

# Linguistic Intimacy: French Texts in the Lives of Franco-Canadian Musicians

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*Suddenly, everything changed in the hall. It wasn't a slow, warm blues tune or a moody, nostalgic personal composition. Her violin didn't sound rich, thin, romantic, or bright. It wasn't any of those. It was harsh, raw, loud, fast ... the music was sort of raucous. Her sisters sang backup while Kelly dominated with lead vocals and fiddle, the sound of which was sharp and penetrating. I couldn't understand the French that she was singing, but her voice, like the sound of her violin, was biting and her syllables flew like daggers. Soon I became aware that the floor beneath my feet was shaking. I looked down and around myself and realized that two men across the aisle from me were stomping their feet and slapping their knees. I thought they would burst out of their seats at any moment and start dancing. I wanted to dance, too, but I was scared.*

Almost a year after her graduating jazz violin recital on 3 May 2011 at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, I interviewed Kelly Lefaive in my kitchen on 8 February 2012. The memory of the last song that she performed during her recital, a French-Canadian traditional folk song called *Yoyo-Verret*, described above, still stood strong in my mind.<sup>1</sup> Her performance of it was my first experience of French-Canadian folk music and demonstrated, through music, part of Kelly's Franco-Canadian identity.<sup>2</sup> I will explore this topic through three case studies: Kelly Lefaive's Franco-Ontarian identity, Claire Bellemare's Québécois identity, and Sophie Dupuis's Franco-New Brunswick identity.

Drawing from the theory of cultural intimacy, coined by Herzfeld as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality",<sup>3</sup> I will investigate each case study through the lens of linguistic intimacy. I proffer a reading of linguistic intimacy as identification with a language instead of a culture (as a language may be shared by several cultures) that provides speakers with an awareness of their linguistic difference and minority when surrounded by another dominant language and whose known difference is a source of shared conflict, defiance, identification, and pride. As cultural intimacy "consists in those alleged national traits ... that offer citizens a sense of defiant pride in the face of a more formal or official morality and sometimes, of official disapproval too",<sup>4</sup> linguistic intimacy offers speakers a sense of defiant pride in the face of another dominant language that threatens assimila-

tion. Arikha suggests that "Poetry is where we come from – verbally. It is the only form of linguistic intimacy."<sup>5</sup> The case studies will reveal that, as music lyrics are poetic in nature, the musical texts are a source of, and outlet for, linguistic intimacy, as they express the performer's and/or composer's attachment to their mother tongue.

Moreover, the musical texts allow each Franco-Canadian to transform her immediate Anglophone surroundings and create a Franco-Canadian musical place. Music is a means through which places can be transformed, social boundaries established, and identities recognized.<sup>6</sup> Because each subject has studied at the University of Toronto, an English university, each has asserted her Franco-Canadian identity in an Anglophone place through performance or composition. Franco-Ontarian Kelly Lefaive celebrated her Franco-Ontarian identity by singing a French-Canadian folk song at her graduating recital. Québécois Claire Bellemare displayed her Francophone identity by singing French art songs and insisting that her recital program be printed in French and English. Franco-New Brunswick Sophie Dupuis demonstrated her Francophone identity by choosing to set French instead of English texts in her compositions. I will show that, although each musician is from a different province and culture, the attachment, pride, and love for French that each possesses enables her to transcend and transform her Anglophone environment through the French texts that she sings or composes, thereby establishing a unique and intimate Franco-Canadian musical place.

## Franco-Ontarian

Born in Barrie, Ontario, Kelly Lefaive grew up in Penetanguishene, a small town one hour north of Barrie with a large francophone population. Her father, a high school music teacher, began teaching Kelly piano when she was 3 years old and orally taught her French-Canadian folksongs throughout her childhood, ensuring that music was a strong element of family life. Kelly credits her father as her greatest musical influence during her formative years.<sup>7</sup> Another important musical influence was her fiddle teacher. Kelly began fiddle lessons at the age of 9 and mixed the music her fiddle teacher taught her with the folk music that she heard at home, around Penetanguishene, and at school. Each year, people from Penetanguishene and other neighbouring Francophone communities attended *Le festival du loup*, a

French cultural festival that takes place in Lafontaine, a small town nearby. It was, and continues to be, the only French cultural festival in the region and features Francophone musicians in daily concerts.

Kelly also attended a French elementary school in Lafontaine that employed music instructors specifically to teach French-Canadian folksongs such as “La Bastringue”.<sup>8</sup> Written in 1930 by the Québécois Madame Édouard Bolduc, this folk reel is about an old man who asks a young girl to dance the “Bastringue”, but is exhausted by the enthusiasm of the mademoiselle, who refuses to stop dancing.<sup>9</sup> The song features dialogue between the male and female vocal parts and not only encourages shared vocal roles of males and females, but also instills the idea that dance is an essential element of traditional folk music, a topic I will address below. In addition to the musical education Kelly received at home, from her fiddle teacher and at *Le festival du loup*, her elementary school education enriched her musical resources and provided opportunities for her to participate in folk music in various circumstances, thus ensuring that she obtained a wealth of folk musical knowledge in her formative years.

Apart from the musical education Kelly received in her hometown, Penetanguishene also nurtured in her a strong sense of pride and identity as a Franco-Ontarian. In 2007, Kelly graduated from the high school *École secondaire le Caron*. Illegally installed as *École de la résistance* in Lafontaine in 1979, it was later renamed and relocated to Penetanguishene. Prior to the installation of the school, Francophone and Anglophone students shared a high school, since the municipal school board refused to create a separate French high school despite the large Francophone population. As a result, exasperated Francophone students hijacked Penetanguishene’s post office, demanded to have their own French school, and illegally founded *École de la résistance* along with Francophone teachers who left the Anglophone high school. Eventually, the provincial government and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice recognized the demand and helped establish the renamed *École secondaire le Caron*, the region’s only French school.<sup>10</sup>

A more recent example of Penetanguishene’s Francophone presence is the single French radio station in town, *Vague FM 88.1*, at which Kelly worked before beginning her studies at the University of Toronto in 2007. This radio station previously aired only French content, but during the time Kelly was employed, decided that 10 to 15 per cent of the content could be in English. Consequently, several Francophone listeners boycotted the radio station, claiming that this was the beginning of assimilation with Anglophones. Although most people in Penetanguishene are bilingual and communicate with Anglo-

phones, there remains a desire and a will to retain French, separate from English, among the Francophone population in Penetanguishene.

Kelly shares in the desire to retain French, although she recognizes her bilingualism (her mother is Anglophone). She says,

We’re surrounded by the English language basically and the fact that we’ve kept up the [French] language even though there are so many Anglophones around, and I’m also Anglophone, I don’t feel like I’m only French ... for a language to survive when you’re with people in another dominant language, it’s easier to lose the language ... I think that’s why I’m proud because I’ve kept it up and I’m happy ... I hope that my children will also speak French, I will make them. [Laughs] I’ll speak to them in French!<sup>11</sup>

Her pride and determination to maintain French is evident as she recognizes the challenge of keeping a minority language alive in a province dominated by Anglophones. She notes that Francophone communities in Ontario are spread out and integrated with Anglophone populations. For this reason, Franco-Ontarians have fashioned a distinct identity and have developed their own variance of French culture. Kelly believes that they are a unique group of people whose separate identity is represented by a Franco-Ontarian flag and anthem, which begins with the lyrics: “*Pour ne plus avoir/ Notre langue dans nos poches/ Je vais chanter/ Je vais chanter,*” and the chorus of which includes the lines, “*Notre place/ Aujourd’hui pour demain/ Notre place/ pour un avenir meilleur!*”<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 1: Franco-Ontarian flag.<sup>13</sup>

Written by Paul Demers and François Dubé, the lyrics of this anthem demonstrate the importance of maintaining the French language, a cause for which the lyricist will sing and with which Franco-Ontarians identify as they strive to maintain French language and culture in Ontario.

At her graduating recital on 3 May 2011, Kelly demonstrated her identification as a proud Franco-Ontarian when she launched into her closing song, *Yoyo-Verret*.<sup>14</sup> A reel, *Yoyo-Verret* is a French-Canadian traditional folk song with a free rhyme scheme, that tells the story of a skeptical Catholic priest who invites three girls who confess to him to

return the next day and drink wine with him. As Kelly says, “Although not all the text and stuff is about being Franco-Ontarian, but creating music in Ontario that is in French, I think, is a celebration of the language in Ontario.”<sup>15</sup> The importance of this folk song is not the content of the text, but the fact that the text is in French. Kelly’s decision not only to perform this French-Canadian piece, but also to make it the closing song of her graduating recital, a significant event and rite in any conservatory- or university-trained musician’s life, demonstrated an identification as a Franco-Ontarian flaunting her roots and making sure they are remembered. Her performance and placement of “Yoyo-Verret” celebrated not only the presence of French in Ontario, but also the Franco-Ontarians who keep the French alive.

Moreover, Kelly was most physically involved during this performance, which exhibited the roles of the body, movement, and dance in French-Canadian traditional folk song. In an email, Kelly said, “Sometimes, I can’t help moving, because a musical rhythm is so strong it makes me feel like dancing. Movement helps me feel the music on a deeper, more organic level.”<sup>16</sup> Kelly’s physical involvement demonstrated the strong relationship between music and dance for her. As my opening vignette relates, the two men who were sitting close to me during Kelly’s performance also had strong physical reactions to this piece and seemed ready to dance. During our interview in February 2012, Kelly said that both men were Franco-Ontarian family friends from Penetanguishene, her hometown, where she was learned French-Canadian folk song and dance. According to Stokes, “Music and dance do encourage people to feel that they are in touch with an essential part of themselves, their emotions and their ‘community.’”<sup>17</sup> The physical involvement of Kelly and the Franco-Ontarian men from Penetanguishene demonstrated a shared community reaction to French-Canadian traditional folk song. Through her performance, Kelly transcended her immediate Anglophone surroundings of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music recital hall and constructed a Franco-Ontarian musical place dominated by the French lyrics of *Yoyo-Verret*, her impassioned performance, and the shared physical reaction from the Franco-Ontarians in the audience.

Kelly Lefave’s Franco-Ontarian identity is fundamentally attached to the French language. Her performance of *Yoyo-Verret* at her graduating recital evinced an unabashed, proud Franco-Ontarian who, having grown up in the Franco-Ontarian culture of Penetanguishene, used music to project her culture, her roots, and her language. As Kelly said before beginning her rendition of *Yoyo-Verret*, “I am French-Canadian and that’s kind of my root, so I’d like to finish off with this tune.”<sup>18</sup> By closing her

graduating recital with a French-Canadian traditional folk song, Kelly demonstrated her identification as a unique Franco-Ontarian who, like the Franco-Ontarians in her hometown, asserted her identity amongst a crowd of Anglophones and fulfilled the opening lines of the Franco-Ontarian anthem: “*Pour ne plus avoir/ Notre langue dans nos poches/ Je vais chanter/Je vais chanter.*”<sup>19</sup> Kelly concluded her graduating recital, and thus her university career, in French and showed that she will sing to always have the French language; she will sing to always carry her linguistic identity close to her; and she will sing to always ensure a place in Ontario for French. She noted, “There’s a real pride in Ontario of being Francophone in Ontario ... I’m proud to be French from Ontario.”<sup>20</sup>

### Québécois

My second case study shares Kelly’s Francophone pride and determination to keep her mother tongue. Claire Bellemare is a 23-year-old Québécoise currently studying classical voice performance at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music. Born and raised in Québec City, she retains her Québécois identity while in a predominantly Anglophone environment through various habits such as listening to Québécois popular music; reading books in French, even if they were originally published in English; writing journals in French “because my deepest emotions express better in my mother tongue”; translating all her voice repertoire into French; translating word for word her favourite French expressions into English, regardless if they make sense; listening to French radio shows; and buying Québécois products such as *La maison d’orphée* olive oil, which is produced in her hometown.<sup>21</sup> Claire states, “Coming here [to Toronto] I realize that I’m always constantly talking about [being Québécois] and making clear that that’s what I am ... I make it clear that I’m different ... it’s important to me ... I always remember who I am.”<sup>22</sup> She believes that being different and being acknowledged for one’s difference is significant in Québécois culture, since the Québécois have always had to present and assert their presence in Canada, and distinguish themselves in order to be respected.

Moreover, Claire views Québécois as a nation, different from the rest of Canada and France. She says,

I do recognize that we [Québécois] are a nation and we’re different and I’m proud of it ... What people don’t see is that, we were someone before Canada happened, and we are still someone. That is not exactly the same than an Anglophone ...

We have our own culture. We are not French. We are Québécois.<sup>23</sup>

Claire distinguishes herself and Québécois not only from other Canadians, but also France's French speakers. She notes that, unlike the French population in Europe, the Québécois have always had to fight to remain in Canada, first against the harsh winters and nature, then against the Natives, English, and Americans. "The thing that you always have to remember is that from the very beginning, people had to fight to stay here ... It's always been a fight *to be*."<sup>24</sup> Claire believes that the Québécois are a separate nation within the country of Canada that have endured continual struggles in order to retain their language, culture, and geographical place; as a result, they have developed a unique culture and mentality, separate from France and the rest of Canada.<sup>25</sup> Through her various habits, Claire presents and asserts her Québécois identity in the predominantly Anglophone city of Toronto.

Many of her favourite popular musicians are from Québec. During our interview, she presented CDs by the hip-hop-influenced group *Misteur Valaire* and the pop/rock groups *Dumas* and *Karkwa*. "Many of my favourite popular musician are Québécois. I listen to a lot of Québécois music. It has a particular sound. More progressive. I love it!"<sup>26</sup> Although she never explains what the "more progressive" sound is, one can hear a distinct musical aesthetic created by the heavy use of electronic instruments, especially synthesizers; high production values; and thick arrangements. Moreover, Claire supports Québécois music because, "That's part of our culture ... it's what we produce."<sup>27</sup> She notes:

[The government] want to keep the city alive and young and ever-changing ... that's kind of part also being a Québécois is like, you can't really stay still otherwise the culture is going to die ... All the music on the pop scene is really encouraged because that's part of our culture, that's to keep it – like, we don't want to just have Coldplay coming home, we want to have people like us.<sup>28</sup>

Claire's musical preferences are influenced by her sense of cultural identification and responsibility as a Québécois. By listening to Québécois music, Claire not only continues to support those artists, but she also carries her Québécois culture to Toronto.

When asked if she listens to traditional folk music, Claire laughed and said that she listens to "actual music", that is, contemporary music such as that created by the groups discussed above.<sup>29</sup> Traditional folk music, or "rigodon",<sup>30</sup> as she calls it, was used for dance and entertainment in an era when television, radio, and other contemporary forms of entertainment did not exist. Today in Québec City, it is heard only on New Year's and at the sugar shack.<sup>31</sup>

Taught to children by family members and at summer schools, folk music's purpose is to pass on the French language, tradition, history, culture, and identity. It is not, in her opinion, for popular entertainment.<sup>32</sup>

Although she laughed at the idea of listening to traditional folk music, she does listen to contemporary folk music such as that of Fred Pellerin, whose "*musique folklorique*" differs greatly from the music of *Misteur Valaire*, *Dumas*, and *Karkwa*. Born and raised in Saint-Élie-de-Caxton, Québec, Pellerin is an award-winning Québécois storyteller and folk musician who, in June 2012, was awarded the prestigious *Ordre national du Québec*.<sup>33</sup> His texts, whether in his stories or music, centre on the people, life, and history of his hometown. Of them, Claire says, "I love to hear his stories and listen to the music of the language. It is very expressive and communicates with my emotions."<sup>34</sup> Through his texts, Pellerin connects with other Québécois who identify with the language and history of Saint-Élie-de-Caxton, specifically, and Québec, broadly. For this reason, Pellerin's texts stir Claire's emotions.<sup>35</sup> Claire's varied musical tastes demonstrate an identification not with a particular musical style, but with the Québécois identity that is communicated through the lyrics of these differing artists who represent present-day Québec.

However, the music that Claire performs demonstrates that her intimacy with French texts extends beyond Québec to include Francophone musicians at large. She notes, "The way I've been taught is more in that French culture, so the way I perceive or I see music has a more French oriented accent ... I've seen people in my class sing music that I sing and it's more mathematical whereas I really feel the *French* under it."<sup>36</sup> She continues to describe French music as "crunchy, your heart is bleeding".<sup>37</sup> Claire extends her understanding of French music to music such as that of Debussy, whom she mentioned during the interview. Her connection to French music is due to her Francophone upbringing: "I've studied the French literature when I was in high school and it's more inside me."<sup>38</sup> Although Claire's identity is strongly attached to a national identity as a Québécois, she also possesses a linguistic identity as a Francophone. Her knowledge of the French language strengthens her musicianship, allowing her to connect more deeply with the French texts that she sings.

Claire is a proud, defiant, and self-aware Francophone whose linguistic intimacy allows her to grasp French music better than her Anglophone classmates. She notes, "When I sing French art songs, mine are better than the other [singers]."<sup>39</sup> She believes her musical understanding of French works is better than her Anglophone peers' because, "My approach, not academically, but emotionally ... is different."<sup>40</sup>

Claire also creates a French performance space when singing French music. Social boundaries as a Québécoise are broken, as she participates not as a Québécoise singing French musical texts, but as a Francophone communicating in her mother tongue the works of other Francophone composers in Québec and abroad. However, notions of difference are established between her and her Anglophone classmates, whose linguistic difference becomes an opposition that encourages Claire to keep her Francophone identity alive. “I don’t want to be – it’s the old story of being assimilated ... I don’t want to forget my roots.”<sup>41</sup> At her third-year vocal recital, Claire ensured that her roots were not forgotten by insisting that her program be printed in both English and French, “because that is who I am and my family will be there.”<sup>42</sup> Claire’s linguistic intimacy with French influences her musical preferences, musical understanding, and musical identity, as it is through French that she communicates her deepest emotions, distinguishes herself from her Anglophone peers, and asserts her language at her first university recital.<sup>43</sup>

### Franco-New Brunswick

Although Kelly and Claire have both displayed a strong sense of cultural identity and pride of the Francophone environments from which they originated, Sophie Dupuis differs in both those regards. Sophie is from the small town Saint-Basile, now a part of Edmunston, New Brunswick. She is currently in her final year of a Masters in Composition at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music. Although she states that people from New Brunswick and the east coast in general have a strong sense of community, she admits to a negligible artistic culture in Saint-Basile:

We don’t have that much of a sense of culture at all. Like, we don’t have fundings for music programs, or very little; there are few, very few music schools; and there are *very few* concerts and shows, arts, and when there are, people are not interested in general because they don’t really think about it.<sup>44</sup>

Sophie credits this dearth of artistic culture to poor music programs in public schools. She says, “We are not educated through school to know about it,” and as a result, “People don’t really ... get it. Like, people do enjoy music, [but] it’s not a common thing ... you just don’t think of it seriously.”<sup>45</sup> Recalling her first music class in high school, when the teacher played Pachelbel’s *Canon in D*, Sophie says a classmate responded, “Oh, it sounds like the songs Dr. Dupuis plays in his clinic!”<sup>46</sup> Her peer related Pachelbel’s piece to the classical music her father plays at his medical clinic. Sophie notes that in order for people

from Saint-Basile to understand music, they must place it in a context such as a movie, festive season, or in this case, the doctor’s office.<sup>47</sup>

There is also an absence of cultural pride and identity in Saint-Basile. She says, “I guess when it comes to celebrate New Brunswick culture, it tends to fall flat ... probably because we’re so close to the border, there’s a lot of blending so there’s a loss of identity.”<sup>48</sup> Located in the north of New Brunswick in between Québec and Maine, Sophie believes that due to the frequent cultural exchanges between its neighbours, Saint-Basile has lost a distinct sense of New Brunswick identity. During our interview, Sophie revealed how this loss has affected the few musical exports of the region, such as the successful Roch Voisine. Also from Saint-Basile, Voisine has made a popular music career in North America and France. In 1994, he won a Juno for Male Vocalist of the Year and in 1997, was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.<sup>49</sup> When Sophie travelled to France on exchange in 2002, she was surprised to see people wearing Roch Voisine pins; she was unaware that he had achieved such popularity internationally. Saint-Basile’s apparent lack of cultural pride resulted in ignorance that Voisine, one of their own, had achieved success.

A second example is popular musician Natasha St-Pier. Born in Riceville, a small town close to Saint-Basile, St-Pier is a musical sensation in Québec and Europe. Making her international musical debut in 2000 on the London stage production of *Notre Dame de Paris*, she became an international sensation when she placed fourth in the 2001 *Eurovision* contest, representing France.<sup>50</sup> Although St-Pier acknowledges her Canadian identity, Sophie says, “She completely denies being from New Brunswick. So, when she talks, she calls herself a Québécois and she calls herself coming from Québec.”<sup>51</sup> Although Sophie and people from her region are disappointed in her denial, Sophie understands: “She had to pretend she was from Québec if she wanted to sell and make money and have people talk about her.”<sup>52</sup> As was seen in Claire, Québécois strongly support their popular musicians, whereas people from Saint-Basile and its surrounding regions do not. Unlike Kelly and Claire, who grew up in cultures that strongly supported the arts and their musical development, Sophie grew up in an environment largely uninterested and uneducated in music.

Of her own music career, Sophie owes in large to her parents’ financial resources and a sibling rivalry with her older sister. Sophie began violin lessons at the age of 4 because of her father’s interest in classical music, and jealousy that her sister, Pascal, had already started lessons.<sup>53</sup> Her father’s and mother’s occupations as doctor and nurse, respectively,

enabled them to pay for private music lessons for Sophie and Pascal and provide them with a music education that they would not receive in public school. Moreover, her parents were able to afford out-of-province university education, which allowed Pascal to register in a joint music and science program at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.<sup>54</sup> When Sophie went to visit her, Pascal's violin teacher asked Sophie to play for him since, impressed by Pascal's abilities, he was curious to see if Sophie was also talented. Sophie's performance impressed him to such an extent that he registered her for an audition at the university (without her permission) and by the following fall, Sophie had enrolled in the same joint music and science program as her sister.

Although originally intending to become a doctor, Sophie chose to concentrate on music and give up science during her university years. She said, "I figured that it would be easier to – if I decided to leave science – to pick it up later than music. And also, again, because of my sister, who told me that I wouldn't do a good job in music. That gives me the final push to take a decision."<sup>55</sup> After choosing music, Sophie specialized in composition. This was not, however, by choice, but by default: in her third year, she failed her performance audition, but had created a composition portfolio which gained her admittance into the specialty. She said,

The fact that I'm here is just a matter of luck from one thing leading to another ... I never thought of composition as an option for a career, at all. I don't think anyone in my hometown is a renowned composer of some sort. That's not a New Brunswick thing either.<sup>56</sup>

She recognizes her fortuitous music career and said of arriving in Toronto, "The most culture shock I had was actually how much culture is taking a big part of [Toronto]. I've never been so excited about music and I actually feel like I do it because I love it so much and it's my passion and I don't find it cheesy saying that anymore."<sup>57</sup>

Of her music, Sophie admits that nothing of Saint-Basile is reflected in her compositions. She says,

I really had to learn music and I took my love of music from somewhere else ... there's nothing from my hometown that appears in my compositions because I didn't learn from there, which is unfortunate ... I really regret that. I wish I had been from that very folk-focused culture.<sup>58</sup>

Earlier in the interview, Sophie said, "[Folk music] is definitely something I missed out on and I guess I'm still catching up on that stuff ... it's just the whole feel that I missed on and I did try to get into it, but it's just not the same because I just don't get it."<sup>59</sup> Sophie wishes she had had the musical upbringing

that Kelly received, surrounded by French-Canadian folk music and culture. She admits that now, in her 20s, it is much more difficult to learn and internalize "the feel" of the characteristics that distinguish folk music from other genres. Of her current compositional style, she says, "It's very tonal. I guess that's how it comes into play, too, my lack of background, because I'm basically catching up on stuff I should have learned years ago and discovering new styles, too,"<sup>60</sup> referring to the advanced tonal and atonal compositional techniques that she was unfamiliar with before starting her Master's degree. Her compositions do not reflect the French-Canadian folk culture embodied in Kelly, but instead reveal a developing composer continually learning new techniques and refining her musical style.

Sophie's Francophone identity, however, is reflected in her compositions in that she prefers to use French instead of English texts. In a piece where she wanted the musicians to whisper, "The English words were just not sufficient to me ... I had to write French sentences for people to say for it to sound the way I wanted it to sound."<sup>61</sup> Moreover, "I prefer the French language over the English so I will tend to get more in touch with French texts when setting poems to music,"<sup>62</sup> reflecting Feld's suggestion that "Song poetry goes beyond pragmatic referential communication because it is explicitly organized by canons of reflectiveness and self-consciousness that are not found in ordinary talk."<sup>63</sup> By setting French texts to music, Sophie connects with a deeper awareness of her Francophone identity that is unexpressed in everyday conversation and that resonates with her need to communicate in her mother tongue.

When asked about the music that she listens to, Sophie revealed that she likes the folk group *Ode à l'Acadie*. Of her favourite song, *Les Aboiteaux*,<sup>64</sup> she says, "The band is really going back to the very original culture and it's very – it's very holy. It's very relatable ... It really hits home when you hit that point of this is where we're from, these are our ancestors. It really connects people in a way."<sup>65</sup> An *aboiteau* was a dike supported with wooden planks that the early Acadian settlers used to drain their fields. The song is about the settlers, their use of *aboiteaux*, and their deportation by the English. Although Sophie does not identify as an Acadian, feeling disconnected from Acadian culture in Saint-Basile, the French text of *Les Aboiteaux* speaks of her mother's Acadian ancestry and awaken a broader sense of her Franco-Canadian identity. As Sophie says after listening to the song, "We were deported and forced to conform and went through tough times, but that was not enough to keep us so proud to be Acadian."<sup>66</sup> The text of *Les Aboiteaux* inspires in Sophie a sense of intimacy with her Acadian identity that supersedes

her lack of Acadian and general French-Canadian culture, and brings to prominence her familial history.

Sophie Dupuis is a Franco-New Brunswick composer whose music does not reflect her cultural identity; her music does, however, reflect her linguistic identity, as it is in French that she communicates her musical ideas and recognizes her Acadian ancestry. “Sound expressions are revealed as embodiments of deeply felt sentiments”, and “Poetic convention [is] the origin of language use specifically marked for reflection and contemplation over loss and abandonment.”<sup>67</sup> Sophie’s music reveals her deep emotional connection to the French language, as she consciously chooses it over other languages to which to set her music. Moreover, the French lyrics of *Les Aboiteaux* cause her to recognize her Franco-Canadian identity as more than simply someone from Saint-Basile, a small town with few cultural resources and a lack of pride and identity, but also as an Acadian whose ancestors were deported and whose culture she has not accessed. Sophie’s intimacy with French texts enables her to transcend her environments, whether in Toronto or Saint-Basile, to create a musical place in which she can take pride and that in Sophie’s own words is “holy ... very holy”.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

Kelly, Claire, and Sophie are three Franco-Canadians who, although different in many regards, share an intimacy with the French language that each uses to transcend and transform her environment to reflect her Franco-Canadian identity. In Kelly, one sees a Franco-Ontarian nurtured in the rich Francophone culture of Penetanguishene. At her recital, Kelly asserted her developed, proud, and unique identity as a Franco-Ontarian by concluding her recital and university career with the French-Canadian folk song *Yoyo-Verret*. In Claire, one sees the self-aware pride of a Québécoise who continually asserts her Francophone identity in her present Anglophone environment of Toronto. Her provincial Québécois identity, however, is superseded when she performs and connects with French texts set in music composed by Francophones beyond the borders of Québec. Lastly, in Sophie, one sees a Franco-New Brunswickian who lacks the cultural upbringing and pride of the former two Francophones, but whose emotional connection with French allows her to express her musical ideas and awaken a broader sense of her Franco-Canadian identity to encompass her Acadian roots. Despite the differences amongst the Franco-Canadians, their linguistic intimacy with French unifies them, as it is through French that they express their history and identity. Stokes suggests that “Music does not then

simply provide a marker in a prestructured social space, but the means by which this space can be transformed.”<sup>69</sup> Through French texts in music, Kelly, Claire, and Sophie transform their Anglophone environments in Toronto to reflect their Franco-Canadian pride, history, intimacy with, and love for French. As Claire says, “We will fight to keep French alive.”<sup>70</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Traditional folk songs are a branch of folk music that Kelly describes as more danceable and typically either a reel (4/4 time) or a jig (6/8 time). The usual instrumentation includes fiddle, guitar, harmonica, jaw-harp, "feet box" (*boîte à pied*), and spoons. *Yoyo-Verret* is a reel. Kelly Lefaive, Interview with Shelley Zhang, February 8, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> French-Canadian does not necessarily specify a person who speaks French, whereas Francophone-Canadian (Franco-Canadian) does. French-Canadian refers more generally to a person with French-Canadian ancestry. For the purpose of this article, Franco-Canadian will be used to specify a person who has French-Canadian ancestry and whose mother tongue is French.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3. For an ethnomusicological reading of cultural intimacy, I draw from Martin Stokes, *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Herzfeld, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Noga Arikha, "Speech After Long Silence: Of Poetry and Consciousness," last modified 2007, <http://www.nogaarikha.com/nogaarikha/page.php?l=en&p=article&c=art&work=3>. Arikha gave this speech at the 2005 Campbell Corner Poetry Prize Reading, Poets' House, New York City.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music," in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Lefaive, Interview, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Madame Édouard Bolduc, "La Bastringue," Starr Records, 1930, 78 r.p.m gramophone record. The lyrics can be found at: The Great Canadian Tunebook, "La Bastringue," last modified May 16, 2012, <http://members.shaw.ca/tunebook/bastring.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> A different version of the song exists where the girl initiates the dance. A humorous video of this version can be found at: National Film Board of Canada, "La Bastringue Madame Bolduc," last modified September 28, 2009, [http://www.nfb.ca/film/bastringue\\_madame\\_bolduc/](http://www.nfb.ca/film/bastringue_madame_bolduc/).

<sup>10</sup> The recount of this event is as Kelly relayed it to me during our interview. For more information, see Université d'Ottawa, Centre de recherché en civilisation canadienne-française, "La présence française en Ontario: 1610, passport pour 2010," last modified March 1, 2004, <http://www.crcf.uottawa.ca/passeport/IV/IVD1c/IVD1c03-1.html>; and Ontario Heritage Trust, "The French presence in Lafontaine," last modified January 2008, <http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/getattachment/Programs/Commemoration/Provincial-Plaque-Program/Plaque-of-the-Month/Lafontaine-ENG.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> Lefaive, Interview, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Demers and François Dubé, "Notre Place," from *Paul Demers*, APCM FS-CD-204, 1990, compact disc. Some sources (mostly English) contest that this is an un-



official anthem, although most French sources refer to it as the official anthem. Kelly refers to it as the anthem “in a way”. Lefaive, Interview, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Beyond Words: Canada’s Official Languages Newsletter, “Quiz on Ontario’s Francophone community,” last modified September 23, 2011, [http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/newsletter\\_cyberbulletin/23\\_09\\_2011/content\\_contenu\\_e.htm](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/newsletter_cyberbulletin/23_09_2011/content_contenu_e.htm).

<sup>14</sup> La Bottine Souriante, “Yoyo-Verret,” from *Xième*, Les Productions Milles-Pattes 67527-02040-23, 1998, compact disc.

<sup>15</sup> Lefaive, Interview, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Lefaive, Email to Shelley Zhang, March 29, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Stokes, “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>18</sup> Lefaive, Graduating Jazz Violin Recital, University of Toronto, Faculty of Music, Toronto, Ontario, May 3, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Demers, “Notre Place.”

<sup>20</sup> Lefaive, Interview, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Claire Bellemare, Emails to Shelley Zhang, March 21, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Bellemare, Interview with Shelley Zhang, March 27, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Bellemare, Interview and Emails, 2012. By “French”, Claire is specifically referring to France’s French population. Despite referring to Québécois as a nation, Claire does not identify herself as a separatist. During our interview, she said, “I love Canada ... [Québec separatists] don’t see that part of our culture is also English ... our identity was built upon the fact that we were against ... something different, but if we dissolve that other part of yourself, you’re just getting weak.” She believes that separating from the rest of Canada would not benefit the Québécois, but only weaken them, since their strength has developed from continually fighting against the English counterparts of Canada. (Although Claire speaks English fluently, she occasionally makes grammatical or idiomatic mistakes. Ex. In the last quote, last line, she switched her pronouns midsentence. Grammatical and/or idiomatic English errors will also appear in the third case study. Instead of noting each incident, I ask that the reader forgive the errors and continue reading.)

<sup>24</sup> Bellemare, Interview, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Claire is not wrong to think of Québécois as a nation within Canada. On November 27, 2006, Canada’s House of Commons passed a motion stating, “That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.” The motion voted 266 to 16 in favour. CBC News, “House passes motion recognizing Québécois as a nation,” last modified November 27, 2006, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2006/11/27/nation-vote.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Bellemare, Interview, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

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

<sup>29</sup> Bellemare, Emails, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Rigodons are essentially traditional folk reels. Sophie Dupuis, Facebook Message to Shelley Zhang, April 1, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Bellemare, Emails, 2012. Sugar shacks are where one can buy various maple syrup products.

<sup>32</sup> Bellemare, Interview, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Although he was set to receive this award, Pellerin declined the invitation due to what he called a “great social crisis”, that is, the student demonstrations in Québec during the spring of 2012 over raised tuition fees. Pierre-Olivier Fortin, “Fred Pellerin décline l’invitation de l’Ordre national du Québec,” *Le Soleil*, last modified June 8, 2012, <http://www.lapresse.ca/lesoleil/actualites/societe/201206/07/01-4532826-fred-pellerin-decline-linvitation-de-lordre-national-du-quebec.php>.

<sup>34</sup> Bellemare, Emails, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> I draw here from the findings of cultural intimacy in Turkish popular music made by Martin Stokes. Stokes, *The Republic of Love*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Bellemare, Interview, 2012. When she said “I feel the French under it,” Claire actually pounded on a coffee table and shook it.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

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

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

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

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> At the University of Toronto, Faculty of Music, third year is the first year of recitals for performance students.

<sup>44</sup> Dupuis, Interview with Shelley Zhang, March 30, 2012. As noted earlier, Sophie occasionally makes idiomatic errors in English. In this case, she pluralized “funding”.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Roch Voisine, “Biographie”, last modified 2012, <http://www.rochvoisine.com/amerique/biographie.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Natasha St-Pier, “About Us,” last modified 2010, <http://www.natashasaintpier.com/>.

<sup>51</sup> Dupuis, Interview, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> The average family income in New Brunswick is rather modest and post-secondary school inexpensive. Sophie notes that most people from her hometown cannot afford to study out-of-province. Dupuis, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Dupuis, Interview, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Feld, 34.

<sup>64</sup> Ode à l’Acadie, *Les Aboiteaux*, from *Ode à l’Acadie*, Trilogie TLGCD1358, 2005, compact disc.

<sup>65</sup> Dupuis, Interview, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Feld, 3; 35.

<sup>68</sup> Dupuis, Interview, 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Stokes, “Introduction,” 4.

<sup>70</sup> Bellemare, Interview, 2012.