

# The Tambourine and the Salvation Army: Rebellion in the Service of Authority

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## Prelude

On a summer's day in 1986, a wave of enthusiasm and incredulity rippled through my community of artists-in-residence at EXPO 86. The excitement was generated by a team of twenty or so youthful women marching to the sound of a brass band. They were not playing the wind instruments in the band; they were striking, shaking and circling tambourines decorated with long multi-coloured ribbons that streamed in loops and lines as they moved them in perfect unison with complex hand and arm choreographies.<sup>1</sup> But, unlike the usual baton-twirlers of a typical marching band, the young women were members of the Salvation Army. Instead of glamorous costumes and high stepping, the tambourine players wore the traditional crisp white blouses, navy blue knee-length skirts, and modest pumps of women Salvationists, modestly yet purposefully marching in dignified step.

Several years later, I found myself revisiting that unusual afternoon after evaluating a paper from a student in one of my classes at the University of British Columbia School Of Music. Because she was an aspiring drum-set player in a rock band, a very rare ambition, she decided to research the role of women in the drum world. Much to her (and my) surprise, there was a considerable amount of positive material for her to draw upon, mostly in the form of West Asian female tambourine players performing on round frame drums with and without the jingles.<sup>2</sup> I instantly recalled my encounter with the Salvation Army tambourine players and decided to research the subject.

I was equally intrigued by the challenge of studying a musical instrument (i.e., the tambourine) that appeared on the surface to be a relatively uncomplicated apparatus in the wide world of music.<sup>3</sup> When compared to the piano and its vast literature, or the equally vast soundscape of the gamelan, to name two of countless examples, the tambourine appears unremarkable, the stuff of the everyday.<sup>4</sup> The examination of the everyday had already come to my attention after reading about the activities and research of the Centre

for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1963-2002) in Birmingham, England (Dworkin, 1997; Turner, 1996) and its successors, particularly the Sociology Department at the Open University, Milton Keynes, England.<sup>5</sup> For example, Bart Plantenga's 2004 study of yodelling is a near-perfect example of the legitimization of a marginalized form of music-making.

## Sources and Discoveries

My exploration of the Salvationists' use of the tambourine began with the Salvation Army Cariboo Hill Temple in Greater Vancouver. I quickly learned from the music director, Bandmaster Dave Michel, that the correct term for the Salvation Army tambourine was *timbrel* and that the players were collectively called *timbrel brigades*.<sup>6</sup> The Salvationists use the term *timbrel* to evoke the tradition spoken of in Psalm 150:4 of the King James edition, "Praise him with timbrel and dance". The term was commonly used in Middle English to designate a round frame drum, *tymbre* (Blades, 1973). Mr. Michel sent me directly to Ms. Margaret Arnold, a famous director of a precision team of Salvation Army timbrelists based in Santa Ana, California.<sup>7</sup> She had conducted workshops in the Greater Vancouver area in 1989 and was instrumental in preparing the Salvation Army timbrelists for EXPO86. Ms. Arnold tours North America as a timbrel choreographer and instructor and has assembled a twenty-page instruction booklet entitled *Timbrel Leadership*. Her first encounter with group playing was in 1958, but it was not until 1976 that she began to create her elaborate and complex stage choreographies (email correspondence: September 30, October 3, 2007).

Ms. Arnold provided me with a personally-made video of the Vancouver Timbrel Brigades in performance and it was then that I realized the full import of their artistry.<sup>8</sup> Instead of marching, the brigade was assembled on a stage for an evening's entertainment of uplifting sacred and secular music. They were arranged in a straight line in front of a Salvation Army traditional brass band, although they could just as easily have

been at the head of a Salvation Army choir or, as they are called, Songster Brigade.<sup>9</sup> As the band performed an extended composition with multiple changes of tempos, metres and moods, the timbrelists played percussion rhythms that reflected the moment-to-moment musical expressions. Each complex percussion pattern was amplified by unison choreographies that included extended arms moving in various directions.<sup>10</sup> During the performances, one of the choreographies consisted of dividing the players into smaller groups, playing in sequence so that an echo effect could be seen as well as heard in the music. Another well known technique is for smaller groups to accompany groups performing simultaneous melodies, rhythms or harmonies with the band. For example, two or three timbrelists would accompany the melody of the solo cornets while another group would accompany the counter melody provided by the euphoniums. Ms. Arnold explains in her booklet that the basic techniques that she teaches (in five graded lessons) are to be used by the timbrel director to compose entire “routines” of percussion patterns and arm, head, and even body, choreographies (Arnold, nd: 11-13). Each technical element is performed over the length of one or two beats.

Ms. Arnold received her inspiration from Major Athol England, a Salvationist living in Altona (outside of Melbourne), Victoria Province, Australia, and very likely the person who created the percussion artistry of the modern day timbrel brigades (Arnold correspondence: 8 October 2003). Although well into retirement these days and dogged by health problems, Major England was still eager to respond to my inquiries from his home in faraway Australia, thanks to the modern convenience of email. “It is very satisfying to hear after fifty years” that there was still an active interest in his timbrel artistry (England correspondence: July 3, 2006).

Major England began to choreograph timbrel percussion concerts in Australia in 1949. He created a new system of notation which he developed from his experiences as a percussionist in a Salvation Army band. The notation is particularly unique in its kinaesthetic dimension, where the specific body action of each strike or shake is simultaneously combined with its specific rhythm. For example, percussion hits on the elbow are notated on the first space on the staff, wrist strikes on the drumhead are notated on the second space, finger strikes on the third space, and strikes on the inside of the tambourine are indicated on the fifth space. In 1960 he visited

England as a delegate of the Salvation Army Youth Congress. During the long ocean voyage he organized an ad hoc timbrel brigade of forty percussionists which rehearsed every day on the outdoor decks of the ship, eventually performing in Hyde Park and the Royal Albert Hall during the period of the congress. “The Australian timbrelists, under Bandsman Athol England, took London by storm”, according to Colonel Percival Dale (1952), writing in his book about the first seventy-one years of the Salvation Army in Australia. Major England later wrote a booklet (East Melbourne, AU: no date) of instructions that outlined his advanced techniques, notated in his unique manner, and then presented several examples of his choreographies. The booklet has circulated widely in North America and Australia (Karl Larsen, archivist of the Canadian Salvation Army, interview, January 25, 2006).

Like Ms. Arnold, Major England is well aware of tambourine activity before the advent of their choreographed timbrel routines. He quoted the Australian Salvation Army newsletter “War Cry” dated July 18, 1891, which identified over 100 corps of Australian Salvationist timbrelists, some with as many as 41 players (correspondence dated November 6, 2006). This date is 11 years after the founding of the Australian division of the Salvation Army, and only 10 years after the introduction of the tambourine into the Salvation Army’s evangelical mission in its home country of England.

One Canadian source that has recently emerged is Tony Scott Janes, a webmaster of a site called Cleft of the Rock. Mr. Janes was raised in the Newfoundland division of the Salvation Army but as a young man he gravitated to a Pentecostal church. He created a 23-page PDF file entitled *Timbrels: Patterns and Movements for Timbrel Brigades and Individual Worship*, based on his early experiences with the Salvation Army female members of his family who played the tambourine. He consulted Margaret Arnold and Ms. Wendy Campbell, a Pentecostal evangelist who also uses the tambourine in her ministry.<sup>11</sup> He also credits Ms. Ina Janes, a member of his family, and his own creative work.<sup>12</sup>

One of the high points of my research was a visit to the North York Temple to attend their Musicales on June 24, 2004. I had been inquiring about the Salvation Army timbrelists in the Toronto area, when Mr. Robert Venebles, a solo cornetist with the North York band and a founding member of the world-famous Hannaford Street Silver Band, invited me to the afternoon

concert. Before the concert the band, members of the congregation, and an official timbrel brigade marched through the streets of York to the sound of one rousing march after another, uniforms, flags and bass drum proudly announcing their presence to the community.<sup>13</sup> At the head of the parade were eight young Salvation Army women performing elaborate, exciting percussion choreographies.<sup>14</sup>

### **Introduction: Women and Music**

Timbrel choreography is an extension of the traditional use of tambourines as a time-honoured feature of the evangelical work of the Salvation Army's musical outreach program. The Salvation Army's use of the tambourine dates from the Victorian Era and reflects a gendered musical expression, reserved for use largely by women.

The stage for any exploration of women's cultural activities in Europe like tambourine performance practices was set by the editors George Duby and Michelle Perrot's sweeping five-volume compilation of the study of women in European history entitled *A History of Women in the West* (Duby and Perrot, 2000). This collection followed closely on the heels of Olwen Hufton's single-volume study *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (Hufton, 1995). Both collections deconstruct the entrenched view that women's role in historical Western society was somehow inconsequential.<sup>15</sup>

Looking specifically at historical English society, where the root of Salvation Army tambourine activity is found, two representative books that illuminated this area of research were written by Sarah Mendelson and Patricia Crawford (2000) and Anthony Fletcher (1999). Both described the cultural position of everyday women and the strategies they employed to accommodate and/or circumvent the patriarchal culture of the times.

A musicological examination of music-making by women in Europe and North America nowadays falls under the purview of the New Musicology or Critical Musicology pioneered by Susan McClary (1991). Groundbreaking work was created by such editors and authors as Susan Cook and Judy Tsou (1993), and Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (1987), who revisited the realm of Western European Art Music from a woman's perspective.<sup>16</sup> Even before the advent of Critical Musicology, female musicians active in the parlours of the Victorian Era had been sympathetically

portrayed and described in the exemplary work of Derek Hyde (1984). Even earlier, Arthur Loesser and Edward Rothstein (1924) investigated the culture of women musicians playing the piano, the Victorian Era's pre-eminent parlour music instrument. In the last 20 years, a renaissance of Victorian Era music studies has been inaugurated by scholars such as Alisa Clapp-Itnyre's close examination of women's music-making at all levels of society, as articulated by Victorian novelists, in 2002. A major force in this line of investigation is Richard Leppert, whose commentaries on the musical iconography of the Victorian Age (Leppert, 1993) are without equal.

Each of these resources, and many more besides, look at the restrictive cultural and social environment of historical European women's lives and how they successfully coped with and even triumphed over those conditions with inventive acts of creativity. The following essay illustrates how the simple tambourine offered yet another escape from paternalism, and a door to artistic and even sensuous expression.

### **The Tambourine in Early Modern European History**

During the eighteenth century Age of Enlightenment, long before the advent of the Salvation Army Timbrel Brigades, the tambourine emerged in Europe as a performance art and symbol, both rooted in a self-conscious women's movement that anticipated feminist theory and sexual liberation.

Contrary to Rene Descartes' (1596-1650) focus on rational thought and the reasoning mind, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) explored the ontology of nature and the natural self, foreshadowing modern-day search for the *authentic self*.<sup>17</sup> One of Rousseau's models was the Noble Savage, based on reports of inhabitants of the New World that had been colonized by the French.<sup>18</sup> He also observed the "peasants" of France and Europe, who he imagined to be fully immersed in the natural rhythm of life (Rosener/Barker, 1993: 18-22).<sup>19</sup> Peasants as Other were envied and emulated by the members of the court, who saw through rose-coloured glasses the similarities between the lifestyles of the peasants and the legendary natural paradise of Arcadia. Originally a backwoods of the Peloponnesian peninsula that remained relatively untouched by the Doric Invasion (1150 BCE), Arcadia achieved a reputation as a rural heaven, untouched by urban cares,

even by the Doric Greeks. Arcadian culture was frequently played out in the soirées of the French court and the public stages of Paris and other European capital cities.

In France, dance was deemed an appropriate vehicle for exploring the Arcadian movement and its *au naturel* imperative. Jean Georges Noverre (1727-1810), ballet master to the French court and father of modern ballet, was at the forefront of this new exploration within the context of a form of stage production called *opéra-ballet* that combined opera with the *ballet de cour* (court ballet) created by the dance instructor Pierre Beauchamp (1631-1705) and composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) for the court of Louis XIV. The early characters of *opéra-ballet* and *ballet de cour*, the imperious gods and goddesses preferred by Louis Le Grand, were replaced by a bucolic pantheon more suitable to the new Arcadian fashion of Louis XV and the Régence (1715-23). Noverre developed a more virtuosic dance technique that was to become the *ballet d'action* and then the ballet-pantomimes of the Romantic Age and modern times.

Noverre's new dance techniques focused on women instead of men, with Marianne Cochois and Barbara Campanini his most favoured dancers. In addition to nymphs and shepherdesses, these women were asked to dance the roles of the *maenads*, the "mad" handmaidens of the Greek Dionysius and Roman Bacchus. They were "mad" because their dance induced a state of ecstasy, leaving behind the reserve and inhibitions of their daily selves. The fevered release of their emotions and physical selves was induced by the seductive effects of wine and the expectant pleasure of the company of males. Dressed in wind-swept, draped chemises, they accompanied their frenzy dancing by playing tambourines. This mythical template followed the models of maenads seen in Greek and Roman sculpture and painting (e.g., Redmond, 1997: 127). The official portraits of Campanini in 1745 and Cochois in 1750, painted by Antoine Pesne (1683-1757), captured them in the same drama as the mythical maenads, tambourines held high.<sup>20</sup>

Other models emulated by the new eighteenth century woman, on stage and in society, included Erato, the goddess of erotic and lyrical poetry and one of the nine Greek muses, also seen holding a tambourine while she danced. Terpsichore, another of the muses, is the goddess of dance, but she is usually depicted holding a lyre, the symbol of Apollo and all that is clear and logical.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the *sibyls*, actual prophet-

esses of ancient Greece and Italy, also danced to induce ecstasy, while accompanying themselves on tambourines. These illustrations are mainly from early and late Renaissance painters, occasionally using themes from ancient Greek and Roman sculptures and paintings (Rasmussen: 2001).

In English circles, the theme of the sexually liberated woman posing as a Maenad bacchante was picked up by Lady Hamilton, née Emma Hart (1765-1815), the star-crossed lover of the English hero of the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson. Before she met Nelson, she lived for a time in Naples. There, she scandalized and entertained the local upper classes by performing *tableaux vivants*, dramatic poses in costume, featuring characters from history and Greek and Roman mythology. These were later reproduced by the famous portraitist Elizabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842). One pose, painted in 1792, spoke directly to the new woman, in her portrayal of a bacchante wearing a neo-classical chemise (although charcoal instead of white) with a tambourine in her hand.<sup>22</sup>

Two facts are prominent in this cultural moment in European women's history, for the purposes of this paper. The first is the ascendancy of the female dancer over the male. The second fact is the new freedom of sexual expression among women such as the dancers. The inherent nature of seventeenth and eighteenth century middle and upper class women became equated with the "authentic" behaviour of the imaginary Dionysian pagan goddesses and their ecstatic dancing.<sup>23</sup> They became models of liberating, spontaneous naturalness, regardless of their roles as seers using dance to bring about visions born of ecstasy and catharsis. They were placed in Dionysian opposition to their Apollonian male counterparts, who allegedly lived by, and aspired to, the ideal of rational behaviour and thought.

For women, the tambourine contributed significantly to this aura of natural, authentic self. One of the results of this new emphasis on the physical expression of the natural look was the continuing evolution of ballerinas. Madame Marie Anne de Cupis de Camargo (1710-70), shortened her skirt so the audience could appreciate her virtuosic footwork. Audiences were then shocked at the sight of her naked legs. In truth, her legs were wrapped in a skin-tight fabric we now refer to as the leotard. As female dancers ascended, male dancers became their accoutrements. Men were denied any part in this evolu-

tion of stage dance, thus laying the seeds for the split between the place of women and men in classical ballet up to modern times.<sup>24</sup>

As Europe entered the Romantic Age, two dancers came to dominate the stage, Marie Taglioni (1804-84) and Franziska “Fanny” Elssler (1810-84). They were seen as polar opposites, each seemingly representing two different aspects of the new woman. Théophile Gautier, a dance critic of the time, said that Taglioni was a “Christian dancer...that resembles a happy angel who scarcely bends the petals of celestial flowers with the tips of her pink toes” (Jonas, 1998: 134). She presented a “virginal and diaphanous art fore-shadowed by undreamt-of possibilities” (Pearsall, 1973: 165) Taglioni accomplished this magic by developing the art of dancing on the toe, using special footwear called *pointe* shoes, still used today in classical ballet technique.

Elssler was “a pagan dancer (who) reminds me of the muse Terpsichore” (Jonas, 1998: 134). She specialized in expressive dances that hinted at open sexuality. She did this by performing character dances supposedly derived from European peasant cultures.<sup>25</sup> Her first dance spectacle was *La Cachucha* (premiered in 1836), based on the flamenco dance of Spanish Andalusia, using castanets to enhance the rhythms that she danced (Pearsall, 1973: 168).<sup>26</sup> Three years later she premiered the Sicilian tarantella, *La Tarantule*, the tarantella from Sicily, another dance of wild abandon and ecstasy supposedly induced by the bite of the tarantula. Although she again used castanets, the ethnographic record specifies that an equally common percussion accompaniment to self-accompany the Tarantella dance was the tambourine.<sup>27</sup> When Elssler performed her “gypsy” character dances, *La Esmeralda* (1844) and *La Gypsy* (1839), the tambourine became front and centre (Guest, 1970: 99-100, 160, 193).

The tarantella was danced by the vernacular women of southern Italy in and around Naples and Sicily. Described as a fast circle dance in 6/8 time, accompanied by tambourines and/or castanets, sometimes with the addition of mandolins, the tarantella dance was characterized as wild and abandoned, at least in the minds of Noverre and other eighteenth century observers from more northern European countries. Whether true or not, they saw vestiges of the ecstatic dances of Greco-Roman sibyls and meanads. Legend claims that the Sicilian and Neapolitan women were moved to dance in a wild and erratic manner after having been bitten by a tarantula spider, conveniently forgetting that men also get bitten.

More likely it is named after the Sicilian town of Taranto. More important to consider, the tarantella may well be a manifestation of the Mediterranean and West Asian women’s tradition of dancing to the sound of their own tambourine rhythms, mentioned in my prelude. A number of painters such as David Allan (1744-96) and Frank Ludwig Catel (1778-1856) painted energetic peasants dancing tarantellas to the sound of tambourines, while others lounge about in care-free abandon.<sup>28</sup> The fascination with the alleged emotional effect of the spontaneous tarantella was a leitmotif of the Romantic Age of music. One only has to recall the several tarantellas composed by Liszt, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff.<sup>29</sup>

Fanny Elssler performed her tambourine tarantella and gypsy dances during her tour of America in 1840-42. It was so hugely successful that it created a wave of Elsslermania. Another famous stage performer of the tarantella, complete with tambourine, was Lola Montez (1821–1861) of “what Lola wants, Lola gets” fame. The English press knew her as “la grande horizontale”. I couldn’t begin to recount her amazing life story without doubling the number of words in this article. Suffice it to say that her voluptuous and rapturous stage dance performances, verging on burlesque, captured the imaginations of men from Europe and the United States. For a time she was the mistress of Ludwig I of Bavaria (1846), but then she made a dramatic move to the United States, ending up in the music halls of the Californian Gold Rush (1847-1861). In this way, the tambourine continued to maintain and even grow in its association with women and theatricalised ecstatic dance. Finally, the equally famous ballerina La Barberina (Barbara Campanini, 1721-1799) also specialized in character dances, including a dance with tambourine.<sup>30</sup> John Rich, the famous English impresario, brought La Barberina to London in the winter of 1740-41 to perform at Covent Garden and Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Her tambourine dance made such an enormous impression on the English public that a country dance was published by John Walsh, titled “Barbarini’s Tambourine”.<sup>31</sup> The dance is still performed today at country dances in England and the United States, but apparently without tambourines!

In England, *circa* 1790, the tambourine and its symbolism moved from the ballet stage to all classes of society. In the upper classes young women adopted the tambourine as a virtuosic, somewhat risqué yet still sufficiently demure avocation (Leppert, 1988: 54, 152). Joseph Dale

(1750-1821) became the pre-eminent pedagogue of the tambourine, publishing a tutor titled *Instructions for the Tambourine (circa 1796)*, music for piano with tambourine accompaniment (*circa 1800*), and even patenting an improved tambourine in 1799.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the most interesting manifestation of this widespread interest was Daniel Gottlieb Steibelt's (1765–1823) *Six bacchantales pour le forté-piano avec accompagnement de tambourin ad-libitum* (Paris: Aug. Le Duc, 1805-06), written for his English wife, who was a tambourine virtuoso.<sup>33</sup>

We also see the tambourine and its associated choreographies move into rural English society, thanks to the peripatetic dance instructors of the time.<sup>34</sup> English dance teachers-for-hire have a long and profitable history in England, fulfilling the needs of the upwardly mobile. Their lessons were made available to people in the far-flung districts of England as well as the home counties of London. From just one such distant location, the Lake District, we have an excellent photograph of a young female dance student in decorous pose with tambourine cradled in her lap (Jewitt, 2000: 69).<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, young girls dancing to their own tambourine accompaniment were seen on the streets of London as buskers. Three young street female tambourinists, dancing on stilts no less, were observed and recorded by Henry Mayhew in the 1860s for his survey of working class activities published in 1862 as *London Labour and the London Poor* (Cohen, 1981: 120, with illustration).

Finally, the tambourine makes an appearance in Minstrelsy in the United States, and then England, in the 1840s. This aspect of the tambourine is puzzling, partly because of the gender switching – the players are all men. It was a component of the Minstrel band that consisted of “bones” (sticks of wood or bone that made the same sound as castanets), banjo, violin, and tambourine. However, a possible explanation for gender reversal may be explained by the fact that Minstrel skits were constructed as parodies of the upper classes, for the benefit of working class white men. The first recorded Minstrel player of the tambourine was William Henry Lane, *aka* Master Juba, who was first noted in 1841 by the press, and then by Charles Dickens, writing of his experiences in the United States in his book *American Notes*. In chapter 6 he describes a dance performance by Master Juba that was highly virtuosic, not only in his stepping but also in the percussion rhythms of his tambourine (Robinson, 2003: 366, and Lott, 1993: 113-

116).<sup>36</sup> One of the greatest black tambourinists was Uaroy Graves, who recorded virtuosic tambourine flourishes in 1929, accompanying gospel and blues music. But possibly the last word on the tambourine in the Afro-American world is the hip hop song “Tambourine”, sung by “Eve” (*aka* Eve Jihan Jeffers) which only mentions the word tambourine repeatedly in the chorus.

### The Salvation Army Tambourine

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the European women's tambourine culture arrived into the hands of the Salvation Army. Invoking Miriam as a biblical Maenad, the women of the Salvation Army turn the ecstatic, pagan symbolism of the tambourine on its head, playing with the same exuberance, yet dressed in conservative, sober uniforms for the glory of God.

Many intense young females of the time, driven by a personal call to advance social justice, joined the Salvation Army. Founded in 1865 by William Booth, a radical Methodist preacher, and his wife and equal partner, Catherine, the mission of the Army was to bring salvation to the most disadvantaged of England's working poor and destitute. A host of women took up the tambourine after seeing an illustration on the cover of the February 17, 1881, issue of the Salvation Army's journal, *The War Cry*. It showed the biblical hero, Miriam, triumphantly playing a tambourine.<sup>37</sup> Miriam, the older sister of Moses, “took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances” to celebrate the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea as it was pursuing the Jews (Exodus 15: 20-21).<sup>38</sup> The iconic illustration had followed very closely on the heels of an article in the same newsletter, dated March 27, 1880, where General Booth exhorted all Salvationists to take up any and all kinds of musical instruments in order to attract the attention of the general public to their street gatherings. He is famously quoted as saying, “that the devil should not be the only proprietor of the great tunes” (*War Cry*, Christmas issue, 1880).

The initial stage for this new wave of interest had been partially set by Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852), the “Robbie Burns” of Ireland. In 1816 he set one of his poems, “Sound the Loud Timbrel” (*aka* “Miriam's Song”), to a melody borrowed from an unknown concerto by Charles Avison ((1710? – 1770). The poem and its setting were seemingly as ubiquitous as his hugely popular songs such as “Believe Me If All Those Eendear-

ing Young Charms”.<sup>39</sup> It was also harshly criticized by some critics. The most telling barb came from the anonymous author of the *Harmonium* in 1824, who said, “‘Sound the Loud Timbrel’ was a delicious morsel for the young ladies” (Kingdon-Ward, 1951: 401). The same condescending tone was advanced almost a hundred years later by Henry G. Farmer, in his 1950 article “Percussion and Petticoats”. He asks the question, “What induced Jane Austen’s girlish contemporaries to emulate Miriam the prophetess...?” (Farmer, 1950: 343). His answer suggests that the young women in their drawing rooms were pursuing a trivial, vainglorious pursuit. That may be true in some instances, but in others the music may well have provided the spark that led to a leap from the drawing room to social action, including, at a later date, membership of the Salvation Army. One only has to recall the similar move of the iconic Eliza Shirley, the heroine in the young (female) adult book *The Hallelujah Lass* (Daughters of the Faith Series, 2004). Certainly we know that Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) had just such an epiphany, albeit not within the context of the Salvation Army. There are many other examples of the working of the spirit of the tambourine.

Within months of the *War Cry*’s cover picture and article in 1881, Salvation Army women were flocking to music instrument stores to purchase tambourines.<sup>40</sup> They participated in parades and services as accompaniment for the march-like praise songs.<sup>41</sup> Their emergence as Timbrel Brigades was parallel with the founding of the splendid brass bands of the Salvation Army, a flourishing musical tradition that is as strong today as it was one hundred and twenty years ago.<sup>42</sup> Both ensembles were soon to be followed by the Songster Brigades (i.e., choirs) in 1898.

General Booth encouraged women to join the brass bands, a radical notion that completely ran counter to the prevailing opinion that playing brass instruments was men’s work and men’s pleasure (Herbert, 1998: 123). However, the tambourine seemed to appeal to women more directly, even though the door to the band movement was open to them. The result was the fact that the timbrel brigades became almost exclusively female.<sup>43</sup> Even today, Timbrel Brigades tend to be comprised solely of women, whereas the bands are often mixed.<sup>44</sup>

## Timbrel Brigades History

There are three stages in the history of the Timbrel Brigades: *circa* 1880 to the war years; the 1950s, led by Mr. Athol England; and then the 1970s, when a revival of his choreographies took place (Arnold email: October 2003).

In the first stage of development the performance practices of the timbrelists were rudimentary. Ms. Arnold believes that they may have consisted of only one or two rhythmic patterns comprised of simple strikes and shakes. The Salvationists performed standing at attention in outdoor locations described by General Booth as cathedrals of the open air, during spontaneous open-air services.<sup>45</sup> Or the Lassies marched in street parades with the timbrelists and flag-bearers at the front of the procession, followed by the band, and then the members of the congregation.<sup>46</sup> Every city in Canada has a photo archive that contains photos of Salvation Army members marching down their principal streets. My home town of Vancouver, British Columbia, is no exception, as can be seen in one striking photograph of a Salvation Army band marching down Hastings Street *circa* 1907 led by a single Hallelujah Lassie looking defiant and resolute (Thirkell and Scullion, 2000: 74-76). On the following page of the same book, Mrs. Hannah Greatrex (née Lynes), one of the founders of the Vancouver Salvation Army, is seen in a photographic portrait of 1943, holding a tambourine with a look of quiet pride on her face.

In addition to accompanying rousing songs and marches in their outdoor ministries, the tambourines were used to collect offerings. The tambourines were held out like baskets and taken around by the timbrelists to collect donations.<sup>47</sup> Collecting on behalf of the poor and ministering to destitute street people in the 1910s and 1920s put the Salvation Army in direct conflict with the International Workers of the World (the ‘Wobblies’), who believed that the poor should be rallied and politicized, not placated with hand-outs and pacified with promises of redemption and acceptance of life as it is. There are several parody songs created by members of the Wobblies criticizing the passive agenda of the Salvation Army and its music-makers.<sup>48</sup> Another group that the Salvation Army wished to distance themselves from were the suffragettes, because of the latter’s overt political nature and rabble-rousing tactics, which reflected badly on the women in the Salvation Army, and also their unusual role

as preachers, still usually seen at this time as an occupation reserved solely for men.

Even today, older Salvationist women spontaneously play tambourines during the music portions of the Sunday services at the Salvation Army temples, using the same rudimentary techniques mentioned above. I have spoken with many members of various Canadian Salvation Army congregations and they all have fond memories of the musical outbursts of spontaneous percussion by the older women. They play their tambourines while seated in a pew, or even standing in the aisles. (Saskatoon informant, June 2003).

In the early 1950s, thanks to the inspiration of Mr. England and others, the technique of shaking and striking the tambourine greatly expanded into choreographed gestures. Instructional materials were prepared, with graded lessons and discussions about brigade leadership qualities and performance concerns (Arnold, n. d.; England, n. d.). England and Arnold developed hand and arm choreographies that require the players to perform cheironomic patterns similar to music conductors but far more complex, all the while striking or shaking the tambourine in various unison rhythms. These aural and visual patterns are used to accompany marches during street parades, but they are principally designed for indoor band concerts.<sup>49</sup> One or up to a dozen performers dressed in Salvation Army white blouses and black skirts stand at attention in front of a band on stage. They trace patterns and perform percussion motifs to accompany the band's performances of marches or even complex fantasias for band, complete with tempo and mood changes, expressed in the percussion patterns and the actions of the tambourines. Each woman mirrors the next, so that all the motion is in unison. Ms. Arnold firmly believes that a polished timbrel ensemble makes the music visible, just like ballet.

In the 1970s, the technique and discipline of the staged timbrel brigades have been adopted by the next generation in a kind of revival atmosphere, but the revival is not whole-hearted, according to my informants.

Young women enjoy the spectacle of the massed timbrel performances and are drawn to the discipline because it is perceived to be fun, good recreation, and an excellent avenue to participate in fellowship. Playing the tambourine has a positive and activist history, as I have already outlined. One added advantage described by Ms. Arnold (with a wink of an eye) is that when

young women are attracted to the Salvation Army for whatever purpose (such as participation in Timbrel Brigades), young men are usually not far behind.

However, the choreographed performances receive mixed reviews from the congregations. Older members are somewhat sceptical about the spiritual value of the performances, wondering if the elaborate gestures are done simply for the pleasure of performance, and not for the glory of God.<sup>50</sup> Playing tambourines in general is seen by some young Salvationist women as old-fashioned, and they worry about outsiders' perceptions. Timbrel brigades are losing favour in some locations but not others. General Eva Burrows (Rtd) described "the phenomenal development of timbrel playing in...Africa. There men and boys play as well as women and girls, and their rhythms are awe-inspiring. They use complex African rhythms, to church songs and choruses. At African SA Congress gatherings, I have seen as many as a thousand women playing the timbrel together, and this is spectacular." (Burrows correspondence: March 25, 2007).

In Greater Vancouver there is no timbrel activity whatsoever, despite the encouragement and workshop development conducted by Ms. Arnold in 1989 at the Cariboo Hill Temple. It seems that some members have affectionate memories of their participation in Timbrel Brigades but do not seem keen to keep it alive. Yet in the North York area of Toronto young women (between the ages of 20 and 30) are reviving half-forgotten memories of timbrel playing and are discussing among themselves whether they should go the next step and have regular practices.

## Conclusion

By accident or design, the invocation of the biblical Miriam by the Timbrel Brigades of the Salvation Army is in harmony with the long and gender-specific history of the tambourine, beginning with the frame drum in West Asia, Greece and Rome in BCE, followed by the migrant women of Rom, who found homes and opportunities to make their music throughout the Mediterranean world, and then its diffusion throughout the economic classes of pre-modern Europe. One locus for all of this activity seems to have been southern Italy, in the hands of the female tarantella dancers.

It is not only the association with gender that is at the heart of this diffusion, but also the sense of rebellion against patriarchal restrictions, and



the discovery of a musical and mimetic language that addresses female empowerment, emotion and freedom of physical expression. Miriam has a special place in feminist literature because she was a prophet in her own right, rather than an adjunct to a male prophet. This boldness of spirit is best seen in her exchange with her brother

Moses when she questions his claim that only he, and by implication, other males, can be the sole spokesperson of God. (Numbers 12. See Ramsay, 2003). The feisty reputation of Miriam perfectly suited the women who joined the Salvation Army and took up the tambourine.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The official tambourine of the Salvation Army can be seen in the catalogue of the Salvation Army's retail outlet called Salvationist Publishing and Supplies Ltd. ([sps-shop.com](http://sps-shop.com)).

<sup>2</sup> See Veronica Doubleday, "The Frame Drum in the Middle East: Women, Musical Instruments and Power," in *Ethnomusicology* volume 25, number 4 (1999), pp. 101-34, Carol Meyers, "Drum-Dance-Song Ensemble," in *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions*, edited by Kimberly Marshall (Boston MA, USA: Northeastern University Press, 1993), and especially Layne Redmond, *When the Drummers Were Women: a Spiritual History of Rhythm* (New York, NY, USA: Random House, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> The tambourine should not be confused with the French *tambourin*, a drum that accompanies a recorder-like pipe called a *galoubet*, common to Provence. The drum was the inspiration for several French baroque lively, duple-time dance forms called *Tambourin*.

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<sup>4</sup> I use the word “unremarkable” advisedly, because I have experienced some amazing performances of tambourine music in my role as a national Winds and Percussion examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music, Canada, and my other life as an ethnomusicology instructor at the School of Music of the University of British Columbia.

<sup>5</sup> For an example of the study of the everyday by the Milton Keynes centre for the study of Culture, Media, and Identities, see Mackay, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> The Salvation Army also has Songster Brigades, which are choirs. The use of military terms and concepts like “brigade” and “army” is quite conscious and was actively encouraged by the founders who identified themselves as the soldiers of God. The brass bands of the Salvation Army, perhaps the most famous musical aspect of the organization, were meant to evoke the military bands of the nineteenth century. See “God’s Perfect Minstrels: The Bands of the Salvation Army,” by Trevor Herbert, in *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, edited by Trevor Herbert (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 187-216.

<sup>7</sup> The Santa Ana Salvation Army and its timbrelists always lead the Tournament of Roses parade on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The parade precedes the Rose Bowl football game, perhaps the most famous football game in the United States. The Santa Ana Salvationists with guest players and timbrelists have had the privilege of heading the parade since it was founded in 1920.

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately the Greater Vancouver Timbrel Brigade is no longer functioning, as of 2007.

<sup>9</sup> I use the term *brass band* advisedly, because the more proper term is *silver band*. Traditional bands in England comprised solely of brass winds prefer to play instruments that have been coated in silver, rather than the clear lacquer that shows the brass body of the instrument.

<sup>10</sup> Ms. Arnold emphasises in her booklet that the timbrelists should “SMILE!!” instead of being engrossed in their technique, a common problem in performances of classical music as well. (Arnold, nd: 15).

<sup>11</sup> <http://joyministry.com>.

<sup>12</sup> On page 23 he also credits “one of the original booklets sold in the SA trades years ago – no longer in print”. This booklet is likely the one written by Athol England, sadly out of print as he says.

<sup>13</sup> Apparently these kinds of parades in the community were a regular occurrence in downtown Toronto and Hamilton as recent as the 1960s. Photographic evidence clearly points to the same activity in Vancouver as well. Spontaneous street parades were a fundamental component of the Salvation Army in its early history.

<sup>14</sup> At the end of the parade, in the church hall, one of the women showed me a huge blister that she had acquired during her vigorous marching performance.

<sup>15</sup> This kind of research is also being actively pursued in non-Western cultures. One of the most interesting examples I have encountered is a series of essays about women’s historical roles in East Asia, titled *Women and Confucian Cultures*, edited by Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> The musics of female Other were explored in two sets of pioneering essays compiled by Beverley Diamond and Pirkko Moisala (2000), and Ellen Koskoff (1987).

<sup>17</sup> Existentialist philosophers were the first to methodically address the idea of the authentic self in terms of authenticity and alienation, although the threads of the subject run all through Western philosophical history from the time of the Greeks. See the collected works of Walter Kaufmann (1921-1980), and *Irrational Man*, by William Barrett (New York, NY, USA: Doubleday Anchor, 1962). Theodor W. Adorno brought the discussion of the authentic self to the modern stage by theorizing the existence of pseudo-individualisation, the dark result of the culture industry, especially advertising. See *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston, IL, USA: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> For a cogent and detailed examination of the fallacy of the concept of “noble savage”, see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Constitutional Project For Corsica, Part 1, drafted in 1765.

<sup>20</sup> Tambourines are first seen in portraits by Jean Raoux of the near-naked dancer Mlle Françoise Prevost in 1723, portraying a Greek Bacchant, and an anonymous painting of 1730, featuring a seated woman in billowing dress and Greek warrior helmet, emulating Minerva.

<sup>21</sup> In the 1723 painting of Mlle Prevost, above, we see the instrument that is the opposite of the lyre, the Dionysian double-pipe, double-reed aulos, accompanying the bacchantes’ dance.

<sup>22</sup> In the early years of the nineteenth century women also discovered another kind of freedom in the form of the neo-classical chemise derived from Greek and Roman statuary and painting. This casual and sometimes provocative dress was censored decades later, as women found themselves in highly restrictive clothing, bustles and corsets. This shift seems to have occurred at about the same time as women were being pushed back into the background to become accoutrements of the male society.

<sup>23</sup> It is interesting for a moment to contemplate the term “nymphomaniac” in the light of this paper, which offers a sympathetic portrayal of sexual freedom, rather than the classical interpretation.

<sup>24</sup> Ramsey Burt (2001: 44-55) debates the ambivalent place of the male *danseur* in the light of homosexuality, real or imagined, in classical dance.

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<sup>25</sup> Character dancing is still a feature of classical dance, appearing in the various grades of developing technique in the international dance academies such as the Royal Academy of Dance and subject to examination towards graduation as a qualified dancer-teacher.

<sup>26</sup> Guest (1970: 97) provides an excellent illustration of Elssler with castanets, painted by Bouvier and now located in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>27</sup> See for example the tambourine player-dancers in the painting by Tischbein (Rasmussen, 2005: 9 of 11). Another classic hand-operated percussion instrument of female dancers are the miniature *zil* (cymbals) played by West Asian female dancers in *raqs sharqi* (eastern dance), *raqs baladi* (folk dance), cabaret, or belly-dancing. The miniature cymbals appear on the tambourine as well.

<sup>28</sup> For an example, see volume 6, page 105 of the *International Encyclopaedia of Dance*, edited by Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press)

<sup>29</sup> Saltarellas share some of the same *cachet* and musical devices as the tarantellas. Berlioz wrote in 1831 during his sojourn in Subiaco, Italy, that he had the great pleasure of encountering peasants dancing a saltarello to the accompaniment of tambourines. See his Memoirs, chapter 38, at [www.hberlioz.com/Italy/subiaco-village.htm](http://www.hberlioz.com/Italy/subiaco-village.htm).

<sup>30</sup> See "Barbarini's Tambourine—Who was Barbarini?" in CDSS (American) Country Dance and Song Society News 161 (July/August 2001), 7–8. She was painted with tambourine in hand as she is dancing, by Antoine Pesne, *circa* 1745, a member of the *fête galante* school of French painters founded by Watteau.

<sup>31</sup> There appears to be some controversy about the textual source of the dance notation. One internet source, <http://www.earthlydelights.com.au/english4.htm#1>, claims it is found in John Walsh's fourth volume of *The Compleat Country Dancing-Master* (17??), which is likely a publication of Walsh's successor, William Randall, who published 1,700 of Walsh's country dances in seven volumes. Another internet source, <http://gfhandel.org/countrydances.htm>, places the source in Walsh's *Caledonian Country Dances*, volume 4, *circa* 1735. To make matters slightly more complicated, a second country dance called "The Tambourine Dance" is found in the *Caledonian* collection, volume 1, book 3.

<sup>32</sup> A listing of the treatises on how to play the tambourine is found in Rice, 1988: 16-23. One of Dale's patented tambourines is on exhibit at the Horniman Museum in London, England.

<sup>33</sup> Steibelt is best known for losing a musical duel with Beethoven in 1800. They were each challenged to improvise on a given tune from Steibelt, and Beethoven's extemporizations were considered so superior that Steibelt left the house of Count von Fries in disgrace.

<sup>34</sup> An overview of history of dancing masters in Europe is found in the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Brainard, 1998: 2: 336-40). The most complete account of dancing masters in England is provided by Richard Leppert (1993: 71-106) in the context of sexual politics. Examples of the music and choreography that was taught by the later English dancing masters who travelled the far-flung counties of England is described in a chapter titled "Performance Dance: amateur and professional," in Jewitt, 2000: 63-69. Aside from dances that required vigorous body mimesis and even theatrics, step-dancing with or without clogs was another popular pastime taught by dancing masters. The tradition was so popular that it spawned national competitions. See *ibid.*: 79-98 for examples of dance steps and a brief history. A more extensive discussion is found in Pilling, 1998: 5: 694-99. Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of competitive step-dancing, between dancing masters in Ireland, is the delightful children's illustrated book *Flying Feet: A Story of Irish Dance*, by Anna Marlis Burgard, illustrated by Leighanne Dees (San Francisco, USA: Chronicle Books, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> The dance is described as a gypsy gavotte, which is particularly interesting in light of the fact that gypsies were a common and not entirely welcome sight throughout England.

<sup>36</sup> A second possibility for the source of minstrel tambourine is the Carnival celebration in French Louisiana. A third source may be the Black gospel singers mentioned earlier.

<sup>37</sup> The illustration and earlier pronouncement was spoofed by several contemporary newspapers, with the General holding a tambourine while appearing dour and very out of place. See R. G. Moyles, 2000: 9-10. Miriam is popular among some Jewish and Christian feminists because of her outspokenness, as recorded in the Bible and the Torah. Also, she was one of the few female prophets. For one unusual example among countless others, see *Miriam's Cup: a Passover Story*, a children's story book by Fran Manushkin (Scholastic US, 1998). For a comprehensive website devoted to radical interpretations of Miriam, see <http://www.timbrelsandtorahs.com/connections/links.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Some modern editions of the Bible use the word "tambourine" in place of "timbrel". However, it should probably be "frame-drum", "hand-drum" or, more specifically, "daff" or "daira" (or another one of the multitude of variant spellings of these two words). The West Asian hand-drum is a round, shallow frame drum which may or may not have jingles attached to it, making it directly related to the tambourine.

<sup>39</sup> The musical setting was described as a "derangement" by "Dotted Crotchet" because it barely resembled the original composition by Avison, a fact even admitted by Thomas Moore (1902: 24).

<sup>40</sup> Legend has it that the first timbrelists were the wife and two daughters of Captain Rothwell of the West Bromwich Corps (Mansfield, Nottingham) in 1881 after seeing the illustration in the *War Cry*.

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<sup>41</sup> The most famous marching song of the Salvation Army is “Onward Christian Soldiers”, with lyrics by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, and music by Sir Arthur Sullivan. It was adopted by the Salvation Army in 1914, although it had been written in 1871.

<sup>42</sup> For more information about the brass band movement, see Trevor Herbert’s essay “God’s Perfect Minstrels: the Bands of the Salvation Army”, in *The British Brass Band: a Musical and Social History*, edited by Trevor Herbert (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>43</sup> Even though the timbrel brigades appeared to be the prerogative of women, men were also welcomed in their ranks, and even became major innovators, such as Tony James and Major England. In an email dated 13Nov06, Mr. James observed “to my surprise I found quite a few males in the UK also playing the tambourine...as a regular activity, not just a novel experience as some proclaim”.

<sup>44</sup> See plate 5, “Captain and Mrs. Case and Daughters (Portsmouth, 1880)”, in Sandall: v. II, verso 117. Informants have told me that women will often quite happily learn brass instruments and fill in where needed, but there seems to be an understanding that men are first in line, if available, when band functions are announced.

<sup>45</sup> One can get a glimpse of this stage in a video produced by the National Film Board titled *Salvation*, written and directed by Rosemary House, 2002. It is shot in downtown Toronto, with a few moments of historical footage that has brief snapshots of timbrelists, unfortunately not playing but simply holding their timbrels.

<sup>46</sup> The first and most famous illustration of the Salvation Army on the march dates from 1880 and shows the White-chapel Corps band on parade on Ratcliff Highway (Sandall: v. II, 116, 133, plate 2).

<sup>47</sup> One can see an echo of this tradition in the Salvation Army collection kettles at Christmas. Before there were kettles overseen by individual volunteers shaking jingle bells or chiming a school bell, small brass ensembles drawn from the full brass band of the Salvation Army would gather on street corners to collect Christmas offerings. One of my informants suggested that the Christmas bands never had timbrelists accompany them.

<sup>48</sup> See Edith Fowke and Joe Glazer, *Songs of Work and Protest* (New York, NY, USA: 1973), for a parody song that ridicules the work of the Salvation Army. “The starvation army they play, they sing and they clap and they pray ‘Til they get all your coin on the drum, then they’ll tell you when you’re on the bum, You will eat, by and by, In that glorious land above the sky; Work and pray, live on hay, You’ll get pie in the sky when you die.”

<sup>49</sup> I was fortunate to see a full-blown parade of Salvationists in and around the North York Temple on June 20, 2004. Traffic was stopped by the Metro Police and neighbours gathered outside their homes to see the remarkable sight of a complete brass band in full sound, followed by some members of the congregation, and preceded by flag-bearers and about ten young women playing virtuosic tambourine routines. Later, they showed me the blisters on their hands in order to illustrate the point that participation in the Timbrel Brigade was not for the faint of heart.

<sup>50</sup> This debate also takes place in the brass bands. Some Salvation Army bands are famous for never playing in public, even though they comprise superlative musicians. Other bands take a different view, hoping that their public performances will draw new members of the public to their Sunday services and ministry.

