

“Massey Hall: The place where music is born” Musical paradise: Another Canada 18th

December 21, 2023

Introduction

As the saying goes, time flies, and it's already the end of December. New Year's Eve is in 10 days. During the busy year-end and New Year holidays, many people listen to music to relax or to get motivated to complete a task they have left unfinished. When I fly on a business trip, I see so many people wearing earphones or headphones.

Music is now an essential part of daily life. You can listen to the wide variety of music that exists in the world 24 hours a day, wherever you want, whenever you want, depending on the situation, and according to your tastes. If you think about it, it is a result of modern science and technology. In other words, the iPhone is a modern-day Carnegie Hall. If you trace its origins, it was the Sony Walkman that brought music outdoors. Furthermore, it was Thomas Edison, the inventor, who created a system that allowed music to be recorded and reproduced by engraving it on tape or vinyl. Before that, there was no streaming, no CDs, no television, no radio, no records. You couldn't hear music without going to the place where it was being played.

Therefore, this time's “music paradise” is Toronto's Massey Hall, an historic concert hall that Canada is proud of.

A very private encounter with Massey Hall

This happened when I was a student after moving to Tokyo from Sasebo. It doesn't sound bad to say things like “moratorium” or “self-discovery”, but in reality, I didn't understand anything about the world, I couldn't see what I really wanted to do, and my days were like a haze. I skipped class and went to a jazz cafe in Shinjuku. In particular, I loved a cafe called DUG. It was on the 2nd floor up a narrow staircase of a multi-tenant building where the restaurant “Acacia”, famous for its cabbage rolls, was on the 1st floor. It appears in Kenji Nakagami's early

masterpiece, "The Gray Coca-Cola." At DUG, the inside of the store was dimly lit, talking was strictly prohibited, and the sound that resonated in your stomach from the giant JBL speakers was very realistic. One cup of coffee lasted 2 hours, and if I refilled it, it lasted about 3 hours. I listened to jazz all the time, sometimes checked the information magazine "Pia" to see what movies were showing at the masterpiece theater, and read the works of Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Jean Genet, and others. To be honest, I don't remember the contents very much. However, I still vividly remember how the improvisations by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie that I heard there touched my heart. At that time, the record I listened to a lot was "Jazz at Massey Hall." In fact, I didn't learn that Massey Hall was located in Toronto and the anecdote about this record until much later, but this was my very personal encounter with Massey Hall.

The Quintet ends at Massey Hall

Although this disc is an old one, recorded over 70 years ago, it is a must-listen for jazz lovers. This is because the five people are the best of the five most basic instruments used in jazz. That alone is super rare. Drums, Max Roach. Bass, Charles Mingus. Piano, Bud Powell. Trumpet, Dizzy Gillespie. And Charlie Parker, alto saxophone. It was miraculous that the dates of the five people based in New York matched. However, Parker was so addicted that he even forgot his instrument. Somehow, the organizers were able to prepare a saxophone that looked like a plastic toy. Furthermore, this performance took place on Friday night, May 15, 1953. At the exact same time, a title match between world boxing heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano and former champion Jersey Joe Walcott was held in the United States, and the television broadcast had amazing viewer ratings. Therefore, even though five of the most famous musicians in jazz history performed together, there was only a small audience at Massey Hall, which can accommodate 3,000 people. It can also be said to reflect the position of jazz in North American society at the time. The organizer was unable to pay properly and gave checks to the members, but in the end they were unable to cash them.

However, music is so wonderful that it blows away the layers of unfortunate circumstances. This is a masterpiece that keeps Massey Hall's name alive.



Neil Young decorates his hometown

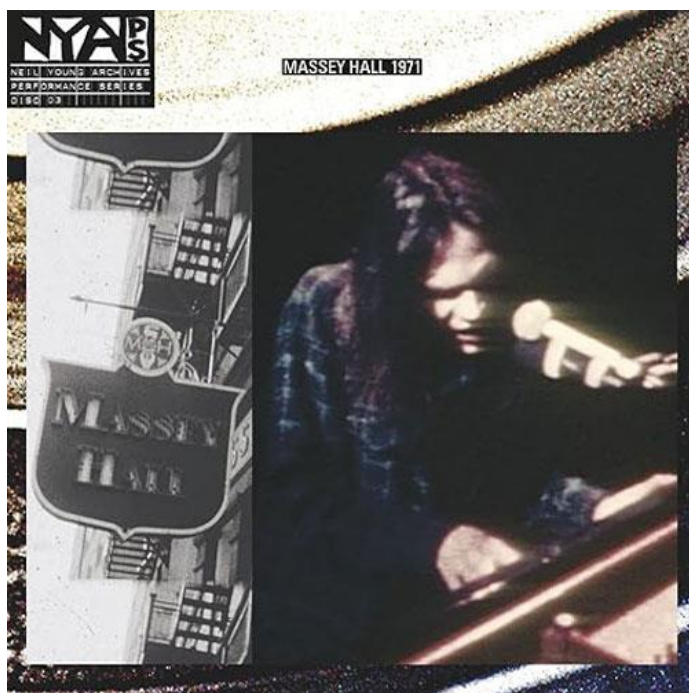
Moreover, many years later, the first time I saw the name Massey Hall was on Neil Young's "Live at Massey Hall 1971." It was released in March 2007, but as the album title suggests, it is a clear record of a solo performance at Massey Hall on January 19, 1971. Due to the record company's sales strategy, this record had been shelved for a long time despite its excellent content, but now it has seen the light of day.

Neil Young is a rock hero born in Toronto and is still active and performing all over the world. Since 1966, his base has been in the United States. Neil Young appears at Massey Hall. Speaking of January 1971, the September 1970 release of the super group Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young (CSNY) in which Young was a member, "Déjà Vu", was released on the U.S., All Canada, All Netherlands album. It reached number 1 on the charts. It is truly at its peak. In terms of countries of origin, CSNY consists of one American, one Briton, and one Canadian. Regardless of their nationality, they are each talented and unique musicians. Although there may be great joy in working together to create great music, jealousy and conflict are also inevitable. Meanwhile, Neil Young distanced himself from the group and

performed alone at Massey Hall, which adorns his hometown.

He sang a total of 18 songs accompanied only by his own live guitar and piano. At this stage, only eight songs, including “Helpless” from “Déjà Vu” mentioned above, had been released. The rest are all unreleased songs. He would perform his new song in front of his hometown fans. This is valuable. You can listen to the prototypes of the five songs that were included in the masterpiece “Harvest” that would be released 13 months after this solo performance. In particular, the piano performance of “Heart Of Gold,” which later became number one in the United States, is a must-listen. Indeed, future masterpieces were being forged in the present tense at Massey Hall.

Another value of this live album is that it realistically captures the audience’s reactions. When words like Canada and Northern Ontario appear in the lyrics, cheers go up. In between songs, when he tells the audience, “It’s been five years since I left Canada, but I’m glad to be back,” he receives enthusiastic applause. In addition, the sound of the audience stomping their feet in search of an encore is impressive. In short, Neil Young’s strong ties to Canada are clearly documented.



A brief history of Massey Hall

Today, Toronto is the third largest city in North America after New York and Los Angeles. One of Toronto's most iconic buildings is Massey Hall. Its name comes from Canadian businessman Hart Massey. It can be said to be a gift to the people of Toronto from the chairman of Massey Manufacturing Co., Ltd., an agricultural equipment manufacturer that boasted a 60% market share in Canada. Railroad magnate Andrew Carnegie completed Carnegie Hall in 1891, but it was completed three years later in 1894.

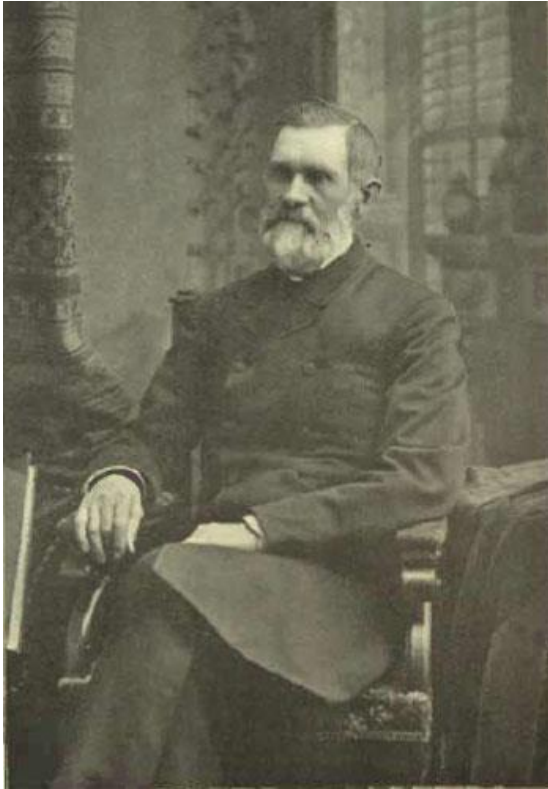
Massey Manufacturing was a small company founded in Newcastle, Ontario by his American-born father, Daniel Massey. After graduating from high school, in 1851 Hart joined his father's company and studied business management. When his father passed away in 1856, 33-year-old Hart took over the company. He solidified the company's foundation locally.

In July 1867, Canada was founded as an autonomous territory of the British Empire, and the province of Ontario developed at an accelerated pace. In the 1870s, Massey Manufacturing moved its base to Toronto, which was rapidly expanding. It was a big decision, but the company grew steadily. In the 1880s, the company began exporting its agricultural equipment to Argentina, Australia, and even European countries.

In 1884, Hart was already 61 years old and his company was doing well. Deciding that it was time for him to retire, he began preparations to hand over the company to his 36-year-old son, Charles, who had great business acumen. However, Charles died suddenly of typhoid fever. Despite his sadness, Hart devoted himself even more than ever to management, and by merging with fellow companies such as A. Harris, Son and Company Ltd. and Patterson Windsor, he grew Massey Manufacturing into Canada's largest manufacturer of agricultural equipment.

Hart Massey, who achieved great success, decided to build a concert hall in memory of his son Charles, who loved music. The concept is "to be a place where everyone can enjoy music and gather, regardless of religion," and "to set admission fees low and not make the concert hall a place for profit-seeking." The concert hall building has a neo-classical design and is modeled after the Alhambra. This is the masterpiece of Canadian architect Sidney Badgley. The opening performance was

Handel's Messiah on June 14, 1894. Hart passed away one year and eight months after Massey Hall was completed. He was 73 years old.



The 21st century and beyond

Massey Hall, filled with Hart Massey's passion, has excellent acoustics, coupled with the free, diverse and inclusive character of the city, and here you can enjoy everything from classical music to jazz, rock, blues, and even folk music. A wide variety of artists are performing here.

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra was based at Massey Hall since its founding in 1906 until moving to the newly built Roy Thomson Hall in 1984. In classical music, George Gershwin, Maria Callas, Glenn Gould, Vladimir Horowitz, Arturo Toscanini, Luciano Pavarotti and others have performed here.

For rock and pop, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Justin Bieber, Cream, Bob Marley, Gordon Lightfoot, Rush and many more have performed here.

Massey Hall is currently in the middle of renovation. Hart's thoughts span centuries and connect to the future. A state-of-the-art building from the 19th century is boldly transforming into a state-of-the-art building of the 21st century while retaining its core.

There is no doubt that Massey Hall will be the birthplace of classics that will remain in the 22nd century.

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