

Children's Folk Music in Canada: Histories, Performers and Canons

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Abstract: In this paper the author explores the origins, growth and popularity of prominent children's performers and their repertoires in English Canada from the 1960s-1980s, arguing that this period saw the formation of a canon of children's folk music in Canada. Various factors that have supported the creation of a children's folk music canon are highlighted, including the role of folk song collectors, folk singers, educational institutions, media outlets and the role of parents in the perpetuation of a particular canon of folk songs for children.

Like many adults, I was rather uninterested in children's music until I became a parent. However, since the birth of my children, my family has been listening to and watching various performers who specialize in music for children. I am not unique in my piqued interest in this repertoire after the birth of my children; indeed many parents seek to provide a musical environment for their children at home, both through songs and lullabies they may sing to their children, and by listening to commercial recordings made for young children. Early music educators recognize the importance of music in the development of young children, and the particular role that parents can have on their child's musical development; as researchers Wendy L. Sims and Dneya B. Udtaisuk assert:

Early childhood music educators stress the importance of providing rich musical environments for young children. The introduction to MENC's National Standards states, "The years before children enter kindergarten are critical for their musical development," and infants and toddlers "should experience music daily while receiving caring, physical contact" (Music Educators Na-

tional Conference, 1994). ... Children's earliest and most intimate musical experiences generally take place in their homes. (2008:17)

As I became more familiar with the vast amount of music that has been created for consumption by children in Canada, I began to question why I knew so little about children's music performers, despite the fact that I was familiar with many of the songs on children's albums, and particularly since I did not listen to this music in my own childhood. Also, as I began to search for music for my children, I found myself steering away from some types of recordings, in favour of others, but upon reflection, I wonder why? What were my criteria for music selections for my children? For people who did listen to children's performers in their youth, some names that probably immediately leap to mind include Sharon, Lois and Bram, Raffi, and Fred Penner, and, for French Canadian audiences, Carmen Campagne and Annie Brocoli may be household names.¹ Other prominent childhood entertainers in the collective memories of many Canadians include The Friendly Giant (a.k.a. Bob Homme) with his friends Jerome and Rusty, Mr. Dressup (a.k.a. Ernie Coombs), and, especially for those who grew up in the late 1970s and the 1980s, legendary Aboriginal folk singer Buffy Sainte-Marie and her son Dakota Starblanket Wolfchild may be remembered as regulars on *Sesame Street* from 1976 until 1981. These artists and their songs have come to form a children's folk music canon in English Canada.

In this paper I explore variables that have shaped and influenced the formation of a children's folk music canon in English Canada; a music canon that is constantly in flux, with new performers and new songs introduced and accepted by audiences – audiences that include the parents who decide what music their children will listen to. I highlight various factors that have supported the creation of a children's folk music canon, including the role of folk song collectors, folk singers, educational institutions, media outlets and the passing on of a particular canon of folk songs to children by their parents.² Some of the questions I explore include: Who were the major "players" of the children's folk music scene that propelled this repertoire and industry in Canada? What are the sources for the music that adults create for children's entertainment? Has a musical canon been formed by collectors and performers of children's music? If so, what are its contents? Are new songs being introduced into the canon, and, if so, by whom? Consideration of a children's folk music canon in Canada is important owing to the values and messages that are conveyed to young listeners through the song texts and through the performers themselves. Furthermore, exploring the origins, growth and popularity of

prominent children's performers and their repertoires highlights a particular moment in the folk music scene in the 1960s-1980s in Canada, a period in which numerous variables aligned to allow for the formation of children's folk music.³

Canonicity and Children's Music: Expansion in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada

A musical canon is a core repertory that is generally regarded as central to a particular genre or style of music, a core that is constantly in flux, responding to the interests and needs of the community to which it belongs. Philip Bohlman defines a musical canon as "...those repertoires and forms of musical behaviour constantly shaped by a community to express its cultural particularity and the characteristics that distinguish it as a social entity" (1988:104). Children's folk music is identified as that music which is created for consumption by children, but not created by or endorsed by a major corporation such as Walt Disney or Fisher Price. Although children's folk music has been commercialized to an extent - through the production of recordings and books, for example - this music repertoire is usually characterized by an acoustic-sounding production and more "traditional" settings of voice with various instruments (e.g., guitar, piano, banjo, fiddle, recorder, etc.). The lyrics often address topics such as appropriate behaviours and manners, developing new vocabulary, silliness and fun, and personalities mentioned are often specific to a Canadian context. Another important consideration is the impact this repertoire and children's exposure to it has on the creation of children's songprints. Songprints, a term coined by and popularized by ethnomusicologist Judith Vander, is "a song repertoire distinctive to [one's] culture, age, and personality, as unique in its configuration as a fingerprint or footprint" (1988:xi). Songprints of individual children are influenced by the musical choices of parents and performers, often shaping children's perceptions of the world around them and the social and cultural values articulated within the music. Songprints are important musically, as the music heard by young children may showcase or privilege particular styles and genres. Each child will have his or her own songprint from their youth, yet shared repertoires and experiences hearing and re-creating this music reinforces the musical canon that has been fostered in Canada since the emergence of prominent children's performers in the 1970s.

Consideration of children's songprints vis-à-vis their agency in song se-

lection is also important as adults are likely to perpetuate the music they were exposed to as children when they have children of their own. For many young children, it is their parents, or their daytime babysitter, who select the materials they hear as children, and as a result, children may have very little say in the music to which they are exposed. Similarly, the recordings that children and adults have access to depend on the willingness of parents and caregivers to seek materials in record shops or public libraries; indeed many children are not exposed to this repertoire at all as their parents continue to listen to “their” music at home and in the car. Ultimately I would argue that although the projected target audience is young children, it is clear that parents must subscribe to the value of music aimed at young children, as well as the philosophy and sound of children’s performers, in order for them to purchase or listen to this music. As a result of the parents-as-front-line-consumer of children’s music, their role in the reinforcement of a particular music canon cannot be underestimated. Many parents turn to the music they listened to and learned as children, perpetuating “their” songs and rhymes on to the next generation of listeners. As adults begin to have children of their own, there is a renewed market for this repertoire; indeed, in negotiating a recording contract with major U.S. label A&M (a significant accomplishment for a Canadian performing for a “marginal” audience), Canadian children’s music icon Raffi commented on the perpetuation of children’s music on a three-year cycle, saying:

For any Canadian artists to have a U.S. record contract was a big deal. For an independent Canadian label to gain national distribution south of the border was a major coup. But that’s exactly what landed in our laps in 1984 when Troubadour signed a six-year distribution agreement with A&M U.S., a significant contract for a number of reasons. All six of my recordings were included, as were three of Fred Penner’s, with no proviso for new product (new recordings) within a specified time. Though this last point was unusual in the record industry, we argued successfully that, *since the existing titles were perennial sellers (with a new audience for them every three years)*, A&M was already getting six ‘new’ albums within the term of the agreement. (1998:142, emphasis mine)

This cyclical nature of the audience for children’s music propagates this repertoire, which is also perpetuated by new and emerging children’s music performers. The fact that the same songs, and the same recordings are used for young children, means that this intergenerational sharing reinforces not only the music, but the artists and their repertoires in Canada. The perpetuation of

a canon of children's music recordings is acknowledged by the artists themselves, evident in the following liner notes from the 2002 re-release of Sharon, Lois and Bram's debut album *One Elephant, Deux Éléphants* (1978):

At the twenty-five year mark, we thought to celebrate the way we were by re-introducing audiences to our beginnings. Our faces may have changed over the years, but the "One Elephant" songs have not. They reflect our innocence, our energy, our passion for a new kind of children's recording – and our belief that every detail must be carefully and lovingly crafted. This album set the standard for all of the music that was to come – in our TV shows, our books, and all of our later recordings.

The contents of the recordings of successful performers such as Sharon, Lois and Bram, Raffi, and Fred Penner, amongst others – including performance styles, languages used, and the contents of the song lyrics – are maintained, reinforcing a particular construction of ideas, values and musical aesthetics. Drawing on Philip Bohlman's exploration of canon formation in folk music, it is clear that the agency of consumers (in this case the adults selecting music for children), and the social context in which the canon exists are two of the main factors in canon formation, perpetuation and change. In addressing the origins of a folk music canon, Bohlman writes:

Folk music canons form as a result of the cultural choices of a community or group. These choices communicate the group's aesthetic decisions – for example, its preference for one medium of musical activity over another. The theoretical basis of the canon thus emphasizes the internal motivations for cultural expression. [...] As socially motivated choices, a community's canons bear witness to its values and provide a critical construct for understanding the ways the community sorts out its own musical activities and repertoires. The anchoring of folk music canons in community values depends, furthermore, on the community's particular historical awareness, its conceptualization of folk music and musical activities during its past and the way these bear on the present. Folk music canons therefore articulate cultural values both diachronically and synchronically. (1988:105)

The valuing of and respect for children and the desire to create music that was accessible and appropriate for them were significant concerns of chil-

dren's performers, both in terms of the quality of the music and the messages in the text. Many people involved in the folk music industry in the 1960s and 1970s recognized the emerging market for children's music and related products, influenced in part by the attention given to children's performers at popular folk music festivals. As the "folkies" began to have children (and to bring their children to folk festivals), they also sought materials and sounds that they liked listening to themselves that was also aimed at their children. Likewise, educators realized the role that musicians could play in the classroom, as a way of introducing children to music, and, through the contents of the songs, widening students' understanding of various concepts. The increased valuation of children's music, children's performers, and children as learners and listeners enabled the formation and reinforcement of a children's folk music canon and helped launch the careers of numerous children's entertainers.

Children's Folk Music: Setting the Stage for Growth and Development

Musical entertainment for children has become an increasingly large part of the music industry in Canada, with various artists producing CDs, DVDs, classroom instruction and television programs and creating new songs and messages for children. Song collectors and scholars such as Edith Fowke and Barbara Cass-Beggs documented favourite children's songs that were performed in homes and school yards in song books and other publications, and they also created music books for use in classrooms.⁴ Performers such as Sharon Hampson, Lois Lillenstein and Bram Morison had already established careers as solo musicians prior to focusing on music for young children, yet their eventual role as pioneers in the genre of children's music resulted in fulfilling careers that served to entertain while teaching children vocabulary, ideas and various skills. As Raffi summarizes:

Bram [Morison] had made a name for himself with his instrumental work backing vocalist Alan Mills [a prominent folk singer]. Lois [Lillenstein] was well known in early childhood education circles in Toronto, and Sharon [Hampson] had been folksinging for a number of years. . . . All three were good musicians and their album [*One Elephant, Deux Éléphants*] . . . was full of fine singing and playing. (1999:126)

Influential children's performers such as these have had a large impact

on the creation and reinforcement of a Canadian children's musical canon that has endured. Indeed, the children's music scene is notable in Canada, as it has generated a large roster of entertainers, programs and recordings of music performed by adults for children and their parents. David W. Watts commented on the unique position of Canada in the proliferation of children's music, writing:

...What makes Canada noteworthy ... in the English-speaking world is the appearance of a whole genre of singers who make their living entirely from singing and recording for children, and who do this in a quality, professional manner. A number of these are former teachers. Trio 'Sharon, Lois and Bram' and soloists Raffi and Fred Penner are best-known across Canada; each region has local figures that are known there. One "regional", Vancouver-based Charlotte Diamond, is on the point of becoming a "national" after a 1986 Juno Award for her album "Diamond in the Rough". (1988:15)

The success of children's performers in Canada is due, in large part, to the professionalism and musicianship of various performers, particularly in the 1970s, a period that saw the emergence of adults who took very seriously their audience of young children and their families. The social, political and artistic context of the late 1960s and 1970s contributed to the support and promotion of Canadian artists, including children's performers, with various musicians finding great success in the singer-songwriter tradition that was flourishing in the United States and Canada. Likewise, the establishment of various folk festivals, such as the Mariposa Folk Festival in 1961, the Regina Folk Festival in 1969 and the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 1974 created performance venues and opportunities for folksingers and audiences to enjoy this music. Within these festivals certain activities were aimed at children, including concerts dedicated to a children's audience. Perhaps inspired by the heightened sense of liberalism that permeated arts and culture during the late 1960s, musicians sought to create enjoyable and entertaining music while engaging children as listeners and performers. The goal to appeal to the entire family, through good, fun music is evident in the liner notes of Sharon, Lois and Bram's 1978 album *One Elephant, Deux Éléphants*:

We just wanted to make a recording "of the children's songs, games, and chants we have collected and treasured over the

years; to present them in arrangements both original and traditional; to feature children of all ages singing alone and with us; to contain material uniquely Canadian; to entertain and inform; to be for children of all ages, to be enjoyed by the whole family.” (liner notes of 2002 rerelease of *One Elephant, Deux Éléphants*)

While it is beyond the scope of the current paper, it is important to point out that in many ways the children’s music canon that was formed in the 1970s privileged a white, Anglo-Canadian identity, with some recognition of French Canada and Aboriginal people as markers of diversity. Since the 1970s much has changed in terms of “Canadian” identity, particularly vis-à-vis multiculturalism, yet with the perpetuation of the musical canon of the 1970s, Canada is typically portrayed as a rather narrowly defined demographic in much of the musical repertoire of these performers.

Mariposa, Estelle Klein and the Rise of Children’s Music in Toronto and Beyond

A number of factors contributed to the emergence of a strong children’s music industry in the 1970s and 1980s, and certain individuals can be credited with setting the stage that allowed these children’s performers’ careers to flourish. Indeed, the Mariposa Folk Festivals, and later, the Mariposa in the Schools (MITS) program that was developed in Toronto beginning in 1970, as well as the interactions amongst a number of folklorists, enthusiasts and performers, combined to catapult the children’s folk music industry in Canada. The Mariposa Folk Festival was founded by Ruth and Crawford Jones in 1960, and the first festival was held at Oval Park in Orillia, Ontario on August 18th and 19th, 1961. In its early years, Mariposa showcased a roster of primarily Canadian performers, including artists such as O.J. Abbott, Jean Carignan, Alan Mills, Jacques Labrecque, The Travellers, Finvola Redden, Ian Tyson and Sylvia Fricker, among others. Even in its first year, the Mariposa Folk Festival program included a children’s concert, free to children under 14 years of age. According to the program of this inaugural festival, “in an attempt to encourage folksinging as a performing art, participants will include some semi-professional musicians,” who, according to Sheldon Posen, included Sharon Hampson and Lois Lillenstein. While this concert was run concurrently with a film screening aimed at adults, in 1965, a children’s concert

was included as a part of the festival line-up, and children were allowed to attend the festival for free. Clearly from the outset the organizers of the Mariposa Folk Festival believed in creating a program that would appeal to entire families, and not just adult listeners.

In an interview, Sheldon Posen elaborated on the critical role Estelle Klein had on the development of children's entertainment at folk festivals. She was heavily involved in the Toronto-area folk music scene,⁵ serving as the artistic director of the Mariposa Folk Festival from 1964-79 (with a break in 1978 when Ken Whiteley served as acting artistic director):

[Estelle Klein] was the one who had Lois and Sharon, at the first Mariposa Folk Festival do a children's area. There was no children's area in any folk festivals before her. Estelle was from the States and had experience with folk music and knew about ... the performers who could and did perform for children. Especially the traditional ones ... performers who had music that children could do.... She was the one who said "we're going to have a children's area and I need somebody to [staff] it" and Lois and Sharon were on the scene. Estelle got that folk music, and because Sharon and Lois did that, that's where Bram saw them, and that was the impetus, the magic moment, when the three of them got together, at Mariposa.

According to Posen, who worked with Klein, Sharon, Lois and Bram and was an active participant in the Toronto folk music scene of the 1960s and 1970s, Klein's vision for a folk festival was very inclusive; she wanted to appeal to a broad demographic and to showcase a wide range of performers. For the children's music scene, the children's stage at Mariposa was a model for other folk festivals, with workshops, a stage and eventually an area for children at the festival, and, as Posen summarizes, children's programming at Mariposa created a benchmark to which other festivals aspired:

In 1976, Mariposa created a separate children's area as one of its annual offerings. Previously the odd children's concert had been squeezed in among other Festival events, but never a separate area and stage for ongoing children's programming. Because of Mariposa's influence, suddenly it became virtually mandatory for any folk festival to highlight performances especially for children. (1993:25)

Children's Folk Music in the Schools, Wider Promotion of Children's Entertainment

School music programs of the 1970s, particularly in the Toronto area, supported the careers of various performers and they also reinforced the emerging children's music canon. In 1970 Mariposa in the Schools (MITS) was launched by the Mariposa Folk Festival, the brainchild of Estelle Klein, co-organized with Klass Van Graft, and Check Roberts. Informed by their belief that it was important to have young children learn folk music in the schools, organizers of this educational initiative brought local folk musicians into Toronto area schools to teach students about folk song through workshops and shows. As explained in an article in the 1974 Mariposa Folk Festival program, MITS:

...presents workshops on folk music to students in elementary, junior, senior and secondary schools. The chief aim of MITS is to impart to students an awareness and appreciation of folk music in many forms. Each workshop tries to give the participants an informative, challenging, and enjoyable musical experience.

The format of the workshops in schools demonstrated some aspect of folk music itself (e.g., instrumental and singing styles, transmission and change of folk songs, traditional roots of contemporary music, song creation), used folk song to teach aspects of a school subject, or to teach about music features more generally (e.g., harmony, rhythm). Although only involved in the program in its inaugural years, Sheldon Posen was asked by Klein to help launch MITS, by liaising between the schools and musicians. He contacted Toronto-area schools to "sell" folk music as worthy for students to learn, he sought singers who would be a good fit in the classroom for students, and he wrote guidelines for the performers so they could best understand their audience and their roles in the classroom. The success of the MITS program was evident as early as 1974, a year in which over 500 workshops were held throughout Ontario by 26 folk artists. (Mariposa 1974).

Many folk music performers became involved in MITS in its early stages, including Ken Whiteley, Chris Whiteley, Bill Usher, Eric Nagler, and Sharon Hampson, Lois Lillenstein and Bram Morison, and many of these performers can be heard as lead singers or backup musicians on many children's music albums. The community of musicians performing for children in the Toronto area, at festivals and at schools, fostered the children's music industry, and many of these musicians had successful careers prior to catering to children's audiences. Although not originally affiliated with Mariposa in the

Schools, Raffi also began his career as an entertainer for children in the classroom, largely influenced by his wife, a school teacher, and his mother-in-law, who was the director of a Toronto-area preschool. Interestingly, because Raffi and his family immigrated to Canada from Armenia, he was not exposed to this music as a child; rather he learned it from his wife and his mother-in-law. He writes:

I hadn't grown up in an English-speaking home, so I didn't know the complete words to even the best-known songs like *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, *Mary Had a Little Lamb* or *Workin' on the Railroad*. [My wife] Deb became my coach, suggesting what songs I might sing, teaching me the words, and advising me to take it easy, be gentle and enjoy the children for who they were. (1999:105)

David Watts summarizes the correlation between music programming in schools as educational tools, as entertainment for children at festivals and the emergence of many well-known children's performers, saying:

Raffi, Fred Penner, and Sharon, Lois and Bram have been featured performers across Canada at teachers' conventions and children's festivals. By taking their audience seriously, they have set a new standard of quality in children's recordings, outclassing the Disney soundtracks and 'imitation voices' that used to dominate the 'juvenile' section of the recording industry. Their collective success has opened the way for a host of regional children's singers, starting in local schools, as they did. A Raffi concert may be an annual event in a community, but these new troubadours are becoming a significant part of the ongoing early childhood music educational scene. (1988:16)

Although the early careers for many children's entertainers were promoted through different schools in the Toronto area, other variables contributed to the growth of the children's music industry in the early 1970s, including the general trend towards a specialized market for children's products. For example, songbooks for children and parent's books about the importance of music for children were published in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶ The proliferation of materials (concerts, recordings, videos, etc.) from performers such as Raffi, Fred Penner, and Sharon, Lois and Bram position them as icons for children's music in Canada, and their success and fame was furthered by the promotion of these artists by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation,

cementing them and their repertoires as central to children's music entertainment in Canada. For example, the CBC aired children's programs that featured Sharon, Lois and Bram, and Fred Penner, including *Fred Penner's Place*, which aired on the CBC from 1985 to 1997 (it was co-produced by Nickelodeon TV in 1989 and 1990), *Sharon, Lois & Bram's Elephant Show*, which aired on CBC from 1984 to 1988 (and later aired on Nickelodeon TV in the United States until 1994), and *Skinnamarink TV*, featuring Sharon, Lois and Bram from 1997 to 2000.⁷ These performers were also involved in various television specials and made guest appearances on various shows and seasonal programs. These three performing groups and individuals also recorded a significant number of albums for children and their parents. To date Fred Penner has released nine albums, Raffi, eighteen, and during their careers as a trio, Sharon, Lois and Bram produced an astonishing forty-four albums for children. The quality of the music on these albums is noteworthy, as these artists are musicians first and foremost, and the renditions of songs known and unknown showcase musical aptitude and interest. The unique approach to children's music taken by this generation of singers solidified their positions as pioneers in the children's music industry, treating their audience, and the music itself, with respect. Posen summarizes:

Whatever the other factors in their astonishing success (timing, location, talent, energy), one of the most crucial was the uniqueness of their products. Their records were different from any children's folksong record that had been issued before. The differences had to do with the style – of rather, styles – of the songs' presentation. These not only were informed by the tastes and abilities of the performers, but also were shaped in important ways by the producers of the respective albums...[with producers who] had extremely eclectic musical tastes and backgrounds and saw no reason to limit their productions to the relatively barebones arrangements of previous children's folksong recordings. In these novel recordings, songs were no longer filtered through the personalities and trademark sounds of the performers... Rather, studio musicians were brought in and each song was given a 'treatment' according to its stylistic possibilities. The resulting records were stylistic collages that invoked all manner of musical traditions and sources: reggae, country, calypso, Broadway musical. They sounded avant-garde for folk records when they came out in 1977... Their novelty was backed by solid musicianship and production. They were perceived as completely new. (Posen 1993:26)

The success of these albums not only reinforced the musicians' positions as prominent children's entertainers, it also shaped the musical tastes and songprints of generations of listeners.

Sources of Singers' Repertoires and the Formation of a Children's Music Canon

The music performed for children in concerts, classrooms and on albums often includes traditional folk songs as well as newly composed or reworked materials. In reflecting upon his song selection for his debut album, Raffi outlines the three sources that children's performers could draw upon for their music: "traditional" children's songs, "third party compositions" or new songs written by others, and originals, composed by the performer (1998:111). Although Raffi does not explain what he means by "traditional" children's songs, it is likely that he was referring to those songs commonly known by young children and taught in schools and heard at home. Many performers for children drew from existing collections of folksongs, including those with a children's focus by Barbara Cass-Beggs and Edith Fowke, as well as other collections of Canadian and American folksongs.⁸ The repertoire of traditional folksong, as presented in these collections was the basis for much of the folk repertoire aimed at children's audiences in the 1970s, and as such, helped form the children's music canon. Another important source for material included the recordings issued by Folkways Records by Moses Asch, including albums of songs for children featuring Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Ed McCurdy, and Alan Mills, among others (Posen 1993:23). Performers sought new material for their audiences, and at various times Sheldon Posen and Edith Fowke were approached by singers looking for new material. Posen also liaised with traditional musicians he knew from his field research in the Ottawa Valley, bringing some of them to the stage; likewise, Bram visited Posen at his field site in order to see what his work was like and to meet musicians. The interaction between "traditional" performers, children's performers and the children themselves is evident on some of the children's albums particularly those that incorporate tracks of traditional musicians and of children's singing games.

Newly composed songs that children's performers incorporate in their repertoire is what Raffi refers to as "third-party compositions," and many examples of these songs can be found on recordings by prominent children's entertainers. However, examples of three songs that were performed and recorded by Sharon, Lois, and Bram give insight into the sense of folk community and sharing that characterized the 1970s and 1980s. As mentioned above

Sheldon Posen was very involved in the folk music scene in the Toronto area in the 1970s, and he worked closely with many of the key people involved in the children's music industry at this time. As a freelance performer, researcher and composer, Posen was approached to create new songs for Sharon, Lois and Bram to perform for their television series. He relates:

It wasn't until they called me, when ... they had their new TV show and they needed material. By then they were doing theme shows and they wanted songs on a particular theme. I remember getting a call from ... their producer: "We need, we're buying songs... You write the songs for us." (Interview, September 2010)

From this exchange Posen composed three new songs that were incorporated into Sharon, Lois and Bram's repertoire: "Dressing Up;" "I'm Terrific;" and "Five and a Rhyme" – each based on a theme of the television program (dressing up and imaginary play, self-esteem for children, and composing music). Through the performance of new songs on television shows, CDs and DVDs, the canon for children's music is expanding. Indeed, Posen's song "Dressing Up" can be found on Sharon, Lois and Bram's CD *Silly and Sweet Songs* (2005), as well as in their video *Sharon, Lois and Bram: Make Believe*, which includes three episodes of *Skinnamarink TV*. This example demonstrates how "third-party compositions" allow for creative freedom with children's performers while expanding the repertoire of children's music.

The final category of repertoire for children's performers that Raffi refers to is original music composed by the performers themselves. Raffi is a good example of a very creative musician who has popularized some of his own compositions, and the most noteworthy example is his song "Baby Beluga." This is a song that Raffi composed and recorded in 1980, and it is widely recognized as his most famous song. According to the liner notes of his 20th anniversary CD, "Baby Beluga" is "one of the most popular children's songs of all time." Raffi himself identified this song as his "best-known song" and recognizes that "as a celebratory love song, it made waves" (1998:121). In his autobiography he elaborates on the inspiration for "Baby Beluga," writing:

In 1979, Kavna, a beluga whale at the Vancouver Public Aquarium, stole my heart and I set out to write a song about this beautiful creature. I [was advised] to make it about a *baby* whale because young children love babies and it would further endear the song to them... *Baby Beluga* became an instant hit and caught the fancy of listeners young and old. The positive focus produced a song of

far greater power than a 'save-the-whale' lament, for to care and protect something or someone, you've got to love it first. And for three-year-olds, loving the beluga was the key as far as I was concerned, a seed that could grow with time." (1998:123)

A testimony to the continued popularity of "Baby Beluga" is the fact that this song is still performed for children audiences, evident in the fact that Australia's internationally successful children's entertainers The Wiggles performed "Baby Beluga" in their 2009 *Go Bananas North American* tour. The Wiggles also recorded this song on their 1996 *Wake Up Jeff* CD, suggesting that the popularity of this song extends far beyond Canadian audiences. Similarly, in doing an online search for videos of "Baby Beluga" I came across a rendition of this song in an excerpt from the ABC television series *Full House*, which aired from 1987-1995. In this excerpt, the characters in this sitcom, comprised of male adults and female children, perform their own sing-along cover to "Baby Beluga." These sites of performance of Raffi's song "Baby Beluga" illustrate how this newly-composed song for children has been catapulted onto the international children's music stage and demonstrate that new songs are entering the children's music canon and making their ways into the songprint of children throughout the western world.

Although many songs that were popularized for child audiences in the 1970s and 1980s are still performed and listened to today, new songs are being introduced into the children's musical canon and they are firmly implanted on the songprints of many children. This expansion is due largely to the choices of artists and the parents of today, parents who were the children learning this music in the 1970s and 1980s, a generation of listeners that Raffi termed "beluga grads." It is clear that Raffi is referencing "Baby Beluga" in this new category of listeners, attesting to his awareness of the role that intergenerational sharing of these repertoires has on the perpetuation of this repertoire.

The children's music canon that was developed in the 1970s is now flourishing in later generations, with new songs introduced to the canon; Bohlman comments on the dynamism of musical canons, writing: "Because the social basis of a community is continuously in flux, the folk music canon is always in the process of forming and responding creatively to new texts and changing contexts" (1988:104). As new songs and traditions of, by and for Canadian children are performed, proliferated and standardized, it will be interesting to see how the children's music canon may shift to reflect the changes in Canadian society. Indeed, with growing diversity and awareness

of multiculturalism in Canada, parents might want their children to have a broader conception of the world around them, including how Canada is defined and the diversity of people and traditions around the world. They might buy recordings made for children by people from cultures other than English and French, or they might choose to not introduce their children to children's folk music at all. Perhaps we might see more artists from different backgrounds producing recordings and gaining national reputations as children's entertainers, promoting a broad palette of musical sounds, lyrical contents and performance styles. With the plethora of musical acts, videos, CDs and television programs that target children, parents, educators and care-givers have many more options for children's music, as the market for children's products has expanded greatly since its emergence in the 1970s. While artists continue to showcase their interpretations of songs from the musical canon, they are also introducing new songs, expanding the musical choices, palettes and songprints of their listeners. Following in the footprints of prominent children's entertainers, and inspired by the philosophies and practices of folk music aficionados and professionals, children's music continues to be valued and consumed by parents, teachers and caregivers in Canada, nurturing this genre that targets a specialized – and special – market. 🍀

Notes

1. There is a great deal of French Canadian children's music available and many successful children's music performers; however, this repertoire is not the focus of this paper.

2. An important article that also addresses the children's folk music scene in the 1970s and 1980s is Sheldon Posen's 1993 article "The Beginnings of the Children's (Folk) Music Industry in Canada: An Overview." As I highlight in this article, Posen himself is an important figure in the children's music scene in Canada, as a performer, composer, collector and academic.

3. Interestingly, according to Wendy L. Sims and Dneya B. Udtaisuk, "the quality of the home musical environment has been of interest to researchers since the 1960s" (2008:17), yet very little research has been conducted by folklorists and ethnomusicologists on the musical and lyrical contents and performers of children's music that is often consumed in Canadian homes.

4. For example: *Sally go Round the Sun* (Fowke 1969), *Ring around the Moon* (Fowke 1977), *To Listen, To Like, To Learn* (Cass-Beggs 1974), and *Your Baby Needs Music* (Cass-Beggs 1978).

5. Estelle Klein's contribution to the folk music scene was recognized by the creation of The Estelle Klein Award by the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals,

awarded to an individual or group who has contributed significantly to the Ontario folk music community.

6. Most notably those works by Barbara Cass-Beggs and Edith Fowke.

7. *Skinnamarink TV* was also aired on the Learning Channel in the United States.

8. A quick survey of other collections, such as Kenneth Peacock's 1965 collection *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports* results in correlations between "regular" folk song collections and these materials that are intended for an audience of children and their parents. For example, in Peacock's collection the first section in the first volume is titled "Children's Songs," and it includes many songs (or their variants) which many Canadian children will have learned in school or at home; six of the sixteen "children's" songs in Peacock's collection are also found in Edith Fowke's collection titled *Ring Around the Moon*.

9. Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0rInDa39l8>

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