

**Thomas-Étienne Hamel and his “*Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap*”:**

***A Manuscript Song Collection of Nineteenth-Century Quebec*<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** Thomas-Étienne Hamel is a celebrated figure in 19<sup>th</sup>-century church and education histories, but his extensive musical activities have received little attention. His *Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap*, a 300-page manuscript containing words and music of 130 songs, has often been described as a folk music collection. However, this appears to be true of only its first half. The remaining songs, culled from French and Canadian sources of Hamel’s time (the mid-to-late 19th century), exemplify the repertoire of composed popular songs cultivated by students and other amateur singers. The article traces sources of the songs, compares them to versions in other published and manuscript collections, and posits a date for the compilation.

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The document that forms my topic is found in the Archives du Séminaire in Quebec City. It consists of a large bound notebook containing some three hundred pages. Of these, 259 are numbered, most of them containing the single-line tunes and the complete lyrics for a collection of songs, all written out in the same hand. Ninety-six individual songs are included; for one song, only the lyrics are given, and for one other song only the title; for the remaining majority (94 songs) the pages provide both music and words. For eight of the song texts, several alternative tunes (“autres airs”) are given, adding another 36 musical items to the collection. One song is copied into the notebook twice, with only minor differences. The total musical component is therefore 131 tunes. Of the 259 numbered pages, nine have been left blank. Blank pages, about thirty of them, also occur after page 259, indicating an allotment of space for more songs that were never included. A few pages from the end, in another hand, there is a partial list of the contents, up to page 99 only.

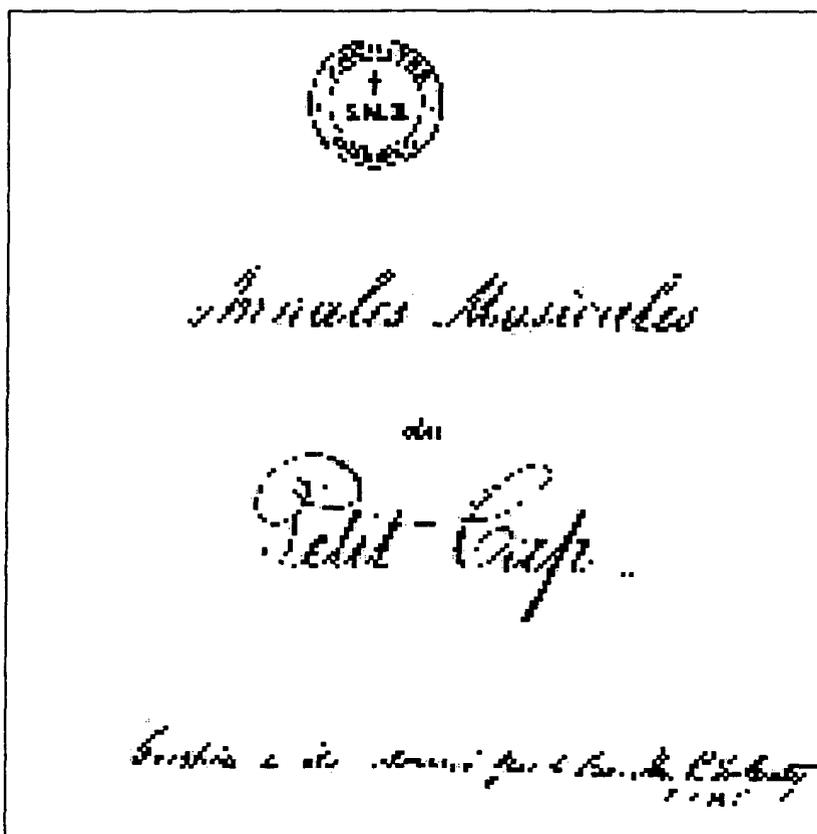
The title-page (Figure 1) identifies the work as *Annales musicales du Petit-Cap*. Under the title is a note, “Ce cahier a été donné par le Rev. Mr. P. Doherty,” and the note is signed, “T. E. H., Pr.” Petit-Cap gives us a geographical connection, being the name of a small district just east of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré where the Séminaire de Québec maintained a villa, used for vacations and retreats. L’abbé Jean-Patrice Doherty (1838-72) was a young teacher at the Petit Séminaire who later became a parish priest at Saint-Roch.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the initials T. E. H. refer to one of the most important figures in Quebec church and educational life of the second half of the nineteenth century, Thomas-Étienne Hamel.

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<sup>1</sup> This article originated as a paper presented in French under the auspices of the Société québécoise de recherche en musique (lecture series “Présences de la musique”) in Montreal on February 20, 2002 and in Quebec City on February 21, 2002. I am grateful to the Society for the opportunity, to Danielle Aubin and her staff at the Musée de la civilisation for their cooperation, to Simone Auger for patiently correcting my language errors, and to Juliette Bourassa of Laval University for kindly providing several identifications in Appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> See the *DCB*, vol. 10, pp. 233-4.

Figure 1: *Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap* (Musée de la civilisation, fonds d'archives du Séminaire de Québec, MS-3. title page.)



Hamel was born in Quebec City on 28 December 1830 and was educated at the Quebec Seminary. At the age of twenty-two he accompanied the supérieur of the Seminary, Louis-Jacques Casault, as secretary during the latter's trip to London for negotiations regarding the charter to establish Laval University. Their five-month sojourn also took them to Paris and Rome. Hamel was ordained in 1854 and the same year was sent to Paris to pursue advanced studies in mathematics and science at the École des Carmes. During this period he became acquainted with another Quebec student, the pianist, composer, and musicologist Ernest Gagnon, four years his junior. Both were part of a circle of bright young Quebecers studying in Paris in the late 1850s.

Graduating with a *licencié-ès-sciences* from the Sorbonne after four years in France, Hamel returned to Quebec, assuming an appointment in 1859 to teach physics at Laval and mineralogy, astronomy, and geology at the Petit Séminaire. At the same time he took up duties as *Sécrétaire-Général* of the new University under its first rector, Casault. During this period he was also an instructor at the École normale Laval. From 1871 he was increasingly active as a church and university administrator, serving as *Supérieur* of the Seminary, rector of the University (succeeding Casault), and *Vicaire-Général* of the Quebec diocese, but seems to have relinquished little of his teaching or his scientific research. In 1874 he and a fellow professor from Laval, the brilliant Joseph-Clovis-Kemner Laflamme, attended a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Hartford, Connecticut; around the same time Hamel

published several essays on scientific and historical topics. In 1881 Hamel led a delegation to Rome to argue Laval's position in a dispute regarding the proposed autonomy of the University's Montreal division, the future Université de Montréal. He was one of the founders of the Royal Society of Canada and in 1886 served a term as its president. Hamel died on July 16, 1913 at the age of eighty-two.<sup>3</sup> His funeral was conducted by the Archbishop and attended by "a large number of priests, the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec ... and the entire University body, led by Monseigneur le Recteur" (Rouleau).

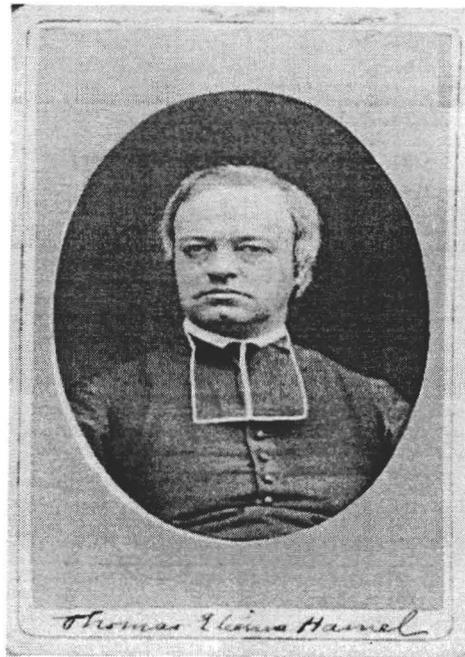
Hamel was a brilliant and versatile scholar and church leader. A contemporary said of him, "il se repose en travaillant" (Myrand, p. 101, note), and another described him as endowed with "une capacité d'efforts étonnante" (Rouleau). One biographical notice provides a rare glimpse of his personality: "De haute taille, figure plutôt austère, il n'en cachait pas moins un coeur d'or sous cette écorce un peu rugueuse" ("Tall of stature, with a rather austere facial expression, he nonetheless hid a heart of gold beneath that slightly rough mask" - Allaire, 1908). A photo from *circa* 1875 confirms this image (see Figure 2). Surprisingly, Hamel is not memorialized in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, although his main contemporaries are.<sup>4</sup> His influence was not merely local; indeed, a prominent scientific colleague, Sir Sandford Fleming, referred to him shortly before his death as "one of Canada's grand old men" (quoted by Morgan, p. 492).

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<sup>3</sup> Biographical information is drawn from the following sources: Allaire; *DCB*, vol. 13 (article, "J. C. K. Laflamme," pp. 562-3); Hamelin; Mathieu; Rouleau.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Index* (Toronto 1991) to *DCB* vols. 1 through 12, there are twenty-two references under Hamel. With most, his name appears with an asterisk, indicating a biography to come; but there is no article about him in vol. 14 (covering subjects who died 1911-20).

Figure 2: Thomas-Étienne Hamel (Photograph ca. 1875, by Jules-Ernest Livernois. Musée de la civilisation, fonds d'archives du Séminaire de Québec, PH 1998-0945)



Curiously, although Hamel's scientific achievements and his many administrative posts are detailed in the various accounts of his life, his connection with music goes largely unmentioned. A brief passage in one biographical notice merely says he "was well versed also in vocal music, had a rich repertoire of songs and collaborated in editions of church music" (Provost, p. 477). This last claim seems to be an error. The *Annales* are duly mentioned in various references regarding Quebec musical folklore (although folklore is only part of their significance, as we will see), but the volume has to my knowledge not been adequately analysed or even properly dated. Moreover, Hamel's activities as a "maître de chant" during his younger days have been virtually ignored. The eulogy of July 17, 1913, written by l'abbé Olivier-Elzéar Mathieu, states that at the time of his appointment at Laval the young Hamel "was at the same time director of the Pensionnat of the University, sang at the Grand Séminaire, gave two courses of public instruction a week, was chosen as one of the students' confessors, and had charge of the Société St Louis de Gonzague" (Mathieu, p. 5). Typically, music here receives only a passing mention.

Alongside the large *Annales* notebook in the Archives, there is a small collection of miscellaneous documents filling out Hamel's musical legacy. These consist of three bound notebooks:

- (1) *Cours de chant* de Thos. E. Hamel Ptr., 1864, Divisions des Grands. 32 paragraphs of musical rudiments, without music examples, headed "Notions élémentaires de Chant - Méthode Wilhem." About four-fifths of the pages are blank.

(2) *Chant en 1864-5* - Thos. E. Hamel Pr.

8 pages listing the students in the various divisions of singing classes, with evaluations ("can't sing"; "there is some hope"; "beyond hope")

2 pages headed "Chœur de M. Gagnon," but without names

10 pages of lesson plans and class roll

21 pages of similar plans and roll-lists for 1865-6, senior and junior divisions

2 pages of lesson plans headed "Plain-chant"

28 pages of titles of plain-chant pieces to be studied

About 45 of this notebook's 102 numbered pages are blank

(3) *Cours de Chant* d'après Wilhem, Division des Petits, Thos. E. Hamel Ptr., 1864-5.

24 paragraphs of musical rudiments, including some notation illustrating note-values and clefs

Most of this notebook (about nine-tenths) consists of blank pages

Besides the notebooks, there are various miscellaneous papers of later date: nine pages of notes for a talk, "Le Langage de la Musique," given for the Septuor Haydn on 22 October 1886; seven pages of notes for another talk, "Langage du geste," for the Institut Canadien, December 3 of the same year; undated notes headed "Voyelles et Conson [sic]," evidently outlining a course on pronunciation. Of interest also is a folder containing a ten-page list of songs, evidently connected with the compilation of the *Annales du Petit-Cap*; thirteen rounds ("airs en canon") not found in the *Annales*; a four-page printed program of a pot-pourri entertainment from the Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, Paris, dated 1857, the period of Hamel's Sorbonne studies; and loose sheets containing manuscript copies of ten songs, either words and music or words only, of which four also appear in the *Annales*. The "Méthode Wilhem" was a widely-used method for teaching sight-singing, based on the *Manuel musical* of G. L. B. Wilhem, first published in Paris in 1836.

The course outlines, lesson plans, and lists of students' names confirm that the young Hamel taught classes of musical rudiments and sight-singing at the Seminary during the middle 1860s. They also provide evidence that a colleague in the music program was his Paris acquaintance Ernest Gagnon. That the two were working together in the same institution is significant since not only is this the period when Hamel started the *Annales* but in the same years Gagnon was preparing his pioneer work, the *Chansons populaires du Canada*, the first edition of which was published in six instalments between 1865 and 1867.

Tracing Hamel's musical formation further, we may note that during his Paris years he not only enjoyed the fellowship of music students and attended public musical events, but was attached to a church, Saint Sulpice, with a distinguished music staff. Of musical significance also is the course of lessons he pursued in Paris with François Delsarte. The lessons were primarily aimed at "expression" in the sense of oration and gesture, and therefore were not directly musical. However, Delsarte had a large following among not only literary figures such as Théophile Gauthier but also actors, public office holders, and several noted opera singers, not to mention prominent composers such as Berlioz and Wagner, both of whom paid homage to his influence. Delsarte himself had begun his career as a singer. Hamel held him in high esteem,

taught his method in Quebec for thirty years, and towards the end of his life published a short treatise based on his ideas, *Cours d'éloquence parlée, d'après Delsarte* (Quebec City, 1906). Among the Hamel memorabilia in the Archives du Séminaire is a bust of Delsarte; a photo appears in his treatise, where Hamel identifies it as a "Copie d'un buste de Delsarte, donné à l'auteur par Delsarte lui-même, en 1858."<sup>5</sup> His student enthusiasm for music, his acquaintance with professional musicians, the evident profound effect of his studies with François Delsarte, his assignment to teach music classes during at least two seasons in the Seminary (perhaps more) - all establishes Hamel's credentials as an individual of some musical skill and accomplishment. Now we will examine the contents of his collection more closely.

The *Annales* begins with the song you might well expect – "À la claire fontaine" (Figure 3). This ubiquitous piece is also No. 1 in the Gagnon collection. Though not declared the "national song" by the St-Jean-Baptiste Society until 1878,<sup>6</sup> in the 1840s it was already universally popular, and Gagnon remarks in introducing it in the *Chansons populaires*, "On n'est pas Canadien sans cela" (Gagnon, p. 1). From this, and from the succeeding eight or ten songs in the *Annales*, some with as many as nine alternative tunes, one might conclude that the volume's object was to preserve the best-known melodies and lyrics of the Quebec tradition, and that it therefore symbolizes the wave of national patriotic feeling so often described by historians of the mid-nineteenth century. Not only were the most popular chansons being gathered, preserved, and studied in their various versions, but composers were quoting them in piano and violin fantasies, dance music, and even choral music for the church. Hamel suggests an affinity with this movement in gathering several different tunes for each of the following widely-known traditional texts (number of "autres airs" given following each title):

"À la claire fontaine," 6	"À Saint Malo, beau port de mer," 5
"Derrière' chez nous y'a-t-un étang," 5	"Quand j'étais chez mon père," 6
"Mon père a fait bâtir maison," 4	"Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre," 9
"M'en revenant de la vendée," 1	"Bal chez Boulé," 2
"Il était un' bergère," 1	

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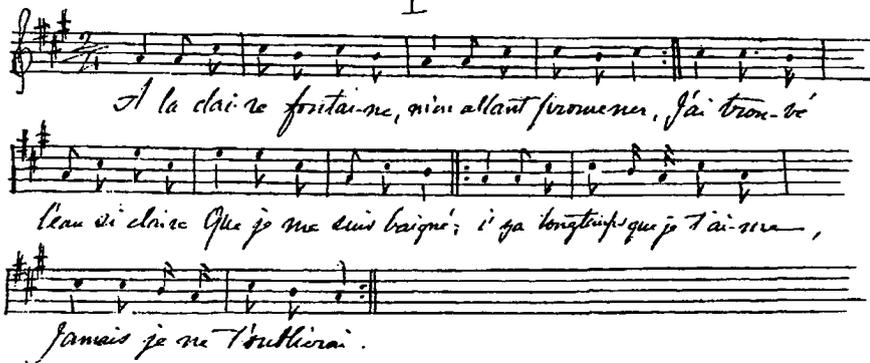
<sup>5</sup> Hamel, 1906; concerning Delsarte and his system, see also Stebbins.

<sup>6</sup> See the *EMC*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 11.

Figure 3: *Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap* (Musée de la civilisation, fonds d'archives du Séminaire de Québec, MS-3, Page 1, "À la claire fontaine")

*À la Claire Fontaine.*

I



*À la claire fontaine, m'en allant promener, j'ai trouvé  
l'eau si claire que je me suis baigné; si ga longtemps que j'ai vécu,  
Jamais je ne l'oublierai.*

*À la claire fontaine  
M'en allant promener,  
J'ai trouvé l'eau si claire  
Que je me suis baigné - Prof. -*

*J'ai trouvé l'eau si claire  
Que je me suis baigné;  
À l'ombre, au pied d'un chêne  
Je me suis fait sécher.*

*À l'ombre, au pied d'un chêne  
Je me suis fait sécher;  
Sur la plus haute branche*

Other often-sung songs from the traditional repertoire are included with a single melody only, for example, "Le petit navire," "Trois petits tambours," "Mon moine [Si mon moine voulait danser]," "Vive la compagnie," "Madame m'envoyait au marché," and "Une perdriole." As a side comment, even though "Alouette" is known abroad as a typically Canadian song, it appears neither here nor in Gagnon nor in any of the other pioneer collections; its popularity appears to date only from the last decades of the nineteenth century.

It seems clear that Hamel did not *collect* these traditional songs, as did Gagnon and others, who notated them afresh after hearing them performed by amateur singers. Many he perhaps reproduced from memory as a native Quebecker growing up in an age when they were sung in home and school circles. For others, he gives due credit to colleagues from whom he has learned the pieces. We will look at the list of his informants later.

Among the body of traditional songs most often reproduced, although indigenous versions may be identified, there are practically no specific references to Canadian life or particular Canadian locales. The characters and places tend to be almost exclusively European, mainly French. In this Hamel's selection accords with others of his period.

This category embraces about half of the tunes in Hamel's collection. Where he starts to differ from his contemporaries is in the remaining half of the *Annales*. Here he departs from the sphere of songs from the oral tradition and moves into a repertoire of popular songs by known songwriters, mainly from then-current French publications, although again he evidently relies on oral input from various of his associates, rather than on printed sources. In some cases he gives attributions of words and/or music - but not all. There are eleven musical attributions.<sup>7</sup> Among these is a setting of Goethe's poem "Marmotte," composed by the young Beethoven around 1790 and published in Vienna in 1805 as Opus 52, no. 7. The remaining ten attributions are not so easily traced. The most prominent names included are Giuseppe Concone, remembered mainly as a composer of vocalises; Ernest Boulanger, known for a series of successful operettas and later as the father of Lili and Nadia Boulanger; and - the only woman represented - Loïsa Puget, a celebrated singer and prolific writer of sentimental songs in mid-century Paris. It seems probable that some of the unattributed items are also by contemporaneous songwriters; the elevated literary and musical style of "La Danse," for example, dispels any notion that it derives from oral tradition; on closer investigation it turns out to be from a collection of romances by Louis Emmanuel Jadin, a prolific composer of revolutionary France.

As might be expected from Hamel's exceptionally wide interests, the songs cover a great variety of types: they include patriotic songs (some Canadian, but more of French provenance); children's game songs such as counting songs and animal-imitation songs; ballads about heroes; lyrical recountings of familiar fairy tales; songs about eating and meals and food; comic songs, sometimes with a grisly or even cruel twist; sentimental songs, excluding those of romantic love; and songs about religious life. The last category is as close as the collection reaches towards religious edification in the song texts. Among the approximately twelve items in which priests or nuns or monasteries or churches arise, the only specifically moral piece is a dialogue between an old priest and a younger one. The title is "La bonne et la mauvaise allure," and, perhaps inevitably, the older man wins out, advising the other in the last stanza, "Oui, ce trouble est divin / Et de très bon augure. / Renonce donc enfin / À tout (*sic*) attache impure." Like Gagnon, Hamel offers only one example from the considerable repertoire of traditional "noëls": "Allons, bergers" is noted as an alternative text for another melody.

What this summary suggests is that Hamel's purpose was twofold: not just to view the musical folklore of his time and place, but, more ambitiously, to preserve for his

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1.

own satisfaction and for the use of his students a compilation of songs representing a contemporary spectrum of French popular culture. The collection, in this sense, really incorporates two distinct compilations. We may observe that before page 100 the songs are mainly from the traditional or folkloric repertoire, whereas from around page 104 through page 259, fewer such songs occur (scarcely half-a-dozen in all), and the main emphasis instead is on songs from the repertoire of composed chansons and romances, often with attributions to known composers and lyricists. This may be why the unknown indexer stopped after the first 99 pages; the rest of the volume had a different purpose and outlook. Ernest Myrand was not entirely accurate, therefore, in predicting that the *Annales du Petit-Cap* would be "a great help to our musicians wanting in future to write the history of French-Canadian song" (Myrand, p. 101, note). Only the first portion of the work relates to the traditions of "French-Canadian song." The remainder illustrates, with few exceptions, another repertoire.

Hamel appears to have been motivated by aesthetic and archival intentions more than by ideas of religious instruction. Though romantic love and sex are clearly forbidden themes, there appears no proscription on violence or cruelty, and while there are no drinking songs of the convivial sort, several items refer approvingly to wine. Hamel's version of "*M'en revenant de la vendée*" closely resembles "*J'ai trop grand peur des loups*" in the Ermatinger Collection (*circa* 1830)<sup>8</sup>: when three travelers wonder where they will spend the night, someone invites them home with a promise of good food and a comfortable bed, but where Ermatinger adds a last stanza indicating that the bed will be shared, Hamel of course omits this.

In a little-known traditional song, "*Le Nez de Martin*," the protagonist is the victim of a familiar hazard of winters in Canada: while working in the forest, his nose not only freezes, but becomes stuck to a tree. Though it seems a mad thing to do, he liberates himself by *cutting off* his nose. A trio of nuns happen by, observe the frozen proboscis, and carry it home with them, where they propose to use it for a candle-snuffer. Amusing? To someone who likes jokes about eating babies, maybe. The ballad "*Le petit navire*" in fact touches on cannibalism in the line, "*À la sauc' blanche il fut mangé*"; an alternative version of the text, containing twice as many verses, delicately omits this reference. In "*Il était un' bergère*," a feisty shepherdess goes too far in punishing the cat who has eaten her cheese, and beats the animal to death; when she expresses remorse, her confessor says her penance will be *to eat the cat*. In "*Marie-Puniçon*," a woman is surprised to discover in successive stanzas various items of her late husband's clothing, and, in the climactic final stanza, his *head*. Grieving over departed spouses is also the subject of "*I-a-tla-tla*" and "*Le ginque me prend*." In the former, the husband demands funerary assistance for his dead wife from various individuals - his neighbors, the beadle and curé of the parish church, and finally the *gravedigger*, whom he instructs to seal the grave tightly so she will not come back. In the other song, a wife stares at her dead husband's features while saying a prayer, and fancies he *has* come back; however, her reaction is fright rather than joy, and the song comes across as ghostly humour, rather than an example of a religious miracle.

Musically speaking, the songs are not all simple, though many of the traditional tunes favour diatonic scale-wise formations that most singers could pick up with little training. Scanning the 66 melodies found in the first 100 pages of the manuscript, that is,

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<sup>8</sup> See Barbeau, pp. 159-182.

the main “traditional” portion of the contents, we find in fact fifteen melodies using only six different pitches, five using only five pitches, and even three which ride nicely along using only four pitches (one of these being the familiar “À la claire fontaine,” using here only do, ré, mi, and sol). Of the total 66 tunes, 51 (close to 80 per cent) are diatonic, that is, they are decidedly major or minor in flavour and use no raised or lowered scale degrees (no accidentals), while nine are modal, that is, they echo the formations of the traditional church modes rather than major or minor, most characteristically in employing a lowered leading note. A further five tunes may best be described as ambiguous in pitch organization, and finally there is one tune that sounds pentatonic.

In former generations, it was almost an article of faith that traditional tunes from Quebec would be found to exhibit a sturdy survival of the old modes amidst the incursions of newer tonal music. Ernest Gagnon’s notes already stress this as a meritorious stylistic feature, a generation later Marius Barbeau follows suit in several of his essays,<sup>9</sup> and in the mid-twentieth century scholars such as Andrée Desautels liked to point to modality as one of the identifying characteristics of Quebec popular music, from which distinctive traits emerged in the work of Quebec composers.<sup>10</sup> But Hamel selects, for almost four out of five of his songs for the *Annales*, diatonic melodies rather than modal ones. If we study the diatonic tunes more closely, however, we may note that more than half of them (29 out of 51) lack the leading-note behaviour so characteristic of tonality: some exhibit no leading note at all, while in others the leading note, though present, avoids its tonal function of “leading” a semitone upwards to the tonic. Therefore, these twenty-nine diatonic tunes may illustrate a “quasi-modal” type, a leaning towards modality akin to the avoidance of the diatonic seventh degree in composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Debussy or Stravinsky.

The change of tone in the texts after approximately page 100 is reflected musically in the appearance of wider interval skips (in “L’Enfant et le loup” and “La Danse,” for example), more decorative vocal lines (in Puget’s “Mon rocher à St-Malo” and Letellier’s “Le Roulier”), and more frequent chromatics (in Masini’s “Naples” and elsewhere). “Naples” (Figure 4) indeed appears as a quite elaborate concert song in this context. In “Les Souvenirs du Peuple,” a decidedly chromatic line ends modally suggesting a sophisticated compositional touch rather than any source from the oral tradition. These comments will suffice, perhaps, to suggest the different kinds of tunes found in the collection. For purposes of this article, I did not find it appropriate to make a more thorough review of the musical content using more sophisticated analytical methods and vocabulary.

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<sup>9</sup> Barbeau, Marius: “Modalité dans nos mélodies populaires,” Royal Society of Canada *Proceedings and Transactions*, series 3, vol. 38, Ottawa, 1944.

<sup>10</sup> Desautels, Andrée: “Les trois âges de la musique au Canada,” *La Musique*, 2, Paris, 1965, p. 314; “The History of Canadian Composition, 1610-1967,” *Aspects of Music in Canada*, Toronto, 1969, pp. 92-3.

Figure 4: *Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap* (Musée de la civilisation, fonds d'archives du Séminaire de Québec, MS-3, Page 195, "Naples," words by E. Aumassif, music by Mazzini [i.e., F. Masini])

*Naples.*

Paroles de E. Aumassif.      Musique de Mazzini

Le long prim temps de lè-ve, bi-che comme un beau  
 Dè-ve, san-tern, a-mis, san-tern, a-mis, san-tern  
 L'hi-ven-der le lo-gè se de-ra-ae plus la ter-ra, des  
 vents qui se-sont terns, Les vents qui se-sont terns, des  
 vents qui se-sont terns. No-que, no-que, no-que ma ha-lan-  
 cel-le, chan-ter, gai ma-te-lets. Que-va-tu dire de  
 mî-le au mur-mu-re des flots, Au mur-mu-re des

As mentioned already, references to Canadian contexts are rare. In "Pierre Nicolas," the reference is oblique, as the singer tells of his feelings "en revenant du Canada" (no more specific locale is stated). But Hamel includes three well-known patriotic songs: "Un Canadien errant," "O Canada, mon pays, mes amours," and "Sol canadien." The first he gives with the tune generally associated with it, the other two to tunes taken from the *Chansonnier des Collèges*, whose third edition appeared in 1860. For "Un Canadien errant," which he titles "Le Canadien exilé,"<sup>11</sup> Hamel follows the usual first three stanzas of the text by Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, but adapts stanzas 4 and 5, so that their expression of patriotic nostalgia becomes more simply personal: thus, the lines "Et ma patrie, hélas! / Je ne le verrai plus!" are transformed (and flattened) as "Hélas, oui, je mourrai, / Je mourrais de douleur." Hamel's version of "O Canada, mon pays, mes amours" follows more precisely the *Chansonnier* version, and particularly its chromatic accidentals, than does Ernest Gagnon in his adaptation of this song (a

<sup>11</sup> The song also appears with this title in the *Chansonnier des Collèges*.

separate sheet-music publication<sup>12</sup>). The text is by the Hon. Georges-Étienne Cartier; where Gagnon includes five verses, Hamel deletes the third and fifth of these (with their references to the country's seasonal changes and to the attractiveness of its feminine population) but adds a new fourth verse, expressing the hope of youth. Hamel's collection includes another song of longing for native haunts, French this time rather than Canadian, "Les Souvenirs," with a text by Chateaubriand in which the following lines occur: "...qu'ils étaient beaux ces jours de France. / O mon pays, sois mes amours toujours." That the last of these lines contains the same terms as Cartier's poem may be a coincidence, but the similarity is striking. And regarding Isodore's Bédard's text, "Sol canadien," for which some years earlier Théodore Molt had published two different tunes,<sup>13</sup> Hamel selects a third, evidently traditional one, from the *Chansonnier* of 1860, omitting the third of Bédard's four stanzas.

Filling out the small number of reflections of the Canadian locale is "Ouich' ta ouich'", for which the text is credited to the donor of the notebook, l'abbé Doherty. Outwardly a comic song about a man who experiences stomach pains, it departs from convention in introducing nonsense syllables "Ouich' ta ouich'," akin to those of the song "Tenouiche tenega, ouich' ka!"<sup>14</sup> in the Gagnon collection. There, the syllables are said to have been invented in imitation of the language of the aboriginals; is it possible that the same applies to Doherty's text?<sup>15</sup>

But for most of the songs, it is *French* culture that provides the model and the images. The "Souvenirs d'un vieux militaire" are those of a soldier who is French, not Canadian; the same applies to the picaresque exploits of "Fanfan Latulippe"; and the several songs about heroic valour concern French, not Canadian, figures. The dramatic "Brutus" celebrates a classic personage, but the historical ballads deal with French notables - Joan of Arc, Napoleon - and the fairytale ballads ("Cendrillon," "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge") are drawn from French literary traditions, notably Perreault. The title of "Les Plaisirs du village" is ironic: a young peasant girl advises a Parisienne to remain where she is rather than relocating in the country, the village in question being once again definitely French, not Canadian. For Hamel, one may conclude, Quebec was culturally a colonial outpost rather than a distinct environment. Though he presumably knew of songwriters active in Canada in his time, he made little effort to include their tunes in his collection.

Apart from the absence of love lyrics, the second half of the *Annales* resembles a typical popular romantic song-anthology, especially perhaps in its representation of comic and sentimental items. The comic songs include a portrait of an eccentric old priest, "Papa-Mignon"; a song about the funeral of a cat ("Le trépas du chat"); two songs about uproariously interrupted wedding ceremonies ("Pinçon et Cendrouille," "Thomas et

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<sup>12</sup> See *Le Passe-Temps*, Quebec City, 21 June 1913 (quoted in the *EMC*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 959).

<sup>13</sup> See the *CMH*, vol. 7, pp. 22, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Gagnon, p. 124 (the refrain is "Ouich'ka!").

<sup>15</sup> However, the *Dictionnaire de la langue québécoise* (ed. Léandre Bergeron, Montreal, 1980) gives "ouiche" and "ouiche-bône" as French equivalents of "wish" and "wish-bone" in the children's game played with a dried chicken bone, which may contradict this explanation.

moi”); and further items with broad dialect humour redolent of the music hall (among the titles: “C’est tout c’que j’peux fair’ pour vous,” “Quand les poules auront des dents”). In the sentimental songs, the bells of the monastery are an image of time passing, and the birds in the eaves of Notre Dame are asked to “prier pour nous.” “Le paysan Lucas” lives in Arcadian bliss, an unsung hero smiling at the world while weeping to himself. In “Le Dot de l’Auvergnat,” a married couple resign themselves to making do with little, while “Les Craintes maternelles” are those of a mother who hopes her offspring will avoid the exploits and engagements of adulthood and “reste toujours petit.”

In illustrating these remarks in their original presentation with a few audio examples, I wondered whether I should apologize that these were concert arrangements rather than plainer or more “authentic” versions. The defence for arranging anonymous or traditional songs is that it helps them become known to a greater number of listeners. This is not the place to describe my personal approach to arranging; I prefer to leave that for hearers to judge.<sup>16</sup>

“La Boiteuse” is a song of “ambiguous” pitch organization. It begins with a few pitches associated with C major, but the later phrases veer towards A natural minor, with the characteristic flat leading note, and the final note is A. Do the lyrics poke fun at a handicapped female peasant? For the adjacent chanson in the collection, “Bonhomme, bonhomme,” Hamel describes appropriate gestures to be made by the singers, and one may wonder whether there were similar actions associated with “La Boiteuse,” perhaps even a dance imitating her awkward gait - one hopes kindly rather than mockingly. The rhythms of the chanson suggest an instrumental background featuring just castanets.

About the rather grisly humour of the text in “Le Nez de Martin” I have already commented. The tune is again “ambiguous,” beginning and ending with the tonal feeling of A major (including its leading note) but beginning unusually on the supertonic, B, and moving with some force into the characteristic formations of F sharp minor, with what I take to be an emphatic pause (though no pause-mark is shown in the manuscript) on F sharp at the exclamation “Ah!” heard at a crucial point in each stanza. The range of a ninth is wider than that of most songs, and the highest pitch is another F sharp, striking an octave resonance with the lower F sharp of the “Ah!” In this arrangement for children’s choir, the three parts share the main tune and the refrain (“Quelle dommage, Martin!”) in various overlapping and imitative ways.

Those two examples from the “folkloric” first section of the *Annales* were of particular interest to me. I was also intrigued by some of the composed chansons from the later pages of the volume. “Le Roulier,” a song with both words and music by Henri Letellier, may have been included for its humorous portrayal, in dialect, of a rustic carter who becomes a reluctant army recruit. “If you don’t hear from me,” he tells his family and his girl-friend, “it may mean I’m dead - in which case you’ll understand why I didn’t write.” But to me this text had a kind of poignancy: you’re left with the feeling that, yes, the poor guy may not survive his war experiences. The vocal line, as I hear it, underlines this air

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<sup>16</sup> The recorded examples were selected from the following unpublished arrangements: (1) “La Boiteuse,” for soprano, tenor, and baritone, accompanied by castanets; (2) “Le Nez de Martin,” from *Trois chansons* for children’s choir (SSA); (3) “Le Roulier,” from the cycle *Young man from Canada*, for tenor and piano. The music is available from the Canadian Music Centre.

of poignancy: it's slow and dirge-like, with considerable small-note ornamentation. The setting is for tenor and piano.

Finally I will address a few questions which the manuscript seems to pose. First, how did Hamel compile the collection? A number of loose sheets (or "feuilles volantes") are tucked into the front cover of the book. These amount to trial copies of various songs, some of which ended up in the book, as well as music and/or lyrics of other songs, both hand-written and printed, which the compiler apparently found insufficiently interesting to include. One guesses he was gathering such items in the years before starting to copy the volume. The songs, as mentioned, acknowledge various colleagues. The list of thirty-three informants includes several prominent names from Quebec ecclesiastical and public life.<sup>17</sup> Though all copied in one person's hand, Hamel's collection may be viewed as a communal effort. The two *published* song collections of Quebec from the same decade afford an interesting comparison with the Hamel manuscript. Gagnon's *Chansons populaires du Canada* has fifteen tunes in common with the Hamel volume, almost all in its first half; the anonymously-compiled *Chansonnier des Collèges* also shares some fifteen tunes with Hamel, in this case entirely in the *second* half. Gagnon's songs relate to traditional European sources, but in his notes he mentions local informants and local variants whether in text or tune, while the *Chansonnier* selection represents national repertoires of several countries, and starts with about a dozen patriotic songs of Canada, most of them newly composed by Canadian musicians. Hamel's volume offers hardly any evidence of a similar approach.

Why did he compile it? Life at Petit-Cap evidently made room for relaxed singing sessions, not for instruction but as a bond of fellowship by the students of the Petit Séminaire and their leaders. In his notes for the song "La Bibournoise," Gagnon remarks, "in former times it used to be impossible for two students of the Petit Séminaire in Quebec to meet in holiday time without breaking out with 'La Bibournoise'" (my translation from Gagnon, p. 74). Hamel includes this song in his volume as an alternative tune for "Quand j'étais chez mon père," and indeed he may have taken it from Gagnon's published work, since that page of the *Chansons populaires du Canada* is among the "feuilles volantes" accompanying his manuscript. The range of songs chosen by Hamel covers suitability for groups of children as well as students of more mature and more sophisticated backgrounds in literature and music. The volume itself, in its two distinct halves, has the appearance of a document of preservation, rather than a much-handled volume from which Hamel or his associates would actually sing. The copies are meticulous (there are only very rare instances of crossings-out or over-printings), the texts are remarkably legible for the most part, and the paper is well preserved and shows no signs of wear and tear. Was the collection destined for publication? The neatness of the copying and handwriting might suggest this but one would have to assume that such an aim was somehow side-tracked since the volume, despite its careful organization and breadth, was left apparently unfinished (one recalls those blank pages near the end).

And then there is the intriguing question, *when* did Hamel compile the *Annales*? In various musical reference works<sup>18</sup> and indeed in the catalogue of the Archives, the

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2. My warmest thanks to Juliette Bourassa, who has provided several identifications in this list.

<sup>18</sup> See Laforte; EMC, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; and Smith.

period of compilation is given as "between 1866 and 1908," suggesting Hamel worked on it for over forty years. The uniformity of the copying style and the handwriting would argue against this. In his last decade, Hamel became virtually blind, but the words and notes are just as steady and readable and the staff lines just as evenly ruled in the last pages of the collection as in those at the beginning. The watermark in the elegant blue paper of the notebook has been dated to 1865, so it was clearly not begun before then. The title *Annales* implies a chronicle with yearly additions; but just how this would apply to the collection remains a mystery. Unless some of the composed songs turn out to have been published only at later dates, I would guess that the whole volume was prepared during Hamel's years as a teacher of music at the Seminary, namely in the middle to late 1860s.

Another question is more difficult to deal with. Did Hamel personally assemble and copy out the songs, or is the volume the work of someone else under his direction? It should be possible to check surviving documents in his hand against the handwriting in the *Annales*, but I have to confess that so far I have not managed to do this. And although Hamel is credited with compiling the *Annales*, an interesting detail is that, among the songs for which informants are acknowledged, a fair number cite Hamel himself *in the third person*. Discovery that he was in fact *not* the copyist would not, in my view, deprive him of credit for the concept and aesthetic ambience of the collection. It remains a unique testimony of the tastes and singing habits of one important segment of Canadian society in its time.

My interest in the Hamel collection goes back fifteen years or so, when Professor Gordon Smith, then a graduate student at Laval, kindly gave me a photocopy. From this I chose two or three songs to arrange for a concert. I retained curiosity about the volume, and returned to it a decade or so later as a source for a further half-dozen arrangements. Then in the Spring of 2001 I had the opportunity to examine the original manuscript and its accompanying documents during a visit to Quebec City, and decided I should try and make a more comprehensive study. My aims were appreciation and critical observation, not in-depth analysis along ethnomusicological lines. As an amateur researcher whose main field is composition, I hope my findings may inspire some more fully qualified (and younger!) scholar to take a systematic look at Hamel and at the musical side of his legacy.

## Appendix 1: Composers of Attributed Songs in the *Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap*

- 128 / Ernest [-Henri-Alexandre] Boulanger: "Le vieux curé / MGG, Fé / 1855-1900  
 133 / Paul Henrion: "Le retour du printemps" / NG2, Fé, Paz / 1819-1901 / *Gallet Paris*  
 137 / H[enri] Letellier: "Le Roulier" / Paz / *Labbé Paris*  
 174 / Victor Parizot: "Les boeufs"  
 179 / [Charles] Pourny: "C'est tout c'que j'peux fair' pour vous!" / Paz, BN 1.450 / *Ch.s.* ("chant seul")  
 182 / Louisa [Loïsa] Puget: "Mon rocher à Saint-Malo" / NG2 / 1810-89 / Paz, BN 1.455 / *Schott*  
 195. 219 / Mazzini [F. Masini]: "Naples" / Fé, Paz / 1804-63 / *Schott, Joubert*  
 203 / [Joseph (Guiseppe) Concone: "Le chant du berceau" / NG2, MGG, Fé / 1801-61 / BN 1.127  
 235 / Beethoven: "La Marmotte" / Goethe / *Op. 52, No. 7*  
 246 / F[rançois (Francesco)] Masini: "Silvio Pellico en prison" / Fé, Paz é 1804-63 / *Gallet, Noël, Schott*  
 248 / Frantz Liouville: "Les voraces et les Coriaces" / BN 1.344

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BN = Bibliothèque nationale, Paris

Fé = Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens, deuxième édition*, Paris, 1883

MGG = *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*

NG = *The New Grove*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

Paz = Pazdirek, *Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur*

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## Appendix 2: Informants in the *Annales musicales du Petit-Cap*

M. Ernest Audette	(l'abbé Ph.-E., 1845-76) All
M. l'abbé Louis Beaudet	Prov
M. l'abbé L. L. Billion	(Louis-Léon, 1814-82) Tang
M. l'abbé Bouchy	(? – Pierre-André, 1818-86) Tang
M. Chiasson	
M. Eudore Chouinard	
L'abbé Th. Darrieux	"Aurmonier de la frégate française <i>La Naïde</i> "
M. (l'abbé Jean-Patrice) Doherty	DCB x; Laf 1
L'hon. F(rançois) Éventuel	DCB xii
M. George Fraser	
M. l'abbé V. Godin	
Mr Jean Gosselin	"Curé de St Jean, I.O."
M. l'abbé ("maintenant Mgr") Grouard	
Mgr T.-É Hamel	Compilateur; Laf 1; Prov
Mgr (Edward John) Horan	DCB x; Prov
M, l'abbé Joys	
Mgr J.-C.-K. Laflamme	DCB xiii; Prov
M. l'abbé Aug. Laverdière	Prov
M. l'abbé Lecourt	(? – l'abbé Honoré Lecours, 1936-66) Tang
M. Cyrille (-Étienne) Légaré	Prov
M. l'abbé A. Lepage	(Athanasie, 1936-82) All; Tang
M. Jos. Edm. Marcoux	(Jean-Edmund?) Prov
M. l'abbé A(ntonin) Nantel	DCB xiii
M. l'abbé Palier, S.S.	
M. Henri Pâquet	(l'abbé André-Charles-Henri, né 1844) All; Tang
M. l'abbé Louis-H. (Honoré) Pâquet	Prov
M. Pierre Roussel	Prov
M. Ferdinand Roy	

M. l'abbé Simard  
 M. Stanislas Tassé  
 M.M. Turcotte

(Henri? Prov  
 Prov

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All = Allaire 1908  
 DCB = *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*  
 Laf 1 = Laforte 1977, 1  
 Provost = Provost  
 Tang = Tanguay

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