

Céline Dion and Shania Twain: The Globalization of Canada's Pop Divas

Canadian pop divas Céline Dion and Shania Twain are two of the best-selling female musicians of all time. Their songs circulate with the air we breathe in malls and grocery stores. They also circulate around the world via recordings and performance tours. Some love Céline and Shania while others love to hate them, but their success is undeniable based on their sales figures alone. So what's their secret?

My SSHRC-funded research in the popular music industry and fan communities suggests that the source of their global appeal is their appropriation of a mélange of musical identities and traditions. Just as Canada is a mosaic, so are Céline and Shania. They are each comprised of diverse layers, ensuring that diverse people can find something to like about them.

Céline sings not just in English and French but also in numerous other languages. She further broadens her appeal by drawing on the music and performance styles of iconic stars like Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and Barbra Streisand. Shania is similarly chameleonic. She is part pop star, part country singer, giving her a massive target audience. Her best-selling album *Up!* even gave her a third musical identity, being released in pop, country, and Bollywood versions.

Decoding the mechanisms behind these two singers' international success opens doors for better understanding of how to market Canadian musicians to global audiences. Beloved bands like The Tragically Hip have never made it outside of our country, but no one knows quite why. My research on Céline and Shania is a step in the direction of heightened comprehension of Canadian cultural exportation. Canada has long played second fiddle to the United States in the arena of North American popular music. It's time for that to change.

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