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The Construction of Citizenship Through Musical Performance in Toronto's Settlement Houses, 1930-1939

DEANNAYERICHUK

Abstract: Throughout the 1930s, Toronto's social settlement houses hosted various musical performances by and for the immigrant and working-class residents of Toronto's poorest neighbourhoods. Given their overarching project of civic betterment, the performances became sites not only to validate the social success of musical work, but also to enact musically notions of citizenship. Within the settlement music schools, benefit concerts and pupil recitals featured conservatory-style music performances, which articulated Western European Art Music to an Anglo-Celtic Protestant norm for citizenship. However, annual spring festivals shifted notions of citizenship somewhat by celebrating the various cultures of immigrants through music and dance.

Résumé : Tout au long des années 1930, à Toronto, les centres d'œuvres sociales abritaient divers spectacles musicaux réalisés par et pour les immigrés et les ouvriers résidant dans les quartiers les plus pauvres de la ville. Étant donné la finalité de leur projet, l'amélioration sociale, ces performances sont devenues les sites, non seulement de la validation du succès social du travail musical, mais aussi de la représentation, en musique, des notions de citoyenneté. Dans le cadre de ces centres d'œuvres sociales, les écoles de musique, les concerts caritatifs et les récitals d'élèves proposaient des performances musicales apparentées à celles des conservatoires, qui articulaient la musique classique d'Europe de l'Ouest à une norme de citoyenneté anglo-celtique et protestante. Cependant, les festivals de printemps annuels ont quelque peu transformé les notions de citoyenneté en célébrant la diversité des cultures des immigrants au moyen de la musique et de la danse.

The Depression of the 1930s hit Toronto hard. By early 1933, nearly one-third of the city's population was out of work, and two years later, one-quarter of Torontonians were recipients of relief. These numbers only swelled in Toronto's poorest downtown neighbourhoods, where working-class and immigrant residents found themselves with lots of spare time

and little money (Irving, Bellamy, and Parsons 1995: 125). Residents turned to their local settlement houses to find activities to fill their days and nights musical and otherwise. Over the previous two decades, these neighbourhood settlement houses, run by Toronto's Protestant middle-class social reformers, had piloted programming to teach Toronto's poor and immigrant residents how to be better citizens and fit into society (O'Connor 1986a; 1986b; 1986c). Settlement houses used music throughout their programs, even launching Canada's first community music schools. To meet the increased demand of the 1930s, settlement workers tried to expand their music schools along with the rest of their recreational and educational programs, but settlement house budgets shrank as they also felt the squeeze of the Depression. Clearly, settlement houses, their music schools, and the members who used both were all suffering.

Yet, music performances at the settlement houses flourished, not only within the music schools, but in general settlement programming as well, a surprising phenomenon not only because of the impact of the Great Depression but also given the houses' adamant insistence that their musical training was not to produce performing musicians, but to contribute to the citizenship cultivation of their members. The settlement philosophy of civic betterment was precisely what made the proliferation of performances possible through the 1930s. The settlement focus on citizenship training opened up multiple performance opportunities, while also providing a clear, public mechanism to validate the citizenship development work undertaken by the settlement houses in general, and their music schools in particular. Moreover, performances articulated specific forms of music to specific ideas of citizenship. The pupil recitals and benefit concerts of the music schools used predominantly Western European Art Music to cultivate an idea of citizenship predicated on an Anglo-Celtic, Protestant, and middle-class norm—namely, that of the settlement workers themselves. However, the annual spring festivals of the houses celebrated many cultures through music and dance of the immigrant participants, constructing a nascent form of a multicultural citizen. What follows is an examination of how settlement houses and their music schools constructed ideas about citizenship through musical performance in the 1930s, drawing from archival materials such as programmes, flyers, newspaper articles, and meeting minutes. Before delving into the specific music performances and how settlement workers framed them in relation to citizenship, it is important first to understand the emergence of the settlement house movement in Toronto, as well as how proponents used cultural education in service of their goals of civic betterment. The emergence of community music schools through the settlement house movement, in

both Canada and the United States (Egan 1989; Dorricott 1950), suggests that North American music education has antecedents in community often overlooked in histories of music education that focus on how music emerged in public school curricula.¹ Recently, some scholars have examined histories of community-based music education (Higgins 2012: 21-41; Bush and Krikun 2013), but this article focuses specifically on settlement music in relation to discourses of citizenship, and rather than focusing on educational practices *per se*, concentrates instead on what could be understood as the results of that education: the performances.

The Emergence of Toronto's Settlement Houses and Cultural Education in Service of Civic Betterment

Settlement houses were neighbourhood-based organizations that functioned partly as social service agencies, partly as community centres, and partly as “cultural outpost[s] in the slums” (James 1998: 50). The settlement house movement was not unique to Toronto or to Canada, but was part of an international phenomenon that began in London, England before spreading quickly through the United States and finally appearing in Canada in the early 20th century. In London, Canon Samuel Barnett established Toynbee Hall as the first settlement house in 1884 with the central purpose of bringing students in contact with the working class to educate the former and uplift the latter. Barnett strongly believed that the lower classes could learn to fit better into society by being introduced to the culture of the upper classes, and he believed that the arts of the upper classes “would ‘elevate’ the poor and inspire them to work harder to improve their situation” (Green 1998: 8). From its inception, Toynbee Hall included music as a key component to cultural “uplift” (Dorricott 1950: 7). Of course, the idea that (high) culture in general and (classical) music in particular could uplift England’s working classes was not invented by Barnett. England’s Music Appreciation Movement began shortly after Toynbee Hall as a citizenship project, with the intent of teaching the working class how to listen to, and appreciate, classical music.² However, Barnett’s settlement idea in relation to cultural education caught the attention of industrializing cities around the world: a neighbourhood house that settled upper-class people among communities of poor and working class to “share” high culture as a technique to strengthen class relations and uplift the poor offered a unique solution to problems of industrialization for social reformers around the globe. The settlement house movement spread quickly through Britain and overseas, and the arts-based focus on cultivating community

through the cultural uplift of the lower classes became a cornerstone of the movement overall (Meacham 1987).

In America, one of the most well-known houses that also directly inspired Toronto's organizers was Hull House in Chicago. Established by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889, Hull House served both men and women in ways similar to Toynbee Hall. Yet, unlike London, Chicago had an influx of immigrants, which shifted Addams' settlement approach toward explicit forms of citizenship training. Influenced by Britain's Arts and Crafts Movement, Addams used performing arts not only to draw the interest of young people in particular, but also as a strategy to encourage co-operative work among the immigrant and working-class residents of the neighbourhood, guided by the idea that the performing arts offered "education for life" (Carson 1990: 116). Further, Addams used performing arts generally, and music specifically, with all residents, in response to industrialization and manual labour, which she saw as "antidotes to the dehumanizing effects of industrial culture on laborers" (Vaillant 2003: 98).

The settlement movement reached Canada nearly 20 years after Toynbee Hall opened, with the establishment of Evangelia House in Toronto in 1902, followed by another five houses over the next ten years (although only four were operating by 1930). These houses were established by middle-class, Anglo-Celtic,³ Protestant Torontonians who were influenced by Hull House in its democracy training and performing arts, and by Toynbee Hall in its emphasis on neighbourly sharing and cultural uplift. Propelled by an emerging philosophy of social reform, Toronto proponents saw settlement houses as a solution to what they called "the Problem of the City," which encapsulated and conflated a dense tangle of concerns about the physical, social, and moral state of Toronto, considered to be a bellwether for the nation (James 1997: 90; Irving, Bellamy, and Parsons 1995: 68). Toronto's population nearly doubled in the first decade of the 20th century, straining the city's infrastructure, and intensifying urban poverty into particular neighbourhoods, driving upper classes to flee downtown for outlying suburbs. Further, these impoverished neighbourhoods, sometimes called "neglected areas" and other times, more bluntly, "slums," were increasingly marked by racial diversity, as immigrants from non-British countries moved to Toronto in unprecedented numbers, creating new forms of cultural pluralism that worried Toronto's mostly British citizens, who feared a heterogeneous nation was no nation at all (Valverde 2008; Strange 1995).

To address the problems of cultural pluralism and intensifying class divisions, organizers established settlement houses in the city's poorest neighbourhoods, hoping to foster citizenship among local residents.

Organizers recruited middle-class workers and volunteers to live, or “settle,” in the houses and act as neighbours, where they would support local needs and launch programs and classes, while simultaneously behaving as model citizens. Organizers and workers saw themselves as the ideal model of the Canadian citizen. They understood their own morals, behaviours, and relationships to form the basis of a Canadian national identity, despite their sympathies toward the tribulations facing Toronto’s immigrant and working-class residents. As historian Cathy James argues, settlement proponents “remained convinced of the intrinsic superiority of middle-class Anglo-Celtic culture, and continued to worry that, if left alone, the working class and the immigrant might pose a very real threat to bourgeois cultural hegemony” (1998: 290).

The focus on citizenship training was common among the settlement houses, although articulated in slightly different ways by each: University Settlement House used the term “civic betterment” (qtd. in Wasteney 1975: 19); Central Neighbourhood House employed “civic unity” (qtd. in O’Connor 1986a: 5); and St. Christopher House preferred “Canadianizing” (qtd. in O’Connor 1986b: 6). The variation in exact terms suggests that the idea of “citizen” pointed to the idea of a Canadian citizen, or the specific formation of a national subject (Yerichuk 2015). However, through terms like “civic betterment,” the concept of citizen functioned just as much as a trope—an idealized notion of how to be and act in a democratic society. Settlement workers took it upon themselves to model the behaviours and values of such citizens, while also launching educational programming to teach appropriate values and behaviours directly. Notably, while some programs were considered recreation and others were more intently educational, settlement workers felt all programming had an educative value, in line with the Hull-House philosophy of education for life.

While music was not the sole focus of any settlement house or the movement overall, Toronto’s settlement houses used music throughout all of their social programs, from singing British folk songs as a recreational activity to singing the Canadian national anthem in democratic training clubs, to organized dance classes and mouth organ bands. Among these dispersed musical practices, settlement workers also established music schools that enlisted classical musicians to provide residents with conservatory-style training in Western European Art Music. Central Neighbourhood House opened its music school in 1915, Memorial had a music school by 1920, University Settlement House in 1921, and St. Christopher House in 1928. The latter two schools continue to operate today, making them not only the first community music schools in Canada, but also the longest running.⁴

All schools partnered with classical musicians from the Toronto Conservatory of Music, which was considered the epicentre of classical music training and performance in Canada (Schabas 2005; Green and Vogan 1991). The music schools insisted, however, that their purpose was different from the conservatory in that music training was not an end in and of itself but rather a tool in service of civic betterment: "Compared with a Conservatory the purpose of a Music School in a Settlement is highly social; that is, it lays emphasis on the all-round development of the pupil, rather than on training for vocational purposes."⁵ By articulating conservatory-style training in Western European Art Music (WEAM) as a tool in civic betterment, the schools normatively positioned WEAM as the musical culture of Canada, albeit a culture they endeavoured to share with Toronto's less fortunate. Settlement organizers and music school staff alike also felt that sharing culture fostered a more cohesive community, which might address the social fragmentation they saw through industrialization. However, as James notes, "the sharing most settlers had in mind was almost entirely the endowment of Anglo-Canadian cultural icons on immigrants" (James 1998: 297). Conservatory-style training musically cultivated citizens, and was predicated on a Western European-derived culture that stood in for Toronto's Anglo-Celtic, Protestant, and upper-class citizens.

While music school organizers launched classes and pedagogies that they hoped would contribute musically to the overall settlement objective of citizenship cultivation, the performances offered a public way for music schools to share, celebrate, and evaluate the relative success of music training as a form of social development.⁶ Music performances were arguably always a part of the settlement houses, even beyond the music schools: Central Neighbourhood House held its first classical concert and first spring festival for members in 1911, and settlement houses frequently hosted dances, plays, and other performances for their members. However, performances expanded significantly through the 1930s, a surprising moment for an increase in performances, marked as it was by diminishing funds and increased demand brought on by the Great Depression. The following sections examine several key kinds of music performances at the settlement houses and the ways in which specific kinds of music in performance produced and validated particular notions of citizenship. The first section looks at the role of WEAM performances of the music schools in constructing an Anglo-Celtic, Protestant, middle-class norm for citizenship. This is followed by an examination of the spring festivals, which used the pre-existing practices of their immigrant participants and shifted ideas about citizenship.

Settlement Music School Performances: Articulating Western European Art Music to British Norms of Citizenship

The value of the music school in providing means of self-expression can scarcely be over-estimated. The joy which parents and children alike gained from the music lessons was evident to all at the annual recital.⁷

Recitals were a part of the settlement music schools from the beginning. Each school held student recitals on a regular basis, some as frequently as once a month. However, beginning in the 1930s, the pupil recitals increased in frequency and scope, culminating in recitals held jointly between the music schools of Central Neighbourhood House, University Settlement House, and St. Christopher House. This was in part due to the formalization of the music schools. Around 1930, each of the four settlement houses took steps to recruit a music advisory committee to oversee their schools, while also hiring part-time administrators to run the schools. As structures formalized, the schools were increasingly able to host regular recitals. However, recitals also increased in the 1930s because demand for music lessons and for entertainment increased as residents found themselves out of work.

While structures and demand created the conditions for performances, the recitals also offered music school organizers a chance to demonstrate the musical accomplishments of the students, most often framed as progress. Central Neighbourhood House noted in its annual report that a recital was held “at which each of the children performed, the parents were invited to attend so that they could see what progress the children were making.”⁸ Similarly, St. Christopher House noted in its 1937 annual report that “excellent progress was made and at the combined recital held in May by the three settlements, our pupils were highly praised by the presiding musical officials.”⁹ The 1935 music school report at University Settlement House asserted that the “progress shown by the playing of the Music School pupils at the Recitals has been judged to be satisfactory according to the reports of those of the Committee who have attended.”¹⁰ All three reports used the word progress to describe their music students in performance, yet the exact nature of that progress was never overtly specified. Certainly, the music schools were likely referring to the development of musical skills, but the display of musical skill in performances also demonstrated *social* skill by showcasing pupils who studied and worked hard; pupils who embodied disciplined music skills and could advance in their musical progress. In this way, perhaps students demonstrated their own process of cultural uplift by performing the music of Toronto’s upper classes.

Given the settlements' mandate of civic betterment, recitals constituted a particular kind of citizen by articulating Western European Art Music to an assumed British settler subjectivity in large part through the kinds of repertoire performed. In a recital held by Central Neighbourhood House Music School, the recital opened with "God Save the King," which was considered Canada's second national anthem. This anthem, declaring fidelity to the British crown, effectively marked the performance space as British before any pupils performed. Following the anthem, pupils performed pieces composed by Mozart, Haydn, Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, and Schumann, among other composers. In this concert, the only piece composed by a Canadian was "Russian Cradle Song" by Boris Berlin. This trend held across all pupil recitals; other programmes included only a few songs by Canadian composers, such as Healy Willan and Donald Heins. However minor a role this repertoire had, the Canadian composers remained firmly a part of the Western European Art Music tradition, which mostly confirmed that, for the schools, "Canadian" music was situated within the WEAM tradition.¹¹

In a few instances, however, programmes listed no composer for certain pieces but instead listed them as either "folk songs" or "traditional." Given the song titles, such as "All Through the Night," "A Hundred Pipers," and "Mary Had a Little Lamb," the folk and traditional songs appeared to be mostly of British origin, and while each of these songs certainly has distinct cultural histories, there was no indication that performance organizers noticed such distinctions between a Welsh song, a Scottish song, and an English song. Rather, the songs were rolled into one assumed tradition, perhaps providing what was seen as simple music material for beginner players that would streamline them into more difficult repertoire from the WEAM canon. However, the ubiquity of British music also demonstrates the kinds of musics excluded from pupil recitals, including musical practices and repertoires from non-Western European cultural traditions, or from jazz and pop repertoires. The data collected by the music schools suggests that their pupils came from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, the annual report for University Settlement Music School from 1935 listed 28 "nationalities" served that year, including "Jewish, Hungarian, Czecho-Slovak, Finnish, Ukranian [*sic*], and coloured."¹² Given the settlement focus on citizenship training in combination with the ethnic diversity of music pupils, the musical exclusions marked sharp boundaries that reinforced the articulation between the normative British-settler national subject and Western European Art Music, framed by organizers as "good music" and "high arts." Perhaps it was unthinkable on the parts of the music school organizers to include any kind of music other than classical music, yet this regime of truth points to the normative exclusions

that bound particular musics to particular ideas of citizenship.¹³ Pupil recitals demonstrated the students' abilities to conform to the cultural content and expectations imbued in WEAM repertoire and rehearsal/performance techniques, all of which represented their successful cultural uplift. Performers stood out not for their own cultural backgrounds or for their inventiveness, but for conforming to the musical and social codes embedded in Western European Art Music and culture, and in so doing, demonstrated social skills appropriate to contributing to urban society at large.

Benefit Concerts

The music schools, much like the settlements themselves, struggled to maintain adequate funding for their operations through the Depression years. Organizers found a useful fundraising vehicle in the form of benefit concerts: concerts staged to raise money for the music school, or the settlement house overall. University Settlement Music School was particularly adept at holding benefit concerts. These concerts, the most formal of the school's performances, served the double purpose of raising funds for the music school and promoting the school's efforts to train disadvantaged students socially through music. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these concerts featured Western European Art Music almost exclusively and took place in established venues outside of the settlement house, such as the prestigious Hart House, the cultural hub of the University of Toronto, and the Eaton Auditorium, a renowned concert hall located on the top floor of Toronto's largest department store. The school performances at times featured professional performers from the elite Toronto Conservatory of Music, such as pianist Norman Wilks and violinist Elie Spivak, and at other times featured the most accomplished pupils from the music school, a careful selection that perhaps ensured a relatively high calibre of musical performers to boost ticket sales, but that also publicly showcased the school's social success by featuring musical proficiency. In these benefit concerts, accomplished music-making was framed in terms of the humanistic goals, intertwining social "work" and elite musical practices for combined social and economic effects.

Wilks, a renowned pianist and school supporter and director at the Toronto Conservatory of Music, gave a prominent benefit concert. Wilks' involvement with University Settlement Music School was sustained: he chaired the Music School Committee for well over a decade until he had to resign to take over for Sir Ernest MacMillan as the principal director the Toronto Conservatory in 1942.¹⁴ His benefit concert, held at the Eaton Auditorium on

November 5, 1932, garnered critical acclaim: “A large crowd very heartily applauded Norman Wilks last Saturday night at the Eaton Auditorium for his brilliant work,” proclaimed a newspaper reviewer, calling him a great artist who never let his audience down “with listless, colorless playing.”¹⁵ The benefit nature of the concert was not far from his performance. Near the end of the performance, Wilks spoke at great length about University Settlement Music School, lauding its contribution to civic betterment while also describing the financial needs of the school. If his speech was not enough, the programme for the concert unabashedly listed the needs of the school just above the concert order on the inside page, asking for pianos, musical instruments, sheet music, books, and even a new building.¹⁶ The benefit concert performed by Wilks served a distinctly different function from the performances by or for members of the settlement houses. Whereas pupil recitals publicly validated social development, cultural uplift, and civic betterment, Wilks did not need to demonstrate his own enculturation. Born and raised in England before immigrating to Canada, Wilks’s English training was exactly what gave him credibility as a Canadian national; he was the epitome of what historian Maria Tippet describes as English Canada’s attempts to bring “Canadian culture into line with that of the mother country” (Tippet 1994: 48). Wilks, however, could use his exalted status as both a national subject and a prominent classical musician to promote the social work and financial need of the school.

Music Performances in the Settlement Houses: “Social Music” and Shifting Notions of Citizenship

While the music schools focused on performances of Western European Art Music through the 1930s, the settlement houses used music in multiple ways outside of music schools, just as they had engaged in music practices well before the music schools were established. From glee clubs to mouth organ bands to folk dances to musical games, musical activities permeated settlement houses from the beginning through to the 1940s. For the most part, these kinds of music-making were categorized as social music, distinct from music school training. The “social” of social music highlighted how workers understood music as a recreational activity rather than a form of musical training as in the settlement schools. Social music was a term more widely used in the music efforts of American settlement houses, but Toronto’s settlement houses adopted and used the term in a similar way to indicate musical activities that were not intended to develop (Western European-derived) musical skills but instead to foster social development through a recreational use of music. Social

music was understood as the music of and for amateurs in that it was easy to teach and learn, requiring no specialized musical knowledge (read: knowledge in Western European Art Music), although several American scholars note that social music leaders did instead require the skills and knowledge of social workers (Cords 1975: 104; Green 1998: 44).

For the most part, social music was not performance-oriented, but instead offered participatory entertainment and community bonding between members. However, even these participatory social music activities spawned occasions for performances, which, like the WEAM performances of the music school, produced social citizens by publicly validating and advancing the citizenship goals of the settlement houses, although in importantly different ways from the music schools. Examining the ways in which these social music practices contributed to the citizenship focus of settlements teases out not only the assumptions that the music schools made about music and citizenship, but also highlights how ideas of citizenship shifted (or did not) with different music practices. Further, paying attention to the kinds of performances occurring outside of the music schools throws into sharp relief the territory that the schools marked for themselves. That music schools were defined as such because they did not have “social” music, that it was perhaps even unthinkable to include any kinds of music besides WEAM, points to the hard discursive lines that had already formed around the very idea of music education, even in this community context that worked toward social ends. The next section looks in-depth at the 1935 Spring Closing at Central Neighbourhood House, which largely upheld the Anglo-Celtic Protestant construction of citizenship, followed by the final section that looks at the intercultural work of the Spring Festivals of University Settlement House, which shifted the musical construction of citizenship more dramatically.

Spring Closings at Central Neighbourhood House

All of the settlement houses hosted large parties and performances before closing for the summer months, which not only celebrated the community and provided entertainment, but also demonstrated the social progress of the participants at the end of a year of participation. University Settlement House and St. Christopher House called their year-end parties “Spring Festivals,” Central Neighbourhood House referred to this event as a “Spring Closing,” and Memorial Institute called theirs an “Exhibition.” Part party and part performance, these events collectively offered a performance-based mechanism to simultaneously demonstrate the work of the clubs and programs

throughout the year while also providing an opportunity to build relationships among community members, and in certain cases, promote the work of the settlements to a broader public.

The programme for the 1935 performance of Central Neighbourhood House showcased 65 children between the ages of 3 and 14 who had participated in dance and drama classes at the house over the year. The performance was arranged by Ruth Gray, who had graduated from the Margaret Eaton School, a private school that trained young upper- and middle-class women in physical education and the dramatic arts (Lathrop 1997). The programme for the evening was arranged in three parts: the first two parts of the programme featured the progress of students enrolled in the Saturday morning dance classes held at Central Neighbourhood House. In the first act, the girls enacted a scene of a dance school from the previous century complete with costumes, in which a dance teacher led a class through a series of exercises and dances, including the polka, waltz, and schottische. The second part had several short dances, including a piece in which two bookend figures come to life, a Russian dance called “Oh Katerina,” and a solo dance about a Water Sprite. The dances were likely choreographed by Ruth Gray, but there appeared to be an element created by the students themselves, given that the dance classes also included improvisation among the techniques taught. While the content largely (although not exclusively) focused on British and Western European themes, with physical comportment and discipline emphasized in each dance, there was still a creative element, suggesting that, unlike the music schools, the dance classes involved the children in that process, in addition to mastery of the particular accepted techniques demonstrated in the first part.

The last portion of the spring festival program featured a play of the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel*, comprising dances set to music in the form of a pantomime, which served as “an excellent vehicle for several picturesque folk dances.”¹⁷ Notably, the music that accompanied the pantomime was taken directly from the opera written by Engelbert Humperdinck,¹⁸ suggesting it was shaped by Western European Art Music. What kinds of folk dances the children performed remains unknown, but the sonic performance of WEAM combined with the visual performance of folk dance collapsed two kinds of music and two distinct discourses into one. Where WEAM was seen as a “universal” music that transcended cultures and therefore represented the most modern, civilized society, folk dance called upon a bygone era associated with a simpler, more pastoral way of life that was often framed as the essence of a nation (McKay 1994). In the Central Neighbourhood House performance, Canada’s romanticized past merged with a modern present in a performance of British subjectivity, yet also in what was simply a children’s

dance pantomime performed with enthusiasm for friends and family. To be sure, the Spring Closing of Central Neighbourhood House did not overtly emphasize the construction of Canadian citizens—at least, few references to the Canadianizing of the residents were apparent in the reports and reviews throughout the 1930s. Yet, performances did provide a way to demonstrate social progress, normatively underscoring ideas of citizenship.

And “demonstrate” they did: notably, a newspaper review of the show eschewed the word performance in favour of demonstration. Entitled “Old-fashioned Favorites [*sic*] Demonstrated by Clever Children,” the article noted that the program was presented “to a large gathering of people interested in settlement work,”¹⁹ emphasizing the social aims of this work. Given the settlement’s overall focus on social development, social progress was entwined with technical proficiency in dance and music. While these performances appeared to involve students in a creative process, there is little evidence to suggest that the background cultures of the participants influenced the classes or the performances. Indeed, it is possible that immigrants participated less in Central Neighbourhood House programming in the 1930s, after it relocated from the culturally diverse neighbourhood of St. John’s Ward to the Cabbagetown neighbourhood of predominantly poor Anglo-Celtic residents. However, University Settlement House on the other side of town continued to serve diverse groups of immigrants in Toronto’s Grange Park neighbourhood, and through the 1930s, took a very different musical path toward citizenship in its spring festivals.

University Settlement House Spring Festivals

The spring festivals at University Settlement House were significantly different from those of the other settlements. Their year-end closing festivals were much more public, set in Grange Park in downtown Toronto, and had as many as 3,000 spectators. Notably, the immigrant participants of University Settlement House performed music and dance from their homelands, which significantly shifted the notion of citizenship constructed through performance. Headworker Frances Crowther described the spring festival as a way to celebrate the cultural backgrounds of their members because many of their “homelands” celebrate the arrival of spring through similar festivals. Where at Central Neighbourhood House the spring theme manifested largely in pastoral myths about fairies and nature, Crowther articulated the spring theme in a similarly mythical way, but made it about the annual rites celebrated by different cultures. This meant the University Settlement’s spring

festival was constructed on the idea of ethnic groups sharing cultural practices, not only with each other, but in front of a larger public, making it in turn a broader public statement about Canadian citizenship. One newspaper article characterized it this way:

What influence will the national dances and the national music of other countries exert on the future cultural life of Canada? What are the youthful new Canadians to contribute toward development of the artistic soul of this new country? The thought is aroused by the remarkable scene presented on Saturday afternoon in the beautiful setting of Grange Park, Toronto, under the auspices of the University Settlement.²⁰

That the author found the scene remarkable suggests that the cultural differences represented through music would contribute to Canada in positive ways. The idea that cultural differences could strengthen rather than weaken Canada as a nation-state had begun to proliferate into a wider public consciousness. The settlement houses may not have instigated this shift; in his analysis of the CPR Folk Festivals hosted across Canada four years prior, Stuart Henderson (2005) argues that they celebrated multiple cultures through performances and handicrafts, and in so doing, shifted the discourse about cultural difference in relation to Canadian identity. While little evidence suggests that University Settlement workers were directly influenced by these festivals, something had certainly shifted in their approach to the cultural backgrounds of their immigrant members.

Like the earlier CPR Folk Festivals, these spring festivals traded in a “spectacle of difference” (Henderson 2005: 143), yet unlike the CPR festivals, these were not professional performers, and selling tickets was not their *modus operandi*. In the settlement house performances, immigrant communities who lived in the same neighbourhood performed together and for each other, participating in a wide array of musics and dances unlike any of the previous kinds of settlement performance, or what one newspaper article referred to as “a miniature League of Nations.”²¹ Settlement workers were now anxious to show that immigrants were as naturally predisposed to artistic excellence as any Torontonians, and perhaps these spectacles offered a public forum for just that (James 1998: 304). An article reviewing the 1935 spring festival suggested that while immigrants’ countries of origin might be experiencing upheaval, there remained a rich cultural heritage that would stay with them even while assimilation took place:

Old World countries may be accustomed to troublous times, familiar with wars and rumors [*sic*] of wars, but they are rich in national tradition and in community folklore; and with fine music, art and beautiful dances they are richly endowed. Even some of the poorest children are familiar with the paintings of great artists, and the influence of this environment never fades.²²

The article goes even further to suggest that these immigrants, children in particular, would “contribute something worth while in the national character of their new home”²³ through their art, music, and dance.

The 1935 spring festival featured dancing and singing from many traditions, advertising “Chinese, Canadian, Danish, English, Jewish, Macedonian, Ukranian [*sic*]” as the groups performing, and welcoming everyone to attend.²⁴ The programme consisted of music and dances from each country in what was a lively performance. A newspaper reporter described the Chinese performance in terms of their colourful outfits and the Chinese orchestra “with peculiar instruments.” Performances of other cultures were described in less detail but also were marked in their difference, named “unusual” by the journalist: “Equally picturesque in their way were the Ukrainians in the Katerina and other numbers; the Danish performers in the unusual Ox dance, and a stately waltz; the Jewish dancers in the Palestinian Hora, and the Macedonians in characteristic episodes.”²⁵ This differed yet again from the CPR Festivals in the way that the spring festival embraced a broader diversity of cultures by including Chinese and Jewish performers—territory that even Gibbons wouldn’t tread in his cross-Canada cultural showcase. Perhaps the settlement houses were engaging in a kind of spectacle of difference, but one grounded in the day-to-day realities of the neighbourhoods where the members and the workers lived.

Yet, the settlement workers continued to see themselves as role models for the Canadian national subject, holding the power to frame cultural difference as acceptable or tolerable, a normative centre that became clear in the performance of a Canadian group in the 1935 festival. The presence of “Canadians” on the roster constructed whatever kind of performance they undertook as, naturally, “Canadian.” The Canadians performed Canadian culture, reinscribing the strangeness of the immigrant cultures that the festival sought to celebrate. The *Toronto Daily Star* described the Canadians as: “women in sun-poke bonnets and old-time flouncy skirts, [who] confined themselves to old barn dances.”²⁶ It may well be that this “old-time” performance of Canadian identity was as foreign to the modern-era spectators as any of the other folk dances, arcane and historical, perhaps offering a

Toronto example of “The Folk” that McKay (McKay 1994: 3-42) describes as a romanticized construction of a bygone era. Yet even given what might have seemed an antiquated performance of Canadianness, it nonetheless framed and naturalized Canadian identity as a British settler norm against which the rest of the performances were differentiated as outside of Canadian culture. Two years later, the same festival broke from previous international traditions because participants wanted to express “their feeling of Canadian citizenship”:

On Saturday afternoon Grange park will be the scene of country dances. At former festivals, international dances have been performed but this year those taking part felt that they would like to express their feeling of Canadian citizenship by doing old English country dances.²⁷

Perhaps, given the time period, the participants may have been motivated to express loyalty to Canada in the midst of World War II. However, while little evidence remains as to the motivations of the participants, what can be noted are the effects of that decision: despite a significant shift in the construction of the citizen through musical performance, the spectacle of multiple cultures and the assertions of cultural contributions to Canadian identity were framed within a fundamental assumption of the Canadian subject as an English settler.

The physical space of the 1935 performance mirrored this musical framing. The performances took place in the green space of Grange Park in downtown Toronto, framed in a cultivated portico decorated with garlands:

The whole performance, enacted against the background of the old Grange House portico, with its pillars decorated with garlands of green, was artistic to a fault and was illustrative of the many strains of culture available for the Canada that is in the making.²⁸

Grecian-style pillars framed the various cultures, literally; Greece was frequently heralded as the birthplace of democracy and adopted by Western European nations to mark their own advanced civilization. The performance space itself was one that cultivated nature into a civilized space—a groomed city park. What is further worth noting in the newspaper review is the idea that Canada was “in the making,” suggesting that this very performance opened up space to negotiate the notion of citizenship through performance predicated on a tension between musically enacting a colonial citizen and a nascent form of a multicultural citizen. The cultural backgrounds of University Settlement House members were highlighted through the spring festivals in an

incredibly public way, which shifted the musical construction of the Canadian citizen from an entirely Anglo-Celtic Protestant norm to something that could be understood as a crucible for the modern Canadian construction of a multicultural citizen, yet still predicated on a continued assumption of a colonial-settler subjectivity.

It is also worth noting the music school's lack of involvement in these spring festivals, particularly in the context of the school's many performances held during the same years. While University Settlement Music School was involved in the spring festivals in providing musicians for a few of the performances, the school classified these spring festivals as social music, which therefore fell outside of its purview. It would be easy to suggest that the schools would not even think of participating in the festivals. Only a decade before, the music schools were offering mandolin clubs and mouth organ bands, yet over time, non-WEAM music was dropped as the music schools focused more narrowly on conservatory-style training. While this institutionalization process is the subject for another paper, it is worth noting here that the music schools had institutionalized WEAM so thoroughly in both practice and thought that by the late 1930s, it had indeed become unthinkable to participate in musical activities that did not centre on classical music. The distinction made by social music bracketed off particular forms and intents of music-making, preserving conservatory-style training in Western European Art Music as the milieu for the music school.

Conclusion

The musical work of Toronto's settlements suggests that music offered a mechanism not just to engage in social development, but to construct cultural notions of Canadian citizenship. Performances became sites to practice and perform citizen subjectivities. However, not all performances created the same subjectivities in the same ways. All of the music school performances, whether benefit concerts or small recitals for friends and family, offered an effective and efficient technique to legitimate students' musical progress. Within the context of the settlement houses' overarching objectives of developing citizens through social programs, the musical progress of the children was mapped onto their social development.

The spring festivals were more public still, particularly the festivals of University Settlement House that involved thousands of spectators. These festivals—not organized by the music schools—used music to produce and perform different visions of citizens. Central Neighbourhood House continued

to promote an Anglo-Protestant Canadian subject by presenting dances and dramas linked to English pastoral ideals, but there were opportunities for student expression through the process of creating the shows. Members of University Settlement produced and performed a very different national subject with music and dances of their cultural backgrounds, under the explicit purpose of celebrating their cultural contributions to Canada. However, these contributions were still predicated on an Anglo-Celtic norm, most clearly seen in the contrast with a “Canadian” group performing at the festivals, claiming their dances and culture as Canadian.

The project of cultural uplift that would develop immigrant and working-class Torontonians and “level out” the classes articulated musical hierarchies to social hierarchies. Just as British subjects were exalted as Canadian national subjects, so too musics associated with British subjects were exalted as more developed, predicated on the exclusions of other kinds of musics that were also tied to racial and class differences. Given English Canada’s history as a colony of Britain, combined with the emerging phenomenon of non-British immigration, social relations were bound up in the musical constructions of Canadian citizenship that assumed British Torontonians were national subjects, placed other and immigrants lower down the social hierarchy. Further, any discussion of Canada’s nation-state is predicated on the colonization of indigenous peoples, and the settlements appear to have ignored First Nations people. While this clearly warrants further study, in the context of musical constructions of citizenship through performance, the absolute exclusion of indigenous peoples ultimately constructed the Canadian citizen as a colonial subject.

However, the complex assemblage of musical practices and rationales within the settlement houses suggest that the notion of Canadian citizen was not fixed, although shot through with a colonial “settler” imaginary. The musical performances of the settlement houses created public moments to reinforce, negotiate, contest, and transform not just individuals, but the very notion of citizenship. ❀

Notes

1. For instance, see Green and Vogan (1991) for a history of music education in Canada; Mark and Gary (2007) for the United States, and Rainbow and Cox (2006) for Britain.

2. Several music education scholars note that music education as a school subject grew out of this movement in the United Kingdom. See, for example, Wright (2014: 74); Vulliamy (1977: 203).

3. I use the term “Anglo-Celtic” rather than “Anglo-Saxon” to describe the dominant Toronto class, following scholars of Toronto’s social reform era (James 2001; Valverde 2008; Chen 2005; Strange 1995). While “Anglo-Celtic” may obscure the power relations between Toronto’s British settlers (e.g., the term glosses over the low status of Toronto’s Irish immigrants), I nonetheless use the term to capture the cultural influences of Scottish and English philosophers on Toronto’s middle class, as well as the legal differentiation of the “preferred race” categories of Canada’s contemporaneous immigration policy, namely English, Irish, Scottish, and “foreigner.” For a more complete discussion on these terms within a Canadian context, see Champion (2010); Urschel (2010).

4. See St. Christopher House (now West Neighbourhood House) Music School (<http://www.westnh.org/programs-and-resources/school-aged-children/music-school/> accessed January 13, 2016) and University Settlement Music and Arts School (<http://universitysettlement.ca/music-arts-school/> accessed January 13, 2016).

5. University Settlement Music School Minutes 1940, Series 619 Subseries 2, File 23. City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, Canada (hereafter *CTA*).

6. See Yerichuk 2015 (chapter 4) for more in-depth analysis of the pedagogies, classes, and school structures that music school organizers used in service of the civic betterment work of the settlement houses.

7. Uncredited newspaper clipping, Central Neighbourhood House. History of Canadian Settlements, Book D. Baldwin Room Archives, Toronto Public Library.

8. 1926 Annual Report for Central Neighbourhood House. Fonds 1005, SC 5, File 6. *CTA*.

9. 1937 Annual Report for St. Christopher House. Fonds 1484, Series 1727, File 7. *CTA*.

10. University Settlement Music School. Report to Committee on work of Music School from June 1934 to January 1935. (February 25, 1935), Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 23. *CTA*.

11. Maria Tippett argues that Canadian musicians tended to cling to “Old World traditions” while trying to create a new Canadian culture. See (Tippett 1994; Tippett 1990)

12. Music School Annual Report 1934-35, Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 23. *CTA*.

13. I use the term *regime of truth* in the Foucaultian sense to indicate both the production of one specific truth over other truths as well as its contingent nature. As Mills argues, truth “is something which societies have to work to produce, rather than something which appears in a transcendental way.” (Mills 2004: 16).

14. Wilks passed away rather suddenly in 1944, and University Settlement Music School wrote a letter published in the Toronto Star paying tribute to his “great humanitarian qualities,” painting a compelling portrait of his tireless dedication to their school. “Served the Children,” Toronto Daily Star, November 28, 1944, 6.

15. “Norman Wilks Recital—Noted Pianist Gives fine Display at Eaton

Auditorium,” uncredited newspaper clipping [1932], University Settlement House. Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 189. *CTA*.

16. Norman Wilks piano recital programme, 1932, Series 619, sub-series 2, File 189. *CTA*.

17. “Children Give Fine Program,” uncredited news clipping, Central Neighbourhood House. Fonds 1005, SC 5, File 1, *CTA*.

18. “TinyTots Dance at Gay Festival: Old-fashioned Favorites [sic] Demonstrated by Clever Children,” uncredited news clipping. Fonds 1005, SC 5, File 1. *CTA*.

19. “TinyTots Dance at Gay Festival: Old-fashioned Favorites [sic] Demonstrated by Clever Children,” uncredited news clipping, Central Neighbourhood House. Fonds 1005, SC 5, File 1. *CTA*.

20. “The Nations’ Dances,” uncredited newspaper clipping [1935], University Settlement House. Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 189. *CTA*.

21. “2000 Dancers Perform in Colorful [sic] Spectacle,” uncredited newspaper clipping, University Settlement House. Fonds 1484, Series 619, sub-series 2, File 189. *CTA*.

22. “The Nations’ Dances,” uncredited newspaper clipping [1935], University Settlement House. Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 189. *CTA*.

23. “The Nations’ Dances,” uncredited newspaper clipping [1935], University Settlement House. Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 189. *CTA*.

24. Poster for 1935 University Settlement House Spring Festival. Series 619, sub-series 2, File 190. *CTA*.

25. “2000 Dancers Perform in Colorful Spectacle,” uncredited newspaper clipping, University Settlement House, Fonds 1024, Series 619, Subseries 2, File 189. *CTA*.

26. “32 Nations Will Parade to Mark Joy of Spring” *Toronto Daily Star*, May 26, 1935, 10.

27. “32 Nations Will Parade to Mark Joy of Spring” *Toronto Daily Star*, May 26, 1935, 10.

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