

Portrait of a Composer: Creation of the David Kaplan Thematic Catalogue

By Hailey Mullock

Introduction

The primary objective of this project is to create a thematic catalogue of the works of the Saskatchewan composer Dr. David Kaplan (1923-2015) in order to produce a record and summary of his complete compositional works.

Dr. Kaplan began working at the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in 1960, and became a driving force behind the creation of an independent Department of Music in 1964. He served as the head of this department for nearly 20 years. Dr. Kaplan was also deeply involved in the music culture of Saskatoon, and Saskatchewan..

A thematic catalogue is a detailed catalogue, including a music incipit, that is “a powerful research and bibliographic tool.” (Brook and Viano, ix)

The project involved hand-searching primary and secondary sources to extract compositional details. These details were recorded and organized in order to allow researchers to learn more about Dr. Kaplan’s compositions.

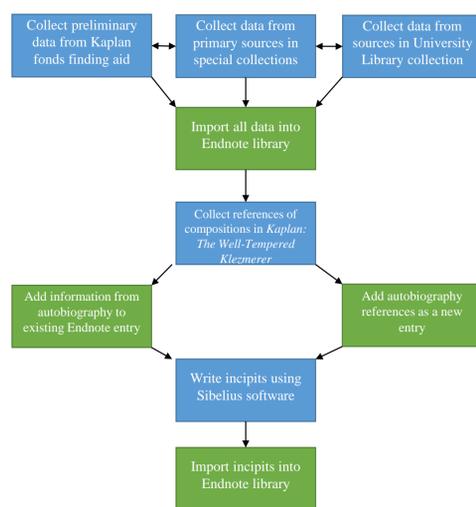
Data Collection

The collection of compositions is from four main sources: the University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, the University Library Collection, Kaplan’s autobiography “Kaplan: The Well-Tempered Klezmerer,” and Klezmer compositions on loan from Brian Unverricht.

The following information was collected from each piece:

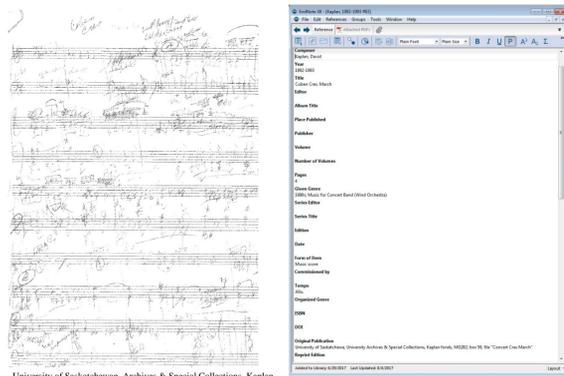
- Title
- Instrumentation
- Tempo
- Score type
- # of pages
- Place of composition
- Date of Composition
- Premier performance
- Dedication
- Event written for
- Publication information
- Original MS location
- Printed and published copies location
- Additional information about documents relating to composition
- Information from autobiography
- Genre given to each piece by Kaplan
- Music incipit

Work Flow



Challenges & Limitations

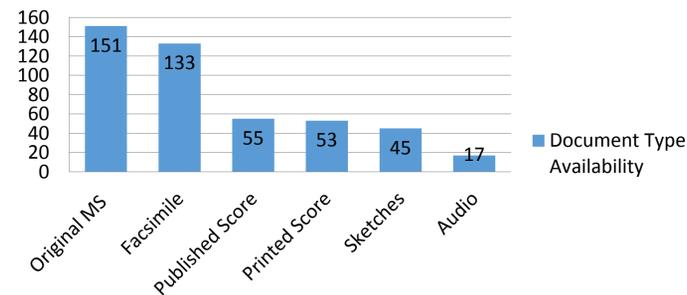
- Legibility of hand-written manuscripts
- Determining whether they are original compositions or hand-written copies
- Kaplan has multiple aliases
- Compositions sometimes missing titles
- One piece in multiple locations
- Collection is organized according to Kaplan’s own organizational system. Resulting in difficulty finding pieces and having to go through the collection multiple times.
- Limited to the hours and space of the Archives & Special Collections



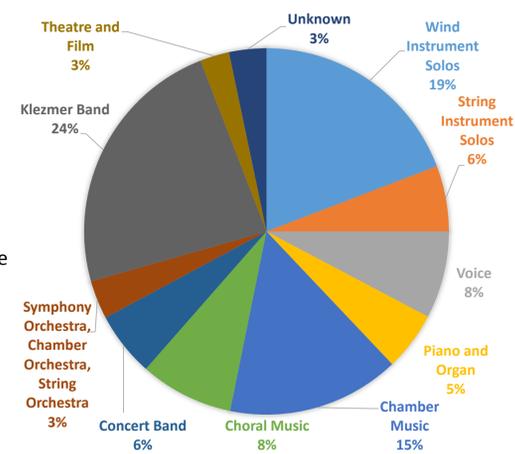
“Coben Crescent March” An example of a difficult to decipher manuscript alongside the completed Endnote entry.
*Coben Crescent is the street Dr. Kaplan lived on.

Results

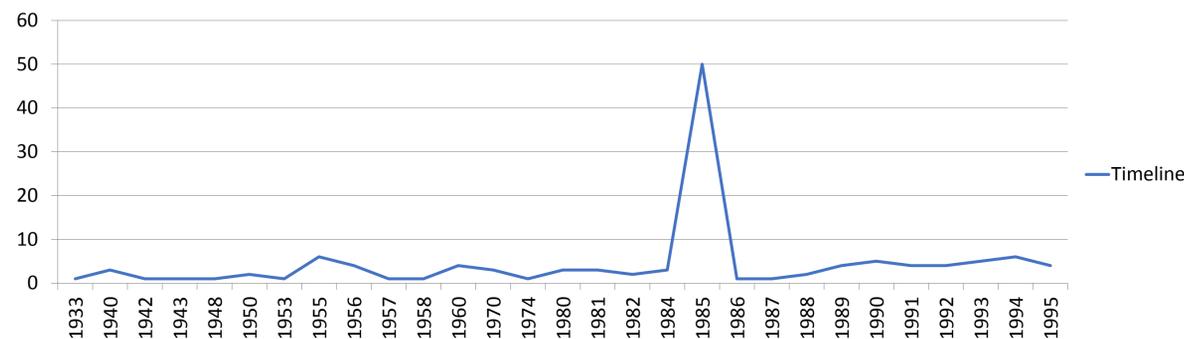
Document Type Availability



Genres of Compositions



Timeline of When Compositions Were Written



Discussion

- Of the total 506 compositions only 268 are dated. As a result the timeline only accounts for 52.9% of all the compositions currently recorded
- Of the 506 pieces 195 are mentioned only in *Kaplan: The Well-Tempered Klezmer* and the physical compositions are missing.
- In the timeline there is a spike in the number of compositions in 1985. In 1985 Dr. Kaplan took a mini-sabbatical from January to June to work on two major projects: 1) studying university programs in the American Midwest; 2) writing compositions for young wind players. This sabbatical also accounts for the large percentage (19%) of compositions categorized as Wind Instrument Solos.
- Klezmer compositions make up 24% of the total compositions. Dr. Kaplan formed the Saskatoon Klezmer Band in the mid-1980s. Dr. Kaplan composed or arranged all of the compositions for the band, making a significant contribution to Klezmer music in the province. The large amount of compositions in this genre may also be due to what compositions we could find. Brian Unverricht, a member of the Klezmer Band, gave us access to his own collection of Klezmer Band compositions written by Kaplan.

“And then, almost by accident, I started playing klezmer myself.”
- Kaplan, 238.

On using pseudonym’s for the Festival of Faith:
“ I didn’t like the idea of my name being flashed all over the program more than once, nor was I trying to feature my own compositions at these festivals. I just had to get things done.”
-Kaplan, 269.

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- Dr. Kaplan often wrote under a pseudonym. Currently there are 11 known pseudonyms that Kaplan used. Daniel K. Laban or D.K. Laban is the name that is used most frequently. Each alias always uses Dr. Kaplan’s initials D. L. K.
- Many of the compositions are available in MS format. In order for them to be made accessible they may need to undergo further transcription.

*There are a number of Klezmer compositions that still need to be recorded.

Conclusions

There is not a comprehensive catalogue of Dr. Kaplan’s works. As the majority of Kaplan’s works have been previously uncatalogued this project facilitates access to Dr. Kaplan’s compositions for research and performance purposes. The project fills a gap in the research literature on music from Saskatchewan.

The next step will be publishing the thematic catalogue online to make the data more accessible.



“Interestingly, I never expected my career and life to go as it has gone. [...] It has been a good life in Saskatoon. Were there disappointments along the way? Of course. I never did get that big symphony job. But as I think about it now, if I had, would I have been able to do the wide variety of thing I’m doing now? Probably not. Did I ever plan to teach at a university? Not really. Did I ever plan to be involved in the discipline of Music Education? No. It was performance, theory, composition and conducting that interested me. But in retrospect, I see that coming to Canada provided me with all those things and more. [...] I am at peace with my career and my life.”
Kaplan, 308, 310

Tools & Resources

- Sibelius, music notation software
- Endnote, bibliographic tool
- University of Saskatchewan Library Catalogue
- MG 282 – David Kaplan fonds finding aid

References

- Brook, Barry S., and Richard Viano, *Thematic Catalogues in Music: An Annotated Bibliography*, Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1997.
- Kaplan, David L. and Darlene Polachic. *Kaplan: The Well-Tempered Klezmerer*, 2012.
- Lewis Foreman. *Information Sources in Music*. Munchen: K.G. Saur Verlag GmbH, 2003.
- Sampsel, Laurie J., *Music Research: A Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc.

To learn more about David Kaplan and the collection:
<http://libguides.usask.ca/music/kaplan>

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Other Contributors: Brian Unverricht, Director of Saskatoon Klezmer Band

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