

Saturday, 22 November 2014
10.30am-4.00pm
EEG 087 (Urwin Lecture Theatre)

University of Worcester, St. John's Campus, Henwick Grove, Worcester,
WR2 6AJ.

The First World War: Culture and Society



Jane Peterson, *Red Cross Center*, c. 1917



Grace Cossington Smith, *Reinforcements: Troops Marching*, c. 1917

The Conference is organised by: The Women's History Network, Midlands Region



The First World War: Culture and Society

Conference Programme

- 10.30am** Registration and Coffee
- 11.00am** **Keynote address**
- ‘A Woman’s Part’: Women and Theatre in the First World War**
- Prof Claire Cochrane, University of Worcester
- 12.00noon** **‘Determined to buy that hat’: Women, Work and War** - Dr Ruth Percy, Ruskin College, Oxford
- 12.30–1.30** Sandwich Lunch
- 1.30pm** **Keynote address**
- Ancient, Revolutionary and Modern Music in Dialogue: Jane Bathori’s musical engagement during the Great War** - Prof Barbara Kelly, Keele University
- 2.30pm** **Florence Camm: Ways to Remember** - Elaine Williams, PhD Student, University of Birmingham
- 3.00pm** **The Female Face of the Great War: Women Warriors in the Royal Serbian Army during World War 1** - Dragana Spasojevic, Curator, Historical Museum of Serbia
- 3.30pm** **‘The Anglo-Saxon Never Willingly Accepts the Idea’: Women and Farm Labour During and After World War I in Prairie Canada** - Prof Sarah Carter, University of Alberta, Canada



The First World War: Culture and Society

10.30am Registration and Coffee

11.00am **Keynote address**

‘A Woman’s Part’: Women and Theatre in the First World War

- Prof Claire Cochrane, University of Worcester

A dominant perspective on the role of women in British theatre during World War One tends to be limited to the figure of the robust music hall entertainer exhorting the lads to “do their bit” for their country or the alluring, and possibly scantily-clad musical comedy stars and chorus girls in spectacular West End hits like the long-running *Chu Chin Chow*. The reality is of course much more complicated. As with many industries vital to the war effort, women found themselves taking on roles traditionally reserved for men. At its most basic this could mean a woman such as the actress Sybil Thorndike at the Old Vic having opportunities to play more male Shakespearean characters. More powerfully the exigencies of war saw two actresses in Liverpool, Madge McIntosh and Estelle Winwood spear-heading a plan which saved the Liverpool Repertory Theatre from collapse. In Birmingham, at the newly-established Repertory Theatre, Maud Gill found herself taking on the vitally important role of Stage Manager. Arguably the most prominent activist during the war was the actress-manager Lena Ashwell whose travelling concert parties took thousands of play extracts and musical recitals to troops fighting on battle fronts across Europe and the Middle East. Illustrating my talk from the records of women such as these, I will explore the circumstances out of which this work arose and discuss the outcomes.

12.00noon ‘Determined to buy that hat’: Women, Work and War - Dr Ruth Percy, Ruskin College, Oxford

As we reflect back on the First World War from this centenary, we are presented with a popular view of total war, one that was all encompassing. While there is no doubt that the war had an unprecedented impact upon British life, for millions of women on the home front daily life continued relatively unchanged. These women certainly took advantage of social change and new employment opportunities and their male family members' military experiences played a central role in their understanding of the war. But oral histories conducted in their old age reveal a preoccupation with the latest fashions, family dynamics, and above all wages for many; indeed their weekly pay checks were often far more important than the khaki uniforms they were sewing or the munitions they were assembling. For these women, who had only been in wage labour for a short time or were just entering the workforce, their newly found independence was as much about their pay packet as it was the product of broader social transformation. Drawing upon the Imperial War Museum's impressive sound archive this paper examines women's experiences of wage labour during the First World War and challenges the narrative that this was a moment of unrivalled national purpose.

12.30–1.30 Sandwich Lunch

1.30pm Keynote address

Ancient, Revolutionary and Modern Music in Dialogue: Jane Bathori's musical engagement during the Great War - Prof Barbara Kelly, Keele University

This paper focuses on the singer, Jane Bathori's war-time concerts at the *Théâtre du Vieux Colombier*, Paris, when she responded theatre director Jacques Copeau's invitation to run the theatre between 1917 and 1919. Her archives and existing concert programmes show the efforts she made to ensure that new music was heard in Paris, despite the bombardment. She was a key figure in bringing together the

music of Ravel, Debussy and Satie's generation with the early works of the youngest generation of mainly French composers. Yet, she was not only intent on performing new music. Her programmes indicate her commitment to early French, Italian and English music and her promotion of music from the French Revolution. Her letters reveal the particular importance she attached to her production of the thirteenth-century 'opera', Adam de la Halle's *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion*. Regarded as both folk opera and the source of opera-comique, the patriotic potential of a war-time performance is clear. Although primarily designed to appeal to an elitist audience, Bathori constructed programmes that purposefully mixed avant-garde, mainstream classical, folk, popular and propaganda music in the manner of bricolage. The paper explores the musical and cultural and patriotic implications of Bathori's war-time activities, in particular, the significance of putting ancient, revolutionary, propaganda and contemporary music in active dialogue at a time of national and international crisis.

Barbara L. Kelly is Professor of Musicology and Faculty Research Director for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Keele University. She has published articles and chapters on Debussy, Ravel, Milhaud, Satie, Poulenc and Honegger. She is author of *Tradition and Style in the Works of Darius Milhaud (1912-1939)* (Ashgate, 2003) and *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939* (Boydell, 2013) and contributing editor of *Berlioz and Debussy: Sources, Contexts and Legacies* (Ashgate 2007 with Murphy) and *French Music, Culture, and National Identity* (Rochester, 2008). She is editing a volume entitled *Authority, Advocacy, Legacy: Music Criticism in France (1918-1939)* with Christopher Moore (University of Ottawa). Her latest project is a study of concerts and new music in Paris and London during and after WWI. She is curating and presenting a series of concerts at the Conway Hall, London, in the autumn on the theme of music during WWI.

2.30pm Florence Camm: Ways to Remember - Elaine Williams, PhD
Student, University of Birmingham

Memorials to those who died during the First World War are part of our communal cultural capital. They are usually dedicated to soldiers who died in the war from a defined place, either a town, city or small village. They are located in parks, municipal buildings, churches, universities and schools across the United Kingdom and beyond. A memorial to an individual soldier was a luxury not available to many. During the war as casualties increased to unprecedented numbers a debate ensued concerning memorialisation. The function and design of memorials was also the subject of several exhibitions. Florence Camm (1874-1960), stained glass artist at the studio of T. W. Camm, Smethwick, was commissioned to produce many war memorials both communal and individual. This paper will discuss how Camm incorporated graphic imagery of war and signifiers of women's war work in her memorials. This paper will consider to what extent Camm's work was influenced by her own experiences during the war, by written accounts in newspapers or magazines of the day, other artistic interpretations of the war or letters sent by her brother, Walter, who was conscripted in 1917. The outbreak of the war and the onset of conscription in 1916 opened up opportunities to women, they participated in society and industry in ways previously denied. The First World War provided a level of autonomy to Camm enabling the introduction of female employees to the studio. The ongoing legacy of this will also be considered.

Camm's working practices and motifs contrast to the focus of national mourning, exemplified by the minimalism of the Cenotaph in London, and provides evidence of a continuing example of the Arts and Crafts tradition exemplifying quality of method and materials used. There are fine art references and connections in her work that can be understood as part of the art historical narrative of the time, an aspect that has not been acknowledged in current literature.

3.00pm The Female Face of the Great War: Women Warriors in the Royal Serbian Army during World War 1 - Dragana Spasojevic, Curator, Historical Museum of Serbia

This paper is the result of an ongoing research project by the Historical Museum of Serbia entitled "Women in World War I" which intends to emphasize the role of women in WWI and make women's contribution to the war efforts more visible and recognizable to the general public. The results of the research were partly displayed in a small exhibition bearing the same title as this paper in June 2014; this introduced a larger scale project on the same topic scheduled for completion in 2016.

This paper is based on one of the segments of the research: the phenomenon of women warriors and their active part in the battles fought by the Royal Serbian Army. The importance of the phenomenon derives from the fact that these women are the first documented female soldiers and officers in WWI. Their participation did not significantly change the outcome of war operations but nevertheless their role questions a largely accepted traditional concept of women as "weaker sex". This phenomenon defies the usual social image of women at the beginning of the 20th century in which they are depicted as mothers, sisters, wives, limited to domestic zones of social stratification and, consequently, denied significant social action. Although WWI considerably delayed the processes of women's emancipation which had already started to manifest around the globe, it can also be perceived as an event which changed the course of emancipation giving European women an opportunity to act upon completely new social duties; the same social duties they were historically denied under the pretext of gender stereotypes and prejudices. Grim consequences of the principal global conflict by that time gave women around the world an opportunity to prove themselves in areas exclusively marked as "men's work", such as defending the country. Unfortunately, after the war, women's efforts were almost forgotten and did not substantially change the position of women in the Kingdom of Serbia but they forever changed the perspective and interpretation of gender roles. This slow but irreversible process gradually built a solid background for an improved and more respectful position for women in Serbian society.

3.30pm ‘The Anglo-Saxon Never Willingly Accepts the Idea’: Women and Farm Labour During and After World War I in Prairie Canada - Prof Sarah Carter, University of Alberta, Canada

Despite acute labour shortages during World War I in prairie Canada, where agriculture was the foundation of the economy, there was no mobilization of women farm workers. Women maintained farms in the absence of husbands, sons and brothers, and urban women helped in the harvest fields, but there was opposition to formal mobilization. This paper analyzes why this was the case, in comparison to the land armies of the U.S. and Britain and the “farmerettes” of Ontario. It explores the prewar context, and in particular a homesteads-for-women campaign of 1908–1914 that called on Canada to end discrimination and extend the free grant of 160 acres available to any male over the age of 18 to women “of British birth.” The consistent reply from government officials was that women were incapable of the physical labour required. The paper also examines the immediate post-war era, when advocates of emigration for British land army women hoped farm work and land on the prairies could be obtained in recognition of their wartime service. But there was deep and profound opposition at all levels of government in Canada to British land army and ex-service women as settlers except as domestic workers. A Canadian general declared in 1921 that: “the Anglo-Saxon never willingly accepts the idea of women for outdoor labour.” Drawn from a study of settler colonialism, women, land and agriculture, this paper analyzes the purposes and persistence of this, and other entrenched views of women’s place and space, as rationales for ensuring that land and farming in the West remained overwhelmingly masculine, and WWI helped to further this aim.

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University of Worcester

Booking Form

Conference Fee: £15

Concessions [unwaged/retired/postgraduate students] - £7.50

University of Worcester and local School/College students -
Free

To book: By post - Please either return the form to the address below with a cheque made out to 'Women's History Network Midlands Region' **or** return the form and pay cash on the day (please indicate this on the form).

By email – Please return this form to ihca@worc.ac.uk to reserve your place. Please include the Subject: **WHN Conference, November 2014**.

Postal address: Dr Wendy Toon, Department of History, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.

For further details, please contact: Dr Wendy Toon
w.toon@worc.ac.uk or 01905-855305

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