

Waiting for Our Miracle: Gender, Race and Nationhood in Canada for Asia

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Abstract: Karen Pegley examines critical trajectories in and around the recent series of benefit concerts in Canada inspired by the Tsunami disaster in Asia in December 2004. A central theme throughout these concerts is the way Canadians define themselves in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and class, through events as seemingly innocuous as benefit concerts.

Benefit concerts—unfortunately—have become very familiar events in North America in response to recent global tragedies. The first mass-mediated benefit concert, *America: A Tribute to Heroes*, aired on September 21, 2001, just ten days after the terrorist attacks on the United States. Then, on the weekend of October 20-21, 2001, more concerts followed: *The Concert for New York City* was held at Madison Square Garden; and in Toronto, artists gathered at the Air Canada Centre for *Music Without Borders: Live*. Following the tsunami disaster on December 26, 2004, artists once again organized to raise funds for the victims in the twelve affected countries. On January 13, 2005, the CBC broadcast *Canada for Asia*; and, in the United States, *Tsunami Aid: A Concert of Hope* aired on NBC just two days later. These are only a few of the concerts held in response to these two horrifying events; many more concerts at the local level were held and likely will continue to be organized for many months—and perhaps years—to follow.

While millions of dollars have been raised for the victims of the 9/11 attacks and tsunami relief through these musical efforts, money has not been the only outcome: a less explicit process of self-definition also has unfolded through these concerts. That music can be used to forge a stronger sense of national identity has been long established; but little attention has been paid to the role of events like benefit concerts in this identity-forging process. However, as Inbal Perelson suggests, "The power to choose who is included in the category of national music becomes a way to socially define the nation."¹ While neither the *Canada for Asia* nor *Tsunami Aid* claimed to represent the music of either Canada or the United States, journalists and media outlets described the performers at *Canada for Asia* as the best Canada had to offer. *Toronto Star* music critic Ben Rayner, for instance, billed the show as "a full complement of A-list Canadian celebrities"² while the CBC's website listed the performers as Canada's "marquee" talent.³ That the government-funded CBC produced the concert also contributes to claims that the music—as well as the narratives and traditions embedded within it—spoke on behalf of the Canadian nation. How, then, did something as seemingly generous and innocent as a benefit concert define us as Canadians—by our gender, race, ethnicity, and class? What were the stories? How were we encouraged to receive them and identify with them?

In this paper, I explore these questions vis-à-vis *Canada for Asia*. Because this event occurred alongside and was informed by other benefits that aired over the previous several years, I will contextualize it by referencing *America: A Tribute to Heroes*, *The Concert for New York City*, and *Music Without Borders: Live*. A comprehensive analysis of *Canada for Asia* lies beyond the scope of this paper; therefore, for the sake of brevity, I will engage in a "sequence analysis": a close reading of the opening passages (the first hour of the concert) and the closing segment. This will include a discussion of the musicians, hosts, and guest celebrities. A consideration of the concert's television personalities is critical here, for, as John Langer argues, "[g]ood television personalizes whenever it can, rarely using a concept or idea without attaching it to or transforming it through the 'category of the individual.'"⁴ It is through these personalities that events on television are "encoded" and "made intelligible," thereby allowing the medium to operate ideologically.⁵ For example, if actor Kelsey Grammar were to appear on stage during a benefit concert, his identity might first register with

¹ As cited in Mark Duffett, "Going Down Like A Song: National Identity, Global Commerce and the Great Canadian Party." *Popular Music* 19/1, 2000: 6.

² Ben Rayner, "Celebrity care package: More than 150 national stars at tsunami benefit, actors, athletes and writers all share the stage," *Toronto Star*, Jan. 14, 2005: A8.

³ Accessed online at: www.cbc.ca/canadaforasia/updates.html

⁴ John Langer, "Television's Personality System," *Media, Culture and Society*, (4) 1981: 352.

⁵ Langer, 1981: 351.

audiences as “Frasier” from the television show of the same name and his status as a psychiatrist, rather than as actor. Accordingly, when people note the presence of a television actor, they also consider the personality that actor plays. In a similar fashion, my analysis of the opening and closing segments’ televisual flow will illuminate the hegemonic forces that dominated the night and contributed to a singular and unified Canadian identity.

Canada for Asia was recorded in two studios at CBC Toronto; this made logistical sense, allowing for a live performance in one setting while the equipment could be set up and taken down in the other. The master of ceremonies was CBC sports personality and host of *Hockey Night in Canada*, Ron McLean, joined by comedian and CBC personality Rick Mercer, and Québécoise celebrity interviewer and WNetwork host Sonia Benezra. Initially it might have seemed surprising that a hockey commentator would have been invited to be the host. However, with the NHL on strike in the 2004-2005 season, it is less surprising that McLean, whose salary is \$400,000 annually, was asked to participate in an effort to keep him busy (he had also been hosting radio spots, variety shows and even the controversial temporary replacement for *Hockey Night In Canada* entitled *Movie Night In Canada*).⁶ Nonetheless, it is critical that the host of a benefit concert is familiar, likable and worthy of the audience’s time and donations. That a hockey personality would be asked to fill this role tells us about the place of hockey within Canadian popular culture. I shall return to this point shortly.

During the performance of the opening song, the audience was presented with emotionally-charged images: screens to the sides of the stage showing CBC footage of destroyed villages, families and individuals, with hopeful shots of Canadian aid workers and military personnel working in devastated Indonesian regions. As the cameras panned across the performers on stage, the contrast between the fortunate (us) and the less fortunate (them) was intentional and striking. The song was a group performance featuring many of the night’s artists. This practice is not unusual: most benefit concerts open and close with “big name” artists. For instance, the *Tribute to Heroes* concert began with Bruce Springsteen and closed with Céline Dion, (followed by an ensemble number). *The Concert for New York City* opened with David Bowie, and closed with Paul McCartney and, again, an ensemble number. The Canadian *Borders* concert, however, was slightly different: Figure 1 outlines the live performance and televised order for the evening:

Figure 1: *Music Without Borders: Live (October 21, 2001)*

<u>Live Performance Order</u>	<u>Televised Order</u>
Choclair	Our Lady Peace
Bruce Cockburn	Bruce Cockburn
The Barenaked Ladies	Choclair
Our Lady Peace	Alanis Morissette
Alanis Morissette	The Barenaked Ladies
The Tragically Hip	The Tragically Hip

The live concert began at 6:00 pm with rapper Choclair, followed by Bruce Cockburn, the Barenaked Ladies and then rockers Our Lady Peace. The television program, however, *began* at 9:00 pm live on the CBC and MuchMusic with Our Lady Peace, followed by considerably shorter prerecorded sets by Choclair and Cockburn (one and two songs, respectively), then complete 40-minute sets by the Ladies, Alanis Morissette and finally, The Tragically Hip, followed by a final ensemble number. (How the Hip’s heightened status within Canada was built is complex, an analysis of which would include an examination of rock privilege

⁶ I say “controversial” because *Movie Night in Canada* has had huge ratings—on some nights drawing 1.75 million viewers, only 341,000 under what *Hockey Night in Canada* averaged last year. Lobby groups have petitioned the CBC to stop airing these movies, claiming that with this show in the evening listings, there is now too much foreign content in the prime-time slot. CBC programming head Slawko Klymkiw defended their practice as a “revenue strategy,” assuring lobby groups and fans of his loyalty to the game. As he stated: “Nothing replaces *Hockey Night in Canada*.”⁶ One wonders, however, why nothing would replace hockey when the ratings for movie programming almost equaled that of hockey programming within just a few weeks of its premiere. What this suggests is that according to many advertisers and perhaps many viewers of the CBC, *Hockey Night in Canada* is entirely replaceable. See Chris Zerkovich, “CBC’s movie programming not far off hockey audience,” *Toronto Star*, Oct. 19, 2004. Accessed online at: www.friends.ca/News/Friends_News/archives/articles10190402.asp

within Canadian music history narratives, governmental endorsement, and corporate (particularly beer) sponsorship at concerts, especially national Canada Day celebrations.⁷ Suffice it to say that it is also in the best interests of Canadian corporations, especially Molson, that The Hip be given special attention and achieve headlining status). The changes between the live and the televised lineup are very telling: when the concert went to air, rock music both opened and closed the event, with the more marginalized acts (by African-Canadian rapper Choclair and Bruce Cockburn, an older, politicized artist) following the big opening act, and not part of the show's "buildup" to the finale. The televised concert's flow, therefore, could then be described as a celebrity opening act, followed by more marginal acts, after which there was a slow buildup to the closing performers, who held the most coveted position of the evening.

Canada for Asia, like all of the preceding concerts, was designed to quickly draw in viewers, opening with Marc Jordan's "Waiting for a Miracle," which featured more than fifty performers. While small groups sang the verses, all artists sang the chorus:

We are parachutes tonight
Falling down against the sky
We are candles burning bright
Waiting for a miracle.

But what is the miracle and who is waiting? It was evident from the outset of the concert that Canadians—the parachutes—will provide the miracle through our donations and be the saviours of those half a world away. This narrative of Canada as compassionate and giving, in fact, permeated the entire program in both music and words. Actor Jason Priestly (formerly of the hit show *Beverly Hills 90210*) also stated early in the program that "over the years Canadians have shown that there are no borders on caring and compassion." These were but two of the constant reminders of what it means to be Canadian—having a collective, compassionate goal of helping those living in devastating circumstances.

Because the show opened with an ensemble, the subsequent performers, according to benefit concert protocol, likely possessed sufficient celebrity status to secure the viewing audience for the early part of the evening. It is not surprising, then, that the next act was the pop band The Barenaked Ladies performing their hit song, "One Week" (This song was one of the Ladies' biggest hits, reaching the *Billboard* Hot 100 Singles; it also received numerous industry nominations, including one for a Grammy Award for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group). In their typical playful style, The Barenaked Ladies played their song acoustically without a drum kit, demonstrating their clean vocalizations. While the band's performance was fairly typical, what happened after they finished triggered what would become another overarching theme that night: hockey. As the cameras panned back to host Ron McLean, McLean asked, "Tyler, where's your drum kit?" (Tyler Stewart, drummer for the band played only hand-held percussion). McLean continued, "Tyler Stewart with no drums here. He's a wonderful hockey player [and] I wouldn't want to cross sticks with him on the drums or on the ice..." It was the first mention of what would emerge as a critical theme of the opening sequence, and indeed, the entire night: the identification of hockey as an important Canadian identity marker.

In a fashion similar to that of the televised version of the 2001 *Borders* concert (also CBC-sponsored), the 2005 concert opened with a 40-minute set by well-known rockers Our Lady Peace, followed by the most marginalized artists of the night (Choclair and Bruce Cockburn). This format functioned to secure an audience and brush through the performances by marginalized performers so that the concert could then build to the finale. Figure 2, below, shows the line-up order for the first half hour of *Canada for Asia*:

Figure 2: Order of Appearance (Opening)

Ensemble opening: "Waiting for a Miracle"
Ron McLean, who introduces...
The Barenaked Ladies: "One Week"
Pinball Clements, who introduces...

Rick Mercer/Ron McLean/Alison Smith, who introduces...
 Adrienne Arseneault (in a CBC news report)
 Gordon Pinsent/Ron McLean, who introduces...
Oscar Peterson: "The Backyard Blues"
 Trailer Park Boys/Ron McLean
 Eric McCormack/Karina Huber
 Sonia Benezra, who introduces...
Mir: "Homeless"
 Ron McLean/Alison Smith, who introduces...
 Steve Puddicombe (in a CBC news report)/ Julie Payette
 Eric Peterson, who introduces...
Bruce Cockburn: "Joy Will Find A Way"
 Kids in the Hall actors Scott Thompson and Mark McKinney/Ron
 McLean, who introduces...
Shaye: "Beauty"
 Ron McLean who introduces Mike Myers, who introduces...
Rush: "Closer to the Heart"
 Rick Mercer/Paul Martin/Ron McLean/Wayne Gretzky
 Don Cherry who introduces...
The Tragically Hip: "It's a Good Life if You Don't Weaken"
 Ron McLean/Don Cherry/Jason Priestley/ Alison Smith who introduces...
 Steve Puddicombe (in a CBC news report)
 Cynthia Dale/ Colin Mochrie and Deb McGrath, who introduce...
Lunch at Allen's
 (Murray McLaughlin, Ian Thomas, Cindy Church, Marc Jordan): "Walking on the Universe"
 Rick Mercer/Margaret Atwood/June Callwood/Austin Clarke

This line-up shows how marginalized acts and cultures were incorporated into the dominant acts and cultures. For example, the Barenaked Ladies were followed by musical artists Oscar Peterson, Mir, Bruce Cockburn and Shaye. Each of the performers/groups in this second segment could be considered "peripheral" performers, like many of the guest celebrities to appear with them and like their counterparts who appeared in the same segments of the previous concerts: Peterson is a senior African-Canadian who performs jazz (appropriately, he followed another Canadian legend, actor Gordon Pinsent, linking this portion of the show generationally). After Peterson, actors from the odd-ball show *Trailer Park Boys* performed a short skit, depicting the negative stereotype of marginalized "white trash." McLean then returned to introduce Eric McCormack who appealed for our donations. It is important to note that McCormack plays the gay character Will on the hit show *Will and Grace*, thus introducing another marginal subculture. Following his appearance, the cameras returned to Karina Huber and then Sonia Benezra, who introduced the next pop-rock trio Mir. In her introduction, Benezra informed the audience that two of Mir's musicians (brothers Asif and Shehab Illyas) were born in Sri Lanka.⁸ Providing these details about the brothers, of course, also gave the impression of inclusivity and liberalism (as if to say, "we have people here from the affected area who are 'successful' artists within our country, so we must be progressive"). Following a short segment by McLean, Smith and Payette, actor Eric Peterson (also an older artist relative to the other performers that evening) introduced Bruce Cockburn, the oldest white male to perform in the concert and one of the few not within the pop or rock genres, clearly placing him on the margins. Placing Peterson, Cockburn (and Pinsent and Oscar Peterson) together in this early section served to keep the older folks safely grouped away from the later younger and more "important" acts. Cockburn was then followed by Scott Thompson and Mark McKinney from the CBC show *Kids in the Hall*. Thomson's gay orientation is eluded to when he jokes, "Bruce Cockburn...I love the way he pronounces his last name." Here, marginalized gayness—eluded to earlier with the presence of Eric McCormack—was more explicitly presented and indeed flaunted. Finally, McLean introduced Kim Stockwood, Damhnait Doyle and Tara MacLean, collectively known as Shaye, who closed off this segment. Shaye's presence was also atypical that night: while other female artists performed solo or in combination with men throughout the evening, Shaye was the only all-female singing group in *Canada for Asia*. It seemed appropriate, then, that they would conclude this second segment of marginalized performers and celebrities.

It was is at this moment, fifty minutes into the show that the tides began to turn: now the artists, speakers, and overall energy of the night shifted from Sri Lankans, African Canadians, women, seniors,

⁸ That a woman provides this information is significant and I will return to this point.

"trailer park" working class and gays, to white rock male performers, political figures and hockey personalities. Ron McLean began this third segment by introducing actor Mike Myers, whose role was to introduce the band Rush. Myers spoke of his pride as a Canadian, pointing out that he, like Rush, is from North York/Scarborough, thus establishing his relationship with the band. He made additional connections with the group, adding that

if you listen to *All the World's a Stage* [a 1976 live Rush album] you can hear one kid from Scarborough/North York in the background screaming 'Nighthawk!' which is my brother Paul and that was his band growing up in the suburbs of Toronto. [Rush is] an amazing band: for me they speak the international language...Rush, like love, is truly the international language, and I think they've been great artistic ambassadors to our country, the Dominion of Canada...

This introduction, then, established Rush's international status as well as the small Canadian male fraternity that included Rush, Myers and his brother Paul (indeed, Rush's extended fraternity among their male fans is well established). Male camaraderie was further reinforced during Rush's performance of "Closer to the Heart": performing with the band were two other actors/musicians: Mike (Bubbles) Smith from the *Trailer Park Boys* and Ed Robertson from the Barenaked Ladies. Both men played acoustic guitar, which did not signify power as much as an electric guitar, but perhaps that was appropriate: they were not equal to the talent of Rush's guitarist Alex Lifeson. Performing with Rush was clearly exciting for both men, for they began to act like exuberant boys in their presence of the band members.

This bonding moment was followed by a sequence of male commentators and political figures, including CBC comedian and political pundit Rick Mercer, followed by Prime Minister Paul Martin. Martin's speech reinforced the narrative of Canadian's generosity:

Canadians have displayed a remarkable generosity of spirit of solidarity...I have spoken ...with the leaders of some of the affected nations. They are grateful. They are moved.

Following Martin's speech, McLean introduced "Captain Canada" himself, Wayne Gretzky. Then when Gretzky's request for funds ended, the in-studio camera showed Don Cherry, already on stage. Cherry's appearance here is significant: a familiar figure to many Canadian hockey fans, he began as an NHL player, then became a coach, and now is a sports commentator appearing on CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada*. His outspoken—and occasionally outlandish—style has given him considerable notoriety. His popularity seems unquestionable, evident in his standings in the "Greatest Canadian" contest. In 2004, the CBC launched a campaign to choose "The Greatest Canadian," which collected 10,000 names. Among these figures were Tommy Douglas, a socialist political figure who invented Canadian medicare; Frederick Banting, discoverer of insulin; Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone; and Sir John A. Macdonald, the "founding father of Canada" who united French and English and facilitated the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Among such distinguished company, Cherry not only placed in the Top 10 at #7, but he also edged out both Macdonald (#8) and Bell (#9). Rounding out the Top 10 was another hockey legend, Wayne Gretzky. (To cultural outsiders, it might seem puzzling that on a voted list of the most important Canadians, two were hockey personalities, while none were women. The highest placing woman was singer Shania Train at #18. Nellie McClung, the activist who led the Women's Christian Temperance Union into a battle for votes for women, winning that right in 1916, placed next at #25.)

As the seventh-ranking "Greatest Canadian," then, Cherry is both well known and linked intrinsically with hockey culture. He was present at this benefit both to add his own weight to the celebrity power, and also, importantly, to introduce a band. Ron McLean began the honours, directing his attention to Cherry:

McLean: "As the proud Canadian that you are, you're the only man that's ever introduced these guys!"
Cherry: "...here they are, the greatest band in the world [as] far as I'm concerned. From Kingston, Ontario, the Tragically Hip!"

The "greatest band in the world," then, was introduced by a Top 10 Greatest Canadian. This is not the first time The Hip had been introduced by a famous Canadian figure: at the earlier *Borders* concert, they

appeared in the coveted final position and were introduced by CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge, one of the most recognizable media figures in Canada. Mansbridge, like Cherry, gave them a hero's welcome, introducing them as "the greatest musical chroniclers of our time." In each of these situations, then, one might argue that The Hip has gained and shared power through celebrity association, implicitly reinforced by the government's own cultural industry, the CBC.

Following the Hip's performance, the focus returned to Cherry and McLean. Cherry was also responsible for introducing the next speaker, actor Jason Priestley. This was a perfect segue from the hockey/white male domain to the broader realm of the social. What made this particularly smooth was Cherry's introduction of Priestley as "a good Canadian boy hockey player." This comment bridged hockey and acting, a more "feminized" profession, and allowed the concert to move seamlessly into a more inclusive and less male-dominated social sphere.

Priestley was followed by CBC news anchor Alison Smith, whose role that evening was to introduce reports by CBC correspondents. Women were limited that night, with female performers numbering about one third of male performers.⁹ However, more women than men made introductions and asked for pledges (although this role was largely non-threatening to the male-dominated performances). Like the previous benefit concerts, women's roles emphasized storytelling, including narratives of nurturing, human spirit and hope. As previously noted, when co-host Sonia Benezra introduced the band Mir, she told us of the band members' status as native Sri Lankans, facilitating an emotional moment as they began to play. Smith's role was made explicit at the concert's opening when McLean introduced her, stating that she was going to "help us with the storytelling." In this particular introduction, Smith explained that

...not only is the scale of this disaster huge—as I mentioned some twelve countries affected—but it's the fact that in many places everything is destroyed, roads, bridges, houses, airports, ports, all of the basic infrastructure that even supports a relief effort. It's all gone.

Her painful and emotionally-laden description of the devastation were followed by a news report by CBC correspondent Steve Puddicombe about a destroyed village in Indonesia, which included images of children, presumably many of whom are orphaned. To close this moving segment, actor Cynthia Dale read a letter from a Canadian aid worker in Indonesia thanking Canadians for their generosity and explaining the difference their contributions make. Dale gave voice to the aid worker, telling us that the first word said to her by the children she assisted were: "Thank you, thank you." The contributions of these women to the benefit, then, brought a compassionate—feminized—feel to the news stories, simultaneously heightening the narrative of Canada as the most compassionate of countries.

This image of Canada as a generous nation resonates throughout media coverage of Canadian foreign aid. As researcher Sherene Razack notes, representations of Canadian peacekeeping forges images of Canadians as a benevolent, generous people. But she argues that peacekeeping and aid is not as innocent as it may seem: it is now drawn as a colour line, with white nations on one side and "uncivilized" Third World nations on the other.¹⁰ Our image of a helpful, generous nation becomes clearer (and stronger) when it is reflected back to us, particularly by a cast of "grateful natives."¹¹ Although *Canada for Asia* was not a peacekeeping effort per se, there was no shortage of images of "grateful natives" that night—via letters and news reports—waiting for our miracle, for our parachutes to open. We were generous, and they were thankful.

Dale's story was followed by an acoustic performance by a group called Lunch at Allen's, which included Marc Jordan, Cindy Church, Ian Thomas and Murray McLaughlin. The shift from the electrified rock genre to the acoustic folk/pop once again reinforced the musical "feminization" of the energy: women traditionally have been discouraged from electrified musical production and encouraged instead to perform acoustic instruments, including the acoustic guitar and piano. As a result, electric, amplified performances like

⁹ This was the number of exclusive female performers who did not perform in a duet or group with male performers, compared to the number of exclusively male singers/groups.

¹⁰ Sherene H. Razack, *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 10.

¹¹ Razack, 2004: 10.

rock music has largely been rendered a male domain. The shift to the folk/pop genre, then clearly shifted the concert back to a space where both men and women could participate. Enter authors Margaret Atwood, June Callwood and Austin Clarke, and the hyper-masculinized hockey/rock space is clearly absent. The concert had segued to the next segment.

Hockey's pervasiveness throughout this concert may initially have seemed innocuous to many viewers: "the good ole hockey game," as Stompin' Tom Connors put it in the chorus to "The Hockey Song," has simply become naturalized within all avenues of Canadian culture. But what we often fail to recognize is the extent to which hockey is a male activity: despite increased numbers of girls playing the sport, female participation remains limited.¹² As Mary Louise Adams argues, men's entitlement to hockey is reinforced culturally, from our television commercials where girls are relegated to the sidelines, to the imbalance of media coverage paid to men's but not women's hockey matches, to the scheduling of ice time within community rinks where boys' hockey dominates.¹³

Moreover, at the elite level of the sport—the professional NHL—women are not permitted, as evidenced in the recent debate over the Stanley Cup. After the recent cancellation of the 2004-2005 NHL season, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson suggested that the women's national teams of Canada and the United States should play for the coveted trophy. In a CTV news report on this proposal, journalist Scott Laurie identified the Stanley Cup as "Canada's equivalent to the crown jewels, its holy grail with regal standing."¹⁴ He made clear the strong opposition to Clarkson's proposal and included an interview with Don Phelps, coach of the Calgary Canucks, who argued that "I think somebody here is suffering from a serious case of permanent jetlag. This makes no sense. I think it's about as revolting as inviting women to the NHL training camp." Laurie also included comments from anonymous people on the street, leading off with one (senior, white) man who commented that: "Well, Queen Adrienne can say many things. No."¹⁵ Here, not only do we get a sense of the opposition to women's access to Canada's "crown jewels" and to full participation in our (unofficial) "national" sport at the professional level, but Clarkson herself is ridiculed—and gendered as such—for proposing the idea. Elsewhere in our political system, women have not fared much better. Even former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien ignored women's desire to play NHL hockey, instead declaring that "every girl dreams of marrying an NHL hockey player."¹⁶ It seems that from our media coverage to our head politician to our municipal community practices, Gordie Howe was right all along: "hockey is a man's game."¹⁷

What makes this story even more complicated are the claims made of hockey vis-à-vis defining our national and cultural identity. It has been called Canada's national sport, but the significance of hockey is much deeper than that. As Tom Sinclair-Faulkner argues:

There is considerable evidence here to support the view that when one becomes a hockey fan or player [in Canada], one is doing more than "merely" taking up a game or entertainment. There is a sense in which one is justified in speaking of hockey as a religion...¹⁸

This is no typical religious practice, but rather an "invisible religion,"¹⁹ practiced and constructed within the framework of the nuclear family. If this is true, then what can we draw from this parallel between hockey, religion and Canadian nationhood? Or, as Adams questions,

¹² Mary Louise Adams, "The Game of Whose Lives? Hockey and the production of male entitlement," in *Artificial Ice*, edited by Richard Gruneau and David Whitson. Toronto: Garamond (forthcoming 2005).

¹³ Adams, 2005: 11-12. Adams' examined the distribution of ice time in Kingston, Ontario, where more than fifty percent of municipal ice time is given to minor hockey, and where in 2002-2003, boys' minor hockey received 278 hours per week, girls' hockey received 53 hours, and ringette received 12. Moreover, it may be difficult to challenge this imbalance, for the governing policy states that if a group had a particular number of hours one year, they would be automatically offered the same amount of ice time the following year.

¹⁴ CTV 11:00 News, Tuesday, February 22, 2005.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Adams, 2005:9.

¹⁷ Zander Hollander, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Ice Hockey* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970), 229.

¹⁸ Tom Sinclair-Faulkner, "A Puckist Reflection on Religion in Canada," *Religion and Culture in Canada: Essays by Members of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Slater (Toronto: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, distributed by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977): 401.

What to make of claims that "Hockey is the national id," as Richard Harrison has written, or that "Hockey is life in Canada," as author Roch Carrier has put it?...If hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white.²⁰

Thus, by reinforcing the hockey theme, the benefit concert reinforced this white masculinization of Canadian culture.

If *Canada for Asia* was any indication, life in Canada not only remains decidedly masculine and white, but rock-oriented as well. The closing sequence—the final half hour of the show—presented the culmination of the evening's three persistent narratives: the centrality of hockey to Canadian culture, a gendered social organization of males and females, and the compassionate Canadian identity. As pointed out previously, benefit concerts tend to open and close with big-name acts, and thus audiences should have expected the show to close with a celebrity performer, and a possible ensemble finale. This concert, however, differed from those described above: the last half hour featured performances by Sloan, Blue Rodeo, Molly Johnson and Andrew Craig, Bryan Adams, and finally, a duet between Bryan Adams and Anne Murray. This line-up started with rock-based bands, including Sloan (a rock/pop/punk band) and Blue Rodeo (a rock/country/folk band), then into a jazz/pop mix, then back to rock/pop music with Adams.

However, according to my argument thus far, the privileging of the white male would suggest that no female would perform in the final portion of the event, and yet both Johnson and Murray were included. But what differentiated the female from male performers was their introductions. Much information was communicated in these introductions, including the success of the bands and their validity as artists. Note the differences between three introductions in this last segment. CBC's Jihan Gameshi introduced Sloan by saying: "These guys have managed to mix great success with maintaining their integrity. They are the original Canadian scallywags, Sloan!" This was followed by McLean's introduction of Blue Rodeo: "Blue Rodeo is up next. I know we all love Blue Rodeo."

The format then changed, and for the only time in this last segment, an act was introduced by a personality *not* affiliated directly with the CBC: the Trailer Park Boys introduced Molly Johnson. I described this trio previously as an oddball group who fit well within the earlier marginalized section of the evening. Here they lend their "cultural outsider" status to Johnson's introduction: "This next performer is a multitalented blues, rock and jazz singer. She's performed with such greats as Ray Charles and B.B. King. Please welcome Molly Johnson." Here, the message was twofold: unlike her male colleagues on stage before (and after her), Johnson was validated not by reference to her musical integrity, but by the male stars with whom she previously had performed. Second, Johnson did not appear alone, but in a duet with African-Canadian singer/pianist Andrew Craig, who was not even mentioned in the introduction. Thus, through the Trailer Park Boys' introduction, the status of both a woman and the only musician of colour in the last segment were simultaneously diminished.

Following Johnson's and Craig's performance, McLean introduced Adams as if he were the closing performer that night: "All the way from London, ladies and gentlemen, you wanted it, you got it. Bryan Adams!" Adams performed his song "Open Road" after which McLean added: "You're a special guy, Bryan, and we really appreciate it..." and then prepared to introduce Anne Murray to the audience. That Murray concluded the show would seem to usurp the power given to Adams. Anne Murray, however, does not perform alone, but in a duet *with* Adams, and, despite that they performed a seemingly equal duet, Adams was still ascribed a special status as the only performer to sing in two songs the entire night. Moreover, in McLean's introduction to Murray, her participation, like Johnson's before her, was diminished:

Steve Sloan and I had the great pleasure of working on Anne Murray's interactive two-hour special on the CBC a year ago. Steve had to miss a hockey game that night and his son's in another huge hockey game tonight. He's into the playoffs playing Bantam 'A' hockey for the Markham Waxers. Tonight's the critical night for Steve's son's team so this will be good luck for the team...

¹⁹ Sinclair-Faulkner, 1977: 399.

²⁰ Adams, 2005: 1-2.

Murray's performance, then, seemed relegated to giving the hockey team good luck for the playoffs. After Murray and Adams sang "What Would It Take?" host Ron McLean concluded the evening with a final reference to Canada's exceptional generosity:

The late Pierre Berton used to say: unlike the pioneers of other countries, Canadians ... fought our frontier struggles against nature. We didn't fight it against humankind. Maybe that's why we're so wonderful in this regard. All of Canada with your warm hearts, what a job you've done for Asia.

While *Canada for Asia* was seemingly a benevolent concert to raise funds for people a half world away, it was also an event that reinforced three narratives for the Canadian viewing audience: that Canadians are generous and helpful in their humanitarian efforts despite a spotty track record for international aid and peacekeeping; that hockey is the domain of white men and linked intrinsically with rock music; and finally, that one of the primary roles of women is not to participate fully and equally in the performance of music and the communication of "news" but to be relegated to the realm of emotions: women's function that night was to add a "feminine touch" to the humanitarian stories, encourage viewers to emote, and in turn, to give. As the final chords to the closing duet rang in our ears, audiences may have wondered what it *would* take to effectively challenge the primacy of hockey, rock music, male privilege and whiteness buried and protected within our self-definition of the peaceful, tolerant, and an inclusively "multicultural" nation.

Clearly, when each of these social narratives appears in isolation, it is naturalized and its effects rendered harmless. What could possibly be wrong with a Canadian Tire commercial where the father takes his son to the cold rink in the early morning? Or the mother who heats up pre-prepared food for her son and the other boys in the rock band, who have been practicing hard in the garage all afternoon? But these narratives do not function in isolation; instead, they function collectively, creating spaces which we are then told are special and meaningful and where women's presence is distasteful, even "revolting." We must question how all of our popular culture industries fortify one another, perpetuating privilege within our national narratives, and reflect upon the seemingly innocent yet highly exclusionary power relations inherent to our sense of being Canadian.

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