

News of the arts

Museum exhibits history of glass

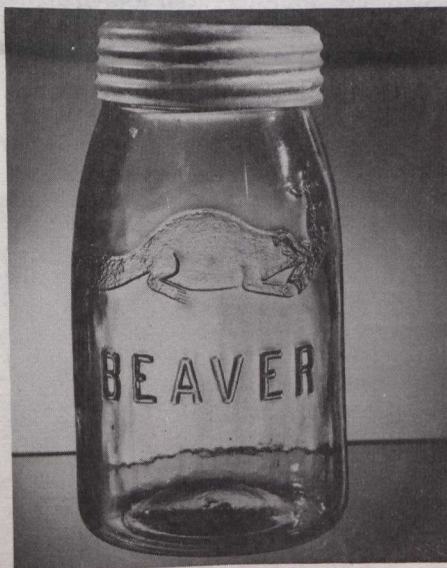
About 1,500 years before the birth of Christ, an unknown craftsman in the area now called Syria made a discovery of profound importance — ordinary sand, mixed and heated with a handful of other common materials, could be shaped into lasting items of beauty.

The basic techniques persist to this day. The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, provides a glimpse of this legacy in its *Gather of Glass, An Exhibition of Glass Through the Ages*, which opened on October 7 and closes December 31.

The exhibit comprises more than 500 pieces from all over the world, ranging from the time of the Pharaohs to the near-present, and drawn from the Museum's own extensive collections. The oldest man-made piece on display is a striped Egyptian perfume jar (approximately 1500 B.C.), while the newest is a pale aquamarine horse manufactured in Czechoslovakia in 1974.

The first form of glass to be worked by man was obsidian, a naturally occurring volcanic glass. It was prized by early man, mainly because it could be chipped into sharp weapons and tools and also, because its smoky transparency made it attractive as jewellery.

Much later, about 1500 B.C., the Syrian craftsman discovered the recipe for manufacturing his own glass. He



This aquamarine glass mould-blown preserve jar, called the Beaver, was produced by the Ontario Glass Company, Kingsville, Ontario, circa 1899-1902.



Wheel-engraved lead glass Swedish bowl, designed by Simon Gate, engraved by E. Aberg, in mid-twentieth century, shows a drinking party in honour of the god Bacchus.

found that when he dipped a metal rod into the molten glass, a portion of it would adhere to the tip of the rod. This portion or mass, known as a "gather", is the basic unit for all glass-work.

About the time of Christ, craftsmen in Imperial Rome discovered that molten glass could be blown like a bubble at the end of a hollow metal tube, and glass-making reached a peak of achievement.

The display of glass techniques includes examples of Islamic enamelled glass, lead "crystal" developed in England about 1686, and nineteenth-century American pressed glass for the masses.

Also in the show are some examples of the types of glass first brought to Canada. It was not until about 1840 that glass

began to be made here. The early Canadian glass industry made window glass and containers for medicine, liquor, snuff and shoe blacking. While much tableware and many commercial containers were produced in Canada, particularly after 1880, some of the most intriguing pieces are those that Canadian glass-makers made after their work-day, when they were free to create items that appealed to their imagination.

When the exhibition closes in December, the Royal Ontario Museum's exhibition hall will be torn down under the Museum's renovation and expansion program. The hall has housed such spectacular displays as *Gold for the Gods* in 1976 and the "Chinese exhibition" in 1974.

Toronto opera opens with new version of "Joan of Arc"

The Canadian Opera Company will open its 1978 fall season at O'Keefe Centre with the first major North American production of Tchaikovsky's *Joan of Arc (The Maid of Orleans)*. Letfi Mansouri, general director of the company, will stage the production. A new English translation of the opera has been commissioned from American translator Richard Balthazar, through a grant from Opera America.

Mr. Balthazar, who worked with Hurok Concerts as interpreter for the Bolshoi Opera during its visits to New

York and Washington in 1975, is one of the main translators (Slavic languages) with the Berlitz Translation Service in Washington. He was formerly an instructor in Russian language and literature at the University of Michigan.

"Tchaikovsky's melodic vein, brilliant orchestral colour and strong emotional expression are all manifested in this, one of the neglected masterpieces of operatic literature," says Mansouri. "We are enormously excited to be able to present its first major North American production in Toronto."