

by the encouragement of more institutional archives, especially in business. Will all of this be enough to fund a total national system on the scale envisaged by the Group? Perhaps not, though it will go a long way. Interestingly enough, even allowing roughly for certain more or less hidden additions to the financial request, the sum would probably still not represent an increase in the first year of much more than 20% of all reported archival budgets. After so many years of neglect and recent inflationary trends, the aggregate figure does not seem very large. Compared to the value of our holdings and the size of our responsibilities, the amount dwindles almost to insignificance. All we have to do is buy one less fighter aircraft a year, every year. That means one less to scrap or crash annually.

Considering the recommendation for funding a new Extension Branch of the PAC, it would be a pity to conclude that “he who pays the piper, calls the tune”, but archivists will be apprehensive on this account. Some will also fear that such infusions could create a “welfare bum” mentality in some authorities. It would be a shame, that is to say, if some provincial or local levels of government used such an opportunity to avoid their own responsibilities. This need not happen, of course, but will bear close watching. There are many areas left unexplored in the report, or which are touched upon superficially or insensitively. Too little space is expended on how to implement the recommendations and in what order. Perhaps too much is expected of the archival community by the Group in leaving so much out of the report. If the *Report* is not in some way or form translatable into concrete action, then when the dust settles it will be seen as insubstantial. Its principal value then will largely be only that it was funded and distributed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—not an insignificant event in itself, but an opportunity lost all the same. On the other hand, it certainly is too much for archivists to ask of one small group of persons in a constricted period of time with slight resources available to devise every answer, for all time, in any situation. At the very least, the *Report* should stimulate many responses, which with good will should complete the Consultative Group’s work. I suspect this can be the final refuge of the committee, and if the *Report* leads to some positive and vigorous action—soon—who then will deny this sanctuary or the wisdom of the Group?

Peter Bower
Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Some performance!

In the early days of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), the Canadian Opera Company (COC) Archivist received promotional material which listed, among the purposes of the organization, a united voice to speak on behalf of its members. To anyone involved in the emerging performing arts archives field, and in desperate need of support, this was seductive advertising indeed. And yet, during the intervening years the Association has given no indication of recognizing the existence, not to mention the plight, of this area of the discipline. The record of the arts of a nation is as representative and revealing a manifestation of that nation’s philosophies, mores, tastes, life styles, attitudes and people as are government, educational, religious and business records, and the growth of Canadian performing arts companies and of their support by Canadian audiences since World War II is a remarkable social phenomenon. Brilliant and devoted Canadians, many of them not native-born, have contributed to the recognition, organization and presentation of Canadian artistic talent, broadening the national character immeasurably. To lose the documentation of their work is to risk distorted presentations in future historical writing.

Canada's past is the story of a people dispersed thinly across thousands of miles, preoccupied with survival, without the economic resources or potential audiences to establish permanent artistic organizations. Because of this, an image has evolved of the Canadian character as almost totally lacking in artistic talents or desires, regarding the arts as non-essential to life. And yet, from the beginning of New France there was music and song and dance—the first lyric theatre was presented by Marc Lescarbot in Acadia in 1606, nine years after the first recognized opera performance in Florence, Italy. For almost two centuries Canadian audiences have welcomed performing arts companies from the U.S. and abroad.

The ACA's June 1979 *Archives Bulletin* commented on Kent Haworth's feeling that if a non-profit organization like the church can afford to maintain its own records, business organizations should do the same instead of foisting the responsibility onto public archives. The apparent inference was that public archives have more material now than they can house and process. Yet, they have a mandate from the public to preserve historical records. Businesses have not. Their role in society is to keep the economy of today in motion. What would be the source of funds to support a programme that professional archivists would consider of even minimal standards? Should the corporation cut back its growth plans? Or increase the price of its product? Or reduce dividends to the shareholders who invested their money in the expectation of the best possible return? Or dismiss staff? Or cut salaries? Or make payroll deductions and prevail on the federal government to make them tax-deductible? Or persuade the federal and provincial governments to run the country on considerably less income from corporate taxes? All of these are, after all, only tortuous and administratively expensive methods of public support.

It is this inescapable cause-and-effect that besets the world of the performing arts (for "shareholders" read "members"—those who by their donations to the company become members of the organization). Like business men, artists and production staff are not historians but, on the contrary, find day-by-day problems sufficient to exercise their mental and financial resources to their limits. Very few performing arts companies operate without the constant spectre of a deficit and the threat, not of cutbacks, but of bankruptcy—possibly the natural consequence of being dependent for survival on an ability to dramatize and create highly-coloured situations. Nothing in the world of drama, onstage or backstage, is mediocre.

In the world of opera, box office returns which produce as much as fifty per cent of required income represent close to ideal conditions. The remainder of the income must come from grants and fund-raising. Canada has taken giant strides with the establishment of Arts Councils but is a far cry from Europe where government support is as high as 95%. There is no relief from the pressing need to lure every dollar—the same dollar that many others are endeavouring to attract. An opera company must accede to rates of pay decreed by various unions—the Association of Canadian Musicians, Actors' Equity, IATSE (the stagehands' union). It must provide an excellent product (usually regarded as a luxury) at a price that will attract in an extremely competitive market. In a world almost deafened by hucksters, it must create a better mousetrap and the costs of promotion are exorbitant. Production costs—sets, costumes, lighting, increasingly complicated technology, directors, designers, conductors, rehearsal space and time, repetiteurs, accompanists—continue to rise and the artists who can be counted on to fill the house command, of course, the highest fees. Administrative staff, the unsung (or at least unsinging) *sine qua non* of the company carries the burden of fund-raising, grant applications, promotion, marketing, budget-control, payroll, financial statements, booking, scheduling, liaison with the Board of Directors. Where does an archives programme, again of even minimal standards of excellence, fit into this over-worked, hand-to-mouth picture? Or do we continue to pretend for all time, that there is no artistic side to the Canadian character—that we are still a nation of people concerned only with eking out a living?

In a paper to the 1974 Public Archives of Canada training course, R.S. Gordon stated, "In custodianship of holdings, and in performance of functions, the archives usually employ a great variety of professional, technical or clerical staff" and listed twelve functions. The need for these functions applies to any repository, no matter what the size. Add to those twelve the skills of a gymnast, an engineer, an accountant, a carpenter, a locksmith, an electrician, some ability in reading musical scores, and you have a fairly complete list of what is required of an opera company archivist. I need hardly say that none of these functions can possibly be carried out to the satisfaction of the incumbent. There is no need to dwell on the needs for accommodation and equipment. The holdings in the COC Archives must fulfill the requirements of the law and of the company staff and the public—students, writers, historians, opera devotees. The current archivist has been content to administer and operate the facility for close to six years single-handedly and without salary because she is in a position to do so and because she considers it of great importance. There is no reason to believe a qualified successor would be found who could accept these terms of employment.

Whose is the responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the records of Canada's artistic history?

Co-ordinated Arts Services, a central organization formed to provide services common to all performing arts companies in Toronto, received seed money from both the Ontario and Federal Governments to establish an archives programme. An archivist was hired to provide assistance and instruction for those members of the organization who wished to avail themselves of this assistance at nominal cost. As in all programmes of this type, funding stopped at the end of the seed period and, in any case, the original terms of reference did not include provision for operating or capital costs to the participating companies. But the scheme in itself was a praiseworthy and imaginative first step. The Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, the Chalmers Foundation and Floyd S. Chalmers have funded the research for, and the publication of, the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Following the release of the Symons report the Ontario Arts Council produced its "Report of a Survey of Toronto Area Arts Archives" which concluded with the observation that, since arts organizations are, almost without exception, in an uncertain financial position at the best of times, and have a prior, mandatory obligation with respect to any funds, it would seem that responsibility for the retention and preservation of arts records, like that for education, falls on governments. Submissions were sent to the Archives Consultative Group of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. In 1976 at the suggestion of Robert Welch, Ontario Minister of Culture and Recreation, the COC Archives applied for a "Wintario" lottery grant. At the end of 1975 the Company's financial picture was, for all practical purposes, one of bankruptcy and the company was carrying out the largest fund-raising drive ever mounted for the arts in Canada. There was no hope of public support for anything as non-productive as archives and at that time Toronto organizations were required to have two thirds of necessary funding from contributions. However, based on the value of the archivist's unpaid services, a small grant was awarded for shelving and equipment. A recent release announced the appointment of an archivist for the National Arts Centre—a relatively young member of the performing arts community, but funded by the federal government.

These isolated rays of light to date add up to zero for those of use who are struggling to keep the faith in spite of space which becomes more and more inadequate, the proliferation of requests for services and information, and a backlog which grows daily. There is very little possibility of a performing arts company's giving any priority to archival needs unless governments provide the wherewithal and the mandate for them to do so. Only archivists appreciate the need for the retention of records other than financial, and are aware of what that retention requires. If this body of experts fails to acknowledge the problem of any section of the discipline and to search for solutions, what hope is there

of impressing the uninitiated? In brief, performing arts archivists need the support, credibility and influence of their peer group, to speak on their behalf, with that promised united voice, into the most receptive ears.

Joan Baillie
Canadian Opera Company

Postscripts on P.A.R.C.

Further to J. Atherton's informative article "The Origins of the Public Archives Records Centre, 1897-1956" (*Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979): 35-59) it should be noted that the recommendations to consolidate the management of historical records into one government agency had some currency prior to Douglas Brymner's comments of 1895 (p. 38) and those of Joseph Pope in 1897 (p. 38-40). For in 1892, the *Report of the Royal Commissioners . . . relating to the Civil Service of Canada* stated that:

the Commissioners would call attention to the fact that valuable records of all kinds are left in an insecure condition and liable at any moment to be utterly destroyed by fire. One of the earliest functions of the Civil Service Commission should be an investigation into the whole subject of departmental and other records.

It is further noticed that three departments are charged with the keeping of records, and three separate expenditures are incurred for this object. Votes are taken by the Privy Council Office, and by the Department of the Secretary of State, for the classification of old records, also by the Department of Agriculture for the Dominion Archivist and Assistant. It is recommended that the historic records that have gone out of reference in the work of the departments, be placed in charge of the Dominion Archivist, and only records to which reference is frequently required be kept in the several departments.¹

On another point, the transfer in 1912 of the Public Archives from the Department of Agriculture to the Secretary of State was not as direct as Atherton stated (p. 44). When the Bill respecting the Public Archives was before the House of Commons and the Senate, questions were raised as to which minister was to be responsible for the Archives.² The Prime Minister of the day, Robert Borden, who had long been a defender of the Archives and who had introduced the Bill into the House, considered the possibility of the Archives' administration being placed under the President of the Privy Council. Consequently, when the *Public Archives Act* received Royal Assent on 12 March 1912, the Archives was placed under the control and direction of the Prime Minister. This arrangement lasted for two weeks, then on 25 March 1912 an order in council transferred the Archives to the Secretary of State.³ A few years later a similar arrangement was proposed to Borden by Arthur Doughty but to no avail.⁴ From our current perspective of austerity, increasing archival responsibilities due to privacy and freedom of information legislation and the growth in the power of the Prime Minister's Office, archivists should reflect upon the glory of those two weeks in 1912 and ponder the splendor of the Archives in the Prime Minister's Office.

Robert J. Hayward
Public Archives of Canada

- 1 Canada, *Report of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into Certain Matters Relating to the Civil Service of Canada, 1892* (Ottawa, 1892), p. xxvi.
- 2 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1911-1912, columns 1494-1497; *Ibid.*, column 6462.
- 3 P.C. 710, 25 March 1912.
- 4 P.A.C. RG 37, vol. 303, file "PAC History" pt. 2, A.G. Doughty to Robert Borden, 23 October 1917.