

Canada/France Cultural Relations

Canada's cultural relations with France occupy an important place in the relations between our two countries. Since the signing of the France/Canada Cultural Agreement in 1965, our exchanges have consistently grown in number and in quality. At first these exchanges took place chiefly in Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario, but since 1975 they have flourished in the other Canadian provinces as well, particularly in the academic and cultural sectors.

Cultural sector

In the area of cultural promotion, Canada's activity in France is directed towards ensuring an ongoing Canadian presence in all parts of that country. These contributions by artists, academics, lecturers, and exhibitions and cultural presentations have a multiplier effect wherever they are held. These efforts, put forth since the beginning of the sixties, have gradually awakened and warmed the French press and public to Canadian culture. In the last five years particularly, a growing number of Canadian artists have been giving presentations in France on their own. During the current season, the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of External Affairs will have given financial assistance to more than fifteen projects touring in France. These range from music and dance to theatre. Expositions assembled by the Art Bank of the Canada Council, as well as by the provincial culture departments of Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick and by the galleries of British Columbia have been circulated in France recently with the assistance of the Department. In addition to these projects, several private visits and tours by artists and groups are organized each year.

In theatre, since 1973 Canada has organized a tour of one Canadian French-language theatre company per year in France. In addition, in 1977 and 1978, Canada subsidized those Canadian companies invited to participate in the Avignon theatre festival. They received unanimous critical applause. These tours by the Théâtre du Nouveau-Monde of Montréal, the Théâtre Expérimental de Montréal, the Théâtre du Rideau Vert of Montréal (with plays by Antonine Maillet, recent winner of the Prix Goncourt), the Compagnie du Centre national des arts of Ottawa, the Théâtre Populaire du Québec and the Compagnie des deux Chaises have created a sustained demand for and interest in Canadian theatre in France.

One of the highlights in the work of the Department has been an undertaking in the field of theatre which has led to creation of a circuit to give nearly 40 sold-out performances over a four year period in fifteen cities of "A toi pour toujours, ta Marie Lou", a play by Michel Tremblay. In addition, this production was part of the regular season of the Théâtre de l'Est Parisien in Paris which is now ready to welcome a Canadian production each year.

In music, Canada has introduced groups of high calibre to France, such as the Orford Quartet, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Festival Singers. Our country has also assisted the tours of several individual artists, presenting them in recital either at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, or elsewhere in France within the framework of Canada Days.