

Prolegomena for the study of

## **Winnipeg's Legacy of Ukrainian Music: A Tentative Guide to Selected Sources of Information**

### **Introductory Note**

The evolution of Ukrainian music in Canada is inextricably linked to Winnipeg and its unique version of the country's Ukrainian experience. This multi-faceted phenomenon took root over a century ago when many hundreds of Ukrainian immigrants were pouring off trains in downtown Winnipeg. Today, of course, Ukrainian musical activity in Winnipeg continues to thrive in a variety of settings throughout the City. Often driven by ideological sentiments, it remains largely segregated from other musics in Winnipeg. At the same time, however, Ukrainian music has also become an important part of the City's general musical landscape. To capture and analyze this story in all its dimensions is a formidable task that awaits the dedication of future scholars. This report, a preliminary to such endeavours, is less ambitious. A random selection of recent findings, it seeks only to draw attention to materials that relate (directly or indirectly) to this particular area of cultural activity; and, hopefully, it will serve to advance the study of this fascinating aspect of Canada's rich Ukrainian heritage.

### **SOME PUBLISHED MATERIALS**

(in chronological order)

#### **1973**

**William Kurelek**, *Someone with Me* (first unabridged edition 1973. This autobiography by a famed Canadian artist of Ukrainian descent includes many references to music making in Winnipeg where Kurelek spent his early school years. Unfortunately, the book has no index; however, the following pages are of interest: 23-25, 28, 56, 66-7, 90 (formal music lessons not considered necessary), 91, 97, 99, 152-3, 155, 162, 198, 201, and 218.

#### **1951**

**Roy Maley**, "Music – Heritage of Ukraine: Centre of Culture Founded in City" in *The Winnipeg Tribune*, September 6, 1951, p.12.

This report by the Tribune's music editor was meant to salute the 60th Jubilee of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. It provides a "who's who" in Winnipeg's Ukrainian music scene at the time and notes that, among other things, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's personnel included eighteen Ukrainians. In this latter regard, the article shows that many Ukrainian Winnipeggers managed to break away from the limitations of a ghettoized culture of Ukrainian music-making -- often to enter the potentially lucrative entertainment industry.

#### **1994**

The article listed below, written by **Claudette Berthiaume-Zavada**, is possibly the best work of its kind, and illustrates the work of a trained, professional, and knowledgeable ethnomusicologist. This micro-study of "Ukrainian Musical life in Montreal" offers a wealth of suggestive methodological approaches that are applicable to the study of

Ukrainian musical activity in other centres – like Winnipeg. This piece is strongly synchronic in orientation and covers a period of about fifteen years starting with the 1970s and ending with the 1990s. “What is it about the Ukrainian musical production in Montreal that distinguishes it from that of other Canadian cities where Ukrainians have settled?” To answer this question the author describes “the various modes in which the Ukrainian musical tradition is expressed in Montreal [...] in order to set out the characteristics of Ukrainian musical life in Montreal”; she explores “how Ukrainian music in Montreal is made and shared and also the framework in which the various modes of cultural expression evolve.” Most crucial is her concept of a “Canadian Ukrainian musical panorama” which is defined as “that Ukrainian music which could not have sprung from any place other than Canada and which is thus different from the music in Ukraine and how it is interpreted”. Strongly quantitative in orientation, the analysis concludes that 53 hours a week is “the collective temporal [Ukrainian] musical space” insofar as Montreal’s Ukrainian musical panorama is concerned.

Claudette Berthiaume-Zavada, “Ukrainian Musical Life in Montreal: Special Characteristics” in *The Ukrainian Experience in Quebec*, a collection of articles edited by Alexander Biega and Myroslaw Diakiwsky (Toronto: Basilian Press, 1994), pp. 173-291, includes several b/w foto-illustrations, a chart, bibliography, discography, and a note about the author. (This is an English translation [by Daniel S.Drapeau] of the original French version, “La Vie Musicale Ukrainienne [etc.]” published in *La Vie des Ukrainians du Quebec*, pp. 181-203, 303-306 (other publication details are the same as for the English translation).

Introduction -- Music as a Delineator of Identity -- Musically-Pertinent Demographic Considerations -- Ukrainians in Quebec: Demography and Context -- Ukrainian Musical Life in Montreal – Ukrainian Musical Networks in Montreal: Some Statistics – Churches – Saturday Schools – Organizations – Choirs – Traditional Dance Groups and Schools – The Ukrainian Musical Scene in Montreal – Professional Musicians – Media (Radio, Television) – Musical Production and Publishing – Distinctive and Favored Modes of Expression – Tentative explanations – Conclusion.

### **1999**

**Roman Yereniuk**, “New chamber ensemble in Winnipeg dedicated to Ukrainian music,” in *The Ukrainian Weekly* (U.S.A.), March 21, 1999. This article underlines the continuing importance of choral singing as a significant aspect of Winnipeg’s Ukrainian music history.

### **2006**

Rudimentary forms of music are always a factor in everyday life. Recollections and personal narratives often testify to their importance.

Eg. no. 1

“At about four o’clock Grandpa would take a big cow-bell he had hanging in the barn and ring it real loud to let everyone know it was time to quit [picking berries] and return to home base. In those days no one had watches with them.” In Sonja Pawliw, “The Social

Side of Saskatoons: There's more to it than picking berries", Nasha Doroha, City, summer 2006, p.34.

Eg. no. 2

... "The Prosvita club on Pritchard Avenue saw around 60 Ukrainian fans gather to watch their [soccer] team [...] the fans clap in unison at key moments in play, starting slow and ending fast. They also now chant together, and after winning yesterday in a shoot-out and emanating deafening roars, they stood together and sang their national anthem." From Sean Moore, "World Cup Celebrations in City: Italian, Ukrainian fans rejoice", *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 27, 2006, p.B3

## **2006**

**Athanasius McVay (chief editor) June Dutka (researcher and writer)** *St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church/ Celebrating 100 Years – Together for Tomorrow* (Winnipeg, 2006). Especially chapters on "The Bells" (p.116-117), "Cantors" (pp.158-159) and "Choir" (pp.170-186).

This commemorative volume, illustrated with many photographs, is a reminder that Ukrainian music-making within a religious context often includes bells, rattles, and chimes. The book also draws attention to the parish as a hotbed of secular music activity including a brass band, concertizing, performances for the public media (radio and television) and the making of audio recordings.

Excerpt:

Used to call the faithful to divine service, "the three bells [...] were the first bells purchased by a Ukrainian Catholic church in Canada, and have been the unifying spirit of the parish throughout both joyous and solemn occasions" (p.136). Since 1967 "the bells are controlled automatically from inside the church to either chime or peal by an electronic apparatus" (p.117).

## **2006**

**Laurie Mustard**, "Polkas and Perogies [...] Ukrainian Woodstock," *Sun* (Winnipeg daily newspaper), June 22, 2006. This article underlines the vibrancy of Ukrainian country music in Winnipeg, the centre of this phenomenon. In this regard, see also Bernice Pontanilla's "Teens tout Ukrainian folk music with first CD" in *The Lance* (May 11, 2006), p.38).

### **ARCHIVAL RESOURCES**

Winnipeg has two institutions with important archival collections relating to Ukrainian music-making in Winnipeg: firstly, the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre ("Oseredok") with its papers of major figures like O.Koshetz, P.Macenko, E.Turula, C.Semchyshyn, and others; second, the University of Manitoba Dafoe Library's "Archives of the Ukrainian Canadian Experience" which houses the papers of W.P.Klymkliw and others. Elsewhere, the University of Alberta's Ukrainian Folklore Centre in Edmonton is also an important archival resource for material linked to Winnipeg's Ukrainian music history. These three archival repositories have internet sites that often include relevant archival finding aids. In addition, the University of Manitoba's Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Studies has an audio archive that consists largely of Ukrainian music recorded in Winnipeg and / or by Winnipegers of Ukrainian descent.

### **Some other considerations**

In *Manitoba History* (issue for October 2005) **Vlad Simosko** notes Winnipeg's multi-faceted music scene which he describes as "this exceedingly rich environment". In this connection, it is important to look for comparative insights by delving into the musics of the City's other ethno-cultural communities. Not long ago, for example, a large, well-illustrated book was published documenting a century of Jewish music making in Winnipeg. With regard to related variables elsewhere, one should consult superior studies like Richard Stites's *Serfdom, Society and the Arts in Imperial Russia: the Pleasure and the Power* (Yale University Press, 2005) – especially "Part II. Music of the Spheres", pp.53-126.

A second factor to consider is the inextricable link between Ukrainian dance and music. In this regard, the Winnipeg careers of dance figures like V.Avramenko (recently researched O.Martynowych and I.Balan) have underlined the significance of this connection. Similarly, the overlapping of music with all kinds of stage activity is well documented by Petro Kravchuk in his *Nasha tsena [=Our Stage]* (Toronto, 1981); an English translation of this work was published as *Our Stage*.

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