

## SLAVIC STUDIES AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: A LOOK BACK TO THE LATE 1940S

Seventy years ago, on 1 July 1949, the University of Toronto set up a Department of Slavic Studies within the Faculty of Arts, with the help of a substantial foundational grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Dr. Sidney Smith, President of the University, stressed the political importance of this new program of study. Noting Canada's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, Smith hoped that "good will and peace" would be furthered by Slavic Studies, but also cautioned, that "in the awful event of hostilities between the Western Powers and the Soviet Bloc, qualified experts in the field of Slavic Studies will be of unique value."

Smith appointed Bertram Ernest Shore, a Canadian citizen, who had undertaken graduate studies in Slavic and East European languages at Harvard and Columbia University, to head the Department. Shore had joined the University of Toronto as a lecturer two years earlier and served on the Committee on Russian Studies. In its final report, the Committee recommended that the focus of study shift from a Russo-centric approach to a comprehensive study of all Slavic cultures. Among the twelve points submitted by the Committee for why the University of Toronto was uniquely suited for the establishment of Slavic Studies was the University's library. The existing Slavic collection was small at that time, yet represented the largest collection of such material in Canada.

How large was the collection? In January 1947, when Shore joined the University, the Slavic and East European collection very broadly defined—titles in western European languages about East-Central Europe and



Russia in all disciplines, translations of Polish and Russian writers into English, French, or German, and books in Slavic vernacular languages—numbered about 1,700 volumes. Of this total, only two-hundred titles were in Eastern European languages.

The responsibility of building the University's library collection fell upon the chairs of academic departments from the 1890s until the creation of the Library's centralized Book Selection Department in 1965. This meant that in addition to Shore's responsibilities for creating a Slavic Studies program, and teaching Russian history and language courses, he needed to build a library collection to support the University's ambitious plans not only to offer Russian-language instruction to undergraduates but also to support graduate study on Russian and Eastern European geography, history, economics, and literature.

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Left: Prof. Bertram Ernest Shore, first head of the Department of Slavic Studies at the University of Toronto; middle: Dr. Maria A. Batanoff who sold her family's collection of some 200 plus Russian books to the University Library; and right: Dr. Boris P. Batanoff, her husband.

Professor Shore took up this challenge with forthrightness and considerable dedication. In July 1947, just six months into his appointment, Shore wrote to the University Librarian, W. Stewart Wallace:

*You, of course, are well aware of how very few Slavic books the University possessed up until the recent past, but may I briefly review some facts in the present circumstances. The subject of Russian, and to a less extent the eight other Slavic languages, is here to stay. Whether it is to be for peace or war, we have got to take close cognizance of a country of two-hundred million people that contiguously covers a quarter of the earth's surface, that possesses a cultural tradition a thousand years old, and that shares with the English-speaking world the greatest potentiality for the future of civilization. These may seem rather strong terms to be using in the present context, but I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THE FACT THAT ON A SUBJECT OF SUCH IMPORTANCE THE LIBRARY POSSESSES NEXT TO NOTHING. [emphasis added—K.K.]*

Shore appealed to Wallace to formulate a strong policy for Slavic-language acquisitions and to pursue “as large an appropriation” that could possibly be arranged for this purpose. The Library needed to build up not only its holdings of new imprints but also to fill lacunae in the standard and classic works

that are fundamental to the study of Slavic cultures. To fail to adequately address and finance the Slavic collection would be “fatal to this new project as a whole and the project [of Slavic studies] as a whole is vitally bound up with the purposes the University is dedicated to serve.”

The topmost levels of the University heeded the importance of the project. President Smith invited the historian Sergius Yakobson (brother of the linguist Roman Jakobson), who was working at the Library of Congress as a full-time consultant, to visit Toronto and to advise the (then) Committee on Russian Studies, on ways to build up the Slavic collection and how to procure materials for the Library. Shore followed up on these recommendations and began to order older imprints from the New York-based Russian booksellers Israel Perlstein, Mrs. K. N. (Ekaterina Nikanorovna) Rosen, Dr. George Gustav Telberg, and Hans P. Kraus, and new titles from the Soviet book agents Four Continent Book Corporation, the Russian American Book Agency “Vek,” and Progress Books of Toronto.

The University Library also negotiated to acquire a significant private collection in early 1947. With a referral from Professor Arthur P. Coleman of Columbia University, the University of Toronto purchased the considerable library of Russian literature from the Batanoff family of Saskatoon.

The Batanoff family amassed the books during their years in exile in China and as immigrants in Canada. Boris P. Batanoff and Maria A. (née Vozdvijenska) were both physicians. Boris Batanoff was born in Simbirsk (now Ulianovsk) Russia in 1890. He completed his medical studies at the University of Kazan in 1914, after which he served as an army-surgeon on the Russo-Turkish front. Returning to Simbirsk in 1917, he married Maria the following year. She was a graduate of the women's medical college of the University of Petrograd (St. Petersburg). When Simbirsk fell to the Red Army in 1918, the couple retreated with a trainload of wounded soldiers to Ufa, Siberia. Boris Batanoff worked as a surgeon in Admiral Kolchak's White Army. He served in its cavalry division and traveled throughout Siberia, before joining his wife in 1919 in Chita, Siberia, a town north of the Russian-Manchurian border in the Transbaikal region, to work with her on the Red Cross train. They remained there until 1922, when they joined the masses of people who had spent the civil war in Siberia and who came across the border into China with the defeated and retreating White Armies. Dr. Boris Batanoff opened a medical office in Tianjin.

The Batanoffs, with two children, sailed from Hong Kong to Vancouver in late 1925. They homesteaded in northern Saskatchewan for two years, before settling in Blaine Lake where Boris practiced medicine. Both Boris and Maria were involved deeply in war refugee work and other humanitarian activities. After Boris Batanoff died



**ALATAS**  
SOUTHURY, CONN.  
U. S. A.



in 1945, Maria joined her two daughters who were undertaking medical studies at the University of Toronto.

On the recommendation of Professor Shore, the University Library bid \$150 for the Batanoff collection, deeming the amount sufficient for a collection that held titles not "very necessary to a university," some that would gradually "be outdated," and others that necessitated the expense of binding due to their paper covers. For this low price, the Library received from Dr. Maria Batanoff over 200 volumes. The collection comprised imprints issued in the immediate post-revolutionary period by Russian publishers in the émigré centres of Berlin (Ivan P. Ladyzhnikov, Petropolis, Slovo), Paris (Russkaia zemlia), Riga (Maksym M. Didkovskii, David Gliksman), and New York (Russkoe literaturnoe izd-vo), as well as in Harbin (Mikhail V. Zaitsev) and Tianjin (A. I. Serebrennikov), China. Among the publishers was also Alatas, an initiative of the writer Georgii Grebenshchikov, who ran the press from an artists' colony he founded in Southbury, Connecticut. The Batanoff collection has a discernible Tolstoyan focus. Among the most represented authors were Leo Tolstoy and his followers, Ivan Nazhivin and Grebenshchikov. The purchased volumes also included editions of works by Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Vladimir Korolenko, Anton Chekhov, Nikolai Rubakin, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Ivan Bunin, Leonid Andreyev, among other Russian writers, as well as translations of works by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark

## BRUTALLY ORNAMENTAL: MOSAICS OF LATE SOVIET MODERNISM, 1955-1989

FIGURE 1



Twain, and the American political reform economist, Henry George.

The Batanoff collection, the titles cataloged separately, when considered as a whole, provides insights into Russian émigré book publishing and distribution in the post-revolutionary period. This material, together with the concerted early collection development efforts carried out by Professor Shore, in cooperation with the University Library, offers us an historical understanding of how the nucleus of the Slavic and East European library collection was formed and how much it has grown, from “next to nothing” to being one of great research significance, holding over half a million titles today.

Ksenya Kiebusinski

The term *brutalism* is often used to describe an architectural trend that spread globally across Western Europe, Great Britain, Australia, Japan, USA, Canada, and other countries from approximately the mid-1950s to the late 1970s. Brutalist buildings, like Roberts Library, usually leave their structural elements and construction materials (typically concrete) exposed. The style is associated with civic architecture of welfare states, commissioned by institutions like governments, municipalities, hospitals, universities, and libraries. As graphic designer Peter Chadwick summarized, “The architects who favoured it loved the material’s ‘honesty’, the sculptural opportunities, the uncompromising modernity as well as the socially progressive intentions that lay behind the style in a climate of economic decline, political unrest and, in Europe, the long decades of post-war reconstruction.” (*This Brutal World*, 2016, p. 6) Critics of the style, however, link its monumentality and perceived monotony to urban decline and social isolation.

Brutalist buildings can also be found in countries of the former Socialist Bloc in East and Central Europe, in the Baltic countries, and Central Asia. A PJRC exhibition, “The Architecture of Late Socialism in East and Central Europe, 1955-1980,” featured a range of examples from former Soviet Republics and Socialist countries to demonstrate the re-

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gional diversity of expression by late modernist architects. Urban historians have only recently begun to address the architectural developments that occurred there during a period stretching from the post-war urban reconstruction of the 1950s to the postmodernism of the 1980s. A broader term, *Soviet modernism*, was introduced by Soviet architect Felix Novikov to describe architectural design during the last 30 years of the Soviet Union. Scholars argue that, despite the Cold War, there was considerable communication via research institutions, trade publications, and professional conferences between architects from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Each side was aware of the architectural developments of the other side.

Not unlike brutalist architecture in the West, Soviet modernist architecture was publicly financed and served the needs of housing, education, and culture. In 1954, a year before Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's cult of personality, he condemned the monumental architectural style of *Socialist realism*. In a historic speech to the All-Union Congress of Soviet Builders and Architects, Khrushchev denounced *excesses (izlishestva)* in architecture, demanding a radical

break with *superfluous*, historicist ornament. Khrushchev's denouncement echoes another famous proclamation made in 1910 by modernist architect Adolf Loos in his lecture "Ornament and Crime." He argued against the decorative designs of Art Nouveau. His position became fundamental for the modernist Bauhaus movement of the 1920s. In place of decorations, Khrushchev called for standardized planning and industrial construction: henceforth architects must build "quickly, soundly and economically," using prefabricated modules and contemporary building techniques. (Khrushchev, 1954, as cited in Reid, "Khrushchev Modern," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 47(1/2), 2006, p. 232-233)

The aesthetic of Socialist realism did not disappear entirely, and many buildings continued to be designed in this manner. Neither was ornament purged entirely from the architecture of Soviet modernism. Ornamentation re-emerged in the form of mosaic designs that adorned the interiors and exteriors of functionalist buildings, monuments, and public spaces. The works of Georgian sculptor and artist Zurab Tsereteli are among some of the largest monumental creations involving mosaics and stained glass. One of

FIGURE 2



his best-known works embellishes the Trade Unions Palace of Culture in Tbilisi, Georgia. The mosaics of intense and vivid colour cover an area of 550 square metres. Created between 1970 and 1971, the mosaics combine animalistic shapes, folkloric designs, and abstract imagery. (FIGURE 1)

Displaying a great variety of styles and motifs, mosaics as public art can be found everywhere, including the walls of apartment buildings, schools, hospitals—even bus stops. As part of the everyday urban landscape, they often go unnoticed by local residents, raising questions about their artistic merit and need for their preservation.

In recent years, several photographic projects have tried to document these creations, which in many post-Soviet countries are often found in a state of neglect. A photographic project by Yevgen Nikiforov, *Decommunized: Ukrainian Soviet Mosaic* (2017), documents examples of Soviet monumental art all over Ukraine. It contains about 200 photographs, some commissioned from photographers in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Krasnodon (Sorokine), places the author was una-

ble to visit. Maria Mitryk, like many Ukrainian artists, used *smalto*, a mixture of glass mosaic pieces with vivid colour to decorate the Geologists' Palace of Culture in Berehove, Ukraine. (FIGURE 2)

A photographic project by Canadian-born photographer Christopher Herwig attests to the variety of styles and decoration in everyday architecture of the former Soviet Union, such as bus stops and shelters. Found throughout the former Soviet Union, these structures served not only as functional but also as social spaces. A comprehensive system of public transportation necessitated the construction of such structures even in the most remote corners of the country. Designed by students of architecture, as well as established artists, and financed by the state, these unique creations represent a heterogeneity of styles, often incorporating local materials and motives, as does this bus stop in Pitsunda, Abkhazia. (Figure 3)

All of the books featured in the exhibition are available at the University of Toronto Libraries.

Natallia Barykina



FIGURE 3

## DOSTOYEVSKY'S WORKS IN THE DELUXE PARISIAN BOOK MARKET

The world of bibliophilia is populated by many curious figures. There are collectors, curators, librarians, critics, artists, art historians, agents, sellers, auctioneers, publishers, printers, editors, and the general category of book lovers. Upon entering this domain, the book lover quickly encounters the extreme valuations associated with the art and craft of printing and publishing. Often, what spurs the book lover's pursuit of valuable items is the admiration of the high quality associated with certain publishing houses, and their ties to artists who are integral to the production of the book. Recently, Prof. Kate Holland of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto, and Prof. Katia Bowers of the University of British Columbia, by virtue of a SSHRC Insight Grant, launched the project "Digital Dostoyevsky." The project will create an open-access Dostoyevsky resource, with textual analysis of his corpus. The PJRC, a collaborator in the endeavor, helped to identify out-of-copyright translations of the author's works into English and French. This undertaking spurred an intriguing bibliophile quest. Immediately, upon review of Dostoyevsky's works translated into French in the 1920s, one notices the popularity of those editions that feature artwork. Disregarding the merits of the translations themselves, the artwork included in Dostoyevsky's books provides us with an opportunity to enter the ex-

citing yet short-lived world of the Parisian luxury book market prior to the great Wall Street Crash of 1929.

It is rare for early French translations of Dostoyevsky to be illustrated. One of his first works to feature illustrations was published in the French anthology of Russian writers titled *L'Âme Russe, contes choisis de POUCHKINE, GOGOL, TOURGUÉNEV, DOSTOÏEVSKY, GARCHINE, LÉON TOLSTOÏ* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1896). It included Dostoyevsky's short story *L'arbre de Noël des pauvres petits*, illustrated by Michel Korochansky. The first French translation of one of Dostoyevsky's novels to be illustrated was *Crime et Châtiment* published by Joseph Ferenczy (unfortunately undated), with bright illustrations by the Parisian affichiste, Francisque Poulbot. In 1914, a translation of Dostoyevsky's unfinished novel *Netochka* appeared in Paris, published by Pierre Lafitte et C<sup>ie</sup>. It was illustrated by the



popular French magazine illustrator A. Némecek.

The popularity of illustrated texts grew, as did the market for bibliophile editions of literary works, in 1920s Paris. This provided publishing houses the opportunity to profit from ornately printed books on high quality velum paper with original illustrations. As Dostoyevsky's writings entered new cycles of translation, larger publishing houses in France, like Gallimard with its imprint Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, offered book lovers editions illustrated by Russian artists living

there. One hundred of Alexandre Alexeieff's lithographs adorn the 1929 edition of *Les Frères Karamazov*, and Alexey Brodovitch's illustrations enliven Dostoyevsky's collection of short stories *Contes Fantastiques* from the same year.

Bibliophile editions of Dostoyevsky were produced not only by mid-sized to large publishing houses, but also by smaller competing presses like Éditions Bossard, which printed several Russian authors between 1919 and 1929. Dostoyevsky's story about a noxious marriage ending in suicide, *Krotkaia*, taken from his *A Writer's Diary* (1876), was translated by Jean Chuzeville in 1927 and titled *Krotkaia: elle était douce et humble: conte fantastique*. This edition has austere black-and-white woodcuts by the French artist Alix Aymé. She had just returned to Paris from Vietnam. Before long, she would separate from her Algerian-born husband, Paul de Fautereau-Vassel, and return to Indochina with her son.

Éditions Marcel Seheur also added Dostoyevsky's story about this dysfunctional marriage to its output. Among Parisian bibliophiles this small firm was recognized as a quality maker of beautiful *de luxe* books handcrafted by Seheur himself. Marcel Seheur is cited as an *éditeur* in the *Catalogue du Salon international du Livre d'art* denoting both his publishing and editorial functions along with his printing press business. This independent firm was based in Montmartre, at 10 Rue Tourlaque. In mid-1920s Paris,

Seheur's press brought to public attention a number of emerging Montmartre artists like Louis-Robert Antral, Georges Guyot, Marcel Gromaire, Maurice Utrillo, and Louis Touchagues, to name but a few that appeared in the series titled *L'Art et la vie*. Infrequently, Seheur also published an irregular periodical titled *Feuillets inutiles*. It was dedicated to collections of yet unpublished poems curated and illustrated in a surrealist manner by Jacques Maret. Issue №8 of *Feuillets inutiles* includes the work of Irish literary giant James Joyce.



The company published *Krotkaia* under the title *Une Femme Douce* in 1927 with the translation carried out by Georges D'Ostoya and Gustave Masson. The artwork for this edition includes ten etchings in bistre by a Polish artist named Gierlowski. The text is surrounded by woodcuts featuring birds of prey reminiscent of Egyptian deities, along with a suggestive interlocking heart and arrow

motif, which appears in the large illustrations as a recurring decorative pattern.

The subject matter of the story, although loosely connected to France, since the narrator promises to take his wife to the northern sea town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, presents the distressed relationship between a man and a woman. Gierlowski focuses on these two characters, often presenting the couple in profile and in the nude in a blended constructivist and cubist inspired style. These images fit Seheur's publishing profile, which often

included artistic nudes, especially in the series *L'Art et la vie*, that recalled the atmosphere of Parisian cabarets and the city's nightlife. Gierlowski's understated treatment of the nude may be more indicative of constructivist sensibilities or the subject's expressive nature.

Gierlowski is virtually unknown. A common business practice by independent publishers, like Marcel Seheur, was to employ little-known creators in order to keep publication costs down. There is scarcely any information about the translator—D'Ostoya

(born Jerzy Soszyński-Ostojka). He was a Polish artist who joined the French Foreign Legion at a young age. Later, he moved to Paris and became an illustrator for the weekly satirical *L'Assiette au beurre*. His works are prized in Poland, especially his 1905 series of political lithographs printed by Władysław Teodorczuk for use as postcards. D'Ostoya is also remembered for his anti-

German caricatures. After the Great War (WWI), he translated works by Dostoyevsky (*Une fâcheuse histoire*, *Une femme douce*, *Cœur faible*, *Le bouffon*, and *L'arbre de Noël*), as well as works by Leo Tolstoy and Arkady Averchenko. Despite D'Ostoya's appearance as a translator in the bibliophile world of 1920s Paris, there is very little biographical information to be found on him. Similarly, except for the etchings he is credited with by Seheur, the biography of Gierlowski remains a mystery.



Marcel Seheur's edition of Dostoyevsky's *Krotkaia* is a typical volume produced by independent publishing houses in late-1920s Paris. It had a limited print run of 301 copies. The first copy was printed *sur japon*, indicating an exclusive paper. Deluxe copies 2 to 26 were printed on Japanese Shidzuoka №4 paper and bound in wine-coloured calfskin with printed scale decorations done by the French book binder René Kieffer. The remaining copies were printed on Vélin d'Arches paper and priced at 250 francs each. In the case of *Une Femme Douce*, Seheur was responsible

for the whole book-making process himself. Normally, Seheur only printed the text. The colour lithographs were added by the Parisian studio of Mourlot Frères. French poster designer Lucien Boucher would oversee the entire bookmaking process. Boucher, an illustrator himself, worked closely with Seheur in the 1920s and is regularly credited as the artistic director in the colophons of books.

Seheur's press and publishing business worked closely with several prominent Parisian art critics: Jacques Guenne, the director of the artistic revue *L'Art vivant*; Paul Fierens, the Belgian poet and art historian who prefaced a book on the Litvak painter Emmanuel Mané-Katz (a title held in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library); and Florent Fels, who authored a book on Maurice de Vlaminck. Vlaminck contributed original colour lithographs to an illustrated edition of *Le Diable au Corps* (1925) by the French novelist Ray-

mond Radiguet, as well as to *Les Hommes abandonnés* (1927) by French author Georges Duhamel. Another French writer, Francis Carco, depicted life around Montmartre and its colourful characters, in particular the group of artists known as Les Apaches. He wrote a biographical sketch about the Montmartre-born artist of uncertain parentage, Maurice Utrillo, titled *La Légende et la vie d'Utrillo*, published by Seheur in 1927. It features ten original lithographs by Utrillo, one watercolour, and one original lithographic portrait of the artist by his mother, Suzanne Valadon, an artist herself and a favourite model of French impressionists during the Belle Époque.

Seheur's book business flourished from the mid-1920s until the stock market crash in 1929 when interest in *de luxe* bibliophile editions of literary works, both foreign and domestic, declined. When the luxury market for these objects withered, the printer and publisher of Dostoyevsky's *Krotkaia*, the 1927 edition of *Une Femme Douce*, ventured into the precarious world of clandestine erotica and pornography in search of profit. Seheur's associate, the previously-mentioned Boucher, worked as a poster designer for the storied and well-established printing firm of Maison Devambez. As early as 1908, starting with an exhibition of erotic drawings by Auguste Rodin, the company began promoting works of a more risqué and bawdy nature to clients eager to make a purchase. As the market changed, Seheur continued to publish *L'Art*

*et la vie*, but instead of Russian literature, which was no longer in vogue, he reprinted late-Victorian-era pornographic literature with explicit illustrations in French translation. Eventually, the Montmartre-based publishing business wound down and seemingly ceased after 1933. Some time later, Seheur moved to Clermont-Ferrand in central France where he worked as a fruit hauler for a representative of Les Halles, the central fresh food market of Paris. In his spare time, he continued to produce a number of *de luxe* books with his privately-operated hand press.



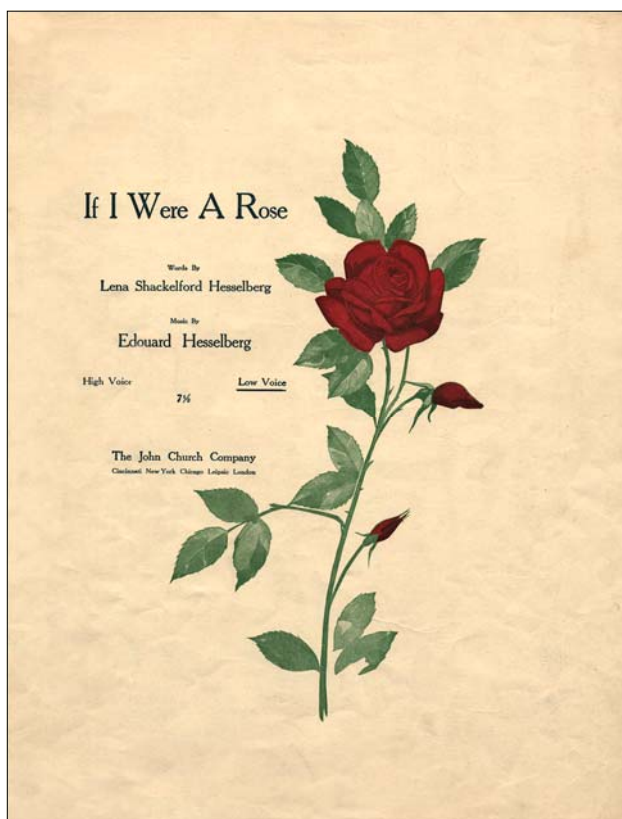
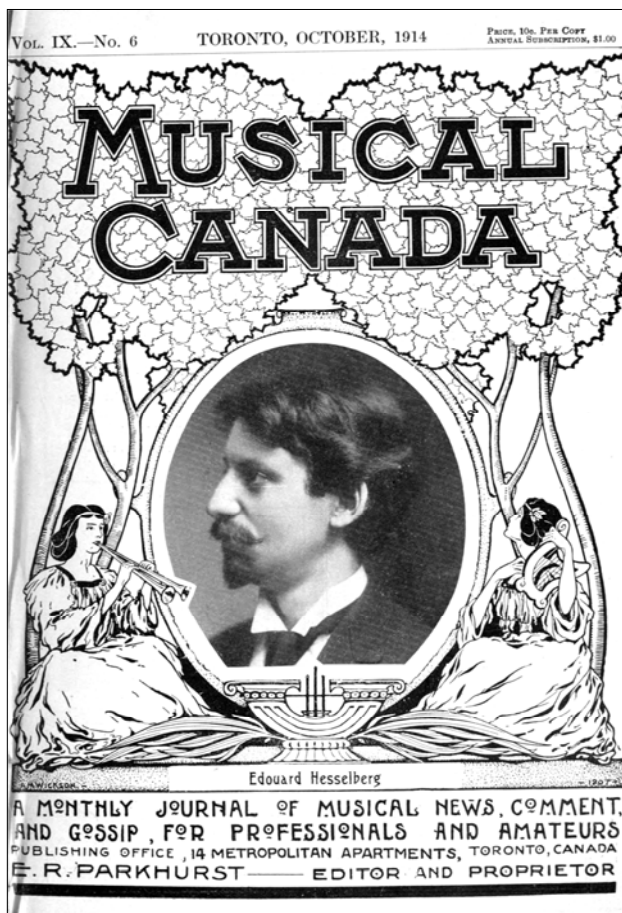
This brief outline of Marcel Seheur's firm is a snapshot of a small printing and publishing company that connected local Parisian artists with the city's luxury book market thanks to its fine handmade editions. In the 1920s, émigré artists from Eastern Europe, like Gierlowski, found temporary work with various publishers and became part of the Parisian artistic community. Illustrated text is at the

heart of artistic exchange between the visual, written, and even musical arts. It will continue to inspire book lovers as long as the craft of bookmaking endures.

Marcin Cieszkiewicz

*Gierlowski's images depict the gradual estrangement between a husband and wife—a 40-year-old pawnbroker (the narrator of the events) and the 16-year-old girl who frequents his shop. The story's tragic denouement culminates in the young girl's self-defenestration clutching an icon of the Blessed Virgin.*

## IF I WERE A ROSE, MY SWEETHEART, YOU MIGHT LOVE ME THEN



Sir Robert A. Falconer was the president of the University of Toronto (UofT) from 1907 to 1932. During World War I, there was some interest to introduce the study of Russian language and culture at the University. The Falconer Papers held at the UofT Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS) include a letter (A1967-0007/069/019/177) from a Russian pianist, Edouard Hesselberg, offering his language skills and services to the institution. Who is Hesselberg and what was he doing in Toronto in 1917?

Edouard Gregory Hesselberg (1870-1935) was born of Jewish parents in Riga, Latvia (then part of the Russian Empire). His mother's cousin was the cellist, composer, and head of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Karl Davydov (1838-1889). In 1880, Davydov commissioned Viktor Burenin to write the libretto for an opera called *Mazeppa*, but it was actually Pyotr Tchaikovsky who wrote the music in 1883. Young Edouard studied at the Moscow Conservatory and briefly with Anton Rubinstein. His classmates included Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin. Graduating in 1892, Edouard left Russia for Europe because of anti-Semitism. With the help of his family and American department store magnate, John Wanamaker, he eventually came to Philadelphia, and debuted at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Within a few years of arriving in America, Hesselberg became the director of the Conservatory of Music in Ithaca, NY (1895-1896). He went on to become the director of music schools at the University of Denver (1896-1900), Wesleyan College in Macon, GA (1900-1905), and Ward-Belmont College in Nashville (1905-1912). He concertized across the country from New York City to Minneapolis in the north, San Antonio in the south, places in between, and as far west as Portland, OR. It was in Denver he met Lena Priscilla Shackelford (1869-1961), a young divorcée and a descendent of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Mayflower settlers.



Edwin Rodie Parkhurst



The Toronto Conservatory of Music, 135-141 College Street

Edouard and Lena were from two different worlds, but love conquered all. Their creative souls came together in a marvelous song *If I Were A Rose* (1899)—music by Edouard and lyrics by Lena. It became a minor hit in North America and was their signature tune.

While living in Macon, they had two sons: Melvyn (1901-1981) and George (1903-1983), both Hollywood actors. Melvyn Douglas acted opposite Greta Garbo in the Ernst Lubitsch political satire, *Ninotchka* (1939), as well as other movies and Broadway plays. George Douglas acted in serials and television shows.

The Hesselbergs were living in Nashville when Edouard was invited to play a recital in front of a select audience (by invitation only) at the Toronto Conservatory of Music (TCM) on 22 April 1912. Toronto's preeminent music and drama critic Edwin Rodie Parkhurst described the recital as "one of the season's most brilliant and highly enjoyable offerings." The program consisted of J. S. Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor* as transcribed by Carl Tausig, a Beethoven sonata, Schumann's *Papillons*, and pieces by Chopin, Saint-Saëns, Liszt, and the Lviv-born Moriz Rosenthal. In conclusion, the pianist performed one of his own compositions. Needless to say, the illustrious audience was duly im-

pressed and Edouard Hesselberg was invited to join the TCM as a senior teacher and examiner. Edwin Parkhurst made sure that Hesselberg's appointment in the fall of 1912 was well-promoted on the pages of *The Globe* throughout the summer months until his arrival in September. Two days after Labour Day, Hesselberg gave his first concert as a citizen of Toronto. Two weeks later a special *soirée musicale* was organized by Lady Mary Phoebe Falconbridge at Loretto Abbey. The concert program included works by Chopin, Vieuxtemps, Leschetizky, Rubinstein, and Hesselberg's own composition, a polonaise from his *Russian Suite*. Many distinguished members of Toronto's upper class attended, including Robert Scott Chilton, the American Consul. Parkhurst noted that "Mrs. Hesselberg was presented by the pupils of the Abbey with a beautiful bouquet."

Lena Shackelford Hesselberg actively participated in her husband's career. Melvyn Douglas recalled that his parents were often away from home attending all sorts of occasions. They "seemed to be driven, perhaps less to excel, than to be accepted. Their constant desire was to mix with the 'best' families wherever they lived." Nevertheless, "the Hesselbergs seemed always on the verge of 'belonging' without ever quite arriving."



St. George Street, early 1900s, looking north



Louis Charles Elson

In Toronto, the Hesselbergs initially rented rooms at 74 St. George Street. This was an elite neighbourhood. Just across the road was the former home of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Today this building belongs to UofT's School of Graduate Studies. Meanwhile, the house where the Hesselbergs lived has been demolished and replaced by the UofT's Lash Miller Chemical Labs. Yet on 5 November 1912 Mrs. Hesselberg received guests at this address. According to standards of etiquette in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Toronto, the reception of guests was a kind of open house event for the purpose of meeting other members of the city's elite society. To further integrate themselves into Toronto's upper class, the Hesselbergs sent their boys, Melvyn and George, to school at Upper Canada College and later to the UofT Schools.

For the next twelve months, Edouard also busied himself writing *A Review of Music in Canada* (1913) for the American author and music educator Louis Charles Elson. Undoubtedly, he was assisted by both Edwin Parkhurst and his wife Lena. Parkhurst had a wealth of information as the editor and publisher of the monthly magazine *Musical Canada*, which he founded in 1906. The *Review* was published as a supplement to Elson's

*Modern Music and Musicians* (1912). It is not an in-depth historical study, but it is an invaluable summary of musical life in Canada at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are five chapters in this review: Music in the Provinces; Aboriginal Indian Songs; Progress of Music in Canada; Prominent Canadian Musicians; and Biographies of Canadian Musicians. The chapter on Aboriginal Indian Songs was actually authored by Alexander Thom Cringan, a fellow teacher at the TCM and a student of Iroquois folk songs.

Of particular interest is the section on Canada's national anthem in the chapter on progress. It is difficult to say if the observations are entirely those of Hesselberg or based on the opinions of others he gathered for the publication. Nevertheless, both contenders for national anthem are described—*The Maple Leaf Forever* by Alexander Muir and *O Canada* by Calixa Lavallée, which "is of small value west of Ottawa." It was only in 1980 that *O Canada* became the national anthem of Canada with the passage of the National Anthem Act. Hesselberg used the *Review* to promote himself and Parkhurst as two preeminent figures on the music scene in Canada. The favour was returned when Parkhurst featured Hesselberg in his October 1914 issue of *Musical Canada*.



Boris Hambourg



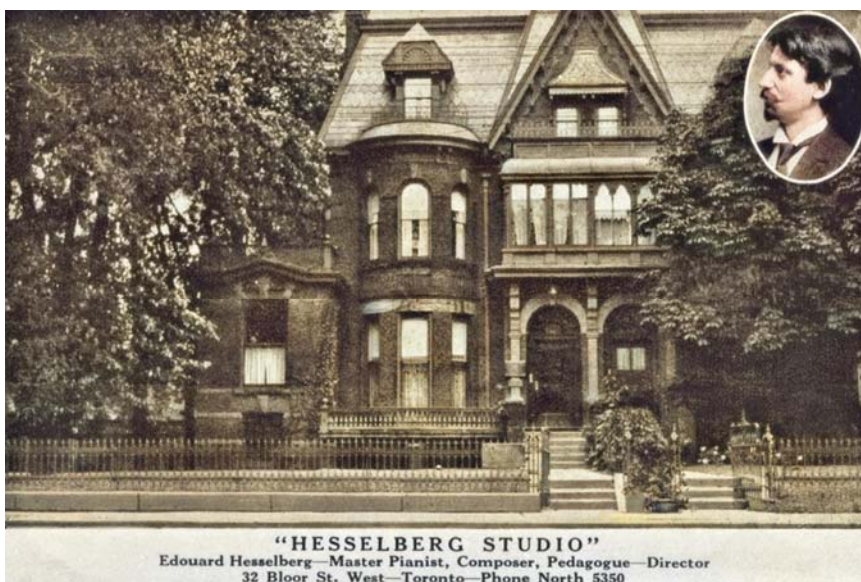
Canadian Foresters' Building, 22 College Street

The 1912-1913 academic year came to a close with a Russian Recital at the TCM with Hesselberg accompanying baritone Hugh Ruthven MacDonald in a program of art songs by Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky. It seems, however, that the Conservatory did not renew Hesselberg's position for the next academic year. Searching for greater acceptance in the city, Hesselberg became affiliated with the Masonic St. Andrew's Lodge of Toronto on 13 May 1913. This had little affect on the Hesselberg family fortunes. By the fall of 1913, the Hesselbergs had moved to cheaper lodgings at 74 Homewood Avenue. Edouard began giving private piano lessons, as well as teaching at the Hamilton and London Conservatories of Music and at various private schools for young ladies in the city: Loretto Abbey, Glen Mawr, and Westbourne. He also began associating with other Jewish expatriates from Russia, like cellist Boris Hambourg and his brother, violinist Jan Hambourg. On 3-4 November 1913, Hesselberg performed trios by Schubert and Arensky with the Hambourgs at the Canadian Foresters' Building Hall at 22 College Street.

While working as a private piano teacher, concert accompanist, and conservatory examiner, Hesselberg became acquainted with

fellow Freemason, Dr. James Logan Gordon, a Protestant American preacher working in Canada. In the summer of 1914, Hesselberg was asked to be the musical director and soloist of Gordon's Christian Citizenship Campaign, a series of Christian revival meetings in Southern Ontario. According to Parkhurst, Hesselberg played to 32,000 people over a period of two weeks. The *Galt Reporter* wrote, Hesselberg "is truly a reverent interpreter of God to man, who seeks His Face and hears His Voice in all things, and unveils for us the beauties of nature..." So, by the fall of 1914, Edouard's fortunes had improved enough that his family was able to move to better lodgings at 32 Bloor Street West, the address at which they stayed for the remainder of their Toronto sojourn. Today the site is occupied by a huge Holt Renfrew store.

The 1915 New Year's Day Concert at the Knights of Columbus Hall, attached to the James Cooper House on the corner of Sherbourne and Linden Streets (now the site of the James Cooper Mansion Condo), featured the inaugural performance of the male vocal Adanac Quartet, which included Ruthven MacDonald. Hesselberg appeared as soloist and accompanist. In February, Parkhurst reported that the great Canadian impresario,



Hesselberg Residence, 32 Bloor Street West

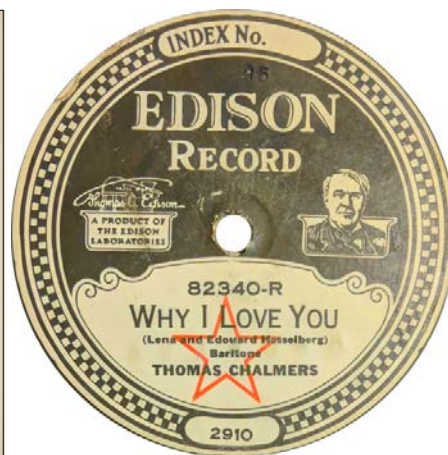


Hugh Ruthven MacDonald

Wallace Graham had signed on Hesselberg to tour Western Canada. There is no evidence, however, that the pianist ever embarked on any such tour. The last great appearance of Hesselberg in Toronto was in a patriotic Monster Concert at Massey Hall on 3 May 1915 in support of the war effort. From then on Hesselberg's star began to fade. Any subsequent mention of him in *The Globe* was due to recitals given by his students.

It is about this time that Edouard Hesselberg's parents died in Joplin, MO. Combined with the lack of any foreseeable success in Toronto, Edouard and Lena began to think of returning to America. The economic situation of World War I made any such move impractical. "Decidedly provincial" Toronto, as their son Melvyn described the city, was to remain the Hesselberg's home for a few more years. Nevertheless, Edouard and Lena began planning for their return to America by writing a song dedicated to President Woodrow Wilson—*America My Country* (1916). At the end of the war, Hesselberg wrote a number of patriotic songs about America and contributed campaign songs in support of the Democratic Party during the 1920 presidential election. Unfortunately for Hesselberg, the Republicans won.

Then on 22 March 1917 there was a rather telling society note published by Parkhurst in *The Globe*. The previous day, a musical afternoon had taken place at the home of conductor and violinist Luigi von Kunits. Towards the end of the list of attendees is the name—"Mr. Hesselberg." Although he is still mentioned, the spotlight had obviously shifted from Hesselberg to von Kunits. Invited by distillery magnate and founder of the Canadian Academy of Music, Sir Albert Edward Gooderham, von Kunits came to Toronto in September 1912, as did Hesselberg, but with much less fanfare. Quietly promoted by his wealthy patron, von Kunits soon became part of the musical establishment of the city. Yet during World War I, as a Serb from Vienna, von Kunits was considered an "enemy alien" like all the other immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike many less fortunate former "Austro-Hungarians," von Kunits was spared arrest and detainment in one of Canada's wartime internment camps. Nevertheless, he had to report to the authorities twice weekly. After the war, von Kunits was given the task of founding the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1922. At the same time, the wife of Canada's department store magnate, Lady Flora Eaton, was also deter-



L-R: Lena Shackelford Hesselberg; score of 'America My Country' (1916); recording of 'Why I Love You' (1925).

mined to establish an orchestra in the city, but her choice for conductor was none other than Rachmaninoff who had recently left Russia because of the revolution.

Later in 1917, with his musical career in Toronto fading, Edouard Hesselberg wrote to the President of UofT offering his services as a teacher of Russian. Unfortunately, from correspondence in the Falconer file (A1967-0007/069/019), it is apparent that the University was not interested in Jewish émigrés from Russia as teachers of Russian. Although Hesselberg's letter has been preserved and remains to this day safely tucked away in the fonds of UTARMS, the Hesselbergs left Toronto for Lincoln, NE by the end of the summer of 1918. But by 1920, they were living in Chicago. It is almost bittersweet to read that the Rhondda Welsh Male Chorus was still performing *If I Were A Rose* at their Massey Hall concert in Toronto on 2 October 1924. If only Edouard Hesselberg had been the kind of "musical rose" that the citizens of Toronto could have truly loved... His inspiration continued to be his dear wife, Lena, with whom he wrote more songs, including another modest hit, *Why I Love You*. It was recorded in 1925 by Thomas Hardie Chalmers, an American baritone, actor, and filmmaker.

Wasył Sydorenko

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Hollywood actress Illeana Douglas, the great-granddaughter of Edouard Hesselberg and grand daughter of Melvyn Douglas, for sharing some of her family stories.

Thanks to UofT Archives and Records Management Services (UTARMS) for providing access to file (A1967-0007/069/019). The image of '32 Bloor Street West' is from this file.

Bibliographic sources include: the autobiography of Melvyn Douglas, *'See You at the Movies'* (1986); Edouard Hesselberg's *'A Review of Music in Canada'* (1913); Edwin Rodie Parkhurst's journal *'Musical Canada'*; the digitized copy of *'The Globe'*; online editions of *'The Canadian Encyclopedia'* and the *'Encyclopedia of Music in Canada'*; Jane Cooper's *'The Canadian Nightingale'* (2017); and old Toronto city directories.

All B&W photographs were colourised using the online service: <https://colourise.sg>

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