

**“Notre place”:
Franco-Ontarians’ Search for a Musical Identity**

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Abstract: The Franco-Ontarian presence in Ontario dates as far back as 1610, and today the Franco-Ontarian population is approximately 500,000. This article explores this “large minority,” its socio-historical background, and the role played by music in Franco-Ontarians’ search for the survival of their identity.

Pour ne plus avoir
Notre langue dans nos poches
Je vais chanter
Je vais chanter

Pour mettre les accents là où il le faut
Faut se lever, il faut célébrer...
Notre place
Aujourd’hui pour demain
Notre place
Pour un avenir meilleur
Notre place
Oui donnons-nous la main
Notre place
Ça vient du fond du cœur.¹

Notre place (1989)

Written and performed by Paul Demers

This song, now known as the Franco-Ontarian “national” anthem, was first performed in Toronto in 1989 to celebrate the passing of Bill 8, a law guaranteeing French provincial services in twenty-three designated areas in Ontario, and the inauguration in 1987 of the TFO (télédiffusion en français de l’Ontario), the Francophone equivalent of TVOntario and the only Franco-Ontarian-based televised programming.² To Franco-Ontarians, these accomplishments were the results of many years of tenacious lobbying and represent yet another victory against assimilation into the Anglo-Ontarian majority. This fight for the survival of the language and culture permeates the history of French speaking people in Ontario.

The abundance of sociological research regarding the survival of the language and the dangers of assimilation and acculturation demonstrates the importance of these concepts to the community. One

¹ Translation: In order to no longer/Have our tongue in our pockets/ I will sing/I will sing//In order to put the accents where they belong/We must stand up, we must celebrate/Our place/Today for tomorrow/Out place/For a better future/Our place/Yes let’s hold hands/Our place/It comes from the bottom of our hearts.

² The Federal television network, *Société Radio-Canada*, also offered French programming at the time, although not specifically with an Ontarian perspective. Other French-language stations include TVA (Québec-based), TV5 (France-based) and RDI (Radio-Canada Information station). Franco-Ontarians have mostly focused on community radio as a form of communication. Examples include *Radio de l’ÉpINETTE Noire (CINN)*, in Hearst (1988); *Radio Huronie FM communautaire (CFRH)*, in Penetanguishene (1989); *Radio communautaire Cornwall-Alexandria (CHOD)*, in Cornwall (1993) and *Kap Nord (CKGN)*, in Kapuskasing (1993).

realizes that the French language is seen by most advocates of the Franco-Ontarian culture as its primary means of identity and survival. The belief is strong within the community that the loss of the language is the first step towards assimilation into the Anglophone majority of Ontario. This focus on the maintenance of the French language has been at the heart of most political endeavours of the last hundred years. Yet one cannot help but question this unilateral view. Is language the most important defining characteristic of the Franco-Ontarians? Are there other features that should be included? If so, what are they? Why has the focus on language been so prominent? Finally, where does music fit into this situation? The primary purpose of this research is to determine whether a link between Franco-Ontarians, their music, and their identity exists. Although the information regarding the history and sociology of the group is prevalent, music studies are almost non-existent. With the exception of Marie-Hélène Pichette's study (2001) of the music festival, *la Nuit sur l'étang* and the APCM's (*Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique*) overview of thirty years of songs in Franco-Ontario (*30 ans de chansons en Ontario français*, 2001), research into the Franco-Ontarian musical culture remains to be done. This paper does not presume to provide an all inclusive answer to the link between the identity of the 485,630 Franco-Ontarians³ and their music, but it can serve as a starting point towards a better understanding of this minority group and its place within the province of Ontario.

The first issue to address in this paper is the terminology that will be used to identify this group. Already when the various descriptions are listed one can observe the challenges involved in providing an accurate definition for the community. The various labels include French Canadians, French speakers, French speakers outside Québec, French speakers in Ontario, Franco-Ontarians, *Ontarois*. Each of these designations holds numerous meanings and is applied differently depending on the situation and/or speaker. Anglophones will most often use one of the first four names, whereas the community itself prefers the last two, although the first one—French Canadian—was used by the group until the 1960s. The reason for the change of name will be discussed later on. For the purposes of this paper, the term Franco-Ontarian will be used as it is the one most commonly found in the literature of the community. The first section of this paper provides a socio-historical background of Franco-Ontarians for a better understanding of this group. The next section is a discussion of the music found within the community, with a focus on its role in the creation of Franco-Ontarian identity.

Socio-Historical Background

The first French settlement in Ontario dates from 1610 with the arrival of Samuel de Champlain and Étienne Brûlé in the Huron territory near Georgian Bay. Forts such as Pontchartrain (Detroit), Niagara, Rouille, Frontenac (Kingston), and La Présentation "insured the military defence and the commercial interests of the French colony in the region" (Kimpton 1984) Today southern Ontario is home to approximately a third of the Franco-Ontarian population, although they count for only 2 percent of the total population.⁴ A. Gilbert refers to this situation as a "minority cell," which he defines as the following:

The minority cells distinguish themselves from mixed environments by the lesser important proportion of Francophones and by the smaller number of French institutions. Life in French in those areas organises itself around the participation in certain groups or at certain events, and everyday life occurs in English [Translation]. (A. Gilbert, qtd. in Gérin-Lajoie, 2003:34)⁵

This definition accurately describes the situation faced by Franco-Ontarians living in the south of the province. Not only are they surrounded by English-speaking people, but in addition, their group includes people from a great variety of cultural backgrounds: approximately a third of the population comes from outside Canada or from an ethnic group other than French (A. Gilbert qtd. in Gérin-Lajoie, 2003:33). This

³ According to the Census of Canada 2001, Cat. No 97F0007XCB2001009.

⁴ According to the Census of Canada 1981, Cat. 93-942, Table 1.

⁵ A. Gilbert, *Espaces franco-ontariens*, 1999, p. 52 quoted in Diane Gérin-Lajoie, *Parcours identitaires de jeunes francophones en milieu minoritaire*, 2003, p.34. – Original quote : "Les cellules minoritaires se distinguent des milieux de vie mixte par une proportion bien moins importante de francophones et par le nombre bien plus restreint d'institutions françaises. La vie en français dans ces milieux s'organise autour de la participation à certains événements ou à certains groupes, et la vie courante se déroule en anglais."

situation is perceived by the community as either creating a lack of homogeneity within the group, thus increasing the sense of isolation that already exists, or as providing the people with a possibility for cultural renewal as well as strength in numbers.

During the nineteenth century, Eastern Ontario (especially the Ottawa region) was colonized by the French of Québec. The Catholic Church's encouragement and the alluring prospect of owning agricultural lands created an enticement to emigrate from Québec. By the late nineteenth century, a substantial number of Franco-Ontarians had established themselves in the counties of Stormont, Dundas, Glengary, Prescott and Russell. To this day, this area includes the highest percentage of Francophone population in Ontario with the language shift—meaning the number of people with French as their maternal language versus the number who actually use French as a language of communication—being one of the lowest in the province (Bernard 1988: Appendix). The situation is slightly different in Ottawa, which demonstrates a greater language shift; although the proximity of the Outaouais region and official bilingualism policies in the national capital help in slowing down the assimilation process of Franco-Ontarians.

The last area to which Franco-Ontarians immigrated is the north-east region, with an influx occurring during the middle of the twentieth century with the discovery of the Clay Belt and the various mines. The economic possibilities were again an enticing factor. Cities such as Sudbury, North Bay, Hearst, Timmins, Kapuskasing, and Cochrane became home to a large number of Franco-Ontarians. Today these communities are rich in cultural organisations—such as *Prise de parole* (publishing house), *Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario* (art gallery), *Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario* (theatrical company), *le Musée du Nouvel-Ontario* (museum)—that were formed mostly during the 1970s in response to the Quiet Revolution in Québec and the need for a new French identity.

Before these events, though, many other situations occurred that gradually led to the development of the contemporary Franco-Ontarian identity. The British conquest over France in 1760 created the identity of a conquered people within the Québec society. “The specific relations that emerged from the contact situation contributed to the identification of the dominated community as that of the French Canadian nation and to the crystallization of its essential traits” (Kimpton 1984:7) These traits consisted of the Québécois as a Catholic farmer living in rural areas and speaking French. Since the most distinguishing characteristic of this list is the language, it became a symbol of the Québécois identity. It is what separated them from their conqueror. This sentiment of preservation was transported with the immigrants to Ontario.

Late in the nineteenth century, a growing sense of being powerless and the feeling of discrimination that was accentuated by the Louis Riel conflict of 1885 can be observed in the establishment that same year of the newspaper *La Nation* in the county of Prescott and the creation of *L'Association canadienne-française d'Éducation en Ontario* (ACFEO) in January, 1910. This uneasy relationship between Francophones and Anglophones escalated when the provincial government passed Bill 17 in 1912. This new law made schooling in French illegal: children not only had to learn English in school, but it also became the primary language of instruction, with French only available as a supplementary subject. The Franco-Ontarian community responded in outrage to this law—known as “Règlement XVII”—and in many cases refused to comply with what was seen as a gross attempt at mass assimilation of the French population by its English-dominated government. In many cases, French continued to be the language of instruction. But this overt disobedience by the community led to a loss of funding: in 1915, close to 200 schools were without money from the government. The ACFEO and other associations, including some from Montreal, attempted to compensate for this lack through the organization of fundraising events. In 1916, the Québec government authorized its school commissions to officially contribute part of their funding to the French Ontario schools. The evacuation of schools upon the arrival of inspectors and the occupation of the École Gigués in Ottawa by parents and students are but a few examples of the actions taken by the community as a sign of resistance. Both the British government and Pope Benoît XV become involved in this conflict, which was finally resolved in 1927. Yet the fight for a French education continues even to this day.

Until 1967, French Catholic schools were funded only until Grade 10; and for many years after the resolution of the Règlement XVII conflict, these schools faced the reality of having to catch up to the English system because of the fifteen-year disruption. Between 1927 and 1967, a student who wished an education

beyond Grade 10 was confronted with limited choices. S/he could attend either an English school, a bilingual school where the courses were taught in English with only History, Geography, Latin and French taught using the French language, or, as a third option, a private institution based on the classical course (“cours classique”) college model found in Québec and overseen by the Church. The curriculum in the last-named institution was limited compared to the first two options. This situation made for a lack of higher education in the Franco-Ontarian community, which was reflected in the type of work they performed and in the salaries they earned.

It is important to understand that this fight for the survival of French was not simply about language: religion was also an essential factor. A popular slogan at that time was “La foi, gardienne de la langue; la langue, gardienne de la foi” [“Faith, protector of the language; language, protector of the faith”]. The French language and the Catholic religion were intrinsically connected. The Catholic Church in Québec believed that the first step toward losing its believers was to lose its language, since most English-speaking people were also Protestant. Thus, in the eyes of the Church, the Règlement XVII was an attempt at assimilation and acculturation of its flock. In Québec, the Church was an integral part of the governing structure until the 1960s, a situation that was reflected in Ontario among the Franco-Ontarian community. The stereotypes used to describe this group—French/Québec ancestry, French-speaking, Catholic, living a rural/agricultural life of poverty or modest means, progeny of farmers, miners, blue collar workers and lumberjacks and large families—retained their potency for a good part of the twentieth century. In this depiction of Franco-Ontarians, one recognizes the strong hold of the Church. The idea of living “a hard life” in order to attain the joys of “the next world” also helped create and perpetuate these images.

The urbanization and industrialization that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s within the Franco-Ontarian community created an environment in which the aforementioned stereotypes began to lose their value. The move away from the protection of rural isolation and homogeneous communities caused Franco-Ontarians to become an anonymous group within an English-speaking world. When the Franco-Ontarians moved into urban centres, their living and working conditions forced them to learn English; they also shifted from the private realm, in which the Church and the parish played an essential role, to the public realm, where the government takes over that role of cultural protector. In so doing, many Franco-Ontarian characteristics became obsolete, which led to a redefinition of the culture.

This change within the community was further emphasized by the Quiet Revolution in Québec in the 1960s. Through the development of a “Québécois” identity, French-speaking people outside Québec were dismissed by the Québécois so that they could concentrate their efforts within Québec’s borders. This abandonment by the majority of French Canadians forced Franco-Ontarians—and all other French communities living outside Québec—to redefine their identity within the hegemonic context of English speaking society. It was during the 1970s that the community began to adopt the name “Franco-Ontarian” instead of “French Canadian.” The Franco-Ontarian flag was unveiled on September 25, 1975 by Laurentian University students.

The green of the flag recalls the fields’ and forests’ greenery during summer promising an abundant future. The white is a symbol of the long winters and is synonymous with the need to transmit its most precious heritage, the French language, in all its purity. The *fleur de lys* bears witness to the adherence to not only the French Canadian culture but also the French international culture. The *trille*, floral emblem of Ontario, clearly demonstrates that Franco-Ontarians are deeply rooted in this province and have the solid intention to occupy this place that is their right in order to grow and pass it on to their descendants. (Gervais 2006)

Gaétan Gervais, professor of history at Laurentian University, is the author of these strong words used to describe the meaning of this “national” emblem. It is an example of the conviction many Franco-Ontarians were willing to demonstrate in order to establish their new identity and make themselves noticed by their own community and the outside majority.

The establishment of the Language Commission by the federal government encouraged the rise of bilingualism and biculturalism as a way of life for Canadians. It is within this atmosphere that in 1968, Franco-Ontarians finally obtained funding for a complete high school public education in French. Yet they

would have to wait until the mid-1980s before Catholic high schools were included in this funding formula. As for post-secondary education at this time, the choices were limited to Université Laurentienne (Sudbury), Université d'Ottawa, Collège universitaire Glendon (York University, Toronto), Collège universitaire de Hearst, Collège Boréal (Sudbury), and Collège Algonquin, now Cité collégiale (Ottawa). Except for the latter two, all the other programs were bilingual, making it still difficult to obtain a complete education in French. In spite of this, the community continued to lobby the provincial government, as can be observed with the passing of Bill 8 in 1989, which guarantees governmental services in French.

Unfortunately, as Roger Bernard points out, although the web of French institutions is more complete now than in the last four decades, it still does not ensure the survival of the community. Bernard believes the focus must move from the political, economic, or linguistic to the cultural process (Bernard 1988:113). The threats of assimilation are numerous and demonstrate the many challenges that the Franco-Ontarian community faces on a daily basis. Some of these warning signs have been mentioned already: urbanization, integration within the industrial workforce, lack of a higher education in French, declining birth rate, and diminished importance of the Catholic religion. One must add to this list the growing number of mixed marriages, which often mean that French is not spoken at home anymore. This language shift is prominent throughout the province and leads to linguistic assimilation. Although the school's role as protector of the French language continues, this environment often becomes the only place where the language is spoken, thus failing to create a situation conducive to the continuation of the language. Moreover, in their quest to perpetuate the language, schools teach standardized French, which discourages many teenagers from speaking it since they believe and have been told in many instances that their spoken French is not adequate.

The complexity of the situation is increased by the arrival of other French-speaking ethnic groups who possess unequal language skills and who emphasize the diversity of the Franco-Ontarian community while attempting to fit into the Canadian society. The growth of the ethnicity factor has put into question the identity of the Franco-Ontarian. Who can be included into this group? Whereas the definition was straightforward in the 1960s, today it involves many more layers. This population includes Franco-Ontarians of birth, Québécois living in Ontario, Acadians, French speakers born elsewhere in Canada and living in Ontario, immigrants from other countries, and Franco-Ontarians living outside Ontario (mostly in Québec). In an area such as Toronto, the number of immigrants is high, and as mentioned earlier, can provide variety or a lack of homogeneity depending on the perception.

According to François Paré, Franco-Ontarians hesitate between the right to fight for their existence and the denial of this same existence. He believes the people find their identity within this framework. They live between two worlds: one of self-isolation, which is in direct contradiction with the open image of being a Canadian, and the other of pluralism, which could result in their assimilation into the majority group and be the death of their community (Paré 1995:172). This dilemma is a large part of the Franco-Ontarian struggle with identity. Some believe in the maintenance of folklore and the past in order to retain their identity. This creation and cultivation of folklore serves the older generations; but because it is not based on the current situation and because the links to the Québécois ancestral roots are fading, the younger generation often does not relate to this association and moves further away from the community. Is this memory of the French Canadian image still applicable or even wanted today? With the rise of ethnicity within the community, does being Franco-Ontarian simply entail speaking French?

Another threat to the Franco-Ontarian community is bilingualism. In many instances, Franco-Ontarians define themselves as bilingual rather than simply French-speaking. Is this because bilingualism is now part of the group's identity, or does it signal the gradual assimilation of the group? In 2001, 91 percent of the population of this community was bilingual and defined itself as French-speaking, English-speaking, or bilingual depended on the context. This move from one identity to the other is alarming to many advocates, who feel that this will lead to acculturation into the majority group, since language does not possess the same importance it used to have. For many, French has become a commodity. The French language is regarded as important in order to obtain a good position in the workforce, and thus has lost its cultural meaning. Since English predominates in most aspects of life—television, music, radio, environment outside the home and school—it is often perceived as the language of entertainment, pastime, actuality and

power, whereas French is a language “cut from the daily reality, part of the folklore and the banal” (Bernard 1988:120).

Franco-Ontarian Arts

Where do the arts fit within this intricate context? Do artists feel they have a role within this search for an identity? Which art forms are most prominent within the community? How are artists supported by the community? What are the possibilities for young people who are looking for a career in the arts? What kind of education opportunities is available to them? And is it possible for them to have a successful career in Ontario as a Francophone artist? These are some of the questions that arise when studying the connection between Franco-Ontarians, their identity, and music.

In the arts in the Franco-Ontarian community, certain genres stand out as possessing a longer and stronger tradition than others. One of these includes theatrical performances. Drama in all its forms is prominent within the community. Every major Franco-Ontarian area has a theatrical company that is well established and regularly performs plays for the people. Repertoire is a combination of French classics and Québécois and Franco-Ontarian plays. Most high schools incorporate not only drama courses but also opportunities for students to prepare, produce, and perform plays, which oftentimes combine dance, theatre and popular music. For example, in the county of Prescott-Russell, many high schools have yearly events that are now well established, such as Casselman’s twenty-year-old *Caféthèque*, Alexandria’s fifteen-year-old *Café chantant*, Plantagenet’s *L’ESP.rit’d’show*, and Rockland’s *Showbizz*. This combination of the arts is also found in the north-east region, where in 1970, the *Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario* (TNO), and in 1971, *la Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario* (CANO) united artists of different disciplines for collective projects meant to affirm their identity as Franco-Ontarians within a community that has an English majority. In 1973, *la Nuit sur l’étang* festival was born. This festival, which signalled the end of a three-day congress—*Franco-Parole*—begins its existence as a show that combines many artistic forms (music, poetry, plays), produced mostly by students of Laurentian University in Sudbury. In 1976, Ottawa’s ACFO (the ACFO changed its name in 1968 to reflect the fact that its scope had now gone beyond education) follows suit and establishes the *Festival franco-ontarien*, which was known at the time as *Semaine francophone* and which combines a number of family activities with music concerts.

Music Education

Much of the music within the Franco-Ontarian community is intertwined with other art forms. Although the two aforementioned festivals are now seen as rites of passage for any French musician in Ontario and have been joined since 1986 by the contest *Ontario Pop*, which occurs in collaboration with the *Festival franco-ontarien*, music still does not have a prominent place within the education system. Music programs are often unavailable to students within French schools or consist of *Harmonies/Bands* who usually perform contemporary and popular works such as jazz, blues rock, or rock. Thus, except for a few arts high schools, students do not receive the musical education necessary to be prepared for university entrance auditions. Most Franco-Ontarians who do learn music study it in English, due to the lack of French-speaking teachers and French resources. Most schools do not have the budgets to purchase musical instruments, and they have a difficult time finding French-speaking specialized teachers. The only post-secondary music program—with bachelor’s and master’s degrees—available to students who want to study in French is at the University of Ottawa; but it is a bilingual program with some courses offered in French and others in English. The only other option available to a person who wants to study music in French is to go to a Québec university.

In the last few years, efforts have taken place to increase the presence of music within the schools. Examples of this can be found in Eastern Ontario, where for the last four years the *Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l’Est ontarien* (CSDCEO) has implemented a new program, *Apprendre par les arts*, which won the “Visionary Award” from the Royal Conservatory of Music in 2003. In this program, students learn mathematics, languages, history, sciences and social studies by creating images, inventing dances, telling stories, and singing songs with the help of comedians, musicians, painters, and writers. This nationwide program, which is found in 170 schools throughout Canada, is available to over 2,200 out of 14,000 students in thirty-six elementary schools and seven high schools in the counties of Stormont, Dundas,

Glengary, Prescott, and Russell in Eastern Ontario (CSDCEO 2006). Another more focused attempt at promoting music occurred in 2003, when students from throughout the province met in Mississauga to participate in *Le festival franco-ontarien de la chanson et de la musique en milieu scolaire*, which included workshops on composition, vocal techniques, and other musical themes. The second time this event took place was in February 2005 in Brampton, Ontario. These efforts toward encouraging music with the Franco-Ontarian youth are noteworthy; but are they enough to change the present situation as well as encourage the creation, performance and interest in Franco-Ontarian music?

Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique

In 1990, the *Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique* (APCM) was created. Its goal is to increase the image of musicians among the institutions, the public, and the media; assure more visibility of the artists; multiply the possibilities for exchanges; find new support; and encourage the development of new professional musicians (APCM 2006). The association numbers 150 members who are professional French-speaking musicians from Ontario and Western Canada. The style of music performed by these artists is wide-ranging, as made clear by the numerous categories set out by the APCM: Rock/Pop (55 artists), Folk/Traditional (12), Youth/Educative (13), Urban/Rap/Techno (8), Blues/Jazz (7), Best of (7), Spiritual/Personal development (4), Compilation/Christmas (4), Instrumental/Classic (6), Other (5), and World Music (2). This diversity in style is an indication of the heterogeneity of the community and also a reflection of its values, which will be discussed later. The APCM has many accomplishments that can be found in the areas of promotion, distribution, emerging artists, workshops/sharing of information, and the creation of a pedagogical tool. In order to promote Franco-Ontarian musicians, the APCM came together with *Réseau Ontario* and *Théâtre Action*, which tours the province to present plays and concerts to communities and schools. Another promotional event has been the organization of the *Gala de la chanson et de la musique franco-ontarienne*, which since 2001 has recognized the accomplishments of Franco-Ontarian artists. As well, since the fall of 2001, the APCM has coordinated five annual concerts with the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The writing of the history of Franco-Ontarian songs for the last thirty years—*30 ans de chansons en Ontario français*—has also been done, as previously mentioned, in 2001 and is available through the association.

From the beginning, the APCM felt it was essential for artists' music to be made available to the public. In order to accomplish this, it has created its own label—Musique AU—became a distributor—APCM—and launched two compilation albums – *Quatorze artistes de l'Ontario français* (1993) and *Chansons + musiques ontariennes* (1994). It has also become a national distributor with Musicaction and has formed a *Comité d'écoute*, which consists of professionals in the field who are required to evaluate and referee all music presented to the association to ensure a quality standard. In 2000, APCM set up a web of distribution within the schools to introduce the younger generation to Franco-Ontarian music. In 2001, an Internet site was launched, and as of 2002, APCM can now sell its compact discs through HMV. In order to encourage emerging artists, the association supports the *Ontario Pop* contest that is for performers, singers/songwriters and groups between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five; the association also sponsored the festival of music within the school milieu that took place in Mississauga in 2003. Since 1992, APCM has issued a periodical, *Le Diffuseur*, and offered workshops on various topics. Finally, in 2005, this group created a virtual pedagogical tool—<http://pedagogie.virtuo.ca/>—whose goal is to establish a link between the arts and other subjects by providing an interdisciplinary approach. This course requires a compilation album, *Fiers!*, which consists of thirteen songs dealing with Franco-Ontarian identity, and the magazine of the history of music in Ontario previously mentioned. The tool itself consists of nine workshops or class activities for students of Grades 9 to 12. These courses can take place within an art class or in combination with French, Canadian studies, and/or computer sciences. Although the concept is innovative and engaging, it has not been incorporated into any school program yet. This might be because the idea is still new—the website was established in 2004—and has not reached many teachers at this point. Educators have shown interest in this work by ordering copies for themselves, and the APCM intends on intensifying its promotion within the school system in the coming years. Maybe it is only a question of time (Châar 2006).

Identity and Music

The last section of this paper focuses on the music categories used by the APCM and its compilation album *Fiers! L'histoire d'un peuple qui s'est donné le droit de risquer*. What do these reveal about the Franco-Ontarian community, its values, and its identity? As previously discussed, Franco-Ontarians are a minority group that is constantly feeling the pressures of assimilation and acculturation into the larger English-speaking community. The lack of cultural resources, combined with the ease of accessibility to the English media in contrast to the French media, contribute to the challenge of preserving French language and culture. For example, in the Greater Toronto area and Toronto, Franco-Ontarians who do not have access to cable or satellite television can watch only the *Société de Radio-Canada* (SRC), which is the French version of the state-network CBC, or listen to its equivalent on the radio (90.3FM *Espace musique* or 860AM). The Franco-Ontarian content of either of these stations usually consists of a few hours a week of regional news. The television programming comes mostly from Québec or France, whereas programming on the radio consists of a mix of Québécois, French, Acadian popular or traditional artists, world music ensembles, jazz, and classical repertoire. Is this choice by *Espace musique* a reflection of the ethnic diversity within the Franco-Ontarian community of Southern Ontario? And why this blatant omission of the artists who perform regularly or who appear at *la Nuit sur l'étang*, *le Festival franco-ontarien* and *Ontario Pop*? Could it be that the small number of persons who participate at these events indicates a lack of interest by the Franco-Ontarian public? Although *La Nuit sur l'étang* has been going strong for the last thirty-four years, its record attendance has been 1,500 people out of a total population of approximately 500,000. As for the *Festival franco-ontarien*, its thirty years has seen an attendance of 15,000 Franco-Ontarians. The complexity of the issues aside, one can still gain an understanding of some of the Franco-Ontarian community's values and see how they can function as markers of the group's identity.

The prominence of the rock/pop genre in the musicians' output, as observed in the APCM's membership listing, indicates the impact of American culture on Franco-Ontarian life. As Gaston Tremblay points out in his article for *30 ans de chansons en Ontario français*, in the 1970s when the music movement began to take shape, American culture was not exotic to young adults since it was an integral part of their everyday reality. American films, music, and literature dominate English Canada, which in turn means that Franco-Ontarians have access to it.

Franco-Ontarians are torn between three poles: the attractive American culture, the interest in the Canadian reality and the proximity (shared origins, beliefs and language) with the Québécois culture ... It is within this institutional emptiness that the Franco-Ontarian identity arises, it is by shouting "Moé j'viens du Nord,'stie" that they will discover that their identity must come from their unique cultural space. It is through accepting their Canadian reality, their Québécois origins and their American culture that they will discover the pyramid's apex, where the Northern star has always been and will always be. The new play that they [Robert Paquette, André Paiement and Pierre Germain] create is in French, using an American form (collaborative creation, multimedia presentation, rock music) and the thematic, which searches for the popular, is anchored in the here and now of Northern Ontario. [Translation by the author] (Francoeur and Psenak 2001:7)

Robert Paquette, who was a force in the sponsorship of Franco-Ontarian music, demonstrated this ability to navigate between cultural influences. As a pioneer, he not only led the way, but also supported many newcomers when he became a well-established artist. Although he has been sharply criticized for his move to Montréal and his lack of advocacy regarding the Franco-Ontarian cause, his regular performance at *La Nuit* and *Le Festival franco* has provided many artists with a role model. The American rock/pop influence continues to be noticed in groups and artists such as *33 Barrette*, Paul Demers, Eric Dubeau, *Kif Kif* and *Brasse Camarade*.

The presence of traditional Franco-Ontarian music in the record industry is an indicator of the importance the community still places on its heritage. Artists such as *Garolou* and Donald Poliquin have succeeded in re-energizing a folklore that was becoming obsolete for many young people. The mixture of the modern with the traditional, also known as *folklore-rock*, has created a renewed interest in the genre. The well-known group, *Swing*, went as far as creating its own style calling it "techno-trad," a combination of new electronic medium with the traditional Franco-Ontarian sound.

Another suggestion of the presence of American culture is found in the rise of urban/rap/techno music. As well, the globalization of music is noticed in the category of world music. It is also a sign of the growing ethnicity of the community since most of the performers in these categories are of African or Haitian heritage. The fact that groups such as *Afro Connexion* and *Le Shah Loskar* are asked to perform at *le Festival franco* and receive multiple awards indicates a rising acceptance by the Franco-Ontarian society of its increasing diversity.

Over the last thirty years, certain musical groups and artists have become part of the folklore of French music in Ontario. Artists in this group include the pioneers of the 1970s like Paquette, *CANO*, *Garolou*, and the successes of the 1990s such as *Brasse Camarade*, *Deux Saisons*, and Paul Demers. The question remains as to whether the APCM's efforts to feature certain musical groups and artists has been successful. Within the context of the contemporary music market is the association able to sell these recordings to a Franco-Ontarian population saturated by the American market (television, music, film, radio) on one side and, if with respect to French content, is mostly knowledgeable about the Québécois industry? There is no doubt that the APCM is aware of these tensions. Indeed, its creation of the pedagogical tools discussed earlier points toward an understanding of this situation.

The compact disc that the association has put together for its pedagogical tool claims that its content deals with the Franco-Ontarian identity, implying that the texts, the music, and the artists represent accurately the community's distinctiveness. Is this true? The title of the disc is *Fiers! L'histoire d'un peuple qui s'est donné le droit de risquer*—“Proud! The history of a people who gave itself the right to risk.” If this title is taken apart, elements are provided for the formulation of a Franco-Ontarian model. “Proud!” with its exclamation mark emphasizes the need to not only have pride in oneself but also to proclaim it out loud. “The history of a people” entails the belief in an extensive past during which a nation was created. “Who gave itself the right to risk” refers to the many political and social struggles in which Franco-Ontarians have been involved in over the last hundred years. The words tell the community that it has always had the right to fight for its survival and that these risks have been worthwhile and must continue today. The album cover presents the Franco-Ontarian flag, a reminder of allegiance to the group. A further emphasis of the identity is the use of the colors green and white. The last noteworthy component of this CD cover is the drawings of persons that remind the viewer of First Nations' pictograms. The appropriation of cultures—First Nations and Anglophone—is a concept that is found in the spoken language, music, and literature of French Ontario. The connection and the intermingling of Franco-Ontarians and First Nations are found throughout their history. It was not unusual for a Franco-Ontarian family to have a First Nations' member within its family tree. As well, during the colonization of Ontario, relationships with the communities, such as the Huron, the Ojibwe and the Cree developed, as the French learned to live in this new and oftentimes harsh environment. Examples of this type of appropriation are found in this album with the songs “Ouendaké” by Michel Paiement, and “Salut Man!” by *Kif Kif*, which adapts throat games and rhythmic sounds reminiscent of First Nations' drumming, respectively. On the other hand, the use of English in songs or literature and its adaptation within the spoken language is more prominent. Although advocates for French are against such “watering down of the language,” it is a way for the community to appropriate the dominating language and take possession of it. A prime example of this practice is the choice of name for the festival *la Nuit sur l'étang*. This title refers to the fact that the event took place over the entire night and the reference to a pond is in response to the English label of “French frogs” when referring to Franco-Ontarians (Pichette 2001:21). The organizers of the event decided that instead of being insulted by this characterization, they would take it and make it their own. Another example of this appropriation of English is found in the song “L'autre bord d'la track” by Serge Monette. Not only does Monette include the words “On the wrong side of the track” but the use of “d'la track” shows a Franco-Ontarian colloquial expression that would easily be understood by most.

This compilation album contains songs of various historical and social themes relevant to the Franco-Ontarian community. “Josée Louise by *Les hardis moussaillons*,” “Ouendaké” by Paiement and “Bâtir pays” by Éric Dubeau deal with the history of Franco-Ontarians from the arrival of the first settlers from France and their marriages to the *Filles du Roy* in the seventeenth century, to the reference of the sometime difficult relationship between French colonizers of Ontario (Étienne Brûlé) and the Huron people, to finally the fight for survival and the rights of the community. A new rendition of the traditional “Les Raftsmen” by *Deux Saisons* makes numerous historical references to people, places, and events that are

associated with Ottawa/Bytown. Other songs such as "Moé j'viens du Nord" by Paquette and "Icic dans le Nord" by Yves Doyon and "En bref ..." discuss the everyday reality of living in Northern Ontario and the courage and strength that the community's ancestors had to demonstrate in order to survive harsh surroundings. The theme of ethnic diversity is tackled in the previously mentioned song by *Kif Kif* titled "Salut Man!," which tells the story of an émigré to Canada who struggles to retain his original culture while adopting the Franco-Ontarian identity. The title song "Fiers!" by *Brasse Camarade* encourages pride in Franco-Ontarian culture and heritage. The last grouping of songs can be identified under the category Theme Songs. "Y a quetchose en nous" by *Topaze* is the theme song of Saint-Jean-Baptiste (the patron saint of French Canadians) festivities in Sault-Sainte-Marie. "Viens nous voir" by *CANO* has been the theme song for *la Nuit* since 1983, and Lise Paiement's "Fidèles au rendez-vous" is the song of the *Jeux franco-ontariens*, a provincial Olympiad-type annual event. The "provincial" anthem, "Notre place" by Demers, discussed at the beginning of this essay, is also included in the album.

The musical genres employed in this album are as varied as its content. One hears traditional instrumentation (fiddle, harmonica, accordion, acoustic guitar, stepping) mixed with modern styles (unusual harmonization, walking bass line, flute); characteristic rock bands with electric guitar, bass, drums; and ballad style with its storytelling capacity. The tone moves from a party atmosphere to melancholy and nostalgia to anger and defiance. All of these emotions reflect the many facets of the Franco-Ontarian identity and its quest for the recognition of its rights since the nineteenth century, making this compilation album of the APCM a successful manifestation of the community.

Conclusion

Are we any closer to understanding Franco-Ontarian identity than we were at the beginning of this paper? Is the French language its defining feature? There can be no doubt that French is an essential part of the musical identity as perceived by a number of Franco-Ontarians. In order to fit the profile, a Franco-Ontarian artist must perform songs containing French lyrics and be able to address the audience in French. Yet the use of the English language in the everyday life of Franco-Ontarians, whether at work, home or during leisure activities, is also an important element in the definition of their identity and that can be observed in the fact that 91 percent of the community is bilingual. The rise in musical ethnic diversity within the group, with West Indies, hip-hop, rap, African rhythms, jazz, and blues influences, has also had an impact on its self-image. The incorporation of these new cultural ideas in combination with American culture, Québécois tradition and the Ontario reality all contribute to the definition of Franco-Ontarians. The search for an individual's identity is difficult in the best of situations due to the flexible and fluid nature of the concept. When a community attempts the same exercise, the complexity is exponentially increased due to the number of people involved. The rise of a distinct Franco-Ontarian identity is still in its infancy; yet music is undeniably part of this self-realization process. Franco-Ontarians demonstrate that music and performances in their mother tongue is essential in the expression of their beliefs, hardships, hopes, fights and celebrations. Although the pressures from outside forces are powerful, there are associations, advocacy groups and a determined populace who continue to work for the survival of the Franco-Ontarian culture.

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