discourse well into the twentieth century.³⁶

If Britain and Canada were free, then logic would have it that enemies of Britain were the enemies of freedom. The Mother Country’s strength lay not merely in her power to intimidate; she fought in order to maintain her supremacy. The musical lines of militaristic patriotic songs contributed to the robust optimism of their texts. All of the composers set their music in a major key, which gave the songs a bright, cheerful sound. Some included brisk long-short rhythms in the accompaniment in order to evoke the sound of a military band. Other composers opted for a more hymn-like approach, with lush, sustained chords creating an air of grandeur. During the peaceful years of the 1880s and the early 1890s, songwriters did not shy away from the notion of armed resistance, often mentioning a willingness to defend the flag during a later verse of a longer song. Significantly, the prospect of battle usually took the form of an invasion of Canada rather than a far-off imperial conflict. The American Civil War and the Fenian raids of the 1860s remained well within living memory, and in spite of Confederation and a transcontinental railway, the young Dominion was hardly impervious to attack. As James Walton Jackson’s “England’s Flag and Canada” (1880) noted:

Should foemen e’er invade our homes,
Or dare pollute our soil
We’ll flaunt aloft the honored flag,
Their base attempt we’ll foil;
For strong our hearts and arms shall prove
‘Gainst all who dare assail;
Old England’s flag and Canada

³⁵ Alfred J. Rostance, “Canada is Good Enough for Me,” lyrics by J. Aunt Stanford (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., c. 1905), Amicus 22677346, LAC.

³⁶ José E. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 35, 48, 53, 61-62; Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 17-19.

Shall evermore prevail.³⁷

The song's tempo was marked *con spirito* (with spirit) and the score featured a number of dotted (long-short) rhythmic figures, creating the impression of a brisk militaristic march. John Davenport Kerrison of Toronto used a stately, hymn-like musical setting to express his patriotic fervour, but his lyrics conveyed a similar warning:

Should Foreign foes our land e'er threat
With desolation fell
God guard the right and lend us might
Th'invader to repel.³⁸

Militaristic imagery became more intense by the end of the 1890s, at least partly due to rising tensions between Britain and the Boers of Southern Africa. Titles such as F.E. Dixon's "We'll Fight for the Grand Old Flag" (1897), and Joseph Gould's "Canadian Volunteer" (c. 1898-1901) (Fig. 7.4) reflect the gradual shift to a more pugnacious tone and a more global outlook on prospective conflict.³⁹ With the beginning of the Boer War, imperialist-nationalism exploded into an all-out language of warfare that continued unabated for the next twenty years. The South African conflict inspired a host of numbers, including "The Queen's Brave Canadians" (1900), "Bobs and Victory" (1900), "Canadians" (1901), and "He Sleeps in the Transvaal Tonight" (1902). Though the production of militaristic tunes decreased slightly after the 1902 ceasefire, it rose again by the end of the decade as the tension from the European arms race became increasingly palpable. Some songs, such as "Mother's Flag" (1911) invented a fictitious

³⁷James Walton Jackson, "England's Flag and Canada," arranged by Angelo M. Read (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1880), Amicus 5374578, LAC.

³⁸J. Davenport Kerrison, "God Preserve Our Native Land" (Toronto: I. Sucking & Sons, 1883), Amicus 5374591, LAC.

³⁹F.E. Dixon, "We'll Fight for the Grand Old Flag" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1897), Amicus 17315610, LAC; J.M. Gould, "Canadian Volunteer" (Toronto: Imperial Music Publishing House, c. 1898-1901), Amicus 5372197, LAC.

war in which the hero fought for Britain.⁴⁰ It would not have taken a large leap of imagination for the song's consumer to envision this war someday becoming real. A number of songs also addressed the *possibility* of war and a readiness to fight if European conflict did erupt. For instance, the narrators of "The Queen's Own" (1910) were soldiers "dress'd in rifle green" awaiting Britain's command.⁴¹ "For King George and Canada" (1912) agreed that all Canadians "adopted sons or home-born it may be;/ Will fight King George, for thee."⁴² Ravenor Bullen's irrepressibly witty "Johnny Canuck" (1910) interpreted the imperial duty in protective terms:

There's a silver-haired old lady in an Isle across the sea...
And Jack's the eldest grandson that she dangled on her knee...
And foes who threaten Grannie will find they have to buck Jack Canuck.⁴³

The music's major key, brisk march pace, and precise dotted rhythms projected once again an air of confidence at the prospect of battle. Such passages further support Carl Berger's claim that English Canadians did not see their imperial ties as a sign of submission. Here England appears as an elderly woman who, though symbolically important, is physically past her prime. Once a major force on the world stage, she is now content to watch her vigorous offspring come into their political inheritance. Meanwhile, "All that We Have We'll Hold" (1912) addressed the naval arms question head on:

New Zealand and Australia
They knew just what to do
They sent to her [Britain] some dreadnoughts
Why can't we send some too?⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Paul Heinrich, "Mother's Flag," lyrics by Dr. Charles H. Baltzer (Canada: C.H. Baltzer, 1911), Amicus 19719735, LAC.

⁴¹ Cameron Craig, "The Queen's Own," lyrics by A. Rose (Toronto: Nordheimer Piano and Music Co., 1910), Amicus 17086172, LAC.

⁴² Arthur A. Penn, "For King George and Canada," lyrics by Cecil E. Selwyn (Winnipeg: Mowbray S. Berkeley, 1912), Amicus 22493507, LAC.

⁴³ Ravenor Bullen, "Johnny Canuck," arranged by Albert Ham (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1910), Amicus 19446046, LAC.

These lyrics imply that imperial duty was not merely a matter of selfless sacrifice; it was also a matter of pride. According to Parsons, Canada possessed just as much valour as the other two colonies; moreover, it was the wealthiest. Clearly, it had an image to maintain.

Many of the militaristic airs from this later period consist of jovial marching songs either asserting or predicting glorious triumph in battle. “Bobs and Victory” (1900) gave a detailed account of British forces outsmarting “sly Cronje” and “old Kruger,” emphasizing the Canadian volunteers’ pivotal role in these developments.⁴⁵ In these sorts of pieces, Canadians’ success in battle naturally resulted from their bravery and determination: “You will never find our Jack/with a bullet in his back... He will conquer or he’ll die for the Empire.”⁴⁶ In songs such as “The Queen’s Brave Canadians” (1900), the imagery could be violently aggressive: “When you’re foremost in the fray/ Strike hard and fast, make your force tell,” it said.⁴⁷ This lyricist envisioned the violence as fierce, but not wanton. Rather, it constituted a means of gaining a swift victory in order to create peace, albeit on British rather than Boer terms.

Sheet music publishers could reinforce an imperial-nationalist message by carefully selecting artwork for the cover page. “Hail! Mighty Empire” (1913) showed a phalanx of six lions (representing the six allied nations) standing at attention with military hats and rifles.⁴⁸ “Sons of the Empire” (1900) featured a vivid display of military personnel in various uniforms: from cavalymen on horseback, to ceremonial highland guards in kilts

⁴⁴ J.C. Parsons, “All That We Have We’ll Hold” (Saint John, NB: J.C. Parsons, 1912), Amicus 21524308, LAC.

⁴⁵ F.H. Burt, “Bobs and Victory,” lyrics by T.W. McLean (Brantford, ON: Hurley & Watkins, 1900), Amicus 5363815, LAC.

⁴⁶ Frank B. Fenwick, “Canadian Jack” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1900), Amicus 17647099, LAC.

⁴⁷ William M. Wallace, “The Queen’s Brave Canadians,” arranged by W.E. Rosendale (St. John, NB: Maritime Steam Lithographic Co., 1900), Amicus 5378351, LAC.

⁴⁸ A.C. Murray, “Hail! Mighty Empire” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1913), Amicus 22138791, LAC.

and bearskin caps, to the khaki outfit and slouch hat worn in the hotter climes.⁴⁹ “But How— Can You Help It?” (1900) (Fig. 7.5) depicted a British soldier with a Boer hanging in mid-air from the tip of the soldier’s rifle. The soldier was smartly dressed in a red top and a kilt; the Boer, by contrast, appeared wild and dishevelled.⁵⁰ As an added touch of symbolism, a cartoon of Uncle Sam appeared at the bottom of the page. Though Sam held an American flag at his side, he carried the British flag in his cap, and extended a second Union Jack to the Boer.⁵¹ This image reflected the popular belief that Americans, in spite of their republicanism, still belonged to the Anglo-Saxon ‘race’ and might someday join Britain’s civilizing mission. Many believed that Canada would become the crucial intermediary in the orchestration of this historic reconciliation.⁵²

The second common narrative detailed the fate of the individual soldier going off to war. Mortally wounded in battle, he nonetheless had time to utter one last message before dying valiantly for his country. The music for these pieces tended to be more melodic and melancholy. Though major keys remained the order of the day, the songs featured plenty of chromatics (notes altered by a half-tone), a turn-of-the-twentieth-century musical trick for conveying pathos. “He Sleeps in the Transvaal Tonight” (1902) depicted a young soldier who implored his comrades to tell his mother that he “fell like a soldier brave.” His fellow soldiers buried him wrapped in the British flag. Though the text told of individual tragedy, it emphasized that the battle had been successful and

⁴⁹ Charles R. Palmer, “Sons of the Empire” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1900), Envelope 1 Box 11, CanSheet, McM.

⁵⁰ Though the illustrator is trying to show the superiority of the British forces, the rendering is not entirely stereotypical. The Boer farmers did, in fact, tend to be unkempt in their personal appearance. Jonathan Vance, written comments to author, December 12, 2013.

⁵¹ J. M. Gould, “But How— Can You Help It?” (Toronto: Imperial Music Publishing House, 1900), Amicus 19280031, LAC.

⁵² Berger, *Sense of Power*, 171; Sylvie Lascombe, “Imperial Loyalty: the English-Canadian Ideal of Christian Universality,” in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, ed. Colin M. Coates (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997), 187, 191.

therefore the soldier's sacrifice had not been in vain.⁵³ "Mother's Flag" (1911) followed a similar structure, though the flag imagery was even more overt. In this case, the dying boy told his comrades that his mother had given him a Union Jack and had told him to protect it at all costs. He asked them to return the flag to her "crimsoned with my life blood-stain." Once again, this personal loss hung in balance with collective triumph, since "ere I numbered with the fallen/ Mother's flag the victory won."⁵⁴

Granted, one must beware of interpreting the songs' imperial-nationalist visions too literally. Sheet music producers may or may not have been militant patriots, but they all saw imperial war as a topical theme that would generate consumer interest. They exaggerated certain details in order to market a more dramatic cultural product, and consumers likely recognized this. The songs nevertheless provide a glimpse of the sorts of images that piqued Canadians' interests and tugged at their heartstrings. Moreover, these depictions might have subtly influenced Canadians' attitudes over time. A consumer may have logically recognized that not every soldier would have time to utter memorable dying words. Still, this thought could have co-existed with a more irrational hope of being able to show similar bravery if the call came to fight.

The British Empire signified more than just the abstract images of monarch, flag, and soldier. For many English Canadians, the link to Britain was a sentimental one, the result of an "increasingly complex web of family, cultural, commercial, and professional

⁵³ J. Cecil Rolls, "He Sleeps in the Transvaal Tonight," lyrics by Irvine F. Bartlett (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1902), Amicus 22632674, LAC.

⁵⁴ Paul Heinrich, "Mother's Flag," lyrics by Charles H. Baltzer (Canada: C.H. Baltzer, 1911), Amicus 19719735, LAC. This song and others like it recall American Civil War era hits such as "For the Dear Old Flag I Die!" (1863) and "Give This To Mother" (1864). Charles K. Harris' "Break the News to Mother" (1897) is a later nineteenth-century example. Finson, *Voices that Are Gone*, (p. 97-98), argues that these types of songs became popular with Americans only when war was either present or imminent. I argue the reverse for Edwardian Canada, because of the country's imbrication in the militaristic imperial-nationalism.

networks” between the two countries.⁵⁵ Between 1900 and 1910, more than 800,000 British immigrants came to Canada and Newfoundland. Many of Canada’s more established residents had been born in Britain or had parents of that heritage. The historian Colin Coates stresses that these very “personal” links cannot be dismissed as nostalgic fancy, for relatives on either side of the ocean communicated frequently.⁵⁶ The music historian Dave Russell has found that many of the patriotic songs in the English music halls referred not to the newer colonies but to older ones such as Australia and Canada, since audiences had so many friends and relatives living there.⁵⁷ Canadian popular songs also commemorated this emotional bond. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* of May 1914 observed that the heightened levels of British immigration had resulted in a greater demand for songs reminding them of home.⁵⁸ Thus, George Sidwell’s “Hail Canada!” (1912) described a symbolic relationship between “O Maple Leaf, our emblem dear, by loving hands entwin’d,/ With Rose and Thistle, shamrock green, within our hearts enshrined.”⁵⁹ Lyricist Douglas Little also wrote of his longing for a white rose (the emblem of Yorkshire) as a metaphor for missing home.⁶⁰

In sum, these pieces cannot hope to provide a complete picture of imperial-nationalist sentiment in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. Canadian imperial-nationalism was a complex set of relations involving varying, even opposing

⁵⁵ Phillip Buckner, and R. Douglas Francis, *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 7.

⁵⁶ Colin Coates, “Introduction,” in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, ed. Colin Coates (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997), iii.

⁵⁷ Russell, *Popular Music*, 150.

⁵⁸ “Developing Canada’s Sheet and Book Music Trade,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 12 (May 1914): 31.

⁵⁹ George Sidwell, “Hail Canada!” (Hamilton, ON: Empire Music, 1912), Amicus 22957921, LAC.

⁶⁰ Douglas Little, “The White Rose” (Winnipeg: Yorkshire Society of Winnipeg, c. 1900), Amicus 21890474, LAC.

feelings towards Britain.⁶¹ They do, however, illuminate some aspects of an imperial ideal at work. Music publishers consciously tried to release works that audiences wanted to hear. The sheer proliferation of imperial-nationalist tunes from this era implies that a powerful demand did exist. Though it is impossible to discern which aspects consumers accepted or rejected, the imperial-national vision at least captured their imagination.

Our “Grand Canadian Land”: Popular Songs and Domestic Patriotism

As previously discussed, songwriters and their public did not consciously distinguish between imperial and national pride. National airs regularly invoked the Union Flag, the monarch, and British liberties in their stock inventories of the benefits the Dominion had to offer. Military marches and tragic soldiers’ tales seamlessly blended the idea that an imperial war protected the Canadian quality of life just as much as that of England. Nevertheless, distinct Canadian images manifested themselves alongside the broader imperial references. This content will be termed “domestic-nationalist,” emphasizing its role as a variant rather than an alternative to the “imperial-nationalist” material.

This English-Canadian domestic-national iconography was rooted in the natural world, the maple leaf being by far the most popular image. The maple leaf had become a recognized Canadian symbol in the 1840s, and Alexander Muir’s iconic tune “The Maple Leaf Forever” (1867) had further solidified the link. Muir’s song remained a fixture in sheet music collections for decades thereafter, printed in numerous editions of varying

⁶¹ Colin Coates, “Introduction,” vii.

designs and price ranges.⁶² Hoping to replicate Muir's success, numerous songwriters continued to invoke the maple leaf. "The Maple" (1894), "The Land of the Maple" (1895), "Land of the Waving Maple Leaf" (1896), "'Twill Help the Maple Leaf to Live" (1901), and "The Sugar Maple Tree" (c.1906) exemplify these efforts.⁶³ Some songs even referred to Canada as the "Maple Land."⁶⁴ Another common image was the Dominion's broad span from sea to sea. Clara Mountcastle's "Canada" (1906), for instance, praised "A land where the minions from shore unto shore, / Hear Pacific's soft sigh and Atlantic's loud roar."⁶⁵ Lyricists frequently combined a number of natural images of flowers, trees, hills, fields, lakes, and mountains in their descriptions:

I love the grand Canadian land
Each mountain, lake and river,
And where its stately forests stand
There I could live forever.⁶⁶

Canada's northern climate proved another a source of pride to inhabitants who thought that it tested their physical endurance and kept the civilization strong. Many English Canadians believed it to be one of the features that distinguished Canada from the more temperate, heavily industrialized nations. First articulated by Sir William

⁶² Allan Smith, *Canada: An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 268-269. See Envelope 2, Box 10, CanSheet, McM, for various editions of Muir's "Maple Leaf Forever."

⁶³ A.J. Gilmour, "The Maple," lyrics by William Wye Smith (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers' Association, 1894), Amicus 11131999, LAC; Collier Grounds, "The Land of the Maple," lyrics by J. Grant (Ottawa: J.L. Orme & Son, 1895), Amicus 5374397, LAC; Harry Herbert, "'Twill help the maple leaf to live," lyrics by William H. Firth (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1901), Amicus 19743395, LAC; Edmund Hodgkins, "The Sugar Maple Tree," lyrics by George Livingstone Dodds ([Winnipeg?]: s.n., c.1906), Amicus 19938986, LAC; Frederick L.H. Sims, "Land of the Waving Maple Leaf" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1896), Amicus 5375525, LAC.

⁶⁴ Reginald C. Steer, "I'm Coming Back to the Dear Old Maple Land" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1909), Amicus 23066704, LAC; George Hahn, "Maple Land: A Song of Canada," lyrics by Victor Lauriston (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1906), Amicus 19413710, LAC.

⁶⁵ Clara H. Mountcastle, "Canada," accompaniment by Carol E. Newcombe (Toronto: Anglo-American Music Co. Ltd., 1906), Amicus 22130192, LAC.

⁶⁶ George Neil, "Our Grand Canadian Land," lyrics by James Noble, arranged by John Burns Thomson (Canada: G. Neil, 1908), Amicus 22139074, LAC.

Hingston in his influential treatise *The Climate of Canada* (1884), the concept had become widely accepted by the turn of the twentieth century. As Canada's own industrial revolution began, anxious domestic-nationalists increasingly sought refuge in this northern myth.⁶⁷ "Men of the North" (1897) provides a vivid example of this fascination with the hardy climate, opening with a boastful challenge: "come if you dare to the Northman's lair."⁶⁸ Similarly, "God Save Canada" (1890) announced that:

Reared like a hardy child
Among the frost and wild,
For some great end;
Forest and waste untracked
Snow-deep and cataract,
Passes with glacier packed
Made her [Canada] their friend.⁶⁹

J.D. Edgar and G.H. Howard's "Canadian Camping Song" (1881) depicted a more nurturing wilderness, forming the backdrop to blissful abandon. In this rendering, "The wild woods of Canada,/ The boundless and free!" offered the ideal space in which to pitch their tent, swim, canoe, and paddle the day away.⁷⁰ Canada's natural resources offered more than just fodder for romantic imaginings. They also represented an economic boon for the young country:

Her mountains and valleys, her green shady bowers,
The hearts of Canadians thrill,
What mineral wealth, what resources are ours,
In forest, in river and rill.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Millar, *Painting the Map Red*, 8.

⁶⁸ H.H. Godfrey, "The Men of the North" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1897), Amicus 5372180, LAC.

⁶⁹ Sydney Perceval, "God Save Canada" (Montreal: Sabiston Lith. and Pub., c. 1890), Amicus 5283284, LAC.

⁷⁰ G.H. Howard, "Canadian Camping Song," lyrics by J.D. Edgar (Toronto: A. & S. Nordheimer, 1881), Envelope 2, Box 7, CanSheet, McM.

⁷¹ James Fax, "A Canadian's Toast," arranged by Arthur Blakeley (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1898), Amicus 5374320, LAC.

Farming formed another mainstay of the Canadian economy, and many patriotic songs evoked the country's prosperity in terms of agricultural bounty. In particular, lyricists praised the country's abundance of wheat. "Greater Canada" (1911), for instance, referred to Canada as a "land of sunshine and of sheaves," while "Our Grand Canadian Land" (1908) observed that "each spreading plain bears golden grain."⁷² Such elation came at least in part from recent improvements in agricultural production. It was not until the 1890s that growing wheat west of Manitoba became a profitable operation. The development of Marquis Wheat, a specimen that grew well in the prairie climate, in 1907 led to even more western farming. As a result of these and other innovations, grain prices boomed.⁷³ It is therefore no wonder that wheat became a primary symbol of Canada's "boundless land of plenty."⁷⁴

Canada's youthful vigour formed another recurring image in nationalist song literature. Robert Ambrose's "May God Preserve Thee Canada" (1886) proclaimed the Dominion a "child among the Nations," though a noble and deserving one. Canada could not claim a long list of achievements simply because its most exciting deeds lay in its future. Ambrose employed a hymn-like accompaniment, reinforcing the solemnity of these grand predictions.⁷⁵ The figure of Johnny Canuck represented the personification of Canada's youth. Johnny (also known as Jack Canuck) dated back to political cartoons from the Confederation era, yet he emerged with renewed prominence in popular songs at

⁷² Charlotte Bonnycastle, "Greater Canada" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1911), Amicus 16601985, LAC; George Neil, "Our Grand Canadian Land," lyrics by James Noble, arranged by John Burns Thomson, 2nd ed. (Canada: G. Neil, 1908), Amicus 22139074, LAC.

⁷³ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 63-64.

⁷⁴ Charlotte Bonnycastle, "Greater Canada" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1911), Amicus 16601985, LAC.

⁷⁵ R.S. Ambrose, "May God Preserve Thee Canada" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., n.d.), originally published by I. Sucking & Sons, 1886, Amicus 15624533, LAC.

the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁶ Johnny Canuck's outstanding features included youth, physical prowess, fair-mindedness, and bravery. His British lineage ensured that he loved freedom and respected the rules of fair play. Meanwhile, his North American upbringing gave him a spirit of enterprise, and a degree of bodily strength exceeding that of the average English gentleman. A frequent feature of militaristic war ditties ("You'll never find our Jack/ With a bullet in his back"),⁷⁷ Jack also appeared in songs during peacetime. According to Ravenor Bullen's 1910 song "Jack Canuck":

He's the sort you may rely on,
for his heart is true and kind,
He's as clean a living straight a man
as ever you will find[.]⁷⁸

Unlike their American counterparts, English Canadian patriotic songwriters commemorated historical heroes and political figures infrequently. Only a handful of songwriters depicted the increasingly distant War of 1812 by the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Although it is possible that topical political songs and dances may not have been preserved, the surviving evidence implies that only outstanding public figures inspired musical homage. John A. Macdonald proved one of the rare exceptions, appearing in songs such as "Sir John A. Macdonald Waltz," "Loyal Opposition Galop [*sic*]", and "Macdonald's Funeral March" (1891).⁸⁰

⁷⁶ John Robert Colombo, "Johnny Canuck," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/johnny-canuck> (accessed July 18, 2013).

⁷⁷ Frank B. Fenwick, "Canadian Jack" (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1900), Amicus 17647099, LAC. See also H.H. Godfrey, "Johnny Canuck's the Lad" (Toronto: Gourlay, Winter & Leeming, 1900), Amicus, 1916332, LAC.

⁷⁸ Ravenor Bullen, "Johnny Canuck," arranged by Albert Ham (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1910), Amicus 19446046, LAC.

⁷⁹ See for instance, Edwin Gledhill, "For Canada Fight," lyrics by Charles Mair (Toronto: A. & S. Nordheimer, 1886), Amicus 5372138, LAC; J. Doan Graham, "The Flag of Canada" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1899), Amicus 5372206, LAC. For the American literature see Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 17-25, 42-48.

⁸⁰ Charles Bohner, "Macdonald's Funeral March" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1891); Annie Douglas, "Sir John A. Macdonald Waltz" (Toronto: Strange & Co., 1882); "Loyal Opposition Galop [*sic*]" (Ottawa:

Idealistic and often wildly inaccurate, these patriotic pieces illustrate contemporary Canadians' impressions of what made their country unique. In this sense at least, one cannot reduce English-Canadian nationhood to a wistful imitation of Great Britain.

Cheering On the Old Boys: Local Composers and Civic Pride

Nationalism, whether of the imperial or domestic variety, was not the only public sentiment vying for expression. Songwriters also penned pieces relating to local events and landmarks. Whether out of civic pride or a practical attempt to appeal to a built-in market of local consumers, these pieces contributed to a contemporary culture of local self-promotion. Recent studies by John Walsh, Nancy Bouchier, and Don Wetherell, have argued for a thriving sense of pride in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Canadian small towns. Walsh analyses local commemorative practices as acts of "inscription," whereby historical narratives and identities for the town were forged. The cultural texts produced as a result of these activities functioned as prescriptive as well as didactic sources. They not only depicted the community as one wished it to be; they also attempted "to educate the eye and also frame the meaning of what people saw and experienced in the landscape before they saw (or in some cases re-encountered) it."⁸¹ In such depictions, everyday town spaces became "historically meaningful," as the industrial, commercial, political, and social doings of previous generations were configured as brave steps on a

J.L. Orme & Son, c.1874-1878), all in Sir John A. Macdonald Song Sheets, Box MU2182, Music Collection 1877-1910, F1065, AO.

⁸¹ John C. Walsh, "Performing Public Memory and Re-Placing Home in the Ottawa Valley, 1900-1958," in *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*, ed. James Opp and John C. Walsh (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 29.

teleological march of progress.⁸² Nancy Bouchier's study of public holidays focuses on the class politics that underwrote official occasions. While purporting to represent the entire community, public events (and by extension, dominant historical narratives) in fact promoted the values of the middle-class elite.⁸³ Donald G. Wetherell focuses on boosterism, showing how efforts in Alberta before the Great War highlighted modernity and industry, resulting in a depiction of towns "as cities in waiting."⁸⁴

Composers of solo instrumental music had a relatively easy task, since they did not need to write, find, or commission lyrics referencing their particular community. A title, a dedication, and a cover page illustration of a local landmark would be sufficient to demonstrate civic intent and fan the flames of local pride. Roberta Geddes-Harvey of Guelph dedicated her 1883 composition "O.A.C. Polka" to the city's Ontario Agricultural College. Though nothing in the jolly melody distinguishes it as local in origin, the cover page featured an etching of the college buildings. Charles Bohner's "Sounds of Toronto Waltz" (1890) and Maxime Heller's "The Queen City Waltz" (1910) are similarly indistinguishable from the thousands of other waltzes written during this period. Their titles, however, gave them a local mystique, a novelty for an audience accustomed to American and British musical imports.⁸⁵ Songwriters had the more difficult task of

⁸² Ibid., 40.

⁸³ Nancy B. Bouchier, *For the Love of the Game: Amateur Sport in Small-Town Ontario, 1838-1895* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), ch. 2.

⁸⁴ Donald G. Wetherell, "Making New Identities: Alberta Small Towns Confront the City, 1900-1950," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2005): 176. Wetherell defines boosterism narrowly as "the promotion and encouragement at the local level of social cohesion and purpose around the goal of economic growth," (182).

⁸⁵ Charles Bohner, "Sounds of Toronto Waltz" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1890), Envelope 1, Box 3, CanSheet, McM; B. Geddes [Roberta Geddes-Harvey], "O.A.C. Polka" (Toronto: Strange & Co., 1883), 987.62.324, Box A13, GCM; Maxime Heller, "The Queen City Waltz" (Toronto: Hawkes & Harris Music Co., 1910), Amicus 19507028, LAC.

matching appropriate lyrics to their melodies, but committed souls such as Wilfred Traher, composer of three songs celebrating London, Ontario, proved equal to the task.⁸⁶

Though local-themed pieces could appear on the scene at any time, their number intensified during events such as carnivals, exhibitions, and Old Boys' reunions. Whether by inspiration or calculation, local musical tributes proliferated at these sorts of proceedings. B. Arthur composed the "Hamilton Carnival March and Two-Step" for the Old Boys' Reunion in August 1903, while bandmaster H. Restorff wrote the "Elmira Reunion March and Two-Step" for Elmira's Old Boys' event that same month. Wilfred Traher produced the song "Jolly London Old Boys" for the city's reunion festivities of 1905.⁸⁷ Publishers sometimes involved themselves as well. Whaley, Royce, and Company printed and distributed complimentary copies of Louis Sekinger's "Toronto Exposition March" (1899) in order to commemorate the heady climate of the summer trade fair. Such efforts were not entirely philanthropic; the visitors who grabbed a copy would have found advertisements for the publisher's wares within.⁸⁸

Other local compositions focused on boosterism rather than commemoration. While their self-congratulatory tone appealed to the existing community members fortunate enough to live in such a marvelous town or city, these pieces mainly attempted to demonstrate the area's worth to outsiders. In doing so, they hoped to attract inhabitants as well as investment from wealthy industrialists. C.L. Graves, for instance, composed

⁸⁶ Wilfred Traher, "The Jolly London Old Boys" (London, ON: Traher Music Co., 1905); Traher, "London" (London, ON: Traher Music Co., 1905); Traher, "They All Say London" (London, ON: W.C. Traher, 1908), all in Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

⁸⁷ B. Arthur, "Hamilton Carnival March and Two-Step" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1903), Amicus 15867455, LAC; H. Restorff, "Elmira Reunion March and Two-Step" (Elmira: H. Restorff, 1903), File 5, CanSheet 3rd Accrual, McM; Wilfred Traher, "The Jolly London Old Boys" (London, ON: Traher Music Co., 1905), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

⁸⁸ Louis Sekinger, "Toronto Exposition March" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1899), Amicus 5375599, LAC.

“Come to London” (1910) for the local Booster Club. The music featured a cover page as well as three additional pages resplendent with black and white photographs of city’s public buildings and parkland. The text deftly balanced images of urban exploits and natural beauty, in an attempt to appeal to both manufacturers and prospective residents. The lyrics affirmed that despite “Babbling brooks and shady trees,”

We manufacture everything
That’s ever used by man—
There’s nothing that we cannot do,
Now beat that if you can.
For London is a wonder
In a hundred thousand ways;
A city of great beauty,
And Industry that pays.⁸⁹

Graves employed a rollicking long-short rhythm throughout the song’s verses, creating a sense of brisk movement, before rolling out declamatory long notes for the chorus.

For larger industrial cities facing crowding and squalor by the turn of the twentieth century, promotional songs represent masterpieces of euphemism and evasion. These cities did not need to cajole industrialists with promises of manufacturing prowess; thus musicians could focus more exclusively on the pastoral splendours within their midst. “Toronto Town” (1912) contained only a few oblique references to city life. The phrase “come along and join our throng” suggested the image of a crowd, and the cover page featured a drawing of Queen’s Park and buildings along the lakefront. The piece, however, contained no other urban references. It employed the terms ‘city’ and ‘town’ interchangeably, and the description of Toronto’s environment restricted itself to the healthful weather:

⁸⁹ C.L. Graves, “Come to London” (London, ON: C.L. Graves, 1910), Amicus 19322942, LAC. For other examples of early twentieth-century boosters emphasizing a region’s modern identity see Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), ch. 1; Walsh, “Performing Public Memory,” 30.

Come when the springtime's in the air,
 Come in the autumn's glow.
 Come in the winter weather fair,
 Come when summer breezes blow.⁹⁰

The irrepressible H.H. Godfrey added his own contribution to the city's musical canon with "'Toronto:' or 'The Pride of the North'" in 1898. Godfrey described a pastoral city "Where smiles the lake 'neath a sky ever blue,/Where blooms the maple tree."⁹¹

It is impossible to say whether such lofty commendations resulted in either increased population or capital investment. Given the small circulation of all but the most successful Canadian compositions, it seems unlikely that these songs would have reached a large or diverse audience. Even so, local compositions played an important role within their communities. Boasting of a town's glory to current inhabitants was in some ways preaching to the choir, yet it helped focus a vague pride in community accomplishments into distinct images, catchy rhymes, and a hummable tune. Moreover, it constituted a highly participatory form of civic culture. Local tunes gave people music to play and sing, letting them perform their civic pride in an active manner.

Exotic Airs: Depictions of Ethnic and Racial 'Otherness'

English-Canadian identity, whether expressed at the imperial, national, or local level, ultimately rested on ethnic foundations. Anglo-Canadians proudly identified as members of the British 'race.' Implicit in their sense of belonging was an acute awareness of those who did not belong, the 'Others' who threatened Canada's self-appointed destiny as a British nation. These sorts of concerns proved particularly relevant at the turn of the

⁹⁰John G. Strathdee, "Toronto Town" (Charles E. Musgrave & Brother, 1912), Amicus 23004349, LAC.

⁹¹H.H. Godfrey, "'Toronto:' or 'The Pride of the North'" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1898), Amicus 5374387, LAC. See also A.E.J. McCreary, "On the Road to Montreal," lyrics by Max See (Sherbrooke: Page Printing and Binding Co., n.d.), Amicus 22047493, LAC.

twentieth century, as immigrants flocked in unprecedented numbers to Canada's shores. Meanwhile, the continued (though segregated) presence of the Aboriginal population served as an unpleasant reminder that European claims to North American territory may not have been as absolute as they appeared.

English-Canadian songwriters' musical depictions of ethnic and racial 'Others' reveal much about the mindset of a community that feared the influence of foreigners. Songwriters romanticized the immigrant experience of favoured groups such as the Scots and, to a lesser degree, the Irish. By contrast, songwriters discursively silenced unwanted groups in Canada by either portraying them as exotics in distant locales (African-Americans, Asians, and Aboriginals) or ignoring them completely (Eastern and Southern Europeans). In doing so, songwriters occluded entire histories of immigration and settlement or, in the case of Aboriginals, a lengthier narrative of colonial encounters. Popular songs were therefore complicit in the Anglo-Canadian imperial project, reinforcing messages about belonging and not belonging, Britishness and 'otherness' at the level of domestic leisure.⁹²

By and large, songwriters seemed ambivalent about the spike in immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. Ravenor Bullen's "Johnny Canuck" (1910) indicated that immigrants were welcome within certain parameters: "And every law abiding man who does not mean to shirk, / Jack welcomes him with outstretched hand: There's land for all to work." By contrast, Canada would not put up with loafers who reaped the benefits of its prosperity without doing anything concrete in return: "For they're the kind of people that this country ought to chuck, says Jack Canuck." Jack listed the English, the

⁹² For an argument regarding the Victorian cult of domesticity and imperialism as intertwined and mutually constitutive, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 34-36.

Irish, the Scottish, the French, and the Dutch as the groups that had come together to become Canadians, implying that other ethnic groups would have had a more difficult time qualifying.⁹³ “Men of the North” (1900) also specified the racial lineage of those best suited to the country’s climate: “for we have the brain and the brawn and the blood/ of the Saxon and the Celt and the Gaul.”⁹⁴ This passage reflected a longstanding argument that non-white peoples from the warmer parts of the globe could not physically adapt to Canada’s cold conditions.⁹⁵

Given the hierarchical racial models of the day, it is no surprise that Scottish songs provided the most positive ethnic stereotypes. Scottishness appealed to the mainstream Canadian population because it offered both familiar and exotic elements. Its members were white inhabitants of the British Isles, yet their Celtic origins gave them a rare romantic quality. Many Scottish-style songs tried to invoke this folk aspect by writing the lyrics in dialect or by describing the Scottish landscape. Any borrowings were purely textual, however. The music itself retained English concepts of major-minor harmony instead of the modal inflections of the Celtic tradition. At most, songwriters introduced a few pseudo-Celtic elements such as the so-called ‘Scottish snap’ (short-long) rhythm.⁹⁶

Canadian songwriters penning ‘Scottish’ tunes usually focused upon a wayfarer’s longing for his or her birthplace. “Canada and the Motherland” (1913) for instance described a Scottish emigrant who missed “The mountains, glens and heath clad hills/

⁹³ Ravenor Bullen, “Johnny Canuck,” arranged by Albert Ham (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1910), Amicus 19446046, LAC.

⁹⁴ H. H. Godfrey, “The Men of the North” (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1900), Amicus 5372180, LAC.

⁹⁵ Contemporaries also believed that non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants’ tendency towards “mental defectiveness” posed a significant threat to the nation’s racial health. See Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885-1945* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 46-47, 51.

⁹⁶ In doing so, Canadian composers were following an established practice in nineteenth-century England whereby songwriters adapted Scottish, Irish, and Welsh ‘folk’ songs to English aesthetic standards. For more information, see Finson, *Voices that are Gone*, 278-282; Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, ch. 4.

The brier and hawthorne tree.”⁹⁷ Wilfrid Mills and Laura Lemon’s “My Ain Folk” (1904) used dialect to inject a bit of ethnic flair into the narration:

Far frae my home I wander;
But still my thoughts return
To my ain folk over yonder,
In the sheiling by the burn.⁹⁸

Lemon’s other Scottish tune, “My Ain Love and My Dearie” (1900), was one of the few popular songs written in the plaintive minor key.⁹⁹ Lemon likely thought that the minor key’s darker tones provided a handy substitute for the modal Celtic scales and the drone of a lonely bagpipe.

Irishness represented a more complicated entity in the popular imagination. Ireland was one of the British Isles, yet its native population lived as a colonised people, ruled by the British government as represented by the Anglo-Irish landholding nobility. Ireland’s emigrant population had moreover suffered discrimination over the nineteenth century for its Catholic faith and impoverished living conditions. Ireland’s integration into these turn-of-the-twentieth-century migrant songs of longing signifies a gradual transition towards sympathetic popular depictions of Irish ethnicity and culture. Once again, songwriters shrank from incorporating any modal inflections of the Celtic musical heritage. Lyrics and the occasional pseudo-Celtic flourish provided all that was needed to ignite the consumer’s imagination.

Ireland often appeared in these songs personified as a beloved woman. The narrator of “Irish Eyes” (1909) described the fair Colleen, an ocean away in Ireland,

⁹⁷ John Adamson, “Canada and the Motherland,” lyrics by Isabella B. Watson (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1913), Amicus 15214738, LAC.

⁹⁸ Laura Lemon, “My Ain Folk,” lyrics by Wilfrid Mills (Toronto: Boosey & Co., c. 1904), Amicus 21880504, LAC.

⁹⁹ Laura Lemon, “My Ain love and my dearie,” lyrics by Ian MacDonald (London: Joseph Williams Ltd., 1900), Amicus 5283207, LAC.

whose deep blue eyes told him to work hard until they could be reunited. Ostensibly about missing an absent sweetheart, Colleen served as a metaphor for Ireland herself, her eyes resembling the blue of the sky and lakes.¹⁰⁰ R.A. Brennan's "Sheela: Irish Ballad" (1897) pursued an identical theme, though it explained the social hardship faced by Irish peoples: "Had I stay'd in ould Ireland, my earnings were small/ Ye know how I strived hard to keep myself near ye/ But success never came to your Barney at all." Barney's love for Sheela similarly represented a thinly disguised love for his homeland. When he finally earned enough money for Sheela to join him, he asked her: "And when you come bring a sod of the Shamrock/ As an emblem of Love from Erin's green shore."¹⁰¹

A few stereotypical Irish depictions persisted during this era. The gentler ones depicted a jolly lot of loafers who loved nothing better than to dance and sing. "Rise it Reilly" (1881), for instance, described a ruckus evening of seamy earthly pleasures:

A few nate words of blarney,
To some bright buxom lass,
A few clean swigs of poteen,
Wiout the aid of glass;
And soon the shrieks of music,
Their notes of warnin' ring,
When up and at it once again,
They dance and wildly sing.¹⁰²

In 1911, Cora B. Ahrens of Stratford, Ontario, wrote a song about Paddy, a cheerful and charismatic man but also an indolent one. He fell in love with a girl named Kathleen Mavoureen who initially refused to wed him, but eventually succumbed to his roguish

¹⁰⁰ John G. Strathdee, "Irish Eyes" (Toronto: A.H. Goetting, 1909), Amicus 23004210, LAC.

¹⁰¹ R.A. Brennan, "Sheela: Irish Ballad" (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers' Association, 1897), Amicus 11252822, LAC.

¹⁰² Charles Connolly, "Rise it Reilly" (Toronto: Toronto News Company, 1881), Amicus No. 5282520, LAC.

charms.¹⁰³ As late as 1904, one could still find the occasional racist cover illustration featuring an Irish ragamuffin with patched clothing, a lyre, and an almost bestial expression on his degenerate face.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, these sort of negative depictions dwindled over time, as the folk appeal of Ireland as a land of green pastures and sweet song emerged as a greater commercial draw.

Canadian song producers may also have been inspired by the sympathetic Irish portrayals in American songs of the day. Tin Pan Alley publishers sought a mass market, and knew that they could not afford to alienate particular ethnic groups.¹⁰⁵ The Irish-Catholic community's growing acculturation likely provided another reason for the shift. As the historian Mark McGowan has shown, Toronto's Irish Catholics underwent a transformation between 1887 and 1922, as they began to embrace English-Canadian culture, in negotiation with their Catholic faith. The city of Toronto, in turn, shed its mid-nineteenth-century reputation for sectarian strife in favour of a more harmonious Catholic-Protestant relationship.¹⁰⁶ This growing sense of co-operation may be seen in the song "For St. Patrick's Day" (1904). Lyricist Henry Arthur Mannix and composer Rev. L. Cochin dedicated the piece to their fellow Irishmen "of All Ranks & Creeds." The lyrics of the third verse affirmed "May we love one another, whatever our creed,/"

¹⁰³ Cora B. Ahrens, "Paddy from Cork" (New York: Ted Snyder Co., 1911), Envelope 2, Box 1, CanSheet, McM.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Kahn, "The Irish Minstrel" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1904), Amicus 21257827, LAC. For other racist Irish depictions in popular songs, see William H.A. Williams, "From Lost Land to Emerald Isle: Ireland and the Irish in American Sheet Music, 1800-1920," *Eire-Ireland* 26, no. 1 (1991): 27-34.

¹⁰⁵ Finson, *Voices that are Gone*, 307-308. See also Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 159.

¹⁰⁶ Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion, series 2, ed. Donald Harman Akenson (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 3-7, 11.

And never see one of our own in sad need.” The fifth verse went on to encourage fellowship not only to the Irish but also to all peoples needing God’s love.¹⁰⁷

Less favoured minority groups continued to face discriminatory portrayals. Racist depictions of African-Americans dated back to the late eighteenth century, becoming more prominent with the emergence of blackface minstrel entertainment after 1828. The minstrel genre bequeathed two character stereotypes: the simple country bumpkin who is cheerful despite his life of servitude, and the more ambitious yet equally foolish “urban dandy.” Minstrel entertainments began a long, gradual decline at the end of the nineteenth century, as burlesque and vaudeville began their ascent. Even so, white performers continued to don blackface for minstrel-style numbers within the larger variety theatre productions.¹⁰⁸ In Ontario, a region slow at embracing the newest American theatre trends, touring minstrel shows remained popular until the First World War and amateur groups continued to use blackface well into the 1920s.¹⁰⁹

The 1880s and 1890s witnessed a fad in America for a type of composition called the ‘coon song.’ Coon songs were a forerunner of ragtime, originating from African-American musicians plying their trade in saloons and other commercial entertainment spaces. Despite their racist lyrics and cover illustrations, the music proved quite inventive, featuring insistent rhythms and free-style lyrics.¹¹⁰ In the 1890s alone, Tin Pan Alley publishers released over six hundred coon songs, making them the bestselling song genre for their time. As Marian Klamkin rightly argues, however distasteful to twenty-

¹⁰⁷ Rev. L. Cochran, “For St. Patrick’s Day,” lyrics by Henry Arthur Mannix (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1904), Amicus 16988522, LAC.

¹⁰⁸ Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 69-71.

¹⁰⁹ David Gardner, “Variety,” in *Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 131.

¹¹⁰ Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 182. For more on the lyrical inventiveness of ‘coon songs’ and ‘rags’ see Philip Furia, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America’s Great Lyricists*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26-34.

first century sensibilities, these songs speak volumes about the musical and racial culture of the turn of the twentieth century. ‘Coon song’ literature resulted in a slew of popular titles such as “All Coons Look Alike to Me,” “Coon! Coon! Coon!” and “My Coal Black Lady.”¹¹¹ These compositions travelled north of the border, where Ontarians such as A. Allan Jones, avidly purchased and performed them as comic fare.¹¹² By the first decade of the twentieth century, the genre faded in favour of ragtime, a new type of tune that pushed the envelope even further with its bright, syncopated rhythms.¹¹³ Canadian composers did not write as many ‘coon songs’ as their American counterparts. They did, however, write several ragtime works for piano. Many of these airs, such as “Rag Time Cadets,” and “Ragtime Spasm,” featured racist images on the cover as a way to advertise the composer’s use of the new ‘ragged’ syncopated rhythms. Alternately, those without the publishing budget for cover art could invoke race in a title, such as “The Darkie’s Dream.” This piece combined hints of syncopation into a lovely F major melody that bore traces of Stephen Foster’s iconic song “Oh Susanna” of 1848.¹¹⁴ Invariably, songwriters imagined their African-American characters within a rural Southern setting. Their habit likely resulted from an attempt to mimic a highly popular and distinctly American musical genre.¹¹⁵ It also, however, reveals something about subconscious notions of what it meant to be Canadian. These African-Americans were caricatures living

¹¹¹ Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 90-91; Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 186-187.

¹¹² The name A. Alan Jones is written on the cover of many of the ‘coon songs’ in Box MU2183, Music Collection 1877-1910, F1065, AO.

¹¹³ Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music*, 90; Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 186-187.

¹¹⁴ W.H. Hodgins, “A Rag Time Spasm” (Toronto: Amey & Hodgins, 1899), Envelope 2, Box 7, CanSheet, McM; G.L. Lansing, “The Darkie’s Dream,” arranged by Emma R. Steiner (s.n., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 8, CanSheet, McM; John Martin, “Ragtime Cadets” (Toronto: A. Cox & Co., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

¹¹⁵ For more on the antebellum South as a powerful postbellum cultural reference, see Lee Glazer and Susan Key, “Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture,” *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996): 1-24.

in a far off region. They were not the escaped slaves and descendants of slaves living in pockets of Southwestern Ontario. In short, African Americans represented a distant folksy imagining rather than a real group within their midst.¹¹⁶

Less vicious but still problematic were the stereotypical depictions of eastern cultures. Giving a piece an oriental theme provided a touch of exoticism as well as some way of differentiating one's composition from the piles of other waltzes and love songs. Such orientalist trappings proved superficial, however. The lyrics denoted a setting in Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Middle East, but the music remained rooted in European harmonies. "Oriental Waltzes," for instance, featured a cover illustration of a handsome Arab woman in a headdress, slippers, and weighty jewels, strumming a harp while burning incense. The music replicated the sounds of a European waltz, with the occasional G# accidental providing the only remote hint of non-western music.¹¹⁷

The few examples of Chinese or Japanese characters in Canadian popular song literature were invariably young, attractive females. This may have been a tactic to entice consumers with depictions of female beauty, but it also coincides with notions of non-European races as 'feminized' or lower on the evolutionary ladder.¹¹⁸ The female figures appeared dainty and occasionally heroic, but they always stopped short of intruding too far upon the Anglo-Canadian consciousness. The action always took place far off in the mythical Far East. In doing so, songwriters avoided engaging with the uncomfortable

¹¹⁶ Hamilton and London each harboured a small yet visible African-Canadian community. See T. Melville Bailey, *Hamilton: Chronicle of a City* (Windsor, ON: Windsor Publications, 1983), 44-45; Orlo Miller, Miriam Wright, Edward Phelps, and Glen C. Phillips, *London 200: An Illustrated History* (London, ON: London Chamber of Commerce, 1992), 21, 44, 66.

¹¹⁷ W.H. Hodgins, "Oriental Waltzes" (Toronto: Amey & Hodgins, 1898), Envelope 2, Box 7, CanSheet, McM. Orientalist themes proliferated in Western popular culture during this time, as exemplified by Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904) and Frederic Norton and Oscar Asche's musical comedy *Chu Chin Chow* (1916).

¹¹⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 44.

prospect of Chinese and Japanese immigrants on Canadian soil.¹¹⁹ “A Geisha Maiden” (1906) for instance told the tale of a beautiful Japanese woman who gallantly gave up both brothers and sweetheart to fight in a war against Russia.¹²⁰ “Little China Maid” (1907) took the form of a courtship set in the Orient. It introduced the outré notion of miscegenation by relating the story of an English man proposing to a Chinese lady during his travels. Even more subversively, the suitor intended to take her home with him to be his wife.¹²¹ The cover illustration, however, mediated this threat to racial purity by featuring a woman with distinctly Caucasian facial features (Fig. 7.6). The music portrayed similar tactics of carefully contained exoticism. The introduction used a sequence of chords evoking the open, hollow sound of oriental music. After few bars, the piece switched to mainstream Euro-Canadian harmonies and continued in that vein.¹²²

Similar tactics of image manipulation occurred in the song “My Fairy Iceberg Queen,” detailing a romance between an explorer-narrator on a whaling boat, and his sweetheart “Miss Esquimaou.” The jocular lyrics described a courtship oscillating between traditional indigenous activities (such as harpooning) and cultural assimilation (“I will teach her how to sing/Do the sword and Highland fling”). The cover illustration, however, showed the image of a lovely white woman, her flawless skin set against the setting sun and the icebergs behind her. Indeed, the visual references to winter and ice

¹¹⁹ For more on turn-of-the-twentieth-century Chinese and Japanese immigration and the racist political reaction their arrival occasioned, see Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

¹²⁰ Wilson MacDonald, “A Geisha Maiden” (Toronto: Pugsley, Dinman & Co., 1906), Envelope 1, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

¹²¹ For the threat of miscegenation see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), ch. 4.

¹²² W. Francis Firth, “Little China Maid” (Toronto: Canadian-American Music Co, 1907), Envelope 4, Box 5, CanSheet, McM.

only emphasized a racial notion of skin as white as snow (Fig. 7.7).¹²³ Once again, the threat of miscegenation had been safely diffused.

“My Fairy Iceberg Queen” was only one of a number of Canadian popular songs depicting Aboriginal peoples. As the musicologist Jon W. Finson has argued in the American context, popular songwriters tended to portray Aboriginals in a relatively benign light compared to the crude depictions of Indian villainy circulating in penny dreadfuls of the day. Unlike African-Americans, Aboriginal popular song characters did not appear as comic figures. They were human beings capable of experiencing love and longing. At the same time, songwriters indulged in stock renderings such as the noble savage heading a dying race whose sufferings were lamentable yet unavoidable given their inability to adapt to modern life.¹²⁴ Canadian popular songwriters supported these stereotypes. Their Aboriginal-themed songs usually revolved around the loveliness of an Indian maid, situating the action in a timeless land of primordial forests, bonfires, teepees, and birch bark canoes. Wilson Macdonald’s “An Indian Ballade” for example described the doomed love affair between a young maiden and a brave chief living in a mythic “Land of the nevermore.” The Indian maid was lovely, but also something of a trusting “child” for believing the promises of her lover. Her chief went away to war, only to return some years later with a new bride. The scorned maiden died of a broken heart, leaving her chieftain to mourn over her grave before he too expired.¹²⁵ Part melodrama, this romance relied upon notions of a race governed by hot passions. Subsisting from the

¹²³ Joseph F. Lamb and Murray Wood, “My Fairy Iceberg Queen” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1910), Envelope 4, Box 8, CanSheet, McM.

¹²⁴ Finson, *Voices that Are Gone*, 268-269. For more on contemporary imaginings of Aboriginals see Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹²⁵ Wilson Macdonald, “An Indian Ballade” (Toronto: Pugsley, Dingman & Co., n.d.), Envelope 1, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

spoils of hunting and war, the tribe's nomadic lifestyle appeared inimical to stable relationships. The song's silences moreover imply that a Christian marriage could have protected the woman from the uncertain fate of a common-law wife. References to "War song, and yell, and laughter," then later "Chantings and sobbings wild," give an image of tribal rituals both strange and primitive.¹²⁶ Exoticism also appeared in the musical score itself; while devoid of any Aboriginal music influences, Macdonald set the song in a minor key. The d minor key signature created a dark tone while the solid triads in the left hand provided sustained notes like a funeral dirge. Another song, "Squanto" (1910), reiterated the need for Christian marriage. In it, a more worldly maiden insisted that her Indian lover conform to Western courtship rules:

Squanto, if you really love me
and you want me for your wife,
Kneel and swear as white men do,
for better or worse you're mine for life;
Squanto, I am not deceiving,
noble white man comes to woo,
If you want your dusky sweetheart,
you must learn to bill and coo.¹²⁷

The composer wrote the verse and the chorus in short, declamatory, even rhythms, as if imitating a chant (Squ-anto-if-you-real-ly-love-me). The verse employed a minor key, once again for a bit of exotic flair, and perhaps indicating the maiden's deeper worries about the constancy of her lover. The piece shifted to a graceful major key for the chorus, implying that the maiden's worries were over once Squanto agreed to abide by the provisions laid out for him. C.L. Graves' "Indian Maid" (1919) presented the tale of a male narrator making a declaration of love to his lady of "pretty sunburnt shade." The

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ruth Dingman, "Squanto," lyrics by Murray Wood (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1910), Envelope 4, Box 14, CanSheet, McM.

chorus lyrics exemplified some of the facile images of ‘Indianness’ in what was actually a conventional song of Western-style courtship:

In birchen bark canoe
I’ll sail away with you
Across the ocean blue
To a cosy little tee-pee new
Just made for me and you.¹²⁸

The narrator’s race is never stated; the reference to an ocean implies an explorer from afar, but the lyric seems more of a throwaway line given the unlikelihood of a birch bark canoe being fit for a transatlantic journey. While the narrator envisioned a happy life in their tee-pee, Western bourgeois ideals ultimately predominated with the idea of a “cosy” marital home devoid of extended family or communal living arrangements. Graves briefly invoked Aboriginal musical traditions when he mentioned a “dance called the Indian prance/ with tum tum beat.”¹²⁹ His music was, however, indistinguishable from other chipper love songs of the day. Indeed, his song even employed a bit of ragtime syncopation, giving it more in common with African-American musical influences than Aboriginal ones. Another song “Hiawatha” similarly portrayed the feelings of male narrator pledging his love for his Indian “woodland queen.” The image of a birch canoe appeared here too, as a metaphor for smooth transportation down the river of wedded bliss.¹³⁰ The music did not deviate from a jaunty Western major key. Nothing, save the lyrics, distinguished this piece from other romance songs of the era.

These songs about Scots, the Irish, African-Americans, Asians, and Aboriginals used stereotypical notions of ethnic difference to give a particular song a bit of exotic

¹²⁸ C.L. Graves, “Indian Maid” (London, ON: C.L. Graves, 1919), Envelope 2, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Neil Moret, “Hiawatha,” lyrics by James O’Dea (Listowel, ON: Morris, Field Rogers Co., n.d.), Envelope 2, Box 10, CanSheet, McM.

flair. Stock images appeared in the lyrics, though rarely in the music since the tunes still needed to appeal to mainstream consumers. While songwriters indulged in poetic depictions of immigrants hailing from the British Isles, they failed to address the prospect of non-white races on Canadian soil, mixing with Anglo-Canadian people. Such lack of engagement reveals the discomfort of English-Canadians during a time when their pristine visions of a white man's country were increasingly being challenged. The popular songs' carefully contained exoticism also indicates an attempt to manipulate, control, and consume images of ethnic Others for the purposes of diversion. As such, these songs ultimately demonstrate colonial powers of inscription.

This survey of imperial nationalism, domestic nationalism, local pride, and ethnic 'otherness' has argued that popular songs can provide insight about ways in which English-Canadians defined a sense of community. Popular songs, though intended for home consumption, were nonetheless imbricated in important political, social, and cultural discourses of their day. The next chapter continues with this theme by looking at parlour songs' treatment of the stages in a family's life cycle, from birth and courtship through to darker themes such as old age and death.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE:

POPULAR SONGS AND THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE, 1880-1913

In addition to broader matters of English-Canadian identity, songwriters looked inwards to the private realm of family, faith, and leisure. In doing so, they cast light on a pivotal period of transition, as mid-Victorian orthodoxies came up against the new technologies and social mores of a modern, industrial age. Some contemporaries interpreted these changes as enhanced freedoms; for others, the novelties betokened uncertainty and doubt.¹ These twin themes of excitement and concern weave throughout the era's popular song repertoire. They are particularly noticeable in the genre's treatment of the various stages of the life cycle. An investigation of themes of youthful leisure, courtship, religion, family, and home demonstrate some of the challenges contemporaries encountered as old patterns of living and loving began to wear and stretch. As prescriptive sources, popular songs did not disparage fun and entertainment, particularly during youth.² They did,

¹ Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 30, 338.

² For popular songs as prescriptive sources, see Petra Meyer-Frazier, "Music, Novels, and Women: Nineteenth-Century Prescriptions for an Ideal Life," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*

however, emphasize responsibility towards society, family, and ultimately to God. True happiness lay in balancing the pleasures of the one with the needs of the other. The narratives may have been trite and the solutions proposed simple ones; nevertheless, they show the ideals and the anxieties propelling a society during a time of great change.

The Pleasures of Youth: Songs of Sport, Leisure, and Amusement

Since amateur music making constituted a leisure pursuit, it is not surprising that songwriters penned a number of tunes on the subject of fun and merrymaking. Bicycling inspired the greatest number of musical tributes. While velocipede or ‘boneshaker’ bicycles in Canada dated as far back as 1869, consumers began to pay attention only after the introduction of the (relatively) more comfortable highwheeler or ‘penny farthing’ model in 1878. Soon, the country boasted numerous male cycling clubs. The introduction of the safety bicycle in the late 1880s and early 1890s prompted women to participate in the cycling craze as well.³ Many songwriters dedicated their compositions to local cycling clubs, likely hoping that its members would form a captive market for the piece. Cycling was particularly suited to musical treatment because composers could employ a 6/8 time signature, which created a sense of circular, perpetual motion in the keyboard accompaniment. Occasionally, composers switched to a slower 3/4 waltz time for the

10 (2006): 47.

³ Glen Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3, 15-17, 30-33, 58. Norcliffe observes that cycling was a middle-class activity during the late nineteenth century; the drop in prices after 1900 gave it popular democratic associations thereafter (31, 187-188).

chorus, as if to show that a bicycle rider could either pedal fast or coast gracefully on his or her instrument of choice.⁴

Bicycling particularly appealed to the younger generation, since it provided an opportunity for exercise and socialization.⁵ Lyricists enticed this audience by stressing that cyclists cut a very fine figure as they rode. One male narrator insisted that he looked very fetching as he sped about in his cycling “sweater.”⁶ H.H. Godfrey, momentarily distracted from his mission to foster patriotism through popular song, wrote a light-hearted bicycling tune that maintained: “ev’ry man’s a king riding a wheel.”⁷ The narrator in “A Corker: A Rollicking Humorous Bicycle Song” (1895) received plaudits from his chums as well as admiration from pretty girls for his prowess on the wheel. He had furthermore developed considerable musculature:

My elegant figure has grown to be bigger
Since first I did mount on the seat of a wheel
Don’t think it is chaff when I tell you each calf
has developed so much they are near to the heel.⁸

Men were not the only ones to reap the health benefits of a cycling regimen. Though not all female cyclists wore bloomers (billowy trousers considered less constricting than skirts or dresses) the Bloomer Girl image became synonymous with the modern cycling woman. “Blooming On the White Rimmed Wheel!” (1895) for instance described fresh-faced, bright-eyed ladies cycling along with the wind blowing the curls in their hair.⁹ The prospect of so much youthful beauty inevitably meant that love would be in the air. “A

⁴ J.F. Davis, “A Corker” (Toronto: J.F. Davis, 1895), Amicus 5369088, LAC.

⁵ This was particularly true during the highwheeler years, when cycling required more physical stamina than the average Victorian middle-aged man could muster. See Norcliffe, *Ride to Modernity*, 181-183, 186.

⁶ Berkley E. Chadwick, “Instalments [*sic*] on the Wheel” (London, ON: London Music Co., c. 1890), Amicus 17247084, LAC.

⁷ H.H. Godfrey, “On Wings of Steel” (Toronto: Mason & Risch, 1897), Amicus 5372183, LAC.

⁸ J.F. Davis, “A Corker” (Toronto: J.F. Davis, 1895), Amicus 5369088, LAC.

⁹ Lindley Hunt, “Blooming on the White Rimmed Wheel!” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1895), Amicus 5374900, LAC.

Corker” described the euphoria of riding near “a neat bloomer girl / side by side you may whirl.”¹⁰ “Mamie and I” (1894) meanwhile followed a relationship from admiration, to love, to matrimony, all with the help of two bicycles and sunny summer weather.¹¹

Songs about other sporting activities such as baseball, cricket, golf, and rugby appear in popular song literature, mostly as descriptive titles for the legions of generic waltzes and polkas composed during this period. As with the bicycle tunes, sporting themes gave the composer the opportunity to dedicate a piece to a local club. Lacrosse, the preeminent sport in mid-to-late nineteenth-century Canada, achieved the highest number of musical treatments. Lacrosse songs usually included a cover page festooned with images of a ball, flags, and rackets.¹² The 1870s air “La Crosse: Our National Game” waxed eloquent about men who

... with dodging and checking, defending, attacking,
With running and sometimes a roll, boys;
With catching and throwing, the sport is kept going
Till the ball is sent home through the goal, boys.¹³

A later tune, “Mister Baseball Fan” (1912), described an evolution of sporting culture where spectatorship had become nearly as exciting as playing the game oneself. By the 1910s, interest in lacrosse had begun to decline in favour of baseball. Amateur baseball teams were hugely popular, particularly in settled regions such as Southwestern Ontario where local communities competed against each other. Toronto’s professional major

¹⁰ J.F. Davis, “A Corker” (Toronto: J.F. Davis, 1895), Amicus 5369088, LAC.

¹¹ Charles R. Palmer, “Mamie and I,” lyrics by George H. Orr (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1894), Amicus 5375301, LAC.

¹² Nellie S. Smith, “Lacrosse Jersey” (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Company, 1892), Amicus 5375550, LAC; L. Fred Clary, “Lacrosse Polka” (Millbrook, ON: L. Fred Clary, 1892), Amicus 5368801, LAC; St. G.B. Crozier, “La Crosse Waltzes” (Toronto: A. & S. Nordheimer, c. 1866-1884), Amicus 5373559, LAC. For the popularity of lacrosse, see Nancy B. Bouchier, *For the Love of the Game: Amateur Sport in Small-Town Ontario, 1838-1895* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), ch. 6.

¹³ “La Crosse: Our National Game,” lyrics by James Hughes, arranged by H.F. Sefton from an Old English melody (Toronto: H. Marshall, c.1872-1878), Amicus 22914633, LAC.

league team also enjoyed considerable spectator support during the first two decades of the century. Sometimes, spectator fervour descended into chaos as emotional fans began booing and throwing items at the visiting team.¹⁴ The eponymous enthusiast of “Mister Baseball Fan,” depicted in the cover art as a rosy, corpulent figure, got so caught up in the game that he exploded into comic outbursts (Fig. 8.1). His use of slang such as “aint” and “youse” identifies him as a man of working-class background, thus ensuring that the song did not contravene prescriptions for middle-class propriety. The rest of the crowd tolerated this eager fan with good-humoured indulgence.¹⁵

Other leisure-themed songs focused upon a specifically urban setting where giddy youth embraced the commercial amusements of the new century. These songs tended to be cheerful and even comic, with breezy melodies and lively piano accompaniments. One song about roller-skating likened the activity to courtship, since a lad could skate with an arm around his lady’s waist. As if anticipating some genteel hesitation, the narrator insisted that the activity was all in good fun: “Come with me for a roller skate, It’s simply great it is fine/ There’s no cause for alarm, it’s full of sweet charm,/ What can be the harm? Get in line?”¹⁶ Another piece told of a couple that made nightly visits to the cinema. The lyrics stressed their youthful frivolity: “our minds, our thoughts are always on the very latest fad.”¹⁷ The scenario was a bit of a fantasy, albeit a delightful one. Paying a five-cent admission fee every evening would have been an unrealistic expenditure. Moreover, though the narrator continued to take his girl to the picture show

¹⁴ Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89, 115-116, 119-121.

¹⁵ Jack Stanley, “Mister Baseball Fan,” lyrics by Homer C. Boucher (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1912), Amicus 23062139, LAC.

¹⁶ Charles E. Wellinger, “Come with Me For a Roller Skate” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1907), Amicus 23226684, LAC.

¹⁷ J.W. McFarlane, “Oh, Take Your Girl to the Picture Show,” lyrics by L.C. Spence (Toronto: Colonial Music Publishing, 1909), Amicus 22071183, LAC.

after they married, busy housewives playing or listening to the piece would have known that this represented more a youthful dream than an adult practice.

Songs of sport and leisure offer a window into some of the entertainment activities of the time. In particular, they emphasize the heady atmosphere of excitement accompanying the newest ‘fads’ such as bicycling, sport spectatorship, and moving picture shows. Leisure was becoming less home bound than in previous decades, and the tunes depict these changes as liberating ones. Ironically, these expanded leisure options meant that young men and women did not need to rely on domestic entertainments such as music making to while away their leisure hours. They could sit at home and play the piano, or they could go out and explore what the modern-age amusements had to offer.

Boy Meets Girl: Songs of Love and Courtship

Romantic tunes formed a significant percentage of the Canadian popular song oeuvre. Sheet music producers believed that tender tales of love would capture the interest, pull the heartstrings, and feed the romantic fantasies of their female target audience. Romantic songs’ additional appeal rested in their eye-catching cover pages, which often featured a drawing or photograph of a beautiful young woman. The theme of love inspired many happy compositions. The more rollicking, chipper ones described a lovely lady who had caught the male narrator’s eye. The chorus consisted of the narrator proclaiming gleefully how Nona, Kitty, Nellie, or Sylvie was the only girl for him.¹⁸ The whimsical pieces

¹⁸ Vernon J. Cavers, “Kitty Carnell” (Toronto: Bryson & Cavers, 1900), Envelope 3, Box 3, Canadian Sheet Music Collection [hereafter CanSheet], McM; Alfred Dunn, “Nona” (London, ON: A.D. Dunn, 1911), Envelope 5, Box 4, CanSheet, McM; J. Willis Elliot, “My Sweetheart Nellie” (Toronto: A Cox. &

waxed poetic about the fair one's beauty, often comparing her to spring flowers or some other aspect of nature. "That's What I Think of You" (1915) exemplifies the sort of pastoral imagery lyricists frequently invoked:

Your eyes are bright like stars at night,
 your lips are like the dew,
 You're the sweetest flow'r in all the world,
 That's what I think of you.¹⁹

Occasionally, songwriters veered into the saccharine. Alfred G. Robyn's "To You" (the follow-up to his previous hit, "You") erupted into an impassioned chorus of high, sustained notes: "So great and grand, So great and grand! / I love thee! I love thee! / So pure, so good, so grand!"²⁰

Not all of the songs depicted happy courtships. A considerable portion described couples separated by rejection, argument, death, or war. "The Fairest Rose in June" (1905) described a repentant suitor who had quarrelled with his sweetheart many years earlier and, despite her pleas, had refused to forgive and forget. Despite the passage of time, her beautiful face haunted him still.²¹ "Memories of Thee" (1913) by no means constituted cheerful fare with its pathetic supplication:

Without thee dear life is but pain
 My soul for Heaven sighs
 Oh come to me but once again
 Ere death's mists dim my eyes.²²

Co., 1899), Amicus 5282654, LAC; Lawrence B. O'Connor, "Sylvie," lyrics by C.B. Billings (Toronto: A. Cox & Co., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 10, CanSheet, McM.

¹⁹ N. Fraser Allen, "That's What I Think of You," lyrics by Stanley K. Bennett (Toronto: Empire Music & Travel Club, 1915), Envelope 2, Box 1, CanSheet, McM.

²⁰ Alfred G. Robyn, "To You" (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., n.d.), Envelope 5, Box 11, CanSheet, McM.

²¹ George Hahn, "The Fairest Rose in June," lyrics by Victor Lauriston (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks 1905), Amicus 19370400, LAC. This plot is very similar to American Charles K. Harris' 1892 mega-hit "After the Ball." Perhaps Hahn and Lauriston were hoping for similar commercial success.

²² John Adamson, "Memories of Thee," lyrics by Isabella B. Watson (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1913), Envelope 1, Box 1, CanSheet, McM.

Composers of these types of songs liberally deployed expression markings such as pauses, speed changes, volume changes, and sustained high notes to portray emotion. Nevertheless, even the most melancholy of compositions employed a sunny major key rather than a sombre minor one. Sadness was instead conveyed by the addition of dissonant notes in order to create moments of musical tension.

The music historian Ruth Solie argues that romantic pieces served an important socializing function for young women. According to middle-class gender prescriptions, a girl of marriageable age engaged in a passive waiting game until the time when she would be chosen and claimed by her future husband. For some young women the wait was mercifully short, but for others it proved long if not indefinite. In a society that considered marriage and motherhood women's natural destiny, finding oneself devoid of prospective suitors could be both frustrating and embarrassing. Solie observes that romantic songs, both cheerful and mawkish, offered many young women a form of "emotional solace" during this liminal stage of their lives. The songs also functioned as a powerful prescriptive text shaping the expectations of younger girls yet to embark on adolescent and adult adventures of the heart.²³

Women who interpreted the romantic songs unquestioningly would have received lessons about male dominance and female submissiveness. Romantic songs, indeed popular songs in general, channelled a strong undercurrent of male dominance by the simple fact that the texts reflected a specifically male gaze. The preponderance of the male narrative voice is ironic considering that the songs catered to a largely female

²³ Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 97. I disagree, however, with Solie's point that popular songs always featured women longing and waiting for their sweethearts. The Canadian popular song literature features plenty of male characters who pine for a woman following a quarrel or a separation.

audience. Even female lyricists such as Jeanie Munro and Elfreeda Dauphinee assumed a male narrative voice when writing their song texts.²⁴ There are a couple of possible reasons for this habit. First, it may have derived from a common perception during the nineteenth and early twentieth century that composition represented an active masculine endeavour.²⁵ Second, adopting a male narrator allowed the lyricist greater narrative freedom. Convention dictated that men took the decisive action in a courtship; telling the story from a man's point of view let the author pursue an active (rather than reactive) storyline.²⁶ Finally, songwriters must have believed that a song with a male narrator describing a woman's beauty would prove more commercially profitable than a female narrator admiring a man. It did not alienate male consumers, while female consumers could easily fantasize about being the recipients of such ardour. For myriad reasons, lady characters in romantic songs remained objects rather than subjects.

While male narrators used sentimental language to describe their feelings, they obviously controlled the relationship.²⁷ Often, they expressed the rituals of courtship as a conquering exercise, as illustrated in the 1907 tune, "Tell Me You Believe the Daisy":

Last night I dream'd of you my darling,
When all the world in slumber lay.
I dream'd your heart by me was conquer'd,
And cupid nam'd our happy wedding day.²⁸

²⁴ Arthur A. Penn, "Come Back After Harvest Time," lyrics by Elfreeda M. Dauphinee (Winnipeg: E.M. Dauphinee, 1910), Amicus 22493408, LAC; Maud Steel Muir, "Hymn of the Empire," lyrics by Jeanie Munro (Canada: M. S. Muir, 1902), Amicus 22133682, LAC.

²⁵ Kristina Marie Guiguet, *The Ideal World of Mrs. Widder's Soirée Musicale: Social Identity and Musical Life in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, Mercury Series Cultural Studies Paper 77 (Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2004), 20-21.

²⁶ Nicholas E. Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 105.

²⁷ Once again, the woman of Canadian popular song literature is more conservative than the robust woman of Tin Pan Alley popular songs. For comparison see Tawa, *Tin Pan* 127-129, 133, 150-151, 155-156.

²⁸ Harry A. Edwards, "Tell Me You Believe the Daisy" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1907), Amicus 17425713, LAC.

A different narrator, already victorious, could afford to be more nonchalant: “I wooed, I won, and then I wed.”²⁹ E.B. Sutton’s “I May Be Fickle” (1903) reinforced male domination in a more circuitous manner through its mocking portrayal of a dandy who spent his money lavishly and flirted with every woman in his path.³⁰ By encouraging his consumers to laugh at the rake’s weaknesses, Sutton tried to help them recognize that such characters represented the antithesis of a stronger, sober form of ‘true’ masculinity.

Many male narrators also made it clear that they were searching for a homemaker. “Molly, My Prairie Girl” (1909) provides a cogent comment on ideal womanhood. A man might flirt with worldly, educated college girls but they were not the type he wished to marry. At the end of the day, “just a little western Maiden” would make his house a home.³¹ Another besotted narrator clearly explained his vision of married life:

There’s only one little wife I want for my home
You are the one.
There’s one little bee that I want for my hive,
You shall be Queen if you come.³²

This passage is striking, not only for its Victorian image of the ‘angel of the house’ but also for the implication that she was going to come live in his house rather than them living together in their house. The use of the diminutive “little” in both of these examples was a common term of endearment in the song repertoire. Moreover, the narrator described the wooing of his “little bee” in terms of surrender, for “I just whispered loves

²⁹ J.W. McFarlane, “Oh, Take Your Girl to the Picture Show,” lyrics by L.C. Spence (Toronto: Colonial Music Publishing, 1909), Amicus 22071183, LAC.

³⁰ E.B. Sutton, “I May be Fickle” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1903), Amicus 23027899, LAC.

³¹ J. Ernest Lawrence, “Molly, My Prairie Girl,” lyrics by Ralph Smith (Toronto: The Westerners Co., 1909), Amicus 21800988, LAC.

³² Harry A. Edwards, “There’s Only One Bee I Want for my Hive, You are the One” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1907), Amicus 17425843, LAC.

[sic] sweet story and her heart did yield.”³³ Throughout the entire song, his lady neither spoke nor acted. She simply stood and blushed.

Will Beattie’s self-published comic ditty “Rosie and Josie” (1908) offers a more realistic depiction of the difficulties young couples faced in the matter of moral supervision in pre-war Ontario. As Joe sat with Rosie in her parents’ parlour,

... he knew he would soon have to leave.
For her mother had told him an hour ago,
She wouldn’t let Rosie sit up late with a beau.
Now Rosie was getting quite nervous because
she knew just what kind of a woman ma was,
But she awfully hated to tell him to go,
For it was the first time that she’d had a beau.³⁴

Beattie’s lyrics made it clear that these two innocents simply wished to enjoy each other’s company. Any serious lapses of moral propriety were heartily condemned in Canadian popular song literature. In the light ditty “I’ll Be Your Rain-Beau,” a song derided for the banality of its lyrics even in its heyday, Hannah and her gentleman friend brazenly ‘spooned’ in an unoccupied summerhouse. When a storm began to rage, Hannah was distraught to find that her sweetheart did not possess an umbrella for the walk back home. Refusing her lover’s cries of affection, she sought out a male passer-by who happened to be brandishing a silk umbrella. After the umbrella-man had seen her home, Hannah decided that he would become her new suitor. Although the notion of leaving one sweetheart for another on account of an umbrella is patently ridiculous, it is no accident that the woman who permitted a tryst in a lonely nook turned out to be a fickle sweetheart.³⁵ C.M. Denison’s “Just Like a Broken Toy” (1905) provided a more sobering

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Will Beattie, “Rosie and Josie” (Corinth, ON: Will Beattie, 1908), Amicus 16179854, LAC.

³⁵ Joe Smith, “I’ll be Your Rain-Beau,” lyrics by Ed. Gardenier, music by J. Fred Helf (Toronto: Comfort Soap, n.d.), Envelope 1, Box 7, CanSheet, McM.

reminder of the importance of propriety. Denison told the cautionary tale of a young woman “loved for a day, then cast away” in the city.³⁶ The repentant woman returned to her childhood home, only to find that both parents had died in the meantime. The message was clear: a girl who had lost her reputation could not be redeemed.

In these many ways, writers of romantic songs asserted an ideal hierarchy of gender. By reasserting traditional Victorian femininity and Victorian masculine dominance, they aimed to impose order on a world that had become increasingly bewildering. This gap between ideal and reality illustrates the anxieties of the time and the coping mechanisms that people adopted. Popular music was something they turned to for relief; therefore, it was imperative that the music told them what they wanted to hear.

Weightier Matters: Sacred Themes in Popular Songs

Next to patriotic numbers, sacred themes produced the largest quantity of popular songs. This reflected not only the orthodoxy of churchgoing in Protestant Ontario, particularly among women, but also the vitality of church music in a province renowned for its choirs.³⁷ With a few exceptions such as Frank Eborall’s “His Grace is Sufficient for Thee” (1916), most composers of sacred songs did not pen their own lyrics. This was largely due to the richness of the Western world’s existing oeuvre of hymns and sacred poetry. J.E.P. Aldous’ “Just as I Am” (1895) for instance employed Englishwoman Charlotte Elliot’s famous early nineteenth-century hymn of the same name. John

³⁶ C.M. Denison, “Just Like a Broken Toy” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1905), Amicus 17158331, LAC.

³⁷ For the gendered religious practices in late nineteenth-century Southern Ontario see Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, Studies in Gender and History Series, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), ch. 2 and 3.

Adamson's "Praise the Lord, O My Soul" (1914) used the text from Psalm 113.³⁸ For those who preferred to seek lyrical inspiration closer to home, one could enlist the help of a local poet. Composer Jules Faber collaborated with lyricist Llewellyn A. Morrison for a string of sacred songs: "The Pearly Gates and Golden" (1902), "His Way" (1904), "The City Eternal" (1905), and "Over the Journey" (1905).³⁹ Some religious compositions represented the natural outpourings of a life committed to faith. The African-Canadian pianist Hattie Rhue Hatchett composed sacred works for the members of her religious community, in which she was deeply involved.⁴⁰ This was not always the case, however. Robert Ambrose, composer of numerous sacred ballads, including "One Sweetly Solemn Thought" (1876), practiced his religion in an inconsistent manner. Robert's wife insisted that "notwithstanding all his reasoning I believe there are few who have a purer faith," yet he refused to attend any of the Hamilton churches' services on the grounds that the mawkish musical offerings got on his nerves. On the few occasions he did appear, he could not mask his disdain, pulling faces, and embarrassing his wife to no end.⁴¹

Sacred music is distinct from other types of popular sheet music for a number of reasons. First, the rampant borrowing of existing texts makes it difficult to pinpoint peculiarities of time and place. Second, sacred music's religious subject matter gave

³⁸ John Adamson, "Praise the Lord, O My Soul" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1914), Envelope 1, Box 1, CanSheet, McM; J.E.P. Aldous, "Just as I Am" (Toronto: Whaley Royce & Co., 1895), Envelope 2, Box 1, CanSheet, McM; Frank Eborall, "His Grace is Sufficient for Thee" (Toronto: Smith & Eborall, 1916), Envelope 1, Box 5, CanSheet, McM. For more information on Canadian hymnals see John Beckwith, "Tunebooks and Hymnals in Canada, 1801-1939," *American Music* 6, no. 2 (1988): 193-234.

³⁹ "Pearly Gates and Golden" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1902); "The City Eternal" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1905); "Over the Journey" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1905) may all be found in Envelope 3, Box 5, CanSheet, McM. "His Way" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks 1904) is Amicus 17531362 at LAC.

⁴⁰ Richard George Stewardson, "Hattie Rhue Hatchett (1863-1958): An Interdisciplinary Study of her Life and Music in North Buxton, Ontario" (M.A. thesis, York University, 1994), 46-77.

⁴¹ Lily Ambrose to Paul Ambrose, January 8, 1889, p. 772, Ambrose Collection, HPL. For Robert's lackadaisical church attendance, and his bad behaviour when he did attend, see Lily to Paul, December 5, 1886, pp. 93-96; Lily to Paul, April 11, 1887, pp. 253-257; Lily to Paul, December 25, 1888, pp. 744-750; Lily to Paul, January 4, 1889, pp. 765-768.

some contemporaries the erroneous impression that it represented an inherently ‘better,’ type of song. In actual fact the music of sacred songs did not differ appreciably from other popular fare. Although songwriters often employed graceful hymn-like chords and tender melodies, these stylistic influences proved fairly common in secular drawing-room music. The permeability of the sacred-secular music divide did not constitute a recent phenomenon. Indeed, the literary scholar Alisa Clapp-Intyre argues that in a strictly formal sense, sacred and secular music in Victorian England were remarkably similar.⁴² By the late 1910s, some critics felt that this tight association had become a bit too close for comfort. Complaints began surfacing in Britain and Canada about popular songwriters hawking their works as ‘sacred’ compositions by the simple use of the Lord’s name once or twice throughout the lyrics.⁴³ Despite similarities of tune (and sometimes text), the purpose of sacred and secular pieces differed significantly. The use of sacred text supposedly transformed a piece from an earthly aural pleasure to spiritual food for the soul. The religiously minded believed in this imperative, and their criticisms of inferior sacred songs reflected their dismay at the thought of this purpose not being achieved.

Sacred songs’ thematic message varied according to the text one employed. From a historical perspective, the most arresting are those focusing on the fragility of life or the finality of the Lord’s will. At an age when poverty, disease, workplace injury, childbirth, and infant mortality made life precarious, one could not assume that death struck only the aged.⁴⁴ Jon Finson further argues that during the nineteenth century, death occurred in

⁴² Alisa Clapp-Intyre, *Angelic Airs, Subversive Songs: Music as Social Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 78-82.

⁴³ “Sacred and Secular Music Should Not Be Confused,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, June 23, 1917, p. 26.

⁴⁴ For an interesting look at deaths among young women, see Miss S. Emma Sisk’s Alma College Scrapbook c. 1881-1902, St Thomas, Elgin County, Ontario, Canada, Microfilm reel M1531, UWOA. Miss Sisk, a music teacher, pasted in various newspaper notices about her former students. The casual reader will quickly observe that many of these young ladies subsequently died in the prime of life. Fanny Marion

close proximity to the living. Most people died at home rather than in hospital or care facilities. Family members, rather than a professional funeral parlour, arranged a corpse for burial.⁴⁵ The prospect of future deaths moreover cast a shadow over nineteenth-century family circles. One had no guarantee that one's nearest and dearest would escape the clutches of a premature demise.⁴⁶ Songs of dying therefore signaled not a morbid imagination, but rather a pragmatic attempt to cope with a sad fact of life. The theme of life's uncertainty infuses Jane Bingham Abbot's song "Just for To-Day," with its plea:

Oh, bid me if to day [*sic*] I die
Come home to day;
So for tomorrow and its needs,
I do not pray.
But keep me, guide me, love me Lord;
Just for today.⁴⁷

Robert Ambrose's "One Sweetly Solemn Thought" (1876) employed a hymn by mid-nineteenth-century American poet Phoebe Carey. Hardly cheering, this text described a narrator on the brink of death, seeking solace at the thought of the Divine realm beyond.⁴⁸ "Call of the Angels" (1881), composed by E.F. Paul with words by Adelaide Procter, struck a solemn note as the narrator waited for the Angels to "Open wide the mystic [*sic*] gate/ At whose feet I long have lingered /Weary poor and desolate." An explanatory statement on the cover explained that E.F. Paul had composed this song several years

Chadwick, one of the female diarists discussed in Chapter Three, was only thirty-two years old when she died in 1905. See Family Notes, Diaries of Fanny Marion Chadwick, MS 573, AO.

⁴⁵ Jon W. Finson, *The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 82-83. Colin B. Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, "Changing Attitudes to Death: Nineteenth-Century Parlour Songs as Consolation Literature," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 23, no. 2 (1993): 82, discusses the importance of parlour spaces in the laying out of the corpse for viewing. Thus the parlour was a space for both the enjoyment of music and for solemn rituals of death.

⁴⁶ Nicholas E. Tawa, *A Music for the Millions: Antebellum Democratic Attitudes and the Birth of American Popular Music*, Sociology of Music Series no. 3 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1984), 123.

⁴⁷ Jane Bingham Abbot, "Just for To-Day" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, n.d.), Envelope 1, Box 1, CanSheet, McM.

⁴⁸ R.S. Ambrose, "One Sweetly Solemn Thought," lyrics by Phoebe Carey (Toronto: A. & S. Nordheimer, 1876), Amicus 5373657, LAC.

earlier as a young man. His choice of text for what he termed a “simple musical production of youthful days” was not a blithe tribute to God’s earth but rather a sombre meditation on the afterlife to come.⁴⁹ Grieving friends and relatives would also have found comfort in sacred songs preaching God’s infinite wisdom. R.S. Ambrose’s “Thy Way Not Mine, O Lord” (1878) and Edward R. Miller’s “Thy Will Be Done” (1911) for example address bereavement through their focus on faith as an anchor in times of trial.⁵⁰

Religious songs offered an effective form of consolation. First, the focus on God’s unknowable plan helped the narrator (and audience) overcome lingering feelings of guilt. It assured them that they could not have prevented the death of a loved one. Second, the songs helped to “transmute the dead from an earthly corpse into a happy spirit abiding in a divine realm.”⁵¹ Third, they helped assuage the listener’s fears about his or her own inevitable end. If death is not death but simply a passage into the heavenly realm, then it was not to be dreaded. Indeed, death would be a positive event in that it meant a closer association with God as well as the long-awaited reunion with dearly departed friends and family.⁵² Such depictions became less prevalent in American popular repertoire after the Civil War, as secularization and doubt started to erode the religious certainties of

⁴⁹ E.F. Paul, “Call of the Angels,” lyrics by Adelaide Proctor (Toronto: Thomas Claxton, 1881), Amicus 5375308, LAC. See also Edward Broome, “The Land of Rest,” lyrics by Jessie Freeland (Cincinnati: John Church Company, 1902), Amicus 16908892, LAC.

⁵⁰ R.S. Ambrose, “Thy Way Not Mine, O Lord” (Toronto: A. & S. Nordheimer, 1878), Envelope 3, Box, 1, CanSheet, McM; Edward R. Miller, “Thy Will be Done,” lyrics by Charlotte Elliott (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishing Company, 1911), Amicus 21565016, LAC.

⁵¹ Tawa, *Millions*, 124.

⁵² Tawa, *Millions*, 120-121, 124. For an opposing view see Bill Ellis, “‘I Wonder, Wonder, Mother’: Death and the Angels in Native American Balladry,” *Western Folklore* 38, no. 3 (1979): 170-185.

yore.⁵³ Canadian writers of sacred song nevertheless retained the practice well into the early twentieth century.

Mama, Papa, Baby, and the Angels: The Family Unit in Life and Death

Songs about death were not wholly confined to religious musings; they permeated the realm of secular songs as well. Victorian and Edwardian popular songs seem morbid and melodramatic by twenty-first-century standards, but contemporaries judged such themes sentimental instead.⁵⁴ Sentimental songs were thought to raise tender emotions, speaking directly to the heart without intellectual fuss or fanfare. Audiences of the time considered sentiment a genuine expression of the depths of human feeling. Only highbrow critics remained impervious to sentimentality's powerful appeal.⁵⁵ Nineteenth-century perspectives on grieving expounded the notion that one should embrace loss in "its fullest intensity" in order to ensure a timely recovery. In a culture that prized the control of one's physical and emotional urges, music provided a socially appropriate outlet for this expression: "Bottled-up feelings were provided a tongue. Songs gathered the totality of pain, made it tangible, and helped expurgate it from the soul."⁵⁶ Death, like love, constituted a universal theme experienced by everyone regardless of class or background. Emoting over a sentimental song helped develop the empathetic faculties; it encouraged the listener to look beyond the narrow sphere of personal acquaintance in order to

⁵³ For more on this American transformation see Atkinson and Atkinson, "Changing Attitudes," 83; Susan J. Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 485; Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 101, 126.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the negative connotations the word 'sentimental' has acquired over the twentieth century see Margaret Ervin, Joyce Hinnefeld, and Catherine Sustana, "Reading the 19th Century, Writing the 21st," *Legacy* 15, no. 1 (1998): 35-44.

⁵⁵ See previous chapter for highbrow criticisms of popular song sentimentality.

⁵⁶ Tawa, *Millions*, 122.

appreciate the broader human condition.⁵⁷ By the later nineteenth century, sentimental songs provided listeners with a reassuringly easy way of tapping into emotions in the midst of a modern world many feared had grown too impersonal.⁵⁸ The idea of bereavement and leisure existing side by side seems strange today, but it made perfect sense in a popular culture that co-opted the idea of death rather than shunning it.

The mortality theme in turn-of-the-twentieth-century popular songs is intriguing because, with the exception of soldiers dying on the battlefield, the deceased was almost always either a mother or an infant.⁵⁹ In doing so, songwriters recognized the very real possibility of female death in childbirth as well as infant mortality. While mothers (whether dead or alive) formed a cornerstone in popular song narratives before the Great War, fathers played more of a supporting role.⁶⁰ When they appeared at all, fathers usually took the role of the grieving widower. In “Daddy” (1885) the father provided a sounding board for the child-narrator missing his mother. Their relationship was a close one, for they were all each other had left. The text nevertheless made it clear that Mother had orchestrated their mutual understanding in anticipation of her imminent demise:

For I’ve got you, and you’ve got me,
So ev’ry thing may go,
We’re all the world to each other, Daddy,
For mother, dear mother once told me so.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 40-41.

⁵⁸ Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 123.

⁵⁹ This narrative device represents a shift from early nineteenth-century tendencies to depict the death of a female sweetheart. See Atkinson and Atkinson, “Changing Attitudes,” 79-100; Finson, *Voices That Are Gone*, 29-30, 37, 47-48, 89-93. Finson argues that popular ideals about female “innocence and purity ... provided the reason for their passing and made paradise their logical abode,” (92-93).

⁶⁰ For the lack of tributes to fathers in popular song, see Isidore Witmark and Isaac Goldberg, *From Ragtime to Swingtime: The Story of The House of Witmark* (New York: Lee Furman, 1939), 177-178. For the father image in nineteenth-century popular culture, see Claudia Nelson, *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850-1910* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

Even in death, Mother continued to be the fulcrum of this family dynamic, and her lack permeated the song from opening to close.⁶¹ “Hello Central, Give Me Heaven,” by American songwriter Charles K. Harris, featured a child trying to use a telephone in order to contact his deceased mother, in the hopes of offering relief to his despondent father. The father figure was entirely absent in Herbert H. Powers’ “Which Way Did the Angels Go?” (1903), where a pitiful and presumably orphaned child wandered the streets in search of some clue to where her late Mama had been taken.⁶²

The Grim Reaper’s other major victim in popular song literature was the family’s beloved child. This trend reflected the very real possibility of infant mortality. It also, however, reflected the symbolic richness of the dying child motif. According to traditional mid-Victorian depictions, the tender age of youngsters made them pure at the moment of their death. This not only rendered such deaths more poignant; it also meant that they became interceding angels, praying for and guarding over the souls of adults on earth.⁶³ “Baby On the Wall” told of a mother’s love for her child who lived “one short happy winter... Before his little life began to fail.”⁶⁴ Wilfred Traher of London, Ontario, evoked a similar theme in the chorus of “Mamma’s Doll” (1910):

Just another little playmate for the angels,
Just another empty cradle, that is all,
Just another home so fair, filled with gloom and deep despair,
For that little ray of sunshine, mama’s doll.⁶⁵

⁶¹ A.H. Behrend, “Daddy,” lyrics by Mary Mark Lemon (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1885), Envelope 2, Box 2, CanSheet, McM.

⁶² Charles K. Harris, “Hello Central, Give Me Heaven,” arranged by Joseph Clauder (Toronto: Imperial Music Publishing House, n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 6, CanSheet, McM; Herbert H. Powers, “Which Way Did the Angels Go?” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1903), Envelope 3, Box 11, CanSheet, McM.

⁶³ Tawa, *Millions*, 134.

⁶⁴ D. Macklin, “Baby on the Wall” (Canada: s.n., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

⁶⁵ Wilfred Traher, “Mamma’s Doll” (Toronto: A. H. Goetting, 1910), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

There were, however, gradations of despair within this oeuvre. While the mother in “Baby on the Wall” found solace in the notion that her child had been reunited with baby Jesus in the manger, the mother in “Mamma’s Doll” allowed herself no such comforting thoughts. Interestingly, Traher wrote another song called “Papa’s Girl” intended as a “Companion Piece” to “Mamma’s Doll”. Unlike the former sad tale, the latter was a brisk song detailing a little girl’s delight in bouncing on her father’s knee.⁶⁶ While there may have been an autobiographical basis for this juxtaposition, it shows the intertwining of happiness and grief in the contemporary popular imagination.

While the above examples recognized that even the most solicitous parents could undergo the horror of losing an infant, other songs served as cautionary tales. These types of pieces featured physically or emotionally neglected youngsters who, in the manner of a Dickens character, demonstrated the purity of their souls before pathetically expiring near the end. These songs implied that improvident parents dramatically increased the risk of childhood mortality and that, however tragic, it was somehow right for parents to be deprived of a youngster whose value they could not recognize. American composer Charles K. Harris’ “Will I Find My Mama There?” for instance portrayed a dying child who asked her sobbing father whether she would meet her kind, golden-haired Mama when she reached Heaven. The second verse revealed that, unbeknownst to the child, her Mama still lived. The Father had invented the fiction some time ago in order to save his daughter the distress of learning that her mother had abandoned “husband, home and baby” for the arms of a lover. The final verse brought the return of the desperate mother, pleading to see her child one last time. The father eventually relented but it was too late,

⁶⁶ Wilfred Traher, “Papa’s Girl” (Toronto: A.H. Goetting, 1911), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

for the girl had passed away moments before. The moral of the song is easy to discern. The mother now paid the price for her reckless behaviour; she had missed not only the precious short years of her daughter's life, but even the right to spend a few last moments at the deathbed. While the song does not specify the deceased girl's malady, it is entirely possible that her ailments resulted from being deprived of her mother's physical and emotional care.⁶⁷ The mother's ineptitude and the consequences that result highlight the importance of the female parent in the domestic sphere. When a mother abandoned her duties for sexual pleasures, the family home fell like a deck of cards.

Harry Herbert's "Just For a Little While" (1906) told the story of a mother who persisted in going to a ball in spite of her child's pleas for permission to go out and play, a strange request given that the dance was likely an evening engagement. The child's entreaty did not signify caprice. He wished for a little time outside, not only because he found himself imprisoned in the house most of the day but also because he could not ask for what he really wanted, which was to spend quality time with her.

Just for a little while mama,
I would like to go out and play.
It is so lonesome in the house,
When you're away all day.
No one to keep me hugg'd up tight,
No one to say my dear or smile.
Please mama do-don't you think it right,
Just for a little while.⁶⁸

In the second verse, it was revealed that the refusal to allow the boy outdoors ultimately sapped his small body of strength. His repentant mother cried "Too late, too late!" as Jesus beckoned the little one to a heavenly place where he would always be permitted to

⁶⁷ Charles K. Harris, "Will I Find My Mama There?" arranged by Joseph Clauder (Imperial Edition of Popular Music, n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

⁶⁸ Harry Herbert, "Just for a Little While" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1906), Amicus 19735751, LAC.

play. J. Bigelow Paine's "In the House of Too Much Trouble" (1901) recounted the tale of a lonely little boy who had neither companion nor playthings. His mother and older sister Jennie were too busy to pay him any heed, and so he sat immobile for hours on end:

In the house of too much trouble,
He must never romp and play,
No one ever seemed to think
That regret would come some day.⁶⁹

In the second verse, the boy fell seriously ill. He asked his chagrined mother if he would be allowed to play when he got to Heaven, but then died before she could respond. The front cover included the photograph of child singer Master Frank Clegg, whose sweet appearance would have been easy to conflate with that of the fictional little boy. Unlike the mother in "Just for a Little While," this parent was marginally better in that she engaged in work rather than frivolous social engagements. Even so, she should have made childrearing her top priority. This moral represents a middle-class point of view, since it discounts the notion of a mother needing to work to ensure enough food to feed her children. Similar to "Just for a Little While," however, this song emphasized that children needed time for play in order to develop properly. Such views were becoming increasingly common in childrearing manuals of the early twentieth century.⁷⁰

Significantly, there are few, if any, examples of a father's physical or emotional absence causing the death of a child. Gender prescriptions insisted that the feeding, clothing, and care of children constituted a mother's duty. Fathers occupied the role of the breadwinner, earning enough money to provide for the family's material needs. While economic distress could just as easily result in malnutrition, disease, and death,

⁶⁹J. Bigelow Paine, "In the House of Too Much Trouble" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1901), Envelope 1, Box 11, CanSheet, McM.

⁷⁰Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 18.

songwriters rarely addressed this prospect. This may have been because of an implicit belief in mothers' ability to care for their children by dint of effort and self-sacrifice even during times of poverty. The emotionally immediate mother-child relationship may have also offered a more compelling narrative. Whatever the reason, with the significant exception of Temperance song literature, father characters did not face nearly the same degree of judgment.⁷¹ The American song "Everybody Works But Father" (1906) instead addressed the theme of fatherly neglect in a comic vein. This story of a household where the father stayed home and the other members of the family worked to support him used satire in order to describe a complete reversal of the natural order:

Everybody works but father and he's a gentleman
Feet in front of the fire, sometimes rushing the can,
Mother takes in washing, so does sister Ann,
Everybody works at our house but my old man.⁷²

In case of any doubt, the reference to the father's habit of drinking gin would have been enough to convince the consumer that such gender subversions led to unseemly disorder. Nevertheless, his improvidence did not result in the death of a child or any similar degree of divine retribution. The family adapted to his laziness and the household struggled along as best as it could. Harry Herbert's "To-morrow Never Comes" (1910) depicted a child who endured his father's repeated promises to purchase toys. Despite the child's despondency, death did not claim him in a bid to punish the father.⁷³

A second form of cautionary tale highlighted the duty owed towards an ageing parent. The most common situation involved an adult son who had benefitted from his

⁷¹ For further information on the image of the male drinker in Temperance Songs see Lytton Naegele McDonnell, "Singing Wet and Dry: Exploring Alcohol Regulation Through Music, 1885-1919" (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 2009), 48, 53-54.

⁷² Eugene Walker, "Everybody Works but Father" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1906), Amicus 23184078, LAC.

⁷³ Harry Herbert, "To-morrow Never Comes" (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1910), Amicus 19742675, LAC.

mother's care prior to leaving her for the great yonder once she had grown old and grey. Eventually chastened by conscience, the son returned home only to find that Mother had died prior to his arrival. "Mother's Last Letter To Me," "Only a Mother," and "The Letter Edged in Black" are three songs that fit this narrative model.⁷⁴ The moral to be derived from these tales is encapsulated in the lyrics to another song:

But one sweet mother Heaven gives,
And soon from earth she may be borne!
Protect and love her while she lives,
You'll miss your mother when she's gone!⁷⁵

The composer of the above piece emphasized the last line by a series of pauses and rests so that the singer enunciated each syllable slowly and deliberately. These depictions stressed that a mother's long years of exertion had exhausted her, transforming her from a matronly beauty into a fragile shell. Defined by her relational role as wife and mother, she withered away when deprived of someone to nurture. As one author expressed it:

She's a poor old gray-haired mother,
ever faithful, ever true,
Who is thinking of your welfare ev'ry day;
If you have a spark of thankfulness,
what course should you pursue,
If this lifelong debt of love you wish to pay?⁷⁶

Songwriters recognized that caring for a parent involved personal sacrifice. In George Diamond's "There's a Mother Old and Gray Who Needs Me Now," the female protagonist Jennie faced the hardship of choosing between marriage and filial duty. Her refusal of romance for the selfless cause of tending an elderly parent was rewarded when

⁷⁴ Verner J. Cavers, "Only a Mother" (Hamilton: Carey Piano & Music Co., 1900), Amicus 16984503, LAC; C.H. Hughes, "Mother's Last Letter to Me" (Toronto: Toronto News Company, c.1890-1899), Amicus 20135530, LAC; Hattie Nevada, "The Letter Edged in Black" (Toronto: W.H. Hodgins & Co., n.d.), Envelope 3, Box X1723, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA.

⁷⁵ T. B. Kelley, "You'll Miss Your Mother When She's Gone," lyrics by George Cooper (Guelph, ON: J.D. Williamson & Co., n.d.), 991.29.2, Guelph Composers Envelope, Box A13, GCM

⁷⁶ Wilfrid Traher, "Throw Your Arms Around Your Mother For It's Your Turn Now" (London, ON: W.C. Traher, 1911), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL.

her sweetheart Jack solved the problem by bringing her mother to live with them. “Your little girl will be my queen forever, /And sweetest flowr’s [*sic*] will always bloom for you,” he announced to the presumably delighted matriarch.⁷⁷ In a comic take on the situation, “I Never Would Live with My Mother-in-Law” told the tale of two lovers named Harry and Pansy, both of whom had elderly mothers, and neither of whom relished the idea of cohabiting with their prospective mother-in-law. Things seemed to have reached an impasse, until Harry devised the brilliant plan to have the two mothers move in together.⁷⁸ Such fairy-tale solutions rarely came about in real life.

In some ways, the cautionary songs about dying children and dying mothers represented two sides of the same coin. Prior to the inauguration of the welfare state, family represented one of the few bastions of support that did not bring with it the negative associations of ‘charity.’ These songs articulate an unwritten rule that a mother had a moral duty to nurture her offspring during their tender years. Once the children had reached adulthood, they would redress the outstanding balance by comforting her in her old age. Should either party neglect their role in this sacred pact, the consequences could be dire indeed. These sorts of songs represent prescriptive attempts to mould behaviour for reasons that were not only ethical but practical as well. Neglected children and economically distressed seniors placed considerable strain on a society where public aid took the form of disparate voluntary endeavours. Through the use of parable, songwriters elicited sympathy from consumers in the hopes that it would deter reckless behaviour. Since music making often took place as a collective enterprise, the songs’ messages of

⁷⁷ George H. Diamond, “There’s a Mother Old and Gray Who Needs Me Now” (Toronto: College Music Co., n.d.), Envelope 4, Box 4, CanSheet, McM.

⁷⁸ Ella Mae Middleton, “I Never Would Live with My Mother-in-Law,” lyrics by Will Beattie (Corinth, ON: Will Beattie, 1917), Envelope 2, Box 2, CanSheet, McM.

familial loyalty would have been reinforced by the presence of relatives gathered in the parlour. The lesson was clear: the family that came together in times of leisure must not forsake each other in times of need.

The Cottage in the Lane: Songs of Home and Nostalgia

If cautionary tales served as a negative reminder of the dangers of familial neglect, other songs offered the positive prospect of domestic felicity. Wistful songs about home and the loved ones within it enjoyed perennial success throughout the Anglo-Victorian world.⁷⁹ The tradition dated at least as far back as the early nineteenth century, when John Howard Payne and Sir Henry Rowley Bishop's "Home Sweet Home" (1823) achieved runaway success not only in their native Britain but across the Atlantic as well. Prima donnas such as Jenny Lind and Adelina Patti perpetuated the song's popularity for decades thereafter. By the early twentieth century, the piece remained so iconic that professional singers knew to have it ready in waiting for the encore requests that inevitably came. The overwhelming popularity of "Home, Sweet Home" inspired a flood of compositions musing on domestic comforts such as a grandfather clock or "The Old Arm Chair."⁸⁰ Songs of home persisted well into the twentieth century, idealizing the domestic sphere as a place of comfort and renewal. J.L. Lonsdale's lyrics for "Only at Home" exemplify some of the elevated language that characterized this genre:

Source of our fairest hours dreaming or wake!
Tie which the bravest heart trembles to break,

⁷⁹ See for instance Susan Key, "Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster," *American Music* 13, no. 2 (1995): 145-166; Lee Glazer and Susan Key, "Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture," *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996): 1-24.

⁸⁰ Marian Klamkin, *Old Sheet Music: A Pictorial History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975), 58-59.

Shrine where our sorrows fly,
 Surest of sympathy,
 Say we not right, who say only a home...⁸¹

Unsurprisingly, songs about home focused not on the bricks and mortar but rather the loving people who dwelt within. These tunes affirmed that earthly wealth did not matter where happy hearts were concerned, yet they compromised this message with their middle-class notions of what characterized home life. Wilfred Traher waxed poetic about his halcyon days of domestic bliss in “A Happy Young Family of Three” (1898). Though Traher’s narrator affirmed, “Of riches a very small share is our lot,” his depiction of home life pivoted on middle-class notions of a breadwinner wage:

Ev’ry morn when they bid me good-bye at the door
 I kiss each a loving farewell
 Then off to my work where in joy I await
 the sound of the old dinner bell
 For I know that my Nellie will welcome me home
 and so will sweet little Marie
 And we’ll sit down and dine in our own cottage home
 as a happy young fam’ly of three...⁸²

Herbert Powers’ “It’s Not the House That Makes the Home” (1904) betrays a similar disjuncture. It told of an unworldly little girl who declared:

It’s not the house that makes the home,
 My mama teaches me,
 For in our humble little cot,
 We’re as happy as can be...⁸³

The social egalitarianism of the lyrics is compromised by the cover image of an eminently bourgeois household (Fig. 8.2). The family gathers around a small child

⁸¹ Virginia Gabriel, “Only at Home,” lyrics by J.L. Lonsdale (London, ON: London Soap Co., n.d.), Envelope 7, Box X450, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA.

⁸² Wilfred Charles Traher, “A Happy Young Family of Three” (London, ON: H. Gilbert Traher, 1898), Music Scores By Local Composers Collection, Box 394B, LPL. Traher included a large photo of his young family on the front cover and dedicated his work “to my wife and baby in memory of those happy days in Old Walnut Row.”

⁸³ Herbert Powers, “It’s Not the House That Makes The Home” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, 1904), Envelope 3, Box 11, CanSheet, McM.

opening a large and lavishly wrapped gift while an aproned girl who appears to be a maid watches from the side. Architectural details show them to be in a dining room with high ceilings and panelled walls, a far cry from the proverbial shared cot. Meanwhile, the orphaned urchin in “If Only I Had a Home Sweet Home” wished only for a “kind papa and a mama dear/ To call me all their own.” Even so, the cover page image depicted the ragged little newsboy looking longingly through the window of a nice brick establishment where lamps, books, pictures, and drapery offered up an image of bourgeois comfort he would never possess.⁸⁴

Of all the family members, the figure of mother emerged as the most crucial in the songs about home. Her love and solicitude personified the comfort, security, and peace of the idealized private sphere. “Just Like a Broken Toy” (1905) told the story of a young woman in a grand concert hall surrounded by an orchestra, bright lights, and beautiful dancing. These delights had no charm for her, however, as she recalled the idyllic home of her youth: “She saw again the hills and skies so blue/ The cattle and the meadows and Mother best of all.”⁸⁵ Another song from the era affirmed that while

... childhood’s happy moments
and girlhood’s/boyhood’s joyous days,
Bring back the fondest memories,
tho’ far from home I’ve stray’d,
But ne’er shall I forget her,
tho’ she’s pass’d beyond recall,
So still to me my Mother’s kiss
was sweeter than them all.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ A.L. McDermott, “If Only I Had a Home Sweet Home,” lyrics by J. Johns (s.n., n.d.), Envelope 2, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

⁸⁵ C.M. Denison, “Just Like a Broken Toy” (Toronto: Harry H. Sparks, c. 1905), Amicus 17158331, LAC.

⁸⁶ Frank Eborall, “My Mother’s Kiss,” lyrics by S.G. Smith (Toronto: Smith & Eborall, 1916), Envelope 1, Box 5, CanSheet, McM.

Mrs. W. Gallagher's "My Childhood Home" of 1914 mentioned mother's loving arms in the first verse, while descriptions of father and siblings did not appear until subsequent stanzas.⁸⁷ W. Francis Firth and A.E. Greenlaw's "Childhood Days" from the same year also mentioned "mother dear with words of cheer" who "bless[ed] me with her pray'r."⁸⁸

Many songs in this genre spoke of home and its pleasures in the past tense, relying on nostalgia to heighten their emotional appeal. From the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, nostalgia had been defined as the disease of homesickness. To cure such an ailment, the sufferer simply needed to return to the longed-for dwelling. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, homesickness and nostalgia began to separate into two distinct conditions. Homesickness meant missing a home as a place; hence one could visit home and feel better. Nostalgia meant missing home as a place and a time. Even if one returned to the geographical site, one would not find the qualities that had made it so precious. Loved ones aged and died, innocence gave way to experience. The golden Eden of one's memories could never be reclaimed.⁸⁹ Nostalgia as a cultural phenomenon began to coalesce in America around the time of the Civil War. Profound social, economic, and political changes created a sense of dislocation from established traditions. Waves of settlers, travelling in search of new farmland or urban job prospects, promulgated a mainstream culture of sentimental longing.⁹⁰ While earlier nineteenth-century migrants left home knowing they would likely never return, technological developments such as railway lines and steamship routes meant that later settlers could

⁸⁷ Mrs. W. Gallagher, "My Childhood Home" (Canada: s.n., 1914), Envelope 6, Box 5, CanSheet, McM.

⁸⁸ A.E. Greenlaw, "Childhood Days," lyrics by W. Francis Firth (Toronto: Nordheimer Piano and Music Co., 1914), Envelope 2, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

⁸⁹ Susan J. Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 470-471.

⁹⁰ Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again," 479, 489-490. See also Key, "Sound and Sentimentality," 149; Tawa, *Millions*, 41-43; Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 125.

return for the occasional visit. Returning, however, shattered illusions about what exactly they were seeking. Now, “upon travelling back, many Americans found they had not arrived and never could. While space could be traversed, time could not.”⁹¹ Derek Scott observes that nostalgia’s appeal rested in part from its ability to appeal to the older generation, reminding them of memories held dear to their hearts. Today’s youth-oriented marketing tactics make it easy to forget that sheet music producers of the Victorian and Edwardian eras appealed to a range of ages.⁹² Music historian Susan Key further notes that the nostalgic wish for the past was ironic, since the mass production of both sheet music and keyboard instruments relied upon the technologies of an industrial society.⁹³

Canadian popular songwriters frequently indulged in nostalgia. “My Childhood’s Home,” for instance, struck a plaintive tone in its recognition that these happy memories were all that remained of a house and faces gone forever. “Childhood Days” similarly longed for a golden time of innocence in a home surrounded by loving people.⁹⁴ “My Mind Wanders Back to our Childhood Days” (1912) told the story of a grey-haired couple recalling all the games they used to play on the farm as children.⁹⁵ The narrator of “My Old Canadian Home” (1907) also remembered a glorious youth spent in “a humble cottage home / On the rolling wooded lands.”⁹⁶ The fact that these nostalgic songs inevitably described a rural setting was not accidental. American and English popular

⁹¹ Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again,” 484-485.

⁹² Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 147.

⁹³ Key, “Sound and Sentimentality,” 149. See also Lee Glazer and Susan Key, “Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture,” *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996): 7.

⁹⁴ A.E. Greenlaw, “Childhood Days,” lyrics by W. Francis Firth (Toronto: Nordheimer Piano and Music Co., 1914), Envelope 2, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

⁹⁵ Harry Paine, “My Mind Wanders Back to Our Childhood Days,” lyrics by “Len” Serviss and Joe Knight (Brockville, ON: J. Knight, c. 1912), Amicus 22353276, LAC.

⁹⁶ Charles E. Bain, “My Old Canadian Home” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1907), Amicus 16413575, LAC.

songs invariably imagined rural homes as icons of a pre-industrial arcadia, symbolizing tradition, community, and security.⁹⁷ Canada's industrial revolution also played a role. Though the Dominion remained predominantly rural in 1900, cities such as Toronto and Montreal had grown rapidly in size and influence. Even agricultural techniques changed as farmers began eschewing self-sufficient operations in favour of specialized commercial farming. Nostalgic songs about pastoral homes of yesteryear demonstrate an undercurrent of recognition that the rise of urban life had posed a challenge to rural existence. For a population that associated rural or small town life with neighbourliness, morality, health, and happiness, this proved a worrying prospect.

Canadian popular song producers worked within the limits of a conventional musical genre to produce a wide variety of material. From courtship to death, from the devoutly sacred to the blithely secular, songwriters hoped to impart lessons about life, love, and responsibility. Collectively, popular songs emphasized that the journey from cradle to grave was one filled with both joy and sorrow. While leisure activities such as bicycling and roller-skating offered pleasant diversions, the needs of family and faith should not be ignored. Neglecting these ties in favour of selfish concerns would only lead to regret. Consumers may have absorbed, negotiated, or rejected this content, but it is telling that songwriters crafted these narratives on the assumption that such tales would sell. At the very least, popular songs offer glimpses of some of the stories people told each other, whether to amuse, to inspire, to caution, or to console.

⁹⁷ Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again," 479; Tawa, *Millions*, 86; Scott, *Singing Bourgeois*, 173.

CHAPTER 9
THE LITTLE PLAYER THAT COULD:
PNEUMATIC PIANOS AND THE MECHANIZATION OF HOME MUSIC

The turn of the twentieth century ushered in a new piece of technology that was to have a dramatic effect on domestic music consumption. The player mechanism, invented in 1897 and commercially available by 1898, enabled the piano to effectively play by itself. Manufacturers, retailers and (eventually) educators and performers lauded the automatic piano as the herald of a new era of musical democracy. The player promised to make music accessible to everyone, regardless of whether one had the time, the money, or the inclination for years of practicing and lessons. For the industry, this meant the ability to market the piano to an entirely new group of consumers. The musical establishment, meanwhile, predicted that the player would enable the masses to cultivate their higher musical instincts. While invigorated by these prospects, supporters of the player equally recognized the threat it posed to existing notions of music's social and cultural worth. For all their trumpeting of twentieth-century improvements, player advocates emphasized the persistence of treasured nineteenth-century beliefs. In their telling, the player made it

easier to achieve the spiritual, social, and cultural rewards of musical proficiency as defined in the late Victorian era. For them, the player represented an adaptation, not a repudiation, of earlier discourses surrounding domestic musicianship.

In the following pages, the terms *player advertisers* and *player promoters* will be used interchangeably as a descriptor for the loose conglomeration of manufacturers, retailers, journalists, teachers, and musicians who for various reasons supported the player piano. Some were bystanders content on occasion to voice their views in favour of the player. Others, finding the success of their careers increasingly linked to the player's commercial success, made more sustained efforts. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* emerges once again as the main platform for player piano supporters to express their ideas. The perspective of player advocates, while instructive, presents only one side of the story. In particular, the views of consumers are largely absent from the archival record. While this chapter gleans evidence of consumer agency from the extant sources, the snippets hint at richer tales that the passage of time has unfortunately rendered silent.

Finally, the ensuing analysis does not describe in any great length the intricate workings of a player mechanism. Such work has already been done by authors whose level of technical knowledge far exceeds mine.¹ Rather, this chapter addresses contemporary debates surrounding the player. As Timothy Taylor attests, it is important to treat technology as something more than a passive entity in the hands of the humans who employ it. Even so, one must avoid the other extreme, where technology becomes a force impacting society in an uncomplicated, linear fashion. Technology's influence lies somewhere between the two, caught up in the "complex, fluid, variable dynamic" that

¹ Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume, *Player Piano: The History of the Mechanical Piano and How to Repair It* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), ch. 7.

characterizes human-environment-object relationships.² Such an approach recognizes that player advocates to a certain extent manipulated discourses to serve their own purposes. At the same time, it acknowledges that they also reacted to a technology whose presence challenged cultural values to an extent they may not have anticipated and did not relish.

Background

The player by no means constituted the first foray into self-playing keyboards. The nineteenth century alone produced numerous instruments that made music in the absence of a competent performer. Some of the resulting inventions were no more than curiosities to be displayed at fairs or industrial exhibitions, but others such as the barrel organ and the barrel piano circulated to an infamous extent. What distinguishes these instruments from the player is that they operated mechanically, usually by way of a rotating crank. A major breakthrough occurred in Germany in 1887 when the Welte Company began to entertain the notion of pneumatic actions, whereby a thin sheet of perforated patterns would govern the passage or blockage of air that, in turn, would activate a lever.³

The earliest player device, dubbed the *piano player*, consisted of a separate floor-length attachment that the user would roll out and rest on top of the keyboard (Fig. 9.1). Pumping the foot pedals on this device activated the bellows, which enabled a long strip of perforated paper to pass over a tracker bar. The tracker bar was connected to pneumatic valves and these valves, in turn, operated “a small row of fingers” which

² Timothy D. Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 26, 30.

³ Ord-Hume, *Player Piano*, 32-33. For more information about the inventions that preceded the player, see Ord-Hume, *Player Piano*, chs. 1 and 4.

would depress the keys on the regular piano keyboard.⁴ The piano player first surfaced in the United States in 1897, and commercial models began to appear barely a year later.⁵ The piano player's rise to fame was short-lived, lasting roughly from 1900 to 1905. The finicky attachment could only cover sixty-five of the eighty-eight notes on a keyboard and it became bothersome to remove when the consumer wanted to play the piano manually. Moreover, the mechanical 'fingers' on the player attachment were fragile and liable to break. The *player piano* (as opposed to the piano player) first appeared in the United States in 1901. Unlike its predecessor, the mechanism was located internally (Fig. 9.2). The player piano furthermore doubled as a traditional hand-played piano, so that the performer could go seamlessly from one function to the other. By 1909, the player piano had eclipsed the older attachment device.⁶ Canadian piano manufacturers embraced the player mechanism. During the early years, they sold and advertised American-built piano player attachments in their retail department. Once the player piano appeared on the scene, they hired other firms to construct the mechanism and then inserted it into their own instruments during assembly.⁷ This chapter will employ the generic term *player* to encompass both the player piano and the piano player, since the technological principle and the discursive debates surrounding the two inventions were identical.

The *music roll* constituted the player's song catalogue. It was a long, thin strip of perforated paper rolled up into a cylinder and placed on a rotating spindle in the mechanism (Fig. 9.3). Pumping the foot pedals caused the roll to rotate and pass from one

⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵ Wayne Kelly, *Downright Upright: A History of the Canadian Piano Industry* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1991), 36; Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1973), 108; Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 39-40.

⁶ Ord-Hume, *Player Piano*, 33-34; Roell, *Piano in America*, 41. Thanks are also due to John Hall who described and demonstrated the workings of a player piano to me in great detail.

⁷ Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 37.

reel to another. In doing so, the paper would pass over the tracker bar, thus activating the pneumatics. Each music roll contained the music for one song. The cylinders were packaged individually in long rectangular cardboard boxes and sold for approximately \$0.75 to \$1.75 each, depending on the length of the musical work in question.⁸

On the eve of the Great War a final invention, the reproducing piano, burst onto the scene. Unlike the player, which merely registered notes, the reproducing piano faithfully inscribed the nuances of the original pianist's performance. This had been achieved by cutting music rolls with extra rows of perforations for expression markings. Manufacturers then took the player piano's expression bellows, which had formerly been operated manually through a series of levers, and linked them up to the pneumatic player mechanism. Most of the world's celebrated pianists registered their performances on the reproducing piano, vastly preferring it to the inferior transcriptions of talking machine records.⁹ This chapter is, however, primarily concerned with the piano player and the player piano since these products circulated most heavily amongst the general public.¹⁰

Suppressing the Piano Girl: Early Support for the Player

Many commentators of the day welcomed the arrival of the player. It would prevent that most lamentable of scenarios: a piano sitting unused in a home devoid of music.

According to Karleton Hackett of the *Ladies' Home Journal*: "Thousands of pianos that

⁸ Melodia, "Making Music Rolls," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 13, no. 8 (January 1913): 35; "Music Roll Trade Menaced," *CMTJ* 15, no. 10 (March 1915): 17.

⁹ Ord-Hume, *Player Piano*, 34. Roell, *Piano in America*, 42-43, claims that the reproducing piano was invented in 1907, but perhaps it was not commercially available until the early 1910s.

¹⁰ The *CMTJ* contains almost no mention of reproducing pianos being marketed to domestic consumers. One suspects that the cost of reproducing pianos would have been significantly higher.

were never touched save on weekly dusting day have been roused by the mechanical player from their long sleep...”¹¹ The musically illiterate were not the only ones perceived to be in need of aesthetic salvation. As previously discussed, the poor quality of amateur pianists had been a running joke for some time. Though influenced by discourses of gender and professionalization, these satires did contain a grain of truth.¹² It is notoriously difficult to assess the ratio of good to poor pianists at the time, or indeed to come to any agreed criteria of what constitutes a competent pianist. Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that there were indeed some rotten amateurs traipsing through Southwestern Ontario (though arguably not as many as contemporaries claimed). Either way, critics considered the player piano a beacon of hope that would stem the tide of musical cacophonies. Player advertisers archly referred to the much-maligned amateur when promoting the superior virtues of their wares. Mason & Risch in 1908 billed its Pianola brand of player as “The Piano Everyone Wants to Hear.” The advertising copy employed a discourse of social utility: “Your friends don’t ask you to play through mere courtesy if your piano is a PIANOLA PIANO. You can give them real pleasure with this instrument. You can play what they like to hear... You do not have to make excuses for your playing. You are never out of practice.”¹³ This passage appears to sympathize with the beleaguered host or hostess, offering the salvation of musical entertainment of predictably perfect quality. At the same time, it encourages the consumer to devalue his or her own playing abilities. It implies that one’s own musical skills have hitherto been

¹¹ Reprinted in “Is ‘Canned’ Music Worth While,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 7 (December 1912): 41.

¹² Craig Roell, *Piano in America*, 37-38. For an enlightening discussion on the poor quality of amateur music making but also the modest expectations of listeners, see Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock ‘N’ Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13-24.

¹³ *Canadian Magazine* 31, no. 1 (May 1908): 49.

tolerated rather than appreciated, and that friends have long since tired of listening to such narrow, hackneyed repertoire. A 1911 ad for Gerhard Heintzman (not to be confused with Heintzman & Company) couched the sting of its message through the use of third-person generalities. It championed its player as a means of “faultlessly” performing selections “far beyond the range of the amateur musician.”¹⁴ Gourlay, Winter & Leeming meanwhile claimed to outdo even prodigious sight-readers: “If you should play ten different pieces every day it would take five years to run through the compositions already available for The Gourlay Angelus.”¹⁵ Regardless of the subtlety of the tactics, the message remained the same. Amateur pianists were being encouraged to indulge in self-criticism, to measure their abilities (and their audience’s interests) in relation to a new standard of note-perfect professionalism.¹⁶

An article from Elmira, New York, reproduced in the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* of 1914, provides an assessment of how early advocates interpreted the sound of mechanical music as compared to notes pressed by the average human hand:

It is another case of seeing something in the ‘hand-made’ quality of things that is not there when you gibe at mechanical piano music and assert that hand playing is much better. Some hand playing is, to be sure, but as it is possible to count the really capable pianists in a city as large as this on the fingers of at least both hands, it naturally follows that the human beings — that is, most of them — who play the piano are inferior as musicians to the perforated music sheet that takes the place of the hands ...¹⁷

This diatribe is fascinating on a number of levels. First, it offers a rare glimpse of the amateur musical landscape of a specific local community, a setting that rarely appears in

¹⁴ *Canadian Magazine* 38, no. 2 (December 1911): 60.

¹⁵ *Canadian Magazine* 32, no. 3 (January 1909): 53.

¹⁶ See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 73, on how today’s public perceives the ability to play a musical piece to rest in the exclusive hands of a gifted minority.

¹⁷ Reprinted in “An Outsider’s Argument for the Player,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 19-20.

the archival record and, when present, often cloaks itself in the glowing phrases of local boosterism. Second, the author issues a devastating attack on the desire for “hand-made” cultural products as an example of misplaced nostalgia. The author then puts forward the unusual but valid argument that human performances can be every bit as pedestrian as those produced by machine: “Most music made by human hands is too mechanical. It is produced by an attempt to slavishly follow the score without at the same time getting the benefit of ‘expression’ because the [human] player is incapable of varying his touch with such art as a Beethoven knew.”¹⁸

An early Mason & Risch advertisement supports this counterintuitive logic that a player device could render a human performance more artistic: “THE PIANOLA takes away from the [human] player the background of every musical composition — the mechanical technique — and gives the player the control of the expression, which contains the artistic color and life.”¹⁹ The poem “Ode to a Player Piano,” which appeared in the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* in 1920, reiterated many of the aforementioned themes of modernity versus amateur philistinism. This time, however, the text emphasized the player as a symbol of fashion, vivacity and leisure, compared to an imagined repressive Victorian past:

Brand new and spotless as can be
 You’re proudly standing there,
 You’ve just come from the shop to me
 Replacing my old square.

We’ll hear no more the minuet
 By maid of gentle station —
 A roll goes in and Grandma’ll play,
 Some modern syncopation.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Saturday Night*, October 20, 1900, p. 11.

From sleep old masters we awaken
 For in these modern times you know
 Sweet Arabella's tunes are taken
 From some 'swift' Broadway show.

No need to wait now ten long years
 Until she really learns to play
 With arduous practice mixed with tears
 And pounding day by day.

A player roll; the trick is done
 There's music in the air.
 With dancing, too, and lots of fun
 We soon forget dull care.²⁰

This author goes to great lengths to depict the manual piano as old-fashioned. The new player replaces not an upright piano, but one of the older 'square' models that had in fact become obsolete by the 1890s.²¹ The style of music performed on the two pianos varies as well. The regular piano is symbolised by the minuet, a courtly dance number originating in the late seventeenth century. While the minuet still figured in the late Victorian pianist's repertoire, it was by no means the most innovative or even the most popular musical form. It does, however, conjure up a stock image of the polite, proper sort of music played by yesteryear's "maid of gentle station." By contrast, the player piano emits the irregular rhythms and catchy tunes of the new Tin Pan Alley musical scene. Even Grandma, whom one would assume to be a beacon of orthodoxy, happily succumbs to player's charms as she rattles off the latest modern number. The presence of the Grandmother alludes to another advertising message: anyone could enjoy music with

²⁰ "Ode to a Player Piano," *CMTJ* 20, no. 11 (April 1920): 67.

²¹ Two of the latest ads for square pianos I have discovered are *Saturday Night*, April 28, 1888, p. 12; *Saturday Night*, April 12, 1890, p. 12.

the player, even if one's fingers had become crippled with arthritis.²² The poem positions the player roll as an agent of liberation, particularly for women who no longer need to devote hours of toil for such meagre musical rewards. Now, Arabella and other would-be Victorian daughters could enjoy their youth by reaping the benefits of musical entertainment without endless hours of sacrifice.

The player piano therefore offered the prospect of harmonious domestic entertainments unsullied by false notes, clumsy technique, or the continual repetition of limited repertoire. Many of the era's more reluctant pianists would have agreed with this assessment, and have welcomed the player as a blessed escape from hours of tedium. Still, not all amateurs were poor performers, and not all viewed piano playing merely in terms of a handy social accomplishment. In their euphoria, early advocates for the player painted the existing musical landscape in very broad strokes. Such portrayals are troubling not only for their inaccuracy, but equally for their devaluing of amateur pianists' hard-won skills. Amateurs found their musicianship compared no longer to their peers, nor even to the rose-tinted memories of visiting concert artists, but to a mass consumer product that could instantly and effortlessly outperform them.

A New Musical Market: Convincing the Musical Establishment

Professional music circles initially disdained the player, fearing it would render their own pedagogical and performance skills redundant. Moreover, they doubted the musical integrity of mechanically produced art. Such reservations eventually dissipated, perhaps

²² See for instance *CMTJ* 14, no. 8 (January 1914): 4. Another way of appealing to the older age demographic was to claim that it was never too late to learn the piano. See *Canadian Magazine* 38, no. 5 (March 1912): 46.

soothed by player proponents' reassurances that the device offered a stepping stone to musical education rather than a replacement of it. The player did not take existing students away from hand-played music, so the argument went. Instead, it introduced an entirely new audience to the delights of a musical life. Those who had never had the good fortune to take lessons, and even those who claimed to have no interest in music, would find enlightenment from the correct playing of sophisticated pieces. As one supporter enthused: "Some may quarrel with the means, but if the end be art — and surely good and accurate piano playing by any means is nearer to art than bad piano playing by hand — then what matter if the means be partly mechanical?"²³ In time, the new consumers' musical sensibilities would supposedly develop to the point that they would want to go one better by learning to play the piano manually. Hence advocates believed that the numbers of students would actually increase thanks to the player.²⁴

Pundits asserted that the player would equally supplement the musical training of existing amateur pianists. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* argued that the player would get young students interested as never before, since the sound of a polished piece of music would give them something to work towards. The music roll would also offer pupils a frame of reference for correct playing, helping them spot and correct their own errors as they practiced.²⁵ The player, moreover, gave students access to a wider range of piano literature, which would help them contextualize their efforts. For instance, students who mastered a handful of Beethoven's thirty-two sonatas could now listen to the entire

²³ "What the Player Puts Within Reach of Every Owner," *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 23.

²⁴ Craig Roell, *Piano in America*, 38, 40, 55-56.

²⁵ "Player Increases Interest in Music," *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 25-26; Roell, *Piano in America*, 56.

oeuvre and obtain a sense of how their particular selections fit into the glorious whole.²⁶ Even students learning other instruments such as the violin would be able to benefit from the player, since it would save them the trouble of enlisting a skilled accompanist.²⁷ At an address before the British Music Trades Association in 1912, conference delegate Sidney Grew maintained that only the poorer sort of music teachers need worry about the player edging them out of a job. The mechanical player could easily outperform the mediocre pianist, but it could not displace the talented artist and educator who would always be sought for his or her unique qualities of expression.²⁸ Player advocates furthermore argued that numerous pupils had been unwilling to put the time into proper practicing before the arrival of the player. These laggards would never make good pianists and therefore did not count as much of a loss to the musical world.²⁹

The music establishment's worries regarding the quality of player music crumbled further after the invention of the reproducing piano. Soon, concert pianists clamoured to render their own performances onto piano rolls as a means of transcribing their work for posterity. Although the talking machine appeared during the first decade of the twentieth century, studios found it difficult to make quality piano records, a problem they did not encounter with other musical combinations. The reproducing piano remained the most accurate way of capturing a pianist's performance until well into the inter-war period.³⁰ Even music rolls destined for the average consumer improved significantly by the

²⁶ Cherubino, *Saturday Night*, April 21, 1900, p. 10; Sidney Grew, "The Development of the Player Pianos and Their Influence on Modern Musical Taste," *CMTJ* 13, no. 3 (August 1912), 46-47.

²⁷ Robert Braine, "Talking Machines and Player Pianos as Aids to Violin Study," from the *Etude*, reprinted in *CMTJ* 13, no. 10 (March 1913): 32.

²⁸ Grew, "Development of the Player," 46. See also Leslie J. Hodgson, "Some Mistakes, and the One Thing Needful," *Conservatory Monthly* 11, no.1 (January 1912): 21, Envelope 4, Box 16, Royal Conservatory of Music Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

²⁹ "Player Increases Interest in Music," *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 26.

³⁰ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), 135-136; Roell, *Piano in America*, 42-44.

century's second decade. Toronto's Otto Higel Company, for instance, manufactured a new line of rolls in 1913 featuring printed numbers on the strips of paper in addition to the perforations. These numbers corresponded to settings on a player piano's speed lever. That way, novices would have a sense of how swiftly they should play a given section of the music, although they were free to adjust the lever at will should they wish to do so.³¹

By the early 1910s, global celebrities such as the educator-pianist Theodor Leschetizky and the piano virtuoso Arthur Friedheim offered public testimonials to the excellence of player pianos. After sampling the New Scale Williams Meister-Touch Player Piano in Oshawa on December 1, 1913, Friedheim enthused: "I could not believe that a player piano could be so flexible in pedal control as to give the dynamics and theme accenting results that you have shown me you can secure...."³² Although Friedheim was likely paid for his endorsement, he would not have risked his professional reputation by recommending an inferior instrument.³³ Granted, elitism did not entirely disappear, for even skillful technology could not negate mundane performances. J.C. Hadden, the acerbic British correspondent for *Musical Canada* related that he "once saw a burly Scots clergyman, who had no more ear for music than an ox, sit down to a piano-player and pump out Chopin for fifteen minutes. Anything more grotesque in the way of a musical 'performance' never came within my experience."³⁴ By and large, however, the musical establishment had come to accept or at least tolerate the new technology.

³¹"Player Piano Music to be Retail at Fixed Prices," *CMTJ* 14, no. 7 (December 1913): 61.

³²*CMTJ* 14, no. 8 (January 1914): 23. For Leschetitzky's testimonial see *The Globe*, October 6, 1906, p. 18.

³³Roell, *Piano in America*, 144-146, 150.

³⁴J.C. Hadden, "Passing Notes," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 8 (December 1912): 253.

The Player and the Politics of Cultural Uplift

The various interest groups supporting the player piano heralded it as the great democratizer for the spreading of musical appreciation. At the same time, they entertained specific views about the sorts of music the public should embrace. They conceded that ragtime, ballads, and other popular fare would initially form the bulk of the mass musical diet. Once the public developed a stronger sense of musicality, however, it would either reject the popular pabulum entirely or supplement it with the more rarefied delicacies of the classical canon. Critics clung to the opinion that popular music was not so much an end in itself as it was a stepping-stone on the path to greater cultural enlightenment. Harmless in small quantities, it should never constitute the entirety of one's musical experience. Such hopes would come to naught, since consumers refused to alter their catholic musical preferences in favour of the uniformity prescribed to them.

Musical connoisseurs placed great stock in the player's ability to transform not only musical technique but taste as well. B.H. Stauffer's 1915 article for *Century Magazine* demonstrates an intriguing combination of economic egalitarianism and cultural elitism. Stauffer championed musical technologies for giving people unlimited exposure to music, regardless of education or financial means. At the same time, he praised mechanical music for "suddenly making the best music as inexpensive as the worst." He related the example of the fictional Jones family. The Joneses would have nothing to do with anything classical and had purchased a rendition of *Tannhäuser* on the mistaken assumption that the title referred to a festive drinking song. Upon the discovery that *Tannhäuser* was in fact a grand opera by Richard Wagner, they banished it to the

bottom of their collection. Some time later, they gave the record another listen and found that it had started to grow on them. “And so the train of evolution will rush forward, bearing the Joneses’ with it until fashion-plate marches are things of the misty backward horizon, and the family has little by little come to know and love the whole blessed field of classical music. And they have found that the word ‘classical’ is not a synonym for dry rot, but it simply means the music that wears best.”³⁵ The metaphor of evolution shows a deliberate hearkening to Darwinian notions of survival of the fittest, which presumably operated on a cultural as well as a biological level. As another contemporary noted, art “follows along a course of natural selection, the trivial and the meritricious [*sic*] continually being displaced in favor of music which, although not making the same instant appeal to the untrained ear as the merely tuneful and jingling works, has qualities that increase and stimulate one’s interest with every repetition.”³⁶ For this writer, however, the adoption of classical music would proceed in a manner in which the participant would play a more active role. It would come about not so much by accident as from a growing appetite for something intellectually substantial.³⁷

“Cherubino,” *Saturday Night’s* music critic in 1900, offered a slightly different take on the player’s capacity for cultural uplift. In a new, musically impoverished nation such as Canada, the player would improve the untutored ears of “provincial” peoples:

Take for instance Beethoven’s Sonata Pathetique, a purchaser of a pianola in a small town like Barrie can procure the music and play the work over and over again till its design, form and beauty become perfectly clear. Without this appliance the tyro would have to spend years in the endeavor to acquire the

³⁵ Reprinted in B.H. Stauffer, “The Mission of Mechanical Music,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 12 (May 1915): 32. This particular article refers to the Jones family buying talking machine records, but the author goes on to say that the same argument could have been made for player piano rolls.

³⁶ “What the Player Piano Puts Within Reach of Every Owner,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 2 (July 1914): 23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

technique necessary to play the sonata himself ... [or] wait for the rare appearance of some virtuoso or phenomenally gifted amateur who could play it for him.³⁸

Music roll manufacturers had furthermore transcribed a vast quantity of orchestral works into piano form in the hopes of increasing the variety of player roll offerings. Ontarians could thus use the player to familiarize themselves with famous orchestral pieces, of which even urbane Torontonians were only dimly aware. In a region where Beethoven's sixth and seventh symphonies had received but a single performance, and the famous choral ninth symphony had never been heard, the possibility of listening to orchestral works scored for player piano roll would be welcome indeed.³⁹ "Melodia," the music correspondent for Toronto's *Star Weekly*, also enthused about classical music's local prospects under the reign of the player roll. Since rolls were priced by length rather than by genre, "The greatest piece of music ever written will cost no more than 'O, You Beautiful Doll!' or 'The Hobble Skirt Walk' – unless it is longer."⁴⁰ Melodia admitted that most of the music rolls sold in Toronto had thus far been of the popular variety, but he (or she) optimistically predicted an upsurge in classical fare in the near future.

Didacticism occasionally found its way into advertisements aimed at the general public. One player ad in *The Globe* urged new owners to "Begin, if you like, with comic opera selections, the light things that have dash and swing and rhythm and sparkle. Grow from that point into an appreciation of finer music – the kind that perhaps bores you now, but which is capable of giving you a keener pleasure than you have ever dreamed of."⁴¹

Advertisers' championing of cultural improvement was not entirely altruistic.

Commercial music indeed formed a significant proportion of sales, yet retailers believed

³⁸ *Saturday Night*, April 21, 1900, p. 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Reprinted in "Making Music Rolls," *CMTJ* 13, no. 8 (January 1913): 35.

⁴¹ *The Globe*, September 19, 1908, p. 2.

that the only way of securing a lifelong music lover (and hence a lifelong customer) was to guide him or her along a path of classical appreciation. They considered popular tunes mere novelties, and assumed that the listener would surely tire of them. When the inevitable did occur, the customer would either return to the retailer in order to purchase new pieces or else give up music entirely. The disastrous consequences of the second far outweighed the benefits of the first. Retailers believed that it was wiser to take the safe approach, guiding their new musical market much as a gardener would tend a flower.⁴²

In spite of the pronouncements, there is little evidence to indicate that the balance in musical tastes changed. Critics bemoaned the low sales for classical rolls, while the figures for popular songs showed no signs of abating. New York's *Elmira Herald* complained, "It is unfortunate that most people choose fool compositions when they buy roll music. Ragtime music played on a piano is bad enough when it is butchered by a human player, but as rendered at full speed with the loud pedal working overtime, as it frequently is on the mechanical player, it is even worse."⁴³ In 1914, the Perforated Music Company announced the twelve best-selling rolls from its Toronto and Montreal factories. These included a smattering of waltzes, popular songs ("He'd Have to Get out and Get Under to Fix Up His Automobile," "There's a Girl in the Heart of Maryland," "Peg o' My Heart"), and spiritual fare such as "Sabbath Day Reflections."⁴⁴ It did not, however, contain any piece that even the most generous of critics would label classical.

The cultural uplifters' strategy failed for a number of reasons. First, their implicit faith in technology as an agent of cultural enlightenment was misplaced. They assumed

⁴² "The Selection of Rolls," *CMTJ* 19, no. 12 (May 1919): 18; "May Discontinue Free Rolls," *CMTJ* 20, no. 11 (April 1920): 39-40.

⁴³ "An Outsider's Argument for the Player," *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 19-20.

⁴⁴ "Popular Rolls," *CMTJ* 14, no. 10 (March 1914): 47.

that one simply had to provide the technology to make classical music effortless and accessible, and the consumer would do the rest. Such thinking rested on the belief that individuals will naturally gravitate to loftier cultural fare. Second, the uplifters misinterpreted the mood of the times. By removing technical skill from music making, the player helped to reconfigure popular notions of leisure. Late nineteenth-century definitions of leisure presupposed an element of endeavour, although such endeavour was supposed to be pleasurable as opposed to strictly disciplinary. By the early twentieth century, contemporaries began to configure leisure as entertainment pure and simple. Amusement parks, dance halls, ice cream parlours, cinemas, and other commercial entertainment spaces contributed to this shift by framing leisure as something passively consumed rather than actively produced.⁴⁵ The player occupied a middling point on the continuum of active versus passive leisure, yet it heralded an important shift away from earlier notions of music as effort. As one author in the *Player Piano Journal* perceptively surmised: “[w]e live in the greatest pleasure-loving age in the history of the world, and never before was wealth so widely diffused; never was there so many people who can afford to gratify their desire for pleasure.”⁴⁶ What cultural uplifters could not understand was that this heady climate of instantaneous gratification conflicted with the plodding ethic of autodidactic musical improvement. For a public being conditioned to enjoy note-perfect music in their homes at the simple push of a foot pedal, it is no wonder that their musical tastes similarly inclined towards the easily digestible.

⁴⁵ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 4-6.

⁴⁶ Alexander McDonald, “No Substitute for Brains in Player Selling,” reprinted in *CMTJ* 14, no. 11 (April 1914): 33, 47. For more on active vs. passive musical engagement see Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 132-133.

The Artist in Us All: The Player and Discourses of Amateur Self-Fulfillment

For aspiring pianists, the player offered an appealing prospect: the ability to play beautiful pieces without undue time, energy, or musical training. Even more intriguing, however, was player manufacturers' insistence that the earthly pleasures of instant consumer fulfillment were not incompatible with the more spiritual satisfactions commonly associated with patient artistic effort. Indeed, promoters concocted an intoxicating prescriptive discourse that tempered the novelty of modern technology, mass consumption, and immediate technical proficiency with a reassuring dose of nineteenth-century bourgeois values. These traditional ingredients included a marked emphasis on individual creativity and the joys of producing music for oneself.

As Craig Roell observes, the player occupied the symbolic heart of the transitional era between a Victorian work ethic and a modern consumer culture of ease and uniformity. The player produced instant results, yet one still had to work for one's music by pumping one's feet and adjusting the expression levers.⁴⁷ This transitional quality is evident in the dualistic language used to describe the player. On the one hand, manufacturers and retailers had much to gain from associating the player with modernity. Emphasizing the instrument's mechanical sophistication increased the public's curiosity. Moreover, narratives of technological progress were liable to have a powerful effect on a society whose notions of historical time tended to be teleological.⁴⁸ A 1902 advertisement for Mason & Risch's Pianola attachment used the slogan "A Modern Invention" and

⁴⁷ Roell, *Piano in America*, 45.

⁴⁸ See for instance early twentieth-century leftists' evolutionary conception of their political mission, Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 29-37.

positioned the device at the summit of the road to improvement: “the Pianola’s rise to a universal popularity is logical, legitimate and natural, and merely emphasizes the broad-mindedness of an age ready to investigate and quick to appreciate merit.”⁴⁹ Some months later, the company’s campaign had altered slightly. It admitted that many forms of technology were not destined to change the world, and existed merely as curios. Some people had wrongly assumed that Pianola fell in these ranks, but they had grossly underestimated its capabilities. Much more than simply a “mechanical toy”, it ranked with the finest discoveries of the industrial era. Indeed, “The universal adoption of the Pianola (as inevitable as was the acceptance of steam and electricity) is only so far distant as the time which must elapse before there is a general understanding of the nature of its services.”⁵⁰ The path of human enlightenment therefore paralleled the adoption of such glorious technological achievements. On a local level, music retailers appealed to consumers’ desire for the conveniences of modern life. Mr. Lee of Hamilton, for instance, deftly compared the player to labour-saving household fittings. When arranging a window display in 1917, he hung a sign with the inscription: “Would you buy a house without lighting and plumbing? Why buy a new piano without a player action in it?”⁵¹

On the other hand, advertisers increasingly realized that they needed to couch their phrasing lest readers become alarmed that the mechanical aspects of the player compromised its artistic elements. By the early 1910s, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* repeatedly advised its readership to avoid referencing the player as “mechanical wonder.” These sorts of messages had worked well during the early years of the player’s introduction, but in point of fact they only secured customers with a short-term interest in

⁴⁹ *Canadian Magazine* 18, no. 4 (February 1902): 48.

⁵⁰ *Canadian Magazine* 19, no. 5 (September 1902): 21.

⁵¹ “What Some Hamilton Dealers are Saying,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 51-52.

acquiring a novelty. Retailers needed to win over the larger swaths of the public looking first and foremost for an artistic musical instrument.⁵²

Player advocates recognized the prejudice against mechanically produced music. Music was a form of art, yet the entire notion of mechanical art seemed contradictory. How could a machine hope to approximate the unique abilities and creative imagination of a human practitioner?⁵³ In light of such misgivings, player advertisers insisted that the instrument was not a mechanical musician but merely a passive enabler of human creativity. As Mason & Risch explained: “music is hidden behind a technic, the mastery of which but few people have time to acquire. The Pianola has changed all this, has slipped the bolt, so to speak... With its aid anyone can play any piano, and play upon it anything he desires to hear. He has all the pleasure of hand-playing, because he controls the expression.”⁵⁴ In these tellings, the player mechanism simply provided a sequence of pitches in the correct rhythmic configurations. The human performer produced everything else, including speed, volume, and other artistic nuances. His or her creative input transformed player music from the mundane to the transcendent. Promoters insisted that anyone could undertake this sacred responsibility, even novices. The player simply gave one the means to produce the music already within him or herself, a bodily experience that was deemed to generate more artistic satisfaction than the passive rituals of listening. Gourlay, Winter & Leeming, for instance, claimed that their player piano was “an instrument, not a machine. It takes the place of the skill and knowledge of a

⁵²“Demonstrating the Player,” *CMTJ* vol. 14, no. 5 (October 1913): 29; “Sell the Musical Instrument, Not a Mechanical Wonder,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 7 (December 1913): 23.

⁵³ See Walter Benjamin “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 221. Benjamin discusses film, photographs, and sound recordings, but the general idea of the “decay of the aura” (p. 222) applies to the player as well.

⁵⁴ *Canadian Magazine* 16, no. 4 (February 1901): xxxvi.

musician. But it leaves you wide scope for expression – for you to fit your own moods, your own feelings...”⁵⁵ Another advertisement noted:

The one kind of amusement that doesn’t grow tiresome is the kind that calls for *individual skill and intelligence*. Anybody can play the Pianola the first time he tries, but that doesn’t mean that he will not improve with practice.

There is a pleasant sense of *personal achievement* in a fine composition well played on the Pianola. No two persons play the Pianola exactly alike, which shows the wide opportunity it affords for the exercise of good taste.⁵⁶

Far from levelling the field of performance to bland uniformity, the player supposedly unleashed the individual potential of otherwise silent musicians. The above text oscillates between a democratic championing of the universal right to partake of artistic production, and hierarchical notions of distinct levels of aesthetic awareness. In particular, the idea of showcasing one’s musical renderings as an indicator of “good taste” harkens back to existing discourses of music as cultural refinement. H.O. Fox indulged a similar vein of thought in an article in the *American Player Piano Journal*:

A player does not ‘play’ the piano in any musical sense. It is merely a means by which anyone may play, the results they get being dependent entirely upon their musical intuition. It is really a note striker, striking the notes correctly, but the time in which the notes shall be struck and the way they are struck must be demonstrated by the individual who is playing the player. Hence to say that a little child can play the Moonlight Sonata is absurd. The child can pump through the roll, and the various notes in the composition will be struck, but they will not be struck in any time or degree that would have any relation to real music.⁵⁷

As these examples demonstrate, promoters insisted that there were proper and improper ways to employ the player. Performers needed to learn how to manipulate the instrument’s various expression levers in order to achieve artistic success. Trades journals placed the onus upon retailers to offer instruction on correct methods of player use, a

⁵⁵ *CMTJ* 18, no. 3 (August 1917): 36.

⁵⁶ *Canadian Magazine* 30, no. 4 (February 1908): 63. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ H.O. Fox, “Playing the Player into the Home,” reprinted in *CMTJ* 16, no. 3 (August 1915): 39.

responsibility it frequently chided them for overlooking.⁵⁸ Enterprising retailers such as Thomas A. Birdsall of Toronto even organized a series of player piano recitals. Listeners would gather to hear a player operator demonstrate both solo pieces and accompaniments for a singer.⁵⁹ The point of these recitals was to showcase the player as an artistic instrument, capable of captivating listeners every bit as much as a live musician.

Another advertising tactic was to personify the player, endowing it with anthropomorphic qualities. The Nordheimer Company advertised its “Human Touch” player piano with the slogan “Perfect as the hand.”⁶⁰ Gourlay, Winter & Leeming boasted in 1907 that their piano player attachment had the distinction of being “the only one possessing the *human touch*”⁶¹ and later insisted that their internal player piano produced a tonal response “so personal that it will yield the daintiest tracery of harmonies in an indescribable richness.”⁶² The Martin-Orme Piano Company of Ottawa meanwhile emphasized the firm’s player as an instrument with sentient qualities, waxing lyrical on its “PERSONALITY” and its “strong human element.”⁶³

Provided that one made full use of its expression levers, the player supposedly enabled its user to better the accomplishments of the world’s great concert artists. In 1900, Mason & Risch promised that regardless of how much musical knowledge one possessed, the Pianola empowered the sensitive amateur to “express in a moment whatever a professional musician can express on the piano, but with equal feeling and

⁵⁸ See for example: “Some Player Piano Don’ts,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 11 (April 1914): 24; “Player Demonstrator-Salesmen Needed,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 23; “The Public Must be Shown,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 3 (August 1915) 34; “Is Player Business Being Neglected?” *CMTJ* 17, no. 5 (October 1916): 18.

⁵⁹ “The Value of Player Piano Recitals and How to Conduct Them,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 5 (October 1913): 29-30. The following month’s issue identifies the author of the article as Thomas A. Birdsall of Toronto who originally wrote it for New York’s *Player Piano Journal*. See *CMTJ* 14, no. 6 (November 1913): 52.

⁶⁰ *Musical Canada* 8, no. 8 (December 1913): 226.

⁶¹ *Canadian Magazine* 28, no. 5 (March 1907): 72. Emphasis in original.

⁶² *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 5.

⁶³ *CMTJ* 16, no. 11 (April 1916): 1.

with better technique than is at his command after years of labor.”⁶⁴ An advertisement for Gourlay, Winter & Leeming went even further. It offered readers the following semi-humorous portrait of Ignacy Jan Paderewski, one of the era’s most celebrated pianists:

When Paderewski,
Eyes ablaze,
Flirts with old Chopin’s
Polonaise
You say: ‘It’s great!’
But you can play
A Gourlay-Angelus [player piano]
That way.⁶⁵

It hardly seems likely that player performances, however artistically executed, could match the prodigious talents and spontaneity of live virtuosos.⁶⁶ The significance is rather that prescriptive player discourse sought to indulge modern consumer desires for easy access without alienating nineteenth-century sensibilities of what constituted good art. The player promised instant wish fulfillment, not only in terms of the superficial pleasures of striking the right notes, but also the euphoria of active aesthetic creation. By investing the player with the solemnity of artistic substance, promoters promised that one could have one’s cake and eat it too. Craig Roell argues that the player piano begat a troubled legacy, based upon a “contradictory ideology ... promoting ease of play while espousing the individual creativity traditionally associated with the producer ethic.”⁶⁷ Jody Berland criticizes the player for promising “the pleasure of creating without work,

⁶⁴ *Saturday Night*, October 6, 1900, p. 11.

⁶⁵ *Canada Magazine* 36, no. 2 (December 1910): 62

⁶⁶ Cyril Ehrlich argues that the early Pianola did not possess much musicality. He notes that the later players represented an improvement but maintains that problems of articulation remained (*The Piano*, 135-136). Arthur Ord-Hume, by contrast, claims that a player piano operated by a sensitive amateur can produce music just as fine as that of a professional, so long as he or she practices the piece thirty to forty times in order to perfect the artistic nuances (*Player Piano*, 257). It is of course impossible for the modern ear to recreate the listening experience of contemporary audiences. The aural soundscape of one hundred years ago provided a different frame of reference for listening. In addition, the instruments themselves have aged and this affects the quality of their tone when performed today.

⁶⁷ Roell, *Piano in America*, 157.

practice, or the taking of time; [and] the opportunity to participate in something valued by others without needing to understand it...”⁶⁸ Player discourse nonetheless demonstrates contemporary negotiations between new technology and existing aesthetic values. It also shows that new consumer products can be framed as both innovative and conservative.

Class and Player Advertisements

Player piano discourse trod an equally fine line between democracy and class-consciousness. Promoters championed the player as a means of instilling equal musical opportunity. Families who could not afford lessons would now have beautiful piano works sounding in their homes. Individuals not accustomed to considering themselves musical could explore these latent sensibilities without committing to a daily practice regime. The player thus widened the market of potential consumers considerably. Craig Roell maintains that the player piano had a significant effect on piano advertising methods. He considers it a catalyst for a shift from Victorian “informative” advertising techniques aimed at urging a pre-existing audience to make a purchase, towards twentieth century “persuasive” style advertising. The persuasive method sought a new target audience, trying to create a want for an object where none had existed before.⁶⁹ Roell’s claim has validity; advertisers indeed wished to appeal to the expanded market that the player rendered possible. Nonetheless, he overestimates the degree to which the player altered the traditional class-based messages of piano advertising.

⁶⁸ Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009), 168.

⁶⁹ Roell, *Piano in America*, 150-151.

Why would advertisers have clung to class-conscious imagery, when the instrument's democratic associations appeared so commercially profitable? Namely, advertisers wished to avoid alienating their traditional market base of middle- and upper-class consumers, who had long equated pianos with prestige and who needed reassurance that the player would not compromise these ideals. Advertising the player as the musical outlet of the common man would have made the elites reluctant to trade in their straight pianos for players, and indeed risked souring their existing respect for the regular piano. As Arthur Loesser observes, the player challenged fundamental aspects of the traditional discourse of piano possession. Owning a piano had formerly implied that one possessed the wealth, the money, and the leisure to acquire musical accomplishments. Since the player enabled consumers to produce music instantly, such skills no longer wielded the same social clout.⁷⁰ This made it doubly important to retain the goodwill of the elite and bourgeois audience. Moreover, even first-time piano purchasers invested in the notion of the piano as a status symbol. The pride of owning a piano in the humbler ranks would have been lessened considerably if the instrument had become so common as to lose its earlier associations of status. It was, in sum, wiser to indulge the new consumers' belief that they were rising socially instead of dismantling the piano's snob appeal.

Indeed, player advertisements are surprisingly reticent on the subject of the instrument's democratic implications. It is rare to find one as explicit as Heintzman & Company's 1907 ad heralding: "A Revolution in the Musical World. The time was, not long since, when it cost a little fortune for a musical education, and then often the one on

⁷⁰ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (1954; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 602.

whom it was spent could play but little. To-day this is all changed...”⁷¹ Most advertisements referenced class obliquely, preferring to frame their discussion in terms of education or leisure time. Anyone who had not studied music, for whatever reason, now had tunes literally at his or her fingertips. Anyone whose life responsibilities had prevented him or her from piano practice could now perform as well as a professional.

While class certainly affected one’s access to education and leisure, other factors may have limited one’s exposure to these benefits. A lack of interest in music lessons or a preoccupation with other activities such as church duties or volunteering could have influenced a lack of musical knowledge. This made education and leisure safer topics of discussion than crude references to income levels. A Gerhard Heintzman ad of 1913 cannily appealed to socio-economic ambitions in the guise of educational acquirements: “Not to know good music is to be but indifferently educated. To-day a knowledge of this subject is expected. Never before was such a knowledge so easy of attainment...”⁷² A 1909 ad for Heintzman & Company preferred to invoke gendered divisions of family labour. “Father does not play; mother, in a lifetime of household duties, has forgotten how; the young folks have set up for themselves, and are away from the old home” and thus the straight piano languished from lack of use. Once the family exchanged it for a player piano, however, a new energy would sweep through the house. “Father will learn to forget the worries of the day as he sits before the instrument. Mother will fill in many a quiet hour when alone during the day.”⁷³ The text here is nicely ambiguous about the class ranking of this family. Father might be a factory hand, but he could just as easily work in a white-collar occupation. Mother’s household chores could be menial tasks such

⁷¹ *The Globe*, November 20, 1907, p. 5.

⁷² *Canadian Magazine* 40, no. 6 (April 1913): 46.

⁷³ *The Globe*, October 2, 1909, p. 7.

as scrubbing the kitchen floor, or she could be spending her days directing a servant and hosting social callers. The advertisement points out that she had once been able to play the piano, hinting that she comes from a refined background. Thus, the advertisement appeals to a broad audience. The essential point here is not the income bracket to which one belongs, but whether one's aspirations conform to ideals of bourgeois refinement.

The compelling image of a lonely, silent pianoforte which the members of a family either cannot or do not want to play appears frequently in player advertisement literature. This depiction sent a powerful message to readers most likely to be swayed by arguments about efficiency. A piano lying silent represented a waste of money and valuable living space; moreover, the piano was letting the consumer down by not performing its primary duty. Shifting the blame for lack of use to the inanimate piano absolved the consumer from any guilt while also conjuring a desire for an immaculate new player. Still, the repeated use of this trope implies that player piano customers were not the class of people who had never owned a piano, but rather those who possessed one not currently serving their needs. Such a message contradicts all the excited talk among the trade about a new target market opening up.

Indeed, a good many of the player ads from this period make far more direct appeals to elitism and class-consciousness. Plenty of the advertisements for the early piano player attachments featured splendidly dressed ladies working the device on costly grand pianos. The following Gourlay, Winter & Leeming advertisement for the Angelus Player Piano (Fig. 9.4) is almost comical in its juxtaposition of the Angelus attachment with the trappings of extreme wealth. The illustration depicts a couple in luxurious evening dress. The woman operates an Angelus attachment that, in turn, is connected to a

long grand piano with beautifully ornate legs and a fanciful arabesque leaf design on the side of its gleaming case.⁷⁴ Ads for upright player pianos engaged in similar types of class posturing. A 1908 Mason & Risch advertisement featured an ultra-fashionable group of slender-waisted, elegantly coiffed, languid ladies. The text informed the reader that the player offered an ideal way to spend one's (supposedly copious) leisure hours.⁷⁵ Other advertisements referred to the possibilities of enjoying one's player while on vacation at one's "summer home," in an era when the use of a holiday residence would have been the distinct preserve of the monied classes.⁷⁶ Indeed, one advertisement in *The Globe* billed its player as "The piano par excellence for the summer home or the yacht."⁷⁷ The rhetoric showed no signs of abating during the second decade of the new century. An advertisement for the Cecilian Company of Toronto announced: "There is about the Cecilian Player an atmosphere of distinctiveness. It radiates good breeding."⁷⁸

Were such promotion methods effective? Scholarly opinion differs on the quantitative extent of the player piano's influence. Craig Roell opines that the arrival of the player proved nothing less than "revolutionary" for the musical consumption patterns of the average household.⁷⁹ Cyril Ehrlich, by contrast, claims that the player never really achieved as high a percentage of total piano sales as its champions had hoped.⁸⁰ The split in the historiography may have something to do with national affiliations. The player

⁷⁴ For other examples of grand pianos being featured in piano player ads see *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 13, no. 5 (September 1899), xxx; *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 14, no. 1 (November 1899), xxxvi; *Saturday Night*, February 19, 1900, p. 11; *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 17, no. 4 (July 1901), 68; *The Globe*, December 21, 1904, p. 2.

⁷⁵ *The Globe*, September 19, 1908, p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 17, no. 4 (July 1901): 68; See Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 112-132 for descriptions of holidaying routines in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Southern Ontario.

⁷⁷ *The Globe*, May 18, 1906, p. 8.

⁷⁸ *CMTJ* 16, no. 8 (January 1916): cover page, verso.

⁷⁹ Roell, *Piano in America*, 45.

⁸⁰ Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 136.

piano enjoyed popularity in England, but not nearly to the same extent as in North America.⁸¹ Roell's American-centered study thus differs from Ehrlich's transatlantic focus. Primary evidence from the Canadian context veers somewhat closer to Ehrlich's version of events. Certainly, the prescriptive literature of the day contained exuberant announcements about the player's runaway success. Musical trade columnist H.H. Wiltshire claimed in 1910 that the player piano had become so popular "that now-a-days in almost every country house and farm house a player-piano is becoming almost as ordinary as is Eaton's catalogue or the family Bible."⁸² In 1913, the *Toronto Star Weekly* happily reported that 25% of pianos being sold in Toronto contained player mechanisms.⁸³ Within the trade, however, manufacturers and retailers privately wondered why player sales continued to flag behind those of regular (or 'straight') pianos. In 1917, one piano businessman estimated that the ratio of players to regular pianos sold was roughly 35 to 65, complaining that by rights it should have been 50 to 50.⁸⁴ Critics noticed uneven patterns of consumption across the country, particularly the reluctance of rural people to embrace the player.⁸⁵ To the trade's astonishment, many members of the public continued to entertain misconceptions regarding the player's capabilities. Two female visitors to London's Western Fair in 1914, for example, admitted that they had not previously known that one could practice on a player piano by hand just like an ordinary piano. Some out-of-town guests of a Toronto hostess in 1917 had never so much as heard

⁸¹ Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 134; Ronald Pearsall, *Edwardian Popular Music* (Vancouver: Douglas David & Charles, 1975), 145.

⁸² H.H. Wiltshire, "A Business Causerie," *Musical Canada* 5, no. 2 (June 1910): 63.

⁸³ Reprinted in "The Player's Capabilities," *CMTJ* 13, no. 8 (January 1913): 23.

⁸⁴ "Fifty-Fifty," *CMTJ* 18, no.1 (June 1917): 58.

⁸⁵ "Player Demonstrator-Salesmen Needed," *CMTJ* 15, no. 1 (June 1914): 23.

of electrically operated player pianos.⁸⁶ Manufacturers and retailers assumed that such ignorance resulted from poor advertising, and responded with a flurry of didactic pronouncements in the trade press.⁸⁷ The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* again touted better salesmanship as a cure-all solution. Retailers had to educate the customer, or face the loss of profits that future player sales would doubtlessly bring.

Such arguments ignored an obvious factor: players cost significantly more than straight pianos. The Pianola, an early player attachment, cost \$275. This figure did not include the price of the piano itself.⁸⁸ Player pianos with the mechanism housed inside the piano case cost roughly double that of a regular instrument. In this respect, the democratic rhetoric of a player piano constituted a farce. The article “The Player’s Progress” came close to the mark when it noted that Ontario farmers recoiled at the notion of paying a few hundred dollars more for a piano with a player mechanism. The thrust of the article was a juxtaposition of rural and urban lifestyles and spending habits, but it unwittingly indicated a major obstacle to the player’s ascent.⁸⁹ Alexander McDonald made a similar argument in the *Player Piano Journal*, again inadvertently since he hoped to promote the player: “A piano is a sign of prosperity, or its absence is an indication of inability to purchase, and it is essential to keep up the front ... With the player it is altogether different. It is not an article of standard home equipment. It is a specialty, and must be sold as a specialty. A man must first be convinced that a player is what he wants, and then he must be convinced that your player is the best for him to

⁸⁶ “Trade Events at London,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 28-29; “Little Known of Electric Player,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 5 (October 1917): 23.

⁸⁷ See for example: “Public Ignorance of Player Piano,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 12 (May 1914): 22; “Taking Care of the Player Piano,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 11 (April 1915): 63; “Proportion of Player Sales Small,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 8 (January 1916) 57-58.

⁸⁸ *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 15, no. 4 (August 1900), xxxviii.

⁸⁹ “The Player’s Progress,” *CMTJ* 13, no. 8 (January 1913): 22.

buy...”⁹⁰ Winnipeg piano dealer John Smith held similar opinions. Upon a return visit in 1913 to his native Guelph, Ontario, he observed that the recent drop in the economy had hurt player sales much more than that of regular pianos. He reasoned that many still considered players a “luxury” as compared to straight pianos, which were deemed necessities.⁹¹ Even the most persuasive advertising could not mask the fact that the player represented a large expense, especially compared to the modestly priced talking machine.

“Well, Father Can Play”: Gender and the Player

Gender was another theme that figured prominently in player discourse. Contemporary advertisements introduced a novel emphasis on men’s ability to contribute to domestic music making without relinquishing women’s duty to provide the same. Manufacturers saw the player as an opportunity to attract a male audience that they had hitherto ignored. Men who laboured at the office all day, they reasoned, could benefit from music’s soothing balm and yet did not have time to learn to play manually. The result was a significant leap in the proportion of men featured in piano advertisements. These new sorts of images frequently showed the wife lounging with some needlework or sitting in rapt attention at her husband’s side.⁹² The wife’s enjoyment of her husband’s musical efforts ensured that the player in no way upset the ideal of blissful togetherness during leisurely evenings in the home. The positioning of the woman as an admiring audience further demonstrated that in spite of his unorthodox hobby, man retained his superior

⁹⁰ Reprinted in “No Substitute for Brains in Player Selling,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 11 (April 1914): 33.

⁹¹ “Winnipeg Dealer Visits East: ‘Jock’ Smith Attends Guelph Old Boys’ Reunion,” *CMTJ* 14, no. 3 (August 1913): 96.

⁹² *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 21, no. 2 (June 1908): 61; *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 32, no. 1 (November 1908) 54. See also *The Globe*, May 23, 1908, p. 8.

position in the gendered hierarchy. The Williams Piano Company of Oshawa ran numerous advertisements emphasizing the player's appeal to the man of business. One headline, "The Work You do Tomorrow Depends on What You do Tonight," (Fig. 9.2) feeds into practical, 'masculine' concerns about workplace efficiency. Meanwhile, the theme of work-related stress and "Jangled nerves" speaks to a new emphasis on mental illness, the presumed effect of the strain of modern living. The notion of leisure as a necessary release for suppressed tensions also betokens the Edwardian era's shift away from the Victorian dislike of idleness.⁹³ These messages persisted for many years. In 1916, the Cecilian Company urged music dealers to "Sell a Cecilian player to a man – he gets evenings of real pleasure because of the quality, of what it can do – he goes to bed with his musical nature properly nourished – he goes to work next morning the better for it – he gets home at night eager for more music."⁹⁴

One aspect that did change between the 1900s and the 1910s was an increased emphasis on the family as an interconnected unit as well as a more fervid positioning of the home as central to one's spiritual happiness. Two advertisements for the New Scale Williams Player Piano from 1914 demonstrate this newer intensity. Both of them emphasize the patriarch's introduction into the world of domestic music making, to the benefit of familial ties. The first (Fig. 9.5), entitled "Well, Father Can Play" shows a middle-aged man, with thinning hair and a respectably portly torso entertaining his young family. The mother is seated while her adolescent daughter places a protective hand on the back of the chair, cradling her mother's head with her arm. The daughter's other arm

⁹³ Jasen, *Wild Things*, 105-111. For other examples of New Scale Williams advertisements with these themes, see *Canadian Magazine* 31, no. 3 (July 1908): 59; *Canadian Magazine* 31, no. 5 (September 1908) 43.

⁹⁴ *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 28.

reaches out to hold the hand of her younger sister. The sequence of arms links the mother, the young woman and the little girl, implying that the two daughters can look forward to one day forming their own happy families along similar lines. The son, a lanky youth, prefers to stand next to his father. He rests by leaning one elbow on the piano as he looks fondly at his parent performing. This posture implies that the young man also has the blueprint for a felicitous future before his eyes.

The second advertisement, entitled “Here’s Dad to Play for Us!” (Fig. 9.6) shows a father now somewhat past middle age, wearing spectacles and stooping ever so slightly. He leans on the arm of his grown-up daughter who beckons him to play for a gathering of her young fashionable friends. The newspaper in the father’s hand indicates that he had been otherwise engaged and had entertained no thought of bursting in on the group’s activities. The fact that the younger people are asking him to perform is significant; it shows that they harbour a deep respect for him and his talents. The text admonishes: “Why shouldn’t this mean you, Sir or Madam – why not keep young with the young folk? Why not refresh your tired spirit all the rest of your days with the ever-youthful gaiety of music?” Thus, music serves as a means of escape from not only the cares of the workday but also the accumulation of years’ worth of worries, as well as the gradual onset of age and infirmity. The father is young once more with the mere flick of a finger and the push of a foot pedal. More importantly, he is strengthening his bonds with the younger generation, ensuring that they will continue to seek his wisdom as they embark upon adulthood. These depictions of domestic unity offered a comforting antidote to contemporary concerns over the young seeking leisure away from the home.

Just as male player piano activity was not supposed to alter the power relations between the husband and wife, a father's piano playing did not challenge his role as head of the household. A 1920 advertisement encouraging music dealers to stock the Gourlay-Angelus Player Piano offered an interesting take on the nuclear family as a "buying unit." A Gourlay-Angelus player was "so responsive that the little folks enjoy playing. The delicacy of the lines of its case design appeals to the woman who appreciates good taste in home furnishings. The price is such that father, the man of business, knows his family is getting the maximum of quality for every dollar of the instrument's cost."⁹⁵ Thus children supposedly valued a piano for its merriment and ease of operation, the mother remained the patron saint of home decoration, and the father kept his position as breadwinner and the economic brains of the family. Women's continued presence in player advertisements offered another method of guarding the sanctity of the gendered status quo. The Cecilian Piano Company billed their player piano as "the *only* one which a woman can operate *without fatigue*."⁹⁶ The accompanying image featured a fashionable woman practicing her instrument and looking down at her curly-haired daughter who in turn gazed up at her. This advertisement stressed that even mothers with no piano skills of their own could now give their daughters a rich musical upbringing. Other advertisements of the day featured women performing on the player, or displaying it to a crowd of admiring female friends. These examples helped ensure that the male market for players did not compromise the piano's traditional link to female domesticity.⁹⁷

Even so, music dealers were intrigued by the possibility of a higher male customer demographic. It required, they thought, an adaptation of existing selling

⁹⁵ *CMTJ* 20, no. 10 (March 1920): 4.

⁹⁶ *CMTJ* 7, no. 4 (October 1903): 32. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁷ See for example *The Globe*, November 23, 1907, p. 13; *The Globe*, March 14, 1908, p. 11.

techniques that had heretofore presumed the primary user to be a woman. Various members of the trade wrote the *Canadian Music Trades Journal*, offering their perspective on how best to cater to the new male clientele. These excerpts illustrate that the advent of the player piano may have altered the gendered landscape, but it by no means created an equal playing field. The author of one piece declared that dealers would do well to ensure that male customers received some preliminary lessons on how to use a player. It would also be wise to conduct occasional visits to help men sustain a long-term interest in their instrument. The article made no mention of adopting similar tactics for musically inexperienced females. Although never stated explicitly, the article implies that men need particular watching because they are not as musically inclined as women.

Whether by nature or by nurture, men will find musical activity more of a conscious effort and therefore their interests may fade sooner.⁹⁸ Thomas A. Birdsall reinforced the notion of women being better suited to music's emotional pleasures. He observed that men tended to admire the player's mechanical aspects. Men's musical tastes furthermore centered on the broader scope of a piece, its overall effect rather than its niceties.

Women, by contrast, possessed a greater affinity for music's emotional nuances:

a man is not nearly so critical as a woman. If he sits down and grinds out a piece, no matter how mechanical it may be, he feels that he has done something of great importance, to himself at least, and he is more apt to overlook the finer points of interpretation and expression than is a woman. On the other hand, a woman will look only to the results produced, whereas a man will want to know 'how' they are produced.⁹⁹

Birdsall advocated selling men catchy songs with instantaneous appeal. Accustomed to an active, can-do approach to life, such men would presumably not have the patience to appreciate introspective works. Birdsall argued that such disparities derived from

⁹⁸ "Player Owners Need Attention," *CMTJ* 14, no. 6 (November 1913): 28-29.

⁹⁹ Thomas A. Birdsall, "The Player – a Man's Piano," *CMTJ* 14, no. 5 (October 1913): 34.

differences in upbringing.¹⁰⁰ Still, the description of male intellectual breadth versus female patience and precision invokes essentialist notions of difference.

Player piano advertisers and retailers therefore tried to engage the male market without eroding the discursive links that made women such a captive audience for music making. While the player removed the hours of drudgery of the female practice regime, it offered only a partial emancipation. Whenever their menfolk decided to toy at the player for an evening restorative, women were still supposed to listen, watch, and join along in song. In short, men made music in the home by choice. Women made music because it was part of their feminine destiny.

Player advocates therefore navigated a middle ground between celebrating and marginalizing the player's role as a mass-produced, domestic technology of convenience. While championing the instrument's technical ingenuity and democratic potential, they insisted that the player would adapt, but certainly not destroy, the system of beliefs that had formerly given domestic music making so much social and cultural clout. In the long run, however, the traditional argument failed. Having introduced the notion of convenient musical consumption, albeit in modified form, the player contributed to the constellation of factors that ushered in more unambiguously passive products of musical consumption such as the talking machine and the radio. The public may have initially recoiled at the prospect of mechanical art, but as it grew more inured to the notion convenience won out over a prim adherence to manual activity. When talking machines and radio began to offer music at a fraction of the cost of players, without all the bothersome foot pedaling, consumers happily chose the path of least resistance.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 10

SONGS OF SACRIFICE:

MUSICAL REPERTOIRE DURING THE GREAT WAR

In the wake of the cheering crowds, factory whistles, and waving flags proclaiming the end of war in Europe, Leo Smith, Mus.Bac., sat down to write a postscript for the November 1918 editorial for TCM's *Conservatory Quarterly Review*. "News of the armistice came just after the preceding paragraphs had gone to press," he wrote. "The sudden lifting of the darkest cloud of oppression which history records, will naturally reflect itself in every phase of existence; and the promise of a new dawn which will bring with it the leisure to again partake of the message of the Arts, should constitute the most gladdening and stimulating effect to all who express themselves in 'the language of the infinite.'"¹ Smith's interpretation of the preceding four years as both politically and artistically challenging speaks volumes about the ways in which music lovers engaged with the war and the effort to win it. This chapter will begin broadly, addressing the musical community's response to the conflict and how international hostilities impacted

¹ Leo Smith, "Editorial Comments," *Conservatory Quarterly Review* 1, no. 1 (November 1918): 2, Box 43, Royal Conservatory of Music Fonds [henceforth RCM Fonds], A1975-0014, UTA.

once-cosmopolitan listening tastes. The discussion will then narrow to focus on Canadian composers' production of patriotic music. Unlike previous studies of Canadian Great War songs, this foray will situate the works within a longer tradition of popular songwriting. Building on themes introduced in Chapters Seven and Eight, it will consider the continuities that link, and the contrasts that distinguish, wartime music from songs of the preceding era. In sum, this chapter argues that the Great War impacted the lives of performers and composers in significant, specific ways. While a few monographs consider everyday life on the Canadian home front, none address music lovers' response to the conflict.² As this chapter will demonstrate, the musical community's experience cannot be subsumed in the broader sweep of civilian experiences. Music lovers, though ardently patriotic, interpreted and adapted to the war in their own distinct ways.

From Cosmopolitans to Patriots: The War and Music Circles

News of the outbreak of war in Europe had an electrifying effect upon Canadians, touching off a flurry of emotions that ran the gamut from excitement to anxiety. Musicians would also have been wrestling with contradictory feelings, arguably intensified by the international scope of their aesthetic interests and professional

² For recent monographs discussing the Canadian home front see Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Suzanne Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); Susan R. Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Sarah Glassford, and Amy Shaw, eds., *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); David Mackenzie, ed., *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

acquaintance. In a somber statement that contrasted with the buoyant patriotism of the Anglo-Canadian mainstream, *Musical Canada*'s Ottawa correspondent observed in October 1914, "It is impossible to speak of the future as so much depends on the outcome of the war. At present no one seems to have any thought but of its terribly devastating effect, and the sorrow and sadness which have already and must continue to follow in its train."³ Though Canadian musicians saw themselves first and foremost as members of an Allied country, they also belonged to an international community of music lovers. As the *Canadian Journal of Music* attested, "Of all professionals, your musician, being the most cosmopolitan, is the quickest to feel the effect of international disturbance."⁴

Canada's musical circles included a number of foreign-born members, yet the majority of these were British or American emigrants. A handful of others came from Allied countries such as Belgium, Russia, or France. Although it would hardly have been politic to announce one's German or Austro-Hungarian ethnicity in a wartime political climate, a survey of pre-war musical journals does not indicate an overwhelming number of musicians claiming enemy origins.⁵ Instead, the Canadian musical community's ties with Germany derived largely from those who had completed their education abroad. Leipzig remained one of the most popular destinations for students seeking a career in music. Canadians receiving musical training in Leipzig between 1885 and 1914 included well-known figures such as: Nora Clench, Harry Field, W.O. Forsyth, Annie Lampman Jenkins, Waugh Lauder, A.S. Vogt, Frank Blachford, Harry Puddicombe, Frank

³ L.W.H., "At the Capital," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 6 (October 1914): 141.

⁴ *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 4 (September 1914): 82.

⁵ Exceptions include: Luigi von Kunits (Austria), Walther Kirschbaum (Austria), and H.J. Lautz (Germany). Otto Higel, the Toronto manufacturer of piano actions, was born in Germany. Musician Augustus Stephen Vogt was a Canadian-born musician of German parentage. See *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 4 (September 1914): 82; Florence Hayes, "Otto Higel Co. Ltd," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter *EMC*] <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/otto-higel-co-ltd> (accessed May 29, 2013).

Welsman, Ernest Whyte, and Lina Dreschler Adamson.⁶ Most spent between one and five years in the city, and the influence of such vibrant artistic surroundings cannot be underestimated. Pianist Louise McDowell described her arrival in Leipzig in the 1890s as “a sudden transition from poverty of musical experience to riches, beyond imagination, of musical opportunity [...]”⁷ These musical sojourners would surely have tried to maintain their valuable Leipzig contacts upon their return to Canada. Those with the funds to do so returned periodically, either for additional training or simply in order to appreciate the cultural scene. Composer-pianist W.O. Forsyth, for instance, attended the Leipzig Conservatory from roughly 1886 to 1888, and made return visits to Germany in 1892, 1905, and 1912.⁸ Berlin, though lesser in prominence, remained another popular destination. Composer Gena Branscombe, and pianists Ernest Seitz and Paul Wells were only some of the musicians born or resident in Canada who trained in Berlin.⁹

Even music lovers deprived of the good fortune to study in Germany nevertheless became familiar with the country’s cultural scene with information gleaned from music journals. *Musical Canada*, for example, published columns from overseas correspondents reporting on the musical happenings in cities such as Dresden and

⁶ Helmut Kallmann, “Germany,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/germany> (accessed November 15, 2012). For Lina Adamson see “Bertha Drechsler Adamson,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/bertha-drechsler-adamson> (accessed June 12, 2013).

⁷ Louise McDowell, *Past and Present: A Canadian Musician’s Reminiscences* (Kirkland Lake, ON: 1957), 39.

⁸ “Reminiscences of a Summer’s Jaunt through a Portion of Germany, W.O. Forsyth, 1887,” Box 12, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC; Elaine Keillor, “Biographical Sketch of W.O. Forsyth,” Envelope 4, Box 13, pp. 12R, 20, 20R, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC; Elaine Keillor, “W.O. Forsyth,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/wo-forsyth> (accessed November 15, 2012). Forsyth wrote an article with the unflattering title of “Flagrant Evils of Musical Life in Germany,” in *Violin* 1, no. 1 (March 1906): 3-4. This article, however, did not condemn Germany in particular but rather the rivalries, factionalism, and nepotism in the music circles of European cities in general.

⁹ For Gena Branscombe see Sydney Dalton, “Our New York Letter,” *Musical Canada* 4, no. 7 (November 1909): 203. For Paul Wells see “Mr. Paul Wells,” *Musical Canada* 8, no. 7 (November 1913): 183. For Ernest Seitz see Marjorie Hale and Patricia Wardrop, “Ernest Seitz,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/ernest-seitz> (accessed May 17, 2013).

Berlin.¹⁰ Occasionally, these updates would take on a more personal note as well-known Canadian musicians travelled to the continent. A. S. Vogt, a Canadian-born musician of Germanic background, took a year's sabbatical from his duties as conductor of Toronto's Mendelssohn Choir from 1912 to 1913 in order to visit the musical capitals of Europe.¹¹ Vogt wrote lengthy articles about his musical travels to cities such as Berlin and Dresden, waxing eloquent on the musicality and the kindness of the German people.¹² Indeed, the musical community's inability to foresee war may be illustrated by the Mendelssohn Choir's elaborate preparations for a tour of Britain and Germany for the year 1915. These plans included a grand performance in the German capital accompanied by the Berlin Philharmonic. By March 1914, the choir had raised \$62,500 towards the \$75,000 travel costs, including a \$10,000 donation from Toronto City Council.¹³ The outbreak of hostilities that August quickly put an end to the project.

Whatever inconveniences the Mendelssohn Choir faced, its members were at least lucky enough to be on home turf when war broke out. Other Canadian musicians did not fare so well. Summertime signalled a fallow period in a musician's calendar when teaching duties and concert engagements all but ceased. Many took advantage of the lull in their schedules to travel either for study or for vacation purposes. The summer of 1914 proved no different in this regard. The ranks of Canadian personnel "marooned" in Europe included Dr. Harry Crane Perrin and Frederick Blair of Montreal, as well as Albert Ham, Leo Smith, J. Earle Newton, H.J. Lautz, Walther Kischbaum, and Healey

¹⁰ *Musical Canada* 4, no. 7 (November 1909): 203; *Musical Canada* 4, no. 9 (January 1910): 293.

¹¹ "No Mendelssohn Choir Concerts," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 1 (May 1912): 15-16.

¹² A.S. Vogt, "Musical Experiences in Europe," *Musical Canada* 7, no. 11 (March 1913): 367-372.

¹³ "Return of Dr. Vogt," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 1 (May 1913): 13; "Mendelssohn Choir Festival," *Musical Canada* 8, no. 11 (March 1914): 313, 315-316; "Mendelssohn Choir Tour," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 2 (June 1914): 36-37.

Willan of Toronto.¹⁴ Those studying, visiting, or performing in Germany and Austro-Hungary in early August 1914 found themselves in the particularly unenviable situation of being stranded in an enemy country. *Musical Canada* referred to an Ottawa singer working in London, England, caught in Munich upon the declaration of hostilities. The journal recounted with relish his tumultuous escape, enlivened by possibly apocryphal accounts of his repeated arrests as a spy before reaching the safety of Allied lines.¹⁵ Miss Rachelle Copeland of Toronto was completing violin studies in Dresden that summer. The authorities imprisoned Copeland for three months before, as *The Globe* coyly put it, she “had an exciting experience in getting away.”¹⁶ Meanwhile, the young organist Ernest Macmillan was in Bayreuth attending a Wagner opera festival when war broke out. His local friends believed that he was in no immediate danger and their advice, combined with Macmillan’s trust in German civility, convinced him to stay put. As a result, he was imprisoned in a civilian internment camp until the Armistice.¹⁷

Clement Antrobus Harris, the British correspondent for *Musical Canada*, voiced some of the confusion of those whose patriotism could not quite submerge friendlier memories of a pre-war German culture. “It is sad to be at war with the countrymen of Bach and Handel ... of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn,” Harris lamented. “But not one man in a million denies the necessity and justice of it. A traveller whose

¹⁴ “Editorial,” *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 4 (September 1914): 82; “Echoes of War,” *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 4 (September 1914): 84.

¹⁵ “Music at the Capital,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9, (January 1915): 213.

¹⁶ “Rachelle Copeland’s Debut,” *The Globe*, January 13, 1917, p. 15; “Miss Copeland’s Debut,” *The Globe*, January 27, 1917, p. 17.

¹⁷ Ernest Macmillan, unpublished memoir, pp. 7-11, Box 126, Ernest Macmillan fonds, MUS 7, LAC; John Beckwith, “Ernest Macmillan,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/sir-ernest-macmillan> (accessed November 23, 2012). See also clip of Tony Thomas’ June 17, 1957 radio interview with Macmillan regarding his wartime internment on CBC digital archives, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/war-conflict/first-world-war/the-first-world-war-canada-remembers/sir-ernest-macmillan-recalls-being-a-pow.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

letter I read two days ago spoke of the great kindness of the German people up to the very eve of war. Evidently there is some sinister influence at work in the Berlin government which, one hopes, misrepresents the great mass of opinion were it free to speak.”¹⁸ Wesley Mills, a McGill physiology professor lately retired to England, would have agreed. A keen music aficionado, he decried discrimination against German and Austro-Hungarian musical immigrants. Reminding his readers that they owed a cultural and educational debt to pre-war Germany, he insisted that “[a]rt is cosmopolitan, and should not be cramped by national boundaries.”¹⁹

These sentiments echo a wider attempt to explain how an industrial, progressive, Christian nation such as Germany could commit acts of military aggression. Though English-Canadians reserved the pinnacle of human achievement for the Anglo-Saxon race, Germany had previously occupied a lofty position relative to the rest of continental Europe. Some sort of mental compromise was therefore necessary in order to preserve the integrity of the existing hierarchy of humanity. As the historian Ian Miller observes, during the first few months of the war, many Toronto residents depicted the conflict as something imposed by the Kaiser upon the hapless people of Germany. Thus, Canada fought against an evil madman rather than an entire nation. This view vanished by May 1915, as news of the gas attack at Ypres and the sinking of the *Lusitania* passenger ship led to stark depictions of Germans as a race both violent and depraved.²⁰

¹⁸ Clement Antrobus Harris, “Passing Notes,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 5 (September 1914): 112.

¹⁹ Wesley Mills, “The Musical and the Dramatic World of England Before and Since the War Began,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 11 (March 1915): 257. For biographical information on Mills see “Death of Professor Wesley Mills,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 11 (March 1915): 274; Faith Wallis, “Mills, Thomas Wesley,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=7604 (accessed November 29, 2012).

²⁰ Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 31-32, 44-45.

Musical circles absorbed this debate, but their difficulty resonated on a more specific, immediate level. Musical devotees found themselves perplexed by the question of whether it was morally wrong to perform or listen to compositions penned by German composers. Having idolized the classical masters as geniuses channeling the music of the heavens, it seemed incongruous to associate them with the very earthly politics of twentieth-century Germany. Something still rankled, however, and musicians searched for a way to enjoy this music in a way that soothed their patriotic conscience. *Musical Canada* and *Saturday Night* illustrated this sense of unease when they cited English news articles exempting various composers from the ignominious label of being ‘German.’ Georg Friedrich Handel had lived a considerable portion of his adult life in England, becoming “a naturalized Englishmen” in 1726.²¹ Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, and the Strausses came from the Jewish ‘race’ and therefore did not count as ethnic Germans. Haydn, Schubert, and Weber, meanwhile, were Austrians, a ‘race’ that, despite finding itself on the enemy side, does not seem to have inspired the same degree of vilification in the musical press.²² As late as September 1917, the *London Free Press* cited the oft-repeated tale of Beethoven tearing up the Eroica Symphony’s dedication to Napoleon upon learning that the latter had pronounced himself Emperor of France. With a dash of wishful thinking, the *Free Press* concluded that “[a]ny partisan of the allies can play Beethoven’s music to-day with a clear conscience, knowing that the master of Bonn and

²¹ “Handel an Englishman,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9 (January 1915): 226. Reprinted from the *London Choir*.

²² “Hearsay and Happenings,” *Saturday Night*, December 5, 1914, p. 27. See also Arthur Hartmann, “Is America Musical?” *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 7 (February 1915): 138-139.

Vienna had a taste for freedom, an appreciation of personal worth, and a pronounced distaste for the militarist madness which has plunged the world into shambles.”²³

As another article observed, the current war resulted from the former Prussian state’s iron grip over Germany’s governing institutions. Southern Germany in particular, it was rumoured, did not relish going to war. Prussian militarism, Prussian arrogance, and Prussian brutality had concocted the war that threatened civilization. Devoid of the refining influences of artistic culture, it was no wonder that Prussia displayed such bellicose expansionist tendencies.²⁴ Indeed, critic Hector Charlesworth insisted that militaristic Germans despised their country’s nineteenth-century Romantic tradition on the grounds that it interfered with their thirst for blood and fire. These interpretations effectively separated the artistic strains of German culture from the militaristic strains.²⁵

Even so, ugly sentiments could infest musical circles, particularly as the conflict wore on, and benign memories of a peaceful Germany began to sink under the weight of wartime propaganda and ragged emotions of loss. Thus, a second way of reconciling Germany’s musical heritage with the modern wartime climate was to chart the past several decades of the nation’s history as a catastrophic fall from grace. *Saturday Night* represented the German people as a race whose artistic heyday had come and gone: “Time was when Germany excelled in this [musical] art, but Kaiserism changed all that. Imperial favor looked more to Krupp guns, Zeppelins, and other weapons of wholesale murder with the result that musical composition languished.”²⁶ The *Canadian Journal of*

²³ “Beethoven a Republican,” *London Free Press*, September 29, 1917, p. 9.

²⁴ “No Prussian Composers,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9 (January 1915): 213. Reprinted from *Yorkshire Post*.

²⁵ Hector Charlesworth, “Music and the Drama,” *Saturday Night*, October 17, 1914, pp. 6-7.

²⁶ *Saturday Night*, October 3, 1914, p. 1.

Music included a poem entitled “Germania” which depicted the German nation as brutes callously betraying the culture of earlier generations:

Rapine and murder, bloodshed and crime
 Committed, to thine everlasting shame,
 By scions of those who scaled the empyrean heights
 And graced the crown of Saint Cecilia.
 O shades of all thy glorious sons
 Who dared to soar on Music’s wings
 And plucked their songs from God’s own lips,
 Lending divinest confirmation to
 Men’s hopes of immortality,
 With what abiding horror do they gaze
 On dread destruction and full wanton lust
 Of those who nursed their infant steps
 And gloried in their wondrous fame!...²⁷

The *London Advertiser* reported rumours of the German army melting down the original engraving plates of iconic classical scores in order to produce machine gun bullets.²⁸ As late as June 1918, *Everywoman’s World* music critic Katherine Hale mused that in the thirty-five years since Wagner’s death, “It was as though, after the Franco-Prussian War, the character of the two nations reversed, the Germans getting farther and farther away from any spiritual vision in their music, and the French whose earlier composers were merely frivolous, learning through suffering the tremendous meaning of music.”²⁹

Despite efforts to separate the German musical tradition from the Kaiser’s troops, the topic remained controversial. Some critics interpreted Germany’s strong presence in the music canon as another facet of her aggressive pursuit of dominance.³⁰ A musical club in the Toronto region held a debate on the question of whether German

²⁷ Maclean Borthwick, “Germania,” *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 8 (March-April 1915): 165.

²⁸ “Music Plates Used for German Bullets,” *London Advertiser*, June 2, 1917, p. 5.

²⁹ Katherine Hale, “What Will Our Music Prophesy,” *Everywoman’s World* (June 1918): 9.

³⁰ “Glorious Festival to Complete Season of Musical Art Society,” *London Advertiser*, April 21, 1917, p. 15; “German Influence Thing of the Past,” *London Advertiser*, May 19, 1917, p. 12.

music should be prohibited for the duration of the war.³¹ The *Toronto Daily Star* even published an editorial supporting a local physician's outrage after he heard a theatre orchestra perform music by a German composer. Anxious and bereaved audience members, the *Star* argued, deserved to enter public venues without the fear of listening to Teutonic strains.³² Others maintained that the beauty of the music outweighed any qualms about a long-deceased composer's origins. The London Musical Art Society, for instance, performed Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* early in 1918. Far from condemning the gesture, the local *Advertiser* even published a biographical sketch of Schubert some weeks later, praising his genius while discreetly avoiding the question of his nationality.³³ The *Hamilton Herald* moreover believed that the appeal of a cherished wedding march outweighed puerile discussions of ethnic origins. It printed a transcription of the Bridal Chorus from Wagner's *Lohengrin* for the wedding season of 1917.³⁴

Further obstacles appeared for those wishing to enjoy German music. Those who did not already possess a copy of a beloved work found it increasingly difficult to purchase one. By the final months of 1914, both Canada and Britain decided to maintain the integrity of German copyrights in spite of the current hostilities. Music dealers therefore could not order bona fide copies of songs from Germany, yet they could not commission a reprint without committing piracy.³⁵ Existing copies of German

³¹ *Sunday World*, December 2, 1916, unplaced clipping, scrapbook p. 71, Box 13, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

³² "German Music at the Movies," *Toronto Daily Star*, May 29, 1918, p. 10.

³³ A. Minor, "Music in the Home," *London Advertiser*, February 23, 1918, p. 5.

³⁴ *Hamilton Herald*, May 5, 1917, p. 2.

³⁵ "Ottawa News," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 26; "How Will the War Affect the Sheet Music Trade," *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914) 56; "Replies to Mr. Wray's Letter," *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 45, 47.

compositions still under copyright eventually ran out, with no opportunity to replenish stocks until after the end of the conflict.³⁶

For those eager to avoid controversy, celebrating the music of Allied Nations constituted a safer option. British and French music had always been popular in Canada. Russian music, on the other hand, possessed a bewitching novelty factor. Women's Music Clubs across the country and even Toronto's Mendelssohn choir devoted concerts to Russian composers.³⁷ The Russian Symphony Orchestra, residing in the United States until the cessation of international hostilities, gave a highly anticipated concert in London, Ontario.³⁸ The Cherniavsky Trio performed in Massey Hall to a large audience that "was not slow to show its unequivocal endorsement of the Russian brothers." Nevertheless, the *Canadian Journal of Music* could not escape a xenophobic distaste for "their ceaseless gesticulation and rocking gestures, which perhaps desire to convey that they are forever swimming in a hypercelestial sea of nameless over-emotions."³⁹

As a palliative to wartime's disruption of musical life, critics comforted themselves with the argument that aspiring Canadian musicians would remain in the country, thereby filling student, teaching, and performing positions to an unprecedented degree.⁴⁰ One author even indulged an ambitious vision of Toronto becoming an Allied-friendly musical Mecca for the post-war world. "Musically Dresden is dead, and not for long years can it hope to enrol [*sic*] again the thousands of English-speaking students

³⁶ "No Decline Shown in Study of Music," *London Advertiser*, June 12, 1917, p. 5.

³⁷ "Setting Apart a Week to Feature Russian Music," *CMTJ* 15, no. 9 (February 1915): 56; Luigi von Kunits, "The Mendelssohn Choir," *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 11 (March 1916): 203-204. See also "Footlights," *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 8 (December 1915): 134.

³⁸ "Glorious Festival to Complete Season of Musical Art Society," *London Advertiser*, April 21, 1917, p. 15.

³⁹ "Cherniavsky Trio," *Canadian Journal of Music* 2, no. 8 (December 1915): 125.

⁴⁰ "The Toronto Conservatory of Music," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 6 (October 1914): 153.

who contributed to its wealth,” leaving Toronto poised to step into the void.⁴¹ Canadian newspapers and music journals similarly reprinted articles from American and British periodicals applauding increased opportunities for home grown talent, opportunities that inevitably came at the expense of colleagues bearing names deemed too Germanic.⁴²

There is no evidence to suggest that, despite occasional grumblings, Ontario’s teaching and performing institutions followed the example of their British counterparts in dismissing musicians of enemy-alien heritage. This may be because there were not many Germans or Austrians in the ranks to begin with. Meanwhile, the few who did possess such backgrounds were usually too highly placed and well respected to suffer any career repercussions. The Toronto Conservatory of Music, the self-proclaimed shining example to music schools throughout the country, was hardly likely to pursue a discriminatory policy given that its musical director, A.S. Vogt, possessed German parentage. Similarly, the great Austrian violinist Luigi von Kunits, resident in Toronto only since 1912, was too eminent a personality to be demoted by wartime politics. He had famously turned down an offer from the Philadelphia Orchestra in order to teach in Toronto, and the musical community knew full well that they were lucky to have him. Moreover, as editor of the *Canadian Musical Journal*, contributor to several newspaper music columns, and director of the Canadian Academy of Music’s string quartet, von Kunits wielded significant influence.⁴³ While informal acts of prejudice may have slipped through cracks in the documentary record, it appears that Ontario musicians’ dislike of German or

⁴¹ “Toronto Can Become the Dresden of America,” unplaced clipping, scrapbook p. 203, Box 13, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁴² See for example “Trade News,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 45; Clement Antrobus Harris, “Passing Notes,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 7 (November 1914): 160-162; “Generals and Admirals of Music,” *Conservatory Quarterly Review* 1, no. 3 (May 1919): 72, Box 43, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁴³ Clifford Ford, “Luigi von Kunits,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/luigi-von-kunits> (accessed May 19, 2013).

Austrian musicians proved more theoretical than real. They recoiled from these musicians as an imagined group, but everyday collegial and personal loyalties likely prevented rebukes against the esteemed individuals already in their midst.

Despite its cosmopolitan outlook, Ontario's musical community eagerly embraced wartime patriotism. Musicians, both professional and amateur, organized and performed in countless concerts in support of the war effort. Their talents enlivened recruiting meetings, while their benefit recitals raised significant sums for charities such as the Red Cross and the Belgian Relief Fund.⁴⁴ The Mendelssohn Choir raised a "magnificent donation" of \$4,095.00 for the Red Cross over a two-day concert series in February 1915.⁴⁵ The Ottawa Symphony Orchestra raised \$675.00 for the Belgians during a single concert in December 1914.⁴⁶ Hamilton launched a weeklong musical festival in September 1917, with all proceeds going to the Great War Veterans' Association.⁴⁷ Even mid-sized community efforts, such as the Berlin Conservatory of Music's Symphony Orchestra recital, anticipated raising \$90.00 for the war effort.⁴⁸ On an individual level, Toronto singer and vocal teacher Arthur Blight gave so many morale-boosting concerts to the Navy League that the organization awarded him a bronze medallion. Blight also sang into a megaphone outside of Toronto City Hall in an

⁴⁴ See for instance: "Mendelssohn Choir," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 6 (October 1914): 142-143; "Patriotic Concert," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 6 (October 1914): 143; "Belgian Fund Concert," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 8 (December 1914): 190; "National Chorus Concert," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9 (January 1915): 210; "Music at the Capital," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9 (January 1915): 213-214; "Extravaganza in Aid of Red Cross," *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 6 (December-January 1914-1915): 129.

⁴⁵ "Mendelssohn Choir Concerts," *Toronto Conservatory of Music Alumni Gazette* (July 1915): 10, scrapbook p. 87, Box 20, RCM Fonds, A1975-0014, UTA.

⁴⁶ "Music at the Capital," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 9 (January 1915): 214.

⁴⁷ "A Week's Musical Retreat," *Hamilton Spectator*, August 22, 1917, p. 7; "An Event of Events," *Hamilton Spectator*, August 24, 1917, p. 8.

⁴⁸ "Belgian Fund Concert," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 8 (December 1914): 190.

endeavour to promote awareness for the Victory Loan Campaign.⁴⁹ Through these and countless other outpourings, musical circles made visible public contributions to the financial and emotional demands of a home front at war.

The Historiography of Canada's Great War Popular Songs

The European conflict presented plenty of opportunities for civilians whose inclinations veered towards songwriting. Canada's entry into war prompted a rush of demand for patriotic sheet music. Songs extolling imperial or national themes had been popular for several years; however, the wartime scenario gave latent patriotic pride greater urgency.

In marked contrast to the untitled scholarly landscape for Canadian popular sheet music, songs from the First World War years have garnered plenty of attention. Paul Litt and Susan Fisher mention war songs in passing, listing one or two examples of top-selling numbers.⁵⁰ Kristine Alexander offers a probing, though brief, analysis of Canadian war songs depicting young girls pining for fathers overseas. Citing prominent examples such as Gordon V. Thompson's "I Want to Kiss My Daddy Good Night" (1916) and Morris Manley's "I Want My Daddy" (1916), Alexander shows how cover illustrations used the technique of "photomontage" to superimpose the geographically distant daughter and father within the same visual frame. She then points out how both gender and racial ideals informed the representation of these daughters as pure, white-

⁴⁹ Kathleen (Blight) Beamer, "Remembering Arthur Blight," pp. 14-15, Envelope 1, Box 1, Arthur Blight Collection, MUS 31, LAC.

⁵⁰ Paul Litt, "Canada Invaded! The Great War, Mass Culture, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 335; Susan R. Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 10.

skinned, innocents.⁵¹ While her visual perspective is helpful, she overlooks the song's musical elements.

Jeff Keshen provides another short discussion of sheet music as a grassroots form of propaganda. Though Keshen lists a handful of Canadian war songs representing a range of themes, he confines himself to pointing out the obvious in the lyrics and cover illustrations (again, neglecting the music itself). Moreover, his interpretations verge on caricature. His comments about one hit song encapsulates his opinion on the genre as a whole: "Through both their lyrics and uncomplicated rhyming structure, these songs revealed a child-like naivete about combat where intrepid men bravely went forth to battle for all that which was good and pure."⁵² Keshen ignores the fact that many serious-minded, intelligent Canadians believed in the war for what they considered to be sound reasons of the head and heart.⁵³ He also forgets that cheerful and sentimental war songs served as coping mechanisms, offering hope and catharsis for anxious civilians.

Jonathan Vance's *A History of Canadian Culture* offers a more nuanced appreciation of war songs' importance as an emotional crutch during "a time of great sorrow and great tragedy, great excitement and great triumph."⁵⁴ Vance's insistence on both positive and negative emotional experiences of war is significant, since narratives of the Great War as an unmitigated disaster did not begin to coalesce until several years

⁵¹ Kristine Alexander, "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 176-177.

⁵² Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 21.

⁵³ For a subtle analysis of home front political opinion, see Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, especially pp. 36-38. The Crombie Family Fonds 45-2004, 37-2007, 23-2008, McM, presents a fascinating example of Edward Crombie's attempt to grapple intellectually with the war after his brother died on the *Lusitania*.

⁵⁴ Jonathan F. Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009), 222.

after the Armistice.⁵⁵ Taking this view, the more jovial wartime tunes no longer bear the taint of gullibility. They rather express an idealistic (though genuine) pride over Canada's contributions to the War for Civilization. Unfortunately, Vance cannot devote more than a few pages of his broad survey text to the topic.

The two most extensive studies of Canadian popular sheet music during the First World War exist beyond the hallowed circle of academic publications. Barbara Norman, a music specialist at Library and Archives Canada, produced an article on Canadian Great War songs for the LAC's virtual archive "Sheet Music from Canada's Past." Norman offers a balanced view of home front compositions as "a repertoire that was slightly self-conscious and more genteel, but nonetheless sincere."⁵⁶ She makes an excellent argument that Canadian war songs are significant as demonstrations of how Canadian society wished to be regarded. In this sense, wartime sheet music represents both a prescriptive ideal and a type of national self-promotion.⁵⁷ Norman makes detailed observations lacking in the more general discussions; for instance, she notes that sheet music cover art inaccurately depicts soldier's uniforms, weaponry, and other equipment.⁵⁸

The most substantial investigation of Great War sheet music comes from Adriana Brook, an undergraduate student who produced an in-depth analysis of the McMaster University archives' eighty First-World-War-era songs.⁵⁹ Her project features bar graphs for year-by-year musical trends, primary source publication information, a complete set of lyrics, and links to historical and modern online recordings. Brook does make a few

⁵⁵ Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

⁵⁶ Barbara Norman, "Music on the Home Front: Canadian Sheet Music of the First World War," <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/sheetmusic/028008-3300-e.html> (accessed May 14, 2013).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Adriana Brook, "War Songs from the First Half of the 20th Century," <http://library.mcmaster.ca/archives/exhibits/worldwar> (accessed May 13-14, 2013).

dubious historical assumptions; for example, that one can use evidence to find out about the past as it really was. Her secondary sources are moreover somewhat dated. Even so, she offers top-notch musical analyses. She considers not only the lyrics, but also elements such as time signature, key signature, expression markings, and rhythmic figures. Indeed, this chapter employs a selective rather than an exhaustive approach mainly because Brook has achieved the latter so well.

A common problem with all of these approaches is that they consider wartime sheet music solely as material culture relics of the Great War. This approach is certainly crucial. It provides a chronological reference point for the evolving saga of life on the Canadian home front. It also demonstrates how the macrocosm of the Great War affected the microcosm of everyday household items. The songs, and the emotions they express, furthermore help to frame the war on personal, intimate terms. Finally, a material culture lens helps correct the music historian's tendency to tunnel vision by pointing out sheet music's similarities with other media such as postcards and food tin labels.⁶⁰ Even so, war songs cannot be reduced to simply another type of material culture. Their musical properties place them within an artistic tradition, however broadly defined. None of these authors has considered the musical context of these songs. As the scholar Paul Maroney notes, many of the discourses framing Ontario recruiting campaigns evolved out of pre-war social, cultural, and intellectual contexts.⁶¹ Similarly, one cannot discuss romantic or familial longing in wartime music without an awareness of the pre-war musical

⁶⁰ Alexander, "An Honour and a Burden," 177. Paula Hastings does not discuss sheet music, but her article "Branding Canada: Consumer Culture and the Development of Popular Nationalism in the Early Twentieth Century" in Chapter 6 of *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007) offers an excellent material culture context as well.

⁶¹ Paul Maroney "'The Great Adventure': The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914-17," *Canadian Historical Review* 77, no. 1 (1996): 62.

landscape. The following analysis will therefore attempt to show continuities between wartime and pre-war popular song culture.

Borrowed Fare: British and American Popular Songs

Unsurprisingly for a country that fetishized imported music, many of the bestselling war songs in Canada were British compositions. As early as September 1914, “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” became the runaway success song throughout Britain and her dominions.⁶² Toronto audiences attending a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore* at the Royal Alexandra Theatre barely a month later were delighted when the cast chose “Tipperary” as an encore piece. The effect proved so magical that the participants (and the audience) repeated the song several times before they tired.⁶³ The iconic status of “Tipperary” was in some ways ironic, since the song had been penned back in 1912 and the lyrics contained no references to battle.⁶⁴ The song’s re-invention as a wartime ditty emerged following reports that the British troops sang it as one of their marching airs. In the new wartime context, the Irish narrator’s longing for home (and his sweetheart) in the midst of London’s Piccadilly district mirrored the feelings experienced by soldiers and their loved ones. The lyrics express nostalgia yet the tune is chipper, suggesting the complex melting pot of excitement, hope, fear, and sadness that often accompanied wartime separations. Over the next several months, as realization dawned that the war would not be a swift one, the “long, long way” to Tipperary increasingly

⁶² “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 37; *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 47.

⁶³ *Saturday Night*, October 24, 1914, p. 6.

⁶⁴ “‘Tipperary’— the Song, the Publisher, the Composer,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 9 (February 1915): 55.

symbolized society's determination to tread the lengthy path to victory.⁶⁵ The historian Tim Cook observes that Allied soldiers' ardour for the song started to cool shortly after civilians adopted it en masse. Soldiers were fiercely protective of their musical rituals as a mark of their special status. Their own motley collection of marching songs, drinking songs, and musical parodies represented a sphere of existence, of intense communal bonding, and bloody trench warfare, that civilians would never understand. Cook further argues that most of the rousing patriotic numbers so popular on the home front held little appeal for the Canadian Expeditionary Force's more cynical political worldview.⁶⁶

Other popular British hits included Paul A. Rubens' "Your King and Country Want You," Kennedy Russell's "Who's for This Flag?," Ivor Novello's "Till the Boys Come Home," and for the more middlebrow cultural palate, Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory."⁶⁷ America's entry into the war in April 1917 shifted the musical output of Tin Pan Alley away from professions of anti-war isolationism to those of military pride. Massive American hits such as George M. Cohan's "Over There," Irving Berlin's "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," Richard A. Whiting and Raymond B. Egan's "'Till We Meet Again," and Stoddard King and Zo Elliott's "There's a Long, Long, Trail" sold millions of copies.⁶⁸ The composer-cum-publisher Gordon V. Thompson later

⁶⁵ "National Hymns," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 23, 1915, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Tim Cook, "The Singing War: Canadian Soldiers' Songs of the Great War," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 232-233. Adriana Brook confirms that the soldier and civilian music of the Great War consisted of two distinct repertoires. See Brook, "War Songs."

⁶⁷ "Trade News," *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 46; *CMTJ* 15, no. 9 (February 1915): 58; "Fortune and Fame Made By a Song," *CMTJ* 16, no. 4 (September 1915): 45.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey C. Livingston, "'Still Boy-Meets-Girl Stuff': Popular Music and War," in *America's Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society*, ed. Kenneth J. Bindas (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers 1992), 34.

lamented how quickly the American patriotic numbers had seeped north. Canada's music industry simply could not compete with the titans of Tin Pan Alley.⁶⁹

Granted, popular songs did not comprise the whole of Canadians' wartime musical experiences. Plenty of classically trained composers penned musical tributes to the war. Charles E. Wheeler of London, for example, wrote a chorus for mixed voices entitled "Sing for Our Passing Brave," set to a text by fellow Canadian Marian Keith.⁷⁰ Canadian emigrant Clarence Lucas composed a patriotic choral number in 1915, intending it as a performance piece for the Elgar Choir of Hamilton.⁷¹ Home front listeners would also have sought solace in familiar works such as classical standards, English folk tunes, or sacred music. One enthusiast named N. Waterman felt sufficiently moved by the pre-war hymns "His Eye is on the Sparrow," "The Bird with a Broken Wing," "He Lifted Me," and "Sweet Peace the Gift" to copy them out meticulously by hand. The first three numbers discuss Jesus offering comfort during times of trial. The enormity of wartime loss would have given added poignancy to lines such as: "Each loss has its compensation, There is healing for every pain; / But the bird with a broken pinion Never soars as high again."⁷²

This wider musical context is important in order to comprehend that Canada's wartime popular songs comprised only a portion of a much broader musical palette. Factors such as geography, education, and personal preference influenced the degree to which civilians embraced the commercial music being produced in their midst.

⁶⁹ Gordon V. Thompson, "My First 50 Years of Music Publishing in Canada," *Builder*, June 8, 1965, pp. 1-2, Gordon V. Thompson vertical file, LAC.

⁷⁰ "Sing for Our Passing Brave," *CMTJ* 17, no. 8 (January 1917): 60-61.

⁷¹ M.H., "Hamilton Notes," *Musical Canada* 10, no. 6 (October 1915): 120.

⁷² This hand-copied music is pasted inside a printed edition of the "Heintzman & Co. March," Envelope 4, Box X450, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA. Waterman copied "His Eye is on the Sparrow" on August 10, 1915, and both "Bird with a Broken Wing" and "Sweet Peace the Gift" on December 6, 1917. "He Lifted Me" contains no date.

Canadian War Songs: The Seasoned Hit-Makers

Carrying on from pre-war habits of production, Canada's wartime sheet music featured the efforts of both professional songwriters and enthusiastic amateurs. What was different about the war period was the sudden upsurge in the quantity of material produced, particularly songs of a patriotic nature. In September 1916, the *Toronto Daily Star* estimated that Canadians had written at least one thousand patriotic songs since the war's beginning.⁷³ There is no indication that the penchant for song writing diminished during the conflict's final two years. Despite the prodigious output, one critic estimated that only about fifty works achieved anything resembling widespread fame.⁷⁴ Many of these songs, the successes and the flops, have been preserved in archives across the country. The sheer number of songs, and the repetitive nature of many of them, makes concise analysis a daunting task. This study will therefore divide war songs into two types: the well-known hits and the obscure grassroots compositions. More attention will be devoted to the successful songs, on the grounds that they resonated with a large number of Canadians and thus capture something of the *zeitgeist* of the war years. The lesser-known songs often consisted of pale imitations of the popular tunes, invoking similar-sounding lyrics and melodies in the hope of striking it lucky. In short, focusing on the most popular war songs distils rather than distorts the genre as a whole.

The best-known Canadian popular composition of the war was undoubtedly "We'll Never Let the Old Flag Fall," published in the fall of 1914. The song's lyricist

⁷³ "War Has Inspired the Bards, 1,000 Songs in Canada Alone," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Gordon V. Thompson, "Canada's War Songs and Those Who Wrote Them," *Canadian Courier*, January 18, 1919, p. 19.

Albert E. MacNutt and composer M.F. Kelly both hailed from Saint John, New Brunswick.⁷⁵ In March 1915, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* reported that 10,000 copies had been sold already. By May 1916 sales had passed the 100,000 mark.⁷⁶ The composition opened with a majestic introduction of straight, steady notes before transitioning into a brisk march for the song proper. Insisting that “Britain’s flag has always stood for Justice, / Britain’s hope has always stood for Peace” the lyrics claimed that Britain fought out of necessity rather than mere pugilism. Once called, however, her subjects would do their duty fearlessly. “We don’t want to fight to show our might, / But when we start, we’ll fight, fight, fight,” the lyrics stated, each repetition of the word “fight” accented so that the vocalist would strike the note with added emphasis. Kelly underscored the theme of allegiance by borrowing a few notes from the anthem “God Save the King” for the song’s introduction and chorus.⁷⁷ The march-like accompaniment and the use of images such as the Union flag and British liberties, link this piece to pre-war patriotic airs. Previously, songwriters had referenced the Boer War, or depicted the Dominion’s readiness for an imagined imperial conflict. Now, the lyrics shifted to reflect the fact that the occasion to prove one’s loyalty had finally arrived.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ George V. Thompson reported that MacNutt wrote the lyrics and the melody, and then gave the tune to local bandmaster Kelly for the piano arrangement. Other sources list MacNutt as the lyricist and Kelly as the composer. See Thompson, “Canada’s War Songs and Those Who Wrote Them.”

⁷⁶ *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 45; *CMTJ* 15, no. 10 (March 1915): 48; “A Record Run,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 12 (May 1916): 49, 51.

⁷⁷ M.F. Kelly, “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” lyrics by Albert E. MacNutt (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers’ Association: 1915 edition), XM2MS A003010, Canadian Sheet Music Collection, XM2A003, UGA. This theme recalls G.H. McDermott’s popular British hit “We Don’t Want to Fight, But by Jingo if We Do” (c. 1878), referencing British annoyance against Russia’s treatment of the Balkans. See Richard Middleton, “Popular Music of the Lower Classes,” in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, Athlone History of Music in Britain Series, ed. Nicholas Temperley (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 82.

⁷⁸ Adriana Brook notes that Canadian Great War songs invoking the British Empire are much more common during the early part of the war (1914-1915). After 1916, few songs refer to Britain directly, swapping national for imperial themes. Brook suggests, convincingly, that this shift reflects Canada’s growing confidence as an autonomous nation.

MacNutt and Kelly collaborated on a second song entitled “By Order of the King,” released during the summer of 1915. This work also extolled the bravery of soldiers willing to fight for their King and flag, to the tune of a brisk march. Still, the tone differs in subtle ways. “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall” is very much a product of the early months of the war, focusing on the enlistment phase of patriotism. Since the song’s soldiers are not anchored into any sort of landscape, the war appears distant and abstract. “By Order of the King,” however, describes soldier-narrators already fighting on the front. This shift reflects the fact that Canadian troops had begun to see action by the time the song was released. “By Order of the King” is therefore more realistic in its appreciation of the obstacles lying between the troops and victory. This sense of realism is admittedly relative. The line “Like knights of old, so brave and bold” invokes a chivalric ideal so prevalent in contemporary and even early postwar imaginings of battle.⁷⁹ Despite this romanticism, the chorus insists that the Allies are “gladly dying just to keep the old flag flying.” References to roaring cannons and “The clash of steel, [that] may make us reel,” may be anachronistic, yet they introduce a visceral possibility of injury and death. “By Order of the King” ultimately did not achieve the runaway success of its predecessor. Anticipation for “By Order of the King” was nevertheless high enough that the first edition sold out within a week of its release.⁸⁰ Sadly, Kelly did not live to enjoy the profits from his fame, dying of tuberculosis in 1916 at the age of thirty-five.⁸¹

⁷⁹ See Vance, *Death So Noble*, esp. Ch. 2 and 3.

⁸⁰ “A New Song by the Authors of ‘We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,’ ” *CMTJ* 16, no. 3 (August 1915): 73; “By Order of the King,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 4 (September 1915): 45.

⁸¹ Florence Hayes, “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/well-never-let-the-old-flag-fall> (accessed June 5, 2013); “Canadian Composer Died in New Brunswick,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 8 (January 1917): 60.

“The Call of the Motherland” (1914), with music and lyrics by Edward W. Miller, proved to be another top seller during the early years of the war. It aimed to show that Canadian troops were not slouches, “As side by side with the Empire’s pride, / We will fight for our Flag and King.”⁸² Once again, the song’s lyrical content is indicative of the earliest phases of Canada’s involvement: the focus is squarely upon imperial pride and battle is as yet only an imagined event. The piece instead emphasizes the geographical distance separating the Dominion from the Mother Country, a distance that renders Canada’s fierce loyalty even more impressive. The melody line is unremarkable, often repeating the same pitch or moving in small step-by-step intervals. Its generic qualities must have touched a chord, however, since the song proved very popular in its day.

Prolific popular composers Morris Manley and Gordon V. Thompson produced the era’s other massive hits. Both wrote songs on a range of themes, from the patriotic to the sentimental. Indeed, their collective output nicely encapsulates the breadth of the wartime popular song genre. Biographical information about Manley is sparse, but according to one contemporary account he was born in London, England, immigrating to Canada near the end of the nineteenth century. He began composing around the year 1900 and lived in Windsor during the early years of the war.⁸³ He formed his own small publishing firm in Toronto around the year 1916, though he occasionally published under other houses as well. A self-styled family man, he frequently called upon his daughter Mildred, the “Phenomenal Child Vocalist,” to help plug his works (Fig. 10.1).⁸⁴

⁸² Edward W. Miller, “The Call of the Motherland” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers’ Association, 1914), Envelope 1, Box 10, Canadian Sheet Music Collection [hereafter CanSheet], McM.

⁸³ Gordon V. Thompson, “Canada’s War Songs and Those Who Wrote Them,” *Canadian Courier*, January 18, 1919, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁴ This description of Mildred may be found on the cover page of Morris Manley, “What the Deuce do We Care for Kaiser Bill” (Toronto: Morris Manley, 1917), Envelope 3, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

Manley's march tune "Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies" emerged as the big war song during the winter of 1915-1916. As of September 1916 it had sold over 100,000 copies. By 1919 the number had swelled to 500,000 copies for the Canadian edition alone.⁸⁵ According to Gordon V. Thompson, Morris Manley began by printing a few copies of the song on his own dime. He then performed the tune with little Mildred throughout Windsor and the surrounding district with considerable success. Following rejections from the larger publishing houses, he convinced the manager of a Toronto vaudeville theatre to let him perform the piece during an upcoming show. Manley planted Mildred in the audience, and then casually asked if anyone in the theatre would care to sing the chorus with him. Mildred then 'spontaneously' rose up and sang in her clear, ringing child's voice. The delighted crowd subsequently rushed to purchase copies.⁸⁶

"Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies" is distinguished by its use of insistent triplets ("It's Jol-ly good luck / to John-nie Can-nuck") in order to evoke a military fanfare. In an attempt to fashion a sure-fire hit, Manley mimicked M.F. Kelly's trick of musically referencing "God Save the King" in the introduction and chorus. The outstanding qualities of this song are its catchy tune and cheerful tone. The lyrics assure the audience that the Canadian boys will someday "all march back with the union jack." Later on in the chorus, the text implores the listener to "Just give them a cheer and banish the tear, / For they'll return again."⁸⁷ This song is one of many compositions referring to the return of soldiers as though it were a certainty.⁸⁸ Such confidence is perplexing,

⁸⁵ *CMTJ* 16, no. 9 (February 1916): 53; "War Has Inspired the Bards," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p. 7; Thompson, "Canada's War Songs and Those Who Wrote Them."

⁸⁶ Thompson, "Canada's War Songs and Those Who Wrote Them."

⁸⁷ Morris Manley, "Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies" (Toronto: Morris Manley, 1915), XM2MS A003018, Canadian Sheet Music XM2A003, UGA.

⁸⁸ For a few of the many examples see Emmett Adams, "God Send You Back to Me," lyrics by Douglas Ferber (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers' Association, 1916), Envelope 1, Box 1, CanSheet,

considering that Canadian troops had already experienced significant casualties by that point. Even the most sheltered civilian would have been well aware that “all” of the soldiers would certainly not be marching back home. It seems reasonable to interpret this song, and others like it, as a calculated attempt to lift the spirits. The lyrics function on a symbolic rather than a literal level. Denying the possibility of collective death helped calm consumers’ fears about the fate of a particular individual. Such tactics may have been escapist, but this brand of escapism was neither callous nor ignorant.

Similarly, Manley’s jocular “What the Deuce Do We Care for Kaiser Bill” is not simply a trivialization of war. The song deftly employs humour in order to lift the spirits of the public. Mockery functions as a means of exhibiting power over the Germans in general and the Kaiser in particular. In real life, they represented a formidable enemy. In the fictional world of a comic song, they appeared ridiculously puny.⁸⁹ While encouraging the reader to laugh, the song does not shy away from some of the grittier aspects of war. The soldiers may be marching “To the front line trenches / just to tease Old Fritz” but the seriousness of the battle emerges in the next line’s command to “Shoot your guns, drop your bombs, until you get your fill.” The final verse relates the macabre prospect of the Kaiser getting his throat slit by a clumsy barber, and the first verse mentions an exploding shell landing fairly near an Allied encampment. Hilarity exists

McM; Charles E. Bodley, “Tipperary Tommy,” lyrics by Irene Humble (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1915), Envelope 1, Box 3, CanSheet, McM; Frank Eborall, “The Girl Who is Yours While You are Away,” lyrics by S.G. Smith (Toronto: Smith & Eborall, 1915), Envelope 1, Box 5, CanSheet, McM; M. Broderick Green, “Answer Me Dearie” (St. Thomas: Mansel B. Green, n.d.), Envelope 2, Box 6, CanSheet, McM.

⁸⁹ For another example of comedy as a means of exerting power over the Kaiser see Harry Taylor, “You’re Up a Tree Old Bird, You’re Up a Tree” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1915), Envelope 3, Box 13, CanSheet, McM.

side-by-side with images of violence, demonstrating that the lyricist employs the dark humour of experience rather than the whimsical humour of innocence.⁹⁰

Gordon V. Thompson (1888-1965) was born in the village of Humberstone (near Port Colborne, Ontario) and spent most of his life in Toronto.⁹¹ His early songwriting career had been dominated by sacred works for use in family singsongs and at evangelical revivals. Thompson's talents as a door-to-door salesman of his own compositions had helped him support himself during his student days at the University of Toronto. Emboldened, he established his own small publishing firm in "a little hole of an office" on Richmond Street in 1909. By the end of the war he had become an active spokesman for the rights of Canadian composers.⁹² Thompson's famous song, "When We Wind Up the Watch on the Rhine" (1917), sold well over 100,000 copies.⁹³ The title of the tune mockingly references "*Die Wacht am Rhein*" ("The Watch on the Rhine"), a German patriotic song made famous during the Franco-Prussian War.⁹⁴ Thompson's narrative described a soldier's promise to marry his sweetheart once he had done his part to help finish off the Kaiser. The verse lyrics are somewhat wistful, as the man braces himself to leave the "Heart of my heart." The jaunty, syncopated music nevertheless creates a sense of forward movement as well as optimism. Neither the soldier's return nor Kaiser Wilhelm's fate are ever in doubt. The watch metaphor is primarily a pun on the idea of a sentry watch in the military. Still, the activity of winding a watch also conveys the impression of progressing towards an inevitable future. The watch moreover serves to

⁹⁰ Morris Manley, "What the Deuce do We Care for Kaiser Bill" (Toronto: Morris Manley, 1917), Envelope 3, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

⁹¹ "Silhouette," June 22, 1957, unplaced clipping, Gordon V. Thompson vertical file, LAC.

⁹² Gordon V. Thompson, interviewed by Helmut Kallmann, November 24, 1959, transcript, Gordon V. Thompson vertical file, LAC.

⁹³ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 21; Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture*, 221.

⁹⁴ Thanks are due to Jonathan Vance for kindly explaining this reference to me.

downplay the violence of the struggle. Winding a watch is a simple task that is physically and mentally undemanding. While admitting that “foes [might] assail,” the text addresses the fruits of victory rather than the struggle itself.⁹⁵

A second Gordon Thompson piece, “When Your Boy Comes Back to You” (1916), sold 54,000 copies during the first three months of its release and 100,000 copies in Canada alone by the end of the war.⁹⁶ This piece addresses the plight of women waiting for news about their loved ones. As Adriana Brook notes, the cover art depicts a woman of uncertain age embracing her returning soldier, thus serving as a place filler for either a mother, a sister, a sweetheart, or a wife (Fig. 10.2). Brook perceptively interprets both “When We Wind Up the Watch on the Rhine” and “When Your Boy Comes Back to You” as representative of civilian morale during the later stages of the war. The prospect of battle no longer seemed glorious, and contemporaries increasingly pinned their hopes on the post-war future rather than the violence-ridden present.⁹⁷ Further evidence reinforces her point; beginning around 1915, songwriters began penning pieces with titles such as “Days of Peace,” “When the World has Peace Again,” and “When the Dawn of Peace is Blooming.”⁹⁸ At the same time, Thompson’s song displays nostalgia in the tradition of pre-war compositional efforts. The cover art and the lyrics both evoke the pastoral ideal of a rural home and an eager “wait by the old garden gate” for the returning

⁹⁵ Gordon V. Thompson and William Davis, “When We Wind Up The Watch on the Rhine,” lyrics by Gordon V. Thompson (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1917), Amicus 23130502, LAC. For a similar point see Adriana Brook’s analysis of this song in the “Nostalgia and Melancholy” section of her website.

⁹⁶ *CMTJ* 17, no. 5 (October 1916): 63; “Silhouette,” June 22, 1957, unplaced clipping, Gordon V. Thompson vertical file, LAC.

⁹⁷ Brook, “War Songs.”

⁹⁸ Muriel E. Bruce, “The Dawn of Peace,” lyrics by Helen M. Radford (Toronto: Empire Music & Travel Club, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM; Herbert Kohler, “Days of Peace” (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1915), Envelope 2, Box 8, CanSheet, McM; Albert E. MacNutt, “When the World has Peace Again” (Toronto: Anglo Canadian Music Publishers Association, 1916), Envelope 1, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

regiment.⁹⁹ Another Thompson song “Hit the Trail that Leads to Mother” employs the nostalgia theme even more strongly for its envisioned postwar reunion:

Mem’ry fondly paints a picture
Of the days of long ago,
When she kissed away your teardrops,
Mother dear who loves you so!¹⁰⁰

While these songs may purport to look forward to a golden future, they equally reach back to an imagined past. These tales of separated families and lovers recall pre-war songs featuring narrators pining for absent maidens, or adult offspring craving a mother’s loving arms. Ironically, the Great War variant of the separation theme projects a more cheerful tone than that of its predecessors. Pre-war mothers and sweethearts usually died before the narrator could return to reconcile. Since wartime morale relied upon hope, the absent soldier more often than not enjoyed a happy reunion with those he loved.¹⁰¹

Finally, both Thompson and Manley scored impressive hits with sentimental songs featuring child narrators. Manley’s “I Want My Daddy” (1916) and Thompson’s “I Want to Kiss Daddy Good Night” (1916) reference the wartime situation while adhering to nineteenth and early twentieth-century sentimental conventions.¹⁰² Child narrators in sentimental songs are always angelic, lonely, and tragic figures. They exist less as individuals than as symbols of innocence in a world gone wrong. Their patient

⁹⁹ Gordon V. Thompson, “When Your Boy Comes Back to You” (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1916), Canadian Sheet Music XM2A003, UGA.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon V. Thompson, “Hit the Trail that Leads to Mother” (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1917), Envelope 2, Box 13, CanSheet, McM.

¹⁰¹ Granted, a significant minority of wartime songs did address the possibility of the soldier’s death. See for example: Ernest R. Bowles, “Canadian Highlanders,” lyrics by Lillie A. Brooks (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers Association, 1915), Envelope 1, Box 3, CanSheet, McM; Muriel E. Bruce, “How Many Mothers are Weeping To-night,” lyrics by W. Archer (Toronto: Empire Music & Travel Club, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM; J. Heward Gammond, “Take Me Back to Old Ontario,” lyrics by Frank E. Balson (Toronto: Gammond-Balson Publishing Company, 1915), Envelope 6, Box 5, CanSheet, McM.

¹⁰² Barbara Norman argues that the many surviving copies of Thompson’s “I Want to Kiss Daddy Good-Night” suggest that it was a Canadian bestseller during this time period.

submission to the trials that befall them heightens the pathos of their situation, since melodramatic conventions favour the intensity of emotional effect over realism. Manley's child-narrator fills just such a role. She sits alone while other children play. She is virtuous, praying for her father's return and relating her predicament without bitterness.

She told her little story as plain as it could be,
I love my dear old daddy though far across the sea
The first to join the army he loved the Union Jack,
Each night I kneel and pray that God will bring my daddy back.¹⁰³

Manley evokes child-like innocence by using soft dynamics, regular rhythms, and broken chords for a delicate musical texture. He writes in the key of G major, but he employs a liberal sprinkling of chromatics in order to introduce more tonal 'colour,' thus enhancing its emotional resonance.

The child-narrator of Thompson's "I Want to Kiss Daddy Good Night" is only marginally more realistic than Manley's. She (or he) wants daddy to return in order to play with her and to tuck her in bed at night. She does, however, worry about his safety and prays ardently for his return. She also presents a rather solitary figure: "I am so very lonely now, Since daddy went away / To be a great big soldier man, I long for him each day."¹⁰⁴ Like Manley, Thompson has written his song in G major and has scattered chromatics throughout. Thompson uses heavier, solid chords, though the graceful waltz-like triple meter offsets their force. The one insistent rhythm in the song comes during the name 'daddy' (short-long), emphasizing the importance of this figure in the eyes of his child. Unlike pre-war sentimental characters, these two innocents are in no danger of

¹⁰³ Morris Manley, "I Want My Daddy" (Toronto: M. Manley, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon V. Thompson, "I Want To Kiss Daddy Good Night" (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 13, CanSheet, McM.

dying. The father's absence provides the necessary dramatic tension, effectively sparing them from the lurid material and emotional deprivations of their literary forbearers.¹⁰⁵

These various offerings constitute the most successful homegrown songs of the Great War. This rarefied group of composers was often held up as an example of how anyone could, with a little talent and ingenuity, compose the next great hit. Such narratives ignored the fact that bestselling songs required a hefty marketing campaign in order to achieve traction with the public. Unless one proved an indefatigable entrepreneur the likes of Thompson and Manley, large-scale advertising could only be achieved under the guise of an established publisher. Regardless, hundreds of would-be songwriters heeded the call to immortalize their country's struggle in musical form.

Canadian War Songs: Grassroots Efforts

Amateur songwriters gallantly entered the musical fray alongside the more seasoned composers and lyricists. As previously discussed, the pre-war Canadian music scene had always included a hefty number of unsolicited submissions and self-published efforts. The war simply increased these numbers as citizens, inspired by a complex combination of patriotism, grief, and opportunism, flooded printing houses with their outpourings. Similar to the pre-war years, formal musical knowledge was entirely optional.

Sales for these amateur compositions usually depended on the ambitions and circulation tactics of their producers. Publishing firms left the promotion for self-financed songs entirely upon the heads of the composer. Only rarely did individual stamina result

¹⁰⁵ For another example of this type of song see Fred G. Brown, "I Want to See if My Daddy's Come Home," lyrics by Grant E. Cole (Toronto: Cole & Brown, 1917), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM.

in a groundswell of sales to rival that of established songwriters. One exception was Toronto's Miss Irene Humble, whose song "We're From Canada" had sold nearly 100,000 copies by September 1916. Miss Humble had proved stalwart in her efforts, though, earning enough subscriptions to pay for the cost of a first edition before the manuscript went to print.¹⁰⁶ Frank Madden's "I'll Come Back to You When My Fighting Days Are Through" was another exception, reaching at least twenty-four editions.¹⁰⁷

Modest hit-makers during this era included Mrs. Jean Munro Mulloy, whose status as the wife of a blinded Boer War veteran likely aided sales of her song. *The Globe* declared her "Johnnie Canuck's the Boy" the big musical number for the spring of 1915. Staunchly patriotic, Mulloy plugged her catalogue as she travelled around Ontario singing for the war effort.¹⁰⁸ Cecil Birkett, an employee of the Raper Piano Company in Ottawa was lucky enough to have his song performed at a local "recruiting rally" at the Russell Theatre. Audience members, their emotions already stirred by patriotic speeches and the energy of a large crowd, found the song enrapturing. Impulse purchases during and after the rally likely helped account for the first edition selling out shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, a young girl from Teeswater named Muriel Farrell paid for a Toronto firm to publish a march she had written honouring the 160th (Bruce) Battalion. The intrepid youth then traveled to the battalion's field day in Walkerton where she and some friends managed to sell 1,000 copies before the end of the event.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ "War Has Inspired the Bards," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p.7.

¹⁰⁷ Frank O. Madden, "I'll Come Back to You When My Fighting Days are Through," arranged by Jules Brazil, 24th ed. (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers Association, 1916), XM2MS A003020, Canadian Sheet Music XM2A003, UGA. An earlier edition of this song (also found in XM2MS A003020) states that it was a self-published work.

¹⁰⁸ L.W.H., "Music in Ottawa," *Musical Canada* 9, no. 11 (March 1915): 266; "Wife of South African War Hero Writes Songs," *CMTJ* 15, no. 12 (May 1915): 50, 53.

¹⁰⁹ "Ottawa Man as Composer," *CMTJ* 16, no. 7 (December 1915): 60.

¹¹⁰ "War Has Inspired the Bards," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p. 7.

Many of these amateur songwriters hawked their wares as a fundraising effort for one of the various wartime charities. Jean Mulloy donated all the proceeds for “Johnny Canuck’s the Boy” to the Kingston branch of the Red Cross.¹¹¹ Philip Layton of Montreal wrote his song “Off to Fight the Germans” in order to stimulate recruiting, and similarly promised his share of the profits to the Red Cross.¹¹² Frank Madden dedicated “I’ll Come Back to You” to the men of the 201st Battalion (Toronto), vowing to use the revenues in order to aid the battalion’s recruitment drive.¹¹³ In return, local wartime organizations played an integral role in circulating self-published songs. A surviving copy of London resident Dora Carpenter Kenyon’s “Come on Ye Boys of Canada” bears evidence of such networking. Its cover contains a penciled message: “Dear Red Cross Sister – Please hand these songs to a good public singer to aid in recruiting and patriotic entertainments.”¹¹⁴

Sheet music also played a role in veteran fundraising endeavours. Once wounded soldiers began returning home, some canvassed door-to-door, sheet music in hand, as an interim method of supporting themselves. As one accompanying leaflet insisted, these were brave men “who have had their health injured in the great fight for freedom overseas and who need employment in the open air.” The leaflet insisted that the soldiers did not ask for charity: “You will find this song to be worth more than the 25c. it costs you, *and you can’t buy it at any music store.*”¹¹⁵ In spite of the disavowal of charity,

¹¹¹ L.W.H., “Music in Ottawa,” *Musical Canada* 9, no. 11 (March 1915): 266.

¹¹² *CMTJ* 16, no. 4 (September 1915): 48.

¹¹³ Frank O. Madden, “I’ll Come Back to you When my Fighting Days are Through,” arranged by Jules Brazil, 10th ed. (Toronto: W.R. Draper, 1916), XM2MS A003020, Canadian Sheet Music, XM2A003, UGA.

¹¹⁴ Dora Carpenter Kenyon, “Come on Ye Boys of Canada” (London, ON: Dora Carpenter Kenyon, 1914), Envelope 2, Box X450, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA.

¹¹⁵ Fred G. Brown, “The Love-Light in My Mother’s Eyes,” lyrics by Grant E. Cole (Toronto: Stanley M. Hallam, 1918), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM. Emphasis in Original. For another example see leaflet attached to Muriel E. Bruce, “How Many Mothers are Weeping To-night,” lyrics by W. Archer (Toronto: Empire Music & Travel Club, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM.

researcher Barbara Norman argues that the average resident would have felt compelled to contribute as “a matter of duty.”¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, W.R. Draper’s “Veteran’s March” featured a prominent photo of the legless Private E. Grue, confined to a wheelchair as the result of fighting at Ypres (Fig. 10.3). Such visual cues served to remind civilian consumers of their responsibility to care for wounded heroes.¹¹⁷

Other novice songwriters had no expectation of massive sales; they simply wished to commemorate a local battalion or a particular individual. Sarah Lawrence of London, Ontario, dedicated her recruiting song “Men Wanted” to a soldier named J. Stuart Campbell of Mission City, British Columbia. While the nature of their relationship is unknown, the dedication and his photograph on the cover ensured that song purchasers would recognize him as “One Who Sacrificed His Life for His Ideals.”¹¹⁸ Mary Robinson and Larkin Craig Chandler of Montreal penned a song dedicated to the local 42nd Battalion, including captioned portraits of two of its members who had died at the front.¹¹⁹ Frank Madden wrote “Hurrah for the Buffs” for the 198th Battalion of Toronto, and displayed the name of commanding officer Lieut. Col. John A. Cooper prominently on the page.¹²⁰ A few songwriters commemorated public figures, such as Prime Minister

¹¹⁶ Barbara Norman, “Music on the Home Front.”

¹¹⁷ W.R. Draper, “Veteran’s March” (Toronto: W.R. Draper, 1919), Envelope 5, Box 4, CanSheet, McM.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Lawrence, “Men Wanted” (London, ON: Sarah Lawrence, 1917), Envelope 6, Box X450, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA. John Stuart Campbell enlisted in the 30th Battalion at New Westminster in March 1915. He was killed in action on September 27, 1916 while serving in the 7th Battalion. There is no record in his attestation form of any link to London, Ontario. Jonathan Vance, written comments to author, December 12, 2013.

¹¹⁹ Mary D. Robinson and Larkin Craig Chandler, “Canada’s Gallant 42nd” (Montreal: Larkin-Craig Chandler, 1915), Amicus 16985710, LAC.

¹²⁰ Frank Madden, “Hurrah for the Buffs,” arranged by Jules Brazil (Toronto: W.R. Draper, 1916), Envelope 4, Box 9, CanSheet, McM.

Robert Borden and Minister of Militia Sir Sam Hughes.¹²¹ Failing that, one could always dedicate one's work to one of the many wartime military or civilian groups.

A final class of authors included soldiers who sent their writings home to be arranged and distributed to a civilian audience. In these cases, the producer's military status became a selling feature, in the hopes that respect for the army, curiosity about a first-hand frontline perspective, and pity for wounded veterans would encourage prospective purchasers. Private Charles H. Quinn's "In the Land of the Fleur-de-Lys, for example, contained the tag line "Written at Vimy Ridge." Interestingly, Quinn's lyrics do not differ noticeably from civilian-authored songs of the time. Perhaps he believed that the public should be protected from the gory details of modern warfare. Perhaps he imitated the tone of home front war repertoire in the hopes of finding a successful formula. Either way, the song indulges in idealism during the opening verse:

To a distant land across the sea
Went the Sons of Britain brave and free,
To fight the foe from Germany
And their hearts were staunch and true.

Quinn's narrator judiciously refrains from any discussion of battle or killing, telling his mother to "cheer up ... till the dark clouds roll away / Keep smiling just for Auld Lang Syne and the sun will shine some day."¹²² Here again, one sees links to pre-war nostalgic repertoire. The narrator muses on a pastoral vision of a "little cottage on the hill":

I see the little garden too
Where the roses and the violets grew
Guarded with such care by you

¹²¹ George Warnicker, "Why Don't You Wear a Uniform?" (Vancouver: Western Speciality Limited, 1915), Amicus 23189252, LAC; Mrs. Verne M. Whitman, "Soldiers of Canada" (St. Andrews, NB: Mrs. V. Whitman, 1915), Amicus 23293468, LAC; William J. Bugler, "The Call to Arms" (London, ON: W.J. Bugler, 1914), Amicus 16920989, LAC.

¹²² Charles H. Quinn, "In the Land of the Fleur-de-Lys," arranged by Jules Brazil (Newmarket, ON: Charles H. Quinn, 1918), XM2MSA003030, Canadian Sheet Music XM2A003, UGA.

And I long for Home, Sweet Home.¹²³

Another army private named H.E. Hancock wrote a piano piece entitled “Privett Waltz,” released in 1919. The cover featured a small photograph of the composer, informing purchasers that this brave man had been wounded at the Somme.¹²⁴ Private T. Pritchard of the renowned “Princess Pats” regiment wrote the lyrics for “The Call” as a blatant attempt to encourage enlistment. His cause was a highly personal one, since depleted early battalions such as his own desperately needed reinforcements. Pritchard’s lyrics offer an intriguing combination of political idealism and battlefield realism. On the one hand, he begs civilian men to “stand for freedom” by enlisting in the “glorious enterprise.” He later refers to war as a “game,” albeit a “sterner” one than these men are used to. On the other hand, he practically undoes his own cause by describing dying comrades, and predicting that the listener’s own death would be celebrated for eternity: “And if in nobly striving The brave sacrifice you pay / Your chums will proudly tell the world that you died in the British way.”¹²⁵ This vacillation suggests some of the confusion going on in the lyricist’s mind: a mind desperate for recruits, unable to deny the frontline carnage, and trying to recall the ideals that had once inspired him to enlist.

Predictably, critics disparaged grassroots popular music on the grounds of its inferiority. Patriotism had provided an excuse for anyone with a gleam of literary or musical ambition to pen meaningless drivel and worse, to think it worthy of wider circulation. *Everywoman’s World* writer Katherine Hale moaned over the “tide of cheap

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ H.E. Hancock, “Privett Waltz” (Canada: H.E. Hancock, 1919), Envelope 3, Box 6, CanSheet, McM. Hancock had been a shoemaker in Toronto before the war. Jonathan Vance, written comments to author, December 12, 2013.

¹²⁵ Jules Brazil, “The Call,” lyrics by T. Pritchard (Goderich, ON: Independent Publishing Co., n.d.), Envelope 2, Box 3, CanSheet, McM.

emotion which might easily swamp the more serious thought evoked from such a world crisis as the present.”¹²⁶ Toronto’s *Saturday Night* similarly quipped, “Of the many patriotic efforts which have been received at this office few are worth noticing ... Most of our lyricists base their offerings on the idea that the entry of the Canadians into the conflict settled the Kaiser’s hash forthwith.”¹²⁷ Highbrow musicians such as George C. Lethbridge and Charles E. Wheeler lamented the haste with which would-be composers expressed themselves. “The reason there is so much trash offered as patriotic songs is because people get hold of some patriotic words and scratch down some notes without any attention to the rules of compositions,” observed Lethbridge. Wheeler concurred that “While genuine inspiration is needed, there must as well be a knowledge of harmony to give proper form to the sentiments and ideals it is desired to present.”¹²⁸

Other critics attacked the works on the principle that their banality sullied the shining patriotism they strove to commemorate. “True patriotism is the national feeling at its best, therefore the good patriotic song must be a worthy medium of expression,” noted one anonymous observer.¹²⁹ A critic from the *Ottawa Evening Journal* meanwhile mocked the self-consciously literary excesses that resulted in “language fearful and wonderful ... What does ‘forfend this nation’s thrall’ mean? We venture to say the average person does not know.” Considering that patriotic songs were supposed to engage the broader public, such inflated compositions would never achieve their aim.¹³⁰ Indeed, an editorial writer in the *Toronto Daily Star* chided the legions of songwriters for

¹²⁶ Katherine Hale, “Patriotic Music: Its Use and Abuse,” *Everywoman’s World* (March 1918): 19.

¹²⁷ *Saturday Night*, December 5, 1914, p. 7.

¹²⁸ “Patriotic Songs Must Have Good Poetry and Music,” *London Advertiser*, June 9, 1917, p. 4.

¹²⁹ “Can You Diagnose a Patriotic Song?” *London Advertiser*, June 2, 1917, p. 5.

¹³⁰ “Necessity of Easily Understood Words in Songs,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 67. Reprinted from the *Ottawa Evening Journal*.

cloaking earthly ambition and vanity under the guise of patriotic service.¹³¹ As luck would have it, the number of patriotic war songs proved so vast that most writers achieved neither fortune nor fame. An article written in August 1917 observed that even the most successful patriotic numbers had worn out their welcome within a few months. Consequently, the top songs from the early stages of the war had already become yesterday's news.¹³² This was not due to any shift in stylistic preferences; it simply indicated a saturated market of quickly produced, quickly consumed musical products.

A few civilians even resented the fundraising effort that accompanied these pieces, on the grounds that it compelled them to purchase an inferior product that they did not especially want. One disgruntled citizen wrote to the *Toronto Daily Star* in the spring of 1918 to complain that "the practice of some returned men of calling at private houses and soliciting the purchase of very indifferent music by the occupant" represented an imposition on one's benevolence. Toronto inhabitants, the writer argued, had given ceaselessly to the cause for years and did not want to be pressed with further demands.¹³³

Nevertheless, the thousands of surviving pieces of sheet music implies that at least some Canadians found comfort in consuming even the more hackneyed patriotic tunes. One must also consider the relief composers and lyricists felt in creative expression, however generic these products appear when considered en masse. Many song producers counted themselves among the anxious friends and families who waited and worried. Mrs. Florence Ballantyne, for example, penned "The Call We Must Obey" (1916) in order to boost recruiting which, in turn, would send reinforcements to relieve

¹³¹ "War Has Inspired the Bards," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 16, 1916, p. 7.

¹³² "Patriotic Songs," *Hamilton Herald*, August 4, 1917, p. 4.

¹³³ *Toronto Daily Star*, April 15, 1918, p. 17.

her sons overseas.¹³⁴ Dora Carpenter Kenyon's "Come On, Ye Boys of Canada" contains a large photo of a soldier identified as C.O. Carpenter of the 18th Battalion, likely a brother or cousin.¹³⁵ However idealistic or conventional, these songs served a purpose.

This survey of repertoire during the Great War argues that the conflict left an indelible mark upon the Canadian musical scene. Classical enthusiasts struggled to reconcile their patriotism with their love of German musical achievements. Popular music devotees produced and consumed reams of sheet music expressing support for the Allied cause. Musicians of all stripes harnessed their talents in order to raise significant sums. These efforts were not without controversy. Some performers drew fire for their reluctance to pigeonhole their repertoire according to present-day political alignments. Conversely, amateur composers were accused of using patriotism to cloak personal ambition.

Studying musical selections during the war is valuable in that it reveals something about the mentality during this time. Still, it is important to recognize that compositions of the war years were indebted to pre-war musical conventions. The wartime scenario necessitated some degree of modification, but continuities with the past prevailed.

The next chapter addresses the fate of the music trade during the Great War. The preceding portrait of wartime composers and performers sets the background for the narrative of piano manufacturers and retailers. Only by observing the struggle between cosmopolitan cultural leanings and militant patriotic loyalties can we begin to appreciate

¹³⁴ Barbara Norman, "Music on the Home Front."

¹³⁵ Dora Carpenter Kenyon, "Come on Ye Boys of Canada" (London, ON: Dora Carpenter Kenyon, 1914), Envelope 2, Box X450, Sheet Music Collection, UWOA. C.O. Carpenter's military papers list Mr. Charles Kenyon of London, Ontario, as his next of kin. Jonathan Vance, written comments to author, December 12, 2013.

the music community's contribution to the war. These contributions help explain why music tradesmen reacted so vehemently to suggestions that musical consumption was tangential and even harmful to the all-important effort of winning the war.

CHAPTER 11
UNDER ATTACK:
THE GREAT WAR, THE MUSIC TRADE, AND THE “MUSIC IN THE HOME”
CAMPAIGN

Performers and composers were not the only musically minded civilians affected by the tide of war. Canada's music tradesmen felt similarly cast adrift, as they tried to negotiate patriotism with pragmatic business concerns. As the war entered its middle stages, the trade endured not only labour and supply shortages, but also fundamental challenges to its *raison d'être*. Vocal members of the public began questioning the necessity of instrument building during a time of war, forcing the music trade to clarify the nature of its contribution to home front society. These efforts resulted in the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music, as well as a campaign promoting “Music in the Home.” This chapter delves into a forgotten aspect of Canadian Great War history. It illuminates the challenges faced by the trade, as well as important debates about music's status as a necessity rather than a luxury. As the trade argued, such debates were integral to Canada's home front effort to win the war.

Business as Usual? The Music Trade, 1914-1916

Canada's music trade responded to the outbreak of war in a spirit of seriousness. Manufacturers accustomed to stringing their pianos with wire imported from Germany suddenly needed to search for alternative suppliers.¹ More worryingly, they feared that the economic uncertainties of wartime would dissuade Canadian consumers. Secure in its belief that the war would be a short one, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* told its readers to keep plugging their wares. All that was needed was a bit of effort, and the economy would soon regain its equilibrium. As for the wider international conflict, that was not the piano man's concern. The government and the military would ensure that Germany got what it deserved.² A September 1914 advertisement for Whaley, Royce & Company illustrated this mantra with its tag line "Let's Talk Business – Not War." Two months later, Frank Stanley Pianos announced that it had adopted a tone of "BUSINESS AS USUAL."³ A lengthier statement from the Thomas Organ & Piano Company encapsulates the tone of forced optimism that permeated the trade during this time:

Don't let nervousness about war conditions overcome your good common sense. Keep moving. Don't sit down and mope and decide that the country is going to the dogs; that hard times are here and there is no business to be done. Our crops are larger this year and prices received for them higher. Our country is all right ... There is prosperity for us all if we keep going.⁴

Despite its avowed attempt to ignore the faraway war, the music trade could not resist drawing parallels between the European battlefields and Canada's internal war against economic depression. These facile comparisons would later dwindle as the extent of the

¹ "War Time Trade," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* [hereafter *CMTJ*] 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 51. Reprinted from *The Globe*.

² *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): cover page; "Trade and the Future," *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 23.

³ *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 37; *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 12. See also "A Hopeful Outlook," *CMTJ* 16, no. 5 (October 1915): 19.

⁴ *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 20. See also "About Business," *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 19.

overseas carnage finally began to register. In the meantime, however, The Wright Piano Company informed retailers that: “The Guns You Need to besiege the piano situation are these *Two Wright Designs*.”⁵ Sherlock-Manning aimed a similar message at dealers with its admonition “War is Hell – Don’t Let your Business Go to War.”⁶

Prescriptive rhetoric may have been optimistic, yet actual sales figures proved discouraging. By January 1915, Toronto manufacturing firms reported buying patterns so “erratic” that even trade experts could only guess what lay in store for the future. Despite earlier predictions of a busy 1914 Christmas season, December piano sales had registered at only fifty to seventy-five per cent of those for 1912.⁷ Talking machine sales, by contrast, soared. The public conceded that entertainment helped to take the edge off wartime anxiety. There were limits, however, to how much people wished to invest. With models as low as \$20.00, the talking machine offered a cheaper, portable alternative to pianos.⁸ Wartime records, featuring not only music but also spoken recordings of (staged) battles, proved popular too.⁹ As one advertisement for Toronto’s Columbia Graphophone Company cheekily announced, “Here Is *One* Industry That War Cannot Harm.”¹⁰

Ontario experienced a prosperous farming season during the summer of 1915, yet cautious consumers still refrained from purchasing pianos. The CMTJ observed that the “prevalent disinclination to buy ... would be readily dissipated by news of an important

⁵ CMTJ 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 12. Emphasis in original.

⁶ CMTJ 15, no. 11 (April 1915): 28.

⁷ “Trade in Toronto: What Some of the Firms Report,” CMTJ 15, no. 8 (January 1915): 55-56.

⁸ *Saturday Night*, December 5, 1914, p. 12. Upper-end talking machines could be expensive, however, with fine wooden cabinets imitating piano designs. Such items cost anywhere from \$70 to \$325.00. See for instance *Everywoman’s World* (September 1919): 29.

⁹ “For Christmas Trade,” CMTJ 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 35; “Descriptive Records Contains ‘Arrival of British Troops in France,’” CMTJ 15, no. 7 (December 1914): 34.

¹⁰ CMTJ 17, no. 12 (May 1917): cover page, verso. Emphasis in original.

Ally victory in Europe.”¹¹ The tactics of trench warfare, however, rendered a decisive victory increasingly uncertain. That summer of 1915, it began to dawn on members of the music trade that the war would likely be a long, drawn-out affair. Numerous factory hands, retail shop staff, and traveling salesmen left their jobs in order to volunteer for the armed forces. Lists of those who had joined up eventually began to be supplemented by notices of those missing or killed in duty. The war personally affected even those at the top of the economic pyramid. Nordheimer Piano & Music Company president Albert Nordheimer, for instance, lost both his son and his son-in-law in the conflict.¹²

In spite of their economic and personal woes, music tradesmen vigorously supported the Allied cause. For reasons of principle as well as those of expediency, manufacturers touted their instruments as Made in Canada. Buying Canadian would ensure that consumer dollars stayed within the country in order to better serve the war effort.¹³ Retailers and manufacturers also contributed by donating money and employee labour. The Sherlock-Manning firm of London gave one thousand dollars to the Red Cross and Patriotic funds in the spring of 1917.¹⁴ A few months later, it sent a week’s worth of cash revenues to the Victory Loan campaign. The Sherlock-Manning and Stanley Piano companies happily accepted Victory Bonds “at par value” as a form of payment for goods.¹⁵ The staff at R.S. Williams’ large Toronto retail branch devised an elaborate plan for pooling their funds in order to purchase four war bonds per week. At

¹¹ “Predicts Good Fall Business,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 2 (July 1915): 55. See also “Conditions,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 3 (August 1915): 29.

¹² “Trade News,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 5 (October 1914): 45; “On Active Service,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 40; “Major Nordheimer Killed in Action,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 11 (April 1918): 80.

¹³ “A Practical Support of Domestic Goods,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 19; *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 43; “The Time to Advertise ‘Made in Canada’ Pianos and Players,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 20. See also “Cool Headed and Confident. Gerhard Heintzman, Ltd. Urge Optimism,” *CMTJ* 15, no. 4 (September 1914): 41; *Saturday Night*, November 21, 1914, p. 7.

¹⁴ *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 71.

¹⁵ *London Advertiser*, November 17, 1917, p. 12; *Toronto Daily Star*, November 13, 1917, p. 10.

the end of each week, organizers held a draw in order to determine which employee would receive the newly purchased bonds.¹⁶ During the summer of 1917, employees of the Sherlock-Manning Piano Company of London and the Karn-Morris Piano Company of Woodstock cultivated two and six acres of farm land respectively in order to help increase the production of food on the home front.¹⁷ Toronto piano manufacturers meanwhile donated ten per cent of their increasingly precious labour force to farming initiatives. In practical terms, this meant that a total of one-hundred-and-sixty factory employees went to work on the farms, with the manufacturers covering the pay difference so that the workers would not suffer any loss of income.¹⁸ Some efforts took a creative turn: one music retailer designed a window display consisting of toy soldiers on a revolving talking machine turntable, with a German soldier lying prostate before them.¹⁹

No sooner had the music trade begun to settle itself in for the long haul than sales of pianos began to improve. By the Christmas season of 1915 manufacturers found themselves straining to fill orders, having cautiously produced only the bare minimum.²⁰ Consumer demand during the final three years of war remained steady, though never approaching the high rates of the halcyon pre-1914 years. Rather, acute shortages in supplies and in particular labour became the new overriding concern.²¹ Mahogany supplies started to run out, and other materials such as veneer became scarce due to panic buying. The labour shortage proved even more pressing. The slump in piano sales during

¹⁶ "How Music Trade Employees Can Help Win the War," *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 71-72.

¹⁷ *CMTJ* 18, no.1 (June 1917): 64-65; "Piano Workers Increase Food Production," *CMTJ* 18, no. 2 (July 1917): 51.

¹⁸ "Piano and Supply Manufacturers Help Win the War," *CMTJ* 18, no. 3 (August 1917): 116.

¹⁹ "A Striking Window Display," *CMTJ* 15, no. 6 (November 1914): 35.

²⁰ "Business is Much Better," *CMTJ* 16, no. 7 (December 1915): 74-75.

²¹ "Summary of Conditions in the Canadian Piano Trade," *CMTJ* 17, no. 11 (April 1917): 23. According to one businessman cited in the above article, piano demands were roughly 60% of what they had been in 1912. See also "Canadian National Exhibition," *CMTJ* 18, no.4 (September 1917): 61.

the early months of the war had necessitated some layoffs, seen as a temporary measure until business improved. When the financial outlook began to brighten over the winter of 1915-1916, manufacturers discovered to their chagrin that most of their former employees had either joined the armed forces or found work in one of the wartime industries. To make matters worse, the existing crop of employees started to dwindle as they too departed for armed service or munitions factories. Unable or unwilling to comprehend that the average worker valued a higher wage packet above nebulous feelings of company loyalty, the bemused manufacturing paternalists wallowed in self-pity. Moreover, since piano manufacture was a skilled trade, losing an employee meant losing the expertise this individual had accumulated on the shop floor.²² As one writer lamented, “Men with life-long experience in piano construction are forsaking the trade by the score to accept wages in munition factories and aeroplane plants so high that the piano manufacturer cannot meet them.”²³ In addition, widespread coal shortages forced manufacturers to plead their case before the federal government’s fuel controller in the fall of 1918.²⁴ Even the transportation of finished pianos throughout the country proved difficult, as railway companies began to suffer from reduced labour and resources.²⁵ While the piano situation proved worrisome, retailers could at least count on Canadian manufacturers to produce and deliver as reliably as circumstances permitted. Violins, on the other hand, usually came from German and Austrian manufacturers, now boycotted due to the war. By September 1917, the *CMTJ* pronounced a violin “scarcity” as retailers

²² “Higher Prices Inevitable for Pianos, Organs and Players,” *CMTJ* 16, no. 9 (February 1916): 13, 17, 19. See also “Scarcity of Men Retards Factory Output,” *CMTJ* 17, no.1 (June 1916): 46.

²³ “Canadian National Exhibition,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 4 (September 1918): 76-77.

²⁴ “Music Industries Submit Coal Needs to Fuel Controller,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 5 (October 1918): 31, 33; “Regarding Fuel Restrictions in the Music Industries,” *CMTJ* 19, no. 5 (October 1918): 74.

²⁵ “A Shortage of Pianos,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 3 (August 1917): 116.

began looking as far as Japan for a reliable stock. Dwindling supplies meant that even second-hand violins in pawnshops became increasingly hard to find.²⁶

Luxury or Necessity? The “Music in the Home” Campaign of 1917-1918

In addition to general consumer reticence, two specific issues continued to dog piano manufacturers in the bid to sell their wares. First, they faced increased public scrutiny for their attempts to sell to the wives of servicemen. In doing so, piano retailers merely continued to tap the female market that had served them so well before the war. A husband donning the uniform, however, transformed a woman’s public identity in significant ways. Prescriptive discourses of the wife as moral guardian of the domestic realm acquired increased potency in light of the sacrifices her husband was making. The duress under which her husband fought to defend his country made it more important than ever to cultivate a home where he would find stability and spiritual relief upon his (presumed) return. At the same time, the physical absence of her male protector raised red flags about a woman’s willingness to walk the straight and narrow now that she was left on her own. Soldiers’ wives therefore faced scrutiny over their leisure and spending habits. One negative stereotype of the errant soldier wife circulating during these years was that of the giddy spendthrift who wasted her husband’s hard-earned army pay on frivolous luxuries.²⁷ Ignoring women’s longstanding experience as managers of household accounts, these stereotypes assumed that the female insatiable desire to

²⁶ “On the Scarcity of Violins,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 4 (September 1917): 93. *CMTJ* 19, no. 5 (October 1918): 20 mentions that the Canadian War Trade Board had recently placed strict limits on imports from Japan, rendering supply lines even sparser than before.

²⁷ Desmond Morton, “Supporting Soldiers’ Families: Separation Allowance, Assigned Pay, and the Unexpected,” in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 218.

consume would run into overdrive without the steadying influence of a husband's financial sense. Canadian Patriotic Fund workers indeed considered it a crucial part of their mandate to offer budgeting advice as well as funds for soldiers' dependents. This advice, frequently administered in the form of home visits, inevitably slipped into regulation as middle-class CPF inspectors hawkishly looked for signs of "extravagance" such as "a telephone, a piano purchased by instalment, perhaps only a new hat."²⁸ An excess of such items would convince the inspectors that CPF funding was neither needed nor deserved. Since CPF volunteers also scouted out conditions on behalf of the Department of Militia, a failing report for a family could lead to the cessation of Patriotic Fund payments as well as the government's Separation Allowance.²⁹

While hardline critics labeled any sort of musical item a luxury in a time of total war, they reserved their strongest disapproval for the piano on the grounds that its elevated price rendered it a proportionally greater sin. Like the proverbial serpent responsible for bewitching Eve into temptation, music dealers found their public image suffering along with that of their female clientele. Incensed about the possible damage to their livelihoods, dealers protested on the grounds of principle. Such charges, they argued, unfairly sullied their moral mission to enrich people's lives at a time when the world most needed music's civilizing powers.³⁰ They denounced the perpetrators of this

²⁸ Ibid., 206, 217.

²⁹ Ibid. See also Desmond Morton, "Supporting Soldiers' Wives and Families in the Great War: What Was Transformed?" in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 210-211. For the class-based implications of bourgeois philanthropic rhetoric see Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 210-211. For another view on this aspect of the Patriotic Fund see Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 72-74.

³⁰ Such high-minded rhetoric may have been used merely for strategic purposes. Still, there is considerable evidence throughout the *CMTJ* before and during the war years that the trade believed in its self-imposed civilizing mission.

“Bosh” and “trashy gossip” as interfering killjoys. Soldiers’ families should not be held any more publicly accountable for their spending practices than their civilian neighbours, so long as they could afford the purchases they made. Moreover, worried families needed leisure to distract them and aesthetic beauty to fortify their spirits. In the words of one Hamilton salesman, “Anyone who begrudges them that necessary pleasure is a hang sight more of a crank than a sane thinker.”³¹ Another writer agreed, “If in the judgment of the vendor the soldier’s family is a good risk for piano or phonograph, he is to be censured for not placing the instrument where it is a real home need. What the women of Canada have given up to make it possible for their men folk to go to the front surely entitles them to the unrestricted privilege of doing what they like with their money...”³² Indeed, some dealers found soldier’s wives reticent about purchasing pianos without the approval of their husbands, making them a harder rather than an easier sell.³³

The stereotype of the spendthrift soldier’s wife touched not only on gendered discourses of women’s home front roles, but also broader discussions regarding the place of music in a society engaged in total war. Some of the nation’s more zealous patriots insisted that any form of musical consumption not immediately related to enlistment or fundraising initiatives represented a waste of precious time and resources. Furthermore, civilians engaging in escapist pleasures such as music were making a mockery of the life-and-death sacrifices performed by Canada’s men overseas. The wartime production of musical instruments equally came under fire. One commanding officer at a recruiting

³¹ “What Some Hamilton Dealers are Saying,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 51-52. As discussed in Chapter 2 although a few dealers tried to land a sale no matter the state of a family’s finances, generally the *CMTJ* discouraged this. It created a headache in the long run, since the family likely would not be able to keep up with payments, forcing the local dealer to engage in the tricky task of repossession.

³² “Selling Soldiers’ Families,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 73.

³³ “What Western Ontario Dealers are Talking About,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 29.

event argued that piano and organ factories should close for the duration of the war, in order to free up more men.³⁴ Author Stephen Leacock lent intellectual credibility to these views when he castigated farmers for purchasing musical instruments, claiming they behaved just as parasitically as the piano and organ manufacturers themselves.³⁵ Such debates were not unique to Canada; criticism abounded in war-weary Britain as well.³⁶

This second vexing issue put members of the music trade once again on the defensive, forcing them to craft a rebuttal that would justify their commercial activities as well as their own faith in their chivalric mission. Perceptively, they realized that the best way to regain lost ground was to reframe the debate on their own terms. Arguing the position that despondent civilians needed a little bit of luxury to counteract gloomy war news, though valid, would not be nearly as effective as questioning the categories themselves. Was music truly a luxury? The music trade thought not. It was a necessity and doubly so in a society unsettled by war.

In an irate letter to the *Toronto Daily Star*, R.S. Williams & Sons general manager H.G. Stanton proclaimed that any man contesting the necessity of music “writes with little knowledge of the fact, and with less knowledge of the heart and home life of the British and Canadian people.” Music had given these loyal subjects the inspiration and courage to support their country at war: “Take the noble art from out of our homes and out of our souls – and you would do much to help the enemy, indeed, causing moods and depression where we want hope and action ... What wife or child or mother or sweetheart

³⁴ “Would Penalize Music Industries,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 21.

³⁵ H.G. Stanton, “Musical Instruments Not Luxuries Even Now,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, October 20, 1917, p. 26.

³⁶ “Slamming the Piano,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 8 (January 1917): 23. The British manufactured brass instruments as well as pianos. The Canadian trade confined itself to the production of pianos, organs, and their requisite parts, but it produced an overall higher grade of goods. For more information on the British trade in wartime see Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), ch. 9.

could not wait for their soldier's return more hopefully, more cheerfully [with music] – and, God pity the man who would deny them this comfort.”³⁷ A *Canadian Music Trades Journal* editorial moved beyond immediate discussions of war to the wider cause of human development: “Music is a necessity. Absolutely and incontrovertibly music is a necessity. Can anyone imagine the mental and physical degeneration, the misery of humanity, the great blot upon civilization that would result by taking music and the means of music from the world?”³⁸

While social pretension remained an effective tool for wooing class-conscious clients, the trade began to appreciate other methods for marketing their product. “Too many pianos and organs have been sold on a ‘keeping-up-with-the-Joneses’ basis,” the *CMTJ* observed. “Children are not clothed nor fed on that basis. They are not taken to the dentist or oculist because a neighbor’s children have filled teeth or wear glasses ... They are all sold on merit as necessities. Why should musical instruments be on any other basis?”³⁹ Perhaps worried that appeals to the sanctity of the bourgeois home would not be enough to sway hard-headed economists, the *Journal* went on to cite authorities in medicine and manufacturing. Leading doctors insisted that music calmed the anxious and reinvigorated the lethargic. Meanwhile, even the more punctilious factory owners conceded that music significantly increased worker efficiency.⁴⁰ The implications of these findings would not have been lost on a society trying to maximize wartime production. Peppered along with these depictions were other articles asserting music’s

³⁷ *Toronto Daily Star*, May 19, 1916, p. 9.

³⁸ “Music is a Necessity,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 3 (August 1916): 37-38.

³⁹ “Music a Human Essential,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 7 (December 1916): 23.

⁴⁰ “Music is a Necessity,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 3 (August 1916): 37-38; “Music in Health Building,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 3 (August 1916): 38-39.

relevance, including the wondrous work done by pianos and talking machines in army canteens and hospitals on the Western Front for soothing soldiers' nerves.⁴¹

Gathering wind from their own impassioned rhetoric, by the autumn of 1916 the members of Canada's music trade engaged in an offensive promotional campaign they dubbed "Music in the Home." As with most Canadian music trade initiatives, the movement had originated south of the border as an advertising tactic.⁴² Toronto manufacturer Robert S. Gourlay then devised the idea of adapting the "Music in the Home" campaign to the Canadian home front.⁴³ Members of the music trade intended to join together for the purposes of transforming the public's view of music as a luxury. Leading members of the movement founded a body called the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music in March 1917, based in Toronto yet charged with representing the interests of music trade throughout the Dominion. This group eventually included a committee of volunteers to take on executive functions, as well as a salaried permanent secretary. The Bureau's first meeting set up a short-term fundraising goal of \$5,000.00, of which \$3,500.00 was eventually raised. The Bureau used these funds in order to commission professional authors and music critics to write appealing articles stressing music's importance in the home. The Bureau would supplement these articles with its own written efforts, thus creating a considerable volume of material to distribute to newspapers across the nation. Bureau members were determined to create a positive tone to their campaign, to reflect on their trade with pride instead of making embarrassed excuses about their *métier*. Taking a cue from wartime propaganda, the trade reasoned

⁴¹ "Music a Necessity? Read This," *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 21; "Talking Machine Music a Necessity," *CMTJ* 17, no. 9 (February 1917): 29, 31.

⁴² "Trade Advancement Being Considered by Canadian Trade," *CMTJ* 17, no. 5 (October 1916): 66; C.M. Tremaine, "A Piano in Every Home," *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 18, 20.

⁴³ "Manufacturers' Annual Meeting," *CMTJ* 17, no. 7 (December 1916): 78-81.

“The householder – if there is one – who is opposed to buying a piano will change his mind if told often enough either by word of mouth or printed message that he should.”⁴⁴

While recognizing the economic roots of their campaign, retailers and manufacturers insisted that they ultimately pursued their quest in order to clear music’s holy name. As the *CMTJ* observed in June 1917, “The object of the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music is to create, develop, and foster music in the home. Of course this must be of advantage to the trade. Nobody pretends that it is not. But – this cannot be of direct or indirect advantage to the trade without first being of direct advantage to the public and to the press.”⁴⁵ Whether idealism did triumph over pecuniary concerns is a matter of conjecture. At the very least, the explanation is consistent with the trade’s pre-war attitudes to its work as a form of cultural uplift.

The “Music in the Home” newspaper coverage differed from previous advertising attempts in that it targeted readers devoid of musical proclivities. Members of the trade recognized that regular music columns needed to be freshened up and rendered more accessible. Mr. Tremaine, the American Bureau’s leader and invited guest at the first Canadian convention, affirmed during his address that “The class of people we want to reach is the general public – the masses – the people in whom musical taste and desire exists, but in whom it lies undeveloped ... Our best way of doing this is to attract their attention by snappy, newsy, interesting articles in the newspapers, rather than by additional music criticisms or notes, for the people who are not reading the musical notes

⁴⁴ “In the Meantime,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 6 (November 1916): 18. The figure of \$3,500.00 raised comes from The President’s Report in “First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 23. The report also notes that the Bureau executive board of volunteers consisted of E.C. Scythes, C.A. Bender, H.G. Stanton, H.H. Mason and D.R. Gourlay. At the March 1918 convention, two new members were added: E. Whaley, and A.P. Willis (p. 29).

⁴⁵ “Music in the Home” *CMTJ* 18, no.1 (June 1917): 17.

published to-day are not much more likely to read them even if the papers devote twice the space to them.”⁴⁶ Elitist ideas of musical taste still coloured the movement’s rhetoric, however. Tremaine predicted that once the masses found their latent musical interests awakened, they would eventually become the sort of people who attended highbrow classical musical events. The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* condescendingly noted that the Bureau’s new ads “are not written for musically educated people, but to impress music upon the masses, upon the journeyman, the farmer, the teamster, the laborer, in short, upon everybody that reads newspapers.”⁴⁷ These sorts of statements conflate class origins with cultural competency, while indulging in hierarchical notions of classical music representing a higher form of art to which the enlightened would inevitably aspire.

Over the spring and summer of 1917, the *CMTJ* reported a growing list of newspapers supporting the “Music in the Home” campaign. The *Journal* presented a narrative of eager editors, pleased at the prospect of a steady stream of music articles written free of charge. A Bureau report from the following year offered a different account – one of persistent Bureau members winning over reluctant editors.⁴⁸ Both renditions are likely exaggerations: the former trying to create momentum, the latter aiming at dramatic suspense. The reality was probably a more mundane mixture of the two. At any rate, *The Globe* and the *Toronto Star Weekly* proved two early adherents to the cause, setting the pace for smaller community papers to follow suit. By June 1917, London, Guelph, Woodstock, Peterborough, and Kingston had all joined the fray, as well

⁴⁶ “‘Music in the Home’ Propaganda Off to a Good Start,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 23. See also “London Piano Dealers’ General Meeting,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 44, 47.

⁴⁷ “Widening the Retailers’ Market,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 9 (February 1918): 21.

⁴⁸ “First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 21, 24.

as Vancouver, British Columbia.⁴⁹ By November 1917, thanks to Bureau Secretary J.A. Fullerton's business tour of the West, a few "Music in the Home" articles reached Regina and Winnipeg. For reasons unknown, the campaign floundered in communities east of Fort William.⁵⁰ Still, by March 1918 the Bureau counted forty papers from Sydney, N.S. to Nanaimo, B.C. printing "Music in the Home" material.⁵¹ The Canadian Bureau prided itself on providing ten to twelve new articles per week, compared to the American Bureau's rate of three to four.⁵² These literary efforts culminated with H.G. Stanton's eight-page booklet entitled *Sunshine for the Soul: The Importance of Music in the Home*, originally published in the *Canadian Home Journal*. The Bureau offered it to music retailers at cost, so that they could distribute it widely.⁵³

While the "Music in the Home" movement cultivated links with existing music critics, notably *The Globe's* E.R. Parkhurst, the movement seems to have been the brainchild of the music trade. Surviving issues of *Musical Canada* and the *Canadian Journal of Music* make no mention of the Bureau's activities.⁵⁴ The Bureau's First Annual President's Address (March 1918) reinforces this impression, since one of the stated goals for the coming year was to convince music teachers, conservatories, and performers to join the cause. In terms deliberately crafted to elicit financial donations, Secretary Fullerton explained that Bureau executive members had given several hours per

⁴⁹ "'Music in the Home' Propaganda Off to a Good Start," *CMTJ* 17, no. 10 (March 1917): 18, 21;

"London Piano Dealers' General Meeting," *CMTJ* 17, no. 12 (May 1917): 44, 47.

⁵⁰ "Music in the Home," *CMTJ* 18, no. 1 (June 1917): 18; *CMTJ* 18, no. 6 (November 1917): 65-69;

"Widening the Retailers' Market," *CMTJ* 18, no. 9 (February 1918): 21. For Fullerton's trip west see "First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music," *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 24.

⁵¹ "First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music," 24, 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵³ "You Pay Only the Printing," *CMTJ* 19, no. 1 (June 1918): 36. I have looked in vain for a copy of Stanton's treatise. To my knowledge, neither the pamphlet nor the relevant *Canadian Home Journal* issue(s) appear to have survived in any Canadian archival or library collections.

⁵⁴ This lack of coverage is all the more strange considering that Parkhurst also edited *Musical Canada*.

week on a purely voluntary basis. Surely local retailers could contribute in some lesser way for the noble purpose of changing the public's view of music.⁵⁵

Performing for a Public: The “Music in the Home” Campaign in Local Newspapers

In keeping with this dissertation's focus on Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Guelph, surviving newspapers for the smaller cities were consulted along with Toronto's *Star Weekly* and *The Globe* in an attempt to determine how the “Music in the Home” campaign played out in the public eye. The *Star Weekly* and *The Globe* both ran their first “Music in the Home” columns on April 7, 1917. The *London Advertiser* followed on April 28, 1917, the *Guelph Mercury* on May 5, the *London Free Press* on July 14, and the *Hamilton Herald* on July 21. The *Hamilton Spectator* made isolated attempts at a “Music in the Home” column on July 20, August 11, September 1, and September 22, but the idea never caught on. Coverage in the other papers proved far more regular, with the column appearing once per week, usually on Saturdays. The first appearance of a “Music in the Home” column generally came out of the blue, without any editorial explanation as to the column's purpose. Sometimes, the column would disappear for a week or two and then return, again without explanation.⁵⁶ A newspaper's loyalty to the scheme seemed largely to depend on the presence of either a music editor already on staff, or a local Bureau-friendly volunteer agreeing to edit the column. The former would only have been available to high-circulation papers such as *The Globe* and the *Toronto Star Weekly*. The

⁵⁵ “First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 23.

⁵⁶ The *Hamilton Herald* is an exception to this pattern. The *Herald* usually played around with the dates of its “Music in the Home” column. The column would appear for a few Saturdays, then on a Friday, then the occasional Thursday, sometimes three days in a row and then nothing for a few weeks.

Globe music editor, E.R. Parkhurst, simply added “Music in the Home” to his column title and added a few of the Bureau’s articles in addition to his regular content. The smaller *London Advertiser*, meanwhile, relied upon the talents of a (presumably volunteer) critic writing under the pseudonym “A. Minor.” This A. Minor proved instrumental in making the *Advertiser*’s weekly column appear with far more regularity than those of the other smaller newspapers. The *Advertiser*’s article content also proved superior in that it blended the generic Bureau-written articles with Minor’s own locally focused fare. Guelph music retailer Fred Kelly, meanwhile, worked hard to convince his city’s two papers to include the “Music in the Home” column. Soon after, Kelly must have given in to other demands on his time. The *Guelph Mercury* began with local content much like the *London Advertiser*, but it soon dwindled to a handful of general Bureau articles.⁵⁷ The *London Free Press* did not even print a column; rather, it tacked on one or two short “Music in the Home” articles at the end of its Entertainment page. One surmises that, without an advocate such as Parkhurst or Minor on hand, the size and frequency of the column depended on whether it had been a slow news day. The tone of the “Music in the Home” columns could also differ based on perceptions of local readership. Likely presuming a more sophisticated urban audience, *The Globe*’s “Music in the Home” column tended to be more erudite. Since *The Globe* articles aimed at a reader with a higher degree of musical knowledge, it will appear less frequently in the following analysis. The lofty tone not only deviates from the rest of the newspapers in this sample; it stands contrary to the Bureau’s intended aims.

⁵⁷ “First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 24. The sole surviving copy of the relevant years for the other Guelph daily, the *Guelph Herald*, will not be available for consultation at LAC until mid-2015.

While the size and quality of the “Music in the Home” column may have differed, depending on the journalistic organ responsible for its distribution, by and large the column made a conspicuous difference in the average newspaper’s musical reportage. Prior to this, local newspapers would include short articles announcing an upcoming concert, or terse reviews of an entertainment that had already taken place. Most newspapers had “Music and the Drama” columns consisting of a short section during the week and a longer section on Saturdays. With the exception of high-circulation papers such as *The Globe* and the *Star*; however, the “Music and the Drama” sections favoured Dramatics at the expense of the Musical content. These columns were often no more than lengthy discussion of the various plays, vaudeville, musical comedy, and moving picture shows in town at the moment. The introduction of “Music in the Home” columns increased the amount of musical coverage from (in many cases) little better than negligible to a good third to half of a page. It also signaled the first time that papers smaller than the *Star* or *The Globe* offered regular articles discussing music in a wider sense: its purpose in society, information about composers and concert artists, and tidbits from the local music scene. These columns became miniature versions of the Canadian music periodicals, only more accessible in tone and free of additional charge.

The “Music in the Home” campaign existed in order to convince readers of music’s necessary contribution to daily life. Thus, a considerable portion of the columns’ written material touched on this theme. In an article entitled “Suppose,” the *Hamilton Herald* encouraged readers to imagine the bleak prospect should the federal government prohibit music. Although framed as speculation, these musings recalled the cries of those wishing to curtail music and all other ‘luxuries’ for the remainder of the war. Using

carefully chosen examples, the author insisted that military parades, church services, civilian morale, and indeed military victories would be severely compromised by such an action. “No music in the army! What of the brave Canadians who went over the parapet at Vimy ridge to the skirl of the pipes giving them Blue Bonnets Over the Border? What of the men at the base, in training, in the hospitals, and what of the wives and mothers at home under the constant strain and worry? No music in the home, then the blues get possession of us, worries weigh heavier, the brightness goes out, and man slips down the ladder because one of his strongest means of uplift is gone.”⁵⁸ *The Globe* presented an equally sobering prospect of a home front bereft of music’s dulcet tones: “Deprived of this saving cultural element, it would not be long before this nation would degenerate to inert materialism, going ahead along mechanical lines and losing all initiative.”⁵⁹ Initiative represented a crucial ingredient in a home front society relying on the efficiency of its labour and volunteer forces. Thus music contributed something intangible yet significant to the war effort, something that could not be measured in dollars and cents but would certainly compromise production were it eliminated.

Other authors adopted a more positive tone, dwelling less on the horrors of a tuneless world and more on the joy and relief that music afforded. One article argued for music’s necessity on the grounds that it provided a much-needed “happy ending” to workdays increasingly overshadowed by worry.⁶⁰ A second article insisted that music’s rejuvenating qualities fortified the individual for further war efforts: “The glimpse into the bright region of the republic of music will make you stronger to deal courageously

⁵⁸ *Hamilton Herald*, August 18, 1917, p. 5. For a similar version of the same article see “Can You Picture Life Minus Music,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, August 25, 1917, p. 26.

⁵⁹ “Music a Need in Time of Stress,” *The Globe*, May 19, 1917, p. 17.

⁶⁰ “Music for the Day’s Happy Ending,” *Hamilton Herald*, January 5, 1918, p. 13.

with the grim realities. It will renew your faith in the future. It will strengthen your determination to do your part to bring that future nearer and more certain.”⁶¹

In particular, columns harped upon music’s importance to the maintenance of domestic harmony, a significant point considering that soldiers were fighting to protect the professed sanctity of the Canadian home. “The strength of a nation is reflected in the character of the life of its people,” argued an article in the *London Free Press*.

“Consequently anything that exercises a good influence on home life should have the ear of every thinking person.”⁶² Musical evenings would strengthen a family’s ties to the home, making it stronger, and thus the nation stronger as a result. In a time of total war, this message became even more relevant. Invoking wartime notions of efficiency, one article pronounced it “an unpardonable sin to have a musical instrument in the house and to allow it to fall into disuse through carelessness.” One should instead heed the example of the strong, vigilant Canadian army and never let one’s “guard” down in one’s own private war to retain hard-won musical skills.⁶³

Should any stalwart patriot remain in doubt as to music’s effect, “Music in the Home” columns included various anecdotes about Canadian soldiers’ musical activities. One of the standard articles the Bureau circulated to multiple newspapers described the battle-weary men’s delight over the \$5000.00 worth of mouth organs they had received due to Canadian fundraising efforts.⁶⁴ As usual, the *London Advertiser* went a step further by cultivating a correspondence with Corporal T.W.C. Rose, a British-born Canadian

⁶¹ “Soothing Power of Music,” *Hamilton Herald*, April 25, 1918, p. 9.

⁶² “Home Life Safeguarded by Music,” *London Free Press*, August 25, 1917, p. 11. For a similar version of the same article see “Home Life Safeguarded by Music,” *Hamilton Herald*, August 25, 1917, p. 5.

⁶³ “Losing One’s Grip Musically,” *London Free Press*, December 1, 1917, p. 11. For a variant of this article see “Don’t Let Art Grow Rust Or Instrument Stand Silent,” *London Advertiser*, December 15, 1917, p. 9.

⁶⁴ For slight variations on this theme see *London Free Press*, July 21, 1917, p. 9; “Fighting Men Want Music,” *Hamilton Herald*, August 11, 1917, p. 5; “Jack Loves Music at Sea and Ashore,” *London Advertiser*, August 25, 1917, p. 5.

who had sung professionally before enlisting in the forces. Then convalescing in Canadian military hospital, Rose penned lengthy epistles describing how music had speeded his recovery. In a passage that would have warmed any Bureau member's heart, Corporal Rose encouraged his readers to continue their musical pursuits in wartime: "After all, music is the most beautiful gift that has been presented to us, and we should strive to make the most of it. Everyone who possesses musical talent should try and do his or her best in this line, as at the present time many a stricken and sorrowing heart can be cheered up or consoled immensely by a song rendered with a full and hoping heart."⁶⁵

Biographical sketches comprised another prominent feature in the "Music in the Home" columns. Authors frequently drew upon the standard roster of classical composers such as Cherubini, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Liszt, yet they usually tried to isolate an angle that would render these heroic figures more accessible to the everyday reader.⁶⁶ One writer, for instance, covered the dubious career of "Liszt as a Practical Joker."⁶⁷ Another piece, entitled "A Musical Ghost Story," presented a melodramatic account of a mysterious patron in a black cloak commissioning Mozart to write his famous Requiem.⁶⁸ In addition to these historical figures, "Music in the Home" columns examined the lives of contemporary celebrities including opera singer Enrico Caruso, pianist Leopold Godowsky, violinist Isolde Menges, and Canadian-born violin sensation Kathleen

⁶⁵ A. Minor, "Soldier-Artist Makes an Appeal for Better Music," *London Advertiser*, November 17, 1917, p. 9. For Rose's discussion of soldiers' lives overseas see *London Advertiser*, December 1, 1917, p. 14. See also "Prisoners and Music," *Toronto Star Weekly*, July 27, 1918, p. 22 regarding music in prisoner-of-war camps, and "Music on Board a Battleship," *Toronto Star Weekly*, May 12, 1917, p. 26; "Music Helps to Hold the Line," *Toronto Star Weekly*, September 14, 1918, p. 22.

⁶⁶ *London Advertiser*, December 8, 1917, p. 9; "A Wider Enjoyment of Liszt," *Hamilton Herald*, January 5, 1918, p. 13; "Anecdotes of Cherubini," *Hamilton Herald*, April 25, 1918, p. 9; *Hamilton Herald*, April 26, 1918, p. 20.

⁶⁷ "Liszt as a Practical Joker," *Hamilton Herald*, May 10, 1918, p. 20.

⁶⁸ "A Musical Ghost Story," *Hamilton Herald*, July 21, 1917, p. 5.

Parlow.⁶⁹ Still other biographical sketches focused on local musicians currently making a name for themselves. The *London Advertiser*, for example, ran a feature about a former city resident who had landed a plum position as a singing teacher in the American Army.⁷⁰ The *Advertiser* also ran a feature on Angelo and Joe Cortese, brothers whose work on the harp and the violin respectively had earned them (and by extension, London) considerable renown.⁷¹ A final type of sketch consisted of tales of brilliant, preferably local, child prodigies whose musical gifts promised a rosy future. This roster included seven-year-old Londoner Samuel Monro, adept at Scottish singing and dancing. Monro's performances had already garnered comparisons with the famous singer Harry Lauder.⁷²

In a thinly disguised plug for music education, many of these life stories emphasized the role of clear-sighted parents in encouraging a musically precocious child. The sketch of Joe Cortese, for instance, revealed that:

From the time Joe was a tiny tot, he revealed a great love for music. He was always begging daddy to buy him a fiddle ... Then one great day the good musical daddy brought home a tiny little fiddle ... and his small boy almost went wild with joy. He wanted to start playing it right away.

'Teach me to play a tune on it, Daddy,' commanded Master Six-Year-Old. Good, obedient daddy immediately started to gratify the whim. In half an hour the little fellow had mastered a simple serenade...⁷³

The above passage emphasizes that "good" parents nurtured, rather than stymied, their children's natural urge to play an instrument. Appealing to parental pride, these texts argued that for all one knew, the next great concert artist could be under one's own roof.

⁶⁹ *Guelph Mercury*, June 2, 1917, p. 8; *London Advertiser*, June 9, 1917, p. 4; *London Advertiser*, September 15, 1917, p. 5; *London Advertiser*, October 20, 1917, p. 5; "Caruso Tells His Life Story," *Toronto Star Weekly*, April 6, 1918, p. 26.

⁷⁰ A. Minor, "Music in the Home," *London Advertiser*, October 6, 1917, p. 5.

⁷¹ A. Minor, "Music in the Home," *London Advertiser*, July 28, 1917, p. 5.

⁷² A. Minor, "London's Youthful Lauder Makes a Decided Hit," *London Advertiser*, May 19, 1917, p. 12. See also *London Advertiser*, June 9, 1917, p. 4; *London Advertiser*, October 13, 1917, p. 11; *London Advertiser*, October 20, 1917, p. 5.

⁷³ A. Minor, "Joe Cortese," *London Advertiser*, July 28, 1917, p. 5.

London Advertiser columnist A. Minor told the story of a local woman who had absorbed just such a lesson. This mother had apparently phoned Minor in order to tell him that she had given in to her five-year-old daughter's ardent pleas for a violin. "Now, we have arranged with a teacher, and the tot is to start her lessons at once. We are looking round for a small enough violin for her. Even a half size will be almost too big. But she is ambitious enough to tackle anything. Who knows but she will be a second [Isolde] Menges? If so, your page will have the credit for getting her started in time."⁷⁴

Other "Music in the Home" articles addressed the subject of music education more directly. The first step was to encourage parents to value musical appreciation as an important element in the quest to raise happy children. Musical exposure should ideally begin during a child's infancy. Various articles advised singing nursery rhymes to babies and toddlers, teaching young children to sing simple tunes, and playing a little music for children on the piano or the talking machine as they reached school-going age. Musical appreciation, the experts insisted, should progress at a similar rate to a child's literary appreciation. Therefore, parents should be incorporating musical segments into their evening story time sessions with their little ones.⁷⁵

The next step in the grand persuasion consisted of convincing parents to give their child music lessons. Thus, a piece in the *Hamilton Herald* assured readers that musical abilities were not inherited; even an unmusical father and mother would be capable of producing a musically sensitive child. Employing the rhetoric of 'normality' so prevalent in discussions of childhood development over the first half of the twentieth century, the article insisted that "Every normal child is born with a capacity for musical development,

⁷⁴ *London Advertiser*, October 27, 1917, p. 12.

⁷⁵ "Music and the Children's Hour," *London Free Press*, September 22, 1917, pp. 8-9.

and it is the parent's duty to see that his children are given a musical education if it is at all possible, even to the point of making sacrifices in other things of less vital importance to the child's future."⁷⁶ Such passages illustrate a growing trend throughout the 1910s and 1920s to place music education within the grasp of all children, regardless of background. Across North America, musicians and music educators proclaimed a new ethic of democracy that would lead, so they claimed, toward a more musically astute post-war society. No longer did musical education constitute a mark of status and privilege; now, a child without music was considered robbed of his or her universal birthright.⁷⁷

One by-product of this discourse of universality was a shift away from older Victorian associations of amateur music as an exclusively female, middle-class domain. "Music in the Home" columnists therefore targeted both boys and girls as potential musical recruits. One article suggested that the mechanically minded boy should take up an instrument in his youth on the grounds that sensitivity to sounds and instrument construction would someday help him pinpoint malfunctioning machines on the factory floor.⁷⁸ While the text creates the impression that such a lad would be working as an overseer or engineer at the top of the pay scale, the linking of musical training with manual trades represents something new. The *Star Weekly* quoted letters from the pleased parents of grown sons who insisted that music had helped guard their precious boys from "perhaps a life of bad habits, or at least of indifferent accomplishment."⁷⁹ The *Hamilton Herald* meanwhile ran a series of two articles describing a fictional boy named "Willie,"

⁷⁶ "Inheriting Musical Ability," *Hamilton Herald*, January 5, 1918, p. 13.

⁷⁷ "Children Who Have No Musical Training Badly Handicapped," *London Advertiser*, July 14, 1917, p. 11; "Children Need More Music in Home and School," *London Free Press*, July 14, 1917, p. 9; *London Advertiser*, September 15, 1917, p. 5.

⁷⁸ "Music and Machinery," *London Advertiser*, September 29, 1917, p. 5.

⁷⁹ "When Boys Take Music Lessons," *Toronto Star Weekly*, May 12, 1917, p. 26. See also "Boys Particularly Need Influence of Good Music," *Toronto Star Weekly*, June 29, 1918, p. 26.

who stood for the archetypal music student of the day. The new discourse did not, however, dismantle existing interpretations of the importance of female music making. The “Willie” articles made it clear that Mother, not Father, bore the responsibility for guiding the musical education of her offspring. Moreover, the series warned mothers to bury their natural ‘feminine’ preoccupations with trivial prestige:

Mothers sometimes think that the object of music study is to prepare Willie to play a piece when the family has company. Accordingly, he is taught for a year or more until he has a fair command of the rudiments and can play an easy piece at sight. Then the study ceases. Now it is just as absurd to attempt to make a musician in a year or two as to make a mathematician in the same time. Music is studied not for the purpose of showing off, but as a means of culture.⁸⁰

Supporting Willie’s musical education therefore meant privileging individual creative development over mere social utility.

For those parents who already gave their children private music lessons, the “Music in the Home” column offered specialized tips on how to achieve maximum results. Newspapers such as the *London Free Press*, the *Hamilton Herald*, and the *Guelph Mercury* included articles about the importance of having a quality instrument (properly tuned) as well as a quality teacher. Likening these factors to the impression made by fine versus cheap clothing, the *Free Press* insisted that, “basing the child’s study on a cheap idea of music, can produce nothing but cheap results.”⁸¹ Meanwhile, the *Herald*’s second “Willie” sketch suggested that Willie’s practice duties should be devised around the number of repetitions of a piece or technical exercise, rather than a section of time. This

⁸⁰ “Willie’s Music Lessons Are Educational,” *Hamilton Herald*, August 11, 1917, p. 5. For a similar message see “Children Should Study Seriously,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, July 27, 1918, p. 22.

⁸¹ “Music Teachers Inspire Confidence in their Pupils,” *London Free Press*, September 22, 1917, p. 8. See also “Piano Tuner, Please,” *Guelph Mercury*, May 26, 1917, p. 9; “Music for Children: Should be of the Best and By Best Teachers,” *Guelph Mercury*, June 2, 1917, p. 8; “In Justice to the Beginner He Must Start Practicing on a Good Piano,” *Hamilton Herald*, January 5, 1918, p. 13.

way, the young lad would not be practicing with an eye on the clock.⁸² Further articles on sight-reading, breath control for vocalists, and metronome use appeared in order to help the older student learn to practice with greater efficiency.⁸³

Finally, newspapers benefitting from the presence of a local musical advocate featured articles linking musical activities to community pride. A. Minor's numerous contributions to the *London Advertiser* provide the most complete example of this strategy. Minor inserted pieces praising Londoners for their refined tastes as well as their commitment to a higher profile for music in the city. These articles included Isobel C. Armstrong's lengthy feature "Renaissance of Musical Art in London," which described the gentle but persistent development of local music clubs, collegiality amongst professional musicians, education facilities, and opportunities for enjoying home music.⁸⁴ Another article observed that Londoners' improved musical tastes could be gauged by the recent decline in demand for popular tunes as well as an increased interest in "the better class of music."⁸⁵ A further method of inspiring local pride was to encourage competition between various communities. Shortly after Chatham's City Council announced plans for a large communal singsong, A. Minor reported that London was organizing a similar event of its own. Indeed, Minor claimed that London musicians had merely been putting the finishing touches on their own preparations when Chatham rushed in with its hasty

⁸²"When Willie Practices," *Hamilton Herald*, August 18, 1917, p. 5. See also "Students Should Be Systematic in their Studies," *Hamilton Herald*, February 22, 1918, p. 5.

⁸³"Tricks in Sight Reading," *Hamilton Herald*, July 28, 1917, p. 4; *Guelph Mercury*, July 28, 1917, p. 3; *London Free Press*, October 27, 1917, p. 11; "The Metronome," *Hamilton Herald*, April 26, 1918, p. 20; "In Singing, Breathe Naturally," *Hamilton Herald*, June 1, 1918, p. 17.

⁸⁴ Isobel C. Armstrong, "Renaissance of Musical Art in London," *London Advertiser*, April 28, 1917, p. 10.

⁸⁵ A. Minor, "Big Improvement in Musical Taste," *London Advertiser*, June 2, 1917, p. 5. See also "London Becoming a Musical Centre with Distinction" and "Music Season Has Been Greatest in London's History," both in *London Advertiser*, May 12, 1917, p. 10, as well as "London Audiences Quick to Express Appreciation," *London Advertiser*, May 19, 1917, p. 12.

declaration.⁸⁶ Similarly, when the *Guelph Mercury*'s "Music in the Home" correspondent reviewed the Elora Dramatic Company's musical evening, he observed: "Elora is probably not possessed of any more talent than any other place. The point is that the people there have cultivated it, while in other places lies dormant ... We [in Guelph] have talent, and plenty of it. Elora can be thanked for the object lesson it gave of home talent well developed."⁸⁷

Through these attempts, "Music in the Home" columns attempted to bring the general reader within range of music's enfolding embrace. It was a battle not only for the pocketbook, but also for the mind. In doing so, the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music hoped that their message would reach even stubborn philistines.

"Music in the Home" Advertisements

In order to reinforce the "Music in the Home" articles, Canadian manufacturers introduced similar themes into their advertising matter. These advertisements could be placed near the "Music in the Home" column proper, on another page, or even in a newspaper that had not signed on to the campaign (such as Toronto's *Saturday Night*). While talking machine advertisements constituted a portion of these "Music in the Home" advertisements, the following discussion will concentrate exclusively on piano

⁸⁶A. Minor, "Music in the Home," *London Advertiser*, October 20, 1917, p. 5; A. Minor, "Old-Time Singing School Will Have Grand Revival in London During Winter," *London Advertiser*, November 3, 1917, p. 7.

⁸⁷*Guelph Mercury*, May 5, 1917, p. 11.

and player piano advertisements. This choice is partly for simplicity's sake, and partly because the piano sale problem represented the crux of the Bureau's *raison-d'être*.⁸⁸

R.S. Williams & Sons of Oshawa addressed the music-in-wartime debate directly by circulating a heavy-hitting advertisement in February 1918 featuring the tag line: "Who But the Most Narrow Minded Could Call Music a Luxury in Times Such as These."⁸⁹ A Nordheimer advertisement for October 1917 employed a quotation from British Prime Minister Lloyd George, whose pro-music stance had made him the unlikely hero of Britain and Canada's war-beleaguered music industries: "Why should we not sing during the war? Hundreds of wars have swept over these hills, but the harp of Wales has never yet been silenced." The advertisement went on to address a major inhibition for wartime buyers: the belief that they should refrain from large purchases during times of uncertainty. "Use, with proper care, does not injure a well made piano," assured the Nordheimer missive, "and it certainly is real economy (where saving is the first essential) to invest now, while pre-war values [prices] yet remain." Indeed, the tag line for the ad read "True Economy in Buying One of These Pianos."⁹⁰ Nordheimer stuck a similar note in another advertisement a few months later. "Give One Good, Practical Gift," the copy admonished. "This is to be a practical Christmas— let us be practical in our selection of the home gifts. Better to eliminate the small, trivial present, so as to secure one good, practical present that all may enjoy."⁹¹ In addition to encouraging cautious readers, the discourse of 'practicality' supported the notion of music as a necessity.

⁸⁸ For examples of "Music in the Home" themed ads for talking machines see *Toronto Daily Star*, September 17, 1917, p. 6; *Toronto Daily Star*, October 4, 1917, p. 10; *London Advertiser*, September 29, 1917, p. 6; *Hamilton Herald*, April 20, 1918, p. 3; *London Free Press*, December 15, 1918, p. 3.

⁸⁹ *Toronto Star Weekly*, February 2, 1918, p. 31.

⁹⁰ *Toronto Daily Star*, October 12, 1917, p. 14.

⁹¹ *London Advertiser*, December 22, 1917, p. 9. See also R.S. Williams advertisement, *Toronto Star Weekly*, January 12, 1918, p. 33.

Other efforts, such as a Mason & Risch advertisement for the Christmas Season of 1918 (Fig. 11.1), conjured appealing visions of the comforting, happy home that music would supposedly create. The ideal of home as a refuge had wielded strong cultural sway since the Victorian era. The past four years of war, with its deprivations and separations, would have rendered that image even more alluring. “Fill Your Home With Music,” the advertisement proclaimed, portraying a family enjoying a cheerful parlour scene. A late middle-aged mother and father pause from their reading material to gaze lovingly at their adolescent daughter sitting at the player piano. A dapper gentleman leans over the instrument, admiring the young woman as she plays. His presence indicates a tone of romantic wish fulfillment for a society still coming to terms with the recent depletion of its ranks of young men. “Music Brings Entertainment, Comfort, Happiness, and Inspiration into the Home,” the copy continued. “In these times when brain and brawn are taxed to full capacity, when nerves are strung to their highest tension and cares and worries fill the hearts of men, RELAXATION is absolutely necessary to the welfare of the individual.”⁹² A Heintzman & Company advertisement that same Christmas season exclaimed that the gift of a piano or victrola would create “a home having a common centre of interest that draws the family closer – a source of joy, of solace, of inspiration that will, as time passes, have a more and more intimate part in the home life.”⁹³ These family-themed ads do possess similarities to pre-war messages. Their greater verbosity and their references to gloom nevertheless mark them out from their predecessors.

A Gerhard Heintzman ad for February 1917 moved its focus from the family to the realm of the individual, waxing eloquent over music’s contribution to inner peace.

⁹² *London Free Press*, December 17, 1918, p. 3.

⁹³ *London Advertiser*, December 13, 1918, p. 19.

Using the tag line “Filling Out Your Life With Music’s Swing” the ad continued: “Life is a medley of moods and conditions. Some we would not wish to lose. But others – who would not gladly bring into his life a new heart-soothing gladness? Music is the oldest and greatest joy-instiller the world has known. No – music is not beyond you.

Somewhere within you there’s that musically sensitive soul. *No more is needed.*”⁹⁴

Another Gerhard Heintzman advertisement depicted the piano as a palliative to the anxious life of a home front civilian. “Dinner over. News of the day all read. It’s been a weary, worrying day. Yet a long stretch of two hours – two vacant, empty hours – before bedtime? If only we knew how to spend that time enjoyably, satisfying! If only we had the nerve-soothing, heart-gladdening charm of – music!”⁹⁵ These sort of messages harkened back to pre-war notions of music as a cure for neurasthenia and other forms of mental stress. In the wartime context, however, such words acquired specific relevance.

A final theme in “Music in the Home” advertisements touched on the contribution music made to the lives of the younger generation. Early twentieth-century psychological studies had already begun paying attention to childhood development; in particular, the factors encouraging or impeding a child’s physical, mental, and moral growth.⁹⁶ The war had rendered children an even more precious resource, a symbol of future regeneration for a country still absorbing the shock of losing tens of thousands of men in their prime. Children equally represented the sanctity of home and hearth, values that Canadian society was currently fighting to defend. Finally, children symbolized society’s hopes for

⁹⁴ *Saturday Night*, February 17, 1917, p. 27. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁵ *The Globe*, May 19, 1917, p. 17.

⁹⁶ Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada 1920-1950*, Studies in Childhood and Family in Canada, ed. Cynthia Comacchio (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006), 18-22; Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 17- 20.

a bright post-war future. This younger generation would reap the benefits of the glorious sacrifices being made in the name of civilization.⁹⁷ Just as the war gave greater potency to children's symbolic power, so did it create anxieties about these resources being compromised in some way. A father's absence, a mother engaged in activities for the war effort: these were only some of the worries about the war's adverse affects on children.

One Nordheimer and two Gerhard Heintzman ads demonstrate the centrality of childhood to the "Music and the Home" campaign. The Nordheimer example features a young girl, her feet dangling high above the piano pedals. "The training of your little one should be guided by an instrument of the highest merits," the text reasoned. "No lesser instrument is good enough for your child's musical education."⁹⁸ The idea of fretting over which brand of piano to entrust to a child relies upon a peculiarly modern concept of childhood as a time for healthy growth on the path to a successful adult life. The modern child's upbringing needed to be guided with the utmost care, in order to ensure the best possible results when he or she reached adulthood. Gerhard Heintzman's ad for April 1918 (Fig. 11.2) similarly appealed to parental anxieties about their progeny's future. Depicting a little girl with long curling hair and a half-innocent half-impish look on her face, its caption read "Little Hands: How Will They Grow? Trained or Untrained?" The advertisement went on to observe, "Those little hands are now in your care, mother. You can train them to bring lifelong happiness or let them go untrained. But *now* is the time to begin their education."⁹⁹ While theoretically leaving the decision up to the imagined

⁹⁷ Kristine Alexander, "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 174-175; Susan R. Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 10-13.

⁹⁸ *Hamilton Herald*, February 22, 1918, p. 5

⁹⁹ *Hamilton Herald*, April 20, 1918, p. 6. Emphasis in original.

mother, the emphasis on the word “now” creates a sense of urgency. The second Gerhard Heintzman advertisement traded didacticism for lyricism, calling music “Childhood’s Best Comrade.” The ad claimed: “[i]t puts zest into all games ... does a score of things that mean delight and content to every kiddie. Even if you were denied the blessing of music yourself, surely you will not keep it out of the lives of your children!”¹⁰⁰ Again, this text represents a twentieth-century preoccupation with childhood imagination and play, not Victorian notions of musical education as discipline and social duty.

Despite its reliance on urban newspapers, the “Music and the Home” campaign reached rural communities as well. The *Farm and Dairy and Home*, a weekly paper published out of Peterborough, contained a full-page article by Marion Dallas of York County, Ontario, concerning the best ways for young musicians to perfect their craft.¹⁰¹ Immediately to the right of the article stood an advertisement for the Williams Piano Company (Fig. 11.3), featuring a drawing of a comely young girl of about ten or eleven, with a rose in her hair and a wide smile on her face as her long graceful arms reached out to press the piano keys. “Why Not Make Mary Merry?” the advertisement inquired. “Gladden her little heart. Let the joy of expression brighten her girlhood days. Let the influence of good music bring out more of that warmth of heart that is the part of every little girl. Let it inspire her to noble things. Even now she is looking to you to encourage her natural desire for music through the possession of a good piano...”¹⁰² While certain elements of the pre-war piano advertising remain intact, namely the assumption of females as naturally musical, there is a novel democratic tone to the ad. It is no longer

¹⁰⁰ *Hamilton Spectator*, October 6, 1917, p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Marion Dallas, “Develop Musical Nature by Home Study,” *Farm and Dairy and Home*, January 25, 1917, p. 92.

¹⁰² *Farm and Dairy and Home*, January 25, 1917, p. 92.

music for the refined classes vaguely defined, but rather music as the universal child's rightful cultural inheritance. No longer does playing the piano give one an edge over one's neighbours. Now, to deny one's child music is to place him or her at a disadvantage not only socially but in terms of development and happiness as well. These strains had been present before the war, but the "Music in the Home" campaign crystallized them into a coherent discourse. Thus, "Music in the Home" advertising strategies represented a change in emphasis rather than a break with the pre-1914 past.

From War to Post-war

Did the "Music in the Home" campaign ameliorate the fortunes of the music trade to any appreciable degree? It is difficult to say. The Bureau's interim report released at the end of 1918 insisted that "It is quite impossible to appraise in dollars and cents the returns that the music trades are receiving from the propaganda of the gospel of music, but ... [i]t is quite apparent to those who have been observant in this matter that where open hostility to the interests of the music industries prevailed in the early months of the war it gradually mellowed into tacit approval..."¹⁰³ Even so, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* does not indicate a dramatic change in the trade's fortunes during the final year-and-a-half of the war. As late as July 1918 the *CMTJ* warned dealers to avoid openly airing their sales figures. The public, the *Journal* cautioned, still tended to overestimate the amount of money that the music trade actually made.¹⁰⁴ It also proved very difficult for the Bureau to maintain high levels of local commitment after the early months of

¹⁰³ "Piano and Organ Manufacturers Meet," *CMTJ* 19, no. 7 (December 1918): 18.

¹⁰⁴ "Public Misconception," *CMTJ* 19, no. 2 (July 1918): 21.

enthusiasm ran their course. In March 1918 even as the Bureau proudly indicated its support among forty newspapers across the Dominion, some of the earliest “Music in the Home” columns were petering out.¹⁰⁵ The *Guelph Mercury* had stopped printing the column in September 1917. The *London Advertiser* and the *London Free Press* columns both trailed away during the spring of 1918. The *Hamilton Herald* column held on until June 1918, before disappearing in its turn. This left *The Globe* and the *Star Weekly*, both of which continued to use the “Music in the Home” into the early 1920s. For newspaper staffers, the editing duties for these columns constituted paid work rather than volunteerism, a fact that accounts for the campaign’s longevity in these publications.

The end of the Great War on November 11, 1918, provided another excuse for worn out newspaper editors and local music representatives to shelve the “Music in the Home” campaign. With the country finally at peace, it seemed logical to assume that the demand for pianos and other musical items would soar. In November 1919, the *CMTJ* tried to warn its readers of the fallacy of these assumptions in an article pathetically titled “Are You Neglecting the Bureau?”¹⁰⁶ With the cessation of the European conflict, piano advertising made a slight transition in theme, moving from the necessity of music in wartime to the necessity of music in a post-war world. Veterans would be coming back by the tens of thousands, many wounded in body and mind and sorely in need of music’s therapeutic powers. The family, broken apart by the war, would repair existing bonds and forge new ones by gathering together to raise their voices in song.¹⁰⁷ Sweethearts,

¹⁰⁵ “First Annual Meeting of Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” *CMTJ* 18, no. 10 (March 1918): 24, 29.

¹⁰⁶ *CMTJ* 20, no. 6 (November 1919): 69.

¹⁰⁷ *CMTJ* 19, no. 8 (January 1919): 5.

reunited after years of waiting, would marry and set up households, including that essential element of a bride's trousseau: a piano.¹⁰⁸

Despite glowing predictions and even a few months of elevated sales, the trade did not realize that the golden age of domestic music making had passed its peak.¹⁰⁹ A host of factors would spell the doom of the Canadian piano industry over the 1920s and 1930s. First, the early post-war Canadian economy floundered into a severe recession. The relative absence of federal planning for the transition to a peacetime economy meant that many workers found themselves out of a job when the wartime factories closed. Returning veterans increased competition for positions, leading to widespread unemployment.¹¹⁰ To make matters worse, Canadians discovered that the serious inflation of the war years continued well into the year 1920, increasing the cost of living for many already beleaguered families.¹¹¹ The outlook for the piano trade was not rosy either. Global supply lines proved slow to return to their pre-war levels. In spite of a large pool of unemployed workers, piano manufacturers continued to face labour problems because most applicants lacked the requisite training. Too many skilled hands had been lost forever, either to the munitions factories or to the battlefields of Europe. Piano magnates moreover antagonized their existing workforce by refusing to meet labour's demands for shorter workdays and increased wages to offset the rising cost of living.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *CMTJ* 19, no. 10 (March 1919): 7.

¹⁰⁹ See for example "What Lies Ahead?" *CMTJ* 19, no. 7 (December 1918): 75.

¹¹⁰ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 324-326.

¹¹¹ Douglas McCalla, "The Economic Impact of the Great War," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 147.

¹¹² "Pianos are in Demand," *CMTJ* 19, no. 9 (February 1919): 25; "Higher Piano Prices," *CMTJ* 20, no. 6 (November 1919): 85.

Second, families with enough disposable income to invest in consumer goods now had another costly item competing for their hard-earned dollar: the automobile. The scholar Stephen Davies pinpoints the late 1910s as the beginning of the “crucial period” during which automobile ownership in Canada skyrocketed. In Ontario alone, car registration numbers rose from 31,724 in 1914 to 155,861 in 1920 and 303,736 by 1925.¹¹³ In addition to offering an alternative outlet for a family’s savings, the automobile heralded significant changes in lifestyle. Increased geographic mobility widened the scope of possibilities for leisure pursuits. This shift proved a significant concern for an industry that anchored its advertising upon the premise of “Music in the Home.” A few *Canadian Music Trades Journal* articles maintained that purchasing an automobile made farmers and other householders more likely to buy pianos, since it had “taken the sting out of the expenditure of a few hundred dollars.”¹¹⁴ The *Journal* article for December 1916 was more clear-sighted when it admitted that: “The pace at which the present generation lives does not make musical education easy ... Perhaps there is no competition for the public’s money quite so forceful as the automobile. This modern industry is pampered and petted by the press to a point that in thousands of homes the problem of problems is always the new motor car.”¹¹⁵ The purchase of other labour-saving devices such as vacuums and washing machines further diverted family saving from the piano.¹¹⁶

Third, Canadians choosing to spend leisure time in the home had new outlets for their musical needs. The rise of the talking machine in Canada is a separate narrative, too

¹¹³ Stephen Davies, “‘Reckless Walking Must Be Discouraged’: The Automobile Revolution and the Shaping of Modern Urban Canada to 1930,” in *Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation*, 7th ed., ed. R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith (Toronto: Nelson, 2006): 317.

¹¹⁴ *CMTJ* 19, no. 8 (January 1919): 5. See also “London Exhibition Considering Enlargement,” *CMTJ* 20, no. 4 (September 1919): 80.

¹¹⁵ “Music in the Home,” *CMTJ* 17, no. 7 (December 1916): 23.

¹¹⁶ Florence Hayes and Helmut Kallmann, “Piano Building,” *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/piano-building> (accessed June 5, 2013).

analytically rich to be included in this study.¹¹⁷ The history of the talking machine was, however, intricately linked to that of the music trade. The E. Berliner Company of Montreal began issuing Canada's first commercial sound recordings in the year 1900 and since then, manufacturers on either side of the border had begun competing for the consumer's dollar.¹¹⁸ Piano retailers sold these talking machines in their stores, although they considered it a secondary line of business. The public initially displayed skepticism at the prospect of this mechanical contraption, dubbing it "canned music."¹¹⁹ Even so, by 1914 public opinion had begun to accept the talking machine as a musical instrument:

The readiness of people to attend talking machine recitals during the season now drawing to a close, is in striking contrast to the indifference of six or seven years ago. If people came at all it was out of curiosity and to witness the performance of science, not to enjoy a musical evening. Then the talking machine had not lived down the prejudice or indifference of the 'better people,' and the dealer who had the temerity to give a recital found the securing of an audience a discouraging proposition.

The readiness with which people will now accept invitations to such musical evenings shows how the talking machine has advanced as a musical instrument, and that people of culture and musical tastes endorse it.¹²⁰

The advantages of the talking machine proved legion. It was small and portable. The cheaper models cost far less than pianos. It provided a completely passive form of musical consumption, dispensing with the player piano's foot-pumping and hand lever

¹¹⁷ I use the term "talking machine" as a generic label for the various patented machines invented to play recorded sound, including: the Victrola, the Gramophone, the Phonograph, the Graphophone, the Concertphone, and the Aeolion-Vocalion. For a discussion of advertisements in the United States see Emily Thompson, "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877-1925," *Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1995): 131-171. For more on the Canadian recording industry see Edward B. Moogk, *Roll Back the Years: History of Canadian Recorded Sound and its Legacy—Genesis to 1930* (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1975). For a discussion of the talking machine's contribution to early twentieth-century narratives of musical democracy see Mark Katz, "Making America More Musical through the Phonograph, 1900-1930," *American Music* 16, no. 4 (1998): 448-476.

¹¹⁸ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 185.

¹¹⁹ Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock'N'Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15.

¹²⁰ "On Giving Recitals," *CMTJ* 14, no. 11 (April 1914): 35.

manoeuvres. The music trade erred in its assumption that the talking machine represented not a form of competition but rather a boon to the piano industry. Buying a talking machine, so the belief went, would foster music appreciation. Development of the latter would proceed to the extent that the individual became dissatisfied with passive listening. He or she would then return to the retailer and purchase a player piano.¹²¹

Actual consumer behaviour could not have been more different. The music trade assumed that the public would seek out cultural improvement on its own. In reality, it basked in the prospect of enjoying music with a minimal amount of physical and mental labour. Passive commercial leisure comprised a new phenomenon, and was completely foreign to the more traditional self-improvement ethic of the music trade. The First World War became the turning point during which the talking machine began to outpace the piano and player piano. While the trade may have been slow to realize the broader implications of this shift, advertising in the daily press is instructive. By the later war years, talking machine and record advertisements outshone piano ads, both in quantity and in size.¹²² The introduction of radio broadcasting in Canada during the early 1920s would further compromise older habits of music making as an active, participatory activity.¹²³ Indeed, an informal survey from the late 1920s discovered that one in five Canadian homes possessed a piano, yet four out of every five owned either a talking machine or a radio.¹²⁴

¹²¹ "Most Advertised Industry," *CMTJ* 13, no. 9 (February 1913): 25; "Talking Machine Versus Piano," *CMTJ* 16, no. 3 (August 1915): 55; "The Effect on Piano Sales," *CMTJ* 16, no. 10 (March 1916): 37; "To Enjoy Music You Must Know It," *Toronto Star Weekly*, June 9, 1917, p. 26.

¹²² This statement is based on general impressions after consulting local newspapers for the "Music in the Home" campaign.

¹²³ For information about the introduction of radio broadcasting see Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), ch. 1.

¹²⁴ Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building."

Consequently, once the initial *élan* of peace and pent-up wartime demand wore off, the post-war years proved to be lean ones for the piano industry. Mary Wright remembered that her father became so desperate to make sales that he would sign prospects for as little as a \$1.00 down payment with a \$1.00 per week instalment:

Sometimes, he would accept a crock of butter, or some other commodity, as partial payment. The people who failed to pay their instalments, and unfortunately there were many, were labeled by Father his 'brutes'. Those were tough times. Ernie [Father] said the bank owned him 'body and britches', but he kept in the good graces of the bank. Somehow, he settled up with them regularly on the 10th of each month. The 8th and 9th days were often grim. Our mother made us behave those days.¹²⁵

The list of piano manufacturing casualties for the inter-war period is enormous. Several smaller or less prosperous factories were either bought out by larger firms, or simply ceased production during the 1920s. This roster included Gerhard Heintzman, Karn-Morris, Newcombe, Nordheimer, W. Doherty, and Gourlay, Winter & Leeming.¹²⁶ Mary Wright's father Ernest decided to close the Wright Piano Company after a fire struck the factory in 1925. Significantly, he continued to retail gramophones, radios, and other smaller musical goods.¹²⁷ The Great Depression dealt the death knell to many other firms. Bell, Dominion, Evans Brothers, Weber, and R.S. Williams & Sons all folded during the 1930s.¹²⁸ By 1940, Heintzman & Company, Mason & Risch, and Sherlock-Manning emerged as the sole Ontario survivors of a once-thriving industry.¹²⁹

The Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music continues to this day. With the decline of piano manufacture in the inter-war period, the Bureau broadened its

¹²⁵ Mary Jean Wright, *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (London, ON: Mary J. Wright, 1997), 59-60.

¹²⁶ Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building"; Wayne Kelly, *Downright Upright: A History of the Canadian Piano Industry* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1991), 60-62, 70, 82-83.

¹²⁷ Wright, *Zestful Lives*, 54.

¹²⁸ Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building"; Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 45, 53, 59, 77-80, 88-89, 91-92;

¹²⁹ Hayes and Kallmann, "Piano Building"; Kelly, *Downright Upright*, 64-67, 75-76, 84-87.

mandate in order to represent the interests of Canadian music in general. Over the next several decades, the Bureau promoted various activities such as community music days, festivals, competitions, and vocational training for music teachers.¹³⁰ The *Canadian Music Trades Journal* was not so fortunate. It, too, became a casualty of the inter-war years, ceasing publication in 1933.¹³¹

The year 1920 is a logical point to conclude this chapter and indeed this dissertation, for it marked the end of an epoch. Technological, social, and cultural shifts, aggravated by economic difficulties, transformed Canadian piano manufacturing from a thriving industry into an obsolete one. While the trajectory seems predictable in hindsight, contemporaries did not foresee anything of the kind. Their obliviousness indicates the sheer novelty of passive musical consumption, as well as the intellectual leap required to interpret passivity as more desirable than active creative endeavour. The music trade's inability to make this jump demonstrates not *naïveté*, but rather the mindset of an older generation guided by the Victorian values of its youth.

The war years and the "Music and the Home" campaign furthermore shed light on a forgotten aspect of home front history. As the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music tried so hard to demonstrate, home fronts are not solely composed of people, production, and propaganda. Music, whether consumed as art or entertainment, played a

¹³⁰ Patricia Wardrop, Clifford O. Hunt, Florence Hayes, "Canadian Bureau For the Advancement of Music," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/canadian-bureau-for-the-advancement-of-music> (accessed June 4, 2013).

¹³¹ Helmut Kallmann, "Canadian Music Trades Journal," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/canadian-music-trades-journal> (accessed June 18, 2013).

pivotal role during this time. It offered solace and escape to the afflicted. It increased morale and productivity. It signified happy homes and happy children, all the more precious in light of the tragedies going on in Europe. The “Music in the Home” effort thus offers a microcosm of everyday Canadians’ preoccupations during the war.

Finally, the plenitude of written material produced during the “Music in the Home” campaign illuminates a key period of transition in the musical landscape of early twentieth-century Ontario. At no other time would music-themed articles occupy such a prominent spot in the pages of the small town newspapers. Bureau members and their colleagues penned most of the articles, yet their attempts to render such writing accessible reveals a lot about broader values surrounding domestic musical activity.

The “Music in the Home” campaign thus represents the culmination of discourses that had been evolving over the past few decades. These discourses embodied plenty of tensions: between democratic rhetoric and classist notions of cultural uplift, between a growing emphasis on universality and lingering notions of natural feminine musical affinity, and between competing notions of music as a social tool as opposed to a source of creative expression. The “Music in the Home” campaign could not resolve these tensions, but it did crystalize them in its plethora of thoughtful, philosophical essays.

In short, the “Music in the Home” campaign provides a fascinating glimpse of not only the fortunes of the music trade, but also that of domestic music itself in the early twentieth century. As retailers, manufacturers, and even Bureau members later came to realize, it represented the ideals of an era that was swiftly coming to an end.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that musical activity in Southwestern Ontarian homes between 1880 and 1920 affected and was affected by public discourses extending beyond the domestic hearth. Wider debates about gender, family, class, community, and nation coalesced in the sight and sound of parlour musicians performing. Moreover, the history of domestic musical entertainments cannot be considered without recognizing the contributing role of manufacturers, retailers, educators, composers, and publishers. Musical activity was therefore a political act, imbued with layers of meaning and entwined in contemporary power dynamics. Using the cities of Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Guelph as examples, this dissertation has tried to follow these vectors of influence back and forth across the culturally constituted public/private divide.

Whether motivated by prestige, utility, or genuine interest, contemporaries invested significant amounts of time and money in the hopes of fostering musical homes. The industrialization of the piano and organ industry over the second half of the nineteenth century meant that keyboards had become quicker and cheaper to produce than ever before. Prices dropped to the point where farmers and the more prosperous

members of the working classes could afford a piano purchased on instalment. This larger, heterogeneous group of consumers found their access to an instrument mediated by the presence of a retailer. Music dealers, though keen to close sales, were even keener to ensure that future payments be honoured. They assessed prospective clients based on external criteria, assuming that gender, class, and ethnicity affected one's ability to appreciate a quality piano and to comprehend financial contracts. Consumers, for their part, frequently resisted retailers' attempts to control their musical fate.

Newspapers and periodicals informed the public that a musical instrument denoted a level of economic comfort and cultural competency consistent with refinement. Music was also thought to strengthen familial ties. It taught daughters important lessons in female domesticity, while supposedly binding husbands, wives, and children together in the happy pursuit of sweet harmony. Despite the influence of these prescriptions, many households felt less than secure about their ability to achieve them. Leading musical educators blamed an overabundance of indifferent disciples as well as a lack of consistent teaching standards. Besides persuasion, there was little they could do to improve the former. They concentrated their fire on the teaching issue instead, constructing a dichotomy of amateur versus professional practices. Conservatories represented the pinnacle of this new order with a hierarchy of competent teachers, a set curriculum, consistent regulations, standardized examinations, and the power to bestow professional accreditations. These new conservatories did indeed improve teaching throughout the province. At the same time, educational reformers little thought that alternate pedagogies could be effective in certain situations, resulting in the marginalization of teaching styles that did not fit their narrow scheme.

Domestic musicianship equally relied upon having enough musical material to play. Classical standards, middlebrow art pieces, popular songs, and hymnals circulated in sometimes circuitous routes between publishers, retailers, and consumers. Domestic musicians regularly borrowed, exchanged, and transcribed sheet music instead of buying it outright. Some wrote to publishers directly in the hopes of bypassing the middleman, while others solicited American friends to mail them music from across the border. Dealers and publishers, meanwhile, bemoaned the stacks of obsolete songs on their shelves and the low revenues they received due to relentless price-cutting. Popular composers, for their part, wrote songs by the bucket-load, hoping that their latest piece of inspiration would become a hit. Some songwriters, such as H.H. Godfrey or Gordon V. Thompson, had plenty of experience catering to the public's desire for a catchy tune. Others were complete novices, taking on the cost of printing their own works and in some cases asking publishing house staff to fill in accompaniments for their melodic ideas.

Canadian popular songs are fascinating primary sources, simultaneously functioning as material object, visual image, textual narrative, and musical work. Consumers inscribed their sheet music with personal information, dedications, and additional technical or expressive markings to help them better render a tune. Anonymous commercial artists produced cover pages that tried to appeal to users without circumventing the publisher's limits on costs. The songs themselves employed sound and lyrics to entertain consumers, while also imparting lessons. Performers and audience members alike would have received messages about the imperial, national, local, and ethnic ingredients that comprised their English-Canadian identity. They would also have garnered insights about familial love and responsibility. Consumers would have reacted

to these themes differently and with varying levels of awareness, but these songs confirm late Victorian notions of leisure as an educational as well as an entertaining experience.

Discourses about domestic music may have been influential, but they were neither static nor infallible. New developments, particularly during the early twentieth century, challenged received wisdom about music's traditional role in the home. These currents forced a reconfiguration of existing ideas, as contemporaries tried to sort out which aspects of their Victorian inheritance were worth defending and which were open to modification. Modern youth culture and its plethora of commercial amusements offered an outlet for adolescent energies outside the family dwelling. The older generation therefore clung to the hope that domestic music making would give youngsters a reason to linger at home. The growing popularity of the pneumatic player mechanism, meanwhile, threatened the interests of music teachers by offering a means of instantly acquiring flawless technique. The player even called the very definition of music into question by raising the specter of mechanically produced art. To compensate, piano manufacturers and retailers promoted the idea that the player apparatus simply produced a series of correct notes in the right order. This, in itself did not constitute music. Creative input, as exhibited through the user's intuitive manipulation of various 'expression' levers, remained essential in order to transform mere sounds into beauty.

Finally, the musical community's habitual activities came under scrutiny during the emotionally heightened political landscape of the Great War. Performing or listening to the works of German (or to a lesser extent Austrian) classical composers became morally suspect, and music enthusiasts struggled to justify their actions to society and to themselves. Delicate negotiations between individual conscience and aesthetic preference

resulted in a spectrum of responses. Some insisted upon their rights to enjoy whatever music they wanted, some tried to explain away Austro-German composers' ethnic origins, some embraced music from Allied countries such as France and Russia, and some patriotically locked away their German compositions for the duration of the conflict. The Great War also provoked a readjustment in Canada's music trade. Costly pianos did not sit well with wartime discourses of thrift and self-denial. Ardent critics claimed that any form of entertainment-related spending was frivolous in light of the life-and-death struggle going on in Europe. Members of the music trade responded by founding the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music in 1917. The Bureau in turn directed the "Music in the Home" campaign, a public relations endeavour designed to promote the idea of music as a necessity, not a luxury. Meanwhile, Canada's popular songwriters began producing sheet music specifically geared to the demands of home front society. Patriotic and morale-boosting songs became wildly popular, and sheet music proceeds often went to wartime charities.

In the short term, the musical community maintained the relevance of domestic music making by adapting existing discourses to embrace the new currents of the early twentieth century. In the long term, it failed to recognize the extent to which values and behaviours were changing. When a small, modestly priced item called the talking machine arrived on the scene, the music trade assumed that it would complement rather than replace amateur musicianship. Accustomed to Victorian dictates on the inherent value of work, music tradesmen little thought that a new generation of consumers would abandon active musicianship once an effort-free alternative came along. The talking machine gave listeners inexpensive access to world-class performers in the comfort of

their own homes. One simply had to wind the handle a few times and the machine did the rest of the work. The modern world of commercialized leisure privileged ease of use: instant gratification and minimal effort formed the cornerstones of its mantra. Other elements such as creative catharsis were eclipsed as a result. Passive practices of musical consumption had already made inroads before the war's outbreak, yet their supremacy truly emerged after the cessation of the conflict. The talking machine, and in time the radio, affected the country's musical landscape in positive ways. Even so, domestic music making became a casualty of these changes. This is not to say that no one performed music at home after 1920; rather, it was no longer the dominant practice and did not hold the same cultural authority.

The subsequent marginalization of domestic musical activity came to be interpreted as liberating to some and a tragedy to others. Music's imbrication in discourses of gender, class, and racial power restricted just as often as it empowered. Parents may have mourned the loss of family sing-a-longs but at least some of their daughters little doubt rejoiced over being spared hours of drudgery on a hated instrument. Neighbours may have welcomed the absence of harsh strains from next door. Recorded music and radios would have enabled poorer families to acquire music in their homes, perhaps for the first time. Such changes were neither entirely bad nor entirely good. As is usual with the passage of time, some things were lost while others were gained.

Between 1880 and 1920, domestic musical activity had exerted a strong, though contested, influence on Southwestern Ontario's social and cultural landscape. Making music was never simply a distraction from living; it was part of life itself.

APPENDIX A: IMAGES

Fig. 2.1. Exterior view of Mason & Risch branch store, London, Ontario, *Canadian Music Trades Journal* 13, no. 12 (May 1913): 54.

Fig. 2.2. Interior of E.J. Wilson's store, Hamilton, *Canadian Music Trades Journal* 14, no. 5 (October 1913): 35.

Fig 2.3. Crowds admiring the plate glass window displays at R.S. Williams & Sons' Hamilton Branch, *Canadian Music Trades Journal* 16, no. 2 (July 1915): 29.

Fig. 2.4. Guelph Piano Sales stone building at 23 Macdonnell Street, c. 1920, A1985.110, Copyright Wellington County Archives. Used with permission.

Fig. 3.1. "A Grand Holiday Present," *Saturday Night*, December 24, 1887, p. 16.

Fig 3.2. "Pure as the Notes of a Bird," *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 10, no. 1 (November 1897): xxxi.

Fig. 3.3. *Canadian Magazine* Advertiser 11, no. 3 (June 1898): lxi.

Fig. 3.4. "All Lovers of Music," detail, *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 26, no. 4 (February 1906): 72.

Fig. 3.5. "I'm taking piano lessons in Erin," Postcard, c. 1910, A1986.49, Copyright Wellington County Archives. Used with permission.

Fig. 3.6. Littlehales Family of Hamilton c.1885, *Canadian Journal of Music* 1, no. 3 (July-August 1914): frontispiece.

Fig. 4.1. "Ontario Ladies College Pipe Organ, 1906," Whitby Public Library.

<http://images.ourontario.ca/whitby/42872/data?n=1>
<http://images.ourontario.ca/whitby/42872/data?n=1>
<http://images.ourontario.ca/whitby/42872/data?n=1>

Fig. 5.1. "A Toronto Medley," Canadian Musician unplaced clipping, scrapbook p. 120, Envelope 13, Box 12, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, Library and Archives Canada.

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Fig. 9.1. Piano player attachment, *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 14, no. 1 (November 1899): xxxvi.

Fig. 9.2. “The Work You do Tomorrow Depends on What You do Tonight,” detail, *Canadian Magazine Advertiser* 35, no. 6 (October 1910): 43.

The Work You do Tomorrow Depends on What You do Tonight

After a wearing, grinding day, you need more than food and an easy chair to make you ready for to-morrow's work. Jangling nerves and whirling thoughts must be soothed and pacified. Restful sleep would do it—"if I could only sleep".

Softly stealing o'er our senses, Music smooths away the trials of the day—brings the brain back to its normal rhythm—soothes, and quiets, and rests.

Because music is created by the best that is in us—and makes its appeal to the best that is in us. The best investment a business man can make is a

**NEW SCALE WILLIAMS
PLAYER PIANO**

“Well, Father Can Play”

Yes, better than he ever thought possible! All the years that he has spent unable to play have been storing up a great fund of memories, and now that the

**New Scale
Williams Player Piano**

with the wonderful Meister-Touch Action has set his musical heart free from his untrained fingers, he finds himself able to give wonderful expression to whatever he plays.

He can play “Rule Britannia” or the “Marseillaise” with so much vigor and go that one’s feet start marching whether or no, and to every other kind of music he brings the same genuine understanding of latent talent.

This superb instrument is the very finest example of player-piano making. Its tone—its control of time and melody—its appearance—all are unexcelled.

Art Catalogue, illustrating the making of Pianos and Players and containing portraits and biographies of Famous Musicians will interest you greatly. Mailed free on request to

THE WILLIAMS & SONS CO.
R.S. AMERICAN INSTRUMENTS OF QUALITY **LIMITED. 145 Yonge St.**

14A

Fig. 9.5. “Well, Father *Can* Play,” *Saturday Night*, October 24, 1914, p. 26.

“Here’s Dad to play for us!”

Why shouldn’t this mean you, Sir or Madam—why not keep young with the young folk? Why not refresh your tired spirit all the rest of your days with the ever-youthful gaiety of music? And withal—play as though Liszt himself were at the keyboard—aided by the

**New Scale
Williams Player Piano**

with its marvellous Meister-Touch Action controlling the tempo and rhythm and its Centre Tracking Control Device assuring perfect control of the music roll. These enable you to develop your own latent musical abilities. Your individuality is never flattened to a dead level of mechanical production. You soar on the wings of music to heights undreamt of by the Masters themselves.

On request, we gladly send Art Catalogue with illustrations of the making of a complete Piano and Player, and portraits and biographies of the Great Musicians.

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145 YONGE STREET, TORONTO.

14E

Fig. 9.6. “Here’s Dad to Play for Us!” *Saturday Night*, December 19, 1914, p. 25.

Fig. 10.1. Photo of Morris and Mildred Manley, detail from cover image of Morris Manley, "I Want My Daddy" (Toronto: M. Manley, 1916), Envelope 2, Box 9, Canadian Sheet Music Collection, William Ready Division McMaster University Archives.

Fig. 10. 2. Gordon V. Thompson, "When Your Boy Comes Back to You" (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1916), Canadian Sheet Music XM2A003, University of Guelph Archives.

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FILL YOUR HOME WITH MUSIC

*MUSIC BRINGS ENTERTAINMENT, COMFORT, HAPPINESS,
AND INSPIRATION INTO THE HOME.*

In these times when brain and brawn are taxed to full capacity, when nerves are strung to their highest tension and cares and worries fill the hearts of men, **RELAXATION** is absolutely necessary to the welfare of the individual.

In what sphere is it more readily obtainable than in that of Music? You can suggest nothing more effectual than the soothing influence of good music—heard right in your own home. More and more, Canadian Homes are learning how much the Mason & Risch Player Piano adds to the enjoyment and happiness of their indoor amusement. It is the Piano with which all others are compared.

**COME SELECT YOUR CHRISTMAS PIANO EARLY——TERMS AND
TIME OF DELIVERY WILL BE ARRANGED TO MEET YOUR DESIRES.**

Fig. 11.1. "Fill Your Home With Music," Mason & Risch advertisement detail, *London Free Press*, December 17, 1918, p. 3.

Little Hands

How Will They Grow? Trained or Untrained?

THOSE little hands are now in your care, mother. You can train them to bring lifelong happiness or let them go untrained. But now is the time to begin their education.

For more than half a century the Gerhard Heintzman piano has trained little hands and little ears.

It has the easy action that brings true delicacy of touch and expression. It has the beauty, depth and resonance of tone that brings the highest appreciation of musical values.

And because it is Canada's Greatest Piano it is an inspiration, an encouragement to achieve something.

—and it is a possession worthy of pride.

Start now to let the Gerhard Heintzman piano train your children as you wish you had been trained.

Gerhard Heintzman

Limited

Canada's Greatest Piano

HAMILTON SHOWROOMS
King Street East
(Next Door to the Post Office)

Fig. 11.2. "Little Hands," *Hamilton Herald*, April 20, 1918, p. 6.

Fig. 11.3. "Why Not Make Mary Merry?" *Farm and Dairy and Home*, January 25, 1917, p. 92.

Why Not Make Mary Merry?

GLADDEN her little heart. Educate those little hands and ears. Let the joy of expression brighten her girlhood days. Let the shaping influence of good music bring out more of that warmth of heart that is part of every little girl. Let it inspire her to noble things.

Even now she is looking to you to encourage her natural desire for music through the possession of a good piano—a piano that will guide her in the mastery of pure, perfect notes—the

Williams Piano
New Scale
ENDORSED BY GREAT MUSICIANS

You know how well the soothing virtue of music would have eased you over many of the rough, hard roads of life. Why not make sure its blessings come to your little girl by training her now while she is so quick to pick up new things. A post card mailed tonight will bring you FREE a beautiful booklet showing the latest models in Williams Pianos.

Write for it NOW.
WILLIAMS PIANO CO.
Limited
Oshawa, Ont.

APPENDIX B:

PRIMARY SOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Contemporary music journals are a crucial source of evidence about Canada's musical history. Since most of the country's English-language music journals were published out of Toronto, their coverage tended to be weighted towards the Southern Ontario region. Music journals from the beginning of the period, such as the *Dominion Monthly Journal of Music and General Miscellany* (Toronto, c.1876) were lightweight affairs, consisting of roughly ten pages of sheet music bookended by a few borrowed American and British articles, a few humorous anecdotes, and several advertisements. The *Musical Galaxy* (Toronto, 1876) was a bit more ambitious, boasting the Governor General as its patron, more informative articles, and at least some original Canadian content. Nevertheless, the editor saw its main purpose as a provider of sheet music, insisting that at a rate of 25 cents per issue "one single piece of music as furnished by THE MUSICAL GALAXY, if bought by itself would cost double the amount of the whole periodical."¹ Both of these publications seem to have been short-lived. Journals from the late 1880s onward were significantly larger, with intellectually substantial articles and a high degree of local content. The life spans of these journals varied, and many issues have been lost. Even so, extant copies of the *Musical Journal* (1887- c.1890), the *Dominion Musical Journal* (1891- ?), the *Canadian Musician* (later the *Musician*, c. 1889-1906), *Musical Canada*

¹ M. H. Hirschberg, *Musical Galaxy* 1, no. 2 (1876), cover page, verso.

(known as the *Violin* 1906-1907, total run 1906-1933), and the *Canadian Journal of Music* (1914-1919) offer unparalleled glimpses into contemporary musical activity.² The journals cost 10 cents cover price and \$1.00 for a yearly subscription.³ Circulation for *Musical Canada* was 1,500 in the year 1909, a number that held steady until 1917, when it dropped to 1,000 copies for the remainder of the decade. The *Canadian Journal of Music*'s circulation numbers stood at 2,750 in 1918, and 2,000 in 1919 and 1920.⁴ The Toronto Conservatory of Music's *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* (1902-1912) *Conservatory Monthly* (1913), and *Conservatory Quarterly Review* (later the *Conservatory Review*, 1918-1935) balanced institutional conservatory news with general articles relating to the Canadian and international music scenes.⁵ Other reading options included the regular music columns in larger daily newspapers such as Toronto's *The Globe*, *Star*, *World*, *News*, and *Saturday Night*.

Educated members of the professional music establishment edited the journals and newspaper columns. Some worked under pseudonyms or even anonymously, yet subsequent research has been able to match at least some names to leading publications.⁶

² These dates come from Helmut Kallmann and Richard Green, "Periodicals," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* [hereafter *EMC*], <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/periodicals> (accessed August 29, 2013).

³ This was the price of the *Musical Journal*, *Canadian Musician/The Musician*, and *Musical Canada*. The *Canadian Journal of Music* began at 15 cents per issue and \$1.50 per year, but soon dropped its price to 10 cents per issue, possibly to fall in line with *Musical Canada*'s rates.

⁴ Christina L. Hartwell, "Musical Canada: A Study of Music Criticism and Journalism in an Early Twentieth Century Canadian Music Periodical" (M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1991), 22. Hartwell's statistics come from the Canadian Newspaper Directory.

⁵ Again, dates are courtesy of Kallmann and Green, "Periodicals."

⁶ Luigi von Kunits wrote many editorials for the *Canadian Journal of Music*. E.R. Parkhurst edited *Musical Canada* and the music column of *The Globe*. A.E. Fisher was editor of the *Musical Journal* 1887-1888 and Augustus Bridle was music editor of the *Canadian Courier*. A.S. Vogt was music editor of *Saturday Night* for a time, writing under the pseudonym 'Moderato.' W.O. Forsyth wrote the "Music and the Drama" columns for the *Toronto Week* in the early 1890s. See John Becker, "The Early History of the Toronto Conservatory of Music" (M.F.A. thesis, York University, 1983), 8; Elaine Keillor, Biography of W.O. Forsyth, pp. 11-12, Envelope 4, Box 13, W.O. Forsyth Fonds, MUS 106, LAC; Ruth Pincoe, "A.S. Vogt," *EMC*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/as-vogt> (accessed January 30, 2012). Hector

While men occupied the bulk of the editorial positions, there were a few exceptions to the rule.⁷ Women had a somewhat larger presence as contributors of articles and news updates, though even here men ultimately dominated the ranks. Both publications catered to the wider musical community, as encapsulated by *Musical Canada*'s subtitle: "A Monthly Journal of Musical News, Comment, and Gossip, for Professionals and Amateurs." Nevertheless, editors presumed a middle-class readership with enough discretionary income to afford an instrument, lessons, and the occasional ticket to a concert or other musical event.

Another publication, the *Canadian Music Trades Journal* (1900-1933) offers a window into musical activity beyond the concert stage. Beginning its published life as a general forum for Canadian musical news, by the early 1910s it had narrowed its focus to become the official trade organ for instrument manufacturers and retailers.⁸ With the average monthly issue running between fifty and eighty pages, music tradesmen had plenty of space to relate successes and to bemoan grievances. The *Journal* targeted music tradesmen across the country, although it did contain a disproportionate amount of Ontario-based material. While the editors were indefatigable in their quest for original content, they often reprinted articles from various American and British music and trades journals to fill out their page count. One limitation of the *Journal* is that it is frequently didactic, offering retailers examples of innovative reforms yet chiding the trade for not

Charleworth proved an exception to the rule of professional musicians editing music journals and music columns. He was a theatre critic who gradually took on music criticism over the course of his career.

⁷ Mrs. Eva Rose York edited the *Dominion Musical Journal*, and Mrs. Susie Frances Harrison edited the *Conservatory Bi-Monthly* for at least part of its run. Furthermore, Mrs. Harlette J. von Kunits (wife of Luigi von Kunits and herself a teacher of violin at the Balmy Beach College of Music and Art) was the associate editor of the *Canadian Journal of Music*.

⁸ According to historian David Monod, trades journals first emerged in Canada in the late 1880s. See Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 28.

following suit. Even more challenging is the fact that the periodical catered to a limited audience of music manufacturers and retailers and, even when criticizing them, ultimately proved sympathetic to their views. Other parties such as piano factory workers, customers, and even female shop assistants were sidelined in favour of the core tradesman demographic.

A fundamental weakness of the music journals and music columns is that they presume a musically astute, or at least a musically enthusiastic, readership. The feminist musicologist Ruth Solie observes that in order to gain a balanced perspective on contemporary musical discourses, it is necessary to read periodicals aimed at a more general readership.⁹ In mainstream publications, contributions by informed music critics such as Katherine Hale, J.D. Logan, and Ernest J. Farmer exist cheek-by-jowl with the more random musical pronouncements from home economists, interior decorators, religious authorities, and first-wave feminists. Periodicals such as the *Canadian Magazine*, the *Farmer's Advocate*, *Everywoman's World*, the *Canadian Courier*, and the *Canadian Home Journal* are particularly fruitful sources for discovering the opinions of the contemporary musical laity.

Unpublished personal accounts of Southwestern Ontario musical activity for this time period are not copious, but what they lack in diversity they make up for in quality and depth. As a result, some of the same families will appear and re-appear throughout the following pages. These families' stories touch on so many aspects of musical activity that their doings stretch across several chapters, providing some coherence as well as a reminder that personal lives crossed and re-crossed the neat analytical categories

⁹ Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 44-45.

academics tend to impose. The Ambrose family of Hamilton offers the most comprehensive account of a family's musical doings. In the fall of 1886 Robert and Lily Ambrose watched their barely eighteen-year-old son Paul depart for a career as an organist in New York. This separation launched a trail of correspondence spanning twenty years and running to some 2,700 pages. Robert and Lily's accounts of their own musical activities and those of their younger children, their nieces, and their neighbours are unparalleled in their detail and vivacity. Other family accounts include the Saunders family, originally from London but eventually spreading out to Ottawa as well as Syracuse and Poughkeepsie in New York State. Collectively, the Ambrose and Saunders correspondence emphasizes a phenomenon that I was unfortunately unable to address in detail: the transnational links between the musical communities of Southwestern Ontario and the northeastern United States.¹⁰

The last major source of primary evidence is Canadian popular sheet music. Music historians have traditionally been reluctant to study the history of popular song. Trained to dissect the sophisticated compositions of the classical masters, the simple strains of popular song have seemed to them inferior by comparison. Studying popular music requires the adoption of an entirely different attitude towards musical critique. First, it involves suspending hierarchical notions of musical tastes, along with value judgments of some forms of music being qualitatively 'better' than others.¹¹ Second, it

¹⁰ See Marilynn J. Smiley, "Across Lake Ontario: Nineteenth-Century Concerts and Connections," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 149-165.

¹¹ For examples of musical scholarship tinged by value judgments, see Sandra Perry, "Sex and Sentiment in America or What Was Really Going On Between the Staves of Nineteenth Century Songs of Fashion," *Journal of Popular Culture* 6, no. 1 (1972): 32-47.

involves understanding that popular tastes are historically dynamic, and that the aesthetic values of popular audiences a hundred years ago were very different from those of today.

The task of setting aside one's musical preferences is much harder than it first appears. The sentimentality and the jingoistic patriotism expressed in many nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular songs can make the most dedicated scholar cringe. Even the notion of originality as a reliable indicator of 'true' musicianship is a fairly recent invention. Originality emerged as a desirable trait only in the wake of twentieth-century recording culture, in which mass replication became easy and therefore less valued than of yore. Before recorded sound, local audiences valued a musician for his or her ability to imitate the sounds of the faraway big-city artist that had made a particular song famous.¹² Victorian and Edwardian audiences furthermore prized songs that exuded an air of familiarity. They "paid little attention to uniqueness, the composer's personality, or sensitive exploration of a poem's meanings. Indeed, to a member of this audience the first might betoken an unacceptable quirkiness, the second an exclusionary eccentricity, and the third an excuse for not writing a memorable tune."¹³ These obstacles mean that Victorian and Edwardian popular music has often been misunderstood.

That being said, a few innovative studies have emerged over the past several years. Nicholas Temperley and Derek Scott each discuss British drawing-room music as a genre associated with the rise of middle-class domestic entertainments. Their analyses, however, focus on the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century, well before

¹² Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'N' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23.

¹³ Nicholas Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), x. Nicholas Temperley agrees that the Victorian public "had limited tolerance for any sort of innovation, and it was this that decisively separated the [drawing-room] ballad from serious art." See Nicholas Temperley, "Ballroom and Drawing-Room Music," in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, Athlone History of Music in Britain Series (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 121.

keyboard instruments came within reach of the ‘respectable’ working classes.¹⁴ Nicholas Tawa and Jon Finson both provide excellent discussions of nineteenth-century American popular song, though the music of the antebellum period provides a richer source of interest.¹⁵ Collectively, these authors provide the outline for a narrative of popular song as it evolved in Britain and America respectively. While the international scene provides essential background, English-Canadian popular music possesses its own unique story. Sometimes, Canadian songwriters absorbed influences from Britain and the United States. Other times, they pursued their own path. This nonconformity may be found in Canadian composers’ reluctance to abandon mid-nineteenth-century musical tropes, or when cultural nationalists sought a musical vocabulary for a nascent sense of Canadian pride. Thus far, Elaine Keillor has been the only scholar to investigate turn-of-the-twentieth-century popular song in Canada. The brevity of her surveys, however, leaves plenty of room for more sustained investigation.¹⁶

Canadian popular sheet music for the period 1880 to 1913 survives in large quantities. Even so, the extant materials do not necessarily constitute a representative sample. Archival cataloguing of sheet music usually involves scattering the idiosyncratic collections of individual owners, unless the items arrive bound together in a secure

¹⁴ Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Popular Music in Britain Series, ed. Dave Harker and Richard Middleton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), ix, 141; Temperley, “Ballroom and Drawing-Room,” 109-134.

¹⁵ Jon W. Finson, *The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Nicholas E. Tawa, *A Music for the Millions: Antebellum Democratic Attitudes and the Birth of American Popular Music*, Sociology of Music Series no. 3 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1984); Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans: The Parlor Song in America, 1790-1860* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980); Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990).

¹⁶ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006) 145, 152, 159; Keillor, “Writing for a Market: Canadian Musical Composition before the First World War,” <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/sheetmusic/m5-180-e.html> (accessed February 19, 2007).

fashion.¹⁷ The titles are pooled together, arranged alphabetically according to composer surname, and then filed under a generic heading such as ‘Canadian Sheet Music’ or ‘Local Composers.’ The archival selection process is equally troubling. Sheet music published or composed by Canadians vastly outweighs foreign imports for the simple reason that Canadian archives have a mandate to preserve domestic cultural products. At most, archives include a small sampling of the voluminous British and American musical catalogue purchased by Canadians. The preservation of European classical standards in public archives is even rarer, because so many older, more valuable editions exist as to render these humble reprints worthless.¹⁸

To make matters even more confusing, Canadian sheet music publishers readily published their own editions of successful British and American tunes. This rampant borrowing means that a piece of sheet music with a Canadian publisher’s insignia, Canadian cover art, and a listing within a ‘Canadian’ sheet music archival collection, may in fact be the creation of a non-Canadian composer and lyricist. The following analysis privileges original Canadian compositions, since it aims to show how popular songs can reflect the habits and concerns of the society that produced as well as consumed them. Determining the nationality of a composer and lyricist can be a challenging task, however. The origins of well-known songwriters can be pinpointed relatively easily. The more obscure songwriters of the day leave few traces in the historical record beyond the sheet music they penned. While every effort has been made to avoid using ‘Canadian’

¹⁷ The word “secure” is an important proviso: if the individual songs were simply sewn together by their original owners, then archivists often undo the thread and remove the individual pieces.

¹⁸ My suspicions on this point were reinforced when a member of the public gave me a large box of sheet music that had once belonged to his grandmother, an Edwardian woman named Roberta Wilson. This collection contains heavily annotated copies of classical works. It therefore represents an example of a personal music collection untouched by the bureaucratic selection and culling practices of public archives.

musical examples without corroborating proof of Canadian nationality, it is impossible to be certain in the case of those songwriters who were little known even in their prime.

Further limitations derive not so much from the selection process as the manner of studying the pieces in question. Archives have neither musical instruments nor sound-proof space on hand for the scholar to try to gain an aural impression of a song. Even assuming one does get to hear a later-day recreation of a tune, how is one to translate evanescent sounds into historical ‘meaning’? As the feminist musicologist Marcia Citron so aptly points out, instrumental music presents something of a challenge:

How do we locate content, especially narrative content, in sounds – mere acoustical phenomena? Do we locate content in the visual, the experiential – the phenomena of the noted page, the performance? Do we fill in explicit content through a story line or a succession of specific emotional states, much as the Romantics did? Do we give up in exasperation and claim there is no content, while still sensing that something is happening to us as we listen?¹⁹

While reluctant to ignore purely instrumental works, as a historian with no post-secondary musicological training, I find myself inevitably drawn to songs with lyrics. Text may not be as fixed as the academic community once believed it to be; however, it provides some sort of anchor in the drifting sea of sounds. A few works for solo piano will be incorporated into this dissertation, yet the evidence will be weighted in favour of songs written for voice with piano accompaniment. As a result, the analyses of Canadian popular songs in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Ten are not intended to represent the entire soundscape of domestic music in late Victorian and Edwardian Ontario. They merely highlight a corner of this oeuvre that has survived relatively intact and in a form that lends itself relatively easily to historical analysis.

¹⁹ Marcia J. Citron, “Feminist Approaches to Musicology,” in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 16.

Wherever possible, for this study the sheet music found in archival collections was digitally photographed in order to allow for a more leisurely process of analysis. The pieces of music were then assessed as cultural products consisting of musical, textual, and visual elements. The genre's adherence to well-known popular music tropes made it fairly easy to interpret the musical score on sight. For instance, many pieces employed a brisk two-step march, or a lilting triple-meter waltz. Dynamics, speed, expression markings, vocal range, and level of difficulty for singer and accompanist were also considered. If the melody and overall 'sound' of the piece was not immediately discernible from the printed score, then the image was placed near a piano and a few lines from the piece played and sung. The music historian Nicolas Tawa reminds us that lyrics were written for singing, not speaking. He observes that "[a]s words gave direction to and particularized the feeling, music acted as a kind of lubricant, removing the possible emotional friction and easing the process of acceptance of the text."²⁰ In this way, music helped render lyrics more believable and emotionally resonant, qualities they may not have acquired had they simply been spoken. In songs with several verses (i.e. more than three) the analysis of the lyrics leans towards the chorus and the earlier verses, on the grounds that these passages would have received the most attention from consumers.

Though it represents but a segment of contemporary musical choices, Canadian popular sheet music is remarkable for its volume as well as its thematic diversity. A thorough study of the oeuvre would occupy hundreds of pages. The dissertation therefore presents only the briefest glimpse of the range of topics and tunes that enlivened the leisure hours in Victorian and Edwardian homes.

²⁰ Tawa, *Tin Pan*, 98, see also p. 92

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Canadian Magazine

Canadian Musician

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Canadian Music Trades Journals

Dominion Monthly

Dominion Musical Journal

Everywoman's World

Farmer's Advocate

Farm and Dairy and Home

The Globe (Toronto)

Guelph Mercury

Hamilton Herald

Hamilton Spectator

Industrial Canada

London Advertiser

London Free Press

Musical Canada (originally the *Violin*)

Musical Galaxy

Musical Journal

Musical Times and Singing Class Circular

Saturday Night

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