

long been an importer in the grand concert field and the Canadian concert-goer has learned to expect to hear the world's most outstanding performers.

By the mid-1880s, opera as an art form had gained acceptance in Canada, with productions in Quebec, Montreal and Toronto. During the latter half of the century, touring companies from the United States and overseas began visiting Canada. By the end of the century, nearly every Canadian city, large and small, had what was referred to as an opera house. However, they bore little resemblance to the European houses and seldom, if ever, was grand opera staged in them. The first attempt to produce grand opera on a large scale was in Montreal in 1910, and additional performances were given in Toronto, Rochester (Alberta), Quebec and Ottawa. A second season was presented the following year. Although an artistic success, both seasons showed such severe financial losses that the project had to be abandoned. The next important venture was the successful staging of *Hansel and Gretel* by a newly-created Toronto company in 1928. The efforts of this company persisted until they were curtailed by the Second World War.

Ballet is a relatively new art form in Canada and began its growth only in the 1930s, when two distinguished teachers extended their activities to include dance groups made up of their pupils -- the Volkoff Canadian Ballet was established in 1938 and the Winnipeg Ballet in 1939. These two companies, though amateur in status, dominated the domestic ballet scene for the next ten years and gave numerous performances in many Canadian cities.

A Diverse Folklore

Canada has a rich folklore, or rather several folklores. The effort is to preserve the mosaic rather than the melting-pot tradition. Folk-music and folk-dancing in Canada are as varied as the different origins of the population. In addition to the folk arts of the Indians and Eskimos, people of many nationalities have brought their music and dances to Canada, all distinctive of the countries from which they came. At the annual Mariposa Folk Festival, now held in Toronto, singers, instrumentalists and songs of every type are represented.

Native Indian dances have been performed since the earliest known times. All the principal events of life were portrayed ritually and the dance was the chief means of expression. The dances were performed to the chanting of one or more persons or the beating of a drum. In the dances of the West Coast Indians, drama and religion were as closely linked as they were in medieval Europe. Some of the Indian dances invoked the world of the supernatural and called for the painting of faces and wearing of elaborate regalia and grotesque masks. With skilful staging, giant totemic animals and birds manifested themselves. The greatest of all the rituals and festivals of the plains was the Sun Dance. There were also snake dances and war dances; in Alberta, rain dances are still held in June. In the traditional dance of the Eskimos, those taking part perform individually, chanting as they dance. The dancer frequently provides his own sound by using a wooden mallet to strike the edge of an enormous drum which he carries.