

Sharing Their Voices: A Short History of Choral Societies in Nineteenth-century Newfoundland

Glenn Colton
Lakehead University
Ontario, Canada

It was a glorious summer's day in North America's oldest city as a musical gathering of unprecedented proportions commemorated John Cabot's voyage to the New World. An instrumental ensemble of the finest musicians in St. John's accompanied a magnificent vocal display by massed choirs, while a native soprano took centre stage.

This *could* have been a description of the Grand Finale Concert of the inaugural Festival 500, a milestone in the rich history of singing in Newfoundland and Labrador that laid the foundation for our gathering here today. The year, however, was not 1997 but 1897, and the performance in question marked the beginning of a Newfoundland landmark of a different sort. On that memorable day, June 22, 1897, the city's finest civilian bands and massed choirs marched in procession from downtown St. John's to the summit of Signal Hill, where they celebrated the founding of the new Cabot Tower. There they were joined by Newfoundland's own "Nightingale of the North," international opera star Georgina Stirling of Twillingate, for a stirring rendition of hymns in honour of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Year. Patriotism and optimism reigned, as the rocky cliffs reverberated with singing. Then, as now, they had come to share their voices.

Despite the many hardships of life in colonial Newfoundland, it had been a remarkable century of social and cultural development. The Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 resulted in unprecedented prices for fish, the colony's unofficial currency, and this in turn fuelled a sustained wave of European immigration. By 1815, the population of the capital of St. John's had grown from just over 3000 at the turn of the century to 10,000 (a number greater than that of Toronto at the time). Slowly but unmistakably, the seeds of cultural progress were planted as a new society emerged. It was a society in which music—in particular, singing—was to play an increasingly vital role.

As early as 1811, advertisements for private musical instruction could be observed in Newfoundland's first newspaper, the *Royal Gazette*, where a Mr. LaTour had placed an ad for music and dancing lessons (to which he later added "the art of fencing"!)." As subsequent waves of musically trained immigrants crossed the Atlantic, opportunities for private musical instruction grew exponentially for those who could afford it. One music teacher, a Mr. Swain, arrived from England in 1843 where, as the *Public Ledger* of St. John's tells us, he had recently sung at "the principal London Theatre" (*Public Ledger*, 1843, December 26). Trained in Paris, Swain offered his Newfoundland pupils instruction in pianoforte, organ, thorough bass, and French, English, and Italian singing, as well as group classes for the study of both sacred and secular music. While private music teachers catered to the families of merchants, professionals, government officials, and members of the clergy, it was the tireless dedication of religious groups such as the nuns of the Presentation and Mercy Convents on the island of Newfoundland and the Moravian missionaries in coastal Labrador,² that made musical instruction attainable for those less privileged.³ By 1833, the Presentation nuns had incorporated hymn singing into the daily school routine, the legacy of which could be observed decades later. At one performance by girls of the convent school in 1861 it was noted that

Some of the girls sang solos and duets, playing the piano accompaniment, and showing much progress and taste in music.... These institutions must truly be regarded as amongst the greatest blessings to society, when we remember how largely its well being depends on female education—more especially the education of the female poor, who if not taught at such establishments, would probably be denied all education whatever. (*Newfoundlander*, 1861, August 5)

As with music education, concert life in 19th-century Newfoundland was inseparably linked to the Church. One of Newfoundland's foremost musicians of the mid-19th century was William Stacy, organist and choirmaster at the Queen's Road Congregational Church in St. John's and a composer of some ability. In 1860, Stacy composed one of the earlier known compositions of local origin, a band piece entitled the *Newfoundland Volunteer's Band March and Quick Step*.⁴ In addition to his church duties, Stacy was bandmaster of an ensemble known as The Queen's Own Rifle Band and actively involved in organizing and directing public concerts in the early 1860s. Many of these concerts featured ambitious programs of oratorio excerpts accompanied by a small orchestra.⁵ The latter feature was exceptionally rare in Newfoundland during this period and not at all common in other parts of North America.⁶ So it was that Maestro Stacy mounted an 1861 performance at the Masonic Hall that featured excerpts from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Messiah*, and *Samson*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.⁷ The performance of excerpts from *Elijah* is all the more impressive considering that the Canadian premiere of the complete work did not take place until 1874 under F.H. Torrington and the Toronto Philharmonic Society (McLean and McGregor, 1992, p. 977). Equally ambitious concerts (some might say overly ambitious) were organized by Stacy in the years that followed, such as an 1863 event that included selections from Handel, Haydn, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, performed by orchestra and a chorus of 40 voices. While the effort was laudable and the audience appreciative, the calibre of the singing had evidently not quite caught up with the repertoire, prompting a local critic to remark that

the solo and chorus from Haydn in the first part was not done justice to. I was sorry to hear this piece. In the second part the singer changed the words from "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness" to "the voice of him that sitteth." The change amused not a few.... Some over anxious singers, not gifted with much ear for music, misled their neighbour vocalists in the hall by beating gloriously out of time. (*Times and General Commercial Gazette*, 1863, March 14)

The diatribes of local critics, however, were the least of worries for some choristers. One infamous incident, in fact, suggests that being a member of a choir in Newfoundland could be hazardous to one's health! As the *Times and General Commercial Gazette* reports, "We regret to learn that the Rev. Mr. Murray and the Cathedral Choristers were attacked at Maggoty Cove by several rowdies, and roughly handled. The assailants are in the hands of the authorities, and it behooves them to teach such scamps better manners" (1877, December 29). Presumably the attack was unprovoked and not in response to a performance by the choir! Clearly, the cultivation of a tradition of choral performance in Newfoundland was not without its growing pains.

The need for improved training of choral singers was recognized in the mid-1860s by George J. Rowe (1841-1909), Mus. Bac., master of St. Mary's Day School in St. John's and choirmaster at the Church of England Cathedral. Rowe arrived in Newfoundland in his early 20s after serving as master of St. Mark's College, Chelsea, London, and, evidently filled with a missionary-like zeal for music education, set out to develop the considerable (but largely undeveloped) vocal talent he encountered. Rowe introduced adult singing classes—a novelty in Newfoundland at the time—that were held in the music room opposite the Church of England Cathedral commencing in 1866. The initial course of classes comprised 13 lessons in the fall of 1866, followed by an additional course in the winter of 1867. By the spring of that year, Rowe's classes had evolved into a group known as the St. John's Parochial Choral Society, and in June, a concert was given featuring hymns, anthems, carols, choral and solo excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*, *Samson*, and *Israel in Egypt*, and selections from an unspecified Mozart Mass.⁸ The members of the society, in turn, showed their appreciation by presenting their conductor and teacher with a new violin recently purchased from London.

Rowe was a dynamic presence in the Newfoundland music scene throughout the late 1860s, conducting a children's choir comprising 300 students of the Central School in the Winter of 1868, and later an adult group known as the Avalon Glee Club in the Spring of

1869. The latter group was distinguishable from the Parochial Choral Society by its secular repertoire, which tended toward popular British songs of the period with a decided preference for comic pieces.⁹ Evidently Rowe's instruction had begun to pay dividends, as critics now found ample reasons to praise the amateur singers, such as the popular local soloist (and notably secretary of the Glee Club), A.J.W. McNeily, who was lauded for "his distinct pronunciation of the words, a merit not always attained by singers" (*Times and General Commercial Gazette*, 1869, April 10).

Although Rowe would later return to Newfoundland, he spent most of the 1870s on an eight-year hiatus in Wisconsin, where he had accepted the post of Principal of Racine College.¹⁰ Whatever void his departure might have left, however, was quickly filled in 1872 by the arrival of the London-trained Emile Handcock,¹¹ choirmaster of the newly constructed George Street Methodist Church in St. John's and subsequently teacher at the General Protestant Academy.¹² Handcock continued Rowe's legacy of singing classes, held twice a week in the basement of the Methodist Church, while interested pupils could supplement their vocal studies with additional private lessons in harmony and counterpoint. Handcock's classes soon evolved into choral concerts and, in March of 1873, a "Grand Concert" featuring a "Chorus of Fifty Voices" was held at the Methodist Church. The event, featuring works by Handel, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and Mercadante, was much anticipated by the emphatically musical public of St. John's. As the *Times* tells us, the enthusiasm of patrons boiled over into something resembling a stampede prior to the concert:

We arrived at the Church, and found the approach crowded with ladies and gentlemen, impatiently awaiting the opening of the doors. When these were opened, nothing could be more amusing than the rush, the shower of tickets and the apparent dismay of five stalwart door-keepers, whose efforts to check the disorder of their coming were quite fruitless. Very soon the best seats were all taken and the remainder gradually filled up, until the Church appeared to be comfortably crowded. (*Courier*, 1873, March 22)

The overwhelmingly favourable reception accorded Handcock's efforts was likely fuelled by a series of lectures he gave on "Church Music and Psalmody" in the weeks leading up to the concert. Handcock was a pioneer of music appreciation in Newfoundland, and on February 5, 1873, in the basement of the Methodist Church, presented one of the earlier lecture-recitals in the island's history, featuring a "choir of ladies and gentlemen who... will at intervals, illustrate different points of the lecture" (*Courier*, 1873, February 5). Aside from his successful efforts to teach singers and instill in the musical public an appreciation of choral music, Handcock was noteworthy for the ecumenical nature of his choirs, which frequently took their members from several different churches. This stood in stark contrast to the religious divisions and sectarian violence that plagued Newfoundland's colonial history, suggesting a social importance for these organizations beyond their undeniable musical benefits.¹³ As a reviewer of one Handcock concert remarked with a notable tone of optimism, "The audience... was thoroughly Catholic and represented the most cultivated musical taste of every religious denomination in the city.... This general love of harmony proves the harmony of our better human nature, which we do well to follow, rather than the dictates of selfish or narrow minded bigotry" (*Courier*, 1873, March 22).

By 1878, interest in choral singing had developed sufficiently to permit the founding of a non-denominational group known as the St. John's Choral Society. With Handcock as its founding director, the Choral Society marked the culmination of years of development in the training of singers and the focal point for what had become a remarkably rich and vibrant Newfoundland concert scene.¹⁴ It was truly a national institution, attracting patrons from nearby communities as well as the "townies" in St. John's. Many of these communities—such as Bay Roberts, Brigus, Carbonear, Harbour Grace, and Heart's Content—established thriving choral traditions of their own through the activities of church, school and community choirs. The Choral Society's first concert took place on February 22, 1879, and, after one year of operations, it could boast a membership of 150 singers. A

committee of management was elected for the ensuing year that included some of the most influential figures in Newfoundland society, among them the recently elected Prime Minister William Whiteway. The Choral Society's concerts, meetings and rehearsals were held in a spacious new 1000-seat hall constructed under the auspices of the St. John's Athenaeum Society, an institute for the advancement of knowledge that sponsored lectures, poetry readings, and concerts, as well as operating the city's principal library.¹⁵ Adding to the attractiveness of the venue was the availability of a new grand piano, recently purchased by the Athenaeum Society. The instrument was put to good use by the society's talented young pianist, Bertha Harvey, who would later undertake advanced studies at the Leipzig Conservatory.¹⁶

In April of 1880, the Choral Society presented the first complete performance of Handel's *Messiah* in Newfoundland before a packed Athenaeum Hall. So great was the public interest that a repeat performance was mounted, prompting one critic to proclaim the event as a milestone in Newfoundland's cultural history:

If there were any doubt as to whether the people of St. John's can enjoy the higher order of music, the audiences which have assembled in the Athenaeum Hall to listen to the *Messiah*, are sufficient to dissipate any such doubt, and to encourage the efforts of those who are labouring to elevate the popular musical taste. We trust the success of this effort will lead to many similar triumphs; and that we shall have many such elevating and purifying musical entertainments in the future, now that we have a fine hall so admirably adapted for such performances. (Evening Telegram, 1880, April 30)

Interestingly, the repeat performance was offered at the reduced admission charge of 20 cents to make it accessible to a broader range of listeners from "all classes" (Evening Telegram, 1886, July 21). Accessibility appears to have been a central concern for the society throughout its existence and, while it might be tempting to conclude that this was an exclusive club reserved for the social elite, such appears not to have been the case. Membership was determined on the basis of audition and, as the Society's 1886 bye-laws indicate, "Any person who is unable to pay the annual fee (\$1 for Ladies; \$2 for Gentlemen) shall, upon recommendation of an honorary member and upon being found competent, be admitted free of charge as a member" (Evening Mercury, 1886, July 21) (see Appendix 1).

The Choral Society continued to grow in size and skill in the years that followed. Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* was the featured work in the Society's Sixth Concert (April 1881), an event billed as featuring "some of the best musical talent in St. John's." (Evening Telegram, 21 April, 1881). One of St. John's' best musical talents during this period was the American-born soprano Clara Fisher, who came to Newfoundland in the Fall of 1879 to perform in a concert of excerpts from Offenbach and Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. With professional operatic experience in the United States, Fisher was highly sought after as a soloist and did not disappoint, maintaining a remarkably active concert schedule that often included several concerts per week.¹⁷ One such appearance took place on April 13, 1882, the Choral Society's Eighth Concert, in which she was featured soloist in excerpts from Haydn's *The Creation*. In addition to her concert career, Fisher was a prominent voice teacher in St. John's, leading singing classes at the Mercy Convent schools, while teaching privately at her own studio, the Clara Fisher Vocal Academy. Her contributions to the city's musical life were so esteemed that rumour of her impending departure for the United States in 1882 met with something of a public outcry! As one writer petitioned, in a letter to the *Evening Telegram*,

Newfoundlanders have long established for themselves the name of a music-loving people, and that we consider justly. Therefore, we think it strange and almost unaccountable that a vocal artist such as Miss Fisher—the only professional vocalist in Newfoundland—should be obliged to leave us.... Surely if we are a progressive people, we will not allow ourselves to retrograde in this most pleasing of the fine arts.... All, I am sure, will readily admit that Miss Fisher

has by her effective training, done much good in cultivating a musical taste here within the past three or four years, and persuade Miss Fisher to kindly remain still amongst us, and continue the work she has been doing so well. (Evening Mercury, 1882, December 27)

The public persuasion evidently worked, as Fisher postponed her travel plans indefinitely and remained in Newfoundland until the end of the decade.

The Choral Society possessed no shortage of native talent either. Fisher routinely shared the spotlight with local singers such as the popular Rev. J. Phelps, the versatile Miss Bulley, and a Mrs. March, described by one observer as "the best soprano in St. John's" (Evening Mercury, 1886, March 5). The society's pianist in 1881 was a twenty-year-old Newfoundlander who would come to dominate the local music scene for the next half century. Charles Hutton (1861-1949) would soon add to his multi-faceted duties the roles of composer, publisher, music store owner, impresario, director and singer in his own productions of popular operettas, and organist and choirmaster at the Roman Catholic Cathedral.¹⁸ In his capacity as church musician at the Cathedral, Hutton served for a staggering sixty-three years, a feat that not even the venerable Healey Willan could match.¹⁹

By 1883, Hancock had been succeeded George Rowe, recently returned from Wisconsin, who resumed his leading role in the city's cultural life as director of the Choral Society.²⁰ To these duties he later added the new role of principal of his own privately-run St. John's School of Music, offering group classes and individual lessons in piano, violin, organ, harmonium, harmony, and singing. In this enterprise, he was ably assisted by two piano-playing daughters, Lucy and Ellen Rowe, who performed regularly at concerts of the Choral Society as soloists, duet partners, and accompanists for the chorus.²¹ Concert programs of the Choral Society continued to feature oratorios, including (in addition to those already mentioned) Handel's *Samson*, as well as cantatas such as Niels Gade's *The Crusaders* and *The Erl King's Daughter*, and Barnby's *Rebekah*. In other instances, mixed programs were the order of the day, with short choral pieces alternating with part songs, madrigals, solos, and occasional instrumental pieces. The program for the Choral Society's Ninth Concert, on April 16, 1883, was typical, featuring (among other works) a Beethoven piano duet played by the Rowe sisters, a series of part songs by Mendelssohn and others rendered by the Choral Society, and a vocal trio by Parry in which the conductor sang (see Appendix 2).

The Society had grown to over 200 members by the mid-1880s, garnering rave reviews from the local press in the process. As one reviewer proudly proclaimed in 1885,

Our choral society has now reached a state of musical excellence which enables it to compare favorably with any similar association elsewhere. It is one of which we may well feel proud. It has now won a high place in public estimation, as providing for the community pure and elevating enjoyments; and every year its efforts are more widely appreciated. (Evening Mercury, 1885, December 31)

Exactly how the St. John's Choral Society would have measured up against "any similar association elsewhere" remains a matter of conjecture since St. John's, like most other North American cities at the time, was relatively isolated culturally and exceptionally so geographically. It is therefore doubtful whether many patrons of the Choral Society, including the reviewer quoted above, would have heard contemporary choirs in other centres such as the Montreal Philharmonic Society (1877-99), or the Toronto Choral Society (1879-91). Nonetheless, the likes of Hancock, Rowe, Fisher, Hutton, and Harvey were highly skilled, professionally trained musicians and it is quite conceivable that the ensemble would have more than held its own when measured against the achievements of others. Comparative judgements aside, the comment serves to underscore the ensemble's central position in Newfoundland society as a symbol of cultural promise and national pride, a musical coming of age for a nation discovering its own voice.

The Choral Society ceased operations in 1888, the same year that a new opera house opened in St. John's to cater to the growing public demand for comic operettas. One year

later Clara Fisher departed for the United States, while the society's stalwart conductor, George Rowe, retired from teaching by the end of the century to seek relief from poor health in Bermuda. He died there in 1909. The end of the Choral Society signalled the end of an era of music in Newfoundland, yet the fact that such an organization could grow and flourish for a decade of continuous operations is a testament to how far local musical culture had evolved in a relatively short period. The Choral Society served as training ground for a generation of amateur singers, a vehicle for instilling an appreciation of classical music in the community, and a potent symbol of social harmony and cultural progress. Its legacy was a culture of musical excellence that made it possible for the indefatigable Charles Hutton to attract an audience of 4000 to a concert of sacred music at the Roman Catholic Cathedral in 1890, and for the Nightingale of the North to receive the support of well trained voices on that memorable summer's day atop Signal Hill.²²

So as we share in the rich exchange of musical cultures that Festival 500 embraces and marvel at the vocal talents of choirs from around the world, let us not forget the musical pioneers of this place—the dedicated men and women of the New Found Land who shared their voices to build a nation.

Appendix 1

Bye-laws of the St. John's Choral Society (1886)

Bye-laws of the Choral Society:

- The name of this Society shall be the St. John's Choral Society;
- Its objective shall be the development of musical taste and talent by the practice and public performance of the works of the Great Masters;
- Its general business shall be conducted by a committee of ten members chosen annually, any five of whom shall form a quorum;
- The Committee shall, by ballot, annually elect the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, Conductor and Pianist of the Society;
- A sub-committee of eight members (two from each of the parts) shall be appointed by the Society at the beginning of each session to aid the Secretary in his work;
- All persons proposing to become or continue as members of this Society shall submit themselves for the approval of the conductor and the committee in respect of their musical proficiency before being eligible as members of the Society;
- The annual fee paid by members shall be as follows: by Ladies \$1, by Gentlemen \$2, by honorary members \$4;
- Any person who is unable to pay the annual fee shall, upon the recommendation of an honorary member and upon being found competent, be admitted free of charge as a member;
- All members, except honorary members, bind themselves upon being enrolled, to attend two-thirds at least of the meetings for the year, and be present and sing at the concerts of the Society, and none save those who have attended such number of practices, except with special permission of the conductor and the committee, shall be allowed to sing at any concert;
- The annual meeting of the Society shall be held during or before the last week of June, when the accounts shall be presented, the proceedings of the session reported and a committee appointed for the ensuing year.

Appendix 2

Program of the Ninth Concert of the St. John's Choral Society, Athenaeum Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, 16 April 1883.

Programme:**Part I.**

1 - Duet (Pianoforte)	Sonata in D (Beethoven)	The Misses Rowe
2 - Glee	"Blow, blow thou winter wind" (Stevens)	Choral Society
3 - Quartette	"The Happiest Land" (Hatton)	Messrs. Rowe, Dunfield, Phelps, Rothwell
4 - Part Song	"Sing on with cheerful strain" (Mendelssohn)	Choral Society
5 - Song	"The Little Tin Soldier" (Molloy)	Rev. H. Dunfield
6 - Part Song	"Autumn" (Mendelssohn)	Choral Society
7 - Duet	"The Greenwood Tree" (Abt)	Misses Haddon and Rendell
8 - Part Song	"Early Spring" (Mendelssohn)	Choral Society
9 - Song	"The Poacher's Wife" (Philip)	Miss Duder
10 - Glee	"The Sisters of the Sea" (Jackson)	Mrs. March, Miss Duder, Messrs. Ayre, McNeily and Choral Society

INTERVAL**Part II.**

1 - Solo (Pianoforte)	Berceuse in D flat (Chopin)	Miss Adelaide Nutting
2 - Glee	"In Summer's Cool Shade" (Arnold)	Choral Society
3 - Quartette	"The Tar's Song" (Hatton)	Messrs. Rowe, Dunfield, Phelps, and Rothwell
4 - Song		Mr. Watson
5 - Part Song	"Hunting Song" (Mendelssohn)	Choral Society
6 - Quintet	"Blow Gentle Gale" (Bishop)	Mrs. March, Miss Duder, Messrs. Phelps, McNeily, and Rowe
7 - Part Song	"Ripe Strawberries" (Hatton)	Choral Society
8 - Song	Bid me Discourse" (Bishop)	Miss Fisher
9 - Trio	"Come Fairies" (Parry)	Misses Haddon, Rendell, and Mr. Rowe
10 - Serenata	"How Gently the Moonlight"	Choral Society
11 - Finale	"God Save the Queen" (Leslie)	Choral Society

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Endnotes

1. LaTour offered instruction in flute and violin.
2. An exhaustive study of the Moravian musical heritage in Labrador is being undertaken by Tom Gordon of Memorial University of Newfoundland.
3. The first formal learning of Moravian hymns by Inuit children in Labrador is documented in the winter of 1780-1 in Nain and Okak. Following the permanent introduction of music into St. John's schools by the Presentation and Mercy Sisters, respectively, in 1833 and 1843, subsequent convent schools were opened in Harbour Grace (1851), Carbonear (1852), Fermeuse and Harbour Main (1853), Brigus (1861), Burin (1862), and St. Lawrence (1871), among other locations.
4. The composition, dedicated to the Governor Bannerman, was subsequently published in an arrangement for piano and violin by Chisholm's Book Store of St. John's, and remained popular with Newfoundland audiences for decades.
5. Reviews of Stacy's concerts from the 1860s show that his ensemble typically comprised the following instrumentation: flute, horn, four violins, cello, and piano.

6. While orchestral accompaniment for such events was rare, a tradition of public instrumental ensemble performance in Newfoundland can be traced as far back as 1817, when chamber ensembles were frequently used to provide incidental music to plays at the St. John's Amateur Theatre. Public concerts featuring vocal and instrumental ensemble music were presented by 1827, while a St. John's Philharmonic Society is recorded as early as 1843.
7. One of the earliest references to the performance of oratorio excerpts in Newfoundland dates from 1838, when a private gathering at Government House (then home to the Governor of Newfoundland) was treated to selections from Handel's *Messiah* and Haydn's *The Creation* by the St. John's Handel and Haydn Society.
8. The St. John's Parochial Choral Society was a reprise of an organization founded by Bishop Edward Feild, the Anglican bishop of Newfoundland, in 1848. In December of that year, Feild wrote of the society to the editors of *Choir Parish* magazine (Feild, quoted in Woodford, 1988, p. 50).
9. The original Avalon Glee Club was founded in 1861 by A.W.S. Smythe.
10. Rowe was succeeded as choirmaster at the Church of England Cathedral by Owen Jones, who capably led the ensemble from the mid- to late 1870s. Jones likewise played an active role in organizing and directing public concerts and sold pianos and harmoniums from his premises on Gower Street.
11. Hancock, who studied at the University of London, was formerly conductor of the Société Harmonique Guemesiaise and Professor of Singing at Kingswood College.
12. As of 1885, the curriculum of the academy included studies in vocal music.
13. As late as 1883, sectarian violence erupted with tragic consequences in the town of Harbour Grace, where an Orangemen's parade sparked a bloody confrontation between Protestants and Roman Catholics that left five dead and seventeen wounded.
14. In addition to choral concerts, many of the larger communities hosted a variety of secular concerts by local amateurs. Most of these featured mixed programs of solo and ensemble singing with occasional instrumental interludes. Repertoire selection showed a strong preference for British popular songs, with occasional classical masterworks rendered. "For the Benefit of the Poor" was a phrase commonly seen in the notices of such concerts, and a host of charitable organizations came to the fore as concert sponsors (such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Dorcas Society, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and many others).
15. The St. John's Athenaeum Society (founded 1861), took its inspiration from the many like-minded institutions in other British and North American cities, such as the Athenaeum Societies of Liverpool (1797), Boston (1807), London (1824), Manchester (1836), Toronto (1843), and Glasgow (1847), among others. From its earliest years, the St. John's Athenaeum Society placed an unusually high value on music in comparison to similar organizations elsewhere. The lecture season was frequently interspersed with "entertainments" comprising poetry readings and music, while a Spring Concert was held every year.
16. Harvey returned to her native Newfoundland in the late 1880s, introducing masterworks by Chopin to local audiences, and may well have given the first piano recital in Newfoundland history.
17. These included concerts of the Athenaeum Society, several charitable societies and churches, and, of course, the Choral Society.

18. Hutton directed one of the earlier North American performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* in St. John's in 1886 and, by 1890, founded the St. John's Orchestral Society. Quite possibly his greatest legacy, however, was the publication of the *Newfoundland Folio of Over Fifty Old Favorite Songs* (1906), a volume that included popular American, Canadian and British pieces, as well as six works by Newfoundland composers (of which four were by Hutton himself).

19. Willan served as organist and choirmaster at the Anglican Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Toronto from 1921 until his death in 1968.

20. Rowe also assumed the position of master of Bishop Feild College, and, in a reprise of his former role, choirmaster at the Church of England Cathedral. Handcock, for his part, stayed on as secretary of the society and frequently appeared as soloist in its concerts, while maintaining an active conducting schedule through concerts of the Athenaeum Society.

21. Rowe's son, George M. Rowe, was a gifted violinist who frequently concertized with his sisters and father during the 1890s.

22. By 1910, Hutton had organized a St. John's Choral and Orchestral Society comprising 135 voices and a 16-piece orchestra which, in turn, inspired 20th-century conductors such as Eleanor Mews (later Jerrett) and Hutton's prodigy Ignatius Rumboldt, both of whom pioneered the adaptation of Newfoundland folk songs for choral performance.