

**Review of the book *Music of Canada* (2009), edited by
Frederick P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, and John
McBrewster**

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Musicological Explorations

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Twila Bakker
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Frederick P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, and John McBrewster, eds. *Music of Canada*. U. S. A; Germany; U. K.: Alphascript Publishing, 2009. 208 pp. ISBN-10: 6130228023 ISBN-13: 978-6130228026

What first drew me to this book was the promise of its title. *Music of Canada* could have encompassed the answer to the long debated question, what is Canadian music? The subject material listed in the table of contents was also intriguing. My interest was particularly piqued by the section on “Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.” Could this beguiling book contain a full treatment of the music of First Nations people in Canada?

Unfortunately, all of my hopes were dashed upon turning over the cover. Perhaps I should have given more credence to the stamp on the front which read, “High quality content by Wikipedia articles!” I thought it must be a joke; after all, who would possibly sell a compilation of Wikipedia articles? And the book did have three respectable-sounding editors, so wouldn’t they ensure that the content of anything published under their names would be quality? Apparently not.

A number of the articles in this “book” contain little or no reference to music. The title comes from the

first article, “Music of Canada,” which is a sweeping generalization of Canadian music history. The four entries that follow contain respectively a shabby discussion of First Nations culture, a biography of the French explorer Samuel de Champlain, a description of the “Culture of the United States” (with one tiny paragraph about music), and some random information about Port Royal, Nova Scotia. Although the remainder of the articles do address some aspect of music – “Musical Ensemble,” “Chamber Music,” “Lists of Composers,” et cetera - the information is too brief and general to be of much use.

Further research revealed some very interesting things. The publisher, Alphascript Publishing, prides themselves on printing “academic work” at no cost to the authors.² All titles are edited by Frederic P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, and John McBrewster.³ *The Wikipedia Signpost*, Wikipedia’s version of a newspaper, ran a story on August 17, 2009 claiming that Alphascript Publishing was running a “scam.”⁴ The author states, when discussing Alphascripts’ three editors, that there is “no sign that these three people

² “Welcome to Alphascript Publishing,” <http://www.alphascript-publishing.com/index.php?&act=nav&nav=10039> (accessed 1 May 2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ PrimeHunter, “Three Million Articles, Chen, Walsh and Klein Win Board Election, and More....,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2009-08-17/News_and_notes (accessed 1 May 2010).

contributed” to the almost two thousand books that bear their names.⁵ This accusation is born out in *Music of Canada*. In lieu of a preface, the reader is provided with a page describing the ways in which the book adheres to copyright law. On this page, it explicitly says that the editors “have not modified or extended the original texts.”⁶ It would seem that the most these editors could have done was to select the entries included in the book - hardly an act of editing.

The Wikipedia Signpost article also highlights the “poorly printed” nature of the majority of the books published by Alphascript.⁷ This is particularly true of *Music of Canada*, which features a number of misspelled words, arrows where weblinks used to be, and bad punctuation and capitalization. Where were the editors during the process of conversion from webpage to printed book? One major failing found in other Alphascript publications mentioned by the author of *The Wikipedia Signpost* article is the lack of correlation between the photos and subject matter. For example, an article about the country of Georgia featured a picture of Atlanta, Georgia!⁸ At least *Music of Canada* appears to be innocent of *this* charge.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Frederic P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, and John McBrewster (eds.), *Music of Canada* (U.S.A.; Germany; U.K.: Alphascript Publishing, 2009).

⁷ PrimeHunter, “Three Million Articles,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2009-08-17/News_and_notes>.

⁸ Ibid.

Although it may seem a bit ironic to review a Wikipedia publication using Wikipedia's newspaper, it is all too appropriate. Let this review be a warning to anyone considering the purchase of an Alphascript publication. The description of these books on Amazon.com is misleading and will give no indication of the source of the articles. The high price of each volume may also confuse a potential buyer. After all, who would charge \$89 for a bunch of Wikipedia articles? Take my advice: if you are one of the millions of people who use Wikipedia as a starting place for research, access the free version online.

However, I highly recommend this book to any first-year undergraduate who wishes to use Wikipedia as a source for class essays. Here at last is a way to go under your professor's radar and include Wikipedia in your bibliography! Teachers beware, Wikipedia is in print!

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Penderecki String Quartet, Gryphon Trio, Erica Goodman, Shalom Bard, Christopher Dawes, and Nora Shulman. *Marjan Mozetich: Lament in the Trampled Garden*. Centrediscs, 2009 CMC CD 14009

Marjan Mozetich is one of Canada's most accessible composers. For proof of this, one needs to look no further than his considerable award collection. The most telling of these accolades is his 2002 Jan V. Matejcek Concert Music Award (SOCAN) granted to