
Part 2 – Development of musical creativity

Probably the first original material created in Canada was a rendition of *Sacrae Familiae* in Gregorian style, written by Father Charles-Amador Martin towards the end of the seventeenth century. The other known piece produced before the nineteenth century was the opera *Colas et Colinette*, staged by Joseph Quesnel in Montreal on January 14, 1790.

The nineteenth century yielded a greater amount of original material. The most prolific of Canada's early composers was Calixa Lavallée (1842-91) who, at age 15, won first prize for both piano and coronet at a competition in New Orleans. He subsequently toured the Americas. After serving with the northern army in the American Civil War he returned to Canada to teach, perform and compose. But his dismay with the lack of support in Montreal spurred him to settle permanently in the United States. Just before his departure, he wrote the Canadian national anthem, *O Canada*. Some of his other accomplishments were studies for the piano, including *Le Papillon*, a piece retained for many years in the study repertoire of the Paris Conservatoire, and the successful operetta, *The Widow*.

Lavallée's battle against the provincialism of Montreal was taken up by a younger composer, Guillaume Couture (1851-1915). His acrid pen attacked the attitudes prevalent at that time. And through his many talents, producing such works as the impressive oratorio, *Jean le Précurseur*, he raised the musical standards of Montreal to an international level. Alexis Contant (1858-1918), one of Couture's students and later a teacher himself, composed two oratorios, *Caïn* and *Les deux âmes*, as well as a *Trio*, a piece still performed today.

From English Canada came W.O. Forsyth (1859-1937), who composed a large body of short and lyrical pieces.

Twentieth century leaders

Four men, spanning two generations, loom large in the history of Canadian music. The first two, although from very different backgrounds and aesthetic viewpoints, played a similar pivotal role in the development of the art of composition in Canada – both through their work and through their teaching.

Healey Willan (1880-1968) emigrated from Britain in 1913 to accept a teaching position in Toronto. While teaching, he continued his side-line career as a church musician and composer. From his active pen flowed a generous catalogue of organ and choral music that greatly