THIS IS IMPORTANT! :
Mitch Podolak, The Revolutionary Establishment, and the Founding of the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

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ABSTRACT

Mitch Podolak founded the Winnipeg Folk Festival (WFF) in the summer of 1974 as an extension of his decade long involvement with the Trotskyist party in Canada. This thesis is based on interviews with him in which he explained his motivations and revolutionary expectations for the WFF, a new breed of Canadian folk festival, significantly different from the first generation of Canadian folk festivals. Podolak adapted Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution to create a Revolutionary Establishment capable of supporting an expected revolution in Canada. He built upon the Communist Party of the United States' definition of folk music, a strain of folk which became successful, ironically, due to its integration with the capitalist economy. The Revolutionary Establishment would be undermined but the WFF would remain politically charged. The WWF would become an important social and political event and an admired and influential model for second generation folk festivals in Canada.

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Introduction

The creation of the Winnipeg Folk Festival (WFF) in 1974 was Mitch Podolak's first attempt to fuse his ten years of Trotskyist political training with his love for folk music.[1] His intention was to create a Canadian folk festival which would embody the politically resistant nature of the Trotskyist international movement for the purpose of challenging the Canadian liberal capitalist democratic system on a cultural front. Heavily influenced by the American Communist Party's use of folk music, Podolak believed that the folk song and its performance were socially important. This importance, he believed, stemmed from the social cohesion created within the festival performance space. According to Podolak this space, when thoughtfully organized, had the ability to create meaning. In other words the relationship between the artistic director, the folk singer, the folk song, the folk song lyric, and the festival audience during the performance creates the meaning of the song.

This thesis will argue that the founding of the Winnipeg Folk Festival (WFF) was Mitch Podolak's attempt to create a *Revolutionary Establishment.* This term refers to an organized space of resistance with a continuous nature that combined the complex political and organizational strategies of the Trotskyist movement with the American Communist party's strategic use of folk music.

To make this case, this thesis will situate Mitch Podolak and the WFF in relation to two folk music traditions: folk festivals in Canada and the Communist Party's use of

[1] See Mitch Podolak biographic outline as Appendix A for more information.

folk music in the United States. These traditions provide the context necessary to understand how and why Mitch Podolak created a folk festival in Winnipeg. In explicating the role of the artistic director in the creation of meaning at a Canadian folk festival, this study will contribute to a better appreciation of the socio-political importance of such figures. It is hoped that this pioneering effort to examine the impact of an artistic director of folk festivals will be useful to future investigators in the field and provide them with directions for further research.

Literature Review

In this study I will contribute to the scholarship of ethnomusicology by providing the first history of the construction of a second generation folk festival in Canada. Previous Canadian research in this area focused on the Canadian Pacific Railway series of festivals initiated by John Murray Gibbon and Marius Barbeau in 1927. This was the first generation of Canadian folk festivals. There is very little written directly about Canadian folk festivals after this period, what I refer to as the second generation of folk festivals in Canada, and even less about the WFF. Pauline Greenhill has written the most on the WFF and was responsible for one special edition of the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin,* one article in the *Canadian University Music Review* and one entry in the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music. There are also two online encyclopedia entries by different authors.[2] The articles in the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin's* special edition

[2] "Finding a Place for Research at the Winnipeg Folk Festival" (Greenhill), "On Your Mark ... The Audience Place at the Winnipeg Folk Festival" (Hagen-Smith), "La Cuisine/Art: Knowing My Place as a Volunteer at the Winnipeg Folk Festival" (Carignan Svenne), "Stop the Folkin' Music!: How I (Kinda) Found My Place at the Winnipeg Folk Festival Camping" (Macaulay) in *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (1995). Pauline Greenhill; Snapshot: Winnipeg Festivals, *The United States and Canada, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 3, Garland Publishing, New York, p. 1232. Greenhill's "Backyard World/Canadian Culture: Looking at Festival Agendas," in *Canadian University Music Review* 19/2 (1999). Wikipedia entry found online: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnipeg_Folk_Festival>. *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* found online: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params>

discuss the WFF from a subjective point of view from within the festival without any discussion of the larger organization of the festival; neither interviews its founder nor looks at the context from which the festival originated. While this methodology has provided a valuable picture of aspects of the WFF it was not envisioned to be a detailed study which looked at the construction, socio-political significance or history of a folk festival in Canada after 1930. Further, there has not been an exploration of the influence the Communist Party of the United States (US) may have had on Canadian definitions of folk music. The American experience with the Communist Party's use-definition of the folk song has been dealt with in detail (Denisoff 1971, Lieberman 1995, Reuss 2000), but no research has attempted to ascertain its possible influence across the border in Canada.[3]

Methodology

This thesis uses historical methods to reconstruct the history of folk festivals and political organizations that supported the use of folk music in Canada and the progressive, left-wing use of folk music in the US to provide the background for the creation of the WFF. It relies on secondary sources for the analysis of the CPR Festivals in Canada and the role the Communist Party of the US (CPUSA) played in the American definition of folk music.

Due, in part, to the effects of the Cold War, there has been little academic work on the role of organized left wing movements in Canadian culture and no academic work which deals with the direct or indirect influence the Trotskyist party has had on Canadian musical culture. The chapters below which deal with the creation of the Winnipeg Folk

[3] Folk music has many contested forms and definitions. I am using the term "use definition" to represent my contention that the definition of a folk song is best determined by social agreement that the song form is 'folk' as opposed to taxonomic categorization according to criteria established by 'expert' musicologists. This definition is both more flexible and closer to how, within the folk festival world, the definition of folk is flexible and evolving rather than static. The Use-definition also seems to be geographically and temporally contingent, i.e. the definition of folk music will be different in a different place and/or different time.

Festival are based on extensive recorded interviews with its creator and first artistic director, Mitch Podolak. This oral history component demonstrates Podolak's politically charged intentions for the Festival. Additional interviews with Gary Cristall and Ian Angus corroborate some of Mitch Podolak's memories.[4] Like all sources, oral history has particular biases, and this evidence has been used with an awareness of the fallibilities of human memory. Oral testimony has been checked against textual sources whenever the author has been able to locate written documentation. These include archival records from the Ross Dowson Fonds at the Library and Archives Canada and documents from the Socialist History Project Archives that help to provide background for Podolak's experience within the Canadian Trotskyist movement.

The creation of the WFF can be seen as a point of intersection for many lines of history. The history of folk festivals in Canada, the use-definition of the folk song, the Communist Party's support of folk music beginning in the 1930s, the history of the Trotskyist Party of Canada and the history of Jewish Canadians all had an impact on Mitch Podolak and the creation of the WFF. The oral history of Podolak provides insight into the personal life of a festival founder and artistic director. It also allows for an examination of the progressive left-wing influence in Canadian folk music. This influence should not be underestimated. Mitch Podolak went on to found or co-found the Vancouver Folk Festival, Edmonton Folk Festival, Calgary Folk Festival and the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. He was also the founder of Barnswallow Records, the record label that financed the release of Stan Rogers' first album. The impact that Mitch Podolak has

[4] Gary Cristall co-founded the Vancouver Folk Festival with Mitch Podolak and was a fellow Trotskyist. Ian Angus is the director of the Socialist History Project and was a Trotskyist as well. Cristall and Angus talked about their interactions with Podolak and the larger Trotskyist issues leading up to the time Podolak started the WFF. Cristall discussed the WFF from the point of view of the founding of Vancouver Folk Festival and the role Podolak played. We discussed critical issues Podolak mentioned, especially the WFF's relationship to the Mariposa Folk Festival.

had on Canadian folk culture is almost beyond measure. He is still working with festivals and special projects around Canada and continues to affect the shape of Canadian folk culture today.

Mitch Podolak presents the creation of the WFF within a dialectical interpretation of history. His telling of events draws on Marxist theory, adapting the concept of dialectical materialism to explain how he came to found the Winnipeg Folk Festival. Whereas the classical Marxist version of dialectical materialism provides an explanation for macro-historical change, in this case it is adapted to explain historical development on the micro level of individual and collective biography and agency. Material conditions shaped Mitch Podolak's early life and led him to adopt a radical political philosophy and to immerse himself in the folk music scene in the United States and Canada. His creation of the WFF was his interpretation of a dialectical process: confronted with the state of folk music in Canada (thesis) and his understanding of folk music and its potentiality (antithesis), he became an agent of synthesis, creating the WFF as a means to solve a contradiction. The contradiction and resolution were, in one sense, a synthesis of abstract concepts of the meaning and potential of folk music. These abstractions, however, were grounded in concrete historical events.

Since dialectical materialism played such a central role in Mitch Podolak's thought, two terms need to be explained before going forward: (1) the dialectic and (2) materiality. The dialectic deals with the contradiction between states. In Hegel's description of the dialectic he wrote: "It [conventional philosophy] does not comprehend the diversity of the philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of the truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements" (Hegel 1977, 2). In Hegel's exposition of the dialectic, the truth of a social formation becomes knowable through its development, not in a static description of its existence. The discovery of truth is found in the conflict

between two positions, not in the rightness or wrongness of either point. The conflict itself is negated and a new position emerges from the conflict. The dialectic requires an examination of these states of being which can be described in historic periods or epochs. These in turn are marked by characteristics which provide a basis for discourse. Essentially this process is taxonomical, but only to the point of developing a description of any social formation for the purpose of discussion. Podolak absorbed this dialectical approach to history and it influenced his goals for folk festivals in Canada and how they should be structured to attain these goals.

Marx adapted Hegel's concept of dialectics. As defined in Marx's *Capital* and *Grundrisse* treatises, the factors that define each state of being, or period of history, have a material basis. Mitch Podolak believes that material forces work on individuals and position them as members of particular groups.

Podolak was a Jewish Canadian born at the end of the 1940s on Spadina Avenue, Toronto, in a predominantly Jewish working-class neighbourhood. Prior to 1950 persons of Jewish heritage tended to live together in certain areas of that city. While they interacted with persons of other heritages in schools and at social gatherings (Keillor 1994, 7-8), knowing about the Holocaust and being called a "dirty Jew" were a part of being a Jewish Canadian. Podolak was disenfranchised in both ethnic and class terms. According to the concept of dialectics that he would later learn, he was part of an ethnic underclass positioned in antithesis to the prevailing WASP liberal capitalist thesis. He would in time begin to apply dialectical materialism autobiographically, self-consciously positioning himself as an outsider in opposition to the prevailing system. Having recast this concept from the realm of political economy in personal and cultural terms, it was then a simple matter to go one step further and apply it to the socio-cultural realm of folk music.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter One introduces a number of issues that highlight the difficulty in defining folk music and explores a number of different ways music has been used to celebrate the Canadian state as a member of the British Empire and later as a nation. The artistic director's (AD) role in the organization of a festival is introduced to provide an example of how, through that person's effort, meaning is created within the festival space. The chapter ends with an overview of the use of the folk song within Canada.

Chapter Two illustrates the connection between the American folk song and progressive social movements. The Communist Party's introduction to the song style and their adoption and support of artists within the form led to the creation of influential publications and performances. This chapter discusses economic accommodations that the Communist Party needed to make in order to successfully broadcast its message. Chapter Three addresses Mitch Podolak's personal history with left wing politics and the impact the American Communist Party's use-definition of the folk song had on him. Also, Podolak's personal history with the Trotskyist party is examined to provide a historical and philosophical basis for his founding of the Winnipeg Folk Festival. Economic negotiations continue to be important in this chapter as Mitch Podolak, like the earlier Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), is required to interact with the economic system he is philosophically required to reject.

Chapter Four explores the creation and organization of the WFF, how he conceived it as a *Revolutionary Establishment,* its success as a model for other folk festivals, and how the model failed to lead to revolution. The artistic director's role is more fully explored to uncover the connection between this individual's personal and political motivations and how those political goals are understood, negotiated, and redefined by the Canadian folk festival audience.

Finally, the Conclusion explains Mitch Podolak's belief that *this is important!* Podolak, in his role as founder and artistic director (AD), is compared to earlier festival organizers, revealing a similarity of belief in the political power of a folk music event. The philosophical differences between these artistic directors show explicitly how the political motivation of the AD is expressed in the social organization of the festival, creating an extra-musical meaning in the performance, which can be used to promote a political message, be it colonial, nationalist or socialist.

Chapter 1: Folk Music and the Canadian Folk Festival

The process of defining who makes folk music and what folk music is in Canada has been affected by a series of academic discussions in three main schools of folklore: the English School, the German School and the American School. Each of these academic groups has influenced, and been influenced, by the others' performance and definition of folk music. This process will be discussed with a focus on the three schools' attempts to define folk music and how these attempts have influenced the Canadian study of folk music. This chapter will also show how an artistic director can affect the definition of folk music and how that definition may be influenced by the artistic director's political motivations. Folk music, as a taxonomical term, examines the music produced by 'the folk.' The folk song, being lyrical, is included under the larger umbrella of folk music, which also includes instrumental music of many forms and many traditions. Folk music at different times has included most European musical forms that are excluded from the canon of art music and all of the non-art music forms of North America that existed prior to the advent of the recording industry. Folk music, however, has grown to include a remarkable number of musical forms which exist somewhere between art music and popular music and at times even includes examples of both. The process of including a musical form under the auspices of 'folk music' can be a politically charged enterprise which may involve including music produced by a disenfranchised group as 'folk music' for the purposes of raising political support for their cause The study of 'the folk' began in Germany with the publication of Johann

Gottfried Herder's two-volume work *Volkslieder* (1778,1779). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's famous collections of folktales followed this work in 1812. Herder's work focussed on what the *Volk* produced and who they were. In his view they were peasants and rural artisans, and could also be grouped by ethnicity. "For Herder and for many subsequent writers on such subjects ... the culture of the Folk, their tales and music and crafts, encapsulated the natural 'cultural core' before it was complicated (and perhaps corrupted) by society" (McKay 1994, 11).

In the next section literature dealing with the popular definition of the folk song is introduced and its central arguments discussed. This provides a context for the term folk music as it is used in this thesis. I will argue that folk music is defined by its use when the performer and audience agree that the music is folk. This is what I refer to as a use-definition.

Defining Folk Music

Any discussion about the role of a folk music event like the WFF has to take into consideration numerous threads of discussion about the nature and definition of folk music. This alone could be the focus of a thesis in the discipline of ethnomusicology. As Bruno Nettl wrote: "Where does folk music fit among the musics? It's a question that leads us to the more general issues of musical taxonomies. But how does one gather data to draw conclusions? There is curiously little literature on that subject" (Nettl 2005, 359). The *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music*[5] has attempted to fill this gap in literature over its history, with varying results. Taxonomic distinctions have been forwarded (Spalding, et.al., 1988), but unsuccessfully. Any discussion that attempts to formulate a

[5] The *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* was previously called the *Canadian Folk Music Journal*. To avoid the confusion that could be created by jumping back and forth between names, I will use the present name of CJTM throughout this thesis.

set of rules to encompass the definition of folk music has been frustrated by the many different points of view from which scholars approach the subject.

This definition is further frustrated for academics by the sheer variety of identities claiming membership in the production of folk music. These different individuals and groups represent many countries, cultures and political positions. It is not difficult to see that an Appalachian claw-hammer banjo player, an English ballad singer and a Venezuelan protest singer come from different worlds of 'folk music.' However, at an event sponsored by the Ottawa Folk Festival in 2006, all three shared the same stage. This is not unusual in the world of folk music and has been a standard practice throughout the second generation of folk festivals.[6] The temptation is to throw out all attempts at definition. As Ken Parsons wrote: "A recent survey of a selected group of CFMS [Canadian Folk Music Society] members has revealed that nobody really *cares* what is and isn't called folk music. The predominant sentiment is 'I know what I like and you can call it whatever you want'."(Spalding, et.al., 1988) This position, however, doesn't provide us with much of a tool to explain why different performers feel comfortable playing together but will not play in a different style of music within their geographical framework. In other words, if it makes no difference, then an English ballad singer could easily perform with a punk band from the United Kingdom, but this does not happen. On the other hand, there is a bond expressed in folk music across geographies, language and culture. The exploration of what this bond is, or could be, remains a very important defining characteristic of folk music. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to

[6] The second generation of folk festivals chronologically began with the founding of the Miramichi Folk Festival in 1958. However, the American urban folk music festival, the Newport Folk Festival, founded in 1959, largely inspired the Mariposa Folk Festival, founded in 1961. The American model placed emphasis on the singer-songwriter and a new urban understanding of folk music, and an outdoor location, which I will discuss at more length below. Miramichi kept many of the characteristics of the first generation of Canadian folk festivals, presenting 'traditional' folk music at predominantly indoor locations; until the 1980s when it started to program more of its urban counterparts. See Miramichi Folksong Festival website: http://www.miramichifolksongfestival.com/id1.html [accessed 20 May 2006]

deal directly with this question, but its examination of the political goals of an artistic director in the creation of a folk festival suggests that extra-musical considerations may contribute to this bond.

Folk music in Canada has an intimate relationship with the folk festival. The definition of the folk festival space and the definition of folk music are intertwined; each relies on the definition of the other. The difficulty of defining folk music, and by extension the folk festival space, can be seen in the contrast between the English school of folk music and the American school. Canada has been more influenced by the English School, and, by extension, the German school. The English and German schools of folk music sought to collect folk songs for a number of reasons, but one was certainly to provide a basis for composition: "From Ernest Gagnon to Ernest Macmillan and Kenneth Peacock (and continuing to the present generation of ethnomusicology students), composers have been acknowledged not only as collectors and researchers but also as "arrangers" of folk material: their inclusion under the rubric "ethnomusicology" (as well as the general exclusion of such creative work from biographical articles or surveys of "composition") risks conflation with stereotypic notions of simple-folk-in-need-of-sophistication" (Diamond, 1993). The American School,[7] through the Composers Collective and Charles Seeger, attempted to do the same but were thwarted by the popularity of the unionist folk singer.[8] "Progressive movements in American politics had

[7] The American School grew out of what is now referred to as the First New England School of Composition which started with William Billings' *The New England Psalm-Singer* (1770). This was the first song book devoted solely to compositions by a single American composer. The musical style was unique due in part to the extremely limited contact with European models. By the 1820s Lowell Mason had managed to establish a European canon in New England which produced imitations of European musical styles with varied success. Dvorak challenged this later derivative approach to found a true American school of composition in the 1890s. American composers moved towards embracing American musical styles, Native American song traditions, and folk songs as a source for composition. The Composer's Collective was part of this American School of composition which looked to create compositions from American sources (Keillor 1995).

[8] This process is discussed in full detail in Chapter Two.

played an important role in helping America rediscover [its] national heritage, a music that was 'well-preserved, still valid, still growing more acceptable than ever. It was a great shame, he (Lloyd) concluded, that so little of this genuine folk music was available on record in Britain" (Gregory 1999/2000, 3).

The initial difficulty in defining folk music, then, lies in the contrast between the progressive political 'folk music' and the historical artefact 'folk music.' In an excellent article by David Gregory that deals with A.L. Lloyd's conflict with the English School, we can see the initial impact of this division. Gregory quoted the British folk song scholar A.L. Lloyd's English definition of the folk song in 1949: "Folksongs are usually reckoned to be songs handed on for generations by word of mouth and of books or off sheet music, songs which are continually changing as each successive singer's memory dictates, songs which are the common property of at least a group of people and the products of a single author" (Ibid.). Even within this definition there was a history of conflict. "Since its inception before 1800, the term and the concept have meant different things to various constituencies, as already illustrated (for German culture alone) by Julian von Pulikowski (1933), who showed, in a large study of the term, how the concept was batted about by politicians of the left and right, by social reformers, nationalists, educators, antiquarians, musicians theoretical and practical, even already in nineteenth-century Germany" (Nettl 2005, 359). It is no surprise then that the popular success of progressive movements would continue to impact the definition of 'folk music' in English language scholarship.

Lloyd's interest in the progressive use of folk music came from the US. "Lloyd clearly admired greatly the poet laureate of the hobo song and organiser and minstrel Joe Hill" (Gregory 1999/2000, 7). The International Workers of the World's (IWW) most famous bard, Joe Hill, and the publication of the *Little Red Songbook*, up to and

throughout the 1920s, captured the imagination of some scholars.[9] Lloyd's interest, like mine, moved from the performance of folk music to the organization of groups of folk singers. In attempting to acknowledge the role of the performance of the folk song as its meaning, Lloyd looked at the role of the folk festival in the American folk music revival of the early 1930s. With his interest in progressive American folk music, Lloyd was confronting the British tradition of folk song collection and analysis epitomized by the Child school. Child's work on ballads exerted an enormous impact on the scholarship of 'folk music.' Child's student Kitteredge would influence the Lomaxes (John and Allan) in the US, the Canadian collectors Roy MacKenzie, Helen Creighton, Marius Barbeau, and John Murray Gibbon, and the English folksong and dance collector Cecil Sharp. To illustrate this influence, Sheldon Posen related: "When I found a ballad during my PhD work I felt like I had 'made it.' As an ethnomusicologist we don't necessarily go out looking for them anymore, like we used to, but they still hold a power when you discover one."[10]

Lloyd was confronting the 'folk song as artefact' model, which placed a heavy emphasis on the collection and preservation of the folk song and little emphasis on the sharing and performance of it. However, modern recording technology had introduced the transmission of the folk song on purchasable recordings. Lloyd was among the first British scholars to embrace the use of this technology as a way to share the folk song. Many scholars in the British school believed, as many still do, that the folk song *must* be orally transmitted to remain a folk song. Lloyd, influenced by the work Alan Lomax had undertaken in the US with field recordings and radio performances of folk singers, was challenging the British school's stand on technologies' role in the transmission of the folk

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[9] In Chapter Three I will discuss the role the IWW and the *Little Red Songbook* had on the progressive 'song as a weapon' model of folk music and the Communist Party's involvement in folk music.
[10] Sheldon Posen, conversation with author, 6 October 2005, Ottawa.

song. "In saying this Lloyd was proposing a radical re-interpretation of Sharp's conception of tradition. If radio broadcasts and 78 rpm records were legitimate vehicles by which tradition might be passed from generation to generation, then English folk music too might be re-invigorated, similar to the American revival" (Gregory 1999/2000, 9). Lloyd attempted to move away from the long held belief that folk songs were somehow dead to allow some room for the modern expression of folk songs and their integration into contemporary culture. This push required a partnership between the producers of folk song culture and the institutional networks of cultural distribution. These institutions had not taken to programming folk songs like they had in the US: "the BBC and other cultural institutions supported high-brow culture to the almost complete exclusion of traditional culture" (Ibid.).

Lloyd was not immediately successful in his drive to expand the acceptance of folk songs in academia, but the conversation that he had sparked would find its way to Canada some years later by way of a festival with which he was involved. As a Canadian folk singer, broadcaster and member of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music, Tom Kines attended the 1966 Keele Folk Festival at Leeds University in England that was hosted by the British Folk Song and Dance Society of which Lloyd was an active member. Kines was impressed by the week of 'folk-life studies' which followed the festival and attempted to transport that model back to Canada (Conlon 1993, 4).

The conversation about the definition of folk music again came to a head at the Canadian Society for Traditional Music 1987 annual general meeting in Quebec City. The discussion centered on a discussion paper presented by David Spalding (CJTM Vol.16 1988) in which he presented twelve criteria for what constitutes folk music. His criteria list is unimportant for our discussion, but it is interesting to note his belief that such a large list was required. The reactions to his list were mostly negative.

Ethnomusicologist Jay Rahn responded: "Virtually all of Spalding' s examples are restricted to English-language genres deriving from a certain British-American tradition. Further, if one viewed Spalding's list as an accurate picture of Canadian folk music, one might be led to conclude that it served only two functions: as secular entertainment and as a pastime for amateurs or hobbyists" (Spalding 1988, 3). Rahn elaborated further about the role of the Society itself: "The Society's third objective 'to stimulate international understanding through a common interest in folk music,' can only begin to be realized if the organization stimulates inter-cultural understanding within Canada itself" (Spalding 1988, 3). Lloyd and Rahn proposed that the academic discourse of folk music become involved with the performance of folk music and thereby come to an understanding of 'folk music' within a model of interaction. This concurs with what I am choosing to call the use-definition.

Tom Kines challenged the definition of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music and his push to bring performers and academics together further complicated the understanding of folk music. In 1992, Kines said: "I am disturbed at the apparent division in the Society between the 'folkies' and the 'academics.' The Canadian Folk Music Society used to have a larger base of performing musicians. Around the time of the name change to The Canadian Society for Musical Traditions [1989] (to reflect musics other than strictly 'folk'), performing folk musicians felt less at home and dropped off, while academics linked to universities increased" (Conlon 1993, 4). The division between the performance of folk song and the study of folk song in Canada was becoming more formalized. Kines was concerned about both the definition of folk music and the divide between academics and performers. As a performer and academic, he likely felt that a working definition of folk music required the agreement of both camps with an interest in folk music. He hoped that a fusion based on shared interests would help to bring the

discussion of what is 'folk music' into an envelope which could serve as a foil to the abstractions of the academy. Unfortunately, his attempt was largely unsuccessful.

For the average Canadian student of folk music there is very little literature that deals with folk festivals. Descriptions are usually very short and assume prior knowledge. Kallmann's *History of Music in Canada* is an example:

> Public interest in Canadian folk song was first aroused by a series of festivals of song, dance and handicraft in the late 1920's. Since then a number of song collections and, after 1950, long-playing records and concerts by professional folk singers have popularized a representative number of Canadian songs among a new, urban audience, scattered over all provinces of Canada. (Kallmann 1960/1987, 267)

Alternatively, folk music is presented in strictly historic terms: "Transmitted by voice alone, folk song by its very nature left few written traces of its history throughout the centuries" (Kallmann 1960/1987, 25). A third description would lead one to believe that folk songs are still available in some places but can be collected as material culture, separating them from any possibility of social use. "It has been estimated that of the seven to ten thousand songs that have been collected in the province of Quebec in recent years, fully nine-tenths are derived from songs brought to Canada before 1673" (Kallmann 1960/1987, 25). This sort of description, fuelled by the collecting activity of many early music scholars and folklorists, emphasises the collection and storage of 'folk songs.'[11] This variety of description of the folk song underlines the difficulty in discussing it.

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[11] The collection of Anglo-Canadian folk songs really began with Roy MacKenzie in Nova Scotia in 1909. After him came Helen Creighton, Elizabeth Greenleaf, Grace Mansfield, Maud Karpeles, Gerald S. Doyle, Margaret Sargent McTaggart, MacEdward Leach, Louise Manny, Edith Fowke, Barbara Cass-Beggs, Richard Johnston, Philip Thomas, Fern Pickering, Ken Peterson, George Proctor, Mrs. T. Koshetz, Jaroslav Rudnyckyj, Robert B. Klymasz, Walter Kymkiw, Kenneth Peacock, Matti Salo, Magnus Einarsson, Philip Tilney, and Carmen Roy. This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives an idea of who was in the field leading up to the founding of the WFF. Although there are collectors here that focussed on Norwegian, Icelandic, Japanese, Aboriginal, Gaelic and even French language songs, it is interesting to point out that they get lumped together with Anglo-Canadian collectors, while Franco-Canadian collectors are regarded separately.

The argument about what defines folk music inevitably becomes entwined in the human organization of individuals interested in the theme of 'folk music.' Bruno Nettl sums up the discussion of American folk music in a language that works equally well for Canadians: "The term 'folk song' has strong emotional connotations in Western society. In American culture of the last fifty years, it stands variously for class, political orientation, ethnicity, tradition, purity, social attitude, environmental consciousness, and contrasting views on education, as discussed in detail by Phil Bohlman (1988). It has signified heritage, cultural integrity, a symbol of better things to come, a way to keep an enclave group intact, a way for people from many groups to communicate" (Nettl 2005, 358). Many of these factors that Nettl outlines point to the use of the 'folk song' in progressive social organizations like the folk festival, which, as noted in the introduction, has been little-studied in the Canadian context.

The definition of folk music rarely relies on a simple criterion of performance agreement. If a folk festival stages a Venezuelan protest singer, a claw-hammer banjo player and an English ballad singer and they are each considered folk in the folk festival space, then the definition of folk music must, like language, be decided by convention. The definition of folk music within this thesis will rely on this approach, which I will refer to as a use-definition. Folk music is accepted as such within the confines of the folk festival, that is, by extension, the decision of the folk music community. This use-definition approach does not discredit any other attempts to define folk music but does provide a more inclusive and less taxonomical method. Nevertheless it is worth keeping in mind other attempts to define folk music as context for Mitch Podolak's understanding of the folk song and folk music.

Canadian Folk Music

In the years preceding the debate over the definition of the folk song in the Canadian Society for Traditional Music, Janet McNaughton (1982) and Brett Kines (1988) brought the early festival organization work of John Murray Gibbon and Marius Barbeau to the foreground. Their Master's theses examine the early programming work that Gibbon and Barbeau had undertaken (McNaughton 1982) and Gibbon's work with the CPR (Kines 1988). Gibbon and especially Barbeau were very active in the collection and dissemination of folk music. Marius Barbeau gave a speech in 1929 in which he summed up the work in French language folk song collection:

> Our field is as vast as it is picturesque and diversified. You may judge of it from the extent of our collections in the National Museum at Ottawa--more than 6,500 records, and the work of compilation still goes on. The origin of our songs alone is a fascinating subject that might arrest our attention. How these valuable relics came down to us from a past age, were brought over from provincial France by the early settlers about three hundred years ago, and since were conserved by generations of reminiscent singers and adapted to new surroundings in the New World--is indeed a colourful and romantic story. It forms a chapter in the history of New France and Canada, our history, and no less fascinating than the best. We would be better Canadians if we knew a little more of these heirlooms of our country. The story of their recovery at the moment when they were falling into oblivion might also be heard with interest; for they have fallen into disuse and survive only in the memory of old people; and we might describe spiritedly our search for them in the Quebec countryside, and our plans for their preservation for posterity in our national collections. (Barbeau 1930, 101)

Barbeau was not satisfied with simply collecting folk songs. He imagined the folk song could be used as the basis of inspiration for the art song: "They [folk songs] may still conquer the day, with deserved and permanent recognition, inspire our musicians, poets and dramatists, and thus become the corner-stone of a true national school of music and art" (Barbeau 1930, 102). Barbeau goes on to say: "We are most sanguine in our anticipation that Canada some day, through the labours of her artists and writers, may

acquire culture" (Ibid.). What is evident in this statement is Barbeau's belief that culture is a product which may be acquired. On the other hand, Gibbon's belief, as we will see, was that folk songs are the expression of culture itself. This distinction between the use of folk song as the basis of composition or high-art in (Barbeau's view) and the folk song as exemplar of ethnocultural character (Gibbon's view) was the beginning of a division of views in Canadian ethnomusicology, the domestic root of the divide between scholar-collector and artist-performer. It is also the most likely reason why Gibbon and Barbeau ended their working relationship. Gibbon and Barbeau had different perspectives on the uses of folk music. While both continued to promote the performance of folk music, Gibbon moved towards presentation of the music and culture of immigrant groups, or 'new Canadians,' while Barbeau concentrated on collecting and recording indigenous folk music of Canada. Barbeau, Gibbon, and others like them would lay down the foundations for the study of ethnomusicology in Canada and the US.

The remainder of this chapter will explore the creation of the first generation of folk festivals in Canada and present the context from which these festivals emerged. A history of folk festivals in Canada leading up to the Winnipeg Folk Festival will provide a jumping off point for an analysis of the construction of the WFF. I will argue that a shared genre label creates assumptions that undermine the complex and changing characteristics of folk music 'people and music.'[12]

The Music Festival

The term folk festival likely came from a 'festival of folk music,' a construction also used for other genres, as in a 'festival of chamber music.' Using the phrase often led

[12] This phrase is taken from P. Greenhill's article for the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* Vol.3, but as she attests in the article it is taken from the organizers of the Winnipeg Folk Festival itself. These words likely come from Mitch Podolak. His definition of folk music as being 'people and music' which he used during our interview is, most likely, the source for this binary corollary.

to an abbreviated form: 'Chamber music festival' or 'folk festival.' This described nothing about the structure, extra-musical intent, motivation or political drive of the event itself.

The history of music festivals in Canada predated the folk festival. As one historian explains:

> Most festivals were concentrated efforts of music-making in which co-operation rather than competition was the ruling principle. The entire musical resources of a city would be called into action and reinforcements imported from neighbouring towns. Giant choruses and orchestras with over one hundred players would thus be assembled. In Montreal such music festivals were held in 1877 and 1895, in Toronto in 1886 and 1894, in Quebec in 1883, and in Hamilton in 1887. One may be inclined to condemn all these affairs as having been spectacles rather than concerts, but it would be a serious error to underestimate their importance as stimuli to musical enterprise. (Kallmann 1960/1987, 175)

It is interesting to note that in Kallmann's reading very little attention is paid to who organized the festival. The fact that a great amount of effort is required to stage such events suggests that there are strong motivations behind them. Histories of such events often overlook what inspired them. This inquiry will begin to address this void by demonstrating the influence individual artistic directors have had on Canadian folk festivals and their political motivations. As we shall see, the largest early music festival in Canada was dedicated to the celebration of Canada within Empire, the first generation of folk festivals celebrated nationalism, and the second generation of folk festivals, shaped by Mitch Podolak, would be as politicized as their predecessors.

Canada: A Celebration of Empire

In *The Music of Canada,* Timothy J. McGee summed up the period from Confederation through to the First World War (WWI): "Confederation marked the beginning of a new stage in Canadian history. It signified that the country was now politically, economically, and culturally an entity separate from its colonial beginnings"

(McGee 1985, 81). He didn't mention the city festivals that Kallmann had described. "Canadian musical identity was in the process of formation. Composers in Quebec adopted French models for their works; those in Ontario adopted English examples. All of them, however, took into account the tastes and needs of their public, and often chose topical Canadian subjects as their inspirations" (Ibid.). The 'needs' of the public were especially taken into account when they coincided with the political, economic and cultural interests that were building society at that time. The Canadian Government celebrated the new King's coronation on Saturday the 9th of August 1902, with a proclamation that read: "King's Coronation, a day of general thanksgiving and rejoicing."[13] During the period that led up to the coronation of the new king, a Canadian composer of British heritage by the name of Charles A. E. Harriss was working towards the production of a Dominion-wide series of concerts called the "Cycle of Music Festivals of the Dominion of Canada."[14] In the popular histories of Canadian music, by MacMillan (1955) and Kallmann (1960/1987), the connection between the coronation and the concert series a year later was not mentioned explicitly even though organization began a year earlier, in 1901, coinciding with coronation preparations. These Canadian music histories do not mention the coronation at all as an important event. However, Harriss had composed the "Coronation Mass Edward VII for these Festivals by gracious permission of His Majesty the King."[15] Given the length of time it takes to compose and

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[13] A list of government proclamations and their dates are available online: <http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/jfa-ha/graces_e.cfm> Accessed on November 20, 2005.

[14] Title comes form the online version of the *Encyclopedia of Canadian Music*: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0000862>. Accessed on December 4, 2005. It is not mentioned by this 'official' title in the Kallmann history and the brochure for the festival refers to it as a 'cycle of music festivals'. It is interesting to note the desire of the *Encyclopedia* to come up with the name after the fact.

[15] This quotation is taken from *List of British Works to be performed in Canada during the Cycle of Music Festivals* brochure found in Appendix B.

publish an original score it is safe to assume that there was a connection between the *Cycle of Festivals*, King Edward VII, and Harriss' commitment to Empire.

The Harriss festivals were held in 18 cities from coast to coast in 1902. Kallmann's history does not indicate who was financially involved in the festivals. He alluded to "where it performed at the Canadian National Exhibition..." and goes on to say: "The most outstanding aspect of the tour was the British patriotism displayed by Canadians, said to have been more British than the British themselves. In the course of some 70 concerts, 'God Save the King' was requested to be played 150 times, 'Rule Britannia' 126 times, and 'The Maple Leaf" 120 times. All patriotic songs received wild applause" (Kallmann 1960/1987, 217). Surely, the maintenance of Empire, on the cultural front anyway, was part of the early festival experience. Britain's economic and military predominance was being challenged in this period by rival imperial powers, and an imperialist movement had sprung up throughout the British Empire, advocating imperial solidarity as the answer to the mother country's problems. These festivals played upon the British cultural heritage of the majority of Canada's English-speaking population to buttress support for the imperialist cause in Canadian politics. It is instructive that in this early example the festival was linked to identity dissemination. This festival can be viewed as bringing together the 'folk' of Canada to engage in a music festival. Urban musicians performed the orchestral and choral music presented at these events. These local 'Dominion' musicians performed music of British origin (except for the works by Harriss himself) for the purpose of celebrating their presumed British identity.

While content of the festival is important in understanding the meaning of the event, it is less important to that meaning than the 'rationale' behind organizing the festival. Harriss is presented as the creator of an enormous work, a three-year

undertaking, for no reason but the performance of the music (and even this is left to the reader's imagination). He presented music by collecting groups of people and enabling them to make 'English' music. The repertoire's importance comes more from its suggestive meaning and historical connection than it does from the texts of the material.[16] It is music that is largely imported from England and performed by citizens of the Dominion of Canada, and includes material that is composed by Harriss himself. If we recall that he was working at the height of the imperialist movement, when influential English Canadians were pushing for closer ties within the Empire, French Canadians were resisting, and, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier was trying to make both sides happy, it is possible to discern a political agenda behind the performances. A staunch cultural-imperialist working to reinforce cultural connections to Britain, Harriss was a politically charged figure--an early example of an artistic director staging a festival for political ends.

The First Generation of Folk Festivals

Marius Barbeau, the famous collector of Franco-Canadian folk song and First Peoples' music, and John Murray Gibbon[17] of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) are considered to be the founders of the first generation of folk festivals in Canada. These began with Barbeau's use of the concert stage to present folk music on March 18 and April 24, 1919 with his first major effort titled *Veillées du bon vieux temps.* These concerts in Montreal represent the first time folk music was presented in an urban concert hall setting (Nowry 1995, 187). Barbeau's acceptance of an invitation to work with

[16] The repertoire list from the Harriss' *Cycle of Music Festivals* is found in Appendix B.
[17] John Murray Gibbon worked as European publicity agent for the CPR from 1907-1913 and in Canada from 1913-1945. See the entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada.*

Gibbon and the CPR in 1927 was the beginning of the first generation of folk festivals and a use of the folk for nationalist purposes.

To present folk music in a festival structure, John Murray Gibbon and Marius Barbeau made use of the same organizational skills which Harriss had used. John Murray Gibbon is an important figure in this regard. Through the work Gibbon undertook to create the first generation of folk festivals, one can examine his aims and to a degree his vision for a folk music festival.

Gibbon changed the festival structure that Harriss had created. Harriss organized a one-day urban event that moved across the country. Gibbon created a multi-day event in different cities. Even though different choirs and groups of instrumental musicians were assembled in each city, the Harriss events can be seen as being the same show, transported to different locations but maintaining much the same program of music, while the Gibbon events may or may not have had the same sort of consistency or connection to one another.

According to Janet E. McNaughton's estimate, the CPR sponsored sixteen major folk festivals across Canada from 1928 to 1931. These festivals were a first for three reasons: (1) they presented folk music instead of art music; (2) they were used for the benefit of a private business; and (3) each festival stimulated the collection of a 'folk' history that could then be used to bolster a sense of nationality among the patrons of the event. What is not original, as we have already seen, is the scope of the endeavour. The Harriss concerts played across the entire country, from coast to coast, not just in central and western Canada.

There is much more research available on John Murray Gibbon and his festivals than there is on the Harriss events. This allows us a better opportunity to investigate the first generation of folk festivals. Marius Barbeau, in his own words, discusses the

beginning of the folk festival: "An opportunity for channelling pioneering efforts in this direction occurred three years later when (the now late) J.M. Gibbon asked me to organize with him, under the joint aegis of the National Museum and the Canadian Pacific Railway, a Festival of Folk Songs and handicrafts at the Chateau Frontenac, Quebec, in May, 1927" (MacMillan ed. 1955, 33-34).[18] Barbeau does not go on to explain the philosophical underpinning of this endeavour.

First the CPR – then the folk

The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) created the first generation of folk festivals in Canada as a tourism promotion scheme. The CPR was an influential Canadian business in the early 1920s, the owner of rail-lines, hotels, and property across the country. The first joint project undertaken between Marius Barbeau and J.M. Gibbon was at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec. Kines describes its origins as follows:

> In the first days of 1927, the General Manager of CP Hotels expressed his desire to Gibbon for an early spring festivity of some kind to launch the tourist season at Chateau Frontenac. Gibbon must have caught his breath. Memories must have washed over him—of the Holt Renfrew exhibit of spinners and weavers he saw in the Chateau's lobby nearly twenty years before, of folk music performances likely seen in England prior to moving to Canada, of Barbeau and his vast collection of folklore, of fiddlers, dancers, and Charles Marchand singing old habitant songs—as he suggested they hold a four-day Folksong Festival, complete with all the trimmings. Such a festival would be a publicity agent's dream, especially for someone as culturally motivated as was Gibbon. (Kines 1988, 108)

Tourism was the motivator for the folk festival. The goal was to organize a spectacle that would draw people into the locale and make them want to stay there for a number of days—to introduce the hotel and promote the region to people

[18] There have been some issues as to who initiated this event. Kines, *John Murray Gibbon: Chief of Many Sides* (M.A diss., Carleton University, 1986), 109 goes into detail over the argument and discrepancies that were presented. He concludes, as do I, that Barbeau's words in MacMillan's 1955 *Music in Canada* (University of Toronto Press) should be the final say of this issue. J.M. Gibbon was the initiator of the Festivals in Quebec; however, it was Marius Barbeau who had initiated the use of folk music on the urban concert stage.

outside the locale so that people would want to travel to the hotel and have their entertainment provided. This is what the CPR did. It advertised the festival where it had train-lines around Canada and the US. To make the most out of its marketing money it bundled the price of the train fare and the accommodations at the Chateau into one ticket price.

J.M. Gibbon

J.M. Gibbon was born in Ceylon in 1875, the son of a prominent tea planter. He was educated at Oxford and began work with the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1907 as a European publicity agent, a position that he held until 1913. From 1913 until 1945 he worked as a general publicity agent in Canada. During the 1920s and 1930s he was a principal figure in the new wave of interwar cultural entrepreneurs, "his key contribution lay in his attempt to reconcile the proliferation of various groups of immigrants within the country with the drive to develop a nationalist mythology" (McKay 1994, 57).

Ian McKay explains: "As the director of propaganda for the Canadian Pacific Railway, he [Gibbon] had a clear interest in creating tourist extravaganzas, and for him, tourism, commerce, and 'the Folk' were inextricably bound" (McKay 1994, 58). There is a desire to describe the work that Gibbon did with these folk festivals as being strictly commercially minded, a pejorative analysis which could position Gibbon, as McKay does, solely as a cultural exploiter. On the surface there seems to be little defence for him. If you consider Gibbon and the CPR as being synonymous then it would be accurate. McKay doesn't allow much room for Gibbon's personal agency. Was Gibbon simply a tool for the CPR?

I will present Gibbon as an individual with agency--a man astute enough to incorporate his personal social desires within an activity that would yield the financial reward the CPR desired. Charles Seeger, who would later play a similar role in the US, said: "If anybody or group runs along beside me, I gave them loyalty in proportion to whatever of my goal they share with me. When it comes to government, I have never departed from the conviction formed in my school days: government is at once a desired good and an unavoidable evil; individuality is to be valued above collectivity, but owes its very being to collectivity" (Pescatello 1992, 116). Gibbon would create a festival that would fulfil two contrasting motivations and would achieve outcomes satisfactory for both him and the CPR.

The exploration of Gibbon that follows outlines the correlation between his political ideology and his interest in and creation of folk festivals. Gibbon as a politically astute artistic director provides a prototype for Mitch Podolak's role as founder of the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

Gibbon and the Fabians

The Fabian Society was founded in 1884[19] and was named in honour of the Roman General Quintus Fabius. The General's military strategy against Hannibal was to delay the battle until the right moment-- a strategy that best embodied the Fabians' strategy as a political movement. Fabians believe that social decisions ultimately rest in the hands of a few powerful members of society. Those leaders can therefore be identified and influenced on a socialist path and society can move peacefully towards change. The commitment to social justice can be seen in the

[19] *A Short History of the Fabian Society,* is available online on the Fabian society website: http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/About/history.asp Accessed on February 20, 2006.

personal and professional lives and read in the many published documents of notable Fabians. As one commentator has described them: "They were earnest, romantic and middle class—characteristics not uncommon in society over the next century. Their aim was 'to help in the reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities'" (Fisher 2000, 1). Their membership included notables like George Bernard Shaw, George Orwell, H. G. Wells, and sympathisers like the famous economist Keynes. Their society was instrumental in the founding of the British Labour Party which brought nearly 200 Fabians to the House of Parliament in a 1945 landslide victory.

Fabians have been credited with modelling the 'Welfare State' through their work to create social programs like the introduction of a minimum wage in 1906 and the National Health Service in 1911. 'Permeation' is a central tenant of the Fabian Society. *Permeation* is a belief that by patiently setting out a rational case for change a 'permeation' of institutions by social reformist ideas will take place. The thinking citizen would, over time, embrace such thought and be won over to the side of change. The 'inevitability of gradualness' was the philosophy of missionary educators, wedded to reform rather than revolution, through collectivist solutions that they believed they could urge upon reforming governments. The Fabian Society was very active in all parts of English academia and members were teachers and students in many prestigious schools, even founding the London School of Economics.

Gibbon and Barbeau, who both studied at Oxford, were very likely to see eye to eye on the importance of social issues. As Kines relates in his thesis: "One need recall Gibbon's association with the Fabians before and after leaving Oxford, and

his latter efforts to unite fellow outdoor enthusiasts in singsongs around Canadian campfires, to illustrate the pervasive nature of internationalism in the lives of its disciples" (Kines 1988, 104).

Barbeau later studied in France with the pre-eminent scholar Marcel Mauss at La Sorbonne. According to Fornier, Mauss was also a deeply committed socialist:

> Marcel Mauss was foremost a scholar, but a scholar who never lost interest in what was happening around him. Unlike his uncle, he was actively engaged in politics from his university days. A member of the Groupe des Étudiants Collectivistes (Collectivist student group), of the Parti Ouvrier Français (French workers party), and of the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary socialist workers party), he supported Émile Zola during the Dreyfus Affair, was a contributor to *Devenir Social* and *Mouvement Socialiste*, became a reporter for *Humanité*, and published articles in *Populaire* and *Vie Socialiste*. Little is known about the role political activity played in his life, particularly the place of the cooperative and socialist movements he participated in. (Fournier 2005, introduction)

Kines goes on to assert that: "It is reasonably safe to assume that Gibbon brought Fabian influenced national/international romanticism with him to Canada, and that Barbeau, having been exposed to the same schools of thought while studying in England, could reach accord with Gibbon and his ideas to develop and promote Canada's folk arts" (Kines 1988, 105). 'Romanticism' and 'internationalism' might be connected, but is romanticism necessarily at the heart of the folk festivals? There is a third way to read this position. Briefly examining the roots of Fabian thought will show they believed that an understanding of history could be a tool for contemporary understanding, by re-presenting members of the voiceless majority, the folk. "Because barriers of geography and changes of social life can block the knowledge of a rich orally-transmitted tradition, the folklorist can play the role of an initiator. ... We wish that these musical expressions of song and dance continued

and created in Canada be heard in order to inspire composers" (Barbeau/Massicotte (1920) as translated by Keillor in press, n.p.).

Gibbon and the Folk Music Dialogue

The staging of the first generation of folk festivals reflected Canadian social history through folk song and the material culture of the folk arts Amateur artists and artisans were presented to middle-class educated spectators in the same venue as professional high-culture artists. The music, stories and crafts, inspired by rural Canadian life, could be used to educate the middle class to the historic realities of life faced by working class immigrant Canadians. The festivals were calculated to provoke a new social awareness of the changing demographics of Canada.

To use Gibbon's own words: "The encouragement of Folk Festivals [first generation] is a good thing, as these remind the younger generation of New Canadians that they have a heritage of music and handicraft which is worth preserving" (Gibbon 1938, 424). During Gibbon's time Canada was a very dynamic country. The face of the nation had been changing rapidly leading up to the years of the festivals. The CPR was interested in promoting tourism; Gibbon was interested in helping to create a different type of country. He was interested in creating a country that allowed individuals to hold on to the social history that they had brought with them and to forge a new *unity of difference*, a cultural mosaic, instead of mimicking the melting pot to the south. Gibbon was concerned with the American 'Melting Pot.' He warned: "Experience shows that if a younger generation is Canadianized too rapidly, there is a loss of understanding between parents and children which is not good for family life, the basis of society" (Gibbon 1938, 425). Due to his association with the CPR which promoted immigration and settlement of non-Anglophones in the Canadian West, Gibbon knew first-hand the

ethnocultural reality of the country and extrapolated this as the basis for a new Canadian nationality. Gibbon, in his work to support the notion of a Canadian Mosaic in his festivals and later in print, was among the first to support a full-blown pluralist idea of Canada in contrast with the popular belief in the necessity of assimilating non-Anglo-Saxons based on the assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority. "He also went out of his way to alleviate fears of unassimilability by discussing individuals' assimilation as well as the 'cement' of common institutions which bound the Canadian mosaic together" (Palmer 2000, 125).

The Folk Festival and Nationalism

To find a way to preserve cultural history and embrace difference while still providing the necessary illusion of unity Gibbon grabbed the title 'Canadian Mosaic' from an American writer, Victoria Hayward. The title was used a second time by Kate A. Foster, "who made an extensive survey of the foreign-born, or 'New Canadians', as they were coming to be called, for the Dominion Council of the Y.W.C.A...in 1926" (Gibbon 1938, ix). Gibbon's *Canadian Mosaic* similarly surveyed the country and described the culture of every group that had immigrated to Canada. He showed that the groups that came to Canada had rich histories and cultures and were bringing valuable attributes that would make Canada a stronger and better country. Today, however we could also read his work as being the worst kind of biological reductionism typical to Western thought pre-Hitler because much of the language describes the racial characteristics of each group of new Canadians. There was a similarity, however, between the pages of the *Canadian Mosaic* and the stages of the first generation of folk festivals in Canada. Gibbon believed that:

> *To know a people*, you must know its history and origins, just as to know an individual person requires knowledge of his parents, his upbringing and his career, as well as the house he lives in and his surroundings. That is why, if we are to understand the Canadian people, we must know more than just the geography and scenery of Canada, and the customs and habits of Canadians. We must also study their racial origins. (Gibbon 1938, viii)

Gibbon took this position further. The sentence could very well have started: '*We should know a people*'. He made sure to include prominent members of Canadian British Society in the festival model. Gibbon was politically astute enough to "advertise this Festival as under the auspices of some Music Association. Mr. Beatty happens to be the Honorary President of a Society known as the Society for the Advancement of Music in Canada, of which Vincent Massey is the President" (Proctor 1980, 19). The work that Gibbon did to attach prominent people to the Festival movement paid off. Public reaction to the first generation of festivals was very positive. The Great Depression hit in 1930 and the CPR Folk Festivals went into decline, but they left a lasting impression on Canadian culture.

Reactions to the first generation of folk festivals suggest that audiences responded as Gibbon had hoped. Gibbon's folk festival performances were seen to be more than entertainment, as one magazine article from 1930 explained: "In these days when all the world is talking of peace, one cannot help being impressed by the influence exerted for peace by these festivals. Not only the New Canadians are made to think and feel Brotherhood, but their people in the older lands will hear of these things and will perceive a spirit of brotherhood, within Canada."[20] The music, then, while important, creates meaning in conjunction with spectacle. The collected performances as organized by Gibbon, as artistic director of the festival, form yet another larger performance.

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[20] C.B. Robertson, "Artists All! – From Many Metals We Are Forging a Spiritual Consciousness Which is Canada," in *The Canadian Magazine* 73, no. 1 (Toronto: Hugh C. MacLean Publications Ltd., 1930), 46.

Folk Nationalism: A Celebration of Multiculturalism

Canadian Mosaic provides us with a valuable insight into how Gibbon viewed the work of folk festivals in the 1930s. In the decade that followed the end of the CPR festivals he was obviously still interested in them:

> The spade work in the promotion of Folk Festivals was done by the Canadian Pacific Railways with a series staged at Quebec, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Banff, Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto. The idea has been carried on by various clubs in various places, such as the Rotary Club at Port Arthur and the Kiwanis Club at Kirkland Lake. Mrs. J.T. McCay has organized an impressive Folk Festival at Vancouver, and the Council of Friendship stages something of the kind at its annual Conference. The Church of All Nations also is active in this field. The Catholic School Commission organized a colourful pageant of New Canadians at Lafontaine Park, Montreal, in connection with the King's Birthday in 1938.
>
> Although the weather proved a handicap, an interesting Folk Festival was initiated on Dominion Day, 1938, at the Exhibition Grounds, Toronto. Supplementing a display of handicrafts, an elaborate stage presentation was made in cooperation with the Native Sons of Canada and the Daughters of Canada, various groups of performers being welcomed by a Master of Ceremonies. Nearly 200 dancers and singers took part, including 20 Danish folk dancers, a Finnish Choral Group numbering 24, the Young Peoples Italian Choir of the United Church of Canada comprising 34 voices, a demonstration of Sokol by a Czechoslovak Society, gay groups of Spanish and Macedonian folk dancers, and a brilliant Ukrainian ballet in six movements, worthy of any stage – the climax of the whole being a tableau representing a Mosaic of the Canadian races, all singing "O Canada" and "God Save the King. (Gibbon 1938, 425)

The artistic director, then, was more than just the person who programmed the event. That person created the spectacle, imbuing the event with a meaning beyond the lyrical and music content of the songs performed therein. The artistic director chose the performers for the event and scheduled the performance space and time within the schedule of the festival. Just as the Harriss festivals were philosophically attached to the celebration of empire, Gibbon's festivals were meant to support a shared, multi-cultural, pluralist version of Canada. Most groups represented in his festivals were of European

heritage, but Gibbon did make space for First Peoples of Canada, if not the Chinese and others of Asian origin.

Folk Music Goes to School

The CPR festivals, the beginning of the first generation of folk festivals, came to an end after the Great Depression began. Gibbon turned his attention to promoting the role of folk song in education. This shift of focus would embed the collection of folk music material inside the educational strategies of various provincial governments in Canada. Folk music would become supported by the state and, in years to come, these published folk songs came to be seen by some, like Mitch Podolak, as artefacts different from the folk songs performed by the folk traditionally. The collection and institutionalization of folk music, which requires the recording, writing, and in some cases arranging, editing, and reharmonizing by university, government, or business sponsored academics separated the folk music from the folk. Gibbon believed that this process helped people understand each other, Podolak believed the opposite, that this folk music was a sanitized version of the *people's* history captured and made a servant to a nationalist agenda. A brief survey of the process that led to the institutionalization of folk music in Canada will show that folk music, in they style Gibbon championed in the first generation folk festivals, did come to support a nationalist project and would provide a point of conflict which helped to differentiate the second generation of folk festivals in Canada.

Gibbon's work on the folk festival helped to further its popularity. Music festivals and exhibitions became popular in many rural parts of the country, finding support from the provincial departments of education (Green, Vogan 1991). Gibbon's push for a national pluralism takes a strange twist when it is adopted by the provincial governments.

Instead of supporting a national wide pluralism the folk song becomes wedded with a provincial nationalism, or regionalism, which props up cultural differences. Gibbon worked to help bridge differences through the creation of sites of cultural sharing, the folk festival. In the hands of the provinces, the folk songs became an emblem of regionalism that equally served the pluralist conception of nation. In 1991 Nancy Green and Paul Vogan published *Music Education in Canada* which surveyed Canadian music education provincially. This section is heavily based on the small section of their research that dealt with the folk song in education.

In New Brunswick schools in 1928 a new course of study listed *Canadian Folk Songs* by Gibbon in its course listing. The Rural Division of the Nova Scotia department of Education supported the creation of festivals in the early 1930s and supported the publishing of Helen Creighton's first publication, *Folk Songs of Nova Scotia.* While not yet a province of Canada, Newfoundland used its own regional folk songs in its school system.

Elsewhere in Canada other innovations took place. In 1955 R.J.Staples [21] was already a long time director of music for the Saskatchewan Department of Education. He was a promoter of collected songs from around the province and published them in a songbook called *Saskatchewan Sings of Jubilee.* These songs were then taught over a weekly radio program and were incorporated into a pageant. Reportedly, an estimated hundred thousand people were united in this celebration broadcast (Green, Vogan 1991, 326).

[21] R.J Staples was the Supervisor for Music of Saskatchewan Schools from 1949-69. He had worked in an advisory position with the music board since 1940. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada.* Available online at: http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0003299 Accessed on February 28, 2006.

G. Roy Fenwick, Supervisor of Music for the province of Ontario, approached Gibbon, well known for his role in the promotion of folk songs, to write two books: *Northland Songs* (1936) and *New World Ballads* (1939). In 1935, Fenwick had created competitive and non-competitive music festivals that showcased the good work that the schools were doing. Songs dealing with traditional occupations were often discussed. Fenwick was responsible for bringing new technology to the instruction of music. Gramophones were used in the classroom to help further the instruction of music. The developments in Ontario under Fenwick would have an impact on music education and to some extent cultural programming in Canada for years to come. "By 1960, CBC had a Children's Department and there were series for primary, junior and intermediate levels" (Newman 1988, 61-1). The publication of songbooks, which in many cases were compilations of previously collected material, also provided an opportunity for the collection of new folk song material, although much criticism has been levelled against these publications, including their reliability as educational strategies. Gibbon's *New World Ballads* were not collections of folk songs at all but compositions by him based on existing tunes with questionable historic themes. As Newman notes, the Canadian content of texts authorized for use in Ontario schools until the mid-1970s was questionable (Newman 1988, 70).

Gibbon's support of folk music in the school system provided a model for folk song collectors to follow. According to Green and Vogan the best collection of Canadian songs was *Folk Songs of Canada, Choral Edition, Book One* by Richard Johnston and Edith Fowke. Edith Fowke, best know as a folk song collector and early ethnomusicologist, would have an enduring impact on the understanding of folk song in the school system in Ontario. This book would be found in households all over Ontario and would inspire and educate generations of children in Ontario. This book very closely

represents Gibbon's presentation of the folk song. Many French folk songs are translated into English as well and the book does include a couple of 'aboriginal' songs, although it is unlikely that they are actually aboriginal songs. The book also presents an odd tune entitled, *White Man Let me Go*, which has a caption that alludes to the song likely being written by a white man feeling bad for 'Indian' prisoners.

Gibbon's work takes a strange turn at this point Although we can see traces of Gibbon's original ideas to bring cultures closer together, the printed page does not allow for the same kind of social transmission that comes from the festival structure and the live performer. Gibbon's desire to broadcast song and culture to create a pluralist nationalism becomes somewhat transformed in the process. Nevertheless, it served to inculcate Canadian schoolchildren with the idea that there was a Canadian 'folk,' an indigenous essence for regional and national identities.

Canada: A Celebration of Nation

Gibbon's desire to use folk song as a tool for understanding and national cohesion caught on: "In the 1960's and the 1970's, as nationalistic sentiments grew, more Canadian folksong collections were found in classrooms and on government listings"(Newman 1988, 99). As nationalists became more concerned with the United States' influence on Canadian culture, more attention was paid to Canadian folk music by national bodies like the CBC and national folk songs were distributed across the country: Newman's analysis of music textbooks shows a sharp increase of Canadian content during the 1980s (Newman 1988, 103).

Some activity for collection and study of folk music largely spear-headed by Barbeau began in the 1930s. The encouragement of more Canadian content came from associations such as the Canadian Folk Music Society (formed 1956) and the Canadian

League of Composers (created 1951). In addition, additional research of Canadian folk and aboriginal musics took place in universities after 1960 (Newman 1988, 85). Slowly folk songs found their way to students in the system. Beginning in the 1940s radio programming on local CBC stations would present folk music, sometimes for school broadcasts, and books of older 'folk song' collections were being published. Yet the performance of folk music was not promoted as part of this academic interest. Few collectors during this time would make the transition from performer to academic and back. Marius Barbeau, who sang during lectures and also recorded for Folkways records, and Tom Kines, who performed at festivals, for the National Film Board, the Canadian Broadcast Corporation, Folkways Records, and Electra records, were exceptions rather than the rule.[22] However, the work that these few individuals were able to accomplish is astounding. In an article written about Tom Kines in 1965, we are able to see the dedication to folk music performance that was characteristic during this period in Canada:

> When the National Film Board made a cartoon strip illustrating Jack Was Every Inch A Sailor, it was Tom Kines who recorded the song. In 1959 he took a tape of it to the Elektra Company in New York, and the outcome was his first commercial record, Maids and Mistresses (and incidentally, the only time an unsolicited audition tape has resulted in an Elektra recording).
>
> He was then asked to take over the Ed McCurdy series, When Dalliance Was in Flower, and spent several months working on the project. On arrival for recording sessions, however, he found the company had re-written some of the songs in a manner he didn't approve, so he bowed out.
>
> An invitation to record for Folkways followed, and for them he made Popular Songs of Shakespeare's Time (which initiated his book), followed by An Irishman in Americay. For the past five years, Mr. Kines has done 26 programs a year for the CBC, as well as a television series. Right now

[22] There are many other names besides Gibbon, Barbeau and Kines worth discussing here. Helen Creighton, Edith Fowke, and Kenneth Peacock, only to name a very few, collected substantial numbers of folk songs. Edith Fowke deserves special mention for the radio work that she did to popularize folk music, especially during the so-called urban folk revival in Canada. Kines is singled out here merely to give an example of the type of work done by these collectors and popularizers.

> he's working on a series of 26 half-hour programs with Jean Price, Russ Thomas and bassist Ron McGee, for the CBC's mid-East network.[23]

We can see that the practical production of folk music during this period relied on American institutions, Electra and Smithsonian, to record and distribute the recorded folk song. The CBC broadcasting that Tom Kines would do was very influential in popularizing folk songs in Canada as he worked to produce domestic programming that had the Canadian folk song at its root: "He feels that we in Canada are so strongly influenced by American music that people tend to complain of a lack of variety in Canadian folk music, 'This is a lot of eyewash.' He insists: 'It just isn't well-known.' Tom Kines is certainly doing his best to remedy the oversight" (Ibid.). Kines believed that a great deal of folk songs that are known had strong ties to Canada and nationally broadcasting this material would help to support the Canadian claim to it.

Gibbon influenced the direction that the performance and collection of folk music would take. From his earliest publicity work with the CPR to his death in 1952, Gibbon produced collections of folk songs. *Collection of Canadian Folk Songs, Old and New* in 1927 is perhaps his best know collection but he had also provided the funding for and publication of many song collections too extensive to discuss here. His early work with Barbeau to publicize the CPR festivals influenced the structure of many of the folk music festivals that would dot the landscape of Canada for many years. Although in many cases his influence can not be directly linked to the regional developments of folk music in the country it is likely that a detailed analysis would show points of connection that would ultimately lead back to work in which Gibbon was involved. Gibbon was successful in his aim to imbue pluralist ideas into Canadian society. His work to bolster the folk music and the folk song was directly tied to nationalism. Gibbon is an example of a socialist

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[23] *The Ottawa Citizen* Entertainment, April 17, 1965

working for a nationalist cause. Possibly as a Fabian he absorbed strategies for effecting social change, then applied them to a Canadian nationalist cause (via cultural and educational institutions).

Mitch Podolak came into contact with Gibbon through the Ontario school system. Nationalist folk songs provided a counterpoint to Podolak's European Jewish Communist internationalist upbringing. Although Gibbon believed that his work created inclusion, the institutionization of his ideas created an exclusive folk music, at least in the eyes of Mitch Podolak, who came to see these folk songs as a testament to the establishment and not 'of the folk.' Mitch Podolak would learn folk music from another source. The American collection of folk music, as mentioned earlier, which would provide a type of folk music that would have an added feature: it would be built into a resistant form of expression that was very attractive to Podolak for political reasons. This part of the American history of folk song collection is tied to the political development of the progressive left in the United States and it is this history that had a direct bearing on the development of the definition of folk music that Mitch Podolak and the WFF supported.

In setting out the development of folk music and Gibbon's influence on the school system, as a successful first generation folk festival AD, I have provided a Canadian model for the publication of folk music tied to the folk festival. In the next chapter I will present a similar example of folk music publication in the US during the same period to show the impact a different political angle would have on the personality of folk music. The US publications would have a greater impact on Mitch Podolak and the WFF and would retain a different 'aura' around its legitimacy as a 'true' folk music source. This thesis does not examine reasons for this but chooses to simply present the events as they affected Mitch Podolak's education in folk music, which would in turn affect his choices as an influential artistic director in Canada. This thesis also does not compare and

contrast the different methods of folk song collection and publication in Canada and the US, nor does it claim that only one methodology exists in each country. However, the folk music sources that are discussed, folk music in the school system in Canada, and *Peoples Songs*, *People's Artists*, *Folkways* records, and *Sing Out!* magazine in the US, were the most influential folk music propagation tools for each country. Their differing approaches and political premises point to differences that would distinguish the style of the first and second generation of folk festivals in Canada and underscore the influence of the American Communist party on the modern definition of folk music.

Chapter 2: Communism and Folk Music in Mid-Twentieth Century America

Mitch Podolak's assertion that "Pete Seeger and Leon Trotsky lead to everything in my life, especially the Winnipeg Folk Festival" (Mitch Podolak, email, November 24 2005) is a very difficult statement to unravel. The desire to say: 'Trotsky was political and Seeger was an artist; therefore art and politics are combined' is strong. On the surface these statements are correct but very superficial. Trotsky was deeply interested in art and published on the matter. Seeger was equally busy in politics and was blacklisted in the US during McCarthyism. Though both men were complex personalities, they shared motivations and were keenly interested in the state of the world and the organization of human beings. They worked tirelessly to create a better world with the best tools they had at their disposal and were condemned to economic and social reprisals because of their work. Trotsky and Seeger create two interlocking spheres of influence and ideas that must be appreciated together in order for us to understand their lasting influence on Mitch Podolak.

The Communist Party of the US (CPUSA) was a political organization that actively sought out members of the working class, the intellectual class and artists to form a new type of political party in the US. Trotsky and Seeger come together in Mitch Podolak's consciousness out of this era and inspired him to found the WFF.

The social movement that influenced Mitch Podolak had roots in the left wing intellectual and cultural centre of the United States, New York City. The New School in New York City had become established enough in the 1920s to hire many prominent

scholars. The relocation of some of these scholars like Charles Seeger to New York would help to create an environment that would wed the folk song with progressive political action. The Roosevelt administration would further support the development and distribution of the American folk song in the New Deal spanning a large part of the 1930s.

From 1929 to the 1940s a series of events occurred which became wedded into the history of the progressive left wing movement that influenced Mitch Podolak. According to Podolak: "Before we can talk about the Winnipeg Folk Festival you need to read Trotsky's *My Life*, Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, listen to Pete Seeger's *Songs of the Spanish Civil War* and be able to sing at least two songs from the *Little Red Songbook*" (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005). Podolak, as a Trotskyist, understood the history of this time from these sources. The autobiographical work by Trotsky, Orwell's personal account of the Spanish Civil War from the point of view of a foot soldier in an International Trotskyist military unit, and Pete Seeger's album that celebrates the international contribution of soldiers in the war make up Podolak's understanding of this period in history. The IWW's *Little Red Songbook* provides a starting point for folk music as a means to organize people around a shared message. The IWW, the International Workers of the World, was very close in philosophy to the Trotskyists. Both groups believed that the emancipation of the working class required an international association of all of the workers, 'workers of the world unite'. The IWW proved to be a very important influence in the development of American folk music because it embraced song as an important resistant element which provided a means to organize people around a message. The IWW used very singable songs, mostly based on hymns with the words rewritten. The Trotskyist movement, which was strictly a political movement, did not get very involved in song creation. Yet it and the progressive labour

movement, best represented by the IWW, fused their messages during these years to produce for Podolak an internationalist focus on the worker and the folk song as a weapon to change the material world within which that worker lives. As we will see, the IWW, and particularly its most famous bard, Joe Hill, would have a tremendous impact on the American Communist Party (CPUSA) and its developing interest in folk music. This is not to say that the CPUSA overwhelmingly supported folk music from the beginning. In fact, quite the opposite is true. But eventually, individuals within and influential supporters of the party would help folk music find a space in the CPUSA's bid to represent the American worker.

This chapter will present the basis for the folk music that Mitch Podolak and the WFF supported. The WFF therefore emerged from the tension that Podolak faced when confronted with Gibbon's socially conscious but nationalist folk song and the Communist internationalist use of the folk song for social action which was tied to the labour movement and socialist revolution. A discussion of the Communist Party's move to engage 'the folk' to its platform is necessary to understand Podolak's motivations for the creation of the WFF and will further complicate the early days of the folk revival in the US and Canada. The second generation of folk festivals in Canada therefore has a two-sided history. On the one hand the first generation of folk festivals that Gibbon started with the CPR festivals had an impact on the popularity of the folk song and its nationalist agenda. Folk music in Canada had been employed to promote tourism, multiculturalism, and nationalism. It is important to point out as well that the first generation of folk festivals existed during a period of Canadian history in which Canada was attempting to define itself as an independent nation. This meant distinguishing itself from England, the mother country, by emphasizing its North American character, without falling under the influence of the United States, its powerful continental neighbour.

The second generation of folk festivals would inherit the folk music collections that had been part of the first generation, but in many cases participants in the second generation would not realize that there had ever been earlier folk festivals. The second generation would be aware of the folk music that had become institutionalized in the education system but many, like Podolak, would be looking to deal with questions other than Canada's national identity and destiny. The focus now was on social justice. The civil rights movement (which coincided with the urban folk revival), and protests against the Vietnam War re-energized the progressive politics of the 1930s.The folk song as a symbol of struggle would remain an integral part of the politics of resistance.

The New School and The New Deal

> *This is the hour for the experiment; and New York is the place, because it is the greatest social science laboratory in the world and of its own force attracts scholars and leaders in educational work.* — proposal for The New School, 1918.

The relationship between the New School in New York City and a series of economic relief programs created between 1933 and 1937 by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration in the US called the New Deal has not yet been studied, so I will only point out some key areas of interest. Charles Seeger became a teacher at the New School in 1929. At this time the famous 'father of anthropology' Franz Boas had already been working there. It is interesting to note that Boas was the man responsible for instructing Barbeau to "go back to Canada and study French folk culture."[24] In 1931 New School's Henry Cowell began to offer its first course in music cultures from around the world which presented performances and lectures from non-European sources. It provided an intellectual landscape that supported a coming-to-terms with the world outside of the university's 'ivory tower' mentality. Individuals like Charles Seeger were encouraged to

[24] Maegan Fisher, *Biography of Marius Barbeau*, 2003. Available online: http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/abcde/barbeau_marius.html Accessed on October 29, 2005.

discover a new socially conscious way to discuss the world. The creation of a non-European music course provided an outlet for the study of musical culture that was outside of the usual school curriculum. During the 1930s, The New School became a major center for the modernist impulse in the visual and performing arts. Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey taught modern dance; Aaron Copland, music; Charles Seeger, musicology; José Clemente Orozco and Stuart Davis, painting; José de Creeft, sculpture; and Frank Lloyd Wright, architecture.[25] Out of this milieu came the Composer's Collective.

Song as A Weapon[26]

The Composer's Collective was founded in 1932 as a collection of a dozen composers and musicians, working together in New York City to produce and perform proletarian music (Reuss 2000, 45). It was not necessarily a communist organization, but the Communist Party paid the rent for the room they used to meet and some members would take part in classes on Marxist-Leninism. The most vocal members of the Collective went by the pseudonyms of Carl Sands and L. E. Swift, their real names being Charles Seeger and Elie Siegmeister respectively. The members of the Collective "had gravitated into the movement's intellectual orbit as a result of the economic and social upheaval of the Depression" (Reuss 2000, 44). Carl Sands during this period wrote: "Music is propaganda—always propaganda—and of the most powerful sort.... The special talk of the Workers Music League (WML) is the development of music as a

[25] History of The New School available online: http://www.newschool.edu/history.html Accessed on January 14, 2006.

[26] This title comes from *My Song is My Weapon* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995). Also from the statement that was written on Woody Guthrie's guitar which I had first seen on an album jacket many years ago which reads: "This Machine Kills Fascists". Trying to understand how Guthrie saw his instrument as a weapon brought me to write this thesis in the first place.

weapon in the class struggle."[27] Seeger voices for the first time the new direction that their music would take in this period. Although the Composer's Collective would only last a few years, it brought into focus a belief in the power of music. "Their efforts to create proletarian music were shaped by their art music training, work with ethnic workers' choruses, and attraction to Communism. They expected to use their training to create mass song, to improve upon the 'Internationale,' for a revolutionary cause" (Lieberman 1995, 29). The Workers Music League was started in 1931 as a way of sharing resources among the many workers' choruses that were around New York at the time. These choruses were the most popular way to make music. Singing groups were started by many community organizations to sing in their own language. These groups were the expression of immigrant communities reacting to their experience of isolation in a new country, creating cohesion by holding on to aspects of home. It is well know that immigrant communities developed in different small geographic spaces in the major cities like New York and Toronto. The Workers Music League (WML), like the Composers Collective, followed the Stalinist nationalist line. This dictated the creation of proletarian music for the singing public. Mike Gold, as a representative of the WML, started to look for American folk music, in much the same way the Russian composers were looking for Russian folk music. The WML however, didn't appreciate the folk songs and ballads that Gold found. Folk music was not going to be the staple of the Collective or the WML.

The Collective refused to use the folk song form. It was thought to be of little use. Carl Sands (Charles Seeger) wrote: "Many folksongs are complacent, melancholy, defeatist, intended to make slaves endure their lot—pretty but not the stuff for a militant

[27] This quotation comes from an article Seeger wrote as C.S (Carl Sands), "The Concert of the Pierre Degeyter Club Orchestra," in *Daily Worker,* 2 January 1934.

proletariat to feed upon."[28] The Collective folded in 1936, just two years after this article appeared in the *Daily Worker*. During that time workers on the front lines of the labour battles had been using folk songs across the US. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)[29] view of song use came into style again. The *Little Red Songbook*[30] that the Wobblies had been producing for decades came back into prominence, and newly composed folk songs found their way to picket lines in various parts of the US. Folk music as a weapon was reborn.

The Popular Front

It is impossible to understand Pete Seeger's recording of *Songs of the Spanish Civil War,* which had such a profound impact on Mitch Podolak, without an appreciation of how the Spanish Civil War was seen on the streets of New York. "Along with fifty-seven other nations the United States supplied nearly 3,000 volunteers who made up the Lincoln Battalion of the International Brigade" (Denisoff 1971, 63). Many songs about the war were sung during these two years. *The Red River Valley* became *Jarma Valley* and many Spanish tunes had words added to depict the war effort. "These and many other songs saturated rallies and street-corner meetings in New York and elsewhere" (Ibid.). Here we see the roots of the urban folk song movement coming into full bloom alongside an international political experience. Singers in New York, who were politically minded and leaned towards social action, became crusaders for the war effort. Burl Ives reflects

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[28] This quotation comes from an article by Carl Sands [Charles Seeger], "A Program for Proletarian Composers" in *Daily Worker*, 16 January 1934, 5.

[29] The IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World, or the One Big Union, was founded in 1904 and is still in operation today. There have been many books published that the IWW itself claims do not represent its history accurately. Recently, there has been an attempt to write a more comprehensive history of the IWW. The best one available is Franklin Rosemont's *Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of the Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 2002).

[30] The *Little Red Song* book was collected and published by the *IWW* and by the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company. I've been unable to pin down an exact beginning date but it was likely before 1905. By 1923 there had already been 19 editions. Available online: <http://www.sacredchao.net/iww/index.shtml >. The songs were written by members of the *IWW. M*any wrote new, socially-active, labour-conscious lyrics and applied them to old hymns. This tradition would remain in the music of the left wing.

on his first experience with this milieu: "Why did this particular audience understand me? It occurred to me that people so concerned about other human beings must be men of good will who would understand my simple songs about people" (Ives 1948, 292). Many folk singers of this period had similar reactions. This early success' impact would emerge again at the end of the War. "The significance of the Spanish Civil War in the sphere of folk consciousness was that it made party policy palatable to some singers who would later play important roles in using folk song as a weapon" (Denisoff 1971, 63).

Many Canadian volunteers went to fight in Spain against Franco. As Beeching (1989) and Howard (1986) both point out, the major difference in the Canadian contribution to the War was the low number of intellectuals who went to fight compared to the US and Britain. The majority of volunteers came from working class backgrounds. In 1937 the League of Nations made it illegal for foreigners to join the many international militias set up to fight against Franco. In May 1937 the MacKenzie-Papineau brigade was formed in Spain, its name taken from the leaders of the 1837 uprisings in Upper and Lower Canada. The brigade fought alongside the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and in fact many Canadians who joined before 1937 were members of the American brigade. Podolak sees Seeger's *Songs of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* and Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* as documents that tell an untold story of Canadian involvement in an International peoples' revolt against fascism in Spain.

Folk Music and the Labour Battle

Mitch Podolak explained that an understanding of the history of labour songs was essential to understand the WFF. The songs of the *Little Red Songbook* remained influential, but this song writing history continued in a number of parts of the US. The songs from the *Little Red Songbook* would remain in circulation, but a new form of

resistant folk song would be developed that would find its inspiration in the image of Joe Hill. Original compositions which told personal stories from the labour battles that took place in the United States in the late 1920s would start to interest CPUSA. The CPUSA and Pete Seeger both found their connection to American folk music in this labour activism. They would embrace music made by the worker that told the story of the workers' lives, their struggles and joys. Although the American folk song would rarely match the political fervour of the early CPUSA, it seemed that it was enough that the song came from the populace of the country.[31]

In his search for a Communist Joe Hill,[32] Mike Gold, labour activist and journalist for the *Daily Worker,* added a qualified endorsement of folk music when he stated: "The nearest things we've had to Joe Hill's kind of folk balladry had been from such southern mountaineer Communists as Aunt Molly Jackson and the martyred textile weaver Ella May Wiggins."[33] The folk song was expressing something that the singing choruses seemed to be unable to do. As Elie Siegmeister lamented, a folk song is "the natural expression of our people who 'don't know anything about music,'...the deepest, most democratic layer of our American musical culture" (Siegmeister 1943, 681-2). No matter what the WML tried to do, people kept singing folk songs. The general public didn't share Seeger and Siegmeister's view of 'good' music. People just continued to sing the way they always had. This is not to say that the work that the Collective did was all

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[31] It is interesting to note that this year (2006) at the Vancouver Folk Festival the artistic director was questioned by an festival-goer why there seemed to be less politically motivated music than at the previous couple of festivals. The AD, Doug Simpson, replied that as far as he was concerned he has as many politically motivated singers as he could find but remarked on the small number of such performers available today.

[32] Joe Hill is the most famous of the Wobbly Bards but very little is actually known about his life. He wrote many of the songs in the *Little Red Song* Book. Many of his tunes are still sung today at Union gatherings. In Appendix C is a song written about him and his execution. It is the most popular retelling of his life and death.

[33] This quotation comes from an article by Mike Gold, "Change the World," in *Daily Worker*, 21 April 1935.

wasted. They established a connection between the musical intellectual class and the working class. As Alan Lomax said: "These were passionate people, you must understand; dedicated to their music, and to their political ideals" (Dunaway 1979,2). The contribution that stands out more than any other is their skill at centralizing and organizing. The WML and the Collective neither lasted very long, or made a great impact but they set up a system of dissemination that would be used in the years to come to propagate folk songs.

A series of labour disputes in Gastonia, North Carolina and Harlan County, Kentucky would become fused together in the Communist consciousness for the rest of the twentieth century. The connection between the folk song form and political activity would be born of the reaction to conflicts experienced in these locales. Folk songs were written on the front lines of these labour battles and would make their way, sometimes with the singers, to New York City. The Communist Party's search for a new Joe Hill would be fruitful during a period when labour disputes within small industrial post war centres were becoming violent and even more widely publicized through various media.

Economically the 1920s was a very divided period. There were many advances and the coming-of-age of consumerism in major centres. However, in more rural and industrial areas it was a time of the largest labour revolts in North America. Strikes in Gastonia and Harlan County which started in 1929 would provide Mike Gold and the Communist movement the opportunity it was looking for.

Capitalism, in many remote single industry towns, had evolved to the point that company owners were as powerful as lords in medieval times. These towns were set up around a single industry and all of the town's people were affected by it. In some cases

the company owned the police, the stores and the houses. Rural people flocked to the towns to get work but would find themselves bound to poverty wage labour in grinding, dangerous conditions. The company did its best to totally rule the lives of its workers. Women and children were ejected from their homes if the man of the house got hurt or killed on the job, unless there was an industry in which the woman could work. Even those who were healthy and worked full time could not get ahead. The pay cheque would regularly be taken back by the company to pay back credit that was given to look after the grocery bills and the rent. This sense of hopelessness was aggravated by the depression. The company, in the spirit of capitalism, would cut pay instead of losing profit. Many places started to strike, aroused and organized by Communist or communist-inspired organizers who in many cases had come to these places for work as well. Their political experience gained in Europe was often put to use. In many of these cases the community would rally together, singing songs from traditional sources. Gastonia, North Carolina was an example of this. Singers would use popular hymns or traditional ballad melodies and compose words to express their plight. In Gastonia the most popular ballad singer was Ella May Wiggins.

Ella May Wiggins was a very popular early martyr of this period of American labour battles. In popular lore it is claimed that vigilantes under the employ of the mill owner killed her in Gastonia. This claim has never been substantiated, but the impact of the claim alone had great effect. "As Ella May's coffin was lowered into the ground, Katie Barrett sang one of Ella May's best-loved songs, 'Mill Mother's Lament.'

> We leave our homes in the morning, We kiss our children good bye, While we slave for the bosses, Our children scream and cry, //and when we draw our money/our grocery bills to pay/not a cent to pay for clothing/not a cent to lay away/and on that very evening/our little son will say:/I need some shoes, mother/and so does sister May//How it grieves a

> heart of a mother/you everyone must know/but we can't buy for our children/our wages are too low//It is for our little children/that seem to us so dear/but for us nor them, dear workers/the bosses do not care//but understand, all workers/Our union they do fear/Let's stand together, workers/ and have a union here. (Lynch 2001,12)

It is not necessary to go into the details that led to the death of Ella May, but it is important to understand the power of her words to popularize the belief that the company killed her. "Whether the shooting of Ella May was a deliberate act may never be proven, what is certain is that Ella May's music, and that of the other strikers at Gastonia in 1929, tells a compelling and revealing story" (Ibid.). The folk song structure allows the contemporary singer to fit words to a very singable tune that anyone can join. The power of the folk song is that it can carry very meaningful lyrics and political statements that can't be shut down. As John Steinbeck famously said in the preface to John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest*: "The songs of the working people have always been their sharpest statement, and the one statement that cannot be destroyed. You can burn books, buy newspapers, you can guard against handbills and pamphlets, but you cannot prevent singing...Songs are the statement of a people. You can learn more about people by listening to their songs than in any other way, for into the songs go all the hopes and hurts, the angers, fears, the wants and aspirations" (Greenway 1953).

In 1931 the battle at Harlan County took a different twist than it did in Gastonia; it had a more political angle. "The mine operators challenged the strikers' patriotism and religious beliefs. Unionism was depicted as a foreign ideology promoted by godless Communists" (Lynch 2001, 51). By this time the death of Ella May had turned her into a folk hero. So when Aunt Molly Jackson started to travel to New York to sing and to solicit funds for the strike activity, pro-labour and communist circles welcomed her warmly.

The strikes ended badly and the National Miners Union had withdrawn defeated from the Harlan County coalfields but Mike Gold and the Communist Party of the United States had found an American symbol of musical resistance. Aunt Molly Jackson now lived in New York City's Lower East Side, leaving her home and family behind her. Alone in the city, she stayed involved in organizing and singing. She recounted her experiences during the 1931 strike:

> "Thirty-seven babies died in my arms in the last three months of 1931. Their little stomachs busted open; they was mortified inside. Oh, what an awful way for a baby to die. Not a thing to give our babies to eat but the strong soup from soup beans, and that took the lining from their little stomachs, so that they bled inside and mortified, and died. And died so hard that before we got help from other states my nerves was so stirred up for four years afterwards by the memory of them babies suffering and dying in my arms, and me sitting by their little dead bodies three or four hours before daylight in the dark to keep some hungry dog or cat from eating up their little dead bodies. Then four years later I still had such sad memories of these babies that I wrote this song." (Lynch 2001, 59)

The power of Aunt Molly's experience was not lost on the urban listeners of the period. Everybody was trying to make sense out of the depression. Aunt Molly put a real human face on it, and brought it really close. The communist circles in New York could not miss the real face of the American proletariat and could not ignore the song form anymore. As Lynch says: "Regardless as to whether the miners themselves perceived their efforts as a Marxist revolution in the making, a number of northern intellectuals were intrigued by the prospects...Aunt Molly's song was the sense of class oppression they so poignantly captured. ... the rugged articulation of workers rising up in rebellion against bourgeoisie capitalism" (Lynch 2001, 63).

Many people in New York came in contact with Aunt Molly Jackson and the folk song form. She used this song to introduce herself at a concert at the New York Bronx Coliseum in front of a crowd of twenty-one thousand people:

> I was born and raised in old Kentucky;/Molly Jackson is my name./I came up here to New York City/And I'm truly glad I came.//I am soliciting for the poor Kentucky miners/For their children and their wives/Because the miners are all blacklisted/I am compelled to save their lives//The miners in Bell and Harlan counties organized a union/This is all the poor coal miners done/because the coal operators cut down their wages / to 33 cents and less a ton//All this summer we have had to listen/To hungry children's cries/through the hot part of the summer/our little babies died like flies//while the coal operators and their wives/All went dressed in jewels and silk/The poor coal miners' babies/Starved to death for bread and milk.//Now I appeal to you for tender mercy/To give us all you have to give/Because I love my people dearly/And I want them all to live. (Ibid.)

The audience, obviously moved by the performance, gave money to her organization. There was also another lesson to learn here that would not be lost on many of the people in the audience. Folk songs can create change, folk songs can educate people and a folk song can be a weapon.

The IWW was still active during this period. The songs of the *Little Red Songbook* were in wide circulation in urban circles; especially in New York. The impact of these new songs is interesting, because unlike the IWW songs, which were lyrical rewrites of hymn melodies, these new protest songs were built upon regional melodies from the rural United States. This new sound was introduced to the New York scene and provided a specifically American folk sound that would be built upon by the next generation.

The Almanac Singers

The Almanac singers were the best-known group to emerge during this time. Pete Seeger, Lee Hayes, Woodie Guthrie, Bess Lomax Hawes, Agnes 'Sis' Cunningham, Millard Lampell and Arthur Stern were the main players. This group brought into focus many of the strands of history that we have been discussing. Lee Hayes and Woody Guthrie had both been working within labour movements as organizers for a number of years and brought the southern labour tradition to New York. Pete Seeger and Bess

Lomax Hawes, were the first generation progeny of Charles Seeger and John Lomax. "[T]he Almanacs were the end product of the rural organizational campaigns and the intellectual political concerns of the 1930's. The function of the group was propaganda, which was not limited to ideology but also had a musical dimension" (Denisoff 1971, 102). The early efforts and early recording of the Almanacs would all be important documents later. The coming of the Second World War split the Almanacs and ended their anti-war stance, not without a little internal strife. The Almanacs started to sing about defeating the Fascists.

The depression and war years were difficult for everyone. Under the fire of war, many people were forced to work in opposition to their pre-war beliefs. The Almanac Singers were included in this. Pete Seeger was able to gain exemption from the war on the grounds that he, like his father, was a conscientious objector. However, others suffered a mix of fates during wartime. The Communist Party (CP) itself moved in step with the Third International (CI): "the sharp turns of 1935, 1939 and 1941 took place with virtually no disruption. The new lines—the exact opposite of what the CI had been saying to everyone—were accepted without question. The Comintern had been tamed. Its parties were led by men who were broken to the bureaucracy's saddle. They would go where they were told, even without the threat of discipline" (Angus 2004, 295).

People's Songs was created at the end of the WWII and was "a logical extension of the mission of the Almanac Singers" (Reuss 2000, 180). The goal of the organization was to produce music first and foremost for people to sing and secondly, a political movement to create a better world. Pete Seeger was the founding director of the group. He brought his personal beliefs in the value and political use of folk song to this new group. The relationship between music and political action is very clear in *People's Songs*. There

was a connection to the Communist Party (CP) as well. It wasn't clearly defined however. Many members of *People's Songs* were also members of the CP only because the interests were interrelated. There was no special emphasis on folk music in the CP. The Party was interested in those who were interested in the Party. CP members like Irwin Silber, who ran the business affairs for People's Songs during their three-year life span, forged the relationship. Silber remembers: "whether the other people involved were members of the party or not, there was a general mutuality of political outlook, ...I think if we had wanted to, we could have arbitrarily decided *People's Songs* policy. There were enough of us in key positions to decide any way we wanted to" (Reuss 2000, 208).

People's Songs battled with financial hardship during its entire existence. It started well in the first year, but keeping the organization functioning was difficult. During its life it made great steps to bring together collections of songs from many places in the US and put them together for people to sing. The main push of *People's Songs* was to get people to sing again and to give them something to sing. This was enough to keep members inspired, but other forces were about to make their existence even more difficult and eventually the *People's Songs* would have to close its doors.

The post war period in the US is well know for the anti-Communist reaction and the McCarthy senate committee on Un-American activities. The pressures that led to the formation of the committee were already at work by 1946. *People's Songs* worked within Labour circles, at rallies, at strikes, to educate unions to use folk songs in their struggles. This brought it wanted and unwanted attention. When the McCarthy committee started watching the group, many members were scared off or cut off from *Peoples' Songs*. It is believed that the McCarthy era was a strictly American phenomenon; however, governments in both Canada and the US were instrumental in shutting down *Peoples'*

Songs. "In June 1948, Montreal city police confiscated copies of *The People's Song Book* during the course of a raid on a number of Marxist and progressive bookshops, citing the famous Hayes Robinson composition of 'Joe Hill' that was often found in the books for sale" (Reuss 2000, 195). It is important to understand that this was not just a witch-hunt for *People's Songs'* publications but a greater sweep of the left. More research is required to assess the situation in Canada, but this is the verdict of Kristmanson. "The RCMP files concerning the American singer Paul Robeson's visit to Canada...record a polarization in public culture that damned virtually any dissenting opinion as Communist-inspired and somehow in the service of Soviet national interest. Concurrently, Canada's post-war federal cultural policies, prefigured in the influential Massey Report, sought to commandeer 'culture' in the civilian area for a similar process of national purification and the 'whitest' form of psychological warfare" (Kristmanson 2003, 141). This tension between radical left wing culture and the government can be seen as one aspect of a shared North American cultural experience. *People's Songs* was sold across North America and was part of a North American mass cultural movement. However, with the reduced ability to actually get a copy of the song book and the stigma now attached to selling them, many bookstores backed away. The reaction was a deathblow for the group.

Sing Out!

Peoples' Artists was founded to follow up on the work of *Peoples' Songs*. In 1950 a new magazine was started. It was named simply, *Sing Out!* There is literature that deals with the work that *Sing Out!* undertook at this time. For our purposes I would just like to look at Irwin Silber, the new editor, and briefly describe the role the magazine would play as inheritor of the work of *People's Songs*.

There has not been a single institution which broadcast the idea of the singing folk wider than *Sing Out!* Irwin Silber compiled a magazine that dared to explicitly combine political statements with a lot of music. The music would all be notated so people could learn and sing it at home. "Irwin Silber, in 'Notes from an Editor's Diary,' recalls he borrowed the name *Sing Out!* from the third verse of 'The Hammer Song' written by Lee Hays and Pete Seeger, which incidentally was printed on the cover of issue number one. It seemed to the publishers an appropriate aim to 'sing out danger...sing out a warning ... sing out love between all my brothers (and sisters) all over this land" (Moss 2000, 20). The magazine published songs which had been collected and stored in the *People's Songs* archive. *People's Artists,* who looked after the archive, included the Weavers, Alan Lomax and Paul Robeson. Silber, with help from Winnipeg-born Oscar Brand,[34] were active in collecting and publishing songs that spoke about issues that regular people were interested in. Issues of the day were not much different than issues that we face in the world today. Freedom, respect, justice and fairness were issues addressed in song. *Sing Out!*, in the same way it does today, published old songs and newly composed songs side by side. The success of *Sing Out!* had much to do with its coming into existence at the right time. New interest in folk music was dawning. "For the most part, it seemed that young people were the ones who were hungry to assimilate old and new folk songs. Now, they could spend a quarter and pick up an issue of *Sing Out!* to find all manner of songs by the likes of Malvina Reynolds, Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie" (Silber 1951, 21).

The magazine was bolstered by the interest it received from a new generation of folk music enthusiasts. It was not the labour unions that helped it succeed this time. It

[34] Oscar Brand had "donated mimeograph equipment contributed which he had purchased while in the Army editing a newspaper for psychiatric patients" (Denisoff 1971, 107). Brand had started *Folksong Festival* on New York public radio in 1940. He later testified before the McCarran Commission against the communist influence in folk music and fell out of favour with *Sing Out!* This is detailed in Irwin Silber's "Folk Singer Oscar Brand Joins Witch Hunt Hysteria," *Sing Out!*, 2 (November 1951), 16.

was the young college crowd that became interested in a different form of expression. This new young movement found its voice in this fledgling magazine that worked as a connecting point between the older radicalized pre-war activists and the post-war and Korean War activists. *Sing Out!* formed a long lasting alliance with Moses Asch and Folkways Records by 1958. The timing was perfect; the Kingston Trio was about to make 'Tom Dooley' a number one hit on the pop charts, a moment considered by many to herald the beginning of the Urban Folk Revival. The combination of Folkways Records and *Sing Out!* magazine meant that folk songs were supported in print and on record and housed in the same place in New York City. Many new folk enthusiasts would be able to receive both the magazine and the albums from the same source. *Sing Out!* had succeeded in doing what had been the dream since Mike Gold was looking for a new Joe Hill. It had found a voice inside North American mass culture.

Sing Out! not only kept the community together, it published innovations as well. "Events such as the first Newport Folk Festival, featured in a *Sing Out!* photo essay by Dave Gahr, drew more and more young singers, players and listeners to acoustic music" (Moss 2000, 22). The popular commercial success of folk music helped to expel the negative stigma of left-ism and the song form became at once commercialized and safe. Mikiko Tachi argues in her 2004 article "Commercialism, Counterculture, and the Folk Music Revival: A Study of Sing Out! Magazine, 1950-67," that the folk music revival depended on commercialism to prosper despite possessing inherent anti-commercialist roots. There was a dilemma. Could *Sing Out!* both challenge the commercial mainstream and take part in it? Tachi reports: "The series of debates centering on the question of whether commercialism aided or harmed folk traditions demonstrated the different interpretations of commercialism proposed by critics. The differences served to negate

the binary view of the relationship between 'authentic' culture and mainstream commercialism" (Tachi 2004, 208). I will deal with this dilemma later, extending the discussion to the WFF as both a space of resistance and a participant in the economy.

"*Sing Out!* was the connecting point. It was like putting a communist in charge of the chicken coop." Podolak quipped: " Irwin Silber was on a political assignment from the Communist Party to do this"(Podolak interview: February 10, 2006). As mentioned earlier, Silber was a member of the CP; Lee Hays, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson were all members or supporters of the party. When I asked Podolak if people really learned songs from the written page he said: "Sure they did, I'd buy the magazine, take it home and learn the tune, bend the cover back, sit at the piano with the banjo and figure out the melody line"(Ibid.).[35]

"The Jews controlled the main propaganda machine for the folk revival and they still do," (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005) he said. Mitch Podolak listed many people in Canada and the US who were influential names in the folk music industry. "When Pete was brought in front of the McCarthy commission I watched the entertainment section for months to find out what would happen to him. It was a really important time" (Ibid.). The McCarthy trials connected the political nature of folk music to the Communist struggle against the state in the minds of many folk enthusiasts. Even if the music itself had no revolutionary potential, the treatment of it at the hands of the state in this very publicized incident, created that potential. In Podolak's mind folk music was indeed a weapon for social change and it was such an important weapon that the most powerful country in the world was concerned about its use.

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[35] Mitch Podolak played the tune he learned in the magazine that was recorded on a Tommy Makam and the Clancy Brothers album. He bought the album because Pete Seeger was on the back cover.

If Mitch Podolak's claim is true that this period of history is imperative to understand the purpose of the Winnipeg Folk Festival, whom does the WFF represent then and on what is it built? Podolak himself was a Trotskyist; Pete Seeger was at least a communist sympathiser; George Orwell was involved in a Trotskyist regiment. Mike Gold was actively seeking a new Joe Hill for the CPUSA's political advantage and Charles Seeger and the Composers Collective were trying to make compositions based on folk tunes as a truly proletariat art, and to make a name for themselves as composers. *People's Songs* and *Sing Out!* like many of the key players in this period were loosely involved politically with the CPUSA and were each actively trying to become commercially successful to some degree. It becomes obvious that nothing holds any of these pieces together except a shared ideal of a better world created by active engagement with capitalism. The use of the folk song for social change harkens back to Gibbon's activities, but the definitive difference is the source of the new composition and its interplay with the economy. These new songs are not written by schooled composers, supported by universities, and based on themes from 'folk' sources, but by amateurs and later folk music professionals who are making 'folk music' for public consumption. The CPUSA work to inspire the New York intelligentsia to engage in progressive left politics actually led to the creation of a folk music industry. The organizational experience gained during this period of Communist influence was used to promote a new form, a 'folk' mass culture. Podolak inherited its history through the products that it produced. The novels, records and magazines that told the story of its creation, history, and development are also the products that it produced for sale. This period marked the starting point of a new form of mass culture that is self-conscious of its role in the economy because it requires economic success to survive while it actively fights against what it sees as an asocial tendency of capitalism.

Chapter 3: Mitch Podolak, Trotsky and the Use of Folk

Mitch Podolak became associated with the Trotskyist movement in 1962 and believed in the tenets of revolutionary Trotskyism. These beliefs required him to oppose the Canadian liberal democratic state due to its complicity with the capitalist economic system. As discussed at the end of Chapter Two, the creation of the folk music industry in which *Sing Out!* magazine and *Folkways Records* played an active part would have unforeseen effects on folk music. Though some members of the new folk community were beginning to have economic success within mass culture, the majority of producers of folk music continued to have only marginal success in New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Montreal, and Toronto. The creation of folk festivals like Newport, Philadelphia, Mariposa and eventually Winnipeg would help provide performance space for the ever increasing numbers of folk music writers and performers.

Providing context for the early days of the Urban Folk Music Revival forces the author to make taxonomical choices for the sake of clarity. This clarity however, in any discussion of folk music, is clouded by the variety of divergent meanings of folk music up to and including this period. As discussed, folk music had been defined by Gibbon and Barbeau, by *Folkways Records*, by *Sing Out!*, and by academic collectors and folklorists on the subject of 'the folk'. Traditional music across much of rural Canada and the US had remained roughly intact throughout all of these transitions and interactions. The impact of radio and vinyl record on traditional regional music, specifically of the South

Eastern US, is well documented, and further complicates the meaning of traditional folk music.[36]

On the stages of these early second generation festivals, older amateur performers stood side-by-side with younger urban professional performers. During this period, many of the singers and instrumentalists who had been recorded in the 1920s and 1930s during the Gibbon years, were being rediscovered and put on stage at these festivals as a way to retain a connection to the past and to honour the legacy that had been established by rediscovered commercial recordings, long thought lost, by artists such as Doc Boggs, Mississippi John Hurt, Brownie McGee, and Sonny Terry, to name only a few. Although primarily an American experience, this practice gave many Canadians a feeling of connecting to an older generation as well. The American festivals also presented some old-time Canadian examples like the North Shore Gaelic Singers, who performed at Newport in 1965, the same day Dylan infamously performed on electric guitar with The Band.

Podolak, as a banjo player and subscriber to *Sing Out!* magazine, was aware of, and inspired by, the development of the folk music scene in late 1950s and early 1960s. However, Podolak would get swept up in the politics of the Trotskyist movement and would not be involved with folk music again until 1973 when he started to prepare for the WFF. This hiatus, beginning around 1963, allowed the young Podolak to develop organizational skills in the style of the Canadian Trotskyist movement under the tutelage of the leader of the movement, Ross Dowson. The experiences that led Podolak to devise a system of organization for the folk festival will be discussed in this chapter. The

[36] In the context of this research, the Urban Folk Revival (UFR) was a key element of the second generation of Canadian folk festivals. Traditional folk music was being brought into urban centres and in some cases, as described above, given a political context. The following section of this research examines this period from the point of view of a participant within the UFR and, for the sake of clarity, will refer to folk music within the context of a burgeoning professional industry under the umbrella term 'folk'.

philosophical and political context for these organizational strategies will by discussed at length in chapter four. This chapter will look at the events in Mitch Podolak's life and, guided by discussions with Podolak himself, will reconstruct these moments of inspiration as they were told to the author for the purpose of providing context and establishing his motivations for the creation and organization of the WFF.

Mitch Podolak[37]

When Mitch Podolak was in his early teen years he would spend his summers at Camp Northland, a Jewish summer camp just outside of the city of Toronto, Ontario. It was the early 1960s and Mariposa Folk Festival was happening in Orillia; in 1963 it was its third year. Mitch Podolak had heard about the festival and asked the counsellors for a couple of days off to attend the folk concert. His request was denied. Mitch Podolak left the camp and went back to Toronto he was 15 years old.

> I went up to Orillia and stayed at a little hotel by myself, the first time ever in my whole life. I remember seeing Alan McRae, Alan Mills, the Chanteclaires and Al Cromwell and Klaus von Graft. I remember people throwing beer bottles at Champlain Park. The organization didn't have any sense of how to control people. They probably didn't have any idea of what was happening outside of their grounds. I was at Mariposa five or six times I guess. I was at Philadelphia and Newport. I was at Newport in '63 and '64. (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005)

When I asked why he kept attending, Mitch Podolak responded: "Pete [Seeger], and the Clancy Brothers, Dylan and Baez, and Paxton, and the Kentucky Colonels, and Mississippi John Hurt, and Hobart Smith and on and on; that's why. This whole fuckin' thing just opened up and I was like, how much can I learn, how much can I learn" (Ibid.).

[37] A biographic outline for Mitch Podolak can be found as Appendix A.

Mitch Podolak traces his initial interest back to the c.1960 Massey Hall concert in Toronto with Pete Seeger. He had heard many of Seeger's songs from his experiences at summer camp. Mitch Podolak found himself at Massey Hall:

> Out came this guy with a banjo and a guitar! That was it for me. I was gone. That was a pivotal moment in my life. Pete takes the stage and sings, 'Oh what will you give me, say the sad bells of Rhymney', all the way home I'm asking my sister what the song meant. That was the bait. It was about the bells that ring in the miner's town and the bells that ring in the merchant town. It was a Welsh song. It was one of the things that got me going about politics. As much a part of my education, that song is, as anything I know. All that stuff started to happen right there. It was a life changing experience. I've never had one like it since. (Podolak interview: September 5 2005)

A political sensibility is expressed in the text of this music. Mitch Podolak understood the importance of such an expression at least at an emotional level. The lyrical substance of the Welsh traditional ballad the *Sad Bells of Rhymney* is obviously politically charged. The lyrics underscore the struggle between the workers and the entrepreneurs and the placating 'silver bells of Wye.'

BELLS OF RHYMNEY

Oh what will you give me
Say the sad bells of Rhymney
Is there hope for the future
Cry the brown bells of Merthyr

Who made the mine owner
Say the black bells of Rhondda
And who robbed the miner
Cry the grim bells of Blaina

They will plunder willy-nilly
Cry the bells of Caerphilly
They have fangs, they have teeth
Say the loud bells of Neathe

Even God is uneasy
Say the moist bells of Swansea
They will plunder willy-nilly
Say the bells of Caerphilly

Put the vandals in court
Say the bells of Newport
All would be well if, if, if
Cry the green bells of Cardiff

Why so worried, sisters, why
Sang the silver bells of Wye
And what will you give me
Say the sad bells of Rhymney.

At the same time Mitch Podolak was invited, by a girl he was interested in, to join a 'ban the bomb' group at his middle school. As he remembers: "You know, I would have joined whatever she asked me to. It could have been a butterfly club; I would have joined

it" (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006). It was a small political group dedicated to social action. Mitch Podolak recalls: " I see Peter Seeger and I heard anti-nuke songs, and working class songs and folk songs and this all began to.... I went to this folk show and there were all these same people from the ban the bomb movement. There it was; it was all tied together. The politics that I was developing and the songs that I was enjoying...it was all right there. From Pete, I learned the human side of politics. From Trotsky I ended up learning the mechanism, the technique and the love of it" (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006). Mitch Podolak continues: "First you have to understand the Urban Folk Revival was the reaction of students and the petty bourgeoisie to the success of the Weavers and then the Kingston Trio. You also have to understand where the Communist Party really comes from" (Ibid.).

According to Podolak, his radicalization was also influenced by the history of his ethnic group in Canada -- several generations of Jewish immigrants moved to urban centres. The influx of immigrants created a desire for a sense of home. This desire led to the creation of social groups, where they could speak their own language in a sea of English speakers. They developed a series of labour groups to support each other and out of these grew cultural groups. Mandolin orchestras and singing groups emerged everywhere there was a Jewish community. Centres were opened to teach children Yiddish and Hebrew. Podolak recalls that every day after public school ended he would go to Hebrew school for an hour. Songs and games were part of the curriculum. Keillor (1994) provides an excellent account of the influence Jewish cultural institutions had on young people in her biographical account of Canadian composer John Weinzweig:

> In the early 1920s John and his younger brother Morris were learning Yiddish and Jewish history, after public school hours, at the Workmen's Circle Peretz School and its summer Camp Yungeveit, just outside

> Toronto. This was the boys' first real opportunity to gain an understanding of their Jewish heritage, since their father did not attend synagogue. Joseph Weinzweig was like many of the Jewish immigrants who came to Toronto after the Revolution of 1905, who 'carried with them the latest ideological and cultural developments in the Pale' and represented 'the entire spectrum of Jewish political radicalism.' (Keillor 1994, 6)

These organizations promoted educational opportunities that would otherwise not be available. Musical, cultural, and religious activities that were similar to Weinzweig's experience surrounded Podolak as a member of this neighbourhood. Yiddish songs, the labour temple, the Zionists, the communists, the social democrats all filled Mitch Podolak's early experience and his recounting of growing up in urban Toronto.

The cultural groups created camps where young Jewish children were able to go in the summer. Some were religious camps, but many were secular. A number of these organizations were run or supported by the Communist party. Podolak explained that the Jewish relationship to the CP was built upon a fundamental belief in internationalism: "The communist groups were started by these immigrants because of their experiences in Europe. Nationalism was a dangerous thing for Jews. Every time somebody decides to get patriotic Jews ended up getting killed. So, Internationalism was very important. Nationalism is a very bad disease. Whether the early communists articulated it that way or not, that's essentially what the reaction was. These early communists didn't escape from Communism; they escaped from a variety of forms of Fascism. Communism was a reaction to the treatment of people. It didn't come from aristocrats or religious orders; it came from the workers, the regular people" (Podolak interview: October 6, 2005).

As a 'red-diaper' baby, Mitch Podolak was very comfortable with Communism. It was as natural as any other political position. He grew up with Lenin's books lying around the house. As a child he wasn't instructed in Communism but he lived within it.

His father was a member of the Red Army under Trotsky and his mother was also an immigrant Communist. He grew up in a Jewish enclave in Toronto and has many memories of his early years and his father's experiences. "I remember my father wielding a baseball bat protecting the Progressive Party sign that we had on our door" (Ibid.). It was his later experiences with Seeger that brought his familial and personal relationship with the left into focus. As he remembers: "The leadership of the Communist Party has a very European outlook on culture. There was always folk singing and dancing around. When we went to camp we saw these adults singing these songs, these folk songs! I liked these songs and thought about them as camp songs and then I saw these guys on stage singing them" (Ibid.).

Mitch Podolak goes on to explain: "Jews were very radical of every persuasion. It was a natural order of things, working class people coming up with a sense of themselves mixed with internationalism. *Workers of all countries unite*" (Podolak interview: October 2, 2005). According to Podolak, the quiet Jewish elements were in the minority before McCarthy. Being political and outspoken was a natural inclination. The initiation of summer camps like Neivolt by the Communist Party was very natural. The programming at the camp brought the *People's Songs* elements to children. As Podolak related in my interview: "When my sister was at camp, Pete Seeger was brought to sing. She came home and took me to a concert and that was my introduction to folk music. When I came home from the concert I sold my clarinet and bought a banjo. All of the things I had been thinking about at the time, Pete Seeger clarified them for me on stage" (Podolak interview: September 5, 2005).

Trotskyism

The Trotskyist movement had an influence on Podolak that needs to be understood within the context of his experience as a member of the organization. The following is a brief history of the Trotskyist movement, followed by Podolak's account of his personal experiences which led to the creation of the WFF.

A Canadian – US connection existed from the very beginning of the Trotskyist movement. Maurice Spector, a leading Canadian Communist Party Member, and James Cannon, a leading American Communist Party member, founded the Trotskyist Fourth International in North America together. "Spector and Cannon had met before, but they did not know each other well; certainly they had never discussed their concerns about the International" (Angus 2004, 190). Their relationship was solidified during the 1928 plenum in New York. They made plans to meet at the Sixth World Convention in Moscow. During this time they received[38] a copy of the book length submission Trotsky made to the convention. It was a condemnation of the theory of 'socialism in one country' and the events that had erupted in China. This document locked both Spector and Cannon together to work for the creation of a Trotskyist movement in North America. Cannon wrote: "We let the caucus meetings and the Congress go to the devil while we read and studied this document. Then I knew what I had to do, and so did he. Our doubts had been resolved. It was as clear as daylight that Marxist truth was on the side of Trotsky. We made a compact there and then—Spector and I—that we would come back home and begin a struggle under the banner of Trotskyism" (Angus 2004, 192). Spector was ejected from the Canadian Communist party and started the Trotsky party in Canada, while in the US Cannon was ejected from the CPUSA. By the end of the

[38] Depending on who you read Cannon *accidentally* got a copy or *smuggled* out a copy of the Trotsky draft document. Either way, Cannon and Spector were working together with Trotsky himself in opposition to the Stalinist takeover of the Comintern.

1930s Spector had moved to New York to work alongside Cannon, cementing the North American Trotskyist movement.

The Trotskyists were an oppositional voice to the Communist Party (CP) from their inception. The most dramatic period of division took place when the CP, in step with Stalin, moved towards WWII with its musical alliances like the Almanacs while Cannon and the Trotskyists opposed the war. In all of the literature dealing with this period of American folk music history there is no distinction between Communists attached to Stalin and the Trotskyist left opposition to the Stalinist Comintern. For an introduction to this Trotskyist position I will make use of an article published in the *Fourth International* in 1942. "This characterization of the war was determined for us by the character of the state powers involved in it. They were all capitalist states in the epoch of imperialism; themselves imperialist—oppressing other nations or peoples—or satellites of imperialist powers. The extension of the war to the Pacific and the formal entry of the United States and Japan change nothing in this basic analysis." Cannon was impressed by Trotsky's work in opposition to Stalin. These men would form the center of the Left opposition to Stalin and the Comintern, and the lone voice in opposition to the *imperialist* war effort in North America.

"We were internationalists before December 8; we still are. We believe that the most fundamental bond of loyalty of all the workers of the world is the bond of international solidarity of the workers against their exploiters. We cannot assume the slightest responsibility for this war. No imperialist regime can conduct a just war. We cannot support it for one moment."[39] The Fourth International was formed in 1938 and was backed by Trotsky. The Third International, or Stalin International, was felt to be

[39] Article written by James B. Cannon in *Fourth International* (New York), January 1942.

incapable of leading the working class to power. Even more importantly, Stalin's policy of 'Socialism in One Country' ended the Soviet Union's belief in internationalism of the working class. The Trotskyists believed that internationalism existed inherently and the organized workers of the world must defeat the ruling class of capitalists.

> We are doing all in our power to speed those revolutions. But those ex-socialists, intellectuals and labor leaders, who in the name of "democracy" support the war of United States imperialism against its imperialist foes and rivals, far from aiding the German and Italian anti-fascists, only hamper their work and betray their struggle. The Allied imperialists, as every German worker knows, aim to impose a second and worse Versailles; the fear of that is Hitler's greatest asset in keeping the masses of Germany in subjection. The fear of the foreign yoke holds back the development of the German revolution against Hitler. (Ibid.)

This perspective on the war effort was quickly silenced by the United States government with the imprisonment of Cannon, fellow Trotskyists and some Wobblies (IWW) on charges of attempting to overthrow the government. Cannon was not released until the war ended.

Like the American section, Canadian Trotskyites remained firm against the war throughout it. The position was reached together 'somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.'[40] The Canadian report of this prewar Fourth International meeting explains the stance of the International towards WWII. The report reads: "Our transitional program retains its former validity and the slogans: 'For a Workers' and Farmers' Government; Expropriate the Fifty Big Shots; Workers' Control of Production; Food and Plenty, not Guns and Bombers; Bread, not Aeroplanes.'"[41]

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[40] The exact location for the meeting was not released. It was the last activity Trotsky would have a hand in before his assassination in 1940.

[41] In *The Canadian Section and the War: An Organizational Report*. Available online: http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/WW2/EmergConf-40.htm Accessed on January 17, 2006.

Resistant Folk Music

The communists learned a great deal about the power of the folk song during the depression and were very influential in shaping a use-definition that would stand in conflict with Gibbons definition of folk music. Mitch Podolak was initiated into this brand of folk in the early 1960's and mixed it with the political position learned within the Trotskyist movement until 1972. Folk music, as a musical form, is not in itself resistant. With lyrics and sometimes in musical content it is a form that allows for the broadcast of characteristics of the society that it claims to represent. The communist organisations we have discussed supported the use of folk music *as* a form of resistance, not because it *was* a form of resistance. It reflected a community of people that positioned themselves at odds with the ruling capitalist class. Mitch Podolak elaborated:

> How would you describe the creation of modern folk music? I look at this society and this working class culture. It is certainly the telling of working class stories. It is a reflection of working class culture. But we live in a bourgeoisie society and this is bourgeois culture. So isn't it then, by definition, bourgeoisie culture. Isn't all culture then bourgeois culture? I actually think so. I think the influences built into that. [singing] 'You gotta go down and join the union/ you gotta go down by your self/ You gotta go down and join a union' [song ends] That's influenced by bourgeois culture as well. The state of the working person in this society necessitates the existence of a union to protect the worker. It's the dialectic. I describe all culture as bourgeois culture. (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006)

Mitch Podolak's difficulty in separating out the bourgeoisie from culture points to a larger issue. How can a resistant culture exist and continue to exist within an economic system that it requires and, at least philosophically, rejects? There is a resistant use of public space to express a consciousness that claims not to be bourgeois but needs to be expressed within the limits of an economic model it cannot fully escape. The festival space is created within the bourgeois cultural framework, according to Podolak, enabling a group of people, regardless of their class or occupational associations, to come together

and celebrate folk culture, defined as proletarian. This inherent conflict is central to the understanding of the emergent folk culture within mass culture. There is an economic and material imperative and, oppositionally, a desire to oppose the economy because of the underlying communist belief in the corruption exerted by economic forces.

The second point Podolak is making here leads to the same conclusion. The economic, anti-social, realities of capitalism force individuals to make choices to join labour unions. The old folk song that he sang is a re-write of an old spiritual, *You Gotta Go Down to the River, You gotta go down by yourself.* The social reaction to an unchecked, free-market capitalism led to the development of unions for protection. As a Trotskyist, Podolak is at odds with capitalism and therefore at odds with a culture that, he believes, *actively* accepts unregulated capitalism. Interaction with the economy can be undertaken on terms of your own choosing. Podolak's position, often used by progressive left thinkers, equates the economy with a machine that is outside of the influence of the workers taking part in it. As we will see, the folk music industry and the WFF interact with the economy and influence it to both serve the needs of the participants and the survival of the festival.

Party Politics

To fully explore Podolak's philosophical and organizational ideas it first requires an investigation into his history with the Trotskyist movement. When questioning Mitch Podolak about the nature of the organization in the Winnipeg Folk Festival he responded: "That's not where it's at. You wouldn't understand how the WFF was organized because you don't know how a political party is organized.[42] The nature of the festival is the human component and that you learn in politics" (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006).

[42] See Appendix D: Diagram of Union of Soviet Socialist Republic.

The experience that he gained as a leader, organizer, party member, and field worker in Toronto, Halifax, and then Winnipeg between 1962 and 1972 had a direct bearing on the structure of the festival. The connection is so direct that Podolak and the co-founder of the Vancouver Folk Festival, Gary Cristall, both brushed off my direct question about it, each claiming independently:" Oh, that's just how a political party is organized. That's not very interesting" (Ibid.).

As a Trotskyist, Podolak had an opportunity to practise the application of skills he would bring to bear on the creation of the WFF. The educational methodology of the Trotskyist movement suited the young Podolak very well. It had been described by one member as a 'dash of theory with a lot of practice'. This methodology was a guerrilla-styled education with many of the lessons learned in the street. The classroom was in a backroom engaged in the planning of events. The lab was in the street, on the front lines of the protest marches, clashes with police, and with other communists, anarchists, and fascists. The rest of this chapter deals with items that the Trotskyites worked on: (a) education, (b) organization, and (c) the theory of permanent revolution and the creation of culture.

Education

The history of a movement, like the communists and Trotskyists, takes on a much more complex dynamic when it is connected to a personal family history. The lines of history and narrative interweave to create a poignant account. Mitch Podolak's family story explains part of his relationship with communism, its history, and Leon Trotsky:

> I knew enough about my folks being communists. They were communists right up until '56. My family were part of the gang that left the CP in '56 and my Pop died... and my Pop had fought in the Red Army in '21. When he saw Russian tanks shooting Hungarian workers in the street. He sure wasn't fuckin' happy. You know...he didn't know ... or I guess hadn't figured out that there were two parts to the revolution. The first part was

> the left and then the second part was the right. So, he died that year. He died pissed. I kind of knew that. We talked about it later, my mom and I. He was pissed. My dad was hot as a cracker when he died. My whole family was in the CP. I was a 'red-diaper baby.' But my family were classical music people not folk people. My family were sophisticated people... (laughs) Musicians, visual artists, not religious...mostly atheists. My mother met my father at a Communist meeting...so...it was the '30s. I knew about the politics...a little. There were these funny little books around the house...it was Lenin. When I was a kid I'd be looking through picture books. I'd see these cute little books I didn't know what they were. Years later I saw those books and was like...whoa I know what those books are. Jeez...I realized lots of stuff about my Pop and my Mom right then and there. Which was great. They were CP people but had left before I got political. They were political people, thinking politics but not active. By the time '62 or '63 came around, the time I was interested, they were already long out of it. I knew about it though; it was instinct I guess. I joined the party. I started calling myself a communist. Pete was a communist so I was a Communist. (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005)

During Mitch Podolak's involvement in the 'Ban the Bomb' movement at his middle school in Toronto in 1962 there were many discussions on tactics. The group was split into two distinct organizations. One group represented the CP and the other the Trotskyists. The Trotskyists appealed to Mitch Podolak more because he felt they were right. "The Trotskyist kids were smarter...(laughs) So I gravitated towards them. They were happy that I did because that's what they were trying to do, get people interested in Trotskyism and develop Cadres and the Vanguard party" (Podolak interview: September 29, 2005). The goal of the Trotskyist movement, which started under Spector and Cannon, had remained the same. Now, under Ross Dowson, who entered the party at age 15 in 1932, the Trotskyists were remaining focussed on the goal at hand: To develop and train Cadres of loyal Trotskyists who would represent the Vanguard party and push for revolution. The Vanguard party represents the active section of a party. The Vanguard is the terminology Trotskyists use to express the front-line practicality of the party. Podolak remembers the early 1960s and his personal experience entering the Trotskyist

movement: "Everything that was going to shape the rest of my life happened between those years, between me being 13 till when I was 16. It all happened at the same time. But it was the time too. The civil rights movement was happening. There were the marches on TV and here were the songs. It was all there. The music is tied up with all the issues" (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006). Mitch Podolak starts singing:

> 'If you want me at the back of the bus/you wouldn't find me right there/ come up to the front of the bus/ I'll be riding up there.' [song ends] There was politics and then real politics, real music about real politics. Politics is the stuff you see on TV. Real politics is when people are participating with politics. Real politics is a march, either against something or for something, or a march to celebrate something. In the end if you have the majority of the people you win. It's about winning right. I think a lot of people on the left think they should be doing something because they think it's their moral responsibility. I think people like that are assholes. I think the reason why people should do things is to win. If we want a better society you better go out and fuckin' fight for it and win. So that's why all those people made sense to me. That's why I got involved with the Trotskyists. They were great people. They were the best activists; they were the toughest activists. (Ibid.)

Ross Dowson had a personal relationship with many of the people that worked with him. He had a small but loyal following in Toronto, so it was possible for him to personally ensure that the young members of the Trotskyist association took the time to learn. Reading was very important to Dowson, who prized knowledge, and as a Marxist and a Trotskyist believed that an understanding of history was a prized political asset. Mitch Podolak on the other hand didn't care too much about reading; it reminded him too much of school. "Ross would walk up to me and say, 'here, read this and then come see me,' and he'd pass me *Spartacus* or *Homage to Catalonia* or something. So I'd read it and then go to see him. We'd have some great arguments! We didn't see eye to eye some times so we had some great arguments. He made me read political theory; he made me read. It had a great impact on me. I owe Dowson a lot" (Podolak interview: February 9,

2006). Mitch Podolak would learn from Dowson and his Trotskyist organization the importance of knowledge. Dowson, in association with the Trotskyist American philosopher George Novacks, would teach a class on historical materialism to the new Trotskyists.[43] Howard Fast's novel *Spartacus* and George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* were intended to inspire the young people who were involved in the organization. It was also important that works of art could be works of resistance. As a member of the Trotskyist movement Mitch Podolak would develop skills that were learned by experience in the field and enhanced by the practical application of Marxist-Leninist theory. Understanding historical materialism was an essential quality of a member of the Trotskyist movement; without it, Trotskyism, a branch of Marx-Leninism, would be impossible. Members, in the style of radicals of the 1930s, would regularly argue about who was most adept at the use of dialectical materialism in the understanding of current affairs.

Organization

The political development for a member of the Trotskyist organization was not easy. Members were expected to move out and begin organizing branches of the League around the city they lived in quite early; when they were locally successful, they were sent further afield on political missions. As Podolak recounted: "I was on a lot of missions (Toronto, Halifax area and Winnipeg). Most of them were successful; some of them weren't. The bottom line, though, is I learned a lot from them. I learned tons about organizing. I learned to trust people. That was the most important thing. I learned that if you try to boss people around it doesn't work" (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006).

[43] The course outline for a class in Historical Materialism was very useful in the preparation for this research. In the Ross Dowson Fonds in the LAC the entire Trotskyist course is available. Available at the Library and Archives Canada: LAC Historical Materialism Lectures notes: LSA Educational Binder 74-16 R10995

The interpersonal skills required to work as a human organizer were gained in the field. The dedication to a vision was also acquired in the field. As Mitch Podolak said: " I got a hardness from Trotsky on a personal level. The knowledge that is important to you, you must be unwavering about. That's what I got from Trotsky. In terms of organizational ideas he was a Leninist. He believed in a disciplined organization that worked *together*. The group adheres to one line in public and has internal democracy within the organization. In the broad philosophical way he was influential; in the practical way Jim Cannon and Ross Dowson way more" (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005).

Mitch Podolak asserts the importance of the Bolshevik model[44] of political organization. This model of democratic socialism as described in detail by Lenin and Trotsky in their theoretical writing on the subject, puts the emphasis for *action* on the ground level, the citizenry. The organization is built upon mutual interest. Members of the same industry would be organized together and would elect a representative from that group. Each industry, in each geographical area, would send one member to a central area or a Soviet, quite often a community centre. These Soviets would select a representative to send up to the next level, or Congress of People's Deputies. This Congress would itself elect representatives who would become members of the Supreme Soviet. In such a way the entire citizenry, in theory, would be represented. The party itself would be organized in exactly the same way. Party members would be elected from the body of party citizenry. Lenin attempted to create a model that would put the legislative agenda into the hands of the people. Trotsky recalled the creation and concrete organization of The Soviet (Council) of People's Commissaries: "[T]o recreate a certain sphere of human life in all its concrete reality, basing everything upon experience in life and upon theory – that is the imagination that a legislator, an administrator, a leader must have, especially in a

[44] See Appendix D: Diagram of Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

period of revolution" (Trotsky 1931, 344). Trotsky took these lessons and passed them on during his period of exile. Cannon and later Ross Dowson would inherit these ideas and attempt to recreate their basic principles, a combination of practice and theory leading to action.

The theoretical structures that Podolak had inherited from Trotsky, Spector and Dowson would be digested in their application in the field. Podolak explained: "Someone says: 'OK here's a theory;' somebody else says: 'OK let me try to apply that.' If you happen to be a person who is witnessing the application of the theory and it makes sense to you, you'll ask what the connection [to history] is. Clearly, you'll say OK; that's a connection to the 'ol man' [Trotsky]. Good Trotskyists are not Trotskyoids or Trotskyites. They are not followers of Trotsky the person; they are followers of the method. They are not sycophants of the 'ol man' but people who apply the theory. I'm not a follower of Trotsky; we're co-thinkers. It's a different view of how this works" (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006).

Mitch Podolak describes the difference in tactics that the CP and the Trotskyists used. As an example, Podolak describes the Canadian Peace Council during the Vietnam War. The CP created it as a front for its activities. They had one member who was not a communist who they used as their spokesperson. This spokesperson would declare that he was not a communist to clear the entire organization. The Trotskyists, on the other hand, would not use a front for any of their activities. Podolak described them as brazen. This led the CP to move, in deference to McCarthyism, into hiding instead of challenging this form of political conservativism. The fronts were used as a way to avoid being stigmatized as Communist. Instead of intellectually challenging McCarthyism they sought to avoid it. The Trotskyists, however, said: 'They are the enemy…let's get them.'

Mitch Podolak identified early, but not uncritically, with the Trotskyist movement. The Trotskyists were very involved with educating their members. It became essential for the Trotskyists to be very rational about their position because of the negative stigma attached to communism during this period. What was wrong with Communism? The ideas were not the ideas of a 'master race' like Nazism; they were the ideas of brother/sisterhood. The problem, as the Trotskyists saw it, was with Stalin. Their relationship with the Stalinists, the CP, was a challenge. The Trotskyists challenged Kirkconnell's analysis which directly equated Communism with Fascism. As Mitch Podolak described: "They are not the same. These are stupid people. What's the difference when you get murdered by a Stalinist or a Fascist? There is some rationale to this question. Anyone who governs with the use of a police state whether it's a Communist, Fascist, Capitalist, or Islamist, --they all use the same techniques; let's not deny this. I think these people are stupid. I really felt that the Trotskyists were not stupid" (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006). The Trotskyists attacked the Stalinists with almost as much vigour as they attacked the capitalist order.

The Fourth International was created in 1938 because of the hostility between the Stalinists and the Trotskyists. As an organizer for the Trotskyist movement, Mitch Podolak was sent to a number of places in Canada to start chapters for the party between 1962 and 1972. After his early work in Toronto he was sent to Edmonton, Winnipeg and then Halifax. Mitch Podolak would travel to these towns and establish a branch of the 'Young Socialists' first and then a 'League for Socialist Action.'

> I would go in and do the same things that you do with any sort of human organization. You look for people who are interested and you start to talk to them about what's possible. Then when you get them convinced that what is possible is an armed struggle and a revolution with a mass in North America, then they join. That would be a big sell these days but in the 1960s, it wasn't such a big sell. It was easier because there was already so much fuckin' ferment. Can this pick up? In May and June '68 in Paris,

> the student movement overthrew the government; the government managed to pick its ass back up off the ground but it was done. If there had been an alternate organization to step into power that would have been the end of that government, or there would have been a civil war in France. That's how powerful it can be. There was the Cubans; Che Guevara, Malcolm X and it was ferment. It was beautiful and really interesting thing that led to Condoleeza Rice[45]...but before that the Vietnamese people stood up against the US. They are the bravest people in the world. They stood up against those people who could have dropped nuclear bombs on them. They still did it and survived. (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006)

The human component to the work of an organizer had more to it then just making lists. It was putting into practice very specific lessons learned from Trotsky. James Cannon had been interpreting the work of Trotsky to apply it in a North American context. This was the work the Trotskyists were undertaking, marrying 'theory with practice' and being aware of the 'fundamental feedback loop of practice on theory.'[46] Ross Dowson, the leader of the Trotskyist movement in Canada until 1974, describes in a letter how the movement examined and understood the events of the day and expressed them in education and action. This letter also provides a context for the milieu in which Mitch Podolak found himself:

> The October 26 [1961] mobilizations were very successful right across Canada. I never saw such a mobilization of police here in Toronto. They made it a point of highest principle that we not be allowed down Yonge. In fact they were prepared for an insurrectionary struggle. They told storekeepers on Yonge to lock their doors. It so happened they had several hundreds of police from across Ontario training in riot control etc at the Exhibition Park—they brought them in. They had several squads of mounted police at different points. They had three (at least) large buses at the ready so they could manoeuvre their forces quickly....
>
> We will have two national tours underway in the month—Jacie Henderson for the youth and Joe Young for the Vietnam movement. This will be directed in large part not only to knit together the many connections we made and or strengthened with this summer's Trailblazers but to build up

[45] Condoleeza Rice is the current Secretary of State for the United States of America (2006) in the George W. Bush Administration. Podolak meant this statement without irony. The point was to identify what was won by the civil rights movement was *inclusion* into the liberal capitalist state not a change in the state.
[46] Ross Dowson often used this phrase in his correspondence.

> the conference of University socialists our youth will be calling this Christmas weekend.
>
> This week a Mexican student will be touring the campuses. What repercussions has the revolt had in Costa Rica? Has the news got through?
>
> The Czech invasion is having real repercussions throughout the CP and interestingly enough in the decrepit CP of Canada and that of the U.S.
>
> The London Vietnam demo was a big success—probably you have read lots about the conduct of the police. But of course there never was any real threat of riots—that was the big build up to scare off the crowd.
>
> I suppose you read about the barring of a Dr. Rodney from Jamaica which sparked the violent explosion amongst students and then amongst the masses in Kingston. Well we had him at our forum a couple of weeks ago. Got an excellent audience – made many contacts with Jamaicans here in Toronto.[47]

The organization created a network of people across the country that organized protests and demonstrations and published and distributed newspapers in order to educate its members to prepare for revolution. The goal was to organize people to win political power. The only purpose to engage in work like this was to be prepared to win. As Trotsky wrote: "One cannot engage in a struggle without expecting to capture the position for which one is fighting" (Trotsky 1931, 173). Ross Dowson echoed this sentiment in a letter of reprimand from 1951: "I don't know whether Marx and Engels had doubts about the immediacy of the revolution in 1848 or not but you canten ter [can't enter] into revolutionary action that is effective if youn [you] put forward all kinds of doubts and reservations."[48] The Trotskyists were preparing for revolution. Every activity they engaged in was directed towards that conclusion.

The lessons which Mitch Podolak learned during his ten years with the Trotskyists would underpin his methodology as an artistic director. When he moved to

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[47] Available at the Library and Archives Canada: Personal correspondence, Ross Dowson Fonds LAC November 4, 1968 E2-1969 49-27 R10995

[48] Available at the Library and Archives Canada: Personal letter to unknown member of the Trotskyist movement. LAC Oct 19 1951 personal correspondence E2-1951-from 49-10 R100995

Winnipeg in 1967, the first thing he did was to organize an anti-Vietnam War protest. The CP in Winnipeg, which had a long-standing tradition since before the General Strike of 1919, didn't know, at first, how to deal with a Trotskyist. Mitch Podolak was the first Trotskyist to organize in Winnipeg. Trotskyists believed in non-sectarian organizing. The CP had a history of organizing along a party line which was directed from the top of the organization from Moscow; the Trotskyists made decisions democratically and followed the majority in the 'rightness' of the decision. This song further makes this point:

The Party Line

In old Moscow, in the Kremlin
In the year of thirty-nine
Sat a Russian and a Prussian
Writing out the party line

Chorus

Oh My Darling, Oh My Darling
Oh My Darling Party Line
Oh I Never Will Betray You
Cause I like This Life of Mine

Leon Trotsky, was a Nazi
We All Knew it For A Fact
Pravda said it; We all read it
Til the Stalin-Hitler Pact

Chorus

Once a Nazi, would be shotsi
That was then the party line
Now a Nazi, hotsy totsy
Volga Boatman sail the Rhine[49]

Throughout the CP history there were constant shifts in direction. The party, which demanded strict coherence to the 'line,' forced its followers to radically alter their position many times. This was not lost to the Trotskyists and was used to politically

[49] Sung to the tune of "My Darling Clementine."

undermine the CP's position. This tactic worked quite well during the Vietnam anti-war movement and led to a swelling in the Trotskyist ranks. Podolak remembered:

> The National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), which was the anti-Vietnam movement, [was] controlled by the Trotskyist, organized demonstrations that were open to everyone. A demonstration in New York City that I was on had three-quarters of a million people in it. It was fifty people wide and three and a half hours long. That was a Trotskyist organization. We controlled NPAC. All of the big demonstrations in Toronto, New York and Washington, they were ours. The whole idea of being inclusive, not being sectarian, not being religious about it. That's why the Americans lost the war. The war wasn't won in Vietnam; it was won in New York and Washington. NPAC won the Vietnam War (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006)

Mitch Podolak recalls a story he heard from a fellow Trotskyist: "When somebody asked Jim Cannon, who was then 80 years old, what's the secret of being a good revolutionary his answer was simple, 'to know what to do next.' Marxism does not reject pragmatism. To know what to do next is the key. That is the practical application of life. If your politics is isolated from life, then your social action is isolated from life; you have no impact. Your political action and your life has to be in line" (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006). It is no surprise then that Mitch Podolak, a banjo-playing folk music fan, would finally turn his attention back to his cultural life. The creation of the WFF lined up his personal interests with his political concerns. The organizational model for the festival space came directly out of his political experience. Podolak subtly enlarged the cultural 'song as a weapon' model used earlier by the CP. The new model was a 'song sharing as a weapon' model. The practical organization of the festival space would be infused with the social action of the creator. Podolak would also find a way to deal with the economic tension between the financial needs of the festival and its resistant aspirations.

Trotsky and Podolak

Mitch Podolak's connection to Seeger and Trotsky was expressed in two CBC radio specials that he produced between 1972 and 1974 just before he started the WFF. The first is a radio biography on Trotsky aired in 1972. To understand the importance of these radio broadcasts we need only to read a letter Podolak received from Ross Dowson:

> Dear Mitch;
> I heard the program on Thursday night. Colossal. You have done a tremendous service to the revolutionary socialist movement. I can only think that the CBC will be anxious to sell that program across the English language world....and hundreds of thousands will hear it.
>
> Not only is it a splendid work politically but I think that it is a real work of art.
> Criticisms---I can't think of any that really matter—except for a next time—another project something along the same lines—say Lenin or Marx or Engels.
> My warmest regards and thanks
>
> Ross Dowson[50]

The next CBC project that Podolak undertook was a biography of Pete Seeger. Understandably Dowson did not write a letter of thanks for that one. Mitch had just left Dowson's group and had become a member of the Revolutionary Marxists in 1972 which may even add prestige this letter. Mitch had been part of a 'fratricidal war' that opposed Dowson and his stand on the Quebec Question and Nationalism that same year.[51]

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[50] Available at the Library and Archives Canada: Personal correspondence from Ross Dowson to Mitch Podolak: November 25, 1972 E2-1972-From 49-33 R10995 LAC

[51] This is a particularly difficult piece of history to deal with. Currently there are no sources to fall back on for scholarly information. In a discussion I had with Ian Angus, author of Canadian Bolsheviks, he clarified the matter, but only a bit. There are a number of events that are taking place simultaneously which had been preparing to destabilize the Canadian 4th International. Members in France and England had been in communication with Dowson's LSA/LSO in Montreal and were prepared to bring them into the 4th International as a separate group. Dowson's stand on entrism with the NDP was a contentious issue. Further to this, according to Ian Angus, Dowson had been trying to retire for a while but couldn't get over the need to be at the head of an organization of which he had always been the leader. Communists of this era often throw around the term 'fratricidal war.' It generally means a splintering of a main group into different interests or 'tendencies.' These internal squabbles, which happen often, lead to a discussion and a vote, which leads to a decision that all will adopt. The majority rules and the party line is followed. This time though it seems there were too many factions and the issues were too large. The splinter groups

The Fourth International and Permanent Revolution

As a member of the Trotskyist Fourth International, Mitch Podolak worked towards revolution. The festival structure he built from personal experience and political practice was designed to create revolution. It was also built upon a belief structure that was highly influenced by Leon Trotsky's writings. Trotsky, possibly inspired by Darwin, believed that society worked in an evolutionary way. Social formations were akin to biological species and progressed through continual adaptation. Trotsky, a determinist, believed that society was inexorably evolving towards socialism. This brings us to Mitch Podolak's intention to build a *Revolutionary Establishment* within the structure of the WFF.

The role of geographic and temporal communal space as *Revolutionary Establishment* is to allow people, as individuals and groups, to have a bonding experience inside this structure, to allow for the personal witness of the power of socialist organization and to actively re-imagine Canada, in the *flow* of the festival experience. The inspiration for this model was Trotsky's theory of *Permanent Revolution,* however, Mitch Podolak had his own idiosyncratic reading of the theory which he then applied to the professional folk music industry. This theory, in its most vulgar form, says that the revolution for democracy, as in America or France, is a first step that will inevitably lead to a revolution for socialism. This theory according to Trotsky is even more important for countries that have a less developed form of capitalism. These countries are surviving in a form of capitalist imperialism without democracy. The coming revolution can combine both forms of revolution, one for democracy and then one for socialism, into one revolution, provided that these less developed countries have the support of more

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created new organizations like the Revolutionary Marxists, of which Mitch Podolak was a part. Later the groups re-formed but so much damage had been done that the numbers, which were always small, were even smaller.

developed capitalist countries already engaged in this process. The permanence of the revolution is founded upon the social evolution that Trotsky, and by extension the Trotskyists, believed to be at the foundation of society. Regular people have a desire for a better social existence, and, when led by a revolutionary vanguard party, will fight to create it, bringing a society necessarily towards a revolution for socialism. This better society, according to the Trotskyist, is first founded in a mature capitalist democracy and later, by revolution, in socialism.

Trotsky planted a seed for Podolak when he said: "Individual artists can help remake culture, but not in isolation and not in conditions of their own choosing" (Rees 1998, 285). This statement can be understood in two ways and is important to do so because of the influence that it had on Mitch Podolak. When Trotsky referred to artists 'not in isolation' he could have meant it in two possible ways. First, not as a single artist looking to create change, it would need to be artists working together to make change on whatever platform could be provided, hence not in personal isolation. Alternatively, 'not in isolation' could mean that artists need to combine their revolutionary efforts with farmers and crafts people, in other words, the proletariat and the peasants, to remake culture. Hence they would not work in isolation by craft, but as an entire class of artists together. They would move from bourgeois concert halls to performance spaces accessible to everyone in society and embrace the cause of the proletariat. The artist class would function as an articulate segment of the proletariat at large. If that were to happen, what kind of culture would be created? Podolak believed that the folk movement was exactly what Trotsky meant. The creation of the folk music festival allows artists an integrated space together with the working class that was not available previously. This change in venues, and creation of a new working class, or proletariat culture, could have large political ramifications. Podolak believed that culture itself has a fundamental

relationship to the power structure of society and that a change in the dynamic of culture can influence the power structure towards another direction. Simply, if an entertainment culture reflects a class construction, then a change in the way that culture works could have an effect on the participants. For instance, there is an obvious similarity between a feudal lord and his serfs to a conductor and the orchestra. It is a top down pyramid, one over many. The music comes from a composer who singularly creates a work of art. That 'work of art' or high-art, has an elite connotation which is supported by the separation between performer and audience in a symphonic performance. In contrast, the folk musician performs music that is, or at least imagines itself to be, directly from the experience of the audience. The separation between performer and audience is downplayed, and as we will see in Chapter Four, intentionally constructed to be so. Podolak believes that the creation of the folk music industry is an attempt to change popular culture and in doing so affect the participants. It would, by extension, impact the society by influencing its contributing members.

Podolak was unaware of the work Gibbon had done in the creation of the first generation of folk festivals. If he had been more aware of Gibbon's Fabianism he would have seen the similarity between the Fabian theory of permeation and his interpretation of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution. Interestingly, both strategies have the same assumption. These generations differ, however, as Podolak takes a very different approach to the identity of the makers of the music and aims to overthrow the capitalist order in Canada and not just alter it, as Gibbon proposed.

Gibbon's impact, especially his work to bring folk music to the school system, was still felt as Podolak worked to create the WFF, and this residual culture led to a

conflict that created a new use-definition of folk music within the second generation[52] of Canadian folk festivals. This new version of the folk festival was predominantly an urban musical experience that focussed on contemporary folk song composition, singer songwriters, and a variety of music forms which included blues, gospel, traditional Irish and Scottish music, and would grow to embrace a wide variety of 'folk' music from around the world. Members of the older first generation of festivals were still active. In 1957 Marius Barbeau and Sam Gesser (Folkways Canada) had actively, although unsuccessfully, planned to promote an urban music festival in Montreal. "This first festival would have as its specific aim the performance of Canadian folk cultures, and the traditions of 'New Canadians' of various ethnic origins. ...The performances would be 6 or 7 in number, at a location such as Molson Stadium at McGill University" (CMC Barbeau 239 f. 24). The earlier philosophically nationalist model of folk music was still being promoted on a large scale, but unsuccessfully. In other parts of Canada, folk festivals, mostly local events, were actively promoting regional and traditional musical styles. The main difference with the second generation of Canadian folk festivals was a focus on urban settings and the incorporation of contemporary folk singers and the songs that they wrote. Again, this contrast is only partial. Barbeau had presented Wade Hemsworth at a Canadian Folk Festival in 1956, however, the second generation of folk festivals would make the contemporary folk song and the singer/songwriter the centre of its presentation, producing music that was in the style of older folk forms but not relying on older or regional material alone. It also actively supported a mass culture version of folk music and would differ in its position on nationalism. The goal of the earlier festivals

[52] The second generation of folk festivals in this thesis starts with the Miramichi Folk Song Festival in 1958, the Newport Folk Festival in 1959, and the Mariposa Folk Festival in 1961. Miramichi is included here because it began at the same time. It is currently the oldest extant folk festival in North America. However, many of its features are from the first generation of the folk festivals and not from the second.

was to find a place for the folk song in Canada; the second generation would attempt to create an opportunity for redefining the identity of the folk singer and in turn the folk song, disregarding nationality as a primary motivator, and enabling the creation of a folk music industry as North American mass culture which positions the audience and the performer as a reflection of one another, the folk.

Podolak took his years of Trotskyist training and applied them directly to the organization of a folk festival. The outcome would produce a *Revolutionary Establishment* within the folk festival structure. This blending of folk music performance with a political sensibility that focussed on grass roots work by regular people would change the way folk festivals would operate in Canada. A secondary outcome would be a complete transformation of the identity of the folk. This transformation came from the integration of audience and performer through the mediation of the festivals' vanguard party, the volunteers. Podolak, by building a structure that encouraged the full participation of an active public, allowed that public to define the event as a reflection of them. The barriers between artist and audience were traversed within the *Revolutionary Establishment.*

Podolak's concept of the folk festival became more influential when he exported it to found the Vancouver Folk Festival.[53] This experience allowed him to consolidate his model of festival organization in Canada. Winnipeg and Vancouver would become touchstones for his organization of other folk festivals. The Edmonton Folk Festival, with which Podolak would be partially involved, would become the largest western Canadian folk festival and would share with Winnipeg and Vancouver the honour of being one of

[53] See Founding of the Vancouver Folk Festival Appendix E.

the most influential Canadian folk festivals.[54] Podolak would expand his influence upon second generation folk festivals by providing a consultation service for smaller and developing folk festivals.[55] This is not to say that Mitch Podolak alone is responsible for the organization of western Canadian folk festivals and that all festivals follow his operational methodologies, but it is important to understand that the success of Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Edmonton folk festivals have had an influence on the operation of other smaller and sometimes older festivals. Economic considerations, although often left undocumented in the professional folk music world, are highly influential. The festivals Mitch Podolak has been involved with have become economic successes. His success as an organizer, therefore, is partially built upon his, real or perceived, economic success. This research does not compare and contrast festival structures, nor does it attempt to create a chronology of folk festival development in the second generation. It does present Mitch Podolak as an important character in the development of the second generation of folk festivals because of the role that he has had and continues to have in their evolution.

[54] The Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver Folk Festivals are regular touchstones for the organization at a festival. This repeats a statement in the text above. There is no study yet that compares and contrasts these three festivals or proves their pre-eminent position among Canadian festivals but within the Canadian folk music industry these three festivals are regarded with much esteem. The ADs of these festivals regularly hold workshops for smaller festivals and help to provide information for the running of any aspect of the festival.

[55] See Mitch Podolak Report on Ottawa Folk Festival in Appendix F.

Chapter 4: The WFF as a Revolutionary Establishment

According to Mitch Podolak, he walked into the Winnipeg Centennial Committee Office in 1974 with $16,000 that he had received as backing from the CBC and laid out the plan for the first Winnipeg Folk Festival. After a number of months of preparation, a free festival was put on at Bird's Hill Park, the first Winnipeg Folk Festival. Podolak remembers the fifteen minutes before the beginning of the folk festival with three members of that Centennial Committee in the audience and a member of the provincial legislature in attendance as well:

> I basically blackmailed these guys into supporting the financial end of the festival. Going into it the Centennial committee, after they gave me the go ahead, asked that we do not do any outside fundraising, even though we budgeted about $50,000 over the amount that we had available. The committee assured us that because they were dealing with all of the funding for the celebration they would handle the carryover. Days before the festival began the money still wasn't there. I had to walk into the festival with a large pile of cheques and tell them that they had a couple of hours to come up with the money to cover these because they were all being sent out. If they didn't cover them, the festival would be bankrupt before it started. It was the first time I was the hard nosed capitalist. Well, they gave in and came up with the money. Now here they are looking at me fifteen minutes before the folk festival starts with about 150 people in the audience and about $120,000 worth of expenses for a free festival. Ha! I'm looking over at these guys and blackmailed them and there's 150 people here for a free event. Forty-five minutes later there were 14,000 people there. But fifteen minutes before the festival I was thinking, 'Gee, do I have enough money for a bus...ha!' I had some serious doubts about what I had just done in those moments. Interestingly, years later I had the same experience at the first Vancouver Folk Festival, in the pouring rain. People around me were freaking out. The next day there were 10 or 12,000 people there. You learn; it's a learning process. When thousands of people start showing up when you're twenty-five years old and you start your first festival, there is no one moment in my life like it. Thousands of people show up for your idea. (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006)

While Podolak presents the founding of the WFF in this reminiscence as a heroic and individual event, in fact the full story is much more complicated. His relationship with Estelle Klein, AD of the Mariposa Folk Festival, was foundational to his understanding of the importance of the folk festival. His grass roots political activities during the 1960s were another important factor. This important period for folk music, which featured artists such as the Almanac Singers, the Weavers, Pete Seeger, Utah Phillips (the contemporary Korean War veteran/bard of the IWW), the rediscovery and popularization of country blues great Mississippi John Hurt, and Doc Boggs, created a wide audience for this genre as presented in festivals and recordings.

This was also a time when contemporary urban based musicians like the New Lost City Ramblers and others performed and recorded traditional American music for young UFR (Urban Folk Revival) audiences. In Canada, Edith Fowke, Helen Creighton, Tom Kines, The Travellers and later Stan Rogers found audiences for their work. The CBC was very active in producing radio and TV shows based on folk music. In the late 1960s and early 1970s folk, country, and pop music would combine and create a very popular form of urban folk music that was led by singer songwriters like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez in the US and Gordon Lightfoot in Canada. Altogether the folk scene in the 1960s was a very rich musical milieu in which the second generation of folk festivals could take root.

Woodstock was created in the midst of the UFR. Its programming exhibited a tension between traditional folk music in all of its definitions and the Tin Pan Alley music world. Arlo Guthrie was there. He inherited from his father a history of progressive song writing. Although he wrote and performed much less progressive music, he was and still is connected to the folk music world. In Canada, Ontario-born Stan Rogers wrote music inspired from his family 'roots' in Canso, Nova Scotia, music that sounded

traditional and was based on themes of industrial transition, of change, of loss, and of love. Mitch Podolak created the WFF within this melange of music and within this transitional time for 'folk' music.

This chapter follows up the theoretical construction of the *Revolutionary Establishment* presented in the previous chapter by providing a practical application of the theory. The creation of the *Revolutionary Establishment*, and therefore the WFF, is bound up in the human organization at the core of the event. The geographical space is a secondary but essential characteristic of the event as it is used to house the participants and to create inclusive spaces for ritual experience.

This chapter will introduce a subtle but important characteristic of the WFF, its imagined relationship to a community picnic and its attempt to distance itself from the Hollywood blockbuster, in short to avoid the type of event described in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. From this community focus stems a number of the significant organizational components of Podolak's *Revolutionary Establishment* (a) the status of the volunteer, (b) the community factor, and (c) the devolution of authority. This examination will create a distinction between the role of the volunteer and the role of the audience. The volunteer structure of the event represents what Podolak refers to as the 'vanguard of the festival.' This vanguard is responsible for the creation of the 'flow of experience' within the event. This constructed experience within a socialist-inspired community model may allow for the participants to see themselves as part of an event outside of the mass culture. This experience, as far as Podolak was concerned, would have a philosophical impact on the participants which would provide support for a revolutionary movement. However, as I will address, it is also possible, as Pauline Greenhill pointed out, that the WFF was just a home for 'white middle class people,' an extension of mass culture, not representing anything revolutionary.

From the Russian Revolution to a Community Picnic

Mitch Podolak was a member of, and believer in, the Trotskyist Fourth International when he started the WFF. He wrote: "I was still an active member of the Fourth International started by Leon Trotsky in 1938. If anybody asked that's exactly what they heard" (Mitch Podolak email: November 22, 2005). The statutes set out by the founders of the Fourth International describe its purpose as follows: "In its platform the Fourth International concentrated the international experience of the revolutionary Marxist movement, and especially that which rises out of the socialist conquests of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. It assimilates and bases itself upon all of humanity's progressive social experiences, which lead to the expropriation of the capitalist class and to the ultimate abolition of classes."[56] Podolak was a member of The League for Socialist Action, the Canadian section of the Fourth International. Its 1961 document, *What the League for Socialist Action is, and What it stands for*, states: "Their program [New Democratic Party] is reformist when the task is revolutionary – that is, socialist."[57] Mitch Podolak was dedicated to the goals of the Fourth International; that included revolution.

Mitch Podolak was influenced by the American communist use-definition of folk music. His upbringing and material circumstances re-enforced this meaning of folk music. This relationship to the meaning of the folk song further propelled Mitch Podolak to become actively engaged politically and to then take that political experience and reapply it to folk music. The Canadian establishment use-definition of folk music from the 1950's to the 1980's was mostly concerned with the folk song as artefact. This artefact, still holding on to the earlier Gibbon use-definition, continued to spread

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[56] Statute 2 of the Fourth International (World Party of Socialist Revolution), September 1938. Available online: http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/fi/1938-1949/fi-1stcongress/ch07.html Accessed January 22, 2006.

[57] *What the League for Socialist Action is, and What it Stands For* (1961), Socialist History Project Archive. Available online: http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/CCF-NDP/What-LSA-Is.htm Accessed February 14, 2006.

throughout the Canadian educational system, further entrenching it as artefact. A conflict emerged between use-definitions of the folk song.

The creation of the WFF brought the Communist use-definition of the folk song to a new level of maturity in Canada. The folk festival structure, built around Mitch Podolak's political ideals, provided an arena for the resistant expression of the folk song. Podolak, based on his political beliefs, altered the focus of the AD, played earlier by Harriss and Gibbon, and these orientation changes would begin to have ramifications on the definitions within Canadian folk culture.

Podolak created a community activity out of the folk festival which imagined itself more as a community picnic than a Hollywood blockbuster. The event, which had its debut during the Winnipeg Centennial, was created to celebrate the people of Winnipeg. Although this first appears to be a celebration in support of the state, it subtly undermines the power dynamic of events by placing a greater emphasis on the role of the observers as active participants in the 'flow of experience.'

Organizing the Festival

According to Podolak, understanding the organization of the WFF requires an appreciation of 'tradition' to understand the adaptation Podolak made to Trotskyist theory. Podolak's definition of tradition must be understood through the lens of dialectics. A model that is applied in 1910 can be applied in 1974 but they will not look exactly the same. Both models will come from the same inspiration and will use the same benchmarks for success, but will be different. Tradition, in the dialectic, allows for change. Therefore a 'static' approach to tradition is misleading. Podolak explains his separation from the Trotskyist, to the founding of the WFF in the words of this understanding of tradition:

> Trotskyists forget that unchanged traditions bind us sometimes. Often, Trotskyist's organizations are sects that operate and think like sects. So whatever was going on in 1910 should be done now, because it was done then. The methodology -- does the Bolshevik model as applied in Russia, as compared to the period of war communism as compared to how it's applied to the WFF -- these are not the same things. Except that they come from the same place. One is a dogmatic approach to carrying the same line; everybody's got to sound the same. The other is a flexible approach around the same purpose. You can follow a tradition without being derivative. What good is something that doesn't grow through experience? What good is any social theory that stays the same? Everything changes around it. What is the dialectic about? It is the conflict between ideas and things and social instances. It is the point of conflict. What changes things and makes things move? It is the conflict. (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006)

The tradition that Podolak talks about in this excerpt is the revolutionary tradition of the Trotskyists learned from the experiences that came out of the Russian Revolution, which had become guiding principles to the progressive left. These guiding principles had led generations of Left activists to the front lines of labour disputes and even into the halls of government in an attempt to rectify a perceived imbalance of power. Podolak believed that the WFF was his contribution to this fight by creating a space where regular people could congregate to publicly imagine and celebrate themselves as a united group, the folk. Podolak talks about the festival model in words that could easily be used to describe a camp meeting, an old southern Christian Jubilee, or any uplifting and socially motivated religious service. Podolak believed that people brought together have the ability to re-imagine themselves and to create change as long as there is a focussed and guided foundation from which this experience is built. The folk song becomes the central focus of this social grouping and the celebration of the song is a celebration of the attendance of the festival. The folk song is a reflection of the folk, the folk festival is a

celebration of the folk, and it is the folk's festival.[58] This redefinition of the folk, Podolak believed, would help to support a shift in power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat.

Built upon Mariposa

Mariposa Folk Festival was founded in 1961, thirteen years before the WFF. The Artistic Director (AD), Estelle Klein, was, according to Mitch Podolak, the most influential member of the Mariposa team and had a great impact on his understanding of what a folk festival could do. It is important to understand that Mariposa was a transitional Canadian model. It was the first urban folk festival of the second generation and had pioneered many of the folk festival structures that are now commonplace. Mariposa went through many changes in the early years. It was forced to change locations numerous times and suffered from many personnel and financial difficulties that did not plague the WFF. Mitch Podolak used many of the organizational principles developed by earlier American folk festivals like Newport and Philadelphia folk festivals, and, in Canada, by Mariposa. The second generation of folk festivals started to evolve when Ruth Jones, Dr. Crawford Jones and Pete McGarvey founded the Mariposa Folk Festival in 1961 in Orillia, Ontario. Estelle Klein became the Artistic Director in 1964. She kept the position until 1979. Her introduction of the workshop stage was an important addition to the organization of the second generation of folk festivals.

Mariposa is directly related to the Newport Folk Festival and can be viewed as a cultural outgrowth of it. Mitch Podolak had attended Newport and the Philadelphia Folk Festival with Estelle Klein on a number of occasions. Podolak was aware, as was Klein, that the Miramichi Folk Song Festival had actually predated Newport and was considered the oldest folk festival in North America. However, Miramichi only presented Irish and

[58] This is best seen in the advertising for the 2006 Vancouver Folk Music Festival. The Festival advertising uses the slogan, "This is your festival. You are the folk." The Vancouver Folk Festival Logo can be seen in Appendix G.

Scottish music until the 1980s and at indoor locations. It has not, even today, become a member of the folk music organizations that have since grown out of the Newport, Philadelphia, Mariposa, Winnipeg, and Vancouver folk festivals. These outdoor festivals are part of an international network with a common outlook on the contemporary folk song. It is interesting to note that Miramichi has slowly moved towards the style of the urban second generation folk festivals. It still offers programming indoors, unlike most second generation festivals, but it does present some contemporary singer-songwriters and has extended its music selection to incorporate some contemporary folk forms. The transition of the Miramichi Folk Festival over the years is another indicator of the success of the later second generation folk festivals of which Podolak was at the centre. The WFF, Vancouver Folk Festival and Edmonton Folk Festival have influenced the style of many of the folk festivals in Canada.[59] This influence must be seen as an indicator of the enduring success of Podolak's organizational and presentation model. The lessons that he learned from Mariposa are crucial to appreciate, but the changes that he made to its structure based on his political experience, he believes, makes a fundamental difference in how his organizational form works within a community.

The Status of the Volunteer

As outlined above, Mitch Podolak had many personal experiences with the Mariposa Folk Festival, Newport and the Philadelphia Folk Festivals before he started the WFF.[60] All had a great impact on him. The proximity and similar community out of which Mariposa grew had a greater impact. Mitch Podolak describes Mariposa as: "Just

[59] *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* available online: http://www.collectionscanada.ca/emc/m17-119.01-e.php?uid=5537&uidc=ID Accessed on March 2, 2006.

[60] Marius Barbeau, Sam Gesser and Francis Coleman organized the Canadian Folk Festival organization in 1957 with the intention to produce a festival at the Molson Stadium at McGill University (CMC Barbeau 239 f. 24). This event did not happen but it shows that a push to create a Canadian folk festival organization happened in conjunction with the work that was taking place in the US. It is also important to note that the Newport Folk Festival was at least in part inspired by the Canadian-born New York City-based radio host Oscar Brand.

about all there, it was almost a completed idea. Estelle just about had everything figured out. She didn't have the theory though that allowed me to see aspects of the festival that just didn't work"(Podolak interview: September 4, 2005). Mitch Podolak discovered in a conversation he had with Mariposa volunteers that they were not invited to the Festival's after-hour party. It was only for paid staff, musicians and invited guests. Mitch Podolak saw this as one of the biggest weaknesses in the organization and a possible explanation of their historic financial and social hardships. "You have to understand that the output of a volunteer, the worker, is not the task that the person is doing. Their output is the enjoyment of the audience. The workers' output *is* the enjoyment of the audience. Pretty cool, eh! What's the surplus value? I don't know...maybe a better question is: Why do you do this? Because its fun. That's why...it's fun. That's the surplus value" (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005).

Stressing *fun* is part of what makes the festival organization successful. In sober academic analysis it is difficult to analyze 'fun,' but though it may be unmentioned or immeasurable, it is undeniably an influential indicator of social inclusion. Fun for everyone, including the volunteer, is the biggest difference between the Mariposa model and the WFF model that Mitch Podolak created. As he explained: "The world is too tough. You just get old enough to deal with it and then you die. It's a strange thing. I'm just finding out how smart I am about some things. Then I realize that it's not smarts; it's experience" (Ibid.). This is not to say that people do not have fun at Mariposa--quite the contrary--the point is that inclusion or, in the negative, exclusion, is felt keenly by volunteers. An organization that is built upon the 'grass-roots' requires the direction of the festival to stem from the grass roots rather than from a central committee. The 'top-down' approach of central organization was the fundamental distinction between the WFF and other festival models. The WFF inverted the model to engage the volunteer as

the central component of the festival. Transforming that person into a member of the 'party' or Party. The volunteer structure on the festival site corresponded with the party structure inside the Bolshevik model. The volunteers are organized for empowerment, not for easy control. This small inversion in organizational modelling is the difference between a more conventional activity and the *Revolutionary Establishment.* The population that has gathered together to celebrate folk music is educated in the methodology of workers' representation. This is expressed in the feelings of inclusion that should stem from it.

Fun is one pillar of this model. If it were not fun, it would not matter how unique the organizational structure was or how good the musicians were; the festival would not be able to continue. A folk festival must have a number of features l functioning together to create a unique experience. It must be inexpensive enough for an audience to attend and socially significant enough to engage the audience and volunteers.[61] Its audiences and volunteers must be sufficiently large and energized to support the festival. The festival must satisfy a complex variety of needs both simultaneously and continuously. This brings us to what Mitch Podolak calls the "community factor": the second pillar of a successful folk festival.

Community Factor

The Community Factor, a term that Podolak coined, is based on a statistical representation of all the people who 'work' at the festival in relation to the numbers of people who come to the festival. The Community Factor allows for a projection of attendance based on the number of individuals that work at the festival.

[61] For a specific example of how the operation of a festival can be examined see Appendix I.

To understand the Community Factor requires a brief analysis of the people who attend the festival:

> In the second last year I was the AD of the festival we set out to take statistics to get a sense of whom the audience was and how my theory of the Community Factor had played out. We got these marketing students from the University of Manitoba to help us collect stats. We put together this questionnaire and had volunteers walking around the festival collecting these stats. They asked every tenth person that passed why they came to the festival. We had these categories: folkie, peripheral folkie, meaning somebody that was interested in progressive music and didn't totally live off of Tin Pan Alley, and 'Eventer'. The Eventer category means that the individual comes to the festival because of the human event that happens there. The music doesn't matter that much to them. We expected about 15% of the audience would be Folkies, some percentage would be Periphery Folkies and about 70% would be eventers. When the stats came back though, only 3% of the surveyed people called themselves Folkies, 97% described themselves as 'Eventers.' This is the extraordinarily loyal audience of the folk festival and they didn't listen to folk music during most of the year, but they were loyal to the event. That was a bit shocking. Generally speaking you can describe the Community Factor in this way. If you add up anybody on the site: a crafter, food concessionaire, volunteer, local entertainer, by year two of them being there they become the chief propagandists for the event. There is not enough people to make up a paid base for the event, I mean from loyal fans of the music. It is the human event that makes the difference. (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006)

The Community Factor is more than just the marketing of the event, however. It is another pillar of the Revolutionary Establishment. Just as the role of the Vanguard Party is essential to the revolution, so are the people. The goal then is to lead the majority to experience a shared consciousness of the world. Social ideals are promoted, not in abstract documents, but through a visceral understanding of what those ideals can create. The vanguard element of the festival, in the terms of Trotskyist theory, is the vanguard party. The party on the festival grounds is represented through the Community Factor. These individuals are members of the establishment. The leadership in the festival experience is left up to the members who form the Community Factor so that they can transmit the goals of the festival to all participants. The leadership of the Vanguard is the

Artistic Director, General Manager and the Volunteer co-ordinator; they help to direct the actions of the Community Factor. They are not led by coercion but by a shared goal or focus that is transmitted by the Artistic Director in personal communication with each of the committees of volunteers. Mitch Podolak explained:

> In order for the festival to work properly, the AD has to sit down with every committee or cadre on the grounds. Their goal is to transmit the meaning of the event so that the volunteers can understand how they are connected to fulfilling the goals of the festival. You have to tell them everything. They have to know that their membership in this activity is vital. That's not bullshit. People know bullshit. You have to tell them the truth. When I was at the Stan Roger's Festival I sat down with every volunteer group and said: ' This time next week, people just like you will be getting together in a place like this in Winnipeg. They are going to have a discussion just like this one. One week after that it will happen in Vancouver.' So it goes. All over the country people are getting together to have this discussion. So they know that they are volunteering for something much bigger than just this festival. When we first started and WFF was the only one. The speech was different but it was the same idea. We are moving towards something and your part in this makes a difference. We are building a social revolution. (Podolak interview: February 10, 2006)

The transmission to the volunteer groups doesn't end with a pep talk. They are informed of the hopes and fears of the festival organizers, and the problems they are facing and the challenges they hope to overcome. The ground rules are laid out: each group is represented by a crew boss; the crew bosses report to a section boss, who in turn reports to the site boss, who reports to the Volunteer Co-ordinator and the AD. Each group is given a different coloured t-shirt to represent their working group. Solidarity is promoted within each working group or cadre and the emphasis is on doing the job 'the best way you can.' The goal of the AD is to transfer decision-making down the line. Each person who volunteers at the festival knows what his or her job is and what is expected. They work together to come to decisions for the benefit of the festival. Mitch Podolak refers to this process as the 'Devolution of Authority.'

The Community Factor is socially fed on the festival grounds as well. The entry to the after-hours party is only open to artists and members of the Community Factor. The opportunity for song sharing is emphasised here. It happens informally all over the site during the weekend but the opportunity to play songs with the performers is promoted as a special event. The volunteer co-ordinator invites all of the volunteers to bring their instruments and to 'jam' at the parties, socially locking everyone together. The emphasis is on creating bonds in a shared social space of *their* making.

The transition from Community Factor to Vanguard is essential. In Podolak's model the members of the Community Factor are themselves transformed into members of the Vanguard. Podolak believed that the commitment to the creation of the event put them in line with his philosophical position concerning folk music and their place as 'the folk.' Mitch Podolak explained it by example: "At the Sudbury festival this year (2005) I had a volunteer who was doing only one shift on the entire weekend and that was doing a survey for me. I asked her why she was volunteering and she didn't have an answer to that. In contrast a couple of years ago I was in the shuttle van in Edmonton and I got to overhear two volunteers from different crews and who had never met explain to each other about why they volunteered. I sat there listening and pretending not to notice and all I could think about was James P. Cannon and how much I owed him. Common purpose was what they were talking about and the trust was implicit. Good festivals don't allow their leaderships to substitute themselves for decision making by volunteers" (Podolak email, December 8, 2005).

The Vanguard element, which returned every year, helped to promote the festival event, educated each other, and transformed this public space into one which celebrates folk music every year.

The Devolution of Authority

The largest section of the Community Factor is made up of volunteers. These are the people who show up for the event and put in hours of un-paid time to make the event happen. The volunteers get a free pass to the festival itself, get fed, and get into the after-hours parties. The only way to get into these parties is to be a volunteer, organizer or performer; which was different than the Mariposa model which created parties for the staff, performers, and paying public. The volunteer must have such a positive experience that they will want to trade their labour for the experience of the event. An important part of this entails what Mitch Podolak refers to as the 'Devolution of Authority.'

As we have discussed, the goal of any good organizer is the ability to trust the people who are working with you, especially if you are a festival or political organizer. The transmission of the authority comes from the Artistic Director down to the volunteer worker on the festival ground picking up the trash. "People on the ground making the 'right' decisions that effect the festival, so the decision-making itself doesn't have to go back up the line. Decisions can be made quickly and by people" (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006). This allows for the reduction of alienation in the labour experienced at the festival. Personal ownership of the festival experience is the intended result. This model is taken from the political experience.[62]

Podolak said: "What if you took all the people that volunteered their time at the festival and you paid them. What do you think would happen? It would fall apart. All of a sudden people are working for you instead of working for them to make the festival happen. People would be alienated from their labour by the money that you paid them for the job. The volunteers are doing this because of the pride that they have in seeing the

[62] See Appendix D with the breakdown of the political party/festival organization in the Bolshevik model labelled Diagram of Soviet Socialist Republic.

festival happen; the benefits they get from it count more than not getting paid. If this weren't the case we wouldn't have volunteers. The festival can't handle the number of people that want to be volunteers. I've said this before, if anyone wants to be a volunteer just to get in free, I'll give him or her a free ticket. I don't want people who will trade in their time for a ticket. I want people who want to make this happen" (Ibid.).

To support Mitch Podolak's claim, there was an economic analysis done on the Stan Roger's Festival that reported: " The festival relies critically on the effort of volunteers, effort that is not included in a purely financial accounting of the festival. What is the cost to society of the volunteer labour expended? It is likely that this ties in with other areas, as [a] common theme of discussion (and jokes) at the festival was that you couldn't pay people enough to do the jobs that they volunteer for. Volunteers feel a type of pride that comes from participating, and doing what needs to be done *without* being paid, as if the pay itself disassociates one from the external benefits" (King 2003, 57). In an interesting admission Mitch Podolak remarked:

> Most of the cool things about the festival weren't created by me. Volunteers started them. People who thought, 'wouldn't it be cool to have this'. So they called me and mostly I said do it. Sometimes I thought it was stupid but I'd let them try it anyway. Like massage at the festival. I thought that was stupid; the woman who brought it up tore a strip off of me. She was right; I [was] just being an asshole. Now, massage is at every festival. That's how good of an idea it was. You have to trust the people that you're working with. That's what makes the festival work so well. You have to let people do the thing that they are good at. (Podolak interview: February 11, 2006)

The *Revolutionary Establishment* needs the devolution of authority to empower the members of the Vanguard. In the same way Podolak was in the Trotskyist movement, this group is taught by experience to see the power and humanity of a socialist organization at work. The Vanguard are then prepared to take on the responsibility of the event making decisions based on consensus and initiative within their working groups.

This model, taken directly from the Bolshevik model, promised to put the power of experience into the hands of the participants and to eliminate the alienation that Marx so famously forecasted. This reduction in alienation and therefore social inclusion would, according to Podolak, lead participants to realize that the world within which they powerlessly live and work can be changed. This transfiguration of the world happens when members of the society, at any level, choose to work together for the good of the entire society, in this case the festival. The *Revolutionary Establishment*, as planned by Podolak, is a social case study where participants work together to create a 'flow of experience' which could be politically and socially transformational.

The Democracy of Space

The presentation of the music at the festival takes place in three critical areas, the main stage, the workshop stage and the social song sharing after hours. The creations of these spaces are pre-planned and the programming of the first two, according to Podolak, expose the dialectic. The role of the Artistic Director (AD) is to program the festival. Mitch Podolak likes to use the term 'Head Artist.' He believes that the role of programming creates the nature of the festival. The experience the audience has with the chosen artists in the spaces that we have discussed sheds light on this statement of the AD. The AD crafts the festival space by creating opportunities for an experience to emerge: the artists are not programmed, but they are given a space in which interesting things can happen. Just as Christopher Small reminds us about the nature of space inside the symphonic hall: "[T]he stage is the orchestral musicians' territory and their playground....but it is for themselves, not the audience" (Small 1998, 64), we must understand how an empty field gets transformed into a performance space, which includes the audience.

As soon as you construct a stage there is a separation between performer and audience. That separation gets larger when you put the electronics of a sound system in between them. The dialectic, however, requires a coming together of artist and audience to form a bond that will give way to an experience, or the creation of something new. This experience is shaped over the course of the weekend. The transformation is a personal transformation to a member of 'the folk.' The layout of the festival grounds, the acts that are programmed during the day on the workshop stages, and then the nighttime main stage must lead somewhere if the experience is going to be meaningful. The AD is responsible for making this happen. The AD is also responsible for the design of the staged space. Mitch Podolak outlines the requirements for any stage. "The most important thing in a stage is its height. If it's too high the separation between artist and audience is insurmountable. The stage *must* be low enough for the audience to feel connected to the performer. The ground should slope up away from the stage so people can see, like a natural amphitheatre. It should appear that there is no disconnect. There should be no fences that bar your view and the festival site should melt into the natural surroundings so it's difficult to tell where the festival ends and the surroundings begin. It should have a completeness" (Podolak interview: February 9, 2006).

The performances should do the same. The AD must have a good sense of the expectations of the audience, must know the work of the performers and must be able to put together a show that challenges the audience socially and musically. The goal is to bring the audience on a journey celebrating their membership in this created community. The stage should be attractive and interesting and the lighting should be good but subtle. Every effort is made to present the artist in a way that highlights the interaction between them and the audience to further the connection between them. The experience should actively push the boundaries of presentation to blur the roles that each understands.

The stage is set for the performer to play their music. The artist walks out onto the stage and starts playing 'folk' music. The main centre of our discussion now becomes evident. It is not the folk music of the Gibbon festivals, the historic presentation of singing culture often 'interpreted' by professionals. It isn't the Almanac Singers or People's Artists singing labour songs at a rally. This is the WFF and this is 'folk' music. The WFF becomes the synthesis of social unrest and political movements. Even the singing of simple personal songs forms a resistant statement. The performance of folk songs becomes a statement of the inclusive, 'we are the folk,' creating an oppositional popular stance to the academic, 'you are the folk.' The WFF was the personal expression of an organizer who found his identity mixed up with historical forces that treated songs as weapons. This is the 'folk music'[63] that frustrates definition because it changes as quickly as the world from which it is born. It is the 'folk music' of common experience in the world. Stories of tragedies and loss, personal stories, and communal stories are shared within this festival space. There are songs of struggle and songs of redemption and joy, and most importantly, songs made by people who are sharing thoughts, cultural memories, musical techniques and life experiences. These are folk songs. These folk songs provide the framework for people to have experiences with other people in an environment that is built on creating an experience that supports society.

The performers at a second generation folk festival differ considerably from those of the first generation. Not only is the second generation folk performers part of a North American wide folk music industry, they also represent a stunning variety of styles of music. The point of introducing the concept of use-definition as a taxonomical tool for

[63] The definition of a folk song periodically stirs academic debate, not only within Canada but internationally. This statement makes specific reference to the article called 'What is Folk Music' in *The Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* 16 (1988).

dealing with what is folk music is made necessary by the work of the AD of the second generation of folk festivals.

Early in the second generation of folk festivals, blues music was incorporated under the folk music umbrella. This inclusion was socially and politically important owing in part to the political turmoil that erupted in the US at the root of the UFR. The AD in a second generation Canadian folk festival will continue to make decisions based on many factors, including social and economic considerations. The Winnipeg and Vancouver festivals, for instance, have a tradition of widening the definition of 'folk' in their programming. Folk music has grown; this can be seen in many folk festival line-ups, from traditional music forms based on English, Scottish, and Irish instrumental and vocal traditions, American vernacular music, blues musicians, and singer/songerwriters to include Indian classical and folk music and dance, Asian classical and folk music and dance, First Peoples music of America and Canada, Australian aborigine music, and many African musical forms. At a contemporary folk music festival, it would be unusual not to have Scandinavian instrumental folk music performed alongside South American folk music.

Cuban bands performed in Canada soon after the Cuban revolution. Winnipeg and Vancouver hired individuals and groups from many South American countries, especially countries at odds with the US government. Radicals, resisters, and political songwriters regularly are found on the stage of a folk festival. These artists are presented side by side with songwriters and instrumentalists who have no political agenda at all. Folk music, then, has gone through periods of taxonomical transformations that require historical and political readings to appreciate. To date there is no in-depth study that fully explores this aspect of the genre.

That being said as consumers of mass culture we are also asked to join a group defined by the characteristics which we can purchase. In this model we purchase CDs, listen to radio stations supported by advertising money from products that are associated with that 'demographic,' or attend concerts as the audience and have little active role in the event. The distinction that Podolak makes is subtle. He believes that the role of the audience at the WFF is active and therefore engaged in the experience that unfolds. The relationship between the performing artist and the audience is, according to Podolak, a real relationship because the songs and stories are from the audience's life experience performed by peers. Further, the workshop space and the song sharing space allow the artist/audience roles to be blurred further by allowing the performer to instruct the audience to be a performer. Folk music is imagined to be democratically produced and openly shared as a natural human expression of ourselves.

The dialectic, which states that the thesis is in conflict with the antithesis and produces a synthesis, works within the folk festival construction by allowing the thesis, the audience, to negotiate itself with the folk song to produce a reaction of 'we are the folk' as a synthesis. This dialectical relationship, or transformation of audience into constituency, is the central focus of the *Revolutionary Establishment*.

Internationalism, Culture and the Folk Song

Internationalism becomes expressed on the festival stage regularly. In fact, any discussion about the nature of 'folk music' is usually frustrated by the constant change of global awareness. Within the *Revolutionary Establishment* the presentation of world music takes on a new and important characteristic. The central purpose for Mitch Podolak's presentation of indigenous music from various cultures is to highlight a political situation and to elicit support for that cause from the folk constituency. The

WFF and later the VFF went to great lengths to program artists from parts of the world that are struggling for independence. The songs that people sing are sometimes also the expression of protest. It can be in a very familiar musical form like the blues which "has had important political functions as a discourse of resistance...as an interpretive metaphor and as an expressive force, with explicit things to say about the civil conditions and rights that are part of the African-American and white experience in America" (Fischlin and Heble 2003, 121). This introduction can have dramatic effects as Martha Nandorfy describes: "The direct contact we Canadians had with Chilean refugees transformed the words 'democracy, freedom, justice, equality from theoretical abstractions (which mass media expects us to take for granted) into tangible experiences. People whom we now knew personally had fought for those ideals in a struggle that had cost them their homeland and the lives of friends and family" (Ibid, 175). The social reality of other people's lives in other countries gets expressed in a personal way, transgressing geography. The social space of the festival is charged with the 'possibility' of change. As Mitch Podolak said in an interview:

> Nationalism is a disease; cultural nationalism is a disease as well. I'm an internationalist first, yet I support the right of people to have self-determination and their own culture. I believe that people are right to do that. What's the difference then in the nationalism of an industrial country like Britain or Canada or the US and the nationalism of an oppressed person in a neo-colonial situation? What is the difference? One is jingoism and one is the struggle for freedom. (Podolak Interview: September 4, 2005)

WFF as Bourgeois Culture

Pauline Greenhill wrote: "I hope next year to extend the research and investigation into exactly what possibilities for profound change might be immanent in a festival, particularly one like the WFF which seems to cater primarily to the affluent white middle class" (Greenhill 1995, 16). Unfortunately, Greenhill didn't get a chance to undertake

that research and so did not propose a response to her question. Mitch Podolak initially makes the discussion more difficult by stating that the festival necessarily has to take place inside bourgeois Canadian culture but does draw lines. The space can work, like a union, as a foil for the extension of capitalist tendencies. His argument however does not dispel the very real possibility that his work to create a revolutionary organization never materialized in the way he expected. Greenhill's analysis of the population base of the WFF initially casts doubts. However, a brief examination of the demographic makeup of Winnipeg raises some qualifications about Greenhill's observation. It the audience at the WFF were composed largely of locals who were a representative cross-section of Winnipeg society, the "middle class" label would hardly stick.

The city of Winnipeg's 2001 Census survey presents a picture of the city that complicates Greenhill's 'white middle class' statement. The census reports that only 13.4% of the population of Winnipeg is non-white.[64] The largest single group of non-white people are Filipino at 4.9%, South Asian at 2%, Black at 1.8%, and Chinese at 1.8%. The remainder of the eight non-white groups listed are all below 1% of the population. The reality of the WFF's visual makeup is statistically sensible. There is a very small population of non-white people in Winnipeg. Greenhill's further assertion of 'middle class' is also interesting to examine. The average income for a male in Winnipeg in 2000 was $34,457, while the average for a woman was $22,618. These numbers certainly make it possible for the attendance of the WFF to be middle class but it certainly dulls the suggestive impact of 'affluent white middle class.'

[64] See City of Winnipeg 2001 Census in Appendix H.

The Popular Folk

The post-war years brought a new group of young people in contact with these folk artists and their songs. The success of singers like Dylan and Baez brought young people by the thousands in touch with the folk singers of the older generation. However, when that music is put on stage in a situation like the WFF, what happens to the nature of the music and the personalities of the people who make it? Further, are these the people that Podolak imagined would lead a revolution?

Many more people know the 'folk music' superstars that I mentioned above than know who the Almanacs were. As writer, performer and folk enthusiast Dick Weissman noted: "The 'folk song' show world comes to resemble a jungle with sometimes bitter, unprincipled, throat-cutting competition. It is certainly a far cry from the Almanac Singers...the world of the pop star had taken over a musical form that was intended to be a platform for a sort of communal sharing, rather than having a platform for the artist to set himself above the audience" (Weissman 2005, 151). The nature of the folk artist or the People's Artist changes to become much more like the pop star than the people's singer. How do you deal with the star phenomena?

The WFF tried to deal with this issue by using the nature of the star as a draw to the festival without giving in to the bourgeois star mentality. At the WFF's beginning, its artists were all paid the same amount, for instance. All musicians and volunteers ate together, stayed together and played together. What Weissman leaves out in his description of the contemporary folk scene is the agency of the promoter to mitigate the star potential. Mitch Podolak created a festival structure that would be as good for the artist as it would be for the audience. The attempt to create a special place for communication between artist and audience would bring interested artists to the festival. Money would become a secondary factor to playing the festival. It is a given that artists

need to be paid, after all they are workers, but they would be expected to be workers in Mitch Podolak's model. "If an artist comes to the festival and doesn't want to hang out with [the] audience they should not have been invited to come. I don't care who they are. There are stars in the Folk Music Industry but I didn't care what they wanted. Everyone is the same; everyone got the same. There was no star system in any of the festivals that I ran" (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005). The artist would come to the festival to play a couple of shows and also do a couple of workshops. However, the human interaction between artist and audience, formally and informally is more prized.

The festival workshop would bring different artists together on a specific topic. For instance: 'A is for Appalachian Old Time Banjo, B is for the songs of Bertolt Brecht, C is for Camp songs I know and S is for Songs I wish I wrote.' These are just a few examples of workshop titles. The alphabet series is a theme that still comes up at some festivals. The purpose of the workshop is to bring artists together to explain a part of the tradition that they are part of to an audience in a very close and informal setting. It isn't a lecture; it is quite often not even planned. Many times the artists get to meet each other for the first time on the workshop stage. Sometimes magic happens. The workshop presents an opportunity for the expression of the roots of folk culture, the passing and sharing of songs.[65]

The WFF became a tradition. The ritualized connection to Bird's Hill Park in July was re-imagined and this created model fed back into itself, legitimizing its own internal

[65] The workshop performance space has proved to be an incredibly valuable resource for the performer. From personal experiences I have had in programming and running workshops for The Ottawa Blues Festival 2003-4, Ottawa Folk Festival 2001-2005, The Ottawa Folklore Centre 2000-2004, I have witnessed many musicians build musical bonds that they have taken into the studio or even on the road. Instrumentalists learn about different but similar traditions, songwriters share songs and writing experiences. Student songwriters have the opportunity to listen to personal stories from established songwriters. The workshop style has been so successful and entertaining that the Songwriter's Association of Canada invites four or five musicians every year to tour a workshop style songwriter's show across the country. There is a need for a study that discusses the transformation of individual style through the workshop environment.

structure, made further legitimate by the increase of festivals sharing the model across the country. Active participants of the festival model, both as members of the Community Factor and as audience, create substructures within the model that become enlarged over time and mutual acceptance. "[S]omething else emerges that happened without my even realizing that it was there. It does take on a life of its own" (Greenhill 2001, 1233). The agency of the audience is vital. The *Revolutionary Establishment* is a learning tool for social action. The structure that Mitch Podolak worked to create put the driving force on the festival site in the hands of the audience. A statement like the one above, from Pierre Guerin, Artistic Director of the WFF after Podolak, re-enforces the reality of the socially active bonds for which the space was designed. This shared sense of ownership of the space is a crucial element of the organizational structure the membership takes part in creating: "[T]he conception that history is less important for the telling of it as such, than for the meanings that can be construed for its participants. Significant not only in the redefinitions and expansion of history's loci, but also in their partaking of its flow" (Blum 1993, 276). Independent activity on the festival ground by the participants points to an ownership of the space, or the *expression* of ownership of the space. Podolak describes the WFF as a socialist festival or a real socialist experience. The role of geographic and temporal communal space as *Revolutionary Establishment* is to allow people, as individuals and groups, to have a bonding experience inside this structure, to allow for the personal witness of the power of socialist organization and to actively re-imagine Canada in the *flow* of the experience.

From Revolution to Ethical Coffee: A Surprising Denouement

The impact of Podolak's *Revolutionary Establishment* did not work out the way he expected. The model that was developed in Winnipeg was transferred to Vancouver in

1978.[66] From Winnipeg and Vancouver the *Revolutionary Establishment* would influence many of the second generation folk festivals in Canada. Podolak's intention to create a revolution would never be realized. Instead, second generation folk festivals would champion integration with the economy which would promote an ethical relationship between producer and consumer. The continuous integration of culture and economy would help to support progressive movements in Canada and would help the audience of the festivals see outside the borders of the country. Over the years, second generation folk festivals would support feminism, recycling, environmental consciousness, gay liberation and, most recently, fair trade and organic food production.

In the months leading up to the 2006 Vancouver Folk Festival a British Columbia based coffee company called Ethical Bean produced a special VFF blend of coffee to advertise the festival.[67] This example clearly shows how Podolak's intention for revolution actually manifested itself. Their economic partnership is not quite what Podolak imagined the impact of the folk festival would be, but it is a good example of what is happening in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Edmonton and many other second generation folk festivals. The fight against the Canadian capitalist state moved from a position of criticism and revolution to a position of construction and negotiation. Members of the folk music community found ways to live inside the capitalist structure in a way that mediated the perceived asocial influence of the economy. Ethical Bean coffee promotes fair trade and shade-growing practices. This process of economic negotiation is not at all what Podolak had expected, but it is the most obvious outcome of his work. The *Revolutionary Establishment* has inadvertently promoted economic and

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[66] An account of the founding of the Vancouver Folk Festival originally published in the VFF 25th anniversary booklet is reproduced in Appendix E.

[67] An advertisement for the 2006 Ethical Bean Vancouver Folk Festival Blend Coffee is reproduced in Appendix I.

social integration with the Canadian economy from a progressive position that would have been unimaginable by Trotsky.

Mitch Podolak, as the creator of the WFF, expected a direct relationship between the volunteer organization structure of the festival, his political position, and the social impact of the festival itself. Podolak believed that his interpretation of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution would manifest itself the way Trotsky expected. There is a fundamental mechanical assumption that society would learn the lessons as they were set out by the AD. However, as we have seen in the development of the *Revolutionary Establishment,* the outcome is not equal to the revolutionary premise. The audience did learn lessons but the process of social/consumer negotiation led to a different set of outcomes than Podolak or Trotsky would expect. The outcome does, however, have a relationship to the premise. As we have seen in the Ethical Bean example, internationalism is expressed in a concern for the proper treatment and maintenance of the farmer producing the product. The outcome is not a revolution to overthrow the Canadian capitalist system but a consumer consciousness that is supported by the festival. The initial economic self-consciousness of the early years of the communist supported folk music movement matured in the second generation of folk festivals to embrace a new form of social capitalism.

Conclusion

The creation of the Winnipeg Folk Festival provided Mitch Podolak a space to make use of organizational methodologies learned during his years with the Trotskyist movement. This space was organized to support the connection between the folk music artist and an active audience which is often thought of as playing a passive role in the ingestion of the meaning of music. In this case the audience is directly connected to the creation of the meaning of the music itself. The relationship between the artistic director, artist and audience becomes intertwined in the production of this meaning. In this context Podolak and the WFF supported the progressive international workers' focus of folk music adopted in the 1930s by the Communist Party in the same way nationalism was supported by Gibbon in the first generation of folk festivals. Folk music and the folk festival became a space of creative and productive resistance. Instead of regularly and outwardly criticizing the liberal capitalist state, Podolak created a successful alternative model of social organization. Through his creative use of Marxist economic ideas, Podolak put the standard capitalist organizational methodology on its head. He moved away from the top down corporate capitalist approach towards an organization that allowed for, and indeed counted on, the personal motivation of members of the festival community. The *Revolutionary Establishment* was created but the result differed from his expectations.

This festival model, instead of being revolutionary, worked within Canadian society to create a space for social development. The festival, represented by the effort of the vanguard element of the festival, the artistic director who worked with a cadre of

volunteers and thoughtfully organized them into representative groups placed in charge of creating the experience within the event working in harmony with the official staging of artists within the space. Their work within the festival provides an experience which Ian McKay calls living differently.[68] The experience that is created is subtle; it relies on the 'feeling' of inclusion and is entirely experiential. Further, this feeling of inclusion *is* the concrete rationale for the success of the philosophy, the model and the festival. It is in fact the backbone of the *Revolutionary Establishment*. Although the model did not create revolution it has created a highly successful model for festival organization. Further research is required to better appreciate the social impact that these folk festivals have had on their communities. In the words of the 2006 Vancouver Folk Music Festival Artistic Director, Doug Simpson:

> I don't know why this works. We still have no idea why we can organize a festival like this so successfully with a volunteer work force that we can rely on year in and out. We have had the same crews voluntarily working on some of these seven stages for more than ten years. They come back each year and help to put this festival on. I don't know why they do it. But they do. This is why these festivals stay working regardless what the older generations of ADs say, we just don't know why it works. I'm really glad people are interested in studying this thing. There needs to be documentation about these festivals. They really are incredible things. I've been involved with this since the second year and I'm amazed that it goes on every year and that people still show up. These festivals are made by the people that attend. The volunteers and the audience take part in this event every year. It's their energy and enthusiasm that make this happen, not government funding. (Simpson interview: July 16, 2006)

The outcome of the *Revolutionary Establishment*, from Podolak's point of view, is participation within the flow of experience on the festival ground. This personal experience allows for the transformation of the individual and by extension the group. This new folk, according to Podolak, treated as an extension of the peasant and workers

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[68] In *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (2005), the author Ian McKay used the phrase *living differently* as a central motif to explain the fundamental drive of the progressive left.

class in classic Marxist literature, can find commonality in their social experience within the festival structure. The festival, built upon solid organizational and performance practices, has grown out of Podolak's experiences within the Trotskyist movement. This adaptation of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution radically alters our understanding of Trotskyist methodology. The outcome of this model is closer to the Fabian theory of 'permeation' but does not work towards winning the decision-making class over to a socialist ideal. Podolak's variation of Permanent Revolution, the *Revolutionary Establishment*, aims to win over the very people that make up the country, the general public, in an experiential multi-generational campaign. The *Revolutionary Establishment* works with the folk festival model to redefine, enlarge and inspire the folk to 'live differently.'

The personal point of view of the creator and original artistic director of the WFF provides unique insight into many important and often overlooked features of a Canadian folk festival. The main goal of this thesis is to show the important relationship between the intention of the AD and the operational structure of a Canadian folk festival like the WFF. As we have seen, placing an emphasis on the individual work of an artistic director is crucial to understanding the relationship between the artist and the audience. It is also crucial to understand the unwritten political intentions that inspire this work. Most often this relationship is assumed to happen at a personal level and disregards the setting of the experience. The WFF is an example of a space, in which the artist and the audience are able to connect. This relationship is brokered by a mediator who constructs the experience and affects its meaning far more than is apparent. The mediator's political goals can colour the interaction of all parts of the festival structure, including those areas that are overlooked or out of bounds to the audience. Finally, the music being researched, in this case, folk, relies on the programming work of the artistic director for a definition

of the music itself. The use-definition of folk music within Canadian folk festivals is an extension of the initial perspective of the artistic director, which has the ability to change and evolve in a dynamic relationship with the festival audience. Although elastic it is rooted in a basic agreement about who is making and who is receiving the music. The identity and role of this audience is more elastic than other performance practices in Canadian music. In the words of Mitch Podolak and the Vancouver Folk Music Festival advertising, 'you are the folk.' This mediation therefore is a very important process that leads to the creation of the identity of 'audience' presenting another rich area for future research.

The artistic directors of the first generation folk festival and some second generation folk festivals worked to present music that was representative of the folk. The main distinguishing factor between the first and second generations was their definition of the folk. Initially the folk were represented by highly skilled examples of the folk arts or by trained interpreters who sought to represent 'the folk' to the middle class. This attitude changed in some second generation folk festivals. The festival itself came to represent the folk, not present the folk. The focus shift, or paradigm shift, may have locked some folk music academics in a battle over whom we are talking about, potentially missing the possibility that earlier taxonomic models were *other* oriented, a product of their time and in some cases inappropriate to deal with the dynamic and inclusive nature of contemporary folk music performance and practice. It is also entirely possible that the economic changes throughout the century that led to a larger middle class provided a general increase in the ability to spend on leisure. This in turn led to generations of performers with the financial ability to present themselves and audiences that are able to spend money to attend festivals.

In the first generation it was only someone like Gibbon, already a member of a wealthy class, who had the ability to present music. The audience would have to be middle class as they were the segment of the population with money that could be used on leisure. With the changes in the Canadian economy over the century it had become possible to present folk music to a middle class that was now large enough domestically to attend. The growth of the middle class therefore could be an important factor in the development of the second generation of folk festivals. This much larger question could only be answered though a multi-generational and comparative study of folk music performers but would help to more conclusively answer the question about the changing focus towards who the folk are in folk music, an issue which this study has only introduced.

The title of this thesis, *This is Important*, came out of one of the initial conversations I had with Mitch Podolak. The reason for his work in the cultural sphere was the topic of my interview and Mitch Podolak's answer was: "We do this because *this is important*" (Podolak interview: September 4, 2005). From that starting point this thesis has examined a number of uses of folk music and has explored how this music has been used to win support for a number of different political positions, nationalism, socialism, internationalism, multiculturalism and communism. The most basic definition of politics is the dynamic of human organization; therefore research into the organizational necessity of musical performance could be political even without external political theory. However, the variety of political personalities that have worked within music suggests that a separation is unrealistic. This analysis of the use-definition of folk music in Canada underlines at two levels why research in this vein is important. First, in a historic survey of folk music it becomes clear that the identity of the folk is tied up with the performance of the music. The organization that supports the use of this music has

shared understandings that are not publicly discussed. Further, and perhaps more intriguing are its assumptions based in class assumptions of which even the main actors are unaware. Secondly, an awareness of class distinctions may allow a festival organization to structure itself in such a way as to redefine the very nature of the music by embracing a supporting structure that promotes folk music of a particular political inclination. If the role of the artistic director of a Canadian folk festival is inherently political in nature, then Mitch Podolak is very accurate in saying that *this is important.*

Mitch Podolak is important because of his work to bridge Trotsky's political theory to music culture organizing and the effect this has had on the use-definition of Canadian folk music. Podolak's adaptation of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution in creating a *Revolutionary Establishment* as a stepping-stone to social revolution is unique to Canada and to North America. The political significance of folk music performance in Canada is a promising field of study that is largely untouched. The recent trend towards more personal and subjective form of social research, while welcome, should be balanced by appreciation of the socio-political context in which these performances take place. The artistic director, once responsible for one or two festivals, has in the last twenty years begun to work in association with peers on regional, national and, very recently, international levels. This complicates the role of the researcher in this field and calls for research of a much broader geographical scope. Harriss believed that the mobilization of a musical public could solidify Canada's commitment to its place in Empire. Gibbon believed that through the use of folk music Canadians could come to understand each other and create a stronger nation. Barbeau believed that through the use of the folk song Canadian composers could create Canadian culture. Provincial governments across the country believed that the study of folk music could support nationalism. The Communist Party and its American supporters believed that folk song

could be used as a weapon in class warfare. Mitch Podolak believed that the organization of a folk festival could destabilize nationality, replace it with an international focus on people, and support revolution. Each of the artistic directors who have been examined in this thesis believed in the inherent power of organizing music in public. They did not question the importance of the projects in which they were involved. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that their goals were political and addressed fundamental questions of social identity and organization. If we wish to come to terms with essential Canadian questions about nationhood, multiculturalism and social justice, we must look beyond formal political institutions and mechanisms of policy formation to encompass cultural arenas that have been political battlegrounds of a different sort for over a hundred years.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

MITCH PODOLAK BIOGRAPHIC OUTLINE

1947, September 21	Mitch Podolak was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
1952-1962	Attended Lord Lansdown Public School in Toronto.
1960 c.	Pete Seeger concert, Toronto, Ontario.
1962 – 1972 c.	Met Ross Dowson and joined the *League for Social Action* (Trotskyist youth group).
1967	Moved to Winnipeg.
1968-1969	Freelance writer and editor for CBC radio.
1970	Moved to Halifax.
1971	Moved back to Toronto.
1971, July 1	Marriage with Ava Kobrinsky.
1972	Moved back to Winnipeg.
1972 c.	Joined the *Revolutionary Marxists.*
1972-1974 c.	Produced two documentaries for CBC radio: Pete Seeger and Leon Trotsky.
1974	Founded *Winnipeg Folk Music Festival.*
1975	Leonard, his son, was born.
1976	Founded *Barnswallow Records* to release Stan Rogers first album *Fogarty's Cove.*

1977	Co-founded *Vancouver Folk Music Festival.*
1978	Moved to Vancouver, British Columbia.
1979	Left the *Vancouver Folk Music Festival.*
1980	Commuted between Edmonton, Alberta and Winnipeg.
1980	Co-founded the *Good Time Medicine Show* and *The Travelling Folk Festival* which turned into the Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge folk festivals.
1986	Co-founded the *West End Cultural Centre* in Winnipeg.
1986	Left the *Winnipeg Folk Festival.*
1995	Moved to Victoria, British Columbia where he took over *Folk Fest* (ICA).
1996	Founded the *Stan Rogers Folk Festival* in Canso, Nova Scotia.
1997	Moved back to Winnipeg.
1997	Co-founded the *World Next Door Festival* in Winnipeg.
1998-2005	Freelance event consulting.
2005	Founded *Walnut Street Music*; a festival & event consulting company and booking agency.

Appendix B:

List of British Works to be performed in Canada during the Cycle of Musical Festivals

ORCHESTRAL

C. V. Stanford	Irish Rhapsody No. 1
"	Irish Symphony
F. H. Cowen	Scandinavian Symphony
F. Corder	Ouverture "Prospero"
E. German	Gipsy Suite
F. Cliffe	Ballade (from Symphony in C Minor)
E. Elgar	Prelude and Angel's Farewell from "Gerontius"
A. Sullivan	Ouverture "Di Ballo"
H. MacCunn	Ouverture "Ship o' the Fiend
	Ouverture "Land of the Mountain and the Flood"
A. C. Mackenzie	Suite "London Day by Day"
"	Ballade "La Belle Dame sans Merci"
"	Two Scottish Rhapsodies
"	Ouverture "Cricket on the Hearth"
"	Ouverture "Britannia"
"	Coronation March

CHORAL WORKS

Cowen	Coronation Ode
Elgar	"
Parry	"St. Cecilia's Day"
"	"Blest Pair of Sirens"
Coleridge Taylor	"The Death of Minnehaha" (Hiawatha, Part 2)
Stanford	"The Revenge"
"	"The Battle of the Baltic"
Elgar	"The Banner of St. George"
Sullivan	"The Golden Legend"
Mackenzie	"The Cotter's Saturday Night"
"	"The Dream of Jubal"

Songs Scenes Duets

Harriss	"Coronation Mass Edward VII" (composed for these Festivals)
	(By gracious permission of His Majesty the King)
	"Festival Mass"
	Choruses from "Torquil"

Appendix C:

LAST NIGHT I DREAMED I SAW JOE HILL

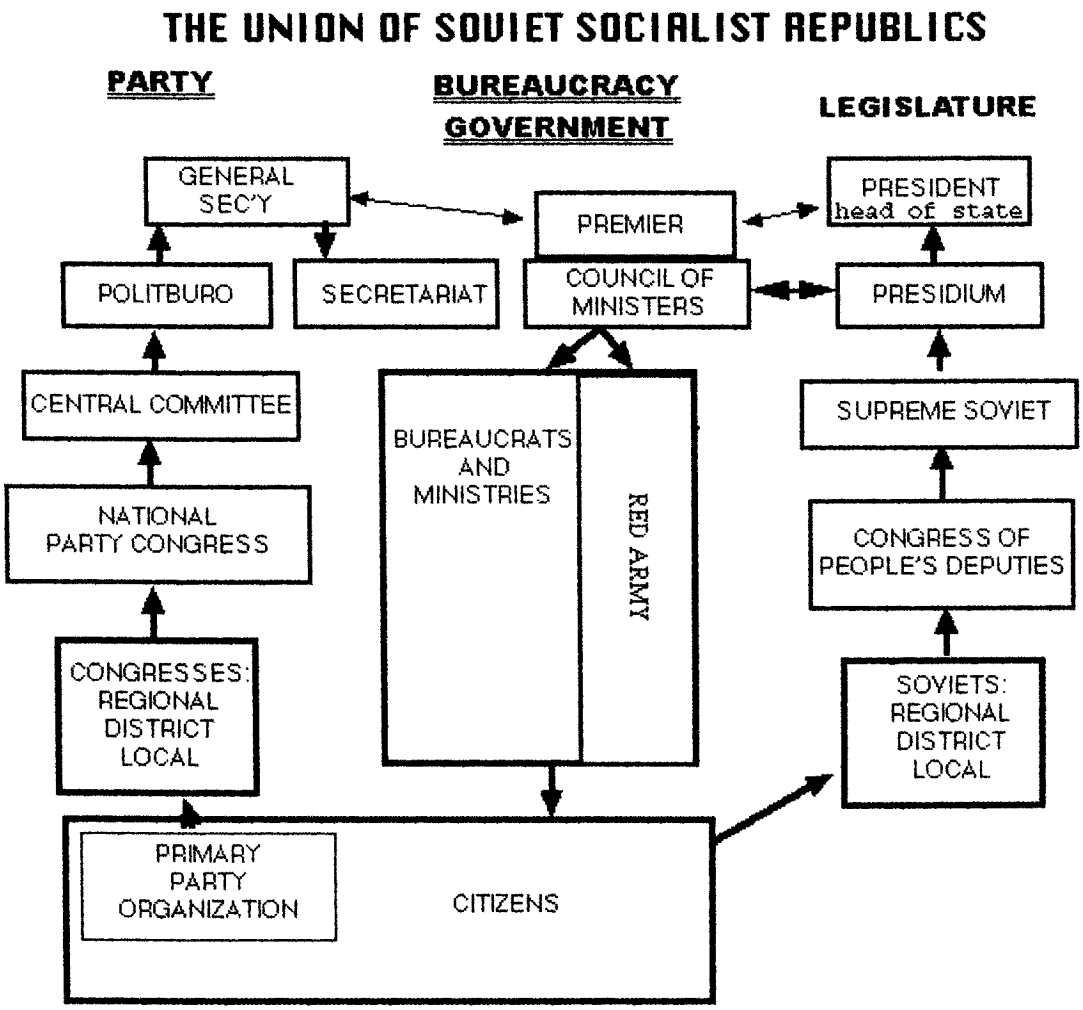
I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he
"I never died," says he
"In Salt Lake, Joe," says I to him,
Him standing by my bed,
"They framed you on a murder charge,"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead,"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead."
"The copper bosses killed you, Joe,
They shot you, Joe," says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die."
And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes
Joe says, "What they forgot to kill
Went on to organize,
Went on to organize."
"Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me,
"Joe Hill ain't never died.
Where working men are out on strike
Joe Hill is at their side,
Joe Hill is at their side."
"From San Diego up to Maine,
In every mine and mill,
Where workers strike and organize,"
Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill,"
Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill."
I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he
"I never died," says he

---------- Music by Earl Robinson, copyright 1938 by Bob Miller, Inc.

Joe Hill, a great organizer and poet, was executed in 1915 on a murder charge which union circles have always considered a frame- up. This song, written in his memory, is one of the most moving of all the labor songs.
Little Red Songbook

Appendix D:

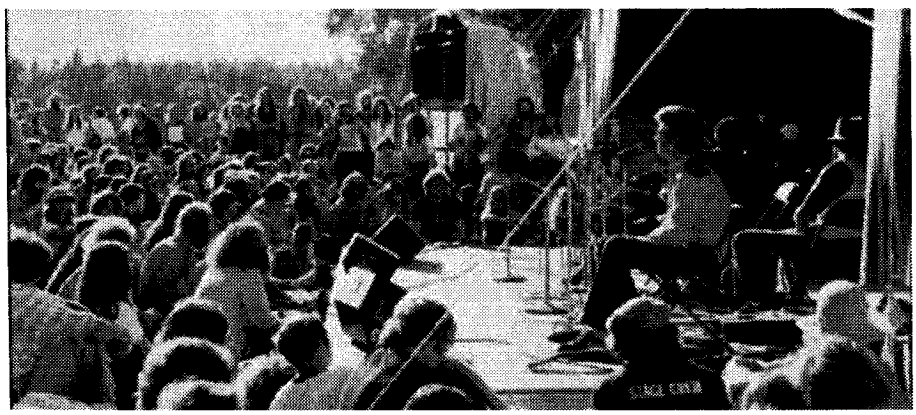
DIAGRAM OF UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS



Appendix E:

FOUNDING OF THE VANCOUVER FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL

How It All Began...



By Hal Wake
Originally published in the 2002 25th Anniverary Festival Program

To achieve the status of a true legend, it should have started differently. It should have started with the artistic director of the Winnipeg Folk Festival, Mitch Podolak, looking across the prairies fixing his penetrating, visionary gaze westward and determining right then and there that he was going to establish a folk music festival in Vancouver. It was the mid-seventies and what better time to deliver the joyous sound and enriching experience for the benefit of the masses. But this isn't Hollywood, thank god, and the reality is that Mitch simply wanted to escape the mosquitoes and biting cold of Winnipeg for a softer life in Lotus Land. Mitch never achieved his dream of making a home here, but, thank god again, the Festival did.

The first step in executing his plan was finding a local champion, preferably one with money. He found one, or perhaps more accurately created one, in Ernie Fladell. Ernie was the Cultural Planner in the Social Planning Department for the City of Vancouver. He'd actually turned a profit on a couple of events in Vancouver, but he had never been to a folk festival. Well, Mitch fixed that. In 1977 he sent Ernie a plane ticket for Winnipeg and said "Get your ass out here and I'll show you what it's all about."

Twenty-six years later, Ernie's memory of the trip is crystal clear. "Mitch had me picked up at the airport and then took me on these winding back roads, in the dark and it seemed to take forever. Finally, I was dropped off in some parking lot and I had no idea where I was. Someone grabbed me by the elbow and we were stumbling along and suddenly I was led up some steps backstage and a guy said, 'Hi, I'm Mitch,' and he shoved me past the edge of a curtain and there I was, practically on stage with Sweet Honey in the Rock in front of 15,000 delirious fans. I was hooked."

Mitch agrees that's how it happened, but it was all part of the plan. "I set him up. I had it all timed meticulously from the moment the plane landed, including the long car

ride. I didn't want him to ease into it. I wanted to get Ernie swept away. I timed the entire show so that he would have something incredible to see and it worked."

A year later at Stanley Park, the euphoria of the Winnipeg stage had given way to opening night jitters at the birth of a brand new festival. A Vancouver team had been established including an energetic city staffer, Frances Fitzgibbon, her colleague, lanky site manager, Lorenz von Fersen, and a young political organizer named Gary Cristall.

They weren't building the event from scratch, however. Volunteers from Winnipeg had taken time off work, piled into cars and at their own expense, driven all the way to Vancouver to help out. Each Winnipegger was paired with a volunteer from Vancouver so that their hard-won experience in mastering the immense task of mounting the event could be passed on.

Frances Fitzgibbon confesses she expressed some misgivings "When Mitch first raised the idea of a volunteer cadre, I thought, ' gosh, wouldn't it be more efficient with paid staff?' I was absolutely dead wrong. When you have people meeting, talking, caring, taking responsibility - they poured their heart into everything. It was actually very moving." Since that first Festival, some of the original volunteers have returned every year to form the network that has become the backbone of the operation.

One of the responsibilities that wasn't taken on by volunteers at that first Festival was security. Lorenz von Fersen remembers a bunch of beefy guys in blue who were used to rousting rowdies from the PNE. When a bus full of cymbal-playing gate crashers in saffron-coloured robes insinuated their way into a parking lot and refused to pay, Gary Cristall and Mitch Podolak decided to handle it themselves.

"I was trying to be the good cop," Mitch explains. "But Gary just came up and said, 'Move the bus or we'll push it into the ocean.' And they moved." Despite that "success", it was an area that clearly needed improvement. When Alice Macpherson suggested enlisting a volunteer committee to develop a new approach to security, they went with it. To this day, a well-trained, experienced volunteer group uses equal measures of reason and firmness to defuse difficult situations at the Festival. They are so good you often don't realize they are there.

According to the founders, it required similar sophisticated skills to convince the Park Board to agree to the use of Jericho Beach Park for the second and subsequent Festivals. Managing the site to minimize disturbance for the neighbourhood, the wildlife and the environment, has been critical to the continued success of the Festival. Managing the political process has been no mean feat either. "It seemed like every year," says Gary Cristall, "We'd go to Park Board and come out of there with a 4-3 vote in our favour. One vote going the other way, and the whole thing would have been over."

On the first night, of the very first Vancouver Folk Music Festival, it rained. "We didn't know whether anyone was going to come - period - and then the rain started to come down," Gary Cristall remembers thinking. Frances still has a vision of the splashback bouncing onto the stage, but the performers kept going.

Curiously, the program for the first Festival doesn't list the performers for the evening concerts. One member of the hardy band of onlookers in the audience remembers being entranced by the sweet - almost to the point of painful - harmonies of Mary McCaslin and Jim Ringer. Ernie Fladell has a clear picture of Stan Rogers and his booming voice, his powerful presence bathed in the brilliant colours of the stage lights, with steam rising off his head. "When Stan came off he said it was like singing behind a waterfall."

"Later that night," says Gary Cristall, "when Pied Pear worked their magic and got a standing ovation in the rain, I knew we were on to something."

Saturday afternoon, the rain mercifully ended and with the sun now shining and with the magnificent ocean and mountain backdrop at the Point Stage, Mitch Podolak witnessed the single best blues workshop he has ever seen in a lifetime of festivals. "There was Leon Redbone, Odetta, Leon Bibb and John Hammond. But it was Roosevelt Sykes, the 70-year-old piano player, that really blew me away. He was joined on stage by Jane Vasey the young pianist for the Downchild Blues Band who wasn't even a guest at the Festival. And at the end of what seemed like an hour of furious, brilliant jamming, he stood up and turned to her, took off his hat and bowed."

No one knows for sure, but the most common estimate is that there were somewhere between 10,000 and 11,000 folks at that first Festival. Enough, it seems, to have convinced all concerned that it was worth the effort and struggle to do it all over again for another year and another and twenty-two more, which brings us to this weekend, July 19-21 2002. Frances Fitzgibbon isn't surprised. "All of us had the belief that it would be around for twenty-five years. We didn't publicly talk about the longevity of it, but the idea was strong and rooted somewhere real. People come to the festival and leave the site altered, different somehow."

For the founders and their successors, it is like building a miraculous community every year. They come to one of the most gorgeous settings in the world, bring in the power, water and the amenities, then the musicians arrive and the audience and then, in Mitch Podolak's words, "You enter a special world. You step outside normal society for three days and enjoy a totally non-alienating experience. What could be better?"

What could be better indeed.

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Appendix F:

MITCH PODOLAK'S REPORT ON OTTAWA FOLK FESTIVAL 2005

A Few Notes: These notes are entirely and solely reflective of my observations of the OFF and represent only my own views. This is not a definitive assessment by any means and should be taken only as a reiteration of my impressions mixed with a large dose of my prejudices and sprinkled heavily with my own theoretical beliefs about folk festivals generally. They are presented herein in a semi structured stream-of-consciousness manner and are presented only for the purpose of animating discussion and having fun.

I'm subjective about the Ottawa Folk Festival. I really like it and one of the things I like best is that it lacks the slickness that has begun to characterize some folk festivals. OFF is still a work in progress wherein a victory is sweet and a defeat really hurts. Producing the festival is still a struggle and that dynamic offers fantastic possibility for trial and experimentation and defeat and victory. Any organization like OFF is always perceptually vulnerable and its seeming chances of survival may be a speculative matter in some quarters... but that would be an error, for the last dozen years and for the next ten dozen years you folks have been doing and are doing what is needed. Lack of money caused by under funding or by lack of enough ticket sales to make the nut on any given year happens periodically, when I was AD & GM in Winnipeg I used to start dreaming about rain in January and dreaming about how much the Arts Council was giving the symphony when they were giving us nothing at all... This constant nag about money, resources and people makes working on a beast like OFF way more interesting and fun than working for a culturally squalid but established and institutionalized folk organization...these are the moments that are the most fun, the ones that count the most, when you are constantly being called to snatch victory from the jaws of the true economics of marketing folk music, enjoy these times folks, while they last ... you'll miss em, I promise...you'll remember these days way better than the fat days to come.

I believe that folk festivals are living entities. They, as a species, are subject to every possible kind of pressure externally and internally that the co-habiting humans can possibly devise. The human condition always enters into everything and that includes all the creature frailties like jealousy and fantasy and ambition. There is always somebody who thinks that they can do a better job. This year for the first time in the three years that I've been coming here, I heard some of the personality and methodological differences aired. I'm distraught that you Ottawatts hold back so much with your emotions, that must hurt, ain't nothing like a good honest fight to settle stuff. I overheard both astute observations and totally twisted chaudnitz and it was useful for me because I began to have a better sense of things. So just to be clear, and from the heart, I think that Gene and Chris and Peter and Janis and everybody else that contributed have done righteous and great work to once again pull off such a great fest. This does not mean that I'm uncritical, that would be incorrect. I believe strongly in critiquing method, as I understand it. In that context I'm looking at a great festival that's has the possibility, if it so chooses to go for it, to compete for the perceptual festival lead in Canadian folkdom. OFF is perfectly located to do this. It's whatever you want to do.

I think that the Ottawa Folk Festival, as it continually and periodically must, needs to particularly ask itself about its cultural agenda and how that translates in practice to the application of audience development.

The Night Stages: The Main stage sound and tech was first class overall, whenever and wherever I watched and listened from, I was blown away. The young fella who was at the soundboard has great ears and a great professional attitude. A great find for the festival.

There is a true need to hire some performers every year who are widely recognized. It helps in lots of ways to have a viable headliner particularly when evening concert dynamics are being considered, well-known artists create anticipation within an audience. Multi-act concert planning is about the management of the emotional state of the audience. If you can crescendo the evening with the focal point of the collective anticipation, the artist, the festival and the AD look great and the festival is talked about positively behind your back.

I have to talk about Kalan a bunch, I know you guys have beaten this to death by now but Kalan was interesting in a lot of ways and he offers us a great focal point for stuff like the relationship of "headliner to box office". Everything about a folk festival gets finely focused when a "big star" hits the event. You should have seen Dylan take a walk across the old Mariposa site; the audience from three stages got up and followed him and left some poor slob on the stage singing to a vanishing audience. Under circumstances that are anything like this, the backstage methodology gets tested very quickly as well. The methodology applied in presenting young Kalan changed the instinctual feel of the festival; not so surprisingly, the debate that was held on Maplepost reflected itself backstage and in the case of the Worms, onstage. Kalan is of course not a big star but he is here today, and tomorrow that is unlikely. I hope the kid enjoys the experience; he should spend more time with his fiddle.

The injection of Kalan as the festival "closer" which is the single most strategic spot of the entire weekend was a genuine technical and tactical error.

The closing moments of a folk festival need to be a poignant reiteration of the weekend aimed directly at the audience simply as a behavioural reminder to return next year. Many festivals have finales, in Winnipeg's case from year one to the present, Irene Goodnight, The Wilde Mountain Thyme, The Mary Ellen Carter and Amazing Grace. Real old-fashioned cornball chestnuts are presented to the audience led by a choir of volunteers and performers. The audience puts their arms around each other and sloppily swoons and sings along. It's a total manipulation of people's emotional state; it's easy to manipulate really tired people. In 2005 those songs may sound dinosaurish, but since 1974 a large chunk of the WFF audience faithfully participates in the finale because it's the final moment of their annual trek to oblivion. The ending is critical. The staging of it is critical, it's show biz. It's the festival's last chance. Festival and audience both know what's going on, no one is stupid, it's kind of like accepting the existence of god or believing in the Chicago Cubs. It's ritual, folks, it's part of the festival ritual, the completion, "too bad its over, see ya next year". This is really a missing emotional thing at OFF. It's different times; the songs need to be Ottawa's songs. The construction of a finale is a task by itself. Schmaltz sells.

The change in backstage culture with the additions of stage side security guards and bodyguards was entirely el delecto de crap-e-olla. Behind the scenes access needs to belong to all performers and volunteers equally and the addition of a mindless little twerp in a uniform at the side of the stage did sfa to enhance the situation or to provide security. Total bullshit.

The main stage set up with endless metal fences at the front and at the side of the front of stage made the place look like an armed encampment rather than an inviting place. Get rid of fence between the artists and the audience for all time. In my view, if an artist needs a fence, then the festival does not need that artist

The fencing was covered with commercial signs in plain view and it took away from every artist that played on the stage. Between the metal fence and the signage, the stage was way less physically and emotionally accessible that it was last year and It's really distracting when an artist has to compete with signage. It doesn't disappear. It's in your face when you're in the audience. There are some artists that won't play on a stage with signage, Raffi for instance, just will not. He'll hand back the deposit, tell you to sue him and he'll piss off in a purple cloud. It's a principled question for him. I've seen him cancel sold-out shows over the issue of attaching his name to a product. I agree with Raffi, anything that takes the eye of the audience off the face of the artist is disruptive of the show.

More about the Mainstage, I entirely disagree with the idea of not having tweeners and comedic co-hosts to assist with managing the audience. The addition of younger straight people is fine but more than a talker is needed. The stop-start-stop-start approach is boring and it never allows for a show long dynamic to develop. The Mainstage is show biz folks, that don't mean capitulating to pop; it's about putting on an engaging show. The show needs to be vigorous from the beginning until it stops. There are millions of entertaining tricks and show scenarios that are designed to make the breaks engaging. This is about engaging the audience and developing loyalty because it's fun. In the context of the current set of expectations, Peter's stage crew delivers exactly what is asked of them and does it so well.

If the show was designed as a straight-through deal then the festival would need to ask its main stage crew for even quicker changeovers with the same level of technical competence as is currently the standard at the OFF. I would be entirely confident of Peter's ability to deliver whatever is needed and whatever makes the festival better.

Pop headliners by themselves do not bring in weekend ticket sales. At best they sell a bunch of tickets to one-timers. If I were part of the team and/or the artistic committee, I would never have done Kalan or anybody like him, no matter what; I would have shot myself in the head before I did that.

During years when a really "good" folk headliner isn't available, a good headliner in the sense of being well known, artistically wonderful, in tune and a good draw, then it's the responsibility of the festival to find other ways to promote the show. The following promotional exercise can work like a charm. I've done this successfully a couple of times.

Pick a great individual artist or band that is entirely unknown in your marketplace and that you can hire easily and that you love musically and respect and that you believe can deliver a fantastic stage show to an audience, and then three months before the festival you start by talking them up to the press in reverential terms. Every interview about the festival, everybody, especially the AD, who does any interviews about the festival talks up the chosen act, you talk about the act to absolutely everybody, especially to every festival volunteer, to every supplier, to your aunt Matilda, to the paperboy/girl on your street, you talk up the act. You just don't ever talk about the festival without mentioning that "Blahnitz From Blahville" is coming to the festival. You don't talk to your spouse or your secret lover without mentioning at least once a day that dear old Blahnitz is coming to town. Guess what, by the time the festival actually comes around, you have created anticipation. All you have to do is pray the act delivers on the stage. Within our world, we have the musical resources to do this very well.

Just for the fun of it, lets just pretend that this year instead of Kalan the team had chosen young Harmony Trowbridge to close the festival. Let's pretend that for the last three months before the festival we'd been talking about her non-stop to everybody who would listen. Joni Mitchell may be a great songwriter folks, one of the best, but nobody knew her from a wet boopka until Estelle Klein placed her perfectly on the stage at Mariposa. I was in the audience, I knew Joni from the Bohemian Embassy and she entirely rose to that occasion. That was the career performance that established her rep, looked good on Mariposa, still does. My guess is that young Harmony will charm her way into history just as soon as some AD gives her a chance after dark. The point being is that in folk music we can create our own stars first, sometimes they become "big" outside of folkdom, that's great, but festivals is where that happens in folk music.

The trust between the festival and the audience is built upon discovery. The majority of the experienced part of the audience comes hoping to find new discoveries every year. They are looking to be blown away. To do this, it's simply not necessary to use famous "headliners"; in some ways counting on headliners to do this should be the last resort. The trust between artists and the festival is pretty organic and within folkdom it is easier to build trust than with any other genre of music, simply because for folk artists, festivals offer the best possible performance opportunity and every folk musician is really aware of the huge numbers of people competing for festival gigs. For a lot of artists, being chosen is a great thing. The AD needs to spend a considerable portion of the festival weekend hanging with future stars on the stage and future stars in the volunteer organization. This need is reason number 1 why you need to have a real party social life after the show; I'll talk about this a little later in more detail.

Personally, if I'd been AD I wouldn't have allowed a single drum machine or backup vocal recordings to be part of a folk music festival i.e. Armatrading. I would limit drum kits and electric bass on the Mainstage to one act per evening and I would make an effort to ensure that when kits were used that they were part of a folk tradition or a closely related tradition like Chicago Blues, Zydeco, Reggae or Rockabilly. I would really have to have an overpowering *musical reason* before I would hire a singer songwriter who used a bass and drum kit. Bass and drums followed by bass & drums, followed by bass & drums, homogenizes the tonality of any festival. It becomes white noise culture just like commercial radio. It becomes pop and phoney and totally without any socially redeeming qualities at all. Fuck homogeneity.

The point, folks, is that within the body of music that is considered "folk", the breadth and width of which is so rich and enormous and spectacular, there is music that can carry an audience off into space. There is nothing in contemporary pop music anywhere than can compete on stage with what's available within the many genres of folk music. There is an abundance of music that reaches into the experience of the listener and touches something deep, be it something from a homeland or something about an old flame or about whatever. Folk music then and folk music now is socially conscious and in touch. There is music that represents our neighbours and us through the tradition of the folk process and carries our story forward without economic and material conditions influencing truth from hogwash. The musical ingredients to blow away an audience and create frenzy, attract new young people as audience and establish the festival as an important cultural factor in the community all exist within our broad community; we don't need the muzik biz to attract large audiences and we don't need them if we really want to influence people. All the other ingredients already exist in Ottawa.

There are brand spanking new young Woody Guthrie's and Stan Rogers and Joni Mitchell's out there and there are new young and exciting players in every genre of folk music from Zydeco to bluegrass to blues. Reaching in a more serious way to the youth movement in folkdom would add an extraordinary level of excitement.

As a folk festival, that is a "folk" festival not a "music" festival, not a "lowest common denominator festival", not a "pop offshoot festival", there is an inherent responsibility to the audience and to the art form to continually introduce the audience to the depth of what is available. Not a nibble, not a small taste but a big delicious feast. In my view, that is what folk festivals are essentially about, the proselitisation of folk music as an art form and the empowerment of the human spirit through the integrated involvement of artists and volunteers and audience. Exposure, osmosis and fun. When you operate from the point of view that festivals are large, well-organized parties, then it works better. When folk festivals reach to pop music to "bolster" sales, we defeat our own cultural agenda; we must not lose our reason to exist. Don't cave culturally to the pop market, bypass it. It's mostly shit anyway.

Beyond my emotional reaction to ersatz drek, I know from watching the insidious retreat to a lower common denominator a number of times, that having pop acts at a folk festival is not viable as a method to grow the audience base. It doesn't leave anything to build on. We want to cultivate a situation wherein selling out all the tickets in advance becomes automatic. Even having folk-pop crossover stars like Joni Mitchell, Elvis Costello etc, historically only gives festivals a one-day sales blip upward. It's not a secure audience recruitment technique. Having a one-day blip with a folk artist like a Joni does give the festival a boost in its anticipation level overall, but ask yourself how many years will go by before some of the two hundred (am I being generous?) young screaming little girls who came specifically out to see the fly-by-night sensation will come back to see a folk festival? Was bringing young Mr. Pimples an audience building exercise? Was it a late charge to get a headliner?

My contention is that the riveting show that happened inside the building which kept folks glued to their seats, while Kalan was up there outside driving away the greybeards, would have been a way better show for the audience as a whole. The inside show was brilliantly programmed, the folk that left and went home while Kalan was kavorting really missed out. The quality of the indoor show increased the perception of the festival as a fine artistic event for everybody who was there.

Lastly about the Mainstage, I wish you would stop using it during the day. It's too loud. It is aimed the wrong way. There is a fine piece of land at the bottom end of the site wherein the sound could be aimed directly across the water. My view is entirely about intimacy between artist and audience. The main stage is too damn big for workshops with sporadic audience illustrating that there are hundreds of empty seats making it very hard for the people on stage to work with a critical mass. From the on stage point of view, the size of the audience itself is irrelevant, it's how tight you pack them. The festival's job is too make it easy for the performer.

Marketing The Festival Beyond Bourgeoisie Advertising Methodology: The perception of equality between artist, organizer and volunteer and by extension, the audience, is where the potential long-term backbone of a festival actually lives. It's all about belief. It's the job of the organizers to instil passion, conviction and ownership of the festival into the entire organization, especially the volunteers. The backstage-volunteer culture is essential to what actually happens at the festival because it helps cement the organization by creating tradition, which then translates into ownership. In my view, what happens with the volunteers is more essential than anything other than the show itself. The festival needs to make volunteers feel special and just like it will be in a future socialist society; the festival needs to reward its volunteer heroes by regard and by fun and not by material wealth. Word of mouth is simply the best advertising and the more folks who are out there lovingly and unconsciously selling the festival, the better off the festival actually is. OFF is not nearly taking full advantage of its possibilities.

The audience and the volunteers all need to believe in the festival as a culturally and physically and emotionally liberating experience. That is why people come back to festivals year after year. It's Yom Kippur, music cleanses the soul and you absolve yourself for being an asshole most of the time and it's time to see friends, have a toke, hear some music, look at the crafts, hear some music, have a toke or a drink, eat a hotdog or worship the sun or the sundown. We all like to look at each other. Granted that Ottawa has a certain rectal tightness us westerners notice immediately, but even in your good city, I've discovered party animals amongst the volunteers who have been waiting for you old guys to lighten up and put on a rip roaring, leg stomping, ass kicking party every night of the festival. Those volunteer would sure like to get personally and warmly invited to the parties and be encouraged to bring their axe and do a little pickin. Eh? Including AD's.

You must also teach the audience to believe that the OFF is an important annual rite. A main task of the festival's central leadership is to consciously indoctrinate its audience base with the same sense of ownership that volunteers have and sometimes artists develop. The best way for that to happen is not in the press; it's with the volunteers going blah blah blah in the community to their friends and to their parents, especially the young volunteers. Start recruiting volunteers at 12 and make sure the party stretches outside the licensed area and invite the kids to the party as well. Take exceptional care of all your volunteers, which OFF doesn't feel like it fully understands yet, except for Sheila Ross, and your volunteers will take care of the festival for decades. They are the heart of the message. The better time they have, the better they will talk it up, so let's start by having the best bloody parties in town and let's leave the Blues Fest in the dust so they become known as bores.

It's not just volunteers that provide the festival with important word of mouth activity; it's the entire community factor (CF), defined as those people within the community or from a fifty of sixty mile radius of Ottawa who actively participate in the festival on site. Any volunteer, any crafter, food concessionaire, reporter, supplier, local performer etc., these folk really contribute to the word of mouth of the festival. They all need to get invited to the parties. They are a part of the festival; make em feel like they belong. The parties need to start when the Mainstage ends and needs to go on until about 4 am on Fri and Sat and on Monday until it gets light. The clear cold reality of Monday morning capitalism in action, getting back away from oblivion and good tunes, is a harsh reminder of how good the weekend was.

The CF usually translates into about 5 sold tickets per unit of CF, for example Edmonton has a CF of about 2200 people. They sell ten thousand tickets daily and if they had more, they could sell more. Consciously cultivate OFF's CF and the audience will grow regardless of who is on the stage. Grow the CF and add a headliner and then you'll be guarding the gate trying to keep out the riff raff carrying dollars in their backpacks. It's a pretty straight progression, the more people who are involved and take ownership, the more tickets you will sell. I never believe in quick fixes.

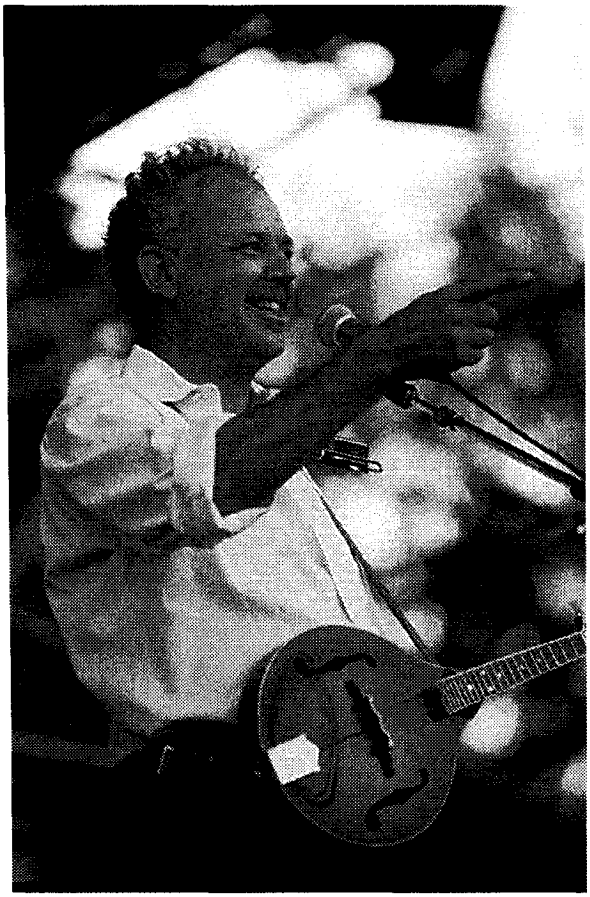
The Site Office: Last year we identified a potential improvement to the daytime stages by moving one stage to the far side of the pavilion in order to lessen the sound bleed in the other field. Three workshop stages were obviously too much for the far field. In the course of making the move, the set up crew placed the stage in what looked to be a logical location. It was different than what I had envisioned but visually and in terms of stage-to-stage bleed it was perfect. Unfortunately, and no fault to anybody, it was located right in front of the place where the building's mechanical system blew out the used air. No one, including me, had foreseen this problem. The fans on the building were loud enough to disturb every performance and to create a white noise for the audience. The solution was to move the stage and the fence.

Chris and I set out to see if this could be accomplished. The tech staff were entirely unresponsive and suggested that we organize the move and they were clearly unwilling, in the face of all the other things that were on their plate, to take this on. Rolling with the punches and being able to adjust to meet the needs of the festival, especially when it comes to the show, which is what the whole thing is all about, is an essential ingredient in the make-up of an on-site festival operation. In the specific order of things where the site set-up crew and the tech operation are one and the same, in my view it is essential that a mechanism should exist within the festival to deal with problems like this, the festival apparatus needs to have the ability to decide things and make to them happen fast, so rather than assuming that the site-tech crew could find the time and resources, the festival needs to have those people resources at its fingertips.

You might consider altering the festivals internal culture to include a "site office" based on the Winnipeg model. It started as a group of irregular trouble-shooters that I asked to work as a crew, and after I left this evolved into the "site office". You're gonna love this. The site office is the central clearing house for information and the central problem-fixing brigade. They know the entire site crew and they are entirely unafraid to make any off stage decision about the operation that they feel is necessary about any subject from immigration problems to any physical malady the site might develop.

Every crew leader on the site understands that the site office is a way better place to get help than from the festival staff who are usually too beat by festival time. Only the show is out of bounds, the site office is an empowered crew of festival vets who have the absolute trust of the central leadership. They also have three golf carts that provide instant mobility.

Currently in Winnipeg the site office people are ten times more experienced in festival operations than the staff. When the AD has a problem like the one confronting Chris about the noise from the fans, then the stage would have moved as soon as the daytime audience cleared out. The problem confronting Chris was an artistic problem confronting the festival. It needed to be solved.



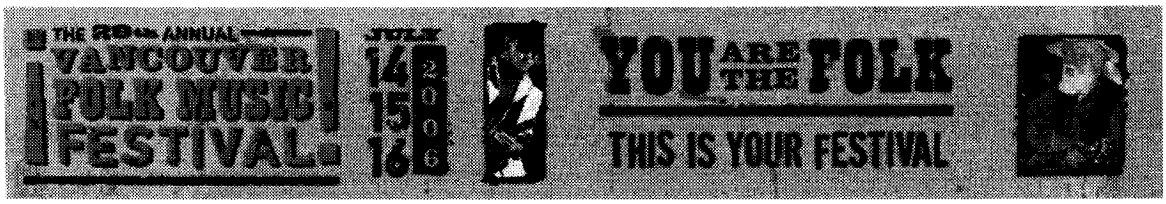
My festival highlight for 2005

Daytime: Every stage at the festival needs to think of itself as being as important as the main stage. Every stage needs to be designed and operated with the artist-audience relationship being the foremost consideration every time without exception. Why you lower or in some cases raise a stage is to make the artists accessible, eye contact with the front of house is very essential for some artists and that can't be manufactured. It needs to be in the planning process and in the implementation. Every time a performer mounts a stage at the OFF, the festival organization needs to be confident that it has done everything technically possible to ensure that the artist has the best chance to succeed. This is about an attitude. Every time an artist succeeds, so does the festival. It's a pretty straightforward equation.

That's it folks, I can talk until the cows come home and there is always more stuff to yap about, every year the OFF is a different experience and every year there is lots to learn. It's a fine festival and I guess that the main challenge is to figure out how ambitious you want to be and then scale everything to that. If it were I, I'd have the western festivals in my gun sights and I'd do my best to outdo them in every way so that they came to visit and admire and say wow.

Appendix G:

VANCOUVER FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL ADVERTISEMENT



It is interesting to note that the most famous contemporary IWW bard, Utah Phillips, is featured on the poster for the festival.

Appendix H:

CITY OF WINNIPEG CENSUS 2001

VISIBLE MINORITIES	CITY OF WINNIPEG		
Visible Minority Group	Number	% of Total	% of Pop.
Filipino	30,000	36.6%	4.9%
South Asian	12,165	14.9%	2.0%
Black	11,275	13.8%	1.8%
Chinese	10,890	13.3%	1.8%
Southeast Asian	5,030	6.1%	0.8%
Latin American	4,500	5.5%	0.7%
Japanese	1,555	1.9%	0.3%
Arab	1,060	1.3%	0.2%
Korean	945	1.2%	0.2%
West Asian	820	1.0%	0.1%
Multiple visible minorities	1,710	2.1%	0.3%
Visible minority not included elsewhere	1,960	2.4%	0.3%
TOTAL	81,910	100.0%	13.4%

LANGUAGES	CITY OF WINNIPEG	
Official Languages Spoken	Number	% of Total
English only	537,265	88.0%
Both English and French	67,010	11.0%
Neither English nor French	5,480	0.9%
French only	680	0.1%
TOTAL	610,455	100.0%

Period of Immigration	Number	% of Total	% of Pop.
Before 1961	20,985	19.8%	3.4%
1961-1970	14,515	13.7%	2.4%
1971-1980	22,130	20.9%	3.6%
1981-1990	21,990	20.8%	3.6%
1991-1995	12,855	12.2%	2.1%
1996-2001	13,270	12.5%	2.2%
TOTAL	105,745	100.0%	17.3%

INCOME	CITY OF WINNIPEG
Composition of Total Income in 2000	%
Employment income	76.1%
Government transfer payments	12.1%
Other	11.8%

Employment Income	Male	Female	All
Worked full year, full time	114,015	86,955	200,975
Average employment income	$44,117	$32,007	$38,877
Worked part year or part time	64,260	79,405	143,670
Average employment income	$19,307	$14,194	$16,481
Average employment income	$34,797	$23,143	$29,145

Income in 2000	Male	Female	% of Total
Under $1,000	7,595	8,960	3.5%
$ 1,000 - $ 2,999	7,705	12,205	4.2%
$ 3,000 - $ 4,999	6,620	10,325	3.6%
$ 5,000 - $ 6,999	7,520	12,415	4.2%
$ 7,000 - $ 9,999	10,245	18,670	6.1%
$10,000 - $11,999	8,010	15,395	4.9%
$12,000 - $14,999	12,270	22,710	7.3%
$15,000 - $19,999	21,010	32,965	11.3%
$20,000 - $24,999	20,085	28,630	9.8%
$25,000 - $29,999	19,215	21,365	8.5%
$30,000 - $34,999	19,990	17,165	7.6%
$35,000 - $39,999	17,255	12,920	6.3%
$40,000 - $44,999	15,355	9,605	5.2%
$45,000 - $49,999	10,905	6,390	3.6%
$50,000 - $59,999	16,670	9,770	5.6%
$60,000 and over	28,560	9,615	8.0%
TOTAL	229,210	247,105	100.0%
Average income	$34,457	$22,618	
Median income	$28,306	$18,129	

Incidence of Low Income in 2000	Number	Total	%
Economic families	25,750	166,590	15.5%
Private households	123,045	606,500	20.3%
Unattached individuals (15 years and over)	43,910	99,155	44.3%

Appendix I:

ETHICAL COFFEE:
VANCOUVER FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL ADVERTISEMENT

Vancouver Folk Music Festival Blend

About The Blend
The Vancouver Folk Music Festival Blend is a dark roast, full-bodied coffee with a thick, chocolate-y richness and at ouch of sweet, delicate fruity notes. The Festival Blend is fair-trade, organic and shade-grown, in keeping with the Vancouver Folk Music Festival's committment to progressive principles in all our endeavours.

Taste The Blend At Pete's Cafés
You can try out the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Blend at the three Pete's Café locations on-site through the Festival Weekend. You'll find the cafés adjacent to the Pete's Boutiques at the Little Folks and Festival Foods areas and across from the Evening Concert Stage, against the north fence.

You'll Want To Take Some Home!
One-pound bags of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Blend will be available through the Festival Weekend at Pete's Boutiques, as noted above. Buying directly from the Festival results in the largest contribution to Festival fundraising.

Available Year 'Round At Your Favourite Market
The Vancouver Folk Music Festival Blend is now on sale at several retail stores throughout the city, and will continue to be available throughout the year. Here's a list of current outlets:

COMMERCIAL DRIVE & EAST VAN
Donald's Market - Hastings & Naniamo
Donald's Market - Commercial
Drive Organics - Commercial
East End Food Co-op - Commercial
East West Market - Main St.
Famous Foods - Kingsway
Ten Thousand Villages - Commercial

WEST SIDE (KITS ETC)
Ten Thousand Villages - Broadway
Capers - Cambie & 16th
Capers- Kitsilano
Cornerstone Coffee - 4th Ave. Kits

WEST END
Capers - on Robson
Nesters - Yaletown

WEST VAN & NORTH VAN
Mainly Organics
Queensdale Market

OUTSIDE VANCOUVER
Planet Organic - Port Coquitlam
Creekside Market - Whistler
Spruceland News - Prince George
Organic Grocer - Surrey

ISLANDS
Planet Organic - Victoria
Ruddy Potato - Bowen Island
Village Food Market - Gabriola Island
Saturna Island Store - Saturna Island

Buy In Bulk And Become A Fundraiser
Hold your own fundraising campaign for the Vancouver Folk Music Festival and sell the Festival Blend by the bag to your friends, family and co-workers. Use the Order Form to buy directly from Ethical Bean. There's free delivery for orders of 12 or more one-pound bags.

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