CANADIAN MUSIC PUBLISHING

Talk delivered at the Colloquium on Canadian Bibliography, November, 1973, and revised for publication.

The simplicity of the title "Canadian Music Publishing" is deceptive. The three words embrace not only the history of a number of business enterprises, but also a chapter of musical composition. These commercial and musical developments in turn are inextricably linked to social history, to the technology of printing, and even the history of art, considering the prevalence of pictorial covers on sheet music publications. In this brief outline I shall proceed in roughly chronological order and, within that order, consider some of these aspects in turn. I admit at the outset that I shall be rather partial to the earlier period in Canadian music publishing, the period before the first World War. I shall conclude with a few remarks about the collecting and the bibliographical investigations that have been undertaken.

The date marking the beginning of music printing in Canada is easy to remember: it was the year 1800. Until then there had been little need for printed music. To the majority of people, music was something transmitted from one generation or community to another by mouth and ear. Church services did require notated music, but since their literature was tradition-bound, needs could be filled by importing European publications or compiling large manuscript antiphonaries, graduals and other types of liturgical collections. To be accurate, one imported book at least was designed exclusively for Canadian use, *Le rituel du Diocèse de Québec* (Paris, 1703) in which plain-chant notation is scattered among 671 pages.

There is evidence also that some secular music was imported in printed form, especially towards the end of the eighteenth century when regimental bands and operatic troupes provided musical entertainment and when a few music stores were opened. Trained music lovers also kept little oblong-shaped books, ruled with blank music lines, into which they copied pieces they wanted to sing or play. A few of these "tunebooks" have survived and represent invaluable documents of the taste of their time.¹

What happened in 1800, the date quoted above, was that John Neilson, the printer of the *Quebec Gazette*, issued *Le graduel romain*, a book of Roman Catholic church music with Latin text and square-note notation on four-line staff, printed from movable type. This volume was the outcome of an announcement Neilson had made in 1797, declaring his intention to publish portable editions of liturgical music, based on French models, provided 400

¹The Music Division of the National Library is establishing a collection of photocopies of such books.

subscribers could be found. *Le graduel romain* was followed in 1801 by *Le processional romain* and in 1802 by *Le vespéral romain*. These pocket-sized books set a record not only as the oldest music printed and published in Canada, but also for the number of pages, about 1,600 altogether. Each volume had later editions, issued by diverse firms, such as Lovell, Desbarats, Augustin Côté and J.B. Rolland.

From 1800 until 1850 some 25 volumes containing printed music were issued in Canada, not counting second and third editions. Most of them featured church music; some provided instruction, and a few were song collections. About half were in French, half in English, and at least one was bilingual: Theodore Molt's *Elementary Treatise on Music / Traité élémentaire de musique* (Quebec, Neilson & Cowan, 1828). The printers and publishers of the volumes were not music specialists but such general publishers as Neilson, Stanislas Drapeau, John Lovell, and Thomas Cary, Jr. Cary, of Quebec, so Professor John Hare tells us, was the first Canadian to print music from engraved plates, the engraver being one "Fr." Hund (probably Frederick Hund who in 1816 was described as a piano maker and organ tuner, and who at one time was co-owner of a music store). The year was 1819 and the volume was *Le nouveau recueil de cantiques à l'usage du Diocèse de Québec*.

It is more difficult to document the beginnings of the publishing of individual compositions, i.e. of sheet music. The first known attempt was undertaken by the same John Neilson who had issued *Le graduel romain* in 1800. An admirer of the writer and composer Joseph Quesnel, he not only published the latter's text for the comic opera *Colas et Colinette* (1808) but set out to publish the music as well. The Public Archives of Canada preserve some of Quesnel's letters in which he instructs Neilson on some fine points of musical notation. He also comments in some detail on the first proof sheets he received from Neilson in 1809. Unfortunately, Quesnel died soon after and Neilson abandoned his ambitious project. None of these proof sheets are known to survive.

A number of advertisements in the *Quebec Gazette* suggest that separate pieces of sheet music may have been published as early as 1818. In the issue of October 15th, bandmaster Alexander Kyle announces that he has composed a march, dedicated to the Duke of Richmond, and that he is selling copies of it. On March 8th, 1819, John [Jean-Chrysostome] Brauneis advertises that he has written a *Grand Overture of Quebec*, copies of which may be had by applying to him. Again, on September 16th, 1819, Brauneis offers for sale copies of a piano piece written in memory of the Duke of Richmond. Do these advertisements refer to handwritten copies that would be made on demand, or to printed copies? If the latter is true, they must have been printed locally, for the 19 days between the death of the Duke (news of which would reach Quebec only several days later) and Brauneis' announcement would not have provided sufficient time for printing in the United States, even if the piece had been composed at an earlier time.

The reference to the United States is not gratuitous. Indeed, most Canadians who desired to see their compositions in print entered into an agreement with an American or British publisher. Stephen Codman, organist at the Anglican Cathedral in Quebec had two songs published in England which were reviewed

in a London music magazine in 1827: "We have scarcely seen any song . . . that lays so strong a claim to a place of supremacy amongst modern compositions of this class."² The *Montreal Bazaar Waltz* by Alexander Duff was published in New York sometime between 1828 and 1834, while the song "Nay! turn not away that lovely eye," which S.M. Bouchette dedicated to the Ladies of Quebec and Montreal, was issued in the same city in 1836.

From that same year, 1836, dates the first separately printed piece of music that has been traced. This is Napoléon Aubin's "Chant patriotique du Canada," which appeared as an insert in the Quebec newspaper, *Le Canadien*, of January 4th, 1836. It was the custom to present a New Year's poem to the subscribers, but this seems to have been the only case in which the poem was combined with music. In 1840 the same Aubin, a Swiss-born journalist, announced two lithographed music publications: his own song "Le Dépit amoureux" (*Album lyrique* No. 1), and *Deux valse*s by the Quebec musician, Charles Sauvageau. In the same year, John Lovell of Montreal brought out a typeset piece, "The Merry Bells of England" by the Bytown choirmaster, J.F. Lehmann, a recent immigrant from Germany.³

John Lovell had taken an important step in music publishing two years earlier with the inauguration of the *Literary Garland*, which featured a piece of music in each issue. The custom spread to other magazines and newspaper supplements, for example *Le Ménestrel* (1844), *The Children's Missionary and Sabbath School Record* (1844), the *Montreal Witness* (1846), *Album littéraire et musical de la Revue canadienne* (1846), and the *Canada Temperance Advocate* (1850 or earlier; all these dates refer to the year when music was first featured). A typical issue would include one, two, or even three short songs, marches, or dances by local or foreign composers, printed either in the text or inserted on detachable sheets. This practise represented an inexpensive and effective means of introducing printed music into Canadian homes on a large scale.

The brothers Abraham and Samuel Nordheimer, Bavarian immigrants, may be considered the first publishers to specialize in music exclusively. Abraham, the elder brother, operated a music store in Kingston from 1842 to 1844, but publishing began only after the establishment of the A. & S. Nordheimer Co. in Toronto in 1844. Publishing was only a part of the firm's activities which also included the importation of printed music and of instruments; it cannot have contributed more than a modest share of the company's revenue, but provided an important incentive to local composers. Plate number 1, "Beautiful Venice" is by a foreign composer, J.P. Knight. It bears a Toronto imprint but no date. The lowest plate number that has been dated, number 36, belongs to 1846. (Incidentally, there are copies with and without plate numbers of some pieces. An expert suggests that the copies with plate numbers are proofs, and that the bulk was printed from lithographic stones, without plate number.)

About 1852 Nordheimer produced plate number 100 and there is little doubt that the company published more items of sheet music before Con-

²*The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*

³Copies of the two pieces by Aubin and the one by Lehmann are owned by the National Library.

federation than any other. It went on publishing up to the early twentieth century (the name having changed to Nordheimer Piano and Music Co. about 1890), but the annual output seems to have declined in the later years. The company was absorbed by Heintzman's in 1928.

Like A. & S. Nordheimer, other mid-nineteenth century firms combined importing and retailing of music and instruments with a modest amount of publishing. Among them were J.W. Herbert, established as an instrument manufacturer in Montreal by 1837; Henry Prince, also of Montreal, in or before 1856; Peter Grossman of Hamilton, in or before 1856; Adélard J. Boucher of Montreal, founded in 1861; and J.L. Orme in Ottawa, founded in 1866.⁴ The Boucher music store still exists in Montreal and only a few years ago I had the thrilling experience of buying Canadian music in mint condition, straight from the shelf, that was a century old. The firm of Orme also survives, but now specializes in furniture retailing, with pianos as a sideline.

Many of the book publishers also ventured into the sheet music field: Brousseau Frères, Augustin Coté, Joseph and Octave Crémazie in Quebec, Eusèbe Sénécal & François Daniel and John Lovell in Montreal (the latter with a Toronto branch, Lovell & Gibson), Henry Rowsell in Toronto, and others. At least one composer, Antoine Dessane of Quebec, established his own lithographic workshop.

Altogether, by Confederation some 300 compositions had been issued as separate publications. Perhaps a little more than half were original Canadian works. The others were reprints of European or American pieces, fashionable dances, marches, piano pieces, and parlour ballads.

Much work remains to be done to identify and distinguish clearly the Canadian and non-Canadian factors in the production of Canadian sheet music, not only before, but after Confederation. When publishers issued foreign compositions, did they set them in type in Canada, or did they import the plates, or perhaps import quantities of printed copies to which a Canadian imprint was added? Does a cover illustration, signed with an American address, indicate that the entire piece was printed in the U.S.A.? Which Canadian publishers did their own printing? And in many cases, it is hard to determine, even with the help of city directories, whether a composer was Canadian or not. Further research will probably reveal a variety of combinations of Canadian and foreign factors, but also a large proportion of purely Canadian products.

Copyright is another important aspect of sheet music publishing that needs more investigating. Copyright notices on pre-Confederation sheet music are few; the few include American registrations. Was this done merely to prevent unauthorized reprinting, or was the piece merely the Canadian edition of an American publication? While some pre-Confederation pieces were "entered according to the act of the Provincial Parliament in the office of the Registrar of the Province of Canada," copyright legislation began in 1868 and henceforth publications were registered in the office of the Minister of Agriculture! A numbering system was adopted that gained momentum as the century wore on and ended in 1924 at entry 42, 462. The first musical item to be entered, number 7, was *The Rose of Ontario Waltz* by Maria E.H. Stisted, a Nordheimer

⁴The company claims it was established in 1861.

publication. An interesting document, it has not one, but two copyright notices: the first, in the original print of the cover, refers to the entry in the office of the Registrar of the Dominion of Canada, 1868; the second one, added in different type of print, refers to the office of the Minister of Agriculture, 1868.

Only about two thirds of the late nineteenth century publications bore copyright notices. The non-copyrights include both foreign and – harder to understand – Canadian compositions. The former category includes many U.S. publications reprinted or pirated by Canadian companies; the latter includes publishers and self-publishing composers who either did not know about copyright or did not see the point of it. One wonders, for instance, why the original edition of “O Canada” had a mere “Propriété réservée” notice instead of a dated and properly worded copyright notice. Obviously, copyright was not organized as tightly as it is today, nationally and internationally. By publishing American popular successes without copyright notices, Canadian firms reaped profits which, by today’s standards, would be illegal. (The largest series of such reprints was misleadingly labelled “Canadian Musical Library.” Possibly these and other Canadian editions were issued in agreement with an American company rather than pirated.) By the same token, U.S. publishers brought out editions of British music, not only for home consumption, but also for export to Canada. This hurt British publishers to the extent that in 1885 a group of them formed The Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers’ Association to safeguard the Canadian market. Within five years, some 580 “Canadian Copyrighted Editions” were issued by the new company, nearly all of non-Canadian music.

With the foundations laid by A. & S. Nordheimer and the formation of the A.C.M.P.A., Toronto became the centre of Canadian music publishing in the 1880s, a position parallel to that in book publishing and one maintained until the present. The more important Toronto publishers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Thomas Claxton (established ca.1870),⁵ I. Suckling & Sons (ca.1875), John Imrie and D.L. Graham (ca.1884), and Strange & Co., publishers and typographers and, in association with W.H. Billing, wholesale and retail dealers (ca.1881). The firms of A. Cox (ca.1892), Musgrave Bros. (fl.1910) and Harry H. Sparks (ca.1902) brought out a large number of cheap editions, cheap not only in price but in the quality of paper, not to mention the music itself.

The publishers outside Toronto included the prominent Quebec musician Arthur Lavigne who opened a music store in 1868 (later Lavigne & Lajoie) and issued many works by local composers, including the first edition of “O Canada;” Lavigne & Hutchison (fd.1891), also in Quebec; De Zouche (ca.1871), Ernest Lavigne (ca.1879); Edmond Hardy (ca.1886); J.G. Yon (ca.1888); J.E. Bélair, the publisher of the music magazine *Le Passe-Temps* (1895); and Walter Street (fl.1888) in Montreal; J. & A. McMillan (fl.1885) in Saint John, N.B. and McKechnie of Ottawa (ca.1900). There were many other companies, only

⁵Apologies are tendered for the vagueness of this and the following dates of establishment. Neither city directories nor the earliest copyright list entries provide definitive clues. Even the companies themselves cannot always be trusted. Nordheimer’s claim to have been established in 1840, for example, is highly suspect.

three surviving ones shall be mentioned here: Whaley, Royce in Toronto (1888, still active as an instrument manufacturer and retailer, the sheet music business now being run by Algord Music); W.R. Draper (ca.1898) in Toronto, primarily a music printer; and Edmond Archambault (1896) in Montreal.

From the point of view of physical appearance, the bulk of Canadian music publications has always been formed by individual pieces in quarto format, containing from two to six pages of music. Octavo-sized editions of choral music became common towards the 1890s and sets of band parts in the early twentieth century. Individual pieces of greater length were rare, James P. Clarke's "Lays of the Maple Leaf" (A. & S. Nordheimer, 1853) with 28 pages being the earliest known. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, song and piano albums, usually on inferior-quality paper and lacking any unifying principle of selection except that of commercial expedience, became fairly numerous, but albums containing several works by one composer – the staple of any pianist's library – were very rare. Two instances were Premio-Real's *Seize mélodies* (Arthur Lavigne, 1879) and Ernest Lavigne's *25 Mélodies* (Ed. Archambault, 1901). One considerable achievement, without parallel in recent decades, was the production of vocal scores of cantatas, operas and other types of music. Examples are Ferdinand Telgmann's *Leo, the Royal Cadet* (Henderson, ca.1889), Charles A.E. Harriss' *Torquil* (Whaley, Royce, 1896), William Dichmont's *Miss Pepple* (Wray, 1911) and Ernest Gagnon's *Accompagnement d'orgue des chants liturgiques* (A.J. Boucher, 1903), numbering 111, 146, 154 and 303 pages respectively.

With the exception of such cantatas and operettas, very little printed music aspired to the concert stage. "Heavy" music was rarely profitable from a publisher's point of view, a fact that has helped to create the myth that it did not exist. Exist it did, but it usually remained manuscript; as a result only a few of the serious efforts of earlier Canadian composers have survived except as titles mentioned in articles and catalogues. By and large, Canadian publications up to the first World War, whether by native or foreign composers, were intended for home entertainment. "Parlour" ballads and "salon" music are apt terms. Church services and patriotic rallies were also supplied with music but surprisingly little was published for the young student. Analysed by medium of performance, the total output – about 8,000 items – may be broken down as follows: about 50% for voice and piano, 40% for piano (including dance and marching band music arranged for keyboard), perhaps 5% for choir and another 5% for band music in parts, organ pieces, violin-piano music and other genres.

As in any other country, the bulk of the music was trivial, some of it lively and clever, some dull and amateurish. But even the *bad* "bad music" deserves our attention, for as a group these publications provide a most fascinating mirror of life in Victorian and Edwardian Canada. The very choice of titles, the cover designs and illustrations, the back-cover advertisements for reed organs or dry good stores all reflect the social aspirations and preoccupations of their time. As the *Subject Index to Musical Canadiana* (Canadian Library Association, 1967) shows, music was named for every town, every event, and every distinguished citizen. Patriotism was intense, although the real issues of politics were kept out of the parlour. (The talk was illustrated

with some 30 colour slides of sheet music covers. These included such gems as "The Hamilton Schottische," "La mère canadienne," "Stand by the Union Jack," "Tecumseh March," "The Prairie Settler's Song," "Stadaconé, danse sauvage," "The New Premier Two-Step," and many others.)

A comparison of the opening years of the twentieth century with the present period shows that, now as then, most of the music purchased by Canadians is imported and that Canadian production serves specific local needs. There are important differences, however, relating to business organization and to the market. Today, the importation of foreign publications is more frequently handled by exclusive agents or branches of foreign firms. The emphasis is on wholesale and mail-order trade, whereas in the old days the street-level retail store was the central activity of the music company, and publishing was supplementary.

With the coming of the phonograph record and the broadcasting media, publishing for home entertainment has shrunk considerably. Music education, however, has provided a growing market in recent decades, as school music, private and conservatory teaching, and competitive festivals have assumed large proportions. Conservatory and festival syllabi assure the sale of from hundreds to tens of thousands of copies of a given piece. More and more Canadian publications are placed on these syllabi. Church choirs and wind bands continue to provide outlets for publishing and the twentieth century has added at least two important consumers to the market: orchestras and music libraries, the former spending more on the rental than the purchase of music. Canadian "popular" music has rarely achieved mass sales. Its promotion depends on the motion picture, the recording and juke box industries which have little independent existence in Canada. Successful Canadian songs, such as "The World is waiting for the sunrise," "I'll never smile again" or the songs of Leonard Cohen are usually those that have been promoted through New York channels. Despite the great popularity of French-Canadian *chansonnerie* music in the last ten or fifteen years, a minimum of such material has appeared in print. The sale potential for serious compositions remains low: the music is usually difficult to perform, and in a world where several thousand professional composers are competing for attention, the chances for arousing international interest are small. Many publishers have issued serious Canadian music as an occasional gesture of good-will, and more recently subsidies have become available. The situation has been remedied somewhat by the establishment in 1959 of the Canadian Music Centre, which promotes the performance of our composers through a circulation and reference library of published and unpublished music. It sells photocopies of unpublished works at cost price, but in each case the composer's permission has to be sought.

The following list includes the names of the most important Canadian publishing firms since the first World War. The branches of foreign firms have included Chappell and Hawkes & Harris (a Canadian union of two separate British companies) during the second decade of the century, and Boosey & Hawkes (1932), Oxford University Press (1939-1973), Chappell (1946), and G. Ricordi (1954). Leeds Music (Canada) (1960) and Southern Music Publishing Co. (Canada) are outgrowths of American enterprises. All these branches have done some original Canadian publishing. Of the Canadian firms, the Frederick

Harris Music Co. and Gordon V. Thompson can trace their beginnings to the years before World War I, although the names and modes of operation have undergone changes. Like Thompson, Canadian Music Sales Corporation does much of its business as agent for foreign companies. The company began in the late 1920s as an American branch plant, but has been under Canadian control since 1934. It also operated the Anglo-Canadian Music Co., a link with the Anglo-Canadian Music Publishers' Association of 1885. The Waterloo Music Company was founded in 1920 and began publishing in 1927. It has always catered to wind bands, but more recently has also specialized in the folk music field. The Western Music Company was formed in Vancouver in 1930 and about 1937 began publishing, especially in the choral and educational areas. In 1970 its copyrights were sold to Leslie Music Supply of Oakville, Ontario. Two companies established in the province of Quebec in the 1930s were Le parnasse Musical (A. Fassio Publications, 1931) which developed a list of Canadian works in the light and serious vein and ceased after Fassio's death in the early 1950s, and La Bonne Chanson of St. Hyacinthe, which issued its first copyright in 1938 and has specialized in song albums for school and home use. After the second World War came Jarman Publications (1947), noted for square dance books as well as other types of music, BMI Canada (active as publisher 1947-69), both with headquarters in Toronto, Empire Music Publishers (1948) in New Westminster, Jaymar Music of London, Ontario, Berandol Music (1969) and E. C. Kerby of Toronto. As a non-profit organization primarily active as a performing rights society, BMI Canada was able to publish the largest catalogue of serious Canadian music of any company. Its publishing activities were taken over by Berandol Music, which has meanwhile developed a programme of its own. Finally, it should be mentioned that various Canadian book publishers continue to issue songbooks and school texts (Dent, Gage, Ginn, Copp Clark, etc.)

Canadian music publishers have maintained contacts with one another through the *Canadian Music Trades* (originally *Music and Trade Journal* (1900-32) which supplied information and discussion about business trends and activities, and at present through the Canadian Music Publishers Association (1950).⁶

Over the decades, much has changed in Canadian music publishing, but much has remained the same. Unable to compete in the Bach-Mozart-Chopin market and to ally himself with a powerful movie and phonograph record industry for the mass circulation of hit parade songs – the economic cornerstones of the large European and United States companies – the Canadian publisher has always been a distributor of imported music (probably at least 80% of all music sold in Canada) and an originator of music only for specific local needs in the spheres of religion, entertainment, education, and patriotism. He has also provided an outlet, though hardly an adequate one, for the Canadian composer of serious music. Throughout history, however, he always had to anchor his publishing in related activities, such as the retailing of sheet music and instruments or the control of performing rights. The overall quantity of annual production – about 150 titles – seems to be the same as it was a century ago.

⁶Since this talk was delivered, an Independent Music Publishers Group was formed in 1974 as a division of the Independent Publishers Association. Music publishers may belong to both groups simultaneously, since the objectives are different.

Until very recently, Canadian libraries did very little to collect Canadian music publications as historical objects. If the music did not serve the needs of their patrons, *i.e.* if it was not required as *music*, it received very little attention. About twenty years ago, an album with many pre-Confederation pieces came into my hands simply because the main Toronto libraries had turned down the offer, a few dollars. Fortunately, interest has wakened in the meanwhile. It is very late, however. The federal government has always had a collection of copyright deposits, which has moved through several departments until it found a permanent resting place in the National Library. The British Museum likewise received Canadian copyright deposits in the early years. But as has been remarked earlier, many nineteenth century compositions had no copyright.

Such pieces have to be salvaged, item by item, from rummage sales, dealers' catalogues, piano benches, and other hiding places. In addition to the National Library collection, which is the largest, important collections of early Canadian music exist at the Metropolitan Toronto Central Library, Laval University, the Université de Montréal, and the Lawrence Lande Collection at McGill University. Dr. Lande has probably been the most successful collector of pre-Confederation music. Smaller collections exist at various public and university libraries and in private hands.

The earliest effort to compile a list of Canadian music publications was the *Complete List of Canadian Copyright Musical Compositions (Entered from 1868 to January 19th, 1889)*, compiled from the official register at Ottawa. This was issued by a group of music publishers in 1889. The information was taken from the lists of copyright entries — musical and otherwise — which were issued by the government each year from 1868 for over half a century. After a gap of about 25 years, the National Library's *Canadiana* took up the listing in the early 1950s. To cover the earlier music completely, *i.e.* including non-copyrights and music published in periodicals, and to supplement the very scanty information supplied by the official lists, the Canadian Music Library Association in 1966 initiated a project to locate and catalogue Canadian music publications to 1921. The project is continued under the auspices of the National Library and has been extended to cover all items up to the beginning of *Canadiana*. It constitutes in fact a national union list, since the ownership of all copies that have been traced is indicated, whether they are held privately or publicly. Up to 1974 some 8,000 items had been reported and catalogued. A more tangible result of the project was the *Subject Index to Musical Canadiana* (Canadian Library Association, 1967) which lists some 800 items, discovered up to that time, "composed by Canadians or non-Canadians and significantly associated with the social life, physical features and political events of Canada by virtue of title, lyrics, plot, cover illustration or dedication to groups or eminent individuals." This little book, to which another 500 titles could be added today, goes a long way to demonstrate that music publishing in Canada, whatever its contribution to art, has never stood apart from the lives and aspirations of Canadians. The music publishers as producers and the compositions as products provide an intimate and accurate reflection of a century and three quarters of Canadian history.

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