

WHICH DOES MORE FOR MUSIC?

Have the French-Canadians Kept Up Their End in Production; or Have the Anglo-Canadians Beaten Them?

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

YOU may count on the five lines and four spaces the musicians who, in the past twenty years, have gone from Toronto to music-make in Montreal; and for vice versa you may leave out the spaces. Musically, as yet, these two musical centres have never mixed. Some cantankerous people say they never will. Do not believe them. There are some very interesting differences between the two cities. Until these are understood we shall never begin to get these two musical cities on the same key.

Nobody forgets, of course, that for three seasons grand opera traveled from Montreal to Toronto, and that it was just beginning to capture a big clientele on Lake Ontario when it went off the road. Foreign artists did that. Though it happens that a few of them—such as Edmond Clement and Beatrice LaPalme were French-Canadian. And if the whole French contingent in those two companies had been cradled on the St. Lawrence, Toronto would have paid its good money as gladly as it did to hear Parisian Huberty and the other dozen or so.

Thus far the compliment comes from Toronto, which, of course, never had opera companies to send to Montreal, or there might have been reciprocity. That may yet happen. Much depends on which is to be considered the ultimate centre of music in Canada, and what makes a centre musical anyway?

One wonders what would have happened had the Mendelssohn Choir ever advertised a concert in Montreal, as well as in New York, Boston, and Chicago. I have always thought there would be a crush to hear it. Of course there is no good music hall of large size in Montreal, and a big choir might find it difficult to perform in a theatre. Two years ago we were within an ace of sending the Choir down there as part of its European itinerary. The war prevented.

Neither do we remember that the Toronto Symphony Orchestra ever played more than once in Montreal on the occasion of the second visit of the Sheffield Choir. Certainly Prof. Goulet's orchestra never went to Toronto. It is a fact, however, that for more than one season the two most celebrated old music masters in Montreal went to Toronto to hear the Mendelssohn Choir sing the Verdi Requiem. Those two fraternizing old musicians are Prof. Guillaume Couture and Mons. Octave Pelletier, respectively maitre de chappelle and organist of the great St. James Cathedral. Couture is himself a chorus-master, having for years led the Oratorio Society in Montreal. He is a fine old character, pupil of the great Cesar Franck, student in Paris, composer and professor of singing and advocate of opera for the masses.

BUT to make random comparisons between the two provinces would lead nowhere. We must recognize in the beginning certain interesting differences. First of all, let us estimate how many of the really dominant music masters in both Toronto and Montreal were Canadian by birth. Take a random census from half a dozen cities of Anglo and French Canada. Begin with Toronto. Who are the native-born dominants there? Vogt, Welsman, Forsyth, Seitz, Blachford, Frank Smith—speaking of men only—Atkinson, Ruthven McDonald, Blight, Dixon, Jeffers. There are others. These will illustrate. But let me name the leaders who are non-Canadian born. Take them by countries.

England—Willan, Leo Smith, Ham, Broome, Coombs, Torrington, Dalton Baker, Galloway, Fairclough.

Scotland—Tattersall, Cringan, the two Bruces.

France—Mons. Vigneti (recent), Carboni.

Russia—Boris Hambourg, Hesselberg.

United States—Paul Wells, Morenzo, Furlong.

Italy—Morando.

Austria—Von Kunits (naturalized Canadian).

Denmark—Viggo Kihl, Rudolf Larsen.

You may take a similar census in Winnipeg and find just about the same 25 per cent. ratio of native-born Canadians prominent in music. Take Calgary, Regina, Edmonton, Vancouver—and find the same. Eastward in Halifax and St. John there is some difference. Perhaps the proportion there is 50 per cent.—with the other half English.

In Anglo-Canada, then, who are the majority of chief music-makers? Plainly, not Canadian-born. We do not say they are not Canadians. A man's nationality is judged ultimately and in the main by the work he does. Probably most of these importees will remain in Canada. We hope so, because the chief part of their business after all is the production of native-born musicians and Canadian music for

Canadians. I anticipate some objection here. Some will say that Englishmen and Scotchmen and Irishmen are not properly imported; that they belong to the same musical scheme, and that one might include Australians, South Africans and Hindus in the same category. But that would be foolish. Music, if anything, is universal. The men who bring to us the best music from continental Europe are as necessary as British-born musicians or even native-born Canadians. And unless we recognize this fact in art we may as well bid good-night to our musical development.

What we are really trying to determine is the comparative actual value of the native-born musicians in Anglo and French Canada. And on this head we must admit candidly that the overwhelming preponderance belongs to the French-Canadian. In Montreal and Quebec you do not find in any marked percentage the British-born musician. You may find a few Frenchmen—but very few. Of Americans, Italians, Scandinavians, Austrians, Germans—scarcely any. The overwhelming majority of musicians in the Province of Quebec were born in that Province. Couture, Pelletier, Gagnon, Dussault, Laliberte, LaPalme, de Seve, Donalda—to name more would be merely to make a directory—are all French-Canadians. And it is these people who direct the musical life of French Canada; though we admit that McGill Conservatorium contains a number of British-born and Canadian musicians.

WITH this broad distinction recognized, we are on the road to understanding a certain kind of separatism between the musical life of Anglo and French Canada. Anglo-Canada has always admitted that it must import most of its music or go without. French-Canada has always believed that French-Canadians were able to furnish most of the music necessary in the evolution of that province.

No doubt they have succeeded. We must not be deluded into imagining that the musical art of French Canada is in any way barren, meagre or unc cosmopolitan. First of all, French-Canadians have won distinction abroad. Beginning with Albani, we may add Lavallee, composer of O Canada, Clement, LaPalme, deSeve, Paul Dufault, Donalda, Eva Gauthier, Djane Lavoie. These are enough. It may be claimed that Quebec's contribution to the honour roll of Canadian musicians abroad is not bigger than that of Anglo-Canada or of all Canada that is not French-Canadian. When we come to count the others, who are there? Burke, from Montreal (Irish descent), Mockridge, tenor; Eugene Cowles, from the Eastern Townships, famous in the old Bostonians; Ed. Johnson, operatic tenor, who starred in New York and Milan; Harry Field, pianist, in Germany; Clarence Lucas, who may be taken to balance Lavallee in composition and is still in New York; Kathleen Parlow, violinist, born in Calgary; Edvina, operatic diva, born in Victoria; Hollinshead, lyric and dramatic tenor, who, by the time this gets into print, will be established in New York; Edith Miller, from Portage, since somewhat famous in Chicago grand opera; Florence Easton, born in Toronto, starring with the Savage Opera companies; Evelyn Starr, violinist, from Nova Scotia; Elizabeth Campbell (Madelene Carreno) now with the San Carlo Opera. This list includes only those who have ceased to live in Canada, not those who have become recognized across the border and still pay taxes here.

It is a matter for expert judges to decide which of these two contingents has been the more valuable in the world of music outside of Canada. We may safely declare the score just about even and begin to examine the domestic end of the problem. French-Canadians have staked off for themselves a great part of musical French-Canada so far as individual work is concerned. By so doing they have kept non-Canadians out. That may or may not be a good thing, but it is a fact. French-Canadians have studied in Paris and Belgium and have come back to enrich the musical life of their own province from the studios of Europe. Anglo-Canadians have gone largely to England, Germany and Austria for the same purpose. The motive in each case was different. The French-Canadian had a racial art to conserve. That art

began with the old chansons more numerous than the folk-songs of most European countries. It comes to a climax in the brilliant work done by French-Canadians in vocal and instrumental performance, in teaching, in opera, in church music. That racial development in music is based upon a well-diffused love of music in Quebec. We believe that as a race French-Canadians are

more temperamentally musical than Anglo-Canadians—born in Canada. We also believe that they have come to a certain valuable development without having the genius for organization and commercial expansion in music that is such a characteristic of Canada outside of Quebec.

Here we are on the edge of a most interesting problem that is only capable of a sketch outline in this article, whose intention is not so much to settle a question as to suggest its most obvious features. It would be foolish to argue that Quebec has done as much to organize modern music as a national asset as all Canada outside of Quebec. Her population is less than half—about two-fifths of the total, perhaps equal to the Anglo-Canadian. But even on this basis she has done less to organize music.

And what is meant by organizing music? In the main just one thing, getting the music over to the people. This takes a variety of forms. Suppose we begin commercially in the matter of manufacturing instruments. Ontario makes half a dozen or more high-grade pianos and as many or more lower grades. You find the distributing branches of these firms in Montreal. Quebec does not make pianos; not to any extent worth mentioning commercially.

Why does Ontario lead North America on a basis of population in the making of pianos, while Quebec is just about at the bottom of the lot? Some critical person remarks:

"It's very simple. Ontario's piano industries were organized by Germans."

He points to the names Nordheimer, Heintzman, Gerhard Heintzman, Mason and Risch for confirmation. There is some truth on the critic's side. The same might be said about the name Steinway, which long ago became world-famous. The Steinways sold in Canada and the United States are made in America. The pianos of German name sold in Canada are made in Canada, by Canadians, with Canadian capital, paying wages to Canadians and sold to Canadians in competition with best makes from any country. The German name is a relic. But there are other leading pianos that have non-German names. Take the Gourlay, the R. S. Williams, the Bell, the Newcombe, and the Karn.

The real fact is that French-Canadian genius does not run strongly to modernized manufacturing of any sort except in a very few lines, chief among which is the pipe-organ. Quebec originated and makes one of the finest pipe-organs in the world. The Casavant organ began many years ago in a little blacksmith shop. It is now world-famous, the one organ that Anglo-Canadians naturally buy for churches, music halls, convocation halls, theatres and other places. It is exported to the United States. The great organ builders of Europe with a thousand years of virtuosity behind them are in nothing but very minor details better than the Casavant, which is entirely as to origin, capital and with a very few exceptions as to actual workmen, absolutely French-Canadian, the product of the town of St. Hyacinthe, on the Yamaska.

CONSIDER the case of choral societies. In all Quebec there are but one or two, and these almost relics. Toronto alone has more public choristers than all Quebec ever had. There is no organizing musical genius in Quebec capable of producing one Mendelssohn Choir, the work of a Canadian-born among Canadians and Britishers. There is in Quebec no such organization as the Elgar Choir, in Hamilton, conducted by a Canadian, Bruce Carey. Quebec has no chorus equal to the National, organized by Dr. Ham, Englishman; none equal to the Schubert Choir, led by H. M. Fletcher, Canadian-born; none equal—when it is before the public—of the Oratorio Society, under the baton of Dr. Broome, Englishman. Add to these the two choral societies of Winnipeg, the Oratorio, under J. J. Moncrieff, and the Elgar, under Dr. Vinen; the Festival Choir, of Edmonton, led by Barford, Englishman; the Arion Society, of Victoria, and the numerous societies in at least a dozen cities and towns on the prairies, conducted in many cases by Englishmen, in some cases by Canadian-born.

It takes a Saxon strain to develop choral organizations. The Gallic idea runs very little to singing.