

## CMHS Faces Tough Times

By Clifford Ford

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The Canadian Musical Heritage Society (CMHS) was established out of a need to provide the actual composed music mentioned in such books as Helmut Kallmann's *A History of Music in Canada, 1534 to 1914*, *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* or my own *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey*. From Helmut's pioneering work beginning in the 1940s until the appearance of the first volume of *The Canadian Musical Heritage* anthology in 1983, Canadian music historians have had difficulty in systematically studying compositions from Canada's musical past (pre-1950) or performers in discovering this rich early Canadian repertoire. Even access to the music was not possible until the National Library established a music division in 1970 and began systematically collecting musical Canadiana. After the appearance of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* in 1981, the stage was set for the creation of the Canadian Musical Heritage Society and to begin the monumental task of reviewing, selecting and publishing Canada's historical compositions. With tremendous satisfaction, the Society completed its task with the appearance of the 25th and final volume before the close of the 20th century.

However, our task is not complete. Although much of the music in the volumes is available from us in sheet music form for performance and study, the majority of Canadians do not read music and therefore have limited access to their heritage. While many performances of the music have taken place the music has not reached a very large

number of Canadians. In addition the Society developed a smaller anthology of the most historically significant works from the larger series—*The Historical Anthology of Canadian Music*—in order to provide instructors with material to teach Canada's musical heritage to both secondary school and university students. The greatest stumbling block has been a lack of recordings for the instructors to use the anthology effectively. For both these reasons the Society attempted to produce a comprehensive anthology of CDs.

But here is the rub. Despite many applications and lobbying we have not been successful in finding the necessary funding for a CD series, although we have had great success with the first two—*Le Souvenir: Canadian Songs for Parlour and Stage* with Sally Dibblee and Russell Braun, and *Noël: Early Canadian Christmas Music* with the Elmer Iseler Singers, Michael Schade, Noreen Burgess, and Mireille Lagacé—they took us four years to produce! Apparently our ministrations to Sheila Copps has been a catalyst and her department is now reviewing its CD funding policy. However, now the very existence of the Society hangs in the balance unless we can find emergency funding.

The Society has spent so much of its time in the past several months trying to convince the powers-that-be to take such a CD anthology seriously that we find ourselves running out of money just to keep going. This summer we reduced our staff to the minimum and, unless some funding source is found

soon, the Society will be reduced to volunteers only. We believe it is important, however, to continue providing performance materials to those who want to bring this music to their listening audiences. How long we will be able to do so is unknown.

The Society is looking long and hard at its options, one of which is to provide a larger membership base that would include instructors, performers, librarians and all those with a concern for the musical heritage of this country. For more information, please call or write to the address below.

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