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Songs of War

Anglo-Canadian Popular Songs on the Home Front, 1914-1918

SARA KARN

Abstract: This article explores the production, content, and reception of Anglo-Canadian popular songs composed during the First World War. It argues that popular songs reflected the changing attitudes of Anglo-Canadians, as composers and publishers created music to fulfill different purposes for those on the home front at various stages of the war. In the beginning, the majority of songs were patriotic marches composed to gather support for Britain and the Empire. As the war continued, there was an increase in the number of patriotic songs that expressed a growing sense of wartime Canadian nationalism to enlist recruits. Throughout the war, music was significant to the First World War experience on Canada's home front.

We have watched the feet of thousands go swinging down our streets – and always to the sound of music. Across the Atlantic, on through England and up the torn roads of France, even to the crest of Vimy Ridge, those feet go swinging, with music playing them on. The battle line of this war is not confined to the Western or Eastern or any other front. It passes through every home, every farm, every factory that is working in the great cause. And in all these places music is a national necessity.¹

J.W. Wallace, *Canadian Music Trades Journal*, October 1917.

¹ J.W. Wallace, "They March to Music," *Canadian Music Trades Journal* (hereafter *CMTJ*) 18, 5 (Oct. 1917): 71.

THROUGH THESE WORDS, J.W. Wallace acknowledged the widespread use of music by soldiers overseas and civilians on the home front during the First World War. War, whether at home or abroad, created an environment in which music served a vital purpose. In both an aural and visual sense, music was significant to the First World War experience on the home front in Canada.

This article explores the production, content, and reception of war-themed Anglo-Canadian popular songs. The messages expressed in popular songs reflected the changing attitudes of Anglo-Canadians on the home front over the course of the First World War. Through the lyrics, music, and cover art of popular songs, composers and publishers produced songs with messages they believed resonated with their Anglo-Canadian audiences for various purposes at different stages of the war. In the beginning, production focused on patriotic songs to encourage enlistment and support for the war effort. These martial songs featured imperial imagery to inspire support for Britain and the Empire at war. As the war continued, patriotic songs adopted more nationalistic elements, establishing an emerging wartime Canadian identity through music.

While thousands of songs were composed by and sung for civilians on the home front in Canada between 1914 and 1918, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of songs produced because of the ephemeral nature of sheet music. The consulted archival collections provide a sample of 130 songs composed in Canada during the war, and the titles of some 1,850 songs appeared in the *Canadian Music Trades Journal (CMTJ)* between August 1914 and November 1918.² Although these collections do not include every song that was composed, they are representative of the types of messages Anglo-Canadians on the home front were exposed to throughout the war. The fact that they still exist in collections today, sometimes in multiples, suggests that they were more widely circulated and purchased at the time.

In addition to sheet music, newspapers were consulted to determine the extent to which the songs were performed during the

² These collections include Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC); the Ley and Lois Smith War, Memory, and Popular Culture Research Collection held by the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario (hereafter UWO); the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections held by the McMaster University Library (hereafter MUL); and the Canadian Sheet Music collection held by the University of Toronto Faculty of Music Library (hereafter UTL).

war, both by regimental bands and other musicians. Although it is difficult to access the reception of music by wartime audiences, the newspaper articles are particularly useful for understanding the reactions to the songs' messages and, therefore, Anglo-Canadian attitudes towards the war.

The *CMTJ* is another valuable source that was published monthly throughout the war. The articles outline various factors that shaped song production and provide details on sheet music and record sales. As the more affordable method of obtaining access to popular songs, sheet music was most commonly purchased by Canadians. Since songs were usually recorded only when they reached a higher level of popularity, the monthly lists of recorded song titles in the *CMTJ* are shorter than the lists of available sheet music. It should be noted that due to common conceptions of music as a 'frivolous' activity, sales figures included in these articles may have been inflated to demonstrate the importance of music to wartime audiences and ensure the continued demand for particular songs. However, those within the music trades were more aware of what would sell, revealing much about the wartime musical climate in Canada.

This study of popular songs provides a bottom-up view of the war by examining the popular discourse that emerges in these sources, as promoted by composers and publishers rather than official propaganda efforts led by the Canadian government. By avoiding the top-down perspective that permeated much of the early scholarship on the First World War, this article engages with more recent work that incorporates a diverse range of experiences, especially among civilians on the home front.³ This approach contributes to ongoing discussions among historians regarding the extent to which the First World War marked a transformation within Canadian society. While exploring these changes, historians have increasingly considered socio-cultural

³ For more recent scholarship, see Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1996); Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916: Volume One* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007); Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918: Volume Two* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008); Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); and *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Sacrifice: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland during the First World War*, ed. Amy Shaw and Sarah Glassford (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012).

factors by examining new types of sources, which has informed the present study of music.

Historians have less-frequently studied music in comparison to other sources, such as literature and poetry, which are the focus of the seminal works on war culture.⁴ In early cases where music was examined, such as Modris Eksteins' *Rites of Spring*, the analysis centred on classical music which was exclusive to the upper class. More recently, historians have challenged the conclusions drawn in earlier works by expanding their source base to consider popular culture, thereby representing the experiences and attitudes of a wider group within society. For example, in *Death So Noble*, Jonathan Vance encourages historians to adopt "a methodology that treats all sources, regardless of their literary quality, on an equal footing."⁵ When applying this approach to the study of music, popular songs should be considered just as valuable as highbrow music.

Scholarship on British, European, and American wartime music also proved useful in developing an approach to analysing popular songs since the Canadian historiography is limited.⁶ Canadian scholarship focuses primarily on the songs that soldiers composed and sang while overseas and considers the impact of group activities like singing on soldiers' morale in order to shed new light on their

⁴ See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1991); and Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Co., 1989).

⁵ Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 5.

⁶ For example, see Kent Bowman, "Echoes of Shot and Shell: Songs of the Great War," *Studies in Popular Culture* 10, 1 (1987): 27-41; John Mullen, *The Show Must Go On!: Popular Song in Britain during the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Carol L. Shansky, "Patriotism and the Skirl of the Pipes: The Scottish Highland Pipe Band and World War I British Recruiting in New York, 1916-18," *Journal of Musicological Research* 33 (2014): 241-67; Regina M. Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory: French Cultural Politics and Music during the Great War* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); Don Tyler, *Music of the First World War* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2016); and Glen Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003).

experiences.⁷ There are only two articles that extend the discussion to the home front through a focus on songs produced and composed in Canada with a civilian audience in mind.⁸

The study of wartime Anglo-Canadian popular songs also informs our understanding of the history of Canadian music, as musicologists and historians have largely focused on highbrow music.⁹ According to many scholars, the end of the war marked the beginning of a sense of Canadian identity in music through the more frequent incorporation of folk songs. However, their studies identify the First World War as a watershed in the development of music but give little attention to the war years themselves.¹⁰ Although the growth in Canadian music is largely attributed to the radio's ability to connect the country through sound in the 1920s, the interwar period must be linked more directly with wartime musical production. The value of considering wartime music in Canada is realised when attention is shifted away from the study of highbrow music exclusively, to a concentration on national identity expressed through popular songs.

THE CANADIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY AND WARTIME SONG PRODUCTION

Before examining the content of the songs, a consideration of sheet music and record production reveals the nature of Canada's music industry both prior to, and during, the First World War. The study of wartime music also offers insight on various social factors that

⁷ See Tim Cook, *The Secret History of Soldiers: How Canadians Survived the Great War* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2018); Tim Cook, "The Singing War: Canadian Soldiers' Songs of the Great War," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39, 3 (2009): 224-41; and Jason Wilson, *Soldiers of Song: the Dumbells and Other Canadian Concert Parties of the First World War* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012).

⁸ Wayne Norton, "From British Columbia: Music of the Great War, 1914-1918," *BC Studies* 182 (2014): 113-24 and Gayle Magee, "'She's a Dear Old Lady': English Canadian Popular Songs from World War I," *American Music* 34, 4 (2016): 474-506.

⁹ For example, see Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Agincourt, ON: GLC Publishers Limited, 1982); Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960); Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006); and George A. Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

¹⁰ Regina Sweeney also noted that there is "barely a meeting of art history and World War I," as scholars often stop their analysis in 1914 and pick back up again in 1918. Sweeney, 3.

impacted popular song production. The songs were shaped by class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, in relation to both the composers and their intended audiences.

Prior to the war, music in Canada developed in a fragmentary way. Scholars have attributed this largely to the fact that Canada was made up of clusters of population spread over a vast territory that made communication difficult. Musicologist Helmut Kallmann concluded that there was a “lack of national character in musical life.”¹¹ There were few songs produced in Canada that were sung in all regions, and no national opera house or music school was established. As a result, composers and performers were not trained to develop an original Canadian style of music, but rather, copied European models that emerged from various schools of music.

In the case of popular songs, Canadian music was heavily influenced by British and American models, resulting in the sheet music and record market in Canada relying on imported music in the prewar era. The majority of sheet music and records listed in the *CMTJ* were simply reissued pieces of European music for the Canadian market.¹² Even the leading Canadian publishing company, the Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, did not produce an abundance of Canadian goods prior to the war. In a November 1900 advertisement about their “impressive” sheet music selection, of which they claimed to have the largest stock in Canada, the Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers mention copyright publications of British and American works but do not refer to any songs composed by Canadians.¹³ However, the creation of the Canadian journal is evidence of one step towards nationalizing the Canadian music market in the prewar era.

When the war broke out, the length of the *CMTJ* gradually expanded to incorporate the growing musical discourse that emerged as a result of the war. Music was repeatedly positioned as an essential part of the war effort, rather than a frivolous activity, for its potential to maintain morale both at home and abroad.¹⁴ This belief in the importance of wartime music is highlighted by the explosion of patriotic songs in the early stages of war that led to a major increase

¹¹ Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada*, 266.

¹² “Canada’s Exports and Imports,” *CMTJ* 1, 1 (June 1900): 25.

¹³ “New Music,” *CMTJ* 1, 6 (Nov. 1900): 12.

¹⁴ For example, see “Music is a Necessity,” *CMTJ* 19, 3 (Aug. 1918): 36 and “Music a Need in Time of Stress,” *CMTJ* 18, 1 (June 1917): 27.

in sheet music and record sales. However, an article from October 1916 expressed concerns over the quality of popular songs produced in wartime: “The present war has been productive of almost as many songs as casualties. How many casualties have been caused by the songs is not known. Some of the latter are veritable atrocities.”¹⁵ These issues were addressed by articles in the *CMTJ* that outlined strategies for composers and major publishing companies to follow in order to make wartime profits on quality sheet music.

Composers were encouraged to target an audience of Canadians who could afford what they had to sell and ensure that the average person would understand the words used in popular songs.¹⁶ Accordingly, the music needed to appeal to the average range of voice (within one octave) and playing ability. The *CMTJ* recommended that composers avoid putting too much emphasis on writing original music because “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...If song writers stray outside the plain, familiar paths they are likely to confuse the public...”¹⁷ Many articles stressed the importance of simplicity and clarity in popular songs, and that overall “the writer has to think in the same terms as the great mass of the people.”¹⁸

These strategies were suggested as part of an effort to produce Canadian music and avoid relying on imports from Britain and the United States. As a result of the war, those in the Canadian music industry strove to create lasting popular songs by emphasizing common wartime values and national unity. According to an article in the *CMTJ* from October 1916, many songs had been produced, but none were of the quality that would resonate with Canadians beyond the war. The article emphasised the importance of the emotional aspects of war to inspire an enduring Canadian song: “The stage is set; passions and emotions beyond precedent have been aroused; Canadian blood flows like water on foreign battlefields.”¹⁹ This desire to create a song

¹⁵ “Publishing Canada’s War Songs,” *CMTJ* 17, 5 (Oct. 1916): 57.

¹⁶ For example, see “Locating Your Prospective Customers,” *CMTJ* 16, 2 (July 1915): 37 and “Successful Popular Songs Are Those Expressing a Big Idea in the Fewest Words,” *CMTJ* 19, 1 (June 1918): 62-63.

¹⁷ “Putting Over Popular Songs,” *CMTJ* 17, 12 (May 1917): 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹ “Canada Waiting for an Immortal War Song,” *CMTJ* 17, 5 (Oct. 1916): 59.

Canadians could identify with for generations was presented in a way that highlighted unity among Canadians in wartime.

The increasing demand for songs on war themes created an opportunity for more Anglo-Canadians to compose and publish popular songs than ever before. An article in the *CMTJ* from October 1916 expressed, “People of all classes—men, women, boys, and girls—some of whom have never before penned a line of verse or a bar of music—come to us wanting us to publish their songs.”²⁰ Although the potential existed for anyone to compose a song and have it published in sheet music form, there were expenses involved that often limited the publication of sheet music to more affluent individuals or those with connections to publishing companies. While the composers themselves were mostly from the middle and upper classes, their songs appealed to a wider audience. Popular songs had become increasingly accessible to working- and middle-class Canadians through the sale of sheet music and recordings and, thus, the messages portrayed through the songs were directed at these audiences.

Gender is another significant factor that influenced the production and content of popular songs in Canada during the war. The music business was overwhelmingly male as the majority of composers, publishers, and authors of articles in the *CMTJ* were men. In the collection of sheet music examined, women composed very few songs. It was possible for women to have their songs published during the war, but rather than holding a primary role as composers they were the main consumers of popular songs. Many song lyrics and cover images were directed at women and girls because they usually purchased sheet music and performed songs in the home.²¹ For example, a number of sentimental songs depicted wives, mothers, and daughters waiting for men to return safely from war as a form of consolation for women on the home front.²²

The views expressed by wartime popular songs were also strongly influenced by ethnicity and religion. Anglo-Canadian popular songs were not the only songs composed during the war. However, the

²⁰ “Publishing Canada’s War Songs,” *CMTJ*, 57.

²¹ “Putting Over Popular Songs,” *CMTJ*, 77.

²² See, for example, Albert E. MacNutt, “I’ll Not Forget You Soldier Boy” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1915), sheet music, UWO; Frank Eborall and S.G. Smith, “Will My Boy Come Back?” (Toronto: Frank Eborall and S.G. Smith, 1915), sheet music, UWO; and Gordon V. Thompson, “I Want to Kiss Daddy Good Night” (Toronto: Thompson Publishing Company, 1916), sheet music, UWO.

number of Anglo-Canadian songs on war themes greatly outnumbered those by French-Canadians during the First World War. Similarly, references to religious views in popular songs reflected the majority of Anglo-Canadians. Pacifist views of the war expressed by those in Mennonite communities within Canada did not form a significant part of the popular song market and so remained absent from popular songs. Therefore, the messages and imagery in mainstream Anglo-Canadian popular songs included in the *CMTJ* and newspapers did not express dissenting views.²³ As a result, the musical voices of French-Canadians, as well as Indigenous people and other minority groups, are absent from this study since they were not the target audience of popular songs composed during wartime.

Through examining the production of wartime popular songs, it is evident that the First World War had a major impact on Canada's music industry. There was a shift towards a greater emphasis on creating Canadian-made songs that contributed to a growing sense of national identity. A consideration for the demographics of composers and intended audiences during the war also informs our understanding of the production process, and how factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and religion influenced the messages the songs portrayed.

MUSICAL MESSAGES: SUPPORTING BRITAIN AND THE EMPIRE

In November 1916, an article in the *CMTJ* declared, "Never in the history of the business has there been a time when patriotic records were demanded as they now are."²⁴ The patriotic songs referred to were those with prominent messages of support for Britain and the Empire at war. Throughout the war, composers and publishers produced songs that featured strong imperial messages, accompanied by musical elements meant to incite patriotism. This suggests that composers and publishers believed that emphasizing ties to Britain would be a motivating force for enlistment and support for the war effort. The focus on imperialist sentiment makes sense in light of the fact that the majority of Canadians at the

²³ The only song in the *CMTJ* that may have expressed an anti-war stance was entitled "Neutrality," appearing in "New Music," *CMTJ* 15, 11 (April 1915): 51.

²⁴ "Patriotic Records," *CMTJ* 17, 6 (Nov. 1916): 35.

time were of British heritage and held an affinity for the Empire.²⁵ According to Carl Berger, “Many Canadians shared in the pride of an Empire on which the sun never set and in the ‘sense of power’ that affiliation with the greatest power on earth created.”²⁶ Not surprisingly, wartime popular songs referred to as ‘patriotic’ by contemporaries overwhelmingly drew upon symbols and ideas that portrayed Canada’s position in the war as one that demonstrated its allegiance to Britain and the Empire.

The songs represent the relationships between Canada, Britain, and the Empire in a variety of ways, placing more emphasis on Britain or the Empire depending on the particular song. While patriotic songs contribute to an overall perception of Britain and the Empire as a single concept, songs in 1914 almost exclusively discuss support for Britain as opposed to those beginning in late 1915, which emphasise the wartime role of Canada within the Empire more broadly. This change occurred alongside an increase in popular songs that expressed a growing sense of Canadian nationalism. These findings support the conclusions drawn by other historians, like Berger, who argued that imperialism was one form of Canadian nationalism.

There were also changes in the overall demand for patriotic songs that expressed support for Britain and the Empire over the course of the war. In the first five months, sixteen songs on this theme were listed in the *CMTJ*, accounting for almost half of the total number of songs about the war composed in the same period. This number increased for both 1915 and 1916, when patriotic songs about Britain and the Empire reached their peak. These songs maintained their importance throughout the height of the conflict, decreasing drastically in number by the final stages of the war, with less than ten songs listed for 1918.²⁷

One of the earliest songs that emphasised supporting Britain was “The Best Old Flag on Earth,” composed by Charles F. Harrison in 1914. The sheet music cover is striking; decorated with the Union Jack in bright colours, it stands out among other pieces of sheet

²⁵ See Desmond Morton, *When Your Number’s Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), 278 and Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 22-23.

²⁶ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), xxv.

²⁷ These numbers were gathered from the lists of newly copyrighted songs that appeared in each month’s issue of the *CMTJ*.



Figure 1: “The Best Old Flag on Earth,” sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of wartimecanada.ca]

music (see Figure 1). The central message of the song is for the Dominions of the Empire to stand by the British and fight for “the old Union Jack, the Best old flag of all.”²⁸ The chorus establishes a connection between Britain and Canada for sharing a common “foe” and assures the listener that Canada will support Britain. Although the song mentions fighting “For the Maple leaf, Our emblem dear” and evokes the tune of the “Maple Leaf Forever” to accompany this line, it is clear that, in the end, Canada would fight on behalf of Britain. At this early stage of the war, popular songs highlighted patriotism towards Britain above all else.

“Stand by the Union Jack,” composed in 1914 by W.E. Delaney, was another marching song that explicitly supported the British with a flag on its cover (see Figure 2). Some unique imagery emerges in this song as Britain and Canada are symbolised as a lion and its cub: “The old Lion is fighting; see the Cubs rush to his side!” The chorus further emphasises the connection between Britain and Canada by highlighting their common values: “Stand by the Union Jack, the flag

²⁸ Charles F. Harrison, “The Best Old Flag on Earth” (Toronto: Musgrave Brothers, 1914), sheet music, UWO.

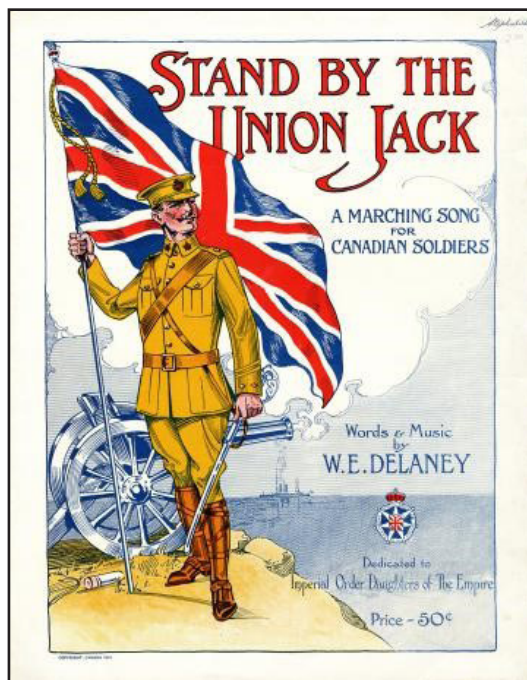


Figure 2: “Stand by the Union Jack,” sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of wartimecanada.ca]

of liberty! / And fight for the Empire which allows no tyranny.”²⁹ The meaning of these lyrics is underlined by the powerful musical accompaniment, to be played as a loud, spirited march throughout. From the early months of the war, the song was recognised by a committee of musicians in Winnipeg for its prominent message in support of the war effort: “The verses convey a fine Canadian and imperial sentiment, and the march is said to be good enough to make the chances good of having ‘Stand by the Union Jack’ take the place of ‘It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’ among the boys from Canada.”³⁰ The sense of optimism in this statement demonstrates that high value was placed on songs that portrayed Britain and the Empire as indistinguishable concepts, positioning Canada as supportive of British values and, by extension, committed to ensuring the continued strength of the Empire.

Along similar lines as the lion and cub imagery, “The Call of the Motherland,” composed in 1914 by Edward W. Miller, expresses

²⁹ W.E. Delaney, “Stand By the Union Jack,” (1914), sheet music, UWO.

³⁰ “Winnipeg Letter,” *CMTJ* 15, 6 (Nov. 1914): 29.

familial ties between Canada and Britain. This emerges most clearly in the opening lines of the chorus:

When war's alarms, and the call to arms,
Comes across from the Motherland,
At the call, as one, each Canadian son,
Is ready to take his stand.³¹

The portrayal of Britain as a mother calling on the help of her sons in Canada evokes the historic relationship between a longstanding imperial power and a young Dominion. The song was positively received by audiences and even issued in player roll form, an indicator of success in the music trades during the war.³² In a letter to the *CMTJ*, reader Henry Frankland from Toronto, attributed his willingness to support the war to the lyrics of “The Call of the Motherland.” “I was so impressed with the words,” he wrote, “that I at once take my pen to let the citizens of this fair Dominion know my feelings, and to offer my services to the country in any capacity...”³³ Although Frankland’s sincerity is difficult to determine, those within the music trades selected Frankland’s statement to appear in the *CMTJ*, suggesting that they believed in the power of patriotic songs to encourage Anglo-Canadians to enlist.

One of the most popular Anglo-Canadian songs from early in the war was “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” composed by Albert Erroll MacNutt and Michael F. Kelly in 1915.³⁴ The song’s lyrics stress fighting for the King and maintaining the strength of the vast Empire in order to uphold British values like pride and justice. The song encourages wartime support from the British colonies with the line “Britain’s sons will rally at her call.” A moderate marching tempo drives the song forward, contributing to a firm message that Britain will not back down. This idea is further emphasised by the accent markings placed above each of the three notes accompanying the line “fight, fight, fight.” These patriotic elements of the lyrics and music likely contributed to the song’s success among Anglo-Canadians. In

³¹ Edward W. Miller, “The Call of the Motherland” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1914), sheet music, UWO.

³² “We are Coming, Mother England,” *CMTJ* 15, 7 (Dec. 1914): 47.

³³ “Music Did It,” *CMTJ* 17, 2 (Sept. 1917): 88.

³⁴ Albert Erroll MacNutt and Michael F. Kelly, “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1915), sheet music, UWO.

January 1916, it was reported in the *CMTJ* that the song had sold over 70,000 copies of sheet music in Canada, and it was deemed “the most successful song ever written and published in Canada.”³⁵

Another march from 1915 by the same composers was “By Order of the King.” The patriotic spirit of this song led many to predict success at an early stage, perhaps “to rival the success of the first production.”³⁶ The latest song did not fail to live up to its expectations. According to the *CMTJ*, the first edition of the song sold out within a week of publication and orders reached the publishers from across the country. By January 1916, “By Order of the King” had sold 10,000 copies.³⁷ MacNutt and Kelly did not stray away from the theme of supporting the British Empire that resulted in the success of their first song, but continued to emphasise the flag and the King as traditional symbols of the British Empire. The final lines of the chorus, “For they are gladly dying just to keep the old flag flying / By order of the King,” demonstrate that, even as casualties amassed, the message of support for the Empire continued to be relevant in the minds of composers.³⁸

“Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies” remains one of the most well-known Anglo-Canadian songs of the First World War. This marching song, composed by Morris Manley in 1915, encourages those on the home front to support enlistment and offers “good luck to Johnnie Canuck, / And all the Allie [*sic*] soldiers.”³⁹ Although similar messages of duty to Britain and the Empire are prominent, this song is unique in its additional representation of Canada as being part of an alliance. The notion of Canada playing a significant role of its own in the war is highlighted by Manley, but he clearly associates Canada as an ally connected to Britain. A distinguishing feature of the song that makes this British connection clear is the inclusion of the melody of “God Save the King” to accompany the lyric “God save our gracious King.” The recording of this song by a popular wartime singer, Herbert Stuart, also features a bugle call and drums,

³⁵ “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,” *CMTJ* 16, 8 (Jan. 1916): 50.

³⁶ “A New Song by the Authors of ‘We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,’” *CMTJ* 16, 3 (Aug. 1915): 73.

³⁷ “Good Songs in Demand,” *CMTJ* 16, 8 (Jan. 1916): 50.

³⁸ Albert Erroll MacNutt and Michael F. Kelly, “By Order of the King” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1915), sheet music, UWO.

³⁹ Morris Manley, “Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies” (Toronto: Morris Manley, 1915), sheet music, UWO.

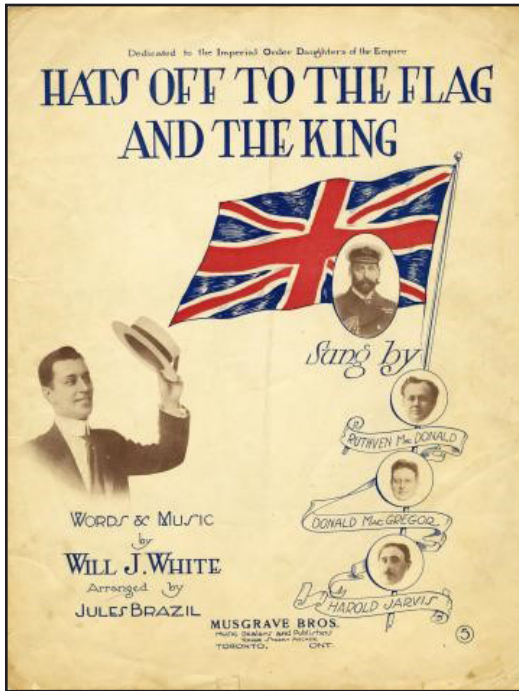


Figure 3: “Hats Off to the Flag and the King” sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of wartimecanada.ca]

marking it clearly as a patriotic song in support of the war.⁴⁰ This song demonstrates that as the war continued, composers began to represent Canadian involvement in more complex ways, outside of the common notion of fighting on behalf of Britain. The messages in favour of Canada as an ally coexisted alongside those that depicted Canadian involvement on behalf of Britain or within the Empire.

Anglo-Canadian popular songs that promoted Britain and the Empire at war continued to be composed as the war proceeded in order to maintain morale and encourage voluntary enlistment to reinforce battalions. In 1916, Will J. White composed the song “Hats Off to the Flag and the King,” a march which features lyrics arranged according to the letters in the words “Briton” and “Canada.” The cover art depicts the composer tipping his hat towards an image of the Union Jack, with an insert of King George V (see Figure 3). The focus on loyalty to Britain is prominent throughout the song,

⁴⁰ Listen to the recording here: Tim Gracyk, ““Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies’ World War I song from Toronto composer Morris Manley,” YouTube Video, March 10, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mc8_klXW8M.

even in the case of the lyrics for the letters that spell out “Canada.” The final line of the chorus declares, “Whil’st the Maple Leaf is our Emblem dear Hats off to the Flag and the King.”⁴¹ These lyrics recognise the maple leaf as a symbol of Canadian patriotism but connect this reference to displaying loyalty towards the flag and the King. The song also portrays the wartime relationship between Britain and Canada as one of mutual benefit: since Britain protects Canada as part of the Empire, Canada must help Britain win the war. As the war progressed, Canada was positioned within a more complex relationship to Britain in popular songs that expressed the reciprocal nature of their war efforts, while continuing to reinforce imperial messages.

In addition to stressing the beneficial ties between Canada and Britain, there were other songs composed later in the war that described a united British Empire. In 1916, at the height of the war, Gordon Dagger and Jules Brazil composed the song “There’s a Corner of the Flag For You to Hold.” This song marks a decisive shift from a focus on Britain to the Empire, emphasizing the shared benefits of everyone across the Empire joining in the fight. The lyrics refer to “tribes of men...at the ends of all the earth” proudly taking their place in war to uphold the honour and strength of the Empire.⁴² The final lines of the chorus highlight just how far-reaching the British Empire had become:

To the North, South, East and West that Flag’s unroll’d
So let us not forget,
That the sun can never set,
On the corners of the Flag we’ll always hold.

A *fermata* appears at the end of each phrase of music, sustaining the final words of each line with a length of note to match the size of the Empire.⁴³ This message of uniting under a common flag was particularly timely, as the British had sustained heavy losses in the war by 1916 and, thus, required every fit man from across the Empire.

⁴¹ Will J. White, “Hats Off to the Flag and the King” (Toronto: Musgrave Brothers, 1916), sheet music, UWO.

⁴² F. Gordon Dagger and Jules Brazil, “There’s a Corner of the Flag for You to Hold” (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1916), sheet music, UWO.

⁴³ A *fermata* is a symbol of musical notation indicating that the note or rest should be prolonged beyond the normal duration.

As these songs demonstrate, during the early years of the war, Anglo-Canadian popular songs emphasised the historic ties between Britain and Canada in order to encourage voluntary enlistment and support of the war on the home front. Although these songs reveal the difficulties in separating the notion of supporting Britain and fighting for the Empire, the lyrics and cover art presented these messages in different ways that reflected the changing views of Anglo-Canadians towards the war. In the early months of the war, the messages almost exclusively emphasised British symbols and ideals while the later songs increasingly positioned Canada within the idea of the Empire at war and even as part of an alliance system. While many patriotic songs composed during the First World War clearly identified an allegiance to Britain and the Empire, this message was not incompatible with the notion of an emerging Canadian identity.

MUSICAL MESSAGES: ESTABLISHING A CANADIAN IDENTITY

Popular songs with a strong patriotic tone not only encouraged supporting the British Empire, but also fighting for Canada. Although seemingly contradictory, historians have argued that Canadian nationalism was expressed alongside an imperial identity during the Edwardian period.⁴⁴ According to Jonathan Vance, “One could glory in being Canadian without it being any less glorious to be part of the British Empire.”⁴⁵ His work demonstrates that while Canadian nationalist symbols were increasingly included in wartime popular culture, imperial symbols also persisted. The study of popular songs also reveals a relationship between patriotism directed at Britain and the Empire, as considered previously, and patriotism towards Canada.

While the popular notion that Canada became a nation during the First World War must continue to be reassessed, the lyrics and cover art of popular songs composed during the war reveal changes in how Canadian identity was conceptualised by Anglo-Canadians. In the first months of the war, symbolism surrounding the Canadian

⁴⁴ For example, see Jonathan F. Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain and Two World Wars* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford Canada, 2012) and Berger, *The Sense of Power*, xxv.

⁴⁵ Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 34.

landscape and elements of nature was present in popular songs alongside the more heavily emphasised British and imperial imagery. As the war continued and Canadians proved themselves in battle, a greater number of songs emerged from 1915 onwards that emphasised specific wartime Canadian achievements without highlighting ties to Britain. Lyrics expressing the notion of Canada's increasing individuality from Britain during wartime were accompanied by traditional styles of music that Anglo-Canadians would be familiar with. Popular songs offer evidence of the imagined role Canada played in the war, which shaped expressions of the Dominion's self-identity within the Empire.

A closer analysis of the sources reveals quantitative changes in the frequency that Canadian nationalist sentiment appeared in popular songs. When the war broke out in August 1914, composers began to include Canadian themes in their music, with at least five popular songs containing explicit references to the nation in the first five months of the war. Nationalist songs reached their peak in April and May 1915 while the Canadians were fighting in the Second Battle of Ypres, with a dramatic increase to forty songs for that year—significantly more songs than in any other category.⁴⁶ The relevance of popular songs with national imagery increased by mid-1915 when the majority of those who enlisted in the military were Canadian-born.⁴⁷ From 1915 onwards, songs on Canadian themes remained a popular choice for composers and publishers, as they promoted an image of the nation that they believed would appeal to Anglo-Canadians during the war.

Other scholars have pointed to a similar shift in views towards the nature of Canada's role during the war. Matthew Bray argues that the focus of the “English-Canadian patriotic perspective” began to change by the spring and summer of 1915.⁴⁸ As Canadian casualties increased during the defence of the Ypres Salient, Canada's role in the war was no longer viewed as just a supporting one as part of the British Empire. According to Bray, this realisation sparked a new response to the war among Anglo-Canadians and the civilian

⁴⁶ These numbers were determined based on the titles of newly copyrighted songs that appeared in monthly issues of the *CMTJ* throughout the war.

⁴⁷ Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 69.

⁴⁸ R. Matthew Bray, “‘Fighting as an Ally’: The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War,” *Canadian Historical Review* 61, 2 (1980): 149.

recruiting movement strengthened. Jonathan Vance also emphasises the First Canadian Division's participation in the Battle of St. Julien as an important testing ground for the soldiers, after which the Canadians were "lionized as heroes of the first order."⁴⁹ Vance argues that the war was increasingly portrayed as a national struggle following Ypres, but the idea of fighting for Britain and the Empire persisted. The identification of mid-1915 as a turning point by each of these historians is important to keep in mind when examining Anglo-Canadian popular songs from the war.

The earliest popular songs that expressed Canadian nationalism included symbols associated with the mythology of Canada's wilderness. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canada was often characterized by its cold, northern climate, which it was believed played a vital role in creating strong and healthy citizens.⁵⁰ Songs that described Canada's landscape were suitable for recruitment as they were usually marches, and their lyrics evoked a strong sense of patriotism and unity across Canada's vast territory.

"Johnnie Canuck's the Boy," composed in 1915 by Jean Munro Mulloy, is a martial song with a clear purpose of recruitment. The final lines of the second verse highlight the call to action across Canada:

From where the Rocky mountains dip
And virgin prairies sweep,
From Arctic rim to Scotia's tip,
Our call is o'er the deep.⁵¹

There are accents placed over the notes of the last line to emphasise duty's call, and the final note is marked with a *fermata* to hold the thought before proceeding into the chorus. These lyrics identify specific features of Canada's landscape in different regions which served to unite the nation in a common cause during wartime.

⁴⁹ Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 63.

⁵⁰ See Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 4; Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 10-11 and Tim Cook, "Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War," *War in History* 10, 3 (2003): 267-268.

⁵¹ Jean Munro Mulloy, "Johnnie Canuck's the Boy" (Toronto: Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers, 1915), sheet music, UWO.

“We’re From Canada,” composed in early 1915 by Irene Humble, is written from the perspective of a soldier declaring his pride and admiration for Canada. The chorus describes:

We’re from Canada, We’re from Canada,
A land beyond compare,
Where the sun shines bright and the stars at night,
Look down on our fields so fair.⁵²

The *CMTJ* included “We’re From Canada” on a list of bestsellers for February 1915 and noted that it had been selected for performances by many concert soloists.⁵³ Through an emphasis on the Canadian landscape, a sense of nationalism emerges in the song, which likely contributed to its success.

Canada’s landscape is also mentioned in “Boys from Canada,” composed in 1915 by Alberta-Lind Cook. The third verse explains that the country looks forward to the day when the soldiers would return: “And Canada will sing with joy of life from shore to shore, / The mountain side and prairie wide / Will see their own once more.”⁵⁴ These lines demonstrate that the message of Canadian unity in wartime was often tied to the landscape. Composers included many references to geographical features of Canada in an attempt to link a sense of national identity to those images, at a time when recruiting efforts were in full force. Since these songs were composed in the earlier stages of the war, when Canadians had little experience in battle, composers relied on non-war related images of the nation.

The symbol of the maple leaf was another common element of popular songs that established a Canadian national identity. Although the current flag of Canada was not yet the symbol of the nation, the maple leaf was associated with Canada long before 1965. The focus on the maple leaf evoked notions of the famous Canadian wilderness. The sheet music covers of “Johnnie Canuck’s the Boy,” and “Boys

⁵² Irene Humble, “We’re From Canada” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1915), sheet music, MUL.

⁵³ “We’re From Canada,” *CMTJ* 15, 9 (Feb. 1915): 54.

⁵⁴ Alberta-Lind Cook, “Boys from Canada” (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1915), sheet music, MUL.

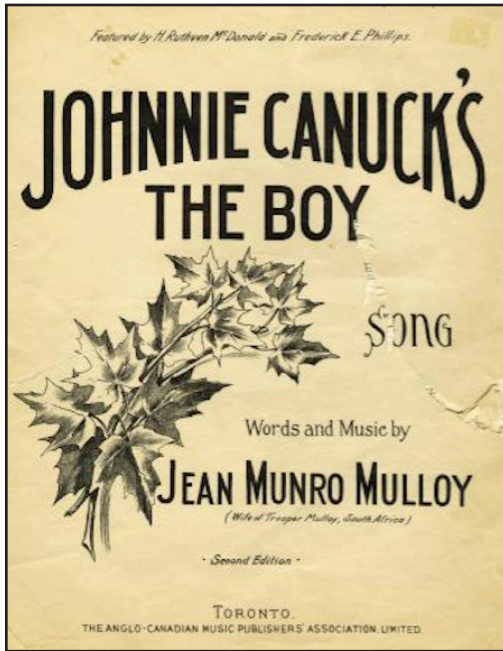


Figure 4: "Johnnie Canuck's the Boy," sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of McMaster University Library]

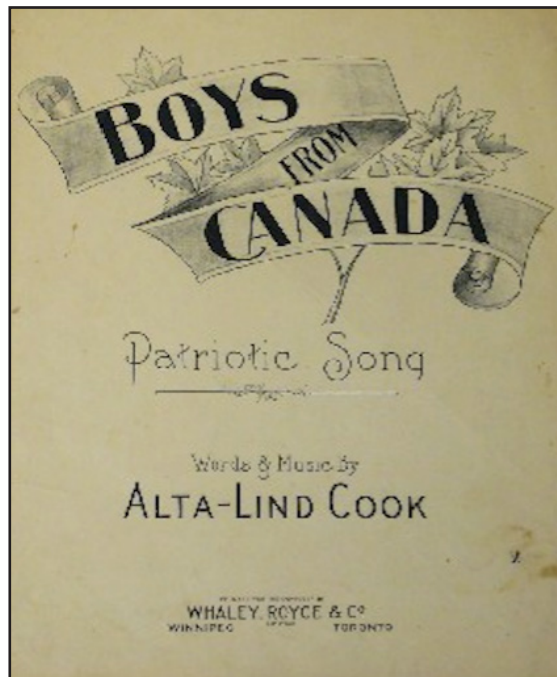


Figure 5: "Boys from Canada," sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of McMaster University Library]

from Canada” incorporated Canadian imagery through prominent use of the maple leaf (see Figures 4 and 5).

The lyrics of “Boys from Canada,” published during the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, discuss the maple leaf on two separate occasions. Canada is referred to as “The Country of the Maple” when describing the country’s war effort, and the maple leaf is also mentioned in connection with soldiers’ uniforms: “‘Tis the Maple Leaf they wear, / Emblem of their country fair.”⁵⁵ The maple leaf badges worn by Canadian soldiers were an important identifying symbol, marking them as distinct from British and other imperial soldiers. The lyrics reinforce this message by emphasizing Britain’s reliance on the Canadians specifically. Therefore, the maple leaf was increasingly used not only as a symbol for Canada, but also as a symbol for Canada’s significant value within the Empire at war.

While the maple leaf was one symbol used to present a distinctive image of Canadian soldiers during the First World War, many songs composed from 1915 onwards refer to the Canadian soldier as “Johnny Canuck,” a national personification of Canada. Johnny Canuck first appeared in political cartoons in the late nineteenth century as a farmer or lumberjack, and was later characterized as a Canadian soldier. Johnny Canuck represented the frontiersman stereotype that formed part of the popular imagination of Canadian soldiers.⁵⁶ During the war, there was a common notion that the Canadian wilderness created the strong, self-reliant, effective Canadian soldier. However, according to Desmond Morton, by 1 March 1916 only 6.5 per cent of those who enlisted in the Canadian military came from a rural farming background, while 18.5 per cent had worked clerical jobs, and another 64.8 per cent were manual workers.⁵⁷ Thus, the perception of the Canadian soldier, as portrayed through popular songs, differed from reality. Yet the Johnny Canuck image, regardless of its limited basis in reality, contributed to the construction of a distinct Canadian identity in wartime.

Jean Munro Mulloy composed the popular song “Johnnie Canuck’s the Boy” in 1915. The lyrics express a sense of pride in the response of “a hundred thousand Jack Canucks” to the call to war.⁵⁸ The song

⁵⁵ Cook, “Boys from Canada.”

⁵⁶ Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 27.

⁵⁷ Morton, *When Your Number’s Up*, 278.

⁵⁸ Mulloy, “Johnnie Canuck’s the Boy.”

stresses the strength and effectiveness of Canadian soldiers in battle, reassuring the listener that Belgium and France would be saved from the “Kaiser’s hordes.” The song’s emphasis on the value of Canadian soldiers to the Allied war effort was received positively by Canadians. A May 1915 article in the *CMTJ* deemed “Johnnie Canuck’s the Boy” as “The Great Canadian War Song” and the music was praised for its “martial fire and military virility,” “rollicking chorus,” and “manly march of melody.”⁵⁹ The article went on to quote the *Medicine Hat Alberta News* to demonstrate the widespread acceptance of the song: “‘Johnnie Canuck’s the Boy’ promises to become one of the most popular songs of the day. It is being whistled and sung by all classes and ages.”⁶⁰ Although advertisements for popular songs undoubtedly embellished their success to encourage others to purchase the sheet music, the fact that the song was so widely advertised suggests that it was considered popular for its positive representation of Canadian participation in the war.

Other popular songs portrayed the idea that Anglo-Canadians were united over a sense of duty in wartime and emphasised the brave heroes who upheld Canadian values while fighting for the Allies. “Canada, Fall In,” composed in 1915 by Edward W. Miller, encourages an active role in war by anyone fit for fighting and declares that “Canada must never, never lag.”⁶¹ The lyrics construct a certain wartime standard for Canadians, contributing to the idea of a shared commitment as a nation in the wake of the losses at Ypres. “Boys from Canada” also emphasises Britain’s reliance on the bravery of Canadian soldiers in particular. The second verse provides a clear example of this message:

From ‘cross the channel comes the call to rally to the fray,
For England needs her soldier boys from Canada today;
To fight for right with all their might and willing to obey
Our brave Canadian soldier boys are up and fast away.⁶²

⁵⁹ “The Great Canadian War Song,” *CMTJ* 15, 12 (May 1915): 50.

⁶⁰ As quoted in: *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Cook, “Boys from Canada.”

Although Canada was ultimately fighting on Britain's behalf, this song portrayed the "Boys from Canada" as especially valuable to the war effort.

The song that, perhaps, best characterized a Canadian national identity is "I Love You, Canada," composed by Morris Manley and Kenneth McInnis in late 1915, marking it clearly as a post-Ypres song. The lyrics feature descriptions of the Canadian landscape and the maple tree, and the song contributes to an overall patriotic sentiment towards Canada. The cover features a colourful map of Canada, establishing the song as a Canadian tune with this recognizable image (see Figure 6). The song was very successful, and was ideal for sing-alongs, as the melody is simple and within range for the average person to sing. It is written from the perspective of a soldier thinking about everything he loves about home:

I love your hills and valleys and your stately Maple tree,
I love all your dear people tho' far away I roam,
When I hear them speak of Canada,
I long for Home Sweet Home.⁶³

The song was unique for its time because there is a complete absence of British and imperial symbols, with the focus remaining on Canada throughout.

As the war continued, popular songs began to draw from wartime experiences to build national unity. From 1917 onwards, songs were composed with titles that directly referenced battles in which Canadians had fought on the Western Front. The song "The Battle of the Somme" is a march composed by Arthur Wellesley Hughes in 1917.⁶⁴ The cover art features two flags in the foreground, framing a battle scene with Canadian soldiers charging forward in the fight (see Figure 7). The scene depicted is quite realistic, likely owing to its appearance in a later stage of the war, as two soldiers appear to be lying on the ground with their arms outstretched towards their comrades in a call for help. While the song is instrumental,

⁶³ Morris Manley and Kenneth McInnis, "I Love You, Canada" (Toronto: Musgrave Brothers, 1915), sheet music, UWO.

⁶⁴ Arthur Wellesley Hughes, "The Battle of the Somme," (Winnipeg and Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1917), sheet music, UTL, https://archive.org/details/CSM_00969, accessed 30 July 2019.

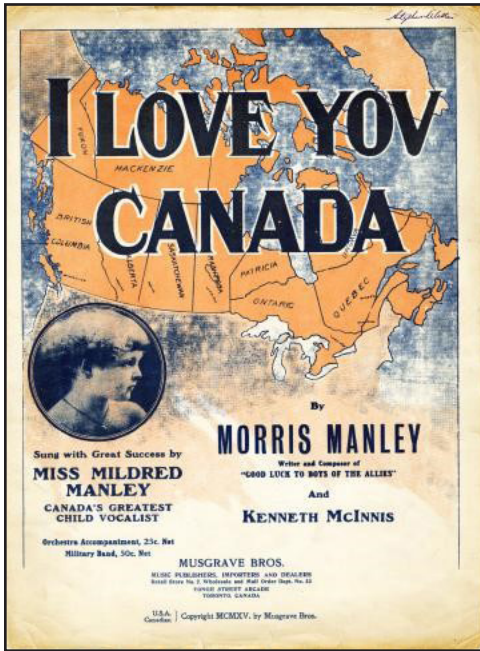


Figure 6: "I Love You, Canada," sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of wartimecanada.ca]



Figure 7: "The Battle of the Somme," sheet music cover image. [Courtesy of University of Toronto Faculty of Music Library]

the music portrays the battle through the frequent use of accents and is marked *fortissimo* throughout.⁶⁵ The song drew attention to Canadian involvement in the Battle of the Somme and contributed to the discourse of Canada coming into its own during the First World War. Popular songs composed later in the war were able to draw from more concrete examples of the Canadian experience overseas, constructing a national identity that was more strongly tied to Canada's involvement in the war.

In the later stages of the war there were also patriotic songs that commended Canada's overall war effort. "The Hearts of the World Love Canada," composed in 1918 by Gordon V. Thompson, makes no mention of Britain or the Empire when explaining that the world was indebted to Canada for the part it played in the war. While the chorus draws from the Canadian imagery that was more common in songs composed in the early years of the war, such as the "prairies and stately trees," the verses make a clear connection to Canada's wartime role. The first verse thanks the "Khaki clad men of Canada" who were away "trenching on fields in Flanders," while the second verse even acknowledges the part that Canadian women played in the war effort. The perception that Canada's involvement in the war was highly regarded around the world created a sense of nationalism in popular songs.

Popular songs featuring Canadian themes were produced throughout the war, as composers and publishers believed these songs would resonate with an audience of Anglo-Canadians. While the particular form of Canadian identity expressed through popular songs remained closely tied to Britain and the Empire, the group of songs examined here expanded on this discourse beginning in 1915 to include distinctly Canadian imagery. As the war continued, composers were able to draw on the war more directly by referencing battles in which Canadians had fought, thereby connecting the country through a common experience. These ideas were accompanied by music that was carefully selected to inspire feelings of patriotism. It is clear that the study of music offers a valuable lens through which to view an emerging national identity in Canada during the First World War.

⁶⁵ *Fortissimo* is a dynamic marking that requires the notes to be played very loudly.

WARTIME PERFORMANCES AND POPULAR SONG RECEPTION

The prominent place of popular songs on Canadian wartime programs reveals the role of public performances in gaining support for the First World War. According to an article in the *CMTJ* from May 1917, “The public seldom takes to a song without first hearing it from the other side of the footlights.”⁶⁶ Throughout the war, popular songs were played as part of the music hall tradition or incorporated into vaudeville performances and were frequently played during local parades and recruiting events.

The vast majority of performances, in Ontario in particular, were concentrated in 1915 and 1916, when the war was well underway and the military was actively recruiting volunteers (conscription was not enacted until late 1917). One commentator in the *CMTJ* drew a connection between patriotic music and recruitment: “Songs of this character doubtless play no small part in influencing the young men of our country to take up arms against a common foe.”⁶⁷ Although this opinion must be approached critically, as it was expressed by an individual who undoubtedly placed a high value on music and spoke to other likeminded Canadians in the music business, the widespread use of music during wartime rallies and concerts indicates that it was an important element of recruitment. The positive reception of music among Anglo-Canadians offers one explanation for why there were widespread efforts by composers and publishers to produce more patriotic music during the war.

A central feature of recruitment rallies, concerts, and parades was the regimental band, including brass and pipe bands. These bands had a long tradition in Canada, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century with their introduction from Britain. Many Canadian military bands maintained their British traditions through to the twentieth century while also adapting their performances to fulfill the changing needs of their audiences in different periods.⁶⁸ During the First World War, military bands were used to raise the morale of soldiers overseas, and they also played music in communities across Canada to gather

⁶⁶ “Putting Over Popular Songs,” *CMTJ*, 76.

⁶⁷ “A New Song by the Authors of ‘We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall,’” *CMTJ*, 73.

⁶⁸ See Lucy Alaimo, “Musical Performance in the Canadian Military: A Preliminary Analysis of an Institution,” Unpublished MA Thesis (Carleton University, 2011) and Jack Kopstein and Ian Pearson, *The Heritage of Canadian Military Music* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2002).

support and recruit soldiers. In Ontario, most performances by regimental bands were in locations within their recruiting catchment area, but some requested to travel across the province and other regions of Canada to gather recruits elsewhere.⁶⁹ Newspaper coverage of these performances indicates that their band programs were fairly standard, consisting mainly of national anthems. However, in some instances popular songs arranged for a band were also included on the program. For example, performances at the Canadian National Exhibition were reported to include “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” in 1915 and “We’ll Never Let the Old Flag Fall” in 1916.⁷⁰

The articles also provide some indication of the reception of music played by regimental bands through their comments on the audiences’ reactions to their performances. On at least two occasions, the *Newmarket Era* praised the local battalion bands for their inspiring performances that contributed to the lasting excitement throughout the recruiting meetings. In September 1916, the 220th Battalion brass and bugle bands played a program of music and it was noted that “favorable comments were made on the splendid showing of each.”⁷¹ An article in the Port Arthur *News-Chronicle* from 11 August 1915 makes an explicit connection between a band’s performance and the enlistment of local men:

The band of the Fifty-Second Battalion is proving very effective as a recruiting medium. It has during the past few days helped to bring in a large number of recruits. On one day alone after the band had been parading the streets, sixteen men enlisted...⁷²

Although the titles of songs performed by the band are not included in the article, it is significant that the successes of recruitment in Port Arthur were attributed, at least in part, to the Battalion band. The overall atmosphere created by regimental bands through their

⁶⁹ For example, see “Transportation for Band of 160th Battalion C.E.F. Re Recruiting,” 19 Feb. 1916, File HQ 683-262-1, Vol. 1581, Department of National Defence RG24, LAC and Telegraph from Officer Commanding 2nd Division to Militia Headquarters, 7 Dec. 1915, File HQ 683-158-20, Vol. 1556, RG24, LAC.

⁷⁰ “Popular Patriotic Song Impressed Upon Thousands of Exhibition Visitors,” *CMTJ* 16, 4 (Sept. 1915): 45 and “Patriotic Tattoo at the Exhibition Grounds,” *The Globe*, 27 Sept. 1915, 6.

⁷¹ “The 220th Battalion,” *Newmarket Era*, 1 Sept. 1916, 2.

⁷² “Battalion Band Proves to Be Good Recruiting Magnet,” *News-Chronicle*, 11 Aug. 1915, 2.

playing of patriotic music was often cited as a mark of success with regards to gathering recruits and support for the war effort.

Some of the most well attended wartime concerts featured other local performers and musicians. An article in the *Northern Advance* on 30 March 1916 explained that a “standing room only” sign was displayed outside of the Barrie Opera House about an hour before the concert began. “The Theatre was packed to its utmost capacity,” noted the article, “with a thoroughly appreciative audience [that] gave the performers liberal applause, for every number an encore being demanded.”⁷³ The concert featured Miss Violet Dunn, a ten-year-old child from Toronto, who opened with a performance of the patriotic song “The Empire Flag.” If the description in the newspaper is accurate and the audience did, indeed, applaud and demand an encore, the imperial messages in the song performed by Miss Dunn resonated with the local audience.

The majority of wartime performances by popular singers were concentrated in larger city centres, especially Toronto. One of the most well-known performers of popular songs was a young girl, Mildred Manley, who was described in newspaper articles as “Canada’s Greatest Child Vocalist.”⁷⁴ Manley often performed music composed by her father, Morris Manley, around Toronto at recruitment rallies, and as part of vaudeville programs at prominent locations such as Massey Hall and the Royal Alexandra Theatre. The success of “Good Luck to the Boys of the Allies” was attributed to Manley’s frequent performance of the song.⁷⁵ According to many newspaper articles from the time, Manley’s performances were well received by her audiences, suggesting that they approved not only of her singing but also the messages portrayed in her father’s popular songs.⁷⁶

Throughout the war, public performances of popular songs served to inspire support for the First World War while improving sheet music and record sales. Regimental bands and other performers were increasingly relied upon to select songs with patriotic messages they believed would resonate with their audiences and encourage

⁷³ “Crowded Theatre for Battalion Concert,” *Northern Advance*, 30 Mar. 1916, 1.

⁷⁴ See “Splendid Program at Hippodrome,” *The Globe*, 31 Dec. 1915, 13 and “Miss Mildred Manley at Loew’s Winter Garden,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 23 Mar. 1916, 2.

⁷⁵ “Miss Mildred Manley,” 2.

⁷⁶ See “War Pictures at Loew’s Young Street Theatre,” *The Globe*, 16 Nov. 1915, 6; “Star Theatre Meeting,” *The Globe*, 27 Dec. 1915, 6; “Splendid Program,” 13; “Miss Mildred Manley,” 2.

enlistment. Therefore, music played a large part in the everyday lives of many Anglo-Canadians in wartime.

CONCLUSION

The words of J.W. Wallace that introduced this paper now find their meaning in light of a detailed study of wartime music in Canada. Popular songs were among those played for marching soldiers “swinging down our streets.”⁷⁷ They were performed during recruitment rallies, local concerts, church services, and on “every farm, every factory.” Perhaps the most widespread use of popular songs throughout the war was within the home. Composers produced songs on different themes that featured various forms of musical accompaniment to appeal to such an array of purposes during the war. Music, then, formed a significant part of wartime experiences, not only for the soldiers fighting overseas, but also for Anglo-Canadians on the home front. Through his declaration that music was “a national necessity” in wartime, Wallace unwittingly justified the importance of studying music as a way to understand wartime Canada.⁷⁸

Popular songs featuring war themes reflected the changing attitudes of Anglo-Canadians on the home front between 1914 and 1918. Throughout the First World War, composers and publishers created songs that appealed to Anglo-Canadians for different purposes depending on the stage of the war. The lyrics, music, and cover art of popular songs represented the messages that those in the music business believed would be met with success among Anglo-Canadians, not only with sheet music and record sales but also through attendances at live performances. In the early years of the war, popular songs were mainly composed on patriotic themes that encouraged support for Britain and the Empire at war. The imperial imagery of the lyrics and cover art was accompanied by martial music, establishing these songs as useful recruiting tools. Songs that promoted an allegiance to Britain and the Empire existed alongside those that expressed Canadian nationalism. As Canada’s involvement in the war continued, composers and publishers recognised the role that Canadian themes set to martial music could play in encouraging

⁷⁷ Wallace, 71.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

enlistment and support for the war effort. Thus, popular songs increasingly featured national symbols as an expression of Canada's growing sense of identity in wartime.

It is through the study of wartime popular discourse, as revealed through songs, that attitudes on the home front are uncovered. Music is not only a valuable source for studying the culture that emerged in the trenches, but it also offers a lens through which to consider how Canadians at home viewed the war overseas. Anglo-Canadian popular songs on the home front were also the songs of war.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sara Karn is a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. Her research explores experiential learning, Canadian youth, and the social memory of the First World War. This article is based on her MA research at Wilfrid Laurier University that examined Anglo-Canadian popular songs of the First World War.

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