
Part 1 – Roots of music in Canada

Canada's musical history dates from the migration of the Indians and Inuit across the Bering Strait, believed to be thousands of years ago. The original inhabitants, and the European fishermen and hunters who followed them, planted the seeds, but organized music – whether referred to as concert, classical, or serious – only came of age in the second half of this century.



Canada's National Arts Centre, Ottawa.

Inuit and Indians

Contact with other cultures has dramatically transformed the lives of Canada's 22 000 Inuit over the past decades. The importance of their ancestral rites and customs declined, reviving only recently with the introduction of the Pan Arctic Games and other activities.

As part of this renewal of interest in the old traditions, the Elders are passing on to the younger generation the songs, dances, traditional games, and other musical expressions, some of which evolved from centuries of contact with Moravians and other Europeans. Conventional Inuit music is sung, usually in a monodic pattern, but sometimes polyphonic. When there is accompaniment, it is provided by rhythmic instruments. Unique to the Inuit are the women's "throat games". In