

Canadian Composer's 'Lost' Manuscripts Rediscovered

By S. Timothy Maloney and Helmut Kallmann

If asked to name a 19th-century composer born in Ontario whose career took him to New York, London and Paris, most of us would probably draw a blank. Had it not been for Calixa Lavallée's success with "O' Canada," he too would undoubtedly be as forgotten as Clarence Lucas. But that may soon change.

Lucas was born near Smithville, Ont., in 1866 and died near Paris, France, in 1947. In between he composed in every genre from popular songs and piano pieces to art songs and "serious" works for piano and organ; from comic opera to sacred music; and from chamber music to choral and orchestral music. He toured widely in the United States and Great Britain as a musical-theatre conductor, was an editor for the British music-publishing house Chappell, and was a correspondent for the *Musical Courier* and *Etude* periodicals.

Although Lucas's name and some of his compositions were not unknown to historians in this country, there were major gaps in our knowledge of his chronology and catalogue of works. His *Othello* Overture, premiered by Henry Wood at the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts in 1898, and his symphonic poem *Ulysses and the Sirens* were among numerous compositions completely unknown to us until his surviving children donated his manuscripts and copies of his published scores - some 350

works in all - to the Canadian Musical Heritage Society (CMHS). This material was recently deposited at the National Library of Canada.

The story is all the more remarkable considering that a fire at Lucas's London studio in 1947 destroyed some of his scores and papers. The remainder was shipped to his home near Paris, where it lay dormant in the attic for almost half a century following his death. This cache included compositions published by several major houses, a scrapbook containing photos and newspaper clippings, correspondence, and even the manuscripts of several novels he wrote. His major musical works include *Peggy Machree* (a musical), *The Money Spider* (a comic opera), *The Birth of Christ* (a cantata), a Requiem Mass, several orchestral overtures (including three with Shakespearean titles), and a string quartet.

Researchers will now have access to nearly six decades of Lucas's creative work. While a number of his compositions have already been published by the CMHS, others will certainly appear in future volumes of the Society's anthologies.

This article first appeared in Classical Music Magazine in September 1997.