

Winds of the North: Canadian Perspectives on Wind Band Repertoire

Dr. Darrin Oehlerking

University of Saskatchewan

Mr. Aaron Nuss, Mr. Dan Terrell, Mrs. Jennifer Tiede

Linn-Mar High School Wind Ensemble

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“Canada’s wind band tradition is more than a musical genre—it’s a reflection of a nation shaped by plurality, unity, and a commitment to inclusion.” – Robert Taylor

“The difficulty of finding a Canadian identity [is] due in part to the fact that we do not recognize our sound when non-Canadians use it.” – Elaine Keillor

“...all we can do is to create an atmosphere in which strong musical personalities can express themselves creatively and naturally.” – Sir Ernest MacMillan

Why Canadian Band Music?

“You Oughta Know.” – Alanis Morissette

Canada is currently experiencing an exciting output of creativity within wind band composition, unlike anything seen in the past. Canadian composers are being recognized for their important current and past contributions to the medium and have gained well-deserved respect on the national and international stages. People involved with wind bands, particularly conductors and music educators, have proven time and again that they are passionate about (and accepting of) new ideas and voices. This is an opportune time to further advance the stories and contributions of Canadian wind band composers to an international audience.

Today’s presentation will favour and honour traditional British/Canadian spellings, as they certainly add a colourful element and provide a specific lustre to this wind band-centred ‘informance.’ The goal is to highlight Canadian repertoire within specific music education contexts.

Canadian Wind Band Repertoire – A Selected Overview

The repertoire below is purposefully not identified by traditional publishing grade numbers. Rather, they are placed into one of four levels:

- Developing: ensembles with one to two years of experience on their instruments.
- Intermediate: players who have slightly more experience than a Developing musician.
- Experienced: ensembles who can handle music with greater intensity and technique.
- Advanced: suggested for ensembles performing at an extremely high level.

These descriptors were chosen due to the variation publishers and composers have as to where compositions are best placed in the traditional Grade 1 through Grade 6 grading system. Band directors should ultimately choose repertoire that is best suited to their specific ensemble.

A small cross-section of quality Canadian repertoire is listed below. **Bolded entries will have excerpts performed during this session.** The amount of wind band pieces composed and available by Canadians is impressive, given the population of the country. Directors are encouraged to seek out additional pieces.

Historic Importance

The following examples are crucial to the history of Canadian and North American wind band tradition and repertoire.

Composition	Composer	Publisher	Level
<i>The Maple Leaf Forever</i>	Alexander Muir Arr. Steve Reisteter	Arrangers' Publishing	Advanced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A modern arrangement of one of Canada's most enduring patriotic songs. Clever quotations of 'O Canada.'			
<i>R.C.M.P. Regimental March</i>	Charles O'Neill	Eighth Note Publishing	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The official ceremonial march of Canada's national police force. O'Neill was a charter member of the American Bandmasters Association and published several pieces in the early and mid-twentieth century.			
<i>The Banks of Newfoundland</i>	Howard Cable	Eighth Note Publishing	Advanced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A collection of 8 traditional Newfoundland Folk Songs. Extremely challenging piece with several key and meter changes. Cable is considered one of the most prolific composers of Canadian wind music.			
<i>Lyric Essay</i>	Donald Coakley	Eighth Note Publishing	Experienced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A slow and haunting chromatic tone poem. Excellent example of mid-century wind band composition. Coakley studied composition with Vincent Persichetti.			
<i>Gotta Make Noise</i>	Michael Colgrass	Carl Fischer	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Colgrass lived in Toronto, ON for almost 50 years. This piece is a jazz-influenced concerto for band and percussion ensemble, and one of a few accessible by less-experienced musicians.			

Indigenous Collaboration and Underrepresented Communities

Canada is a noted leader in encouraging and supporting music from underrepresented communities. Canadians are still working to reconcile the colonial aspects of many of our institutions, specifically those in education. The musical and non-musical programming in our schools and universities should lead us towards a better understanding of everyone we connect with in our daily lives.

Composition	Composer	Publisher	Level
<i>The Gathering of Eagles</i>	Bob Baker and Arr. Robert Buckley	Hal Leonard	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">An excellent example of meaningful collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. It was referred to as an example of "Reconcili-action" at the premiere performance.			
<i>Vision Chant</i>	Andrew Balfour Arr. Mark Hopkins	markemersonhopkins.ca	Experienced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Originally composed for choir, this important collaboration allows for an authentic Indigenous voice to be meaningfully represented in the wind band medium.			
<i>Rider of the Mountain</i>	D.I.D. Choi	Carl Fischer	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"Cinematic" piece that will excite young musicians. Choi is only 28 years old, but has an impressive number of compositions available.			
<i>Ned the Neck</i>	Jocelyn Morlock	Canadian Music Centre	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Jazz-influenced piece describing an albino boa constrictor named Ned.			
<i>Cave of the Winds</i>	R. Nathaniel Dett Arr. Dana Paul Perna	Ludwig Masters	Advanced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Modern arrangement of an early twentieth century quickstep. John Philip Sousa commented that Dett was one of the composers he admired.			

French-Canadian Repertoire

French-Canadian wind band repertoire includes a rich history of traditional folk songs, as well as important contemporary contributions to the medium.

Composition	Composer	Publisher	Level
<i>A French-Canadian Suite</i>	Arnold MacLaughlan	Bourne Co.	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three-movement suite for young players that utilizes historic French-Canadian folk songs. 			
<i>Symbiophilie!</i>	Jonathan Dagenais	Eighth Note Publishing	Experienced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A “non-traditional” march written for the 160th anniversary of the Saint-Jérôme Concert Band (Montreal, QC). 			
<i>Blanche Comme la Neige</i>	Harry Freedman	Canadian Music Centre	Developing
Quebec folk song that translates to “White as the Snow.”			
<i>They Came Sailing</i>	André Jutras	C.L. Barnhouse	Experienced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the most prolific contemporary French-Canadian composers for wind band. 			
<i>Laurentian March</i>	Louis-Phillipe Laurendeau	BandMusic PDF	Advanced
Described as an “Introduction to the patriotic tune ‘O Canada.’” An important composer and arranger for Carl Fischer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He also used the pen name Paul Laurent.			

The Howard Cable Memorial Prize in Composition

The Canadian Band Association established a composition competition in 2012 to encourage the development of original Canadian works for wind band. Emerging composers were invited to submit works no higher than Grade 3 in the concert band rating system. The program was renamed to honour Howard Cable after he passed away in 2017. To date, 14 pieces have received awards, with numerous others subsequently submitted to publishers for consideration.

Composition	Composer	Publisher	Level
<i>Portrait of Terry Fox</i>	Quan Le	musicdirect.ca	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written to honour one of the most celebrated Canadians of the twentieth century. Winner of the 2018 prize, it was awarded posthumously after Le passed away from cancer. 			
<i>Chasing Sunlight</i>	Cait Nishimura	Cait Nishimura Music	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winner of the prize in 2017. High-energy piece that simultaneously emulates senses of urgency, excitement and accomplishment. 			
<i>The Meeting Place</i>	Kenley Kristofferson	C.L. Barnhouse	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winner in 2016, it is a musical description of the “safe space” that students often attribute to a school’s band room. 			
<i>Swiftriver Passage</i>	Paul Suchan	Eighth Note Publications	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A piece with multiple meter changes that celebrates the Province of Saskatchewan, whose name is taken from the Cree word for “Swift-Flowing River.” 			
<i>Rocky Mountain Lullaby</i>	Christaan Venter	Canadian Music Centre	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winner of the inaugural competition, the piece uses aleatoric effects to represent the picturesque Rocky Mountains. 			

Contemporary Canadian Composers

Additional examples of composers currently writing quality band music for all levels of ensemble.

Composition	Composer	Publisher	Level
<i>ISS Flyover</i>	Peter Meechan	Meechan Music	Experienced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An internationally renowned composer, Meechan penned this exciting concert opener inspired by the International Space Station. 			
<i>Discovery</i>	Ryan Meeboer	Eighth Note Publications	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeboer is one of Canada’s leading composers for young musicians, with hundreds of compositions and arrangements for large and small ensembles. 			
<i>Northern Lights</i>	Matthew Neufeld	Randall Standridge Music	Intermediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-meter composition inspired by the night skies in the vast Canadian Prairies. 			

Lighting the Dark

Lindsay Stetner

Eighth Note Publications Developing

- A piece for young musicians inspired by the life and work of Nikola Tesla.

Slipstream

Jordan Nobles

jordannobles.com

Advanced

- Open-form composition that requires spatial performance, producing an immersive soundscape.

Special thanks to the fantastic student musicians of the Linn-Mar High School Wind Ensemble for their assistance with today's presentation. Aaron Nuss, Dan Terrell and Jennifer Tiede have created an incredibly positive musical learning environment!

Today's presentation was generously sponsored by GIA Publications. Please visit booth 1403 in the Exhibit Hall and look for the newly released *Winds of the North: A Survey of the Canadian Wind Band Tradition and Repertoire*.

Thank you to the University of Saskatchewan College of Arts and Science for supporting this research.



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

WINDS OF THE NORTH

A Survey of the Canadian Wind Band Tradition and Repertoire

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

DARRIN OEHLERKING

FOREWORD BY

ROBERT TAYLOR

WITH CHAPTERS BY

JASON CASLOR

PRATIK GANDHI

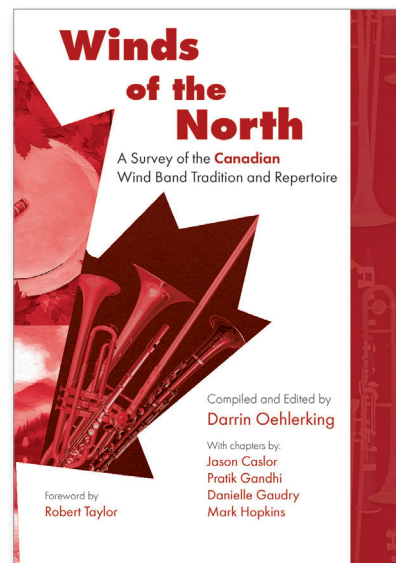
DANIELLE GAUDRY

MARK HOPKINS

Winds of the North: A Survey of the Canadian Wind Band Tradition and Repertoire highlights the importance of Canadian contributions to wind band and music education practices. This substantial volume explores the unique history of wind band in Canada, balanced with contemporary perspectives and representative repertoire.

The chapters in Part I cover a range of topics, including an overview of Canadian wind band history, French-Canadian perspectives (presented in both French and English), decolonizing wind band practices, meaningful Indigenous collaborations, and other important legacies and contemporary issues. Significantly, all chapters are presented through a twenty-first-century lens.

Part II offers scholarly resource guides for 85 of the best works by Canadian composers, categorized by difficulty for developing, intermediate, experienced, and advanced bands.



Each guide presents information about the composer and the work's composition, historical and cultural perspectives, stylistic considerations, pedagogical information, and an overview of the work's form and structure. Rounding out each guide are suggested resources and recordings.

This landmark resource pays homage to the creativity and community that define the Canadian wind band tradition, celebrating its past while inspiring the musicians and educators who will shape its future.

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