

Arts

Long-celebrated as a place of natural beauty and wide-open spaces, Canada today has also become known as a centre of contemporary artistic creation. This may be due in part to the country's relatively short history — as if, unshackled by the past, Canadian artists have undertaken to create their own classics. Today, in literature, dance, cinema and other forms of artistic expression, Canadians are in high demand at the world's major cultural events.

Music

Music, be it classical, rock, jazz or opera, has always held a place of prominence in Canada, and Canadians have made their mark beyond ethnic and cultural barriers.

Bryan Adams, Céline Dion and Leonard Cohen are popular with rock fans all over the world, while Roch Voisine and Daniel Lavoie have won the hearts of Francophone audiences worldwide.

Montreal's world-renowned annual jazz festival is a must on the itinerary of all jazz fans. Such groups as UZEB have taken their place among the world's best jazz ensembles. Oscar Peterson is one of the all-time greats, while others, including Lorraine Desmarais, Oliver Jones, Karen Young, Michel Donato and Ed Bickert, are building solid reputations for themselves.

Classical music is also appreciated in Canada. A number of cities have their own symphony orchestra. Many ensembles, such as I Musici and Taffelmusik, are commonly featured at major international festivals and on quality labels. Of all the symphony orchestras in Canada, Montreal's is probably the best known. Under the baton of Charles Dutoit, it has earned an impressive list of prizes and distinctions.

The name Glenn Gould is foremost among performers of classical music: his musical genius and originality brought a new coloration to classical music. Such rising young artists as Angela Hewitt, Ofra Harnoy and Louis Lortie are also renowned worldwide.

Opera lovers are well served by the Vancouver Opera Association, the Canadian Opera Company and others, known for their originality and the quality of their performances. Maureen Forrester, Jon Vickers and Louis and Gino Quilico are among Canada's many talented performers.

Dance

When the subject of modern dance in Canada is raised, La La La Human Steps and the Desrosiers Dance Theatre are names that immediately come to the minds of dance aficionados. All are on the leading edge of experimentation in the field of dance.

Three large ballet companies perform regularly on the international circuit — the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Grands Ballets Canadiens and the National Ballet of Canada — receiving praise wherever they perform.

Every year, a growing number of independent choreographers and dancers mount performances in Canada and abroad. Among this group of more than 150, Margie Gillis, Marie Chouinard, Ginette Laurin, Peggy Baker and Jean-Pierre Perrault continue to embody a uniquely Canadian approach to dance.

Literature

Canadian literature is a mirror of the country's linguistic dualism. English-Canadian and French-

Canadian literature are themselves subdivided into regional voices, which in turn mirror the concerns of their own varied communities. Although short on tradition, "Canlit" is increasingly read, translated and acclaimed the world over.

Canadian novelists, essayists and poets such as Robertson Davies, Margaret Atwood, Gabrielle Roy, Jacques Ferron, Alice Munro, Anne Hébert, Jacques Godbout, Northrop Frye, Hubert Aquin, Gaston Miron, Michael Ondaatje and Mordecai Richler have given voice to the deepest thoughts and feelings of Canadians.

Theatre

Canadian theatre is an excellent reflection of the country's cultural diversity. Quebec theatre, for example, has become increasingly popular both at home and abroad in recent years, thanks mainly to the plays of Michel Tremblay, which have now been translated into more than 20 languages.

Canadian theatre is known for its innovative spirit and search for new forms. Companies such as Carbone 14, Repère and One Yellow Rabbit tour the world and receive critical acclaim wherever they go. Others, like Green Thumb, Les Deux Mondes and Mermaid have channelled their energies into creating children's theatre with the refinement and quality of adult theatre.

The Cirque du Soleil has been revolutionizing entertainment under its yellow and blue big top since 1984. Millions of people in audiences around the world have marvelled at its spectacular productions combining theater, acrobatics and music.