

# The Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition: The First Ongoing Multicultural Festival in Canada

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## Two Book Stores and a Discovery

Browsing in a used book store one day, I saw a title that I thought must be a mistake: *Folk Festivals and the Foreign Community*. I looked closer, paid the three dollars and left the store with a song in my heart. By golly, I held in my hands a manual on how to assimilate immigrants by organizing “folk” festivals celebrating their culture. I knew of the phenomena but I had never seen hard evidence that there was a codified approach. *Folk Festivals and the Foreign Community* was written by Dorothy Spicer of the Department for Work with Foreign Born Women of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). It was published by the Women’s Press in 1923. It is the only manual on organizing a folk festival I have seen, although I believe there are others of a similar vintage. It is not a book you can find easily, so I would like to quote the introduction by Edward A. Steiner. It is a classic exposition of how many approached, and still approach, cultural representations of “the Other”:

The ear of a race is strangely attuned to some particular note. Every drop of blood runs to it and every nerve dances with it. The squealing of the bagpipe arouses atavistic memories and brings back heath and heather – thatch and scone. The Gypsies’ fiddle lures the last penny out of the Magyar’s pocket and brings to his drab mill town in Pennsylvania memories of the Czardas and the Puszta... A tremulous, high tenor note visions the sky of Italy to the millions who will never see it again. A deep wailing cadence like that which comes from the surge of suffering gives the Jew that sense of joy which is akin to pain. All these notes must be woven into the gladness of the new Race which is being born here in America out of many race strains and divergent cultures.

These race strains and divergent cultures find their finest expressions in the various festivals which in the Old World bring colourful joy into the hard, everyday life of toiling folk. The aesthetic sense is a great and unsatisfied hunger in the hearts of most of our immigrant peoples; to help them satisfy it, to rescue it when the clatter and crash around them begins to make them callous, is a great and useful and patriotic task. It means the preservation of our great cultural resources.

For this reason I welcome Miss Spicer’s book and commend it to all those who are trying to find a key to the heart of the foreigner and who wish to help make accord in our discordant racial conglomerate. The author has been wise in the selection of her material, clear and concise in the direction she gives for production, and inspiring in the good and gracious spirit which permeates the book.

The American genius for organization is needed to restore and preserve the great cultural values which have been brought here, and to make possible the living together of these people who once were aliens and enemies and have to be made into citizens and friends.<sup>1</sup>

The project of making citizens and friends out of those who “once were aliens” and Ms. Spicer’s assertion in her book that: “There is no more certain method of approach to the heart of the foreigner with whom the community worker comes in touch than through the best the foreigner has to give – through his festivals and songs, his art and handicrafts, his folklore and traditions”<sup>2</sup> is a concept shared by other event organizers of the time. John Murray Gibbon is the most notable of these, having pioneered multi-ethnic folk festivals in Canada in the 1920s and ’30s. He also wrote *The Canadian Mosaic*, based on a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio series, and a template for what would be called multiculturalism. But a lesser-known proponent of these ideals was Mrs. John T. McCay. McCay (whose first name was Nellie) organized the Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, a series of events that ran from 1933 into the 1980s. It was while browsing in another book store that I came across a small collection of programs from the Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festivals in the 1930s and ’40s. It struck me that these were the manifestation of the approach of the YWCA, seen through the eyes of Vancouver. Between my own collection and those in the Vancouver Public Archives I have had access to the programs for six of the first ten festivals between 1933 and 1943. The following essay examines the ideology underpinning these events, and its relationship to organizers and programming.

## The Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festivals

Gibbon's Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) festivals, heralded as the pioneering folk festivals in Canada, included only one in Vancouver, The Sea Music Festival in January of 1929. It moved to Victoria the following year and that, as far as Vancouver and Gibbon were concerned, was that. Whether the inspiration for the Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, as the first one was called, came from Gibbon's CPR festivals or from somewhere else is not clear. What is known is that in September 1933, the first festival was held at the Hotel Georgia. By 1942, the Canadian Folk Society was founded and was the organizer for subsequent Vancouver festivals, with the name changing to Folkfest sometime in the early seventies.

The programs reveal little about Mrs. McCay, the festival's founder, although a prominent ad in festival programs reveals that Mr. John T. McCay was the manager for British Columbia of the Dominion Life Assurance company.<sup>3</sup> However, a small amount of biographical information can be found in a 1943 publication.

In *The Ports of British Columbia*, published in 1943, Agnes Rothery wrote:

Mrs. McCay came from the prairies. She was the daughter of a farmer and had long pondered why people who were willing to send money to foreign countries to teach people conduct and morals should, as soon as those people came to live in their midst, be unwilling to associate with them.

She found that Vancouverites wanted segregation in the public schools. She found that Chinese girls were not allowed to train as nurses in the hospitals. She found that even after foreigners got their papers and legal rights they remained, socially, foreigners and were so designated. She found that even the third and fourth generations were registered in the nationality of their foreign-born progenitors. She found that she herself had no existence, technically speaking, as a Canadian; that she was merely "a British subject resident in Canada."

Mrs. McCay had already become friends with many foreigners in Vancouver before she definitely enlisted the leaders of 29 different national groups... The last people to join were the English. They offered no distinctive handicraft. A little self-consciously they put on a Morris dance. But finally, as the festival gathered prestige, even the English succumbed. A group of them got into Elizabethan costumes and sang madrigals.<sup>4</sup>

The early Vancouver festivals stand out for the presentation of Asian art and artists during a time when racial prejudice in Vancouver was a serious

affair. Their presentation of First Nations material was equally rare. They are worth looking at as forerunners of dozens of multicultural celebrations in other cities that became important components of Canadian cultural life decades later. These early festivals are both visionary and representative of the ideas of their time. A consideration of the board members and organizers suggests that they were projects of what can only be called the ruling class, celebrating folk culture in the best romantic nationalist tradition: the proverbial "happy, singing, dancing peasants". There is little representation of political conflict in the programming. For example, the fact that the early festivals took place in the depth of the Depression is nowhere even mentioned. Even World War Two would merit only an oblique reference in 1943!<sup>5</sup> Occasionally, unpleasant hints of the "real world" found their way in: the Italian program in 1937 began with a performance of "Giovanezza"<sup>6</sup> (the Fascist anthem), but most of the audience would not have known its significance. Spain was represented throughout 1936-39 (the years of the Civil War) without a mention of the conflict that was tearing it apart. There was obviously a determination to avoid controversy while concentrating on what were perceived as eternal and enduring values; for instance, in 1937, the "Spanish" presented "Fado Blanquita, depicting a flirtatious fishermaid. In this dance finger cymbals are used."<sup>7</sup> It was danced by "Miss Elsie Baker". Given that the "vice consul for Spain", listed in the program for that year was Mr. P.F. Bernard, one wonders which Spanish government was represented and whether there were any Spaniards at all involved. "Real" Italians were very much involved, including Dr. Giuseppe Brancucci, vice-consul and patron of the festival.<sup>8</sup>

## Ideology and Curation

The negation of any comment on local or international conflict came to be a hallmark of many of these events. Much of the programming merits the acerbic criticism made by the German revolutionary composer Hanns Eisler in the '30s of "fake" folk music:

Then these "nature moods", these false folk songs, in short, kitsch, bad music and false words ... there are two sorts of folk songs, the genuine and the false. The genuine folk song originated in earlier centuries from the people themselves. The false folk song is the product of a corrupt and sordid entertainment industry ... Too little is known among working class singers about the way bourgeois research workers handed these songs down to them. In the most important collection of folk songs (in Germany) ... the publisher informs us in his forward that he cut out all politically unsuita-

ble and all morally obnoxious songs. This means nothing less than that the most valuable folk songs are unknown to the broad mass of the working class.<sup>9</sup>

This is why events organized by the “folk” themselves, especially by organizations committed to societal change and influenced by the same left-wing ideas Eisler had, were often more “real” in their representation of the complex aspects of national identity and immigrant life in Canada. These ideas, and the songs about them, were available in Vancouver while McCay’s festivals took place, but rather than at the Hotel Georgia, they were to be found in the Ukrainian, Finnish, and other “ethnic” halls east of downtown.

It is worth remembering that these festivals took place during a period when the class struggle in Vancouver was intense. For instance, the Battle of Ballantyne Pier, the On To Ottawa Trek, and the confrontation at the Carnegie library, are all events that loomed large in 1935. There is not a shred of evidence of them in the festival program. Whether this was entirely the design of the organizers or an expression of the desire of the “national groups”, as they were called, to make nice for company, or both, is not known. However, as we examine the list of patrons and other honoured representatives on the festival program masthead, we can guess why the festivals did not delve into the problems of the world at home or abroad. However, if members on the board and organizing committee were taken, with a few exceptions, from the elite, and did not encourage social realism, these festivals did allow some insight into, and an introduction to, a variety of cultures. This was their value, and the programs include a laudable anti-racist stance and internationalism that was rare at the time.

The program for the first festival has no statement of purpose or welcome, but it does have a logo that would continue to be used for at least the next thirty-five years (see Figure 1). It is the top half of a globe with people (all appearing to be men) in ethnic dress holding hands. There is an Aboriginal person (or possibly two), a Dutchman (identified by wooden shoes), a Chinese man, and several others whose features are less discernable. It makes a clear statement of stereotypes and friendship simultaneously. In the introduction to the third festival in 1935, G.M. Weir, provincial Minister of Education, sang the praises of the event and its organizer, Mrs. John T. McCay. After stating that the festival is “a project which the government is proud to commend”,<sup>10</sup> Minister Weir continued:

Education is concerned with everything that will make our national life, and our personal lives, more rich and complete. A Festival of this kind is

therefore of unique educational value ... We are all of us made more tolerant and kindly when we recognize how fellow Canadians of different racial origin and different national history are alike striving to add something of beauty to the complicated pattern of our common life. It is of great importance that all elements of our population should understand that Canadians of the older English-speaking stock look with sympathy upon the cultural contributions which may be made by all the races here now...<sup>11</sup>

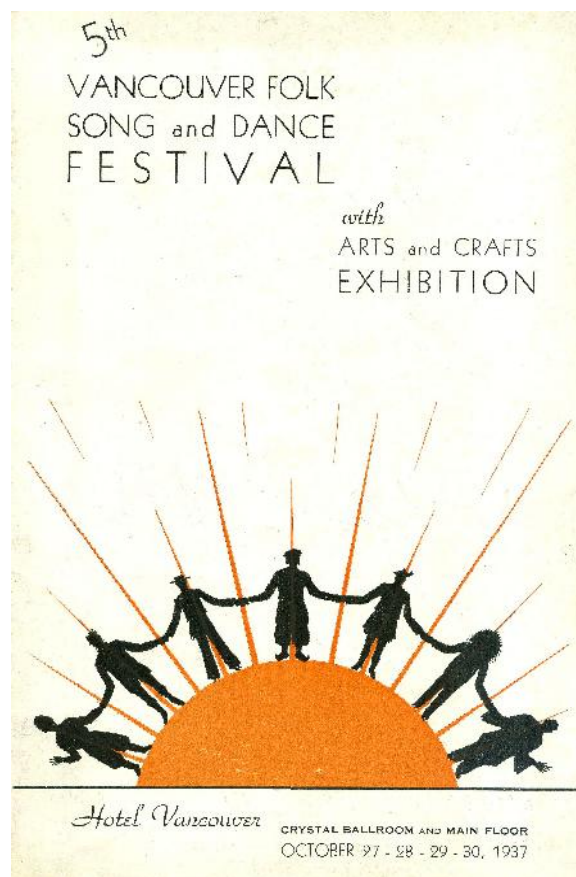


Figure 1: Festival Program

Weir’s introduction is both enlightened and paternalistic. The fact that he could use the term “all races” is significant at a time when Chinese immigration was prohibited, and Aboriginal people were being sent to residential schools. A year later, in 1936, the festival was given a message in Chinese calligraphy by Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu, “one of the great Calligraphers of China”,<sup>12</sup> who was apparently at the festival. A pamphlet issued by the festival explained that the doctor had “left us with a three-fold treasure; a fine specimen of the art of Chinese calligraphy, an original poem, and a gem of philosophic truth exactly

applicable to the Folk-Craft Movement”.<sup>13</sup> The text of Dr. Kiang’s poem is:

Thousands of branches may  
Issue from one tree,  
Yet all streams run  
Toward the sea.<sup>14</sup>

The pamphlet with the poem also has some text. “The nations of the earth are not normally separate and exclusive; they are just *different* in accordance with the higher law. We must see that their variety contributes to the beauty of human society. This, the Folk Festival shows us with startling clearness...”<sup>15</sup>

In a 1936 address to the Conveners and National Groups, Mrs. John T. McCay (writing as Nellie McCay in the program) stated,

... please understand that our hearts are almost too full for words – we know how you have worked to make this fourth Folk-Craft Festival the greatest success ever achieved; we know only the spirit of true international good will could have brought you together in harmony for this great occasion; but above all we know that your labour has been one of love, the one binding power in the world, and let us only add that we are bound to you by that same tie – now and from now – Onward!<sup>16</sup>

“The spirit of true international good will” in 1936 was a message in limited supply! There is no hint of patriotic jingoism here; there is, by implication, a hint, perhaps, of anti-fascism represented by “love” in the style Charlie Chaplin would use a year or two later in *The Great Dictator*.

In the forward to the 1937 program, Robert England<sup>17</sup> continued in the tradition of previous introductions with the following statement: “For many people Canada is ‘the land of their sons rather than the land of their fathers’... We may ask in Canada for the giving by all races of their distinctive colours to the warp and woof of our national fabric.... Indeed one may add that our Dominion must be shared. This is true not only in a cultural sense but also in an economic way.”<sup>18</sup> One wonders what he meant by sharing in the Dominion in the “economic way”.

For the sixth festival in 1938, Eric Hamber, Lieutenant-Governor of BC, wrote good words about how the festival “In the space of a very few years ... has brought together the national, traditional and artistic talents of representatives of more than forty nations of the world ... to meet on the common ground of artistic impulse and work.”<sup>19</sup> Then he cautioned, “all those who contributed to the success of the festival to bear in mind that, no matter they are Canadian born, are naturalized British subjects, or simply residents in our midst, this is Canada, and the duty of all who

reside within its boundaries is to adhere to the principles and laws by which it is governed and thus, as well as by cultural development and freedom in the enjoyment of their folklore, to maintain and protect the freedom and security which is the heritage of all British peoples.”<sup>20</sup>

It is a more sober greeting than the previous ones. But this was indeed the fall of 1938. The Japanese had invaded China. Hitler had annexed Austria and the Czechs had been sold down the river at Munich. “Kristallnacht” was a few weeks away. Mussolini had conquered Ethiopia, and the Spanish Republic was all but lost.

Yet the Alpen Club presented its Bavarian Country Dance and Austrian yodel song,<sup>21</sup> the Japanese Club presented a koto and shakuhachi tune, “Light of Hope”,<sup>22</sup> the Jews under the direction of Rabbi Cass led a chorus in folk songs,<sup>23</sup> and the Chinese presented a program of dances and songs.<sup>24</sup> This international cultural peaceful coexistence would continue right through the war years. Agnes Rothery in *The Ports of British Columbia*, describes the 1941 edition of the festival: “...every single group which had ever been represented sent its delegates – probably the only place on the globe where peoples whose countries were at war came together without enmity...”<sup>25</sup>

In 1943, the program was reduced to its bare bones. The introduction is in the form of Congratulations from the Department of Trade and Industry of BC:

Congratulations to the Vancouver Folk Society for persevering in this praiseworthy activity. In these days of tension and sustained effort, it is gratifying to know that the cultural and human influences are not being overlooked and that care is still being taken to preserve them for the return of happier days. The Vancouver Folk Society had done outstanding service in furnishing a channel through which to express the ideals and aspirations of those who seek to make this world safer and pleasanter.<sup>26</sup>

Remarkably, organizers managed to bring together performers from 24 countries. Perhaps even more remarkable is that these included “Bavaria”, Italy, Ukraine, Hungary, New Zealand, India, Mexico, and Russia, representatives of both Allied and Axis countries.

Having examined and quoted extensively from the introductions to the festivals to outline the approach of the events, I want to look at two other aspects: the makeup of the organization, and the repertoire performed. Both of these underline the approach outlined above, one of a romanticized culture purveyed by a ruling class cadre devoted to creating a liberal society with a multicultural aesthetic.

## The Organizers and Sponsors

The first festival was held over four days, between September 21 and 25, 1933. September 24 was a Sunday, still a day for prayer and reflection and not for secular singing and dancing. The leading patrons of the festival were the mayor of Vancouver and the president of the University of British Columbia.<sup>27</sup> There followed a list of other patrons: Chris Spencer, W.H. Malkin, Miss A.B. Jamieson, Mrs. Edward Mahon, Mrs. Stuart Jamieson, Mrs. Percy Des Brisay, Mrs. E. Lippsett, and Professor Chas. Hill-Tout (President, International Club).<sup>28</sup> Most of the patrons were women, which was common enough in those days; the wives and daughters of the elite often spent their time in activities of a socially progressive nature.

Hanns Eisler both acknowledged and lampooned this phenomenon in a speech to a union choir in 1938: "If there were to be a very peculiar earthquake which would swallow up only wealthy women, then on the following day conductors, singers, pianists and composers would be found on the headline."<sup>29</sup> This was certainly the case in terms of the Vancouver Folk Song Festival.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to know who exactly they were apart from their husbands, which, I suppose, is often the point. Mrs. J. Stuart Jamieson is listed in an ad in the first festival program as the lecturer on "World Events and International Affairs" at the Vancouver Current Events Club, while Miss A. B. Jamieson appears as a patron(ess) of a production of *The Brontes* at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1937.<sup>30</sup>

There were other names to conjure with, many having streets and parks named after them today, such as Hamber, Odium, Westbrook, etc. The wife of Dr. Klinck, the president of UBC and festival patron, appeared as another *Brontes* patron.<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Edward Mahon was quite possibly the wife of a real estate speculator who named Castlegar, BC, and developed North Vancouver, where a large park is named after him. She is mentioned by Dorothy Livesay as a supporter of the artists who founded the West End Community Centre in the late '30s.<sup>32</sup>

W.H. Malkin was a major food wholesaler, with a store on Water St., who was also the mayor of Vancouver from 1929-1932. Malkin Bowl in Stanley Park is named after his wife who died the same year the first folk festival took place. The Des Brisay family (neighbours of the Malkins) were also represented.

Mary Lipsett was likely the wife of Edward Lipsett. They were active in the Vancouver Exhibition Association (VEA), and the creators of Happyland, later Exhibition Park and the Pacific National Exhibi-

tion (PNE). Together they collected and, in 1941, donated a major collection of Pacific Coast Aboriginal Art to the VEA and established the Lipsett Indian Museum as an attraction in the park; it was later transferred to the Vancouver Museum. Chris Spencer of the Spencer Department Store, where crafts were sold, is one of the few men on the list. Another male and student of First Nations culture was Charles Hill-Tout, described as the president of the International Club.<sup>33</sup>

The above-mentioned list of organizers and board members reveals the powers that be in Vancouver civil society of the 1930s. The wife of the insurance company executive, the mayor, an ex-mayor, wholesale food magnates, the university president, the art collector and philanthropist, the businessman/amateur anthropologist, and the wife of a respected professor were not the first group one might think would come together to present the folk culture of diverse ethnic groups. But, in fact, it was absolutely the profile of one side of the folk community in those days. They were enlightened, even if firmly attached to the dominant values of their society. They made things happen. They were proud to serve. They were active in a diverse grouping of clubs, institutes and committees. They are the folks who still populate many boards of important cultural organizations. They were "doers", and they did.

By the third festival in 1935, the patrons grew to include the Lieutenant-Governor and the mayor of Vancouver as well as the various consuls and vice-consuls of the participating countries.<sup>34</sup> The list also includes a corporate who's who (e.g., the president of the Board of Trade, and the publisher of the *Vancouver Sun*), as well as pioneer feminist Nellie McClung. The chairman of the first presentation was General Victor W. Odium<sup>35</sup> (Boer War veteran, newspaper editor, and diplomat; future ambassador to China). He was followed by G.G. McGeer (mayor of Vancouver) and John K. Davis (acting doyen of the consular corps).<sup>36</sup> In other words, this was no marginal event in an obscure ethnic hall; these were the men who owned and ran the country.

As the decade evolved, this would change slightly, with a certain political expansion to the left. In 1936, Dorothy Steeves (a Co-operative Commonwealth Federation member of the provincial legislature) is on the masthead, as is Garfield King (a well-known labour lawyer and head of the Labour Defence), who was linked to the Communist Party and was listed as being from Progressive Arts (a left-wing theatre group).<sup>37</sup> Their presence, combined with the various bourgeois representatives, has a hint of the Popular Front.

## Repertoire

The first festival opened with a welcome by the consul general of the United States. Then, at 8:10 pm on Thursday, September 21, Yugoslavia led off with a program featuring a “Jugoslavian Tamburitza Orchestra in Original Folk Songs and Dances”.<sup>38</sup> The Swedes performed a series of folk dances with untranslated names except for one with the English title of “Dance of the Oxen”.<sup>39</sup> The Afro-American repertoire, aside from the sentimental Stephen Foster numbers, was spirituals: “Swing Low Sweet Chariot,” “Mary Don’t You Weep”, etc.<sup>40</sup> While some of these have a subtext of escape or resistance, it is doubtful this was explained to or sensed by the audience. The Greeks led off the next night with seven “classical” dancers and a dozen “peasant” dancers performing Classical Dances of the Seasons and folk dances with instrumental accompaniment by members of the Calangis family.<sup>41</sup> The Danes went a bit further with a recital of some of Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tales “accompanied by Miss Pauline Olsen in her interpretive dances”;<sup>42</sup> clearly this was a modern take on folk culture. The French Canadians followed with “Le vieille chanson de France et du Canada en tableaux”, featuring such standards as “Sur le pont d’Avignon”, “L’Alouette”, and “À la claire fontaine”, amongst other traditional songs, ending with “O Canada”.<sup>43</sup> “Japanese Girls” performed “Dance of the Seasons” followed by “Sword Dancers”.<sup>44</sup> The Irish did folk dances, including “St. Patrick’s Day” and a jig;<sup>45</sup> the German program featured dances and folk songs with no other information.<sup>46</sup> The English presented three folk dances and the “Red Indians” two songs, “Indian Calling” and “Indian Song”, as well as an “Indian Dance”, with only a little more detail in a description of the first song: “a song the Indians claim to have had from the beginning of the world”.<sup>47</sup> The Norwegians, Scots, Italians, Finns, Russians and Icelanders followed the same approach: folk songs or folk dances with titles were in the various national languages and unexplained. Only the Icelandic program incorporated an “Interpretive talk” in its presentation;<sup>48</sup> what the conveners might have said by way of introduction is not recorded.

It is impossible to be exact about what the performances looked and sounded like. However, given the general approach and descriptions provided in the programs, it appears to be very much in the realm of clichés and stereotypes. It is worth remembering, however, that for at least some of the audience, the very fact that these ethno-cultural communities had their own cultural expressions was a revelation. The goal was to give the impression of the culture of the various groups as polished and generally upbeat. This

can be traced back through Gibbon to Mrs. Spicer’s manual cited above, which recommended that “simplicity and straightforwardness must always be sought and all complicated allegorical allusions must be avoided ... Whatever the subject for the folk festival, the nature element should always be emphasized ... Speaking detracts from the impersonal charm of the production.”<sup>49</sup>

At the third festival in 1935, the programming was identical to that of the first. Clearly, a template had been established. The ticket for the show that year was 25 cents during the day and 50 cents for the evening shows, with a season’s ticket costing \$1.50. Children could attend from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm for a dime.<sup>50</sup> For comparison, in 1935 the average wage was \$1600 a year, a gallon of gas was 10 cents, the average cost for house rent was \$22.00 per month, a loaf of bread was 8 cents and a pound of hamburger was 11 cents.<sup>51</sup> Tickets were neither cheap nor expensive.

As the years went by, the festival unfolded as it had before. Some programs had more informative explanations about the songs and dances, putting them in context; others did not. The 1936 English presentation was particularly well explained,<sup>52</sup> the Austrian/Bavarian less so. Here is the introduction to the Lumbermen’s Dance: “The Austrian lumberjacks are the merriest people you could meet. They know how to handle the axe, the tongue and the fist.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed.

There were roughly thirty crafts displays drawing from an impressive array of sources, from Belgian Congo to Burma, China to a cross-country gathering of Canadian crafts.<sup>54</sup>

The fifth festival, in 1937, featured a children’s program with an “Indian and Ceylon Puppet Show” courtesy of the Empire Tea Bureau.<sup>55</sup> The Chinese and Japanese consuls were both on the masthead, despite the war between them.<sup>56</sup> Progressive Arts was gone, although the Women’s International League, a pro-peace organization, may have covered the left flank, but most of the standard representatives were there.<sup>57</sup> The Board of Trade, the School of Art, the various women’s clubs, the newspapers, the Hudson’s Bay Company and, for the first time, the CBC, were all present.<sup>58</sup>

The last festival I will look at briefly is the eleventh, held in October of 1943. Even here, in the key year of the war, when the tide was beginning to shift in favour of the allies, there was no explicit mention of it. There is only the reference to “these days of tension and sustained effort” and the fact that the festival has been a way of supporting “the ideals and aspirations of those who seek to make this world safer and pleasanter”.<sup>59</sup> This is subtlety carried to an extreme.

The printed program is very modest and the festival was much reduced. There was a show each evening from Tuesday through Saturday.<sup>60</sup> It had moved from the Hotel Vancouver to the Hudson's Bay Company Georgian Room.<sup>61</sup> The crafts program is different: "For the first time the Vancouver public will have an opportunity to view an all-Canadian exhibition of arts and crafts..."<sup>62</sup> Crafts were on sale after the festival at the Folk Craft Shop at Spencer's department store. There were no program notes, aside from which groups performed which evenings. The Chinese and Japanese were no longer featured on the program. There are no Germans, but the Bavarians were still present. The stalwarts of previous years were all represented: England, Scotland, Croatia, Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, India, Poland, French Canada, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Mexico, and more.<sup>63</sup> John Goss, the British singer, and organizer of the Labour Arts Guild, was thanked.<sup>64</sup> He would be an important link to the post-war folk music movement.<sup>65</sup> Tickets had risen from 50 to 60 cents.<sup>66</sup> The last item of note is that now the festival is sponsored by the Canadian Folk Society (Vancouver Branch).<sup>67</sup> The society had been set up the previous year and they clearly were positioning themselves to be a national player in the post-war cultural world.

Nellie McCay left Vancouver, passing on the leadership of the festival to others. She organized the first Toronto Folk Festival in June of 1947.<sup>68</sup> As mentioned above, the Vancouver Festival would continue into the early '80s as FolkFest. It appears to be the first of the annual "multicultural" festivals that would come to populate all major, and many minor, Canadian cities in the '60s and '70s. The approach it pioneered, bringing together "establishment" figures and representatives of ethnic groups, would be a model for many years to come, as would the programming approach of focusing on celebration and an often imaginary folk memory of "the old country".

However, with the creation of various folk song groups in Canada that were influenced by People's Songs in the United States and the folk revival, a new approach began to take hold. Songs from various countries and peoples, sometimes sung by them and sometimes sung by ensembles with a multinational repertoire, began to express a more nuanced and diverse content. Songs of anti-fascist resistance, songs from the Spanish Civil War, peace songs, political songs calling for political and social transformations and national liberation began to be sung and heard. Some of them, "Wimoweh" and "Guantanamo" would become popular hits.

Later, when the term "world music" came into vogue, a more complex, varied, and critical presentation of music and other traditionally based cultural forms would grace the stages of folk festivals of a

new type modeled on the Mariposa Folk Music Festival and later on the Winnipeg, Vancouver, and other festivals. The older model would, if not disappear, at least share space with something more rooted in reality. That said, the Vancouver Folk Song Festival made an important contribution to creating a culture of diversity and inclusiveness in Vancouver. For that it merits a thank you from those who love traditional music, and further study by those who want to understand the development of folk music in Canada.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Edward A. Steiner, "Introduction" in *Folk Festivals and the Foreign Community*, Dorothy Gladys Spicer (New York: The Women's Press, 1923), v-vi.

<sup>2</sup> Spicer, *Folk Festivals*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Program, 1st Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1933, inside cover.

<sup>4</sup> Agnes Rothery, *The Ports of British Columbia* (New York: Doubleday, 1943), as quoted in "September 21, 1933" *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver*, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/chronology1933.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> "In these days of tension and sustained effort...." Congratulatory message from The Department of Trade and Industry, Program, Eleventh Folk Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1943, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1937, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Hanns Eisler, *A Rebel in Music: Selected Writings*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Kahn and Averill Publishers, 2000), 98.

<sup>10</sup> G.M. Weir, "Foreword", Program, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1935, 1.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu's Message to the Fourth Vancouver Folk Festival As Interpreted by Charles Stansfeld-Jones, pamphlet, 1936, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu, "Foreword", Program, 4<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1936, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Kiang Kang-Hu's Message to the Fourth Vancouver Folk Festival As Interpreted by Charles Stansfeld-Jones, pamphlet, 1936, 4.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Listed in the 1935 program as "Director, Western Division, Department of Colonization and Agriculture, Canadian National Railway".

<sup>18</sup> Robert England, "Foreword", Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Hamber, "Foreword", Program, 6<sup>th</sup> Folk Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1938, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Program, 6<sup>th</sup> Folk Festival, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Program, 6<sup>th</sup> Folk Festival, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Program, 6<sup>th</sup> Folk Festival, 21.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Agnes Rothery, *The Ports of British Columbia* (New York: Doubleday, 1943), as quoted in "September 21, 1933" *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver*, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/chronology1933.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Congratulatory message from The Department of Trade and Industry, Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1933, 1.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Eisler, *A Rebel in Music*, 140.

<sup>30</sup> Program, "The Players Club Presents 'The Brontes' by Alfred Sangster," 1937, 1, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/theatre/pc3703.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Dorothy Livesay, *Journey With My Selves: A Memoir, 1909-1963* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), 157.

<sup>33</sup> Hill-Tout is listed in the Encyclopedia as "perhaps Canada's most important amateur anthropologist, largely through his friendships with the Salish people. He became president of the anthropological section of the Royal Society of Canada, to which he was elected in 1913, and a fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain."

<sup>34</sup> Program, Third Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival with Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1935, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Program, Third Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Program, Fourth Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival, 7.

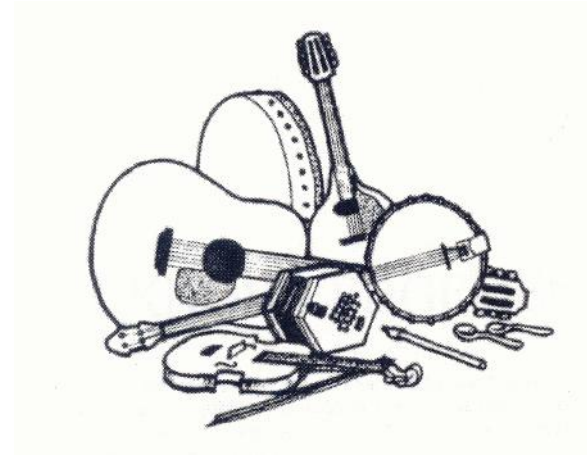
<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival, 9.



- <sup>44</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> Program, First Vancouver Folksong and Dance Festival, 11.
- <sup>47</sup> Spicer, *Folk Festivals*, 25-26.
- <sup>48</sup> Program, Third Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 7.
- <sup>49</sup> “How Much Things Cost in 1935”, The People History, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1935.html>.
- <sup>50</sup> The list of songs and dances to be performed during the English presentation was followed by notes explaining their origins and significance. See Program, 4th Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 23.
- <sup>51</sup> Program, 4th Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 24.
- <sup>52</sup> Program, 4th Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 30-31.
- <sup>53</sup> Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 9.
- <sup>54</sup> Program, 5<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Folk Song and Dance Festival, 3.
- <sup>55</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> Congratulatory message from The Department of Trade and Industry, Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 1-2.
- <sup>59</sup> Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, Front Cover.
- <sup>60</sup> “Exhibition,” Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 3.
- <sup>61</sup> Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 1-2.
- <sup>62</sup> Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, 2.
- <sup>63</sup> “[John] Goss and [Julia] Christianson founded the Labour Arts Guild in July 1944, in order to promote interest in the arts among labour and interest in labour’s struggle among artists. The Labour Progressive Party, many of whose members were on the first executive committee of the guild, hoped that by means of the guild they would be able to enlist artists in ‘active participation in the rising people’s movement.’ ” John Goss was blacklisted as a communist and deported to England in 1950. Scott Watson, “Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure and Painting in the Age of Anxiety”, The Canadian Art Database, Centre for Canadian Contemporary Art, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://www.ccca.ca/c/writing/w/watson/wat013t.html>
- <sup>64</sup> Program, Eleventh Folk Festival, front cover.
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> Program, Folk Festival, 1947, 5, accessed August 4, 2012: <http://archive.org/stream/folkfestivaljune00artguoft#page/n1/mode/2up>



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