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Beethoven and
Canada: A Miscellany
Helmuth Kallmann

1770. In Germany, the birth of Beethoven. In Canada, the beginnings of organized concert performance. A year before, a Philharmonic Society presented an oratorio; in 1770 *The Quebec Gazette* printed the notice seen below.

Beethoven's music comes to Canada

Even if we searched all the surviving newspapers and diaries of the beginning of the nineteenth century we could never ascertain exactly when the first Beethoven music was played or sung in Canada or what its title was. Among the extant music of the Quebec Harmonic Society, founded about 1820 and active for only a few years, there is a handcopied second violin part of the First Symphony. We also know that the Herrmann ensemble included Beethoven's music in their 1832 appearance in Saint John, N.B.

¹ see *Beethoven & Quebec*. The Lawrence Lande Foundation for Canadian Historical Research, No. 2, Montreal, 1966. Redpath Library, McGill University. A performance of the canon by Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal can be heard on the RCA Victor record CCS-1029 stereo. The main features of the record are: Alexander Brodt's *Paraphrase in Polyphony*, a symphonic work based on "Freu dich des Lebens" and Jean Papineau-Couture's Piano Concerto.

Canada may claim, however, a Beethoven world premiere in the composer's own life time. At least, it is reasonable to assume that when Theodore Molt returned from Vienna to Quebec in the summer of 1826 he made his friends or pupils perform the canon that Beethoven had scribbled on a piece of music paper the size of a large postcard. German-born Molt, after teaching music in Quebec for a number of years had decided early in 1825 to visit Europe to make the acquaintance of some of its great musicians. Beethoven was well disposed to his overseas visitor and on December 16th, 1825 — his 55th birthday as it happened — he dedicated *Freu Dich des Lebens* to the overjoyed Molt. Though the canon appeared in the *Gesamtausgabe*, the manuscript later disappeared until Lawrence Lande, a zealous collector of Canadiana, secured it for Canada once again in 1966.¹

THE
QUEBEC
GAZETTE.



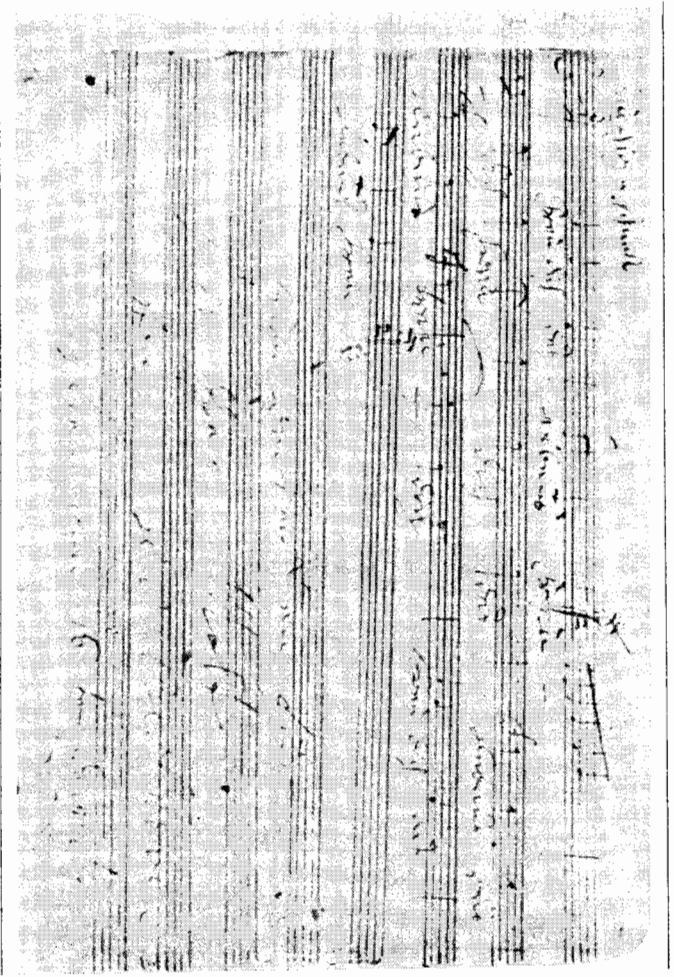
L A
GAZETTE
D E
QUEBEC.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1770.

JEUDEI, le 22 FÉVRIER, 1770.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T S.
M U S I C.

THE Managers of the Gentlemen's Subscription
Concert, take this Opportunity of informing the Subscribers thereto, that the Performance will, for the future, begin precisely at Six o'Clock.



By the 1840's Beethoven's music certainly had become familiar to music lovers. Skilled amateur pianists tackled orchestral and chamber works in piano duet arrangements, as is shown by some volumes of music preserved at the Séminaire de Québec. Musical societies also featured Beethoven. In his *Toronto's Pre-Confederation Music Societies, 1845-1867*² David Sale lists the following performances for the first year:

- Hallelujah to the Father (Mount of Olives)*
- Coriolanus Overture*
- Prometheus Overture*
- Symphony No. 1* (probably incomplete)
- Quintet* (performed by 2 horns and strings)
- Symphony No. 2* (probably incomplete)

A few years later, in 1849, Pierre-Henri Bouchy could report proudly from the Collège classique de Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière:³

"Ce qui m'intéresse plus, c'est le suffrage des prêtres de notre maison et même celui des écoliers. Je suis enchanté de voir leur goût se reformer et se former; ils savent déjà apprécier dignement les belles compositions, et quoique la musique de Lambillotte et Labat ne soit pas à dédaigner, ils mettent une extrême différence entre les morceaux de ces auteurs et ceux d'une tout autre portée, de Beethoven par exemple."

- 2 M. A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1968.
- 3 Letter to Abbé Edouard-Gabriel Plante, June 13, 1849, preserved at Les Archives du Séminaire de Québec.

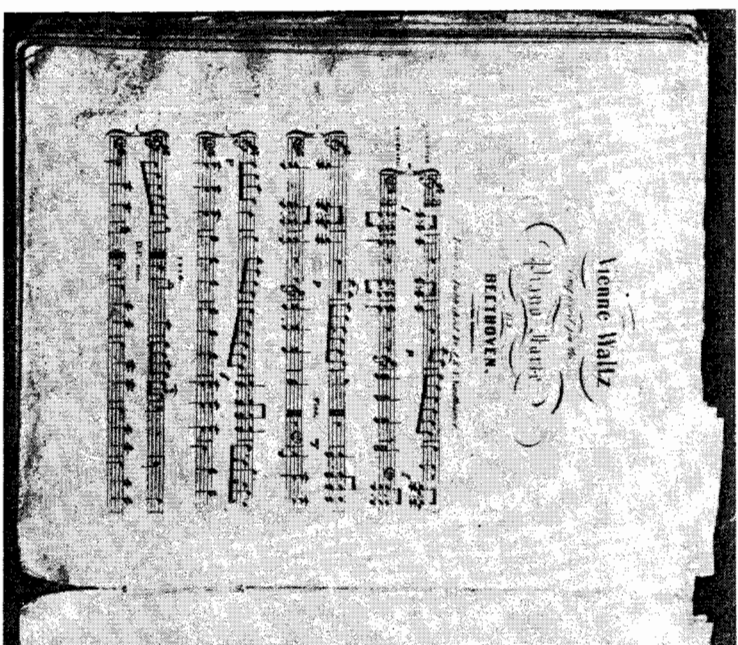
One of their performances included "la Victoire du Christ de Beethoven, avec paroles chantées (le morceau le plus difficile et le plus long de la journée)."

Nor did many years pass before Beethoven's music was heard in the far West. Henry Morley has told of a concert given in the early seventies at St. Ann's Academy in New Westminster where a sixteen-year-old girl pupil played the *Pathétique* Sonata.

*"This was the first really good music that some of the younger listeners had ever heard, and it welded them at once to the piano and Beethoven."*⁴

⁴ "Musical Pioneers of the Far West did much to Promote Growth of Art," *The Daily Province*, Vancouver, Oct. 26, 1927.

Nor all efforts to propagate Beethoven's music were successful. A. & S. Nordheimer, Canada's pioneer music publishers, brought out as one their first publications — in the mid-forties — Beethoven's *Vienne Waltz*. Alas, in spite of a certain brusque quality, the piece is considered spurious by modern authorities. Known also as *Almack's or Azalia Waltz*, it belongs to a group of several pseudo-Beethoven waltzes that were widely circulated by some American and European publishers.



No comment is needed for the following except from the London journal, *The Musical World* of February 1871:

A CORRESPONDENT writing to us from Montreal says:—"The Christmas holidays which are now drawing to a close, I have spent in Montreal. Although a fine and improving city in most respects, in a musical point of view it is very backward; there are few concerts and those of the poorest kind; no good public performers, and the general public taste at the lowest ebb. The (grand) concert in honour of Beethoven had an orchestra of about forty bad players, a chorus to match, and one or two sixth-rate singers. Although Nilsson was in Toronto, the people here could not raise enough to induce her to come. In a town not far from here I heard of a professor having all the best teaching in the place, who had only heard of Beethoven, but did not know any of his music, whilst the names of Schubert, Chopin, &c., were perfectly unknown to him. So much for Canadian musical taste. I miss the London concerts not a little; perhaps when we are annexed to the States we shall keep up with the more better."

As if to make up for this disaster the Montreal violinist Franz Jéhin-Prume, a Belgian-born musician of international acclaim, did some remarkable pioneering for Beethoven during the next several months. The reviews for the individual concerts however make it clear that the *Pastoral* Symphony was represented by its first movement arranged for a large chamber ensemble.



The do, justice to the audience who have attended these concerts, we have not had time to say that these have not been many in our history, for the same reasons, although we fear we could not say this had the house been so well filled every night as it was on the last.

MR. PRUME'S CONCERT.

Table listing musical pieces by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and other composers, along with the names of the performers such as Miss Dore, Mr. Prume, and Miss DeLoraine.

BEN APHARETICAL 146 DIRECTORY. BEN

- Anderson James W., clerk, 159 John
Anderson John, reporter, bds at 55 Victoria
Anderson Joseph, fanny goods, 250 Queen West
... [many more names and addresses]

When Beethoven lived in Toronto Most definitely it was a genuine Beethoven, a descendant of the Bonn court musician and tenor Johann, whose name graced the Toronto City Directory for 1873. But just as certainly, this man would have been an embarrassment to his famous grand-uncle, had the two lived at the same time. For Ludwig Johann van Beethoven (1839 — between 1890 and 1916), the son of the composer's nephew Karl, was a man of doubtful character, a "con" artist who in 1868 had used Wagner's influence to gain access to the king of Bavaria, exploiting the generosity of the monarch and

The Reader,

TORONTO, TUESDAY, OCT. 29, 1873

LOCAL NEWS

MADAM VON BEEHOVEN.—We noticed in our impressions of Saturday and Monday that the above talented lady intended delivering a *piano-forte* recital at the Agricultural Hall. A very large assemblage attended to hear the performance, the crowd being so considerable that numbers had to stand. It became apparent from the moment that Madam Beethoven commenced the superb *sonata* 26 of her great uncle, that in delicacy of touch she can hardly be surpassed, and as the piece progressed through the *scherzo* and solemn *Funeral March*, it was clear she possessed feeling and execution in an equal degree. There has probably seldom been any *piano-forte* player in Toronto who would alone sit down to render the programme set before Mad. von Beethoven's company. From end to end it contained nothing but the most difficult of classical music, yet it is hard to mention one piece as being superior in its delivery to another. The programme comprised *The Sonata op. 26*, "Beethoven"; *Andante and Rondo Capriccioso*, "Mendelssohn"; *Meditation*, "Lael"; *Tannhäuser*, "Liszt"; *Grand Sonata Pathétique*, "Beethoven"; *Turkish March* (from Beethoven's, "The Ruins of Athens,"); "Rubinstein"; *Adelaide*, "Beethoven"; *Egmont Overture*, "Beethoven." The *piano-forte* upon which the recital was given was unfortunately not equal to the occasion.

⁵ Ludwig Johann later became managing director of the New York Commissionaire Co. and a vice director of the South Pacific Railway, calling himself Louis von Hoven. It is not known when and where his life ended. His wife died in Vienna in 1917, their son Karl, the last of the Beethovens, shortly afterwards in the same year. For further reading consult Paul Neill's "Beethoven's Grand-nephew in America," *Music and Letters*, July 1957 and Joseph Schmidt-Gögg's *Beethoven, die Geschichte seiner Familie*, G. Henle Verlag, 1964.

other Munich notables. For some years he lived in grand style, posing as Baron van Beethoven, the composer's grandson (1), but eventually he considered it wise to seek distant lands and on September 15, 1871 he arrived in New York. Emigration seemed to have been a precaution against a threatening jail sentence. Indeed a term of four years was pronounced in Munich in July 1872, *in absentia*. Meanwhile Beethoven spent most of 1872 in Rochester but came to Montreal before the end of the year.

If this episode is recounted here, it is largely because Ludwig Johann was married to a pianist, Maria Nitsche, an artist of genuine accomplishment (but with her own *in absentia* jail sentence of six months) who made a real contribution to the performance of Beethoven music in Montreal, Ottawa, Brockville and other Canadian cities. In the fall of 1872 she received pupils at her Montreal residence, 24 Cathcart Street, and drew "the attention of the Citizens of Montreal to the Opinions of the Press respecting her Classical Concerts which have already taken place." Her Toronto debut took place on October 28th.

For obvious reasons the Beethovens never stayed in one city for a long time and from Toronto they seem to have moved to Detroit by the spring of 1873.⁵

MONTREAL, April 12, 1873.

From "Folio," Boston, Oct., 1872.

A swindler has appeared at Vienna,—Ludwig Von Beethoven,—who claims to be a direct descendant of the great composer. He succeeded in obtaining a thousand florins from the king.

From Toronto Paper, March, 1873.

Ludwig and Madame Von Beethoven, professing to be related to the eminent German composer, have suddenly disappeared from Toronto, being largely in debt to traders.

EDITOR FOLIO:—

DEAR SIR:—These people swindled every one with whom they came in contact during a three or four months' residence in Montreal. Pass them around.

Yours, truly,
A SWINDLER.

The large works come to Canada

When the Toronto Conservatory was established in 1886, it was a matter of course that nearly all the piano sonatas were listed on its examination syllabus. But the students rarely had a chance to hear an orchestral work. The Seventh Symphony was given in Toronto in 1893 and the *Eroica* in Montreal in 1902. Of the choral-orchestral works, the *Mount of Olives* was performed in Montreal in 1893, but the most remarkable event was the first performance of the Ninth.

For newspaper attention the *Ninth* had to compete with T. P. Brooke's Chicago Marine Band — much to its disadvantage — but *The Daily Star* was able to despatch reviewers to both events.

The Daily Star.

....Montreal Philharmonic Society's

Festival Concerts

Windsor Hall, Montreal,
Wednesday, 7th April, at 8.15 P. M.,
Max Bruch's
"ARMINIUS."

Thursday, 8th April, at 3.30 P. M.
MATINEE
Of Orchestral Numbers and Vocal Solos.
At 8.15 P. M.,
Masselet's
"MARY MAGDALEN"

and L. von Beethoven's
"NINTH (CHORAL) SYMPHONY,"
Friday, 9th April, at 8.15 P. M.,
Wagner's
"TANNHAUSER."

SOLOISTS:

Soprano—Miss Rosa Margare Bonaldi, New York, and
Mira Kravak Dunton Wood, Bayville, New York.
Cello—Mr. Baron Bernhard, New York.
Bass—Mr. Homer Moore, New York.
Harp—Miss Corral Shaw.
ORCHESTRA—
THE BOITON FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA of 70 pieces
Played at Northampton, taken by subscription only from
Thursday, 24th to Tuesday, 29th March, inclusive. Sales
to general public from Wednesday, 28th March, inclusive. Sales
Prices—**Matinee, \$1.50 and \$1.00.**
Friday, \$2.50 and \$2.00.
Room 15, 172 Notre Dame St.
A. BROWNING, Secretary,
1915

FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1897.

A GREAT MUSICAL EVENT

Two Works Produced for First Time in Canada.

Mr. Moltenhauer took the orchestra and chorus in hand for Beethoven's great work with a firm but not the least delicate touch. The highest plane of musical achievement yet attained in our opinion by the Philharmonic. The orchestral and choral work were indeed superb. Much has been written about the symphonies which were the result of prolonged and profound thought on the part of the great master. Whether or not Beethoven felt that great as the possibilities of the orchestra were, the human voice was needed for the greater effect. The theory, Northwithstanding the interest with which the work was listened to by the large audience, betiding a musical work of high and solemn import, and the summer breeze is assuaged. Max Bruch, Masselet, Beethoven and Wagner. Successful performers of works by these masters indicate great versatility and great devotion to art, and recognizing this the Philharmonic is to be sincerely congratulated.

HONORARY PATRON: H. R. H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT
PATRON: HIS EXCELLENCY, THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. HONORARY PRESIDENT: SIR JOSEPH FLAVELL, BART.

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

DR. HERBERT A. FRICKER, Conductor
THIRTIETH SEASON
1926-1927

The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra
FRITZ REINER, Conductor

MASSEY MUSIC HALL
TORONTO

February 24th, 25th and 26th 1927
Orchestral Matinee, February 26th, 1927
SUBSCRIPTION LIST CLOSES TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1st, 1927

In 1927, the centenary of Beethoven's death, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, supported by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra accomplished a feat of both repertoire and endurance. In a series of four concerts on three successive days it presented the *Missa Solemnis* under H. A. Fricker and the Ninth Symphony under Fritz Reiner; in addition to shorter works by Beethoven and other composers.

A BEETHOVEN CENTENARY

Having in mind the fact that the great composer Beethoven departed this life in the year 1827, it has been decided to make two of the concerts this year specially commemorative of that event and to this end Dr. Fricker and Mr. Reiner have selected those two great monuments to his genius, the *MISSA SOLEMNIS* in D and the *NINTH SYMPHONY* (the choral). In both these works the combined force of the orchestra of one hundred players, the Chorus of two hundred and thirty-five singers, and a quartet of soloists, will co-operate, performing the Mass on Friday evening, February 25th and the Symphony on Saturday afternoon, February 26th. Other Beethoven numbers will be performed at the first concert on Thursday evening and at the closing concert on Saturday evening.

FRIDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25TH

The programme will be **BEETHOVEN'S MISSA SOLEMNIS**—the Mass in D, now given for the first time in Toronto. It is the Master's greatest choral work, a composition of stupendous proportions and of enormous dramatic possibilities. First conceived as an expression of his love for his friend and patron, the Archbishop of Olmutz, and to be performed at his installation, its scale developed so that as a liturgical work it was seen to be impracticable and could only be performed with all the resources of a large orchestra, chorus and four soloists. On this occasion an outstanding performance should be provided by the chorus of two hundred and thirty-five voices, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra of one hundred players and the following eminent soloists: Chaire Dux, Soprano; Verna Carrega, Contralto; Tudor Davies, Tenor and Fraser Gange, Bass. The Mass will be preceded by the *Leonor Overture No. 3*, Beethoven.

The *Missa Solemnis* performance was billed as the first in Toronto but may have been the first in Canada. In the same year also, the complete cycle of the string quartets was given in Toronto by the Hart House String Quartet in alternation with such visiting ensembles as the London and Kilbourn Quartets.

This left only one major work to receive its Canadian premiere, *Fidelio*. The opera received this performance in Montreal on May 3, 1946 (repeated the next day) under the auspices of the Montreal Opera Guild. Emil Cooper conducted. Dino Yannopoulos was stage director. Most of the main roles were sung by foreign artists but Joseph Victor Laderoute sang Florestan.

1970: The Bicentenary

What proportion of Beethoven's complete *œuvre* was performed in Canada during 1970? How many times was the *Leonor No. 3* played? The statistics have not yet been compiled, but there is every evidence that Canadian performers and ensembles indulged in a veritable feast of Beethoven music. Only two unusual features shall be

documented here. One was a touring exhibit, organized by Dr. Franz Grasberger, director of the music department of the National Library of Austria, called *Beethoven, the Man and his Time*. It was the result of a suggestion made by Nicholas Goldschmidt and was first shown at the Guelph Spring Festival of which he is the director.

The other unusual feature was Alexander Brott's research into some of Beethoven's contrapuntal studies, from which he selected and orchestrated a number of prelude and fugues. A CBC commission, the work is titled *The Young Promethus*. Brott gave a similar treatment to *Seven Minuets* and *Six Canons*. Nearly all these works had never been heard in concert in any form.

It is doubtful that 1977, the 150th anniversary of the composer's death, following so closely upon 1970, will be a special Beethoven year. But in 2027—what may the chronicler have to add to the present sketch at that time? For one thing, I wish, much more definite information about the early years of Beethoven appreciation in Canada; for another, a confirmation that this unique body of music will be as meaningful and as modern as it is today.