

MUSIC IN CANADA

Canadians import nine-tenths of their acquired music from the United States. What of it?

THE so-called Americanisation of Canada has as much to do with music as with almost anything in business or trade. Nine-tenths of the money spent annually in Canada for imported music goes to the United States. There never has been an English opera company in Canada that did anything really serious. We have heard more than half a dozen such companies from the United States. Henry Savage has sent us two companies, giving in all no fewer than about fifty performances of Wagner, Verdi and Puccini. The Nordica Opera Company last year gave several performances. The National Opera Company have recently been touring the country. There have been sundry others. We shall probably never have any grand opera in Canada that is not produced in America—including the United States.

Canada has never heard a British orchestra! neither any French orchestra—but at least one from Germany, the Dresden Orchestra last year, the La Scala Orchestra from Milan three years ago and the Mascagni aggregation about ten years ago. Against this we have had every big orchestra in the United States, and most of them again and again. The Theodore Thomas Orchestra broke the ground years ago, away back in the sixties. Seidl came along years later. The Thomas orchestra has played in Canada best of fifty times, with a fair prospect of continuing to come until further notice. Damrosch has been here nearly twenty times, with a total of twice that many concerts at least—travelling not only to Montreal and Toronto but to St. John, Victoria and Vancouver. The Pittsburgh Orchestra under Victor Herbert and Emil Paur has given as many performances in Canada as any of the others and has done not only the large centres of mid-Canada, but also many of the smaller cities of Ontario, including London, Hamilton, Galt and Stratford. The Cincinnati Orchestra has been here under Mr. Van der Stucken. The Boston Symphony—greatest of all—appeared in Canada once, under Mr. Gericke. The Chicago Orchestra under Mr. Von Fielitz, the celebrated writer of song cycles, came twice. The Henry Savage orchestras have been here a number of times. Fritz Scheel came once with his Philadelphia aggregation. Buffalo used to send an occasional orchestra. The Minneapolis Symphony have played several times in Winnipeg, which is badly situated for other orchestras.

So that except for our own more recent organisations in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec, all doing excellent work in a big way, we have paid more than nine-tenths of our orchestra money to Uncle Sam.

So far as bands are concerned, we are less subject to the offerings from across the border. Sousa and Gilmore and Creatore and Duss and the Chicago Marine Band have played many times in Canada; but we have heard also many if not most of the best bands from England, Ireland and Scotland.

Coming down to soloists, we are again largely on the debit side of Uncle Sam's ledger. Nine-tenths of the big artists who appear in Canada come under United States management, many of them direct from the Metropolitan Opera House, many from New York concert bureaus and from Chicago, as well as from Detroit and other places. We have, however, heard most of the great English and Irish unattached artists; such people as Watkin Mills, Santley, Edward Lloyd, and Plunket Greene, besides Muriel Foster and the bright particular stars such as Patti, Jenny Lind and Albani, who of course is a Canadian by birth and English by tradition.

Really there is no awful danger about this species of "Americanisation." Art knows no nationality—when it comes to the universal word. We are as much benefited by big things in art from the United States as by similar things from anywhere else. We are pleased when we hear a great choral organisation like the Sheffield Choir, although we have never been able to reciprocate by sending a chorus to England. We are just as much pleased to send our greatest of choirs across to the United States, even though we never got a chance to reciprocate by importing choral talent from that country. We are all able to sing "God Save the King," followed by a verse of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" as was done by the Mendelssohn Choir last year in Chicago. And we should be eminently relieved if a lot of the twaddle about the American invasion were as harmless in effect as the fact that Canadians import most of their acquired music from the United States duty free, whereas they pay thirty-five per cent. duty on machinery and furniture.

In the matter of musical merchandise Canada is much less liable to importations and ideas from across the border. We manufacture more than nine-tenths of our own pianos, and there is not a single United States company of any importance with a branch factory in this country. Canadian pianos are as good as the best—outside of a very few remarkable makers—and but little inferior to even these. There are at least a score of Canadian piano factories in Canada, controlled by Canadian capital and operated by Canadian labour. Many of the best makes in Canadian pianos are known favourably and almost famously abroad, and in very few instances do Canadian music-lovers when they buy pianos of the highest merit think of ordering from United States or even European houses.

A great many of our band instruments are made abroad, but in brass some of the best of these are made in Canada; wood-wind instruments being largely made in Europe, while violins are made excellently in Canada; as are reed and cabinet organs—and the very best of pipe organs.

In fact Canadian pipe-organs have few equals and no superiors in any country. There are three or four firms who have studied this problem very acutely and the instruments of some of them have become famous in other countries; which in a land where a hundred years ago most of the diapasons were in the tree-tops is highly creditable.

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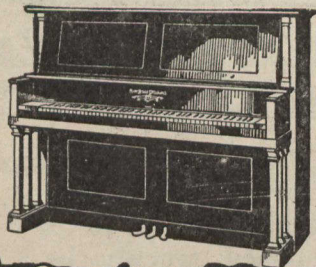
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