

# O CANADA

by Calixa Lavallee

Piano Solo arranged by John Burge

Advanced Level



 A Red Leaf Pianoworks Project





# O Canada



**Composed by Calixa Lavallée**

**Arranged for Solo Piano by John Burge**

**Advanced/Grade 10 Level**

**O CANADA** was composed by Calixa Lavallée (1842-1891) in 1880. Although it was used as Canada's national anthem for many decades, it was only officially recognized as such by an act of parliament in 1980 (one hundred years after the song was first published). There are numerous arrangements of this tune and one of John Burge's favourite is by Godfrey Ridout with whom Burge studied counterpoint at the University of Toronto. Like many pianists, Burge has often found himself in situations where he has had to play "O Canada" on the piano and over the years his own arrangement has become quite stylized in a somewhat virtuosic fashion. He has also incorporated the study and analysis of this tune into many of his theory and analysis classes at Queen's University, especially around the date of a federal election. During the year that Stephen Harper was first elected Prime Minister of Canada, Adèle Barclay, a student of one such class, summarized Burge's treatment of the national anthem in the *Literary Review of Canada* (July/August 2015, p.9) while reviewing Brian Thompson's biography of Calixa Lavellée (*Anthems and Minstrel Shows: The Life and Times of Calixa Lavellée*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015):

*During my first-year music theory course at Queen's University, Professor John Burge demonstrated a particular harmonic sequence using the opening chords of "O Canada" as an example. The first three chords are a basic enough riff off Pachelbel's Canon, but in "O Canada" their resolution is relaxed, making the familiar strong chords tentative—which is a curious construction for what is supposed to be a patriotic march. Anthems typically boast at the onset, pursuing unflinching triumph rather than coy lyricism. Burge pointed out that this particular harmonic design dovetails with the unassuming Canadian identity. He suggested that this coincidence was possibly due to intuition of the part of the composer or, perhaps, that this inaugural delicate pathos appealed to later generations when they adopted "O Canada" as our national anthem.*

*Burge timed the lesson to fall on an election day and interrupted the class to answer a fake phone call from Prime Minister Paul Martin—the purpose of which was to inspire the class, predominantly 18-year-olds, to vote for the first time. After hanging up the phone, Burge launched into a full-fledged performance of "O Canada" on the grand piano. The music majors sang with their practiced voices a compelling and impromptu rendition of the national anthem. Burge's performance was a lesson on the relationship between music and nationalism.*

This arrangement is dedicated to Mary and Peter Burns. Mary was John's harmony, counterpoint and analysis teacher when he was growing up in Calgary and she was certainly a great help in completing all of the requirements for the Associate Diploma of the Royal Conservatory of Music while he was still in high school. A fine pianist herself, Mary was in demand as an accompanist and kindly played the orchestral reduction for a number of piano concertos that John learned at the time. Successful arrangements of existing tunes often rely heavily on harmony and counter-point and as such, this particular dedication seems very fitting.

for Mary and Peter Burns

# O Canada

"An arrangement described in the Literary Review of Canada, July/August, 2015."

Original Composed by: Calixa Lavallée

Arranged by: John Burge

Poco agitato  $\text{♩} = 100$

8va

Musical score for the first system (measures 1-3). The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is 'Poco agitato' with a metronome marking of 100. The score is for piano, with a first system of two staves. The right hand (RH) starts with a melody in the upper register, marked *mp* and *espr.*. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment, starting with a *p* dynamic. A dynamic shift to *mfp* occurs in measure 3. A 'no ped.' instruction is present at the end of the system.

Musical score for the second system (measures 4-6). The right hand continues the melody, marked *mfp*. The left hand features a bass line with a *p (sub.)* dynamic and a *cresc. e accel.* instruction. Fingerings 2, 1, 4 and 3, 4 are indicated. A 'no ped.' instruction is present at the end of the system.

Musical score for the third system (measures 7-9). The right hand features a series of chords, marked *rit.*. The left hand continues the bass line with a *ff* dynamic and a *dim.* instruction. Fingerings 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 4 are indicated. A 'no ped.' instruction is present at the end of the system.

Musical score for the fourth system (measures 10-13). The right hand features a series of chords, marked *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. The left hand continues the bass line with a *p* dynamic. A 'no ped.' instruction is present at the end of the system.

15 **Moderato** ♩ = 80

*p dolce*

*mp*

┘ (pedale normale)

19

*p* *cresc.* *mf*

22

*p* *cresc.*

25

*mf* *p* *molto cresc.*

28

*ffp marcato*

O Canada

31 *ff* *mf* *ff*

34 *mf* *ff* *mf*

37 *sfp* *ffp* *ff*

40 *mf* *ff rit.*

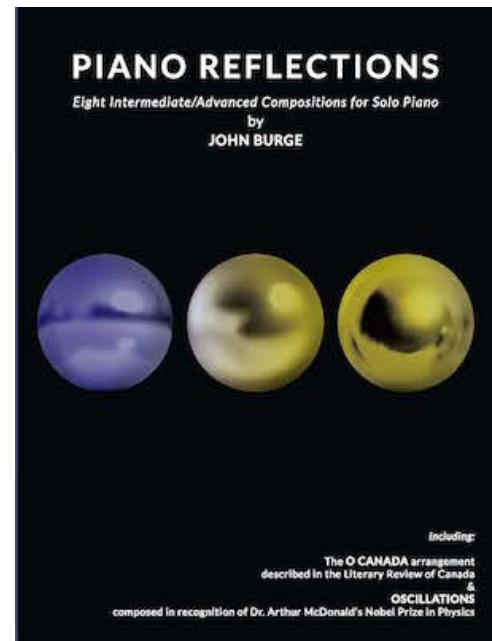
42 *fff* *f* *fff* *f* *fff* *ff* *ffff*

(ped. al fine)



John Burge (b. 1961, Dryden, Ontario) is a Canadian composer who has been teaching at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario since 1987. A Juno-winning composer, he has produced a large body of instrumental and vocal music including a number of symphonies and concertos as well as a chamber opera. Like many composers he has a close affinity to the piano and as a solo performer, he still tries to find time to present concerts or lecture/demonstrations of his own music on the piano. In 2013 he joined the Red Leaf Pianoworks collective and began releasing new editions of his solo piano music starting with ***Parking an Octatonic Truck*** (JBComps-001). This earlier set consisted of piano solos ranging from grades 1-8, a number of which had been composed as quick-study compositions for use at music festivals where Burge had adjudicated.

This arrangement of "O Canada" was first published in John Burge's collection of solo piano pieces titled, ***Piano Reflections***. The impetus to write down the arrangement came in 2015, when Adèle Barclay, a writer and former first-year harmony student of Burge's, happened to mention Burge's solo piano arrangement of "O Canada" in a ***Literary Review of Canada*** book critique. Indeed, the book that she was reviewing at the time was a biography of Calixa Lavallée, the composer of "O Canada". As this arrangement had often changed character over the years due to its improvisational underpinnings, it seemed an ideal time to finalize the notes for the arrangement. It is worth noting that this separate edition of the arrangement is a special printing that is only to be sold at the Red Leaf Pianoworks booth at conventions and trade shows. Otherwise, a pdf of the arrangement can be purchased online or can be obtained by purchasing the complete ***Piano Reflections*** collection (JBComps-004).



Other pieces in ***Piano Reflections*** include:

- Grade 7: Playing Tag
- Grade 8: Prelude to a Prelude
- Grade 9: One-Note Groove  
Pastels  
Variations on a Simple Theme
- Grade 10: Dancing Arpeggios [Etude]  
O Canada [Arrangement]
- Diploma: Oscillations

—Do check out the websites listed below for recordings of John Burge's solo piano music.—

[www.johnburge.ca](http://www.johnburge.ca)

  
[www.RedLeafPianoworks.com](http://www.RedLeafPianoworks.com)