

concluding my remarks I wish to express my great pleasure at the excellent bilateral cultural and education relations that exist between our two countries. Our relations have traditionally been friendly and close, and they were given a strong impulse when Canada's performing and visual arts, as well as literature were highlighted at the Holland Festival in 1985. At that time many links were created that have endured and that are still active. A number of Dutch impresarios regularly visit Canada, and are familiar with Canada's cultural scene. They have been instrumental in presenting Canadian dance and theatre companies, as well as musical ensembles, not only in The Netherlands but also in other European countries. Canadian authors are now frequent visitors in The Netherlands, and quite a wide range of Canadian literature is available in Dutch bookshops, both in English or French and in translation. The presentation in Toronto and in Ottawa of "The Boulevard of Broken Dreams" gave Canadian audiences an opportunity to familiarize themselves with some aspects of Dutch culture.

At the moment there are talks between The Netherlands Opera and the Claude Vivier Foundation about the presentation of his opera "Marco Polo" in Amsterdam in 1996. Claude Vivier died at a tragically young age, but his music is becoming better-known and I hope that the "Marco Polo" project will bring his music to an even larger audience.

Ambassador Förster, we have much to talk about and I look forward to our discussions.