

# Opera as Trans-Atlantic Culture in Pre-Confederation British North America: Mozart's "Crudel! perchè finora" on an 1844 Toronto Concert Programme

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## Résumé de l'article

Quelle est la raison pour laquelle le duo de Mozart « Crudel! perchè finora » (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, III (i)) était-il au programme des divers airs d'opéra interprétés par des musiciens amateurs et professionnels à la soirée musicale privée de Mme Widder à Toronto? Typiquement victorien, le programme formel de cette soirée mélangeait opéra et chant choral, ballades populaires et musique instrumentale. Cependant, le duo de Mozart est rarement entendu lors de tels programmes. L'hôtesse britannique a peut-être compté sur son auditoire de haut rang dans la colonie canadienne afin de reconnaître les vertus de son programme reflétant les pratiques de la capitale londonienne et de promouvoir du même coup les visées—politiquement délicates—, en développement foncier de son mari. Cet exemple de culture trans-Atlantique suggère que les programmes de concert amateur victoriens peuvent constituer des sources utiles dans le cadre de l'histoire des pratiques de réception des auditoires.

OPERA AS TRANS-ATLANTIC CULTURE  
 IN PRE-CONFEDERATION BRITISH NORTH AMERICA:  
 MOZART'S "CRUDEL! PERCHÈ FINORA" ON AN 1844  
 TORONTO CONCERT PROGRAMME

*Kristina Guiguet*

Operatic excerpts featured prominently on the 1844 programme of a private soirée musicale planned for Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Widder's Toronto home (see fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

Programme		
OF		
MRS. WIDDER'S "SOIRÉE MUSICALE,"		
LYNDURST, MARCH 12, 1844.		
PART I.		
CORO—"Plaudite oh Popoli" (Tancredi).....		Rossini.
DUET—"Mira oh Norma" (Norma).....	Miss Hagerman and Mrs. Nash.....	Belini.
CANTONET—"My mother bids me bind my hair".....	Mrs. Widder.....	Haydn.
ARIA—"Come l'adoro" (Beatrice di Tenda).....	Miss H. Scott.....	Belini.
GLEE—"Lutzow's wild hunt".....	Dr. McCaul, Mr. Barron, Mr. Wells and Chorus.....	Feber.
SCENA ED ARIA—"Vivi tu" (Anna Bolena).....	Mr. Humphreys.....	Donizetti.
BALLAD—"The dream is past".....	Miss Hagerman.....	Glover.
DUET—"Crudel! perche finora" (Le Nozze di Figaro).....	Mrs. Widder and Captain Haliday.....	Mozart.
BALLAD—"I ought to tear thee from my heart".....	Mrs. Nash.....	Abrams.
QUARTETTE—"Mi manca la voce".....	Mrs. Nash, Mrs. Widder, Mr. Hum- phreys, and Captain Haliday.....	Rossini.
PART II.		
FANTASIA—Piano Forte.....	Miss Clara Boulton.....	Herr.
ARIA—"Trono e corona" (Torquato Tasso).....	Mrs. Nash.....	Donizetti.
BALLAD—"Dermot Astore".....	Miss Macaulay.....	Crouch.
DUET—"Oh, lovely maiden, stay" (Azor & Zemira).....	Mrs. Nash and Mr. Humphreys.....	Spohr.
CANTATA—"Ah! per sempre io ti perdo!" (I Furitani).....	Captain Haliday.....	Belini.
SONG—"Echo song".....	Mrs. Widder.....	Sir H. R. Bishop.
GLEE—"Come, silent evening".....	Dr. McCaul, Mr. Barron, Mr. Wells and Chorus.....	Call.
ARIA—"Vi ravviso" (Sonnambula).....	Miss Hagerman.....	Belini.
SONG—"Not a drum was heard".....	Mr. Humphreys.....	Bornett.
TIZO—"Vadasi via di qua".....	Mrs. Widder, Mr. Humphreys, and Capt. Haliday.....	Martini.

Figure 1. 1844 Widder Programme (courtesy of a private collection).

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Elaine Keillor, Brian McKillop, and Sarah Bonesteele, and to the anonymous readers of *Intersections* for their helpful comments on this paper, as well as to Michael Rudman and the owners of the private collection of Humphreys papers, who were generous with access to their materials. Callista Kelly and Christine Taylor of Carleton University's Inter-Library Loan department played a critical role in acquiring materials. Funding for the graduate work for which this research was done was provided by the Ontario Graduate Scholarship and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada Doctoral Scholarship, as well as scholarships from Carleton University.

"Soirée musicale" shows the accent except where original sources do not. It is retained in French in the text because it was used as a term of anglophone culture.

Mrs. Widder, an amateur singer, performed in “Crudel! perchè finora,” the duet between Count Almaviva and his servant Susanna from Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* (hereafter, *Figaro*), on a programme that combined amateur with professional musicians in musical genres from opera to glees and parlour ballad. Operatic excerpts were standard popular fare in colonial Canada as elsewhere in the British Empire but Mozart opera, and particularly this *Figaro* duet, were unusual on local concert programmes in Toronto during the 1840s<sup>2</sup> (Sale 1968, 69). Why was this enchanting snippet of Mozart opera programmed and performed by an amateur musician on this occasion?

The answer is perhaps most readily found by considering private concert programmes as evidence of audience reception. The historical meaning of individual works varied according to the specific combination of composers, performers, audiences, and venues. As musicologist John Shepherd points out, music itself is highly abstract, but with each performance of a given work, the imaginative worlds of those who participate in making and hearing it endow the sound of music itself with layers of meaning that are historically specific (Shepherd 1991, pp. 13, 176). The history of performance is difficult to document and understand, in part because it is a history of the changing meanings of music.

Although opera was standard popular fare in Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, not all operatic excerpts carried the same social or political heft. As hostess and named producer of the 1844 private concert, Mrs. Widder’s personal repertoire choices were liable to particular scrutiny, if only as evidence of the values implicit in the way her husband’s household was conducted. Her choice of Mozart’s “Crudel! perchè finora” was perhaps more daring than some other operatic material might have been. For a middle-class woman like Mrs. Widder, singing the part of a sexually provocative servant girl pressed on social norms of feminine respectability. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, the Widder programme was an active negotiation of economics and politics, a politically sensitive social event at which the musical activity of the hostess was of central importance (Guiguet 2004). Especially since she had ready access to other attractive repertoire, Mrs. Widder must have had compelling motivation to perform in this Mozart duet on this occasion.<sup>3</sup>

Audience reception of opera in 1840s Toronto relied on social and political features of a trans-Atlantic musical culture that could be tailored to suit local resources and purposes. Performing opera on such a mixed programme was one of Mrs. Widder’s means of demonstrating British cultural identity while adapting it to the social and political networks at play in Toronto. In England, Italian opera was primarily associated with the musical leisure of the aristocracy and

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to David Sale’s exhaustive indices of composers, performers, and programme lists for much of the context for the Widder concert in Toronto. Sale shows that after 1845 the first public performance of a duet from *Figaro* was November 2, 1846. Although the particular duet on that occasion is not specified, it was sung not by amateurs but by professionals, mezzo soprano Matilde Korsinsky of New York, and local baritone Jules Hecht (Sale, p. 325). For Korsinsky, see Martin 1993, 129.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Humphreys, whom she knew well, had just published a lyrical song that requires dramatic characterization and the same vocal range as the Mozart duet the year before (Humphreys 1843).

landed gentry, with which the local British governor of colonial Canada would have been personally familiar, but Mozart operas were far less frequently performed for this audience. In particular, *Figaro*, with its republican themes, was a site of some cultural controversy and vocal excerpts from it were seldom programmed in elite private London concerts. In Toronto, the largest urban centre of Canada West, the same practice applied.<sup>4</sup> Between 1845 and 1867, excerpts from operas by Donizetti and Bellini far outweighed those by Mozart and other German composers (Sale 1968, 391–416). In this context, Mrs. Widder singing “Crudel! perchè finora” was an oddity. Exploring why this anomalous repertoire was programmed can provide a better understanding of the ways in which musical life was woven into contemporary politics and commerce.

This paper proceeds by first identifying the *soirée musicale* as a form of British and colonial elite culture that opens a window to popular culture. The use of amateur concert programmes as new sources for both music and social history is discussed, and finally a detailed discussion of this Mozart operatic excerpt in the Widder programme of 1844 is offered.

#### IDENTIFYING THE SOIRÉE MUSICALE AS A FORM

Victorian private programmes like the Widders’ are unfamiliar today. Cultural historian Paul DiMaggio notes that typical mid-nineteenth-century theatre programming (albeit for the northern United States) used a “promiscuous combination of genres that later would be considered incompatible” (DiMaggio 1991, 276). Tastes have changed over time, influenced in part by music scholarship that favours stylistic consistency in programming as a goal of aesthetic sophistication. For example, as the ground-breaking Canadian musicologist Helmut Kallmann wrote about nineteenth-century Canadian programmes, “It is easy for us to smile at these programmes with their mixture of styles and circus-like array of entertainers, but we must not forget that even in Europe taste sank to a low ebb in the years after Beethoven’s death” (Kallman 1987, 109). From their roots in 1950s Canadian cultural nationalism, Kallmann and the Canadian musicologists who have further developed his work are producing a solid body of research that contributes to the empirical and conceptual foundations on which this study depends. Kallmann’s recognition that the social history of musical life was a valid aspect of musicology is an important precursor to the suggestion made here that amateur musicians and the structure of their social and political relationships were components of a Victorian programming aesthetic.

Constructing the Widder programme required a sophisticated calculation of aesthetic and social factors taken together, a calculation that could not have been a function of ignorance but required education, skill, social tact, and hard work. The structure of the *soirée musicale* as a form depended on combining differen-

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<sup>4</sup> The naming of this geographic area changed from Upper Canada (1791 to 1841) to Canada West (1841 to 1867), becoming Ontario at Confederation. “Colonial Canada” refers to the colonies of British North America prior to Confederation. While the Canadian research for this project was done in Ontario, the conventions of using multiple musical genres in programming, as well as the social structures of gender and class, most likely apply, perhaps with minor local variations, to the rest of British North America before Confederation.

ces: different musical genres matched to performers of distinctly varied social and musical status. The form itself embodied a conservative social thesis: that apparently natural differences of gender and class formed a stable universe of interlocking hierarchies. The result was, literally, delightfully harmonious (Guiguet 2004).

Elite culture like the Widder programme is seen by some popular culture historians as discrete from or irrelevant to popular culture (e.g., DiMaggio 1991, 377). Culture, that mobile matrix of beliefs, values, and ideas that shapes and is shaped by all forms of communication, is indivisible from the economic and political fault lines of power and can thus be understood to drive social change. Like DiMaggio, Lawrence Levine is a popular culture scholar who has persuasively argued that the distinction between “high” and “popular” art had not yet solidified into a class-based divide of repertory before the second half of the nineteenth century, with the useful implication that such distinctions are the function of socially constructed hierarchies, rather than a necessary component of the artistic work itself (Levine 1988). Rather than focusing on sharp class divisions, this study suggests that elite and popular culture shared much common ground.

The Widder programme is a window into popular audience reception of opera in pre-Confederation Canada, a subject for which little documentary evidence exists. As Figure 2 shows, between 1845 and 1860, the repertoire from the Widder programme cropped up repeatedly in Toronto programmes.

Canadian musicologists Elaine Keillor and Barclay MacMillan have shown that tunes by Bellini, Mozart, Bishop, Barnett, and Rossini, all composers featured on the Widder programme, were also frequently heard in remote homesteads, small towns and popular Methodist hymn books (Keillor 2006, 104; Barclay MacMillan 1990, *passim*). The Widder programme was clearly part of the continuum of musical life in colonial Canada, whether this took place in formal concerts or informal home music-making.

The Widder programme was also recognizably similar to English private programmes of the same period, so it is a reliable example of the main features of these musical parties. As a concert form, the *soirée musicale* characteristically combined an atmosphere of domestic leisure with a professional level of expertise, often showcasing amateurs with professional musicians for an audience that doubtless included their friends and family. It used exactly the mix of musical genres and casting conventions visible on the Widder programme. Individual artists performed only in the genres that matched their class, occupation, and gender, with the proviso that amateur women of a higher class sang the same kinds of music as the working male musicians, sometimes nearly as well. Opera was associated with professional musicians or Lady Amateurs, as were solo ballads, canzonets, and songs. All of the women on the Widder programme were probably Lady Amateurs, including Miss Clara Boulton, who

played a dazzling but popular piano fantasia based on operatic themes.<sup>5</sup> Private concerts gave highly skilled but amateur women musicians a formal concert venue in which to exercise their artistic authority, but without compromising their domestic femininity (Guiguet 2004, 49; Reich 1993, 132).

Two of the Gentlemen Amateurs, Frederick Barron and John McCaul, were working educators. The third was a lawyer whose father had been a colleague of Barron and McCaul. All experienced amateur singers, they ranked socially somewhere between the working musician and their more powerful host, and linked their names on this programme only with glees (Guiguet 2004, Chapter 3). For these ladies and gentlemen, amateur status as musicians was an important signal of social rank, and the musical genres in which they performed were entirely consistent with their position on the social ladder. Captain Haliday, a British military man posted to Toronto, might have been one of the many fine musicians who worked in the British military (Kyte Senior 1981, 173), since he sang very difficult music.<sup>6</sup> Mr. James Dodsley Humphreys was a professional tenor who had arrived in Toronto in 1835 after training at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM, hereafter) in London.<sup>7</sup> For Humphreys, the Widder evening was an audition before the men in the audience who held the gift of lucrative church, orchestral, and teaching work. Socially and politically powerful, but musical amateurs, these men influenced the engagement of singers, chorus masters, and teachers for the organizations to which they belonged, including St. James's Anglican Cathedral, the first Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra (formed in 1845), and Upper Canada College, a boys' preparatory school (Guiguet 2004, Chapter 3).

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<sup>5</sup> "Lady Amateur" and "Gentleman Amateur" are capitalized to reflect the clear social role of such musical amateurs in the period both in colonial Canada and in Britain. The Herz piano "Fantasia" is not named, but most of his fantasias were based on operatic themes. Mrs. Nash may have had more extensive training or performance experience than the other women, since she sang in an enormous vocal range, from the exquisite Harriet Abrams canzonet to the technical showpiece of "Trono e corona" (Donizetti, *Torquato Tasso*). Little is known about Mrs. Nash, but she was probably by this time married to a respectable businessman, J. R. Nash, who sat on the first board of the Toronto Philharmonic Society (Sale 1968, 366). Had she been a working musician, once she married, she would have had to renounce a professional career, so she is likely to have held at least formal Lady Amateur status at this time. Given the advantages of middle-class life over the scramble of working as a professional musician, many women musicians might have been delighted to have been admitted to the ranks of Lady Amateurs.

<sup>6</sup> Other interpretations for Captain Haliday's singing are possible: he had been posted to Toronto four years earlier, and might then have begun to train vocally with Mr. Humphreys, a local voice teacher. Toronto was a small city at this time, and undoubtedly men who were interested or talented in music would have been drawn in to male musical clubs. For a similar argument about class-crossing in homosocial catch and glee clubs, albeit for an earlier period in England, see Robins 2006, 13. However, it is likely that even when people of different social status sang together, class difference was not erased. Further research on male singing clubs in pre-Confederation Canada is needed to address this question.

<sup>7</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, s.v. "Humphreys, James Dodsley," casts doubt on Humphreys having attended the RAM. My recent research at the RAM, however, shows that the school's administrative records repeatedly refer to "James Dodsley Humphreys" and his persistent difficulties in paying his tuition. See, for example, the entry stating that Humphreys was assisted with a promissory note from a Mr. Tarbutt, from March 6, 1834, in RAM Committee Minutes [Volume] 5, 1834–1835, p. 25.

**Tancredi excerpts**

- 1855 Touring company, Mlle. Paradi (Sale 126)
- 1855 Boston Brass Band (Sale 158)
- 1863 Band of 30<sup>th</sup> Reg. (Sale 222)

**“Mira, O Norma”**

- 1851 Touring company (Sale 95)
- 1855 New York touring company (Sale 125)
- 1856 Mlle. Paradi company (Sale 135)
- 1856 English Opera Company (Sale 137)
- 1858 Touring company, Thalberg (Sale 149)

**Beatrice di Tenda excerpts**

- 1851 Jenny Lind (“Ah mie fedeli”) (Sale 100)

**“Lutzow’s Wild Hunt”**

- 1845 Toronto Choral Society, Band of 82nd Reg., conducted by Humphreys (Sale)
- 1846 McCaul, Humphreys, Barron (Sale 65)
- 1851 St. Lawrence Hall Benefit (Sale 94)

**“Vivi tu”/Anna Bolena excerpts**

- 1852 St. Lawrence Hall, Band of 71st Reg. (Sale 102)
- 1854 Toronto Philharmonic Society (Sale 119)

**“Mi manca la voce”/Moses in Egypt excerpts**

- 1845 St. George’s Church Amateur Choral Concert (Sale 60)
- 1846 Toronto Philharmonic Society (Sale 63)
- 1857 “Moses in Egypt Fantasia”, Thalberg (Sale 143)

**“Ah, per sempre io ti perderi” I Puritani excerpts**

- 1848 Mrs. Robinson (née Hagerman) (Sale 79)
- 1863 Band of 30th Reg. (Sale 222)

**“Echo Song”**

- 1851 Jenny Lind (Sale 100)
- 1853 Adelina Patti (Sale 116)
- 1858 Mme Wookey with Metropolitan Choral Society (Sale 155)

**“Vi ravviso” La Sonnambula excerpts**

- 1850 Opera Troupe of the New Orleans Theatre (Sale 91)
- 1862 Mr. Hudson, English version “All is now lost” (Sale 202)

**“Come, silent evening”**

- 1846 Toronto Philharmonic Society (listed as “deCall”) (Sale 65)

**“Vadasi via di qua”**

- 1846 Toronto Philharmonic Society (Sale 64)
- 1846 Toronto Philharmonic Society (Sale 66)
- 1856 Misses Heron and Troupe (Sale 133)
- 1856 Strakosch Grand Opera (Sale 139)

Figure 2. “Performances of Widder music in public concerts in Toronto 1835–1860 (from Sale 1968, Appendix II: Public Concerts: January 1845–July 1, 1867).

## AMATEUR PROGRAMMES AS EVIDENCE FOR AUDIENCE RECEPTION

As Mozart specialist Neil Zaslaw has noted, “musical works do not exist without performance and performance implies audience reception” (Zaslaw 1989, ix).

What constitutes sound evidence of reception? Much audience reception history relies on collecting empirical data about numbers and locations of public performances, as well as printed music criticism, analytical programme notes, numbers of performances in various venues, and the careers of professional musicians who performed or produced individual works. These are reliable means of assessing the relative popularity of composers and even of particular works.<sup>8</sup>

This study proposes that private concert programmes featuring amateur musicians can be read as first-hand evidence of audience reception of opera and other musical genres. Audience members at professional concerts who developed their own amateur performances of the same or similar repertoire, expressed their “audience response” in the form of repertoire choices and programme sequences. Their written or printed programmes are documentary evidence of those occasions when such choices solidified into formal, though private, performances. Private concert programmes were designed for small audiences well known to the programmer and host of the event, and cast with amateur musicians, some of whom likely insisted on performing particular repertoire. In each case, the final programme reveals the outcome of the many decisions that were settled with the ultimate aim of pleasing the host family, each of the performers, and their intended audience.

It must be noted that printed programmes are not reports of what actually took place, whether in amateur or professional programmes. British musicologist Ian Woodfield gives an excellent example of the difference between plan and execution, using letters and diaries from British amateur musicians resident in late-eighteenth-century imperial India. One such amateur, who was both performer and hostess, referred to one of her programmes as “my list”, and clearly noted when guest performers chose to deviate from it (Woodfield 2000, 104–107).

There is a coordinating genius behind every planned, formal performance. In amateur concerts, one of the amateurs, often the hostess, made final programming decisions, often in consultation with one of the professional musicians involved. The point of departure for this study was to ask what considerations drove the decisions of the person(s) who programmed the Widder concert. In the absence of a document flatly stating those considerations for the Widder concert—such as a diary tracking the process or a letter recounting an overheard conversation on the subject—the final printed programme is a statement of the programmers’ conclusions about which music and performers should appear, and in what sequence.

#### AVAILABILITY OF VICTORIAN PRIVATE CONCERT PROGRAMMES

Private concert programmes exist in some dedicated British collections (Ridgewell 2003), but there, as in Canada, they are difficult to locate. Only with-

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<sup>8</sup> A fine example of this approach includes Christina Bashford’s analysis of the reception of Beethoven string quartets in London in the 1830s and 1840s, and draws on private papers and amateur performances as well as public, published, and professional activities (Bashford 1996).



in the last few years has the value of such programmes as historical evidence been identified in Britain (Weber 2005). There is no consistent protocol for cataloguing programmes internationally, so they often turn up piecemeal.<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Widder's programme is the earliest of the very few Canadian *soirée musicale* programmes so far discovered. As performing musicians today may be glad to note, such programmes can provide evidence that live musical performance was an important feature of the public worlds of business, politics, and social identity. The private 1844 amateur performance of Mozart's "Crudel! perchè finora" was indivisible from the public, political world that encompassed it.

That public arena was not limited to colonial Canada but was part of a trans-Atlantic imperial culture. The Widder programme was created in and for local circumstances, but it was part of an imperial continuum based on British practice. Canadian musicologist Elaine Keillor points out that British musical practices, repertoire, and training, as well as individual British musicians, were a significant influence on musical life in colonial Canada (Keillor 2006, 86). Certainly both the Widders and their professional tenor had come directly from London, bringing the idea and experience of the *soirée musicale* with them. William Weber, whose pathbreaking work in British concert programmes has done much to encourage the collection and cataloguing of these documents, suggests that British musical tastes in the nineteenth century included a heterogeneous mix of primarily European compositions from a range of historical periods, but emphasizes that programming preferences were changing between 1820 and 1850 (Weber 1975, 19–20; Weber 2005). Others in the lively historiography about music in nineteenth-century England have made it clear that there was no uniform musical public in London but a welter of overlapping clusters.<sup>10</sup> Individual music lovers could participate in or attend more than one kind of music-making but they tended to cluster in groups framed by the gender and class of their participants (Weber 1975, 15). As English musicologist Christina Bashford has noted, even when two musical groups had virtually identical aims, their audiences could share very similar musical predilections and yet be "relatively separate" from each other, divided by class, gender, and occupation (Bashford 1999, 23; cf. Sachs 1991). There was no single, coherent audience for art music in nineteenth-century England.

## METHOD OF CONCERT PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

Unraveling the meaning of a programme like Mrs. Widder's is apparently simple: the researcher chases down each piece of information on the programme and

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<sup>9</sup> The author would welcome any information about the locations of Canadian concert programmes prior to 1875.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of London's sometimes mutually hostile musical publics from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, see Sachs (1991). For a successful musician, see the Strauchen (2000) biography of Giovanni Puzzi, a horn player in all the London orchestras at one period, each with a particular repertoire and audience focus. Puzzi was also a powerful London concert "fixer", whose concert programmes of the 1850s, held at the Royal College of Music, London, show the biggest opera stars of the time in programmes for private consumption. For a desperately unsuccessful musical family, see Beedell (1992).

then looks to see if any patterns emerge. But the process is fraught with fragmentary sources and layers of empirical complexity, and patterns may emerge that cut across different categories of information, like a game of three-dimensional chess. Every piece of information on the programme can open a line of research. Although many of the selections on the programme are now out of print, each was collected and assessed for difficulty, aesthetic content and lyrics. Early publication and performance histories of each work were also noted. To identify social networks, the genealogies of the performers and the named host family were tracked. Many of the Widder performers belonged to politically and commercially prominent families about whom there is a wealth of documentary evidence and existing scholarship, making it possible to flesh out the context in which the concert was planned. By tracing available scholarship and hunting for primary sources about the families of Mrs. Widder's performers, great swathes of pre-Confederation political and business history were revealed. Surprisingly, collections of primary documents from the women of two politically prominent families, the Hagermans and the Beverley Robinsons, were discovered. With notable exceptions (e.g. McKenna 1994), the papers of women from such families are an undervalued resource.

Despite the inevitable gaps in primary sources, patterns are discernible because of the high volume of information that can be generated from a single programme. Though few are available, other programmes from a similar time and from families with similar features, including occupation and class, can be compared. In one significant example (discussed below), the comparison revealed how very closely the Widder programme resembled a private London concert, as is discussed below.

The research hypothesis that drove the larger project is that the Widder concert programme was carefully constructed by educated and strategic thinkers with musical experience and skills. The research aim was to work backwards from the programme to discover the local political and social concerns that might have influenced the programming process, and accordingly many of the techniques of social history were applied in the research. For each element of the programme (repertoire, casting, and sequence), the programmer(s) had to have access to the music and to performers willing and able to perform it. The sequence had to present the amateurs successfully despite the inescapable range of ability and skill among the large number of performers. By 1890, enough Canadian amateur concert producers were sufficiently tormented by this puzzle that some acquired etiquette books advising how to create a "really taking programme" (Anon. c. 1890, 39).<sup>11</sup> Constructing these typically Victorian programmes required a considered and sometimes inspired use of available resources and prevailing cultural values. While some conclusions based on these uneven empirical sources must be expressed as probabilities, the incontrovertible evidence of cultural process is the programme itself.

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<sup>11</sup> From the Spadina Museum Collection, Culture Division, City of Toronto. My thanks to the City of Toronto Culture Division for providing access to their collection.

## STRUCTURE OF VICTORIAN CONCERT PROGRAMMES

The programming template or structure for the Widder programme is identifiably Victorian. Programming, whether done well or badly, by professional or amateur musician, is an art that adapts both the process and the templates of programming to the moment in history in which it is carried out (cf. Weber 1975, 17). In the mid-nineteenth century, as now, the choice of sequence was a critical programming device for subtly refiguring the meanings of individual works. Perhaps informed by the British eighteenth-century tradition of the pastiche opera, in which folk songs, popular ballads, Italian opera, and close-harmony glees were adapted and pulled together to serve a plot and a cast for which they had usually not originally been intended (Lindgren 1991), the *soirée musicale* as a concert form constructed new meanings out of disparate components.

As Lindgren points out for pastiche opera, programming with a variety of musical genres need not imply incoherence but simply historical differences in programming aesthetics. On close inspection, for example, the Widder programme sequence reveals thematic consistency while developing a gentle plot. In the first half of the programme, for example, sandwiching Mozart opera between a good canzonet (the Abrams) and a bad ballad (the Glover), makes aesthetic programming sense on two counts. First, this section of the programme maintains a coherent flow of yearning for a love that is beyond reach. The great tenor aria for an aristocratic male character, “Vivi tu,” is followed by the Glover ballad that enacts the drama of an ordinary young woman; both express a yearning for a better world hopelessly out of reach. The Glover complicates the “plot” by placing the experience of a young woman, rather than a heroic male aristocrat, in the spotlight. The Mozart duet that follows brings together both characters, a male aristocrat with an ordinary young woman, and continues the Glover theme of romantic tension. The political tension of “Vivi tu,” in which aristocratic honour is at stake, is also continued in the Mozart, but subtly changed: Mozart’s aristocrat compromises his own honour by succumbing to overwhelming desire that threatens both his own and his servant Susanna’s marriages. The Mozart is followed by the Abrams, which could be understood as an admonishment to give up a harmful desire for unattainable love. Abrams composed her exquisite canzonet to the lyrics,

I ought to tear thee from my heart / But cannot bear with thee to part,  
 I ought to blot thee from my mind, / And be not thus to reason blind.  
 Nor sense nor reason will avail, / And I my folly must bewail,  
 For sure ’tis madness great in me, / To ere bestow one thought on thee.  
 (Abrams c. 1800, pp. 10–11)

Wiser the Count who would take such admonition to heart, though it would cost *Figaro* its central plot!

Second, the programme tends to alternate the gender and number of performers throughout. In the sequence from “Vivi tu” to the Abrams, the Mozart duet is part of this alternation of male with female performers, and solos with duets and ensembles. These patterns of variation benefit the audience, but to

achieve them, the programmer had to juggle appropriate linkages between the gender and class of each performer, the musical genres in which they performed, and the quality of the amateur and professional performances being juxtaposed (Guiguet 2004, 29). Multiple layers of aesthetic considerations were at play in the building of this programme, some purely musical, some concerning the technical abilities of each performer, and all of it shot through with sensitive management of social identity. Weak or inexperienced performers, for example, could still shine if they were assigned short, easy selections, like the less than two-minute “Come t’adoro” assigned to Miss H. Scott, or buried in close harmonies that disguised individual voices, like the glees. The period aesthetics of Victorian private programme construction balanced the social and performance conventions of trans-Atlantic culture with a delicate eye to thematic coherence and the strengths and weaknesses of local amateur and professional musicians. Considerations of musical style and quality were only part of this programming process.

#### “CRUDEL! PERCHE FINORA” ON THE WIDDER PROGRAMME

Topical issues of interest to local communities also influenced programmers, performers, and audiences. The Widder programme was created during a time of extraordinary political upheaval when Mr. Widder, the evening’s host, was in a hot public spotlight because of the political implications of his business plans. The semi-public nature of his wife’s private concert could significantly have affected his public reputation. This programme thus had to stay within the bounds of propriety and yet provide novelty, charm and aesthetic delight. Private musical life of mid-nineteenth-century Canada was an important medium of political and social action.

Mrs. Widder’s programme is an example of strategic socializing at its finest and was designed to help her husband, Frederick Widder, forward a business plan for which he needed the support of the local British Governor. Mrs. Widder had learned the skills of such strategic entertainments in London’s high society before she emigrated in 1839 (Davidoff 1973; Booth Martin 1978, 101) and she applied them with masterful knowledge of the social and political networks in 1844 Toronto. “Crudel! perchè finora” supported the Widder family’s goals in three ways: the music was available and technically accessible to Toronto amateurs; it was part of a programme whose repertoire and casting conventions reeked of the London culture familiar to the local British governing elite; and the republican overtones of *The Marriage of Figaro* may have been bait to lure some Toronto political Reformers into Frederick Widder’s circle.

To achieve its social and political goals, the Widder soirée musicale had to be a satisfying musical experience. Competitive socialising in 1840s Toronto meant that desirable guests could choose their entertainments, inspiring hosts to offer the best they could muster. Since most of the performers on the Widder programme were amateurs, it was important that they perform material they could master. Although no guest list has yet been found, given Victorian gender norms, the Widder audience probably included the fathers or husbands of all

the women who performed. Chief Justice Christopher Hagerman, Miss Mary Jane Hagerman's father, and William Henry Boulton, Miss Clara Boulton's father, for example, were powerful political figures from families of long-standing political and social prominence in Canada West.

Mrs. Widder's singing abilities are unknown, but the vocal range of her selections on this programme suggest that the Mozart duet may have appealed in part because vocally it is not unduly taxing. The duet is primarily a clever acting piece in which Susanna, a servant girl, is setting a trap for her lascivious boss, the Count, by pretending to agree to an adulterous meeting with him. The comedy arises from Susanna being so flustered by lying and by pretending to be sexually available, that she continually says the wrong thing. Susanna's music here gives amateurs like Mrs. Widder a chance to demonstrate musical and dramatic skills without demanding exceptional vocal technique.

The music of the duet was probably readily available in Toronto through Mr. Humphreys. *Figaro* is excellent repertoire for a music training school because it provides juicy roles for many singers. The RAM produced *Figaro* in 1830, shortly before Humphreys became a student there (Rudman 2001, 9; Royal Academy of Music Archive 1830). Given institutional memory, with professors teaching the music they knew and the music doubtless available in the library during all of Humphreys' tenure at the RAM, "Crudel! perchè finora" may appear on Mrs. Widder's programme because Mr. Humphreys knew it from London, had a copy, and taught it to Mrs. Widder. Humphreys may even have been Mrs. Widder's own singing teacher, since a letter written the week before mentions the upcoming Widder concert and remarks that "James [Dodsley Humphreys] ... is getting all the snobs for pupils."<sup>12</sup> He was certainly teaching Miss Hagerman, one of the Widder amateurs. A letter she wrote to him says, "it is to you I owe my first instruction in the vocal art" (Rudman 2001, 23–4).

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<sup>12</sup> Harrison to Foster, Toronto, 5 Mar. 1844.

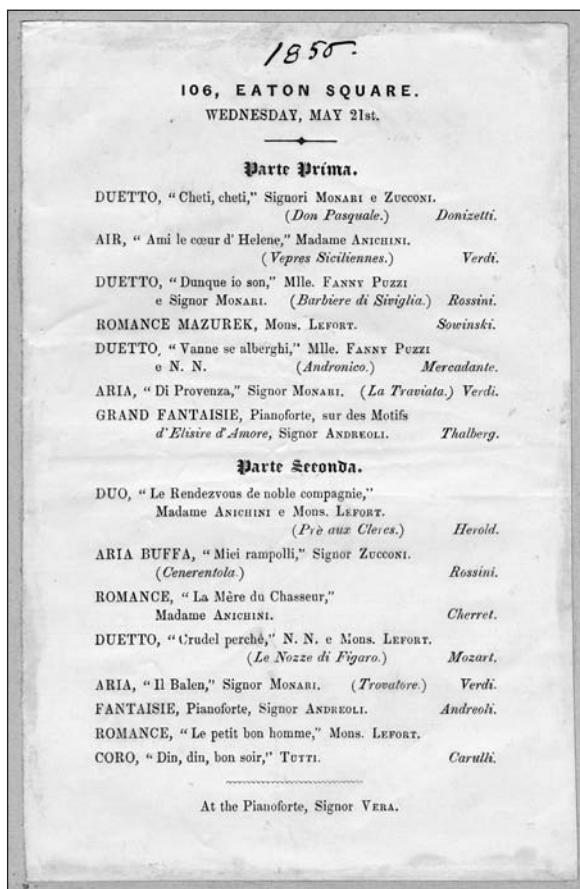


Figure 3. 106 Eaton Square 1856 Programme (GB-LRCM CPH/Puzzi Album, copyright Royal College of Music, London, 2007).<sup>13</sup>

Although this delicious slice of Mozart was available to amateurs who could readily sing it and was probably known to Toronto's leading voice teacher at the time, it was a problematic piece for a respectable, middle-class woman within the British Empire to perform at this time. Mrs. Widder had emigrated from London five years before, and in the colonial world of 1840s Toronto, the circles of power in Toronto were heavily anglophile, if not indeed British by birth.

<sup>13</sup> Many more programmes from this period have doubtless either not survived or were beyond the scope of this research, but the Royal College of Music (RCM hereafter) collections are extensive, and all of its holdings from 1830 to 1865 were reviewed for this project, as were some of those held at the British Library. Different sets of performing artists are represented in these collections, but the repertoire range was similar throughout, and, in all of the programmes reviewed, "Crudel! perchè finora" sung by named amateurs is absent. These differences in artists suggest that the absence of this duet is representative of the period. Completeness of such a search must be forever elusive, although more information may eventually be accessible. For a London programme database project, see Bashford, Cowgill, and McVeigh, 2002. My grateful thanks to Paul Collen, Curatorial Assistant, Centre for Performance History, RCM, for help with the RCM collection.

Much travelling back and forth across the Atlantic occurred in this period, so for Canadian-born members of the local ruling classes like the Hagermans and Boultons, exposure to soirées musicales as well as to the public professional performances of opera was likely a common place.<sup>14</sup> Working musicians also travelled repeatedly. For example, during the brief period when he lived in Toronto, Henry Haycraft, Mr. Humphreys' former RAM colleague, wrote and published several gently lyrical songs dedicated "to his fellow Academician and friend, J. Dodsley Humphreys Esq." London musical training must have been considered appealing to local music buyers, since Haycraft identified himself on this and his other Toronto songs as "Associate of the Royal Academy of Music London" (Haycraft 1856a). In 1844, London culture was still a profound influence in Canada West.

"Crudel! perchè finora" very seldom appears on extant London private concert programmes. Of several hundred programmes collected from London, Norfolk, and East Yorkshire for this project, the only example of a private concert with an amateur woman singing Susanna in this duet is an 1856 programme planned for the fashionable West End of London.

Here, the amateur soprano was listed only as "N. N."—or "no name."<sup>15</sup> For a respectable middle-class women in this period, to print her name as the performer of a servant engaged in sexually titillating her master was unorthodox at best, both socially and politically. The scene depends, after all, on Susanna being explicitly sexually attractive and in grave moral danger. Politically, Susanna intends to undermine the power of a male aristocrat to exercise certain absolutist rights, implicitly demonstrating that he is not her moral superior and is not even in control of his own domestic situation. While sexual power over servants was not at public issue in the 1840s, open contention between conservative and reform views about the heritability of political and social power was still often violently under way in both Britain and colonial Canada, making this a politically sensitive selection. Mrs. Widder must have had compelling reasons for putting her name so frankly beside it on the programme.

Performing the repertoire was different from memorializing it in print, for a printed programme lived beyond its ephemeral use as a guide to a concert, hence the sensitivity about printing a name in association with awkward repertoire. The function of a programme as a memorial document is obvious in the collections of artists' own papers. The Widder programme, for example, was found in Mr. Humphreys' family papers, perhaps because these private concerts were important features in professional careers.

## PROGRAMMING THE EVENT

The actual programming of such events was, on most occasions, a collaboration between the host and a professional musician. Artists held, or were summoned

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<sup>14</sup> For a European trip by one of the Widder daughters, see Johnson (1970, 230), citing Ryerson (1883, pp. 366–7).

<sup>15</sup> My thanks to Oliver Davies of the RCM for this insight. The 1856 programme is held at the RCM, Centre for Performance History, Concert Programme Collection, Puzzi Album.

to, repeated meetings with clients to discuss programmes. Such clients were not particularly shy about their demands, as this 1849 letter from Lord Cawdor, a prospective private concert host, suggests:

With regard to the second part you will not I hope think me difficult or troublesome if I propose to make considerable alterations in it. Very few of the things proffered are known to me but they do not seem to be of the class and character of music which I should prefer. I do not know Mr. Lockey's song and should very much wish that instead of the ballad which follows it Miss Birch<sup>16</sup> would sing something that would give us the opportunity of hearing the brilliancy of execution in which she so much excels that Greatorex<sup>17</sup> used to call an aria d'agilita. It would very much relieve and enliven that part of the concert and there must be many such with which she is well acquainted. I should also like very much to change the Milkmaid for something else ... When the lads of the village—Oh Lord have mercy upon me Pergolesi or Arne's song When forced from dear Hebe to go<sup>18</sup> are things which occur to me as well known to you and I dare say that there are others. Mercadante's duet I am not acquainted with—would it not be preferable to conclude with the Hymn in Mosé [sic] in Egitto “dal tuo stellato Soglio” which would make a good finale. I pray consider these things and I will come over on one of the days on which you will be at (*illegible*) and settle the programme finally ...<sup>19</sup>

From the musician's perspective, this is a stomach-clenching combination of precision and vagueness. Did Lord Cawdor intend to hear all of the works he named? What would the musician reveal about his own taste and personal values if he did not offer precisely the “aria d'agilita” that Lord Cawdor had in mind but perhaps could not remember by name? Note that the musician's attempt to introduce a Mercadante duet fails because the client does not know it: so much for the musicians who had already learned it and for the aesthetic purpose it was to have served on the programme. During the promised discussion with Lord Cawdor, the musician would have had to produce a steady stream of alternatives for each line in the programme until his client was satisfied.

Here is the operation of audience reception and preference at work, shaping the repertoire of specific artists and of whole programmes. Whether or

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<sup>16</sup> Charlotte Ann Birch (1815–1901) probably knew James Dodsley Humphreys, since they were both at the RAM in the same period. Long a soprano soloist with the Sacred Harmonic Society, she performed in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 1847, with the composer conducting (Anon. 1901, 195; Cummings 1897, 759). Charles Lockey (1820–1902) was the first tenor soloist in *Elijah* in 1846 (Anon. 1902, 28–9).

<sup>17</sup> From 1793 to 1830, William Greatorex conducted the Concert of Ancient Music. The oft-repeated repertoire of this organization was “the great works of earlier composers” that were at least twenty years old, and emphasized Handel, the Italian Baroque, and English glee composers. Attendance was by subscription only, and “limited to the highest levels of society” (Sachs 1991, 208).

<sup>18</sup> “When forced from dear Hebe to go” is among the music brought to colonial Canada by the Hammett Pinhey family, of Horaceville at Pinhey's Point heritage site, near Ottawa, Ontario. The rare volume held in the collection of the Pinhey's Point Foundation is Hyde vol. 1 [ca. 1798]. My thanks to Bruce Elliott and Margot Reid for kindly providing access to the Pinhey's Point collection.

<sup>19</sup> RAM Archives, McCann Collection, file 2005.1377, Stackpole Court, Pembrokeshire, Aug. 13, 1849, Lord Cawdor to unknown musician. My thanks to Janet Snowman, Collections Registrar, RAM, for her generous research help.



not the host performed, producing a private concert influenced the repertoire and programming habits of any professional musicians involved. Although no such correspondence about the Widder programming process seems to have survived, it was probably the professional musician, Humphreys, who hunted out the specific musical selections, following the directions of Mrs. Widder about casting the socially desired performers in music appropriate to their abilities while maintaining the aesthetic coherence of the whole (Guiguet 2004, Chapters 2, 3).

Second, the Widder programme was redolent of high society private concerts in London, England. Figure 4 is the programme of Mrs. Sandeman's 1849 London soirée musicale, which shows the daughter of a wealthy port wine merchant family as an amateur musician performing in various genres, including piano solos, vocal solos and duets, with well known professional performers.

Mrs. Sandeman's Soirée Musicale, at her residence, 15, Hyde Park Gardens, on Friday Evening, June 8, 1849.		
Under the direction of Signor Ferrari. Mr. W. Sterndale Bennett will preside at the Pianoforte.		
<b>Part I</b>		
Duo	Violin and piano, <i>Airs from Oberon</i> – <i>Miss Helen Sandeman and M. le Marquis de Chardonnay</i>	Blagrove & Benedict
Trio	“Ti prego,” – <i>Madame Ferrari, Miss Sandeman and Signor Gallini</i>	Curschman
Scena	“Ecco il Pegno,” – <i>Signor Ferrari</i>	Donizetti
Lieder ohne worte	– Pianoforte – <i>Miss Helen Sandeman</i>	Mendelssohn Bartholdy
Aria	– “Or la Sull’ Onda,” – <i>Miss Sandeman</i>	Mercadante
Duo	– “I Muletieri,” – <i>Made. and Signor Ferrari</i>	Masini
Fantasia on <i>Airs from “Lucia” Concertina</i> , – <i>Signor Giulio Regondi</i>		G. Regondi
Glee	– “Blow gentle Gales,” – <i>Madame Ferrari, Miss Sandeman, and Signor Ferrari</i>	Bishop
<b>Part II</b>		
Quartett	– “Ecco quel fiero Istante,” – <i>Made. Ferrari, Miss Sandeman, and Signori Gallini and Ferrari</i>	Costa
Piano Forte	– Solo – <i>Mr. W. Sterndale Bennett</i>	Bennett
Scena	– “Come per me Sereno,” – <i>Madame Ferrari</i>	Bellini
Notturmo and Rondo Russe	– <i>Concertina</i> – <i>Signor G. Regondi</i>	G. Regondi & De Beriot
Duo	– “Oh di qual Onta,” – <i>Miss Sandeman and Signor Ferrari</i>	Verdi
Morceau de Concert	– From “ <i>Lucrezia Borgia</i> ,” <i>Violini</i> – <i>M. le Marquis de Chardonnay</i>	Chardonnay
Song	– “The Wanderer,” – <i>Miss Sandeman</i>	Schubert
Quartett	– “Over the dark Blue Waters,” – <i>Madame Ferrari, Miss Sandeman, and Signori Gallini and Ferrari</i>	Carl Von Weber

Figure 4. 1849 Sandeman Programme (GB-Lbl, shelfmark 1572/596).

The Sandeman and Widder programmes are markedly similar. In each case, locally prominent professionals sang with amateurs. The Ferraris were established opera singers at the Royal Italian Opera at Covent Garden. William Sterndale Bennett was then a prominent pianist, composer, and professor at the Royal Academy of Music, and taught Miss Sandeman in this period, just as

Humphreys taught Miss Hagerman.<sup>20</sup> Both the Sandeman and Widder concerts use the same mix of musical genres and some of the same composers: Bishop, Donizetti, Bellini, and Weber. The Widder programme fits the British mold, albeit with a notable difference: there is no Mozart at the Sandemans' concert.

The social historian of English music William Weber suggests that well into the 1840s London high society (to whose company rising merchants like the Sandemans often aspired) attended Italian opera and programmed it in their private concerts virtually to the exclusion of German or English (Weber 1975, 19–20). During the 1840s, however, musical tastes changed: public concert programming in London was moved gradually away from Italian to German opera and specifically to Mozart. By 1847, for example, a programme by Louise Dulcken (see Figure 5) shows Mozart opera in the first half, just as it was in the Widder programme of 1844.

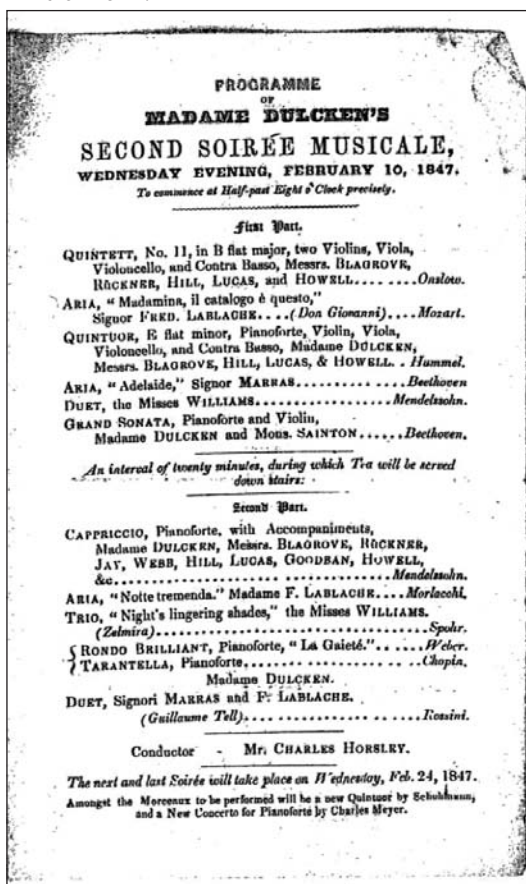


Figure 5. 1847 Dulcken Programme (courtesy of the Royal College of Music).

<sup>20</sup> Collection of Barry Sterndale Bennett: William Sterndale Bennett, Teaching Diaries, 1849, A3. My grateful thanks go to Mr. Barry Sterndale Bennett for his kindness in providing access to these diaries.

Weber suggests that the first half of this concert was “self-consciously serious, with no Italian composer represented ... [and] ... the second half is lighter” because it contains Italian opera excerpts and salon pieces.<sup>21</sup> It may be that Mrs. Widder was adding Mozart simply to keep in step with changing musical fashions in London.

Mrs. Widder might also have added Mozart to her programme to honour the Widder family connections in London’s mercantile district called “The City.” There were many layers of difference and contestation in class and musical canon formation during the period. Different segments of London “high society” seem to have clustered in different geographic districts: the “West End”, where Eaton Square and Hyde Park Gardens are found, was associated with the aristocracy, and “The City” with wealthy merchants. The contemporary canon of standard performance repertoire was being formed in this period, but it was still highly contested, socially as well as musically. English Mozart specialist Rachel Cowgill suggests that “distinct repertoires were championed by West End and City factions, and it was the introduction of Mozart’s operas in particular that triggered a sparring for authority in matters of musical taste” (Cowgill 2000, 42). The merchant community of London’s “City” district was a prime mover in establishing Mozart operas in the aristocratically dominated theatres of the “West End” of London (ibid.). As wealthy merchants, the Widders may have experienced Mozart opera excerpts through their connections in the “City.”

Finally, the intrigues of Upper Canadian politics may have prompted the use of Mozart’s duet. Mrs. Widder may have been relying on a purely political connotation to *Figaro*, an opera that was always politically controversial. The de Beaumarchais play on which it was based had been banned as politically subversive in Vienna, and even with considerable rewriting of the libretto, Mozart had trouble getting the court theater to allow the first performance in 1786 (Murray 1991, 30). *Figaro* was still controversial in London in the 1830s. In the discourse of musical life in Britain that preceded the 1832 Reform Act, which expanded the electoral franchise in the face of intense opposition from landed gentry, aristocracy, and the established Anglican Church, the musical preferences of audiences were often associated with political views. Musicologist Jennifer Hall-Witt uses an array of published music criticism and private papers from 1830s London to suggest that concert audiences were described in “language that resonated with the perceived achievements of the [1832] Reform Act”—critical of the aristocracy and cheering the virtues of the non-aristocratic middle classes (Hall-Witt 2000, 131).

The titled and aristocratic audiences who favoured Italian opera and avoided Mozart were often painted as “morally bankrupt, overly exclusive” (Ibid., 127). By contrast, Hall-Witt suggests that audiences who were “particularly likely to go to a Mozart Opera” in this period were usually non-titled, middle-class professional people. These audiences took music more seriously as an aesthetic and

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<sup>21</sup> A duet from Louis Spohr’s opera, *Azor and Zemira*, appears in the second half of both the Widder 1844 and Dulcken 1847 programmes, further evidence of the similarities between form and content in programmes from both Toronto and London.

intellectual pursuit in its own right, and were among those who claimed the right to political power on the basis of merit rather than inherited title. Putting Mozart on a London concert programme could be a political issue.

### COLONIAL CANADIAN POLITICS

This brings the discussion back to the Widder concert, held in a time of political uproar in the colonial Canadas over the right to vote for accountable government. In late 1843, the Baldwin-Lafontaine Executive Council had resigned to protest the reluctance of British Governor Metcalfe to implement accountable government. An urgent priority of the British colonial government at the time of the Widder musicale was to make peace among opposing political factions in the Canadian colonies. Only four days before the Widder soirée musicale, the newspapers had carried another attack by political Reformers on the British Governor, signed by none other than the father of pianist Miss Clara Boulton, William Henry Boulton.<sup>22</sup> In opposition to Reformers stood old guard Tories like Miss Hagerman's father, who thought accountability to the electorate was nothing more than mob rule. One of the hottest issues dividing these two in 1844 was the fate of certain Crown Lands, the Clergy Reserves (Metcalf 1980, 52). The Reformers, like William Henry Boulton, wanted to sell the Clergy Reserves and apply the money to secular, government-supported education. Part of their purpose was to disestablish the Anglican Church from political governance. Churchmen like Bishop John Strachan and political Tories like Hagerman wanted to retain the Church as part of political governance and to continue to support it with the Clergy Reserves revenue.

At the time of the soirée, Mr. Widder was publicly and universally attacked for suggesting these politically sensitive Crown lands be developed for private profit, this most memorably by Anglican Bishop John Strachan, whose printed leaflet is a triumph of vituperation against Frederick Widder personally and against his land development corporation (Aliquis 1845). Widder was trying to take advantage of the political chaos of 1843–1844 to sequester Crown lands from government jurisdiction. In effect, he was bidding to acquire private, commercial control of significant aspects of government, since private sector development of those lands meant a further step in disestablishing the Anglican church from political governance, as well as installing infrastructure (roads) and determining a portion of immigration policy by attracting new settlers—issues of state-wide impact (Widder 1855). In March 1844, Widder was still trying to succeed by creating all the necessary alliances, thus persuading Governor Metcalfe that he, Widder, could assist the colonial government in making peace among the opposing political factions that had so splintered the colonial government. That is, he had to convince these bitterly opposed political foes to trust him as a civilised and moral manager of all the civic interests invested in those

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<sup>22</sup> *The Banner*, 8 Mar. 1844, p. 39. The Reform Association of Canada was formed February 1844, by a Dr. Scott, George Brown, the Baldwins, and others and announced its Constitution as designed “to forward the objects” of responsible Government against the “practical renunciation” of it by Governor Metcalfe (Metcalf 1980).

lands. Because significant power still rested in imperial hands, Widder had to demonstrate his worthiness to the local imperial representative, the Governor. Strategic socialising by means of a *soirée musicale* strongly reminiscent of London high society was one of many approaches Widder used. It seems likely that recognizing such familiar, British high culture in a colonial outpost would, almost unconsciously, have encouraged the confidence of British colonial administrators in Widder and his family as loyal and highly cultivated Britons.

Mrs. Widder's programming can perhaps be most clearly understood as a strategy to draw political opponents into the same drawing-room to applaud the musical accomplishments of each other's families. The printed programme could be sent to those who did not attend, including the Governor or powerful contacts resident in England, as documentary evidence that Mr. Widder was a force of English culture in the colonies. The names of some amateur performers were also witness that Mr. Widder's wife had brought together in literal harmony members of the opposing sides, like the fathers of Miss Boulton and Miss Hagerman. The two men were on opposite sides of the political divide, and had hated each other personally for decades. Miss Hagerman's father once described Miss Boulton's father as "the reptile from York" (Trent University Archives 1833).

Did both men attend? We do not know, but until the concert started, neither did Mrs. Widder. While Toronto conservatives and reformers would be equally interested in attending a good private concert, conservative sensibilities would have been supported by the conservative social overtones of glees (Guiguet 2004, 59–60), and the many references to absolute monarchy or oligarchy among the other operatic selections, most of which support governance by unelected, aristocratic, and blameless male heroes. Mrs. Widder may well have been laying extra bait for the Reformers with this duet. She herself sang *Susanna*, perhaps to glue the Widder name to an excerpt that is a stark example of republicanism: aristocratic vice being opposed by a meritorious servant girl. The stakes for the evening were high enough that this respectable matron was willing to identify herself on the printed page as a personification of *Susanna*.

## CONCLUSIONS

The *soirée musicale* was a programme form that embedded a conservative view of organic human hierarchy in its very structure of repertoire selection and casting. The presence of Mozart's "*Crudel! perchè finora*" in such a programme thus glitters like a Molotov cocktail perched on a drawing-room table, an oddity that might attract a musically-experienced eye. It sends conflicting messages that sound a little like *Susanna* saying yes and no to the same improper suggestion by the Count in the duet. "*Crudel! perchè finora*" may be a clue that Mrs. Widder was trying to do the impossible: create a programme that was both politically conservative and politically reform. She may have failed to arrive at this epistemological Atlantis, but the concert programme was as foolproof a map as possible for an excellent musical and social experience for every person in the

room. Mr. Widder's great project of capturing those Clergy Reserves eventually failed, but not because Mrs. Widder had stunted in her programming art.

Mrs. Widder's use of opera in her Toronto concert is an example of amateur performance as audience reception and at the same time addresses cultural exchange between colonial Canada West and the metropolitan centre of Empire, London. In her private concert, as in other such events, formal and serious in social and aesthetic intention, audience members became performers and programmers who expressed their understanding of the music they heard in public by constructing a pastiche programme of their own.

To account for the presence of "Crudel! perchè finora" on an 1844 programme in a wealthy Toronto drawing-room, the social and political meanings of musical performance are inescapable. Mozart's magical music did not create meaning by itself. Meaning depended instead on the performers, their audiences, and their reasons for making music together. The musical culture of Empire stretched across the Atlantic to the Widder home, where Elizabeth Widder carefully tailored her programme to entice a mid-Victorian Toronto audience to listen to Mozart opera with a special curiosity.

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#### ABSTRACT

Why was Mozart's duet, "Crudel! perché finora" (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, III (i)) among the operatic excerpts sung by amateur and professional musicians at Mrs. Widder's private Toronto soirée musicale? Typically Victorian, the formal programme for this musical party mixed opera with glees, popular ballads, and instrumental music, but the Mozart duet is rarely found on such programmes. The British hostess may have relied on her socially prominent audience in colonial Canada to recognize that her concert echoed the programming practices of London (England), as she positioned the concert to support her husband's politically-sensitive land development plans. This example of trans-Atlantic culture suggests that Victorian amateur concert programmes are useful sources for audience reception history.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Quelle est la raison pour laquelle le duo de Mozart « Crudel! perché finora » (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, III (i)) était-il au programme des divers airs d'opéra interprétés par des musiciens amateurs et professionnels à la soirée musicale privée de Mme Widder à Toronto? Typiquement victorien, le programme formel de cette soirée mélangeait opéra et chant choral, ballades populaires et musique instrumentale. Cependant, le duo de Mozart est

rarement entendu lors de tels programmes. L'hôtesse britannique a peut-être compté sur son auditoire de haut rang dans la colonie canadienne afin de reconnaître les vertus de son programme reflétant les pratiques de la capitale londonienne et de promouvoir du même coup les visées—politiquement délicates—, en développement foncier de son mari. Cet exemple de culture trans-Atlantique suggère que les programmes de concert amateur victoriens peuvent constituer des sources utiles dans le cadre de l'histoire des pratiques de réception des auditoires.