

# Tafelmusik

## Visions and Voyages: Canada 1663–1763

PROGRAM NOTES

By Alison Mackay

*Visions and Voyages* is Tafelmusik's contribution to the national activities commemorating the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation in 1867. In order to feature some of the most beautiful music in our core repertoire, we have chosen to explore the century between 1663, when Quebec was established by Louis XIV as a royal province of France, and 1763, when North America came under the control of the British crown.



*A new & accurate map of the islands of Newfoundland, Cape Breton, St. John and Anticosta; together with the neighbouring countries of Nova Scotia, Canada, &c.* Emanuel Bowen [London, W. Innys, 1752]. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

This century saw the flowering of secular music by Purcell, Handel, Lully, Marais, and Rameau, much of it written for monarchs who gained prosperity and prestige from their Canadian colonies. Instrumental works by these composers provide the musical portion of *Visions and Voyages*.

Diaries, letters, archival records, ships' manifests, account books, and religious mission reports called "Relations" provide rich details about life in Canada at this time, and much of the material for the spoken narration of the concert is taken from them. These sources often reveal a dark picture of European attitudes to the first inhabitants of Canada, and set the stage for the crushing of Native cultures and the establishment of residential schools which came with Confederation and the establishment of the Indian Act.



Seeking an expression of life in Canada before European contact, we have turned to the beautiful writing of the poet and scholar **Armand Garnet Ruffo** (*photo, left*), a band member of the Fox Lake Chapleau Cree First Nation and a citizen of the Ojibwe nation. Prof. Ruffo teaches at Queen's University, where he is Queen's National Scholar in Indigenous literature, and we are deeply grateful for his permission to use an excerpt from his poem *Old Story*.

To represent the exhilarating artistic currents in the Native communities of Canada, we have engaged two of its most exciting young artists, narrator **Ryan Cunningham** (Artistic Director of Native Earth Theatre Company), and dancer and choreographer **Brian Solomon**, the creator of two new works set to the music of Jean-Philippe Rameau.

After a portrait of the centuries-old communities living in the territory before European contact, the first half of the concert is devoted to life in New France and to music by French composers. These particular works have never been performed by Tafelmusik before, and include excerpts from the opera *Sémélé*, by **Marin Marais**, viola da gamba virtuoso and director of the Paris Opera from 1705 until 1709. Like Handel's oratorio of the same name, the opera is based on the story of Jupiter and Semele from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. One of the most colourful movements is a musical depiction of an earthquake, used in our performance to accompany a seventeenth-century account of the great Charlevoix earthquake of 1663, which had its epicentre in Trois-Rivières and was felt in much of eastern North America.



The stunning images which are projected during the musical earthquake are the work of the Canadian landscape and architectural photographer, **Simeon Posen** (*photo, left*), whose photographs are held in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The National Gallery in Ottawa, and Gallery Arcturus in Toronto. Preferring the subtlety of black and white, Mr. Posen works with large- and mid-size negative formats, hand-developing the film materials and printing on silver fibre-based papers. We are immensely grateful for his generous sharing of works from his *Water* portfolio.

The dramatic Charlevoix earthquake was followed a month later by a seismic event in the governance of Canada. Louis XIV dissolved the "Company of New France," an association of 100 investors who had been granted a monopoly over the fur trade and settlement of the colony in 1627, and declared Quebec to be a

royal province under the direct authority of the crown. The architect of the new province was the powerful finance minister of France, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who organized every aspect of French official life to magnify the glory of the young king.

Hoping to increase the French population of the new province in order to foster stability and create a Canadian market for goods manufactured in France, Colbert embarked in 1663 on a ten-year program of recruitment of young women for emigration to Quebec. They became known as “the daughters of the king” (*les Filles du Roi*), and many Québécois can trace their lineage to these 800 foremothers (as can Hillary Clinton, Angelina Jolie, and Madonna!).



*Vue de Quebec, capitale du Canada.* Georges-Louis Le Rouge [Paris, 1755]. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

In order to foster and exert control over culture, scholarship, and manufacturing, Colbert established the Academy of Sciences, the Paris Observatory, the Gobelins Tapestry works, a Royal Factory for the manufacture of glass and mirrors, and a Royal Academy of Music which soon came under the direction of the Italian-born dancer and composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully.

The theatre of the Palais-Royal, home of the Paris Opera at this time, received a major renovation in 1674, and the work chosen for the grand opening of the new hall was **Jean-Baptiste Lully's** *Alceste*, composed in honour of a recent military victory of Louis XIV. Dancing was extremely important in French opera at this time, leaving us with a treasure trove of instrumental music from each of Lully's theatrical works,

including the overture and the dance movements which appear throughout the work.

Dance theorists from Lully's time divided dances for music theatre into two categories. One type of dance used codified steps and geometric patterns combined in various ways to create new choreographies for the standard minuets, gavottes, and sarabandes which provided moments of music reflection or energetic activity in the unfolding drama of the opera.

Another type of dance was called "expressive" or "imitative," using newly created movements to imitate the motions of a hammering blacksmith or a rowing boatman. It is known that on several occasions Lully took these special dances away from the more conventional choreographers he normally used. For the chaconne depicting the planting of a palm tree in the middle of the stage in his opera *Cadmus & Hermione*, for instance, he himself created the steps and figures for the solo dancer and eight men from the corps de ballet. The dance commentator Abbé Dubos, who was intimately acquainted with Lully's practice, reports that some dances were like "choruses without words," i.e. dances without formal steps, using movement and gestures to portray strong emotions such as grief. He particularly cites the funeral procession from *Alceste*, which is performed in our concert to accompany the description of the funeral procession of the famous Huron-Wendat leader and orator Kondiaronck, who died in 1701 during the largest diplomatic gathering in the history of early Canada, the Great Peace of Montreal. At the close of the peace conference, for which a special theatre was built, 1,300 native delegates representing 40 First Nations joined in ceremonial dances and songs with the French delegates. A bonfire was lit and a great ceremonial feast was shared by all.

A contemporary account of the event also describes the performance of a Te Deum, the ancient church hymn which was given elaborate musical settings by many baroque composers and was often performed during special celebrations. Jean-Baptiste Lully, for instance, composed a Te Deum to celebrate the recovery from surgery of Louis XIV (though the composer tragically died from gangrene after stabbing his foot while conducting the work). The Te Deum in D Major composed by Lully's contemporary, **Marc-Antoine Charpentier**, is thought to have been composed in celebration of the French victory over William of Orange at the Battle of Steinkirk in 1692. The lively instrumental prelude, which ends the first half of the concert, has become famous today as theme music for programs on broadcasts of the European Broadcast Union.

Across the channel, England had staked its own claim for large portions of Canadian territory in 1670, when Charles II granted rights over fur trading and mining to his cousin Prince Rupert and "The Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay." Seeking both the North-West Passage and the higher grades of fur which came from animals living in colder climates, the new company established trading posts at the mouths of the six major rivers flowing into Hudson's Bay. British ships picked up bales of beaver pelts once a year for the making of felt hats, which had been fashionable since the sixteenth century and were now a necessity for the well-dressed businessmen, soldiers, and aristocrats of Europe.



Three-cornered beaver hat, pictured in Philippe Mercier, *Sir Edward Hales*, 1744, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Orange, now William III of England, commissioned from Purcell to celebrate the birthday of his wife Queen Mary in 1694. The short symphony is composed in three parts; a stately opening followed by a lively canzona, and a final adagio full of striking dissonances and soulful chord progressions which provide a fitting prelude to the recitation of names of Indigenous communities around Hudson's Bay, soon to be dominated by English colonists.

The founding of the Hudson's Bay Company complicated the balance of power among the various constituencies in Canada, and as the decades passed, the British crown looked for ways to cement alliances against the French. In February of 1710, four influential representatives of the Iroquois confederacy (one of them the grandfather of Joseph Brant, founder of the city of Brantford) were invited to visit London at the expense of Queen Anne, who had ascended the British throne after the death of William of Orange. The visit of the ambassadors caused a sensation in London, and the political and cultural activities of their visit were recorded in newspaper accounts and in a 53-page book published in 1710 called *The Four Kings of Canada*. After their four-week crossing of the Atlantic they were

Louis XIV had established a particular fashion for a beaver hat with the brim folded back on three sides and the three-cornered hat was soon being worn across the channel in England. There it was known as the "cocked beaver," celebrated in music with the popular fiddle tune "Johnny cock thy beaver." The second half of the concert features a set of variations for violin and continuo on this tune, published in 1685 in John Playford's collection *The Division Violin*.

Playford and his son Henry, who ran a music shop located in the Inner Temple area of London and frequented by Samuel Pepys, were the most important music publishers in Restoration England. They enjoyed a close relationship with **Henry Purcell**, and published many of the works composed for the Stuart monarchs who presided over the English colonization of Canada at this time. The second half of the concert begins with the overture (called a "Symphony") to *Come ye sons of art*, the ode which William of

lodged at an inn called the Two Crowns and Cushions, owned by the upholsterer Thomas Arne. (His son would become the composer Thomas Arne, and his daughter Susannah would become one of Handel's favourite singers, Mrs. Cibber, for whom he composed the contralto arias in *Messiah*.)

On April 19, the four visitors were brought from their lodgings by coach to the Palace of St. James for an audience with Queen Anne. They addressed the Queen at length through an interpreter about various political issues, and presented her with a wampum belt. She commanded that the guests be shown the city, and they were taken by barge to Greenwich, where they inspected the astronomical instruments at the Royal Observatory. They dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury, visited the Tower of London, and were taken to St. Paul's Cathedral to inspect the dome, which was under construction at the time.

They were also invited to various cultural events, including a performance of *Macbeth* at which the audience refused to let the play begin until the Canadian kings were seated on the stage for all to see. The newspaper announced a special performance in their honour of William Congreve's *The Old Bachelor*, a play for which Henry Purcell had composed an overture and nine movements of instrumental music in 1693. After Purcell's untimely death at the age of 35 in 1695, several important posthumous editions of his works appeared, including a large anthology of orchestral music published by his widow Frances in 1697. This was the first printed collection devoted exclusively to incidental music for the English stage. Titled *A Collection of Ayres composed for the Theatre*, it contained suites of overtures, song tunes, and dance movements, including the movements on our program from *The Old Bachelor* and *King Arthur*, music that could have been performed in concert versions for the Four Kings of Canada in 1710.

1710 was also the year of the first visit to London of **George Frideric Handel**, who throughout his life was a great admirer of Purcell's music. Handel's first opera for the London stage, *Rinaldo*, was an immediate success, and he soon entered the employ of Queen Anne and settled in England for the rest of his life. He went on to serve the first two Hanoverian kings: George I, for whom *Water Music* was written, and George II, for whose coronation Handel composed *Zadok the Priest*, which has since been used in every English coronation. In 1719 Handel was appointed "Master of the Orchestra" of the Royal Academy of Music, London's first opera company, and in the following years he composed 31 operas with Italian texts. *Scipione*, composed in 1726, contains the march now famous as the regimental march of the Grenadier Guards.

The London public began to cool towards Italian opera in the 1740s and Handel began to favour English-language oratorios: works which were less expensive to produce since they didn't use sets or costumes, but nevertheless provided a stage for Handel's brilliant dramatic flair. *Israel in Egypt* (1739) opens with a solemn "symphony" expressing grief over the death of the patriarch Joseph. The music, which is adapted from the 1737 funeral anthem for Queen Caroline, illustrates Handel's custom of reworking old material for a new context, and we have used it to express a lamentation over the language used by Nicholas Flood Davin in his recommendation of "aggressive civilization," which laid the groundwork for the establishment of residential schools in Canada.

The Grande Entrée from *Alceste* (1750) represents yet another type of Handel's theatrical activity, for it is one of 20 pieces of incidental music composed for a lost play by the Scottish author Tobias Smollett. The rising rockets of sound in the oboes and violins are an unusual effect in the regal processional music which we use to bring King George III on to the scene in our concert, bringing our century of music and Canadian history to a close. Although he came to the throne a year after the composer's death, the king loved Handel's music, finding great solace in later life when recovering from bouts of his terrible illness, porphyria, in playing Handel's music on the harpsichord.

One of George III's first duties at the beginning of his reign was to oversee Britain's claim to North America after the end of the Seven Years War. His Royal Proclamation of 1763 set out guidelines for the settlement of Aboriginal lands, explicitly recognizing Aboriginal rights and land titles, and stating that all territory would be considered Aboriginal until ceded by treaty. Though the proclamation has been contravened many times, it is enshrined in Section 25 of the Canadian Constitution, and is still used in treaty negotiation and litigation today.

The final section of the concert is devoted to a weaving together of Armand Garnet Ruffo's poetry, Brian Solomon's choreography, and one of the most exquisite pieces of music by **Jean-Philippe Rameau**, the Entrée of Polyhymnia, the muse of sacred poetry and dance, from the opera *Les Boréades*. This work was in rehearsal in April of 1763, the final year of our century, when the Palais-Royal theatre burned down. The music, not known to have been performed in Rameau's lifetime, seems to express perfectly the longing for the vision referred to in the title of our concert — the dream for a better path on which to move forward together as we embark on Canada's next 150 years.

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*Please go to the Tafelmusik website to see a list of images projected during the concert:*  
**[tafelmusik.org/Visions](http://tafelmusik.org/Visions)**

*We are grateful to the **National Film Board of Canada** for permission to use excerpts from Bernard Gosselin's 1971 film *César's Bark Canoe*.*

### **The Tafelmusik Canadian Fiddle Tunes Project**

On Sunday, February 26th, between 5:30 and 6:00, immediately after our final performance of *Visions and Voyages*, the orchestra will be joined onstage by 25 young violinists from Etobicoke School for the Arts and the Suzuki program at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre. For several months the students have been working on eight old fiddle tunes: five from the historical fiddling traditions of French, Scottish, and Aboriginal communities in Canada, and three from sources in Tafelmusik's repertoire. Canadian fiddle expert Anne Lederman and Tafelmusik's own Christopher Verrette have joined teachers Gretchen Paxson-Abberger, Rebecca Sancton-Ashworth, and Pamela Bettger in working with the students. Please join us for this short performance demonstrating their hard work in contributing to the activities of Canada 150.