Applauding the Victorian Music Hall
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The Victorian music hall must be treated as a unique form of entertainment, as it recast relations between the popular and the people. It offered audiences a diverse programme, which other institutions were unable, or unwilling, to provide. Once music hall embedded itself into the cultural landscape of Victorian Britain, it became an essential component of life that provided individuals, including women, with a way to articulate their identities. This analysis will pay specific attention to the development of the music hall in London, as it primarily thrived in that city, but claims will also be made about its presence in Scotland and other regions. Programmes presented and commented on social and political trends by addressing the concerns of working-class life. Although it was a community-based institution born 'from below', it eventually spread to include the middle class, as it was subjected to a process of commercialization[i]. Music halls became a socially disputed institution because of their cultural dominance and the challenge they posed to 'legitimate' forms of theatre. As a result, the form of entertainment created specifically for and by the 'common' people, ceased to exist. Music halls transformed the social, urban, and cultural environment in Victorian Britain. The social relationship between and among working and middle class cultures shaped and was therefore shaped by this process. The primary material from this era reveals the powerful influence that music hall had on the lives of all those involved, both throughout the nineteenth-century, as well as within twentieth-century contexts. Above all else, music hall culture reveals that Victorian Britain did not deserve its reputation for prudery, as it sought out pleasure and was "quite joyous in its pursuit"[ii].

The seeds of music hall culture were sewn into the cultural fabric of Britain through a multi-step process that started in smaller venues. There exists no official beginning to the rise of music hall culture, as music entertainment had been apart of people's lives for centuries. A form of music hall culture began with pleasure gardens in the fifteenth century. This was a new amusement venue where audiences had to pay money to watch musical performances[iii]. It was

not until the 1830s and 1840s that the beginning of music hall emerged within the assembly rooms of small pubs and coffee houses, especially within large manufacturing towns. These places began to set up so called, 'music saloons', which offered entertainment in addition to alcohol. This entertainment consisted of music, singing in character, many forms of dancing, juggling, and tumbling by specially engaged performers. At these assemblies, men could gather, drink, and sing in good company to their hearts' content. The primary characteristic of these assemblies was the upholding of an atmosphere of 'good-fellowship'[iv].

When tavern owners began employing professional entertainers, local unpaid amateurs continued to perform in places that became known as 'free-and-easies'. There was no entrance free, refreshments were sold, and a happy 'go as you please' entertainment existed for budding amateurs[v]. The three largest venues by mid-century, the Casino, the Victoria Saloon, and the Polytechnic Hall in Manchester, enjoyed average audiences amounting to twenty-five thousand weekly[vi]. These singing saloons in turn gave birth to the music hall. The passing of the Theatre Act of 1843 is considered to be the major stepping-stone for music hall development. With a dramatic license from Lord Chamberlain, the Act removed the monopoly of drama from the patent theatres, and offered saloons the chance of becoming legitimate theatres. Some of these saloons became theatres, like the Grecian and the Britannia, while others became the early music halls[vii].

Once music hall culture experienced a rapid increase in popularity, it firmly embedded itself in the cultural framework of Britain and became an essential component of Victorian life. Charles Morton, is considered to be "the father of the halls", as he exploited the new opportunities of the fast growing talent at his disposal, and acquired a license in 1849 to open the first music hall. Canterbury Hall was such a success that Morton became increasingly inspired to build larger more luxurious buildings to house all of his concerts[viii]. Willson Disher, both a performer and spectator of the halls wrote: "these Saturday nights at the Canterbury Arms, by the railway arch in Westminster Bridge Road, are so popular that the public house is crowded out. At the Canterbury, music is taken very seriously"[ix]. By 1850, London could already boast of a diverse and complex entertainment industry. Hence, music halls were forced to fight for their existence in the face of theatres large and small, pleasure gardens, concert rooms, and song/supper rooms. One of the major difficulties was to establish a distinct image for the halls,

since their programme had a great deal in common with rival establishments. The meaning given to the term 'music hall' in the middle of the century did not mean a venue for variety entertainment, but rather one with a general purpose and concert hall[x]. This changed towards the end of the century. Its songs were the popular currency of the era, played on barrel organs, sung by buskers in the street, by workers in the workplace, on outings and holidays, and sold as sheet music to be sung at home around the piano. The 'comic song' is a significant component of the 'genuine music hall', as it gave opportunities to men to be humorous, even though they might be completely uneducated[xi]. Its humor and styles penetrated the Victorian and Edwardian mind, shaping ways of thinking about pleasure and entertainment, as well as providing much of the vocabulary for everyday life[xii]. This indicates that above all else, people found a place in which to become articulate in the music hall.

Historians generally agree that British music hall culture was created by and for the working class when it first emerged mid-century. Dagmar Kift explains that in the early decades of the nineteenth-century, music halls catered predominantly to working class audiences of both sexes, as well as to members of the lower middle class. By the 1890s, music halls developed into variety theatres that catered to all classes of society. The music hall has thus been characterized as an institution that was born 'from below'. It was regarded as a vital element in working-class culture because it catered mainly to them and played an important part in their everyday life. It offered them a variety of attractions and amenities, which were not provided for by other institutions. It was somewhere they could meet for companionship and entertainment without outside interference; a place where social trends and values could be presented and commented on by performers and audiences alike, and where social identities were shaped[xiii]. Historian Richard Baker also argues that music hall culture emerged as a response to working-class environments. He explains that for the working-class, life was wretched in mid-Victorian England, and thus entertainment provided the only escape from their grim reality[xiv]. Opinions sharply diverge over whether music hall continued to reflect working-class political and social values during its subsequent commercial development.

From its beginning, music hall was a socially disputed institution. Conflict was the main feature of the first decades of music hall history (1840-1865), until the halls became socially

acceptable in the 1890s. According to Kift, music halls were one of the most controversial institutions of English working-class culture[xv]. They were conspicuous for several reasons, and quickly became the centre of people's interest because of the fact that they introduced a different, more controversial form of entertainment. The main source of irritation was not their architectural dominance, but their cultural dominance. Religious reform groups were especially against music halls, as it was believed that they diverted the attention of workers from the alternative leisure opportunities that these groups offered. Most serious of all, the values exhibited by the halls were anything but the Victorian values of hard work, sobriety, and respect for marriage and the family[xvi]. Therefore, the top of English society rejected the music hall. The Royal family did not expose themselves to it at all[xvii]. Social dispute concerning music hall culture was stronger in London than in the regions, due to its strict economic, social, and political structures. Questions and concerns about prostitution in London music halls were also taken much more seriously, as its role as the country's capital city was to set an example by upholding Victorian values[xviii]. By 1875, there was anti-music hall hysteria in Scotland where critics were dismayed at the moral effects of some of the cities free and easies. Scottish religious institutions gave evidence that "young women, so scantily clad as to be almost naked, danced upon stages before crowds of men, sitting drinking beer and spirits and smoking cigars and pipes; whilst men sang songs both blasphemous and filthy, containing, as they did, suggestions of a coarse and indecent nature"[xix]. There existed strict guidelines that music halls were forced to comply with, as outlined by *A Handy Book on the Law of the Drama and Music*, written in 1864. The laws imposed a penalty on Sunday performances and punished all actors who performed without belonging to a specific company. Anyone using a house, room, garden, or venue for public dancing, music, or public entertainment in the cities of London without a license had to be arrested[xx]. These sources indicate that there was a strict moral and social code that people had to follow in regards to entertainment. It is possible that music hall experienced such social dispute because of their status as a working-class form of culture.

Contemporary politics were integrated into music hall culture through the many performances that embodied mainstream popular sentiment and cultural stereotypes. Its performers mimicked royalty and politicians, offering satire and parody of the leaders of the British Empire, while ridiculing middle-class patrician values. This provided a medium for the

expression of national as well as local identities. They were at the centre of passionate social and political disputes in part because they set up their own alternatives in opposition to middle-class interpretations of 'Victorian values'[xxi]. The songs themselves were also very political. For example, one particular song expressed the concerns of public housing in London through the lyrics, "Oh! It really is a werry pretty garden, and Chingford to the eastward could be seen; if it wasn't for the houses in between!"[xxii]. Prominent characters included the cockney 'coster' comedian, the 'blacked-up nigger minstrel', 'hebrew' comedian, and the 'scotch comic'[xxiii]. These characters, based on cultural stereotypes within society, were controversial because they proved the political nature of music hall culture. Disher writes that 'burnt cork', which was a male performer dressed up in black face was thought to be seen, not heard. This increasingly became untrue, as songs that were orchestrated, the banjo, and the tambourine, and the many other things that are seen as typical of the British music hall, increasingly included 'burnt cork'[xxiv]. This stereotypical image that played a significant role in music hall entertainment, had in turn played a role in proliferating racist images and attitudes. Character representations of the Scottish man presented him as someone who kept up the traditions and customs of his homeland and put them on public display. Paul Maloney argues that the 'scotch comic' had an uncomfortable cultural resonance in Scotland, as it parodied the drunken, kilt-clad Scot[xxv]. In *Winkles and Champagne,* a primary account of an audience member argues that, "Scots who take to the halls start with an advantage. Possessed of a national character that is notoriously contrary, they are born with the flavor of comedy in their mouths. All their traditions mingle glamour and mockery"[xxvi]. Not only did these music halls showcase musical talent, but they also displayed images that could be considered discriminatory.

The everyday life of the working class became the major theme of nineteenth-century music hall songs. This theme was celebrated in great detail and commented on ironically, realistically, and sentimentally. Historian Peter Bailey explains that the success of music hall in the nineteenth-century can be attributed to their choice to use features from pre-industrial folk culture, such as cultural influences from the pub and street entertainment, while adapting them to the parameters of new urban worlds[xxvii]. The music hall programme as a whole varied considerably, as every performance consisted of circus members, music and theatre, information, and innovations[xxviii]. Songs also dealt with broader themes of urban living, such as the benefits of

public transport or the drawbacks of bureaucracy, but most of all how to turn any difficulties to your own advantage. Here, the local audiences were confronted with familiar problems that they could laugh about together. Although music hall songs grieved over the social injustices in the country, they made little attempt to propose changes to the status quo. This was because social classification within the Victorian age was accepted as a fact, and anyone who attempted to break out of his or her class was a valid source for mockery[xxix]. Baker teaches us that in 1865, the sheer nonsense of one of the most popular songs at the time, 'Slap bang, here we are again!' seemed to attract everyone. Charles Dickens wrote about the song in his journal by stating, "Everybody, old and young, male and female, grave and gay, lively and severe, sang it or hummed it… what influence do our law-makers exercise at the present moment compared to that which is wielded by the author of this song"[xxx]. This is indicative of the power and great influence that music hall songs possessed. It also proves that the Victorians were not as prudish as their reputation suggests, as they used humor to come to terms with their different realities.

As they developed throughout the century, the urban design features of music halls varied considerably in their approach. This is confirmed by the various photographs and sketches of music halls that display their increasing grandeur as the century progressed. Some appeared to be part of the factory building that they were attached to, while others were built with arches and columns with an elaborate and detailed stage, set, and balcony. The London Pavilion, built in 1885 was one of London's famous music halls, as it encompassed all of these more elaborate features. The bourgeois and suburban music hall differed considerably from its more fashionable rival both externally and internally. It was generally dingier and gaudier in appearance, the entrance was covered with posters and adorned with plaster statues, and walls were lined with tarnished glass[xxxi]. Architect Frank Matcham is recognized for his modern design and construction of theatres toward the end of the century. He built the London Coliseum and the Palladium, which became two of the world's most famous variety theatres[xxxii]. *Theatre Buildings Collection* presents visual representations of various music hall venues, including a pamphlet design created in 1897 by Matcham. It proposed the development of a new building in Granville, London to house the Theatre of Varieties. From the outside it was a grand building that resembled a castle, while on the inside, it had large hanging balconies, a large stage, and an immense amount of seating, which separated the audience according to class. The architect asked

for twenty thousand pounds to build it, as the site was in a new neighborhood and the interior was promised to be distinctly 'modern'[xxxiii]. The pamphlet reveals that music halls were a major form of infrastructure in London. The fact that there is an emphasis on developing the 'modern' indicates that there was an increasing need to attract the middle and upper middle classes.

The construction of the halls was forced to undergo many structural changes throughout the century, as they began to attract middle-class audiences. As audiences grew larger, 'better' conditions became necessary. Other buildings also had to be taken over to provide communities with more space to house the music halls. A law passed in 1878 requiring the appropriate authorities in London to issue a 'certificate of sustainability' on every music hall. These surveys of buildings were intended to force the closure of many small halls, as two hundred of them around the country eventually did[xxxiv]. Some argue that closing the small music halls marked the final and complete severance of the variety stage with its old association of the tavern and the concert saloon. Historians Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson argue that the halls originally exhibited evidence of their origins, but the "last vestiges of their old connection were eventually thrown aside, as they emerged in all the splendor of their newborn glory"[xxxv]. The architect, the designer, and the decorator further accelerated these changes, as they were enlisted to alter the tawdry music hall of the past in order to give place to the theatre of varieties of the present day[xxxvi]. Backstage and technical specifications were added to the new variety theatres, as they were equipped with full-depth stages and flying facilities in contrast to the basic circumstances afforded by other halls[xxxvii]. Through these structural changes of music hall, working-class influences on this form of culture began to diminish, as they were physically built to resemble more 'appropriate' theatres. This serves to reinforce the fact that class differences played a large role in shaping the physical development of music halls in Britain.

There was a strong female influence in music hall culture, both within urban spaces and in advertising, regardless of the fact that the influence was subject to heated public debate. All literary portrayals of the halls and their performers focus on the spectacle of women assuming new and powerful roles. By the 1880s, music halls became a public space that was no longer subjected exclusively to strict male control or dominance[xxxviii]. A reporter of *The Daily Telegraph* in 1894 commented on the presence of women at The Empire music hall. The reporter

noticed that young women entered the theatre alone, more or less gorgeously dressed. When asked "do you object to women going to places of entertainment alone?" a woman theatergoer responded, "no, I think that women ought to be able to go into any assembly alone"[xxxix]. Women performers would engage in music hall tableaux, an art form that involved an abundant display of poses. Music historian Barry Faulk argues that the prime function of this was to "incite, and sell desire"[xl]. The music hall, along with the shop window, the street poster, and the picture gallery was used as a free space to produce attractive displays and 'salable' illusions of women. Striking a pose was a mode of seduction aimed at the consumer, and thus there was a considerable amount of work put into producing and embodying resonant images. By participating in posing, working class women transformed their figures into 'classical' bodies that allowed them to acquire the cultural and symbolic capital that was believed to be associated with high-status artistic achievement[xli]. A variety of advertisements showcase the biographies of women performers, in addition to photos of themselves dressed elegantly and fashionably. The purpose of this was to make known their high status as well as to attract audiences of high status[xlii]. Vesta Tilley and Marie Lloyd are examples of female performers who became controversial targets. Tilley received criticism because she preferred doing male roles exclusively, as she felt that she was better able to express herself as a male. Lloyd was a music hall singer known for adding sexually suggestive matter to the most innocent lyrics, and thus she faced clashes with guardians of morality. Her performances were significant because they articulated the disappointments of life, especially for working-class women[xliii]. Although these women were provided with the opportunity to perform, they were unable challenge Victorian ideals to the extent that male performers could.

The sale of liquor within the music hall was also a controversial subject that divided working and middle-class audiences because of their different positions regarding 'respectability'. The authorities were anxious to find a way to remove the sale of liquor from the hall, as they had done earlier in theatres. As a result, regulations required the bars to be completely cut off from the auditorium where the performers were[xliv]. In the earlier days, music halls were financed by the sale of alcohol and the entertainment was not regarded as socially acceptable. It is explained by historian Richard Baker that in these pubs, "everything was done that the most drunken imagination could suggest or that could pander most effectually to the

lowest propensities of depraved humanity"[xlv]. These new music halls made the respectable middle-classes shun older forms of music hall, and thus a clash was created between the halls and middle class reformers. An article from *The Economist*, an 1866 London newspaper, provides an overview of the issues presented with selling alcohol in the London music hall. The article explains that theatrical managers objected to the fact that music halls were governed by more lenient rules concerning the sale and consumption of refreshments (and the freedom to smoke during a performance), and asserted that such behavior was incompatible with the 'legitimate' drama for which the theatres claimed a monopoly. The writer of the article refutes this reasoning by arguing that in Shakespeare's day no such inhibitions existed, yet his productions were still deemed 'legitimate'[xlvi]. Restricting the sale of liquor was a result of the legislature's desire to control working class leisure.

The very definition of legitimate drama was a major cultural issue because it was used by critics to privilege certain forms of theatre that attracted a more prestigious audience, while excluding those forms created by the working-class, such as the early forms of music hall. Just as the relationship between social class and social attitudes were never simple, neither were the links between both kinds of theatre entertainment. The distinction between dramatic and music hall entertainment, became a subject of concern for the government. Before the 1843 act, the spoken drama had been confined to the theatres that inherited the royal letters patent, which included Drury Lane and Covent Garden. By mid-century, music halls constituted a challenge to theatres on artistic as well as social grounds, because of the fact that the best of them were comfortable, cheap, and offered a variety of entertainment that the theatre could not compete with[xlvii]. Audiences of both classes participated in dialogue about 'legitimate' versus popular entertainment. "Who'll patronize the intellectual amusement when they can go into a music hall and get rough and tumble with a song over the pipes and swipes?", asks a minstrel on stage[xlviii]. Edwin Beresford provides a primary account that defines the English as a people devoted to pleasure in all its forms, regardless of its legitimacy. He explains that "the English have been, and are, as essentially pleasure-loving as other nations, and quite as joyous in its pursuit"[xlix]. He addresses music halls by explaining: "whereas they started out as lounges, they are now legitimate successors of those earlier ones". Even altering the title of 'music hall' into 'palaces of varieties' represents the eagerness to appropriate them into a more legitimate form. This prompts

one to question how Victorians defined 'legitimate' and if they believed that the only forms of legitimate theatre were those modern styles that attracted middle-upper class audiences. This seems to be the case, as Beresford explains that the English people have grown far too sophisticated to enjoy the same form of pleasure as people did in the past[l]. The 'modern' critic would thus regard music hall in the 1850s as illegitimate, therefore also defining all entertainment specifically for and by the working class as illegitimate.

The atmosphere changed in the London music hall after 1890, as they were no longer catered exclusively to lower-middle and working-class audiences. Maloney states that "to the historian, music hall is fascinating because of the tensions created between its social agenda, its songs about and for working people in largely urban industrial contexts, and the rapid widening of its audience to the middle class. It became part of the great British social experiment"[li]. From the 1870s on, management began an attempt to improve the public image of music hall entertainment, by broadening its potential audience to include the middle classes. The auditoriums of the new 'palaces of varieties' were sub-divided into social segregated areas that allowed the different social groups in the audience to enter and leave by separate exits. Maloney explains that although the audience may have been working-class, the environment in the auditorium was directed towards middle-class sensibilities and notions of respectability[lii] Mander and Mitchenson also explain that the halls, which had been almost exclusively patronized by a class that termed themselves "the people", had by the 1890s attracted wealth, fashion, and people of distinction. The music halls also became 'palaces of amusement', where the most prominent and distinguished representatives of art, literature, and the law mingled nightly with the dramatic world[liii]. The roots of this transformation lay in part in a national campaign in the 1880s and 1890s to improve the moral tone of the entertainment. The conscious rising of music hall's moral and social tone could be primarily seen as a calculated business development to repackage a product for a different sector of the market. Altering music halls externally and internally was a pedagogical tool of the professional middle classes eager to school others in Englishness[liv]. It is significant to note that in contrast to the city, music halls within the regions maintained an element of social homogeneity, which had been its hallmark from the start[lv].

Commercialization of the form inevitably led to increasing pressure for music halls to attract middle-class audiences. There exists an extremely large selection of advertisements from this era that showcase the many performances, actors, and, especially, the music hall venues themselves. These serve as a visual representation of this cultural form, but also indicate the competition between theatres to attract audiences. This is indicated by headings on posters such as "The Palace: the handsomest music hall in Europe", or "The Bedford: all the stars, constant changes". The rise in commercialization in itself indicates that these theatres were now competing for the attention of the middle class. *The Era Almanack*, an advertising newspaper distributed throughout London and the regions in the second half of the nineteenth-century, showcases the many theatrical events and forms of entertainment that were taking place around England. One advertisement for Sun Music Hall in Knightsbridge, marketed itself as an "elegant and commodious hall and one of the finest and best ventilated in London". This advertisement also explains that it is open every evening with an "amount of talent second to none in the kingdom"[lvi]. Various names of singers and participants in the show are also provided. To attract audiences, companies marketed their unique architecture, ability to reserve seating, ticket price, and the quality of talent they planned to showcase. They were not only in competition for *any* audience, but rather a middle-class one. This would provide the venue with increased prestige throughout the entertainment scene[lvii].

Although there is varied opinion between historians on the subject, there exists evidence that conflict was created between classes as a result of the changes that music hall culture underwent to cater to a larger, middle-class audience. It was obvious that middle-class ideas of entertainment and leisure were much different than working-class ones, which privileged rest and relaxation. 'Rational recreation' was the very opposite of what was propagated in the halls in the early years, but rather the enjoyment of sex, food, drink, the right to idleness, and pure entertainment. Respectability was the central concept in the arguments of middle class reform groups. They believed that they had an exclusive right to dictate how other people should live and would not tolerate any rival influences, groups, and institutions, including the music hall. Kift argues that this created great tension between what he describes as, "the hedonistic and somewhat unbridled working class culture, and middle class social reformers organized in temperance and purity movements"[lviii]. The halls may have been critical of Victorian morality in its extreme form, and although they mocked it and viewed it ironically, they did not contest or

question Victorian values. They simply interpreted these values in their own fashion. The general consensus among historians is that class conflict was created because of the fact that the working class was denied its right to experience culture the way it wanted to.

Alternatively, many argue that music halls served as a force of social cohesion that countered society's concerns of social and moral division. Maloney argues that music hall exemplified a converging of sensibilities, as they were about a shared urban experience, which happened to be predominantly that of the lower classes. He suggests that this did not make it a working-class form in any politicized sense. He also states that it is wrong to assume that music hall lacked resonance for the middle classes. The question was whether the middle-class felt comfortable acknowledging this shared experience publicly[lix]. This presents an interesting argument, as it suggests that there was demand for the 'legitimizing' of music hall culture, not because of its foundational problems, but because of the fact that middle class audiences felt uncomfortable sharing in this unique cultural form. Maloney explains that music hall appealed to all classes because of its ideas of community and social wellbeing. It was vested equally in individual experience and collective responses to the transition to urban industrial living. By reasserting these older social values, music hall brought about a healing convergence of sensibilities that helped counter the fragmentation and division of early industrial society[lx]. David Cheshire argues that the cult of personality, a distinct social influence that emerged from music hall, also contributed to the convergence of class differences, as all audiences established a common relationship through their genuine interest in the lives of performers[lxi].

As the new century dawned, social conditions existed that provoked a change in popular entertainment and a decrease in the amount of interest in music hall entertainment. With the rise of the South African War, new freedom was being experienced, and Victorian public attitudes towards entertainment were changing as England moved into the Edwardian era. The middle classes were ready for a family entertainment that was free from the taint of vulgarity and robust vigor that kept them away from the music hall[lxii]. The moving picture played a large role in drawing audiences away from both touring melodrama in the theatre, as well as from the halls themselves. The new generation performer, conscious of his or her newfound dignity, chose to become a variety artist instead of a music hall performer. Wireless radio and various cultural

influences such as cabaret and ragtime added a distraction to the halls and many grand theatres were closed down as a result[lxiii]. Maloney explains that the scale of the decline in music hall was nearly as rapid as its rise, as cinema quickly overtook it in popularity during the interwar years. Many historians believe that by the 1950s, with the arrival of television, music hall was effectively dead as a form of mass entertainment[lxiv].

The contemporary impact of music hall culture reveals that its influence did not end with the arrival of modern entertainment forms. For years, it has been said that music hall is dead, but there is evidence that suggests this is untrue. Peter Honri argues that the traditions of music hall have gone far beyond the confines of the old Empires and of the earlier music halls. Today, one can find music hall culture in cabaret, pop concerts, theatre and films, and especially within television. It has never been the locale or era that has made variety truly the people's entertainment; rather it has been the performers reflecting their immediate era who have given life to this art even in the present day[lxv]. Cheshire explains that music hall never ended, but rather all that happened were changes in the names of performers, methods of presentation, and styles of music and costume[lxvi]. Kift explains that music hall culture had an impact on present day politics as well. The Labor Party did not develop from above, as a rival to working-class culture, but rather sprang out of a network of grass roots organizations and community-based institutions. The music hall was part of this network. The main achievement of the hall was the propagation of a culture, which strengthened both the self-confidence and the consciousness of the working class. When the Labor Party was founded in the 1890s, it was able to build on this culture and consciousness[lxvii]. In *Winkles and Champage,* former music hall performers express their concern that society ignores the fact that music hall still exists. One of them writes, "we sigh for the veterans of variety who have gone, although we make no attempt to see those who survive. Whereas the old 'number' had a leisurely life of years, its modern counterpart exists only for some frenzied weeks"[lxviii]. Although they realize that the old music hall had vanished long ago, they encourage present-day society to value the cultural influences that emerged from its musical past, while recognizing forms of music hall culture that do exist within contemporary music.

The relationship between working and middle class cultures influenced the process through which music halls transformed the social, urban, and cultural environment in Victorian Britain. . Although it caused controversy, music hall culture provided an essential outlet for the

working class, as it became a way of life and an essential art form that defined entertainment. Music halls exacerbated tension between classes, as they were reformed to propagate Victorian morals and ideals, but they also established class cohesion through their foundational ideals of community and ‘good-fellowship’. Legitimate or not, it is a fact that music hall dominated and defined Victorian society. It is for this reason that it continues to be a fascinating piece of Victorian life that piques not only the interest of cultural observers, but all those seeking to understand this immensely intriguing era today.

Endnotes

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