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Contemporary Music in Canada - 2

The Avantgarde and Beyond

While some may regard it tragic that Canada never was able to develop anything even remotely resembling a national musical tradition, the same lack of tradition is a blessing now when older nations are fighting hard to shed parochial prejudices in order to become world citizens. Canadians already are world citizens.¹

This statement by Udo Kasemets might seem to invite a paradox. But it does seem evident that the unique strength of North American culture in this century is directly related to the very absence of a rich and significant tradition. It is arguable that only America could have produced a Charles Ives or a John Cage, a Harry Partch or a Murray Schafer for the very reason that these creative figures, and many others like them, came to artistic maturity in a society largely unburdened by the oppressive and weighted emotional ambience of what might be called 'the great tradition'. Only in such a milieu, uncluttered by the historical consciousness of the age, is the artist 'free to be himself', to put it in the form of a Cageian aphorism. Thus it is that we have indigenous to the North American continent a unique breed of individual, part inventor, part artist, whose ingrained eccentricity and persistent disdain for tradition have nourished the irreverent attitudes which in the historical sense have been labelled 'avantgarde'.

As much as the European community may resent the implication, there is solid evidence that the centre of gravity of artistic activity in the West is gradually shifting away from the traditional European centres towards the New World. The main beneficiary, of course, has been the United States. But Canada, too, as a smaller member of the North American community, is beginning to feel the winds of change as moribund Old World traditions, imported wholesale in the early years of the century with great fanfare, are swept aside to make way for 'the tradition of the new'.

Two outstanding pupils of John Weinzweig provide a reasonable starting point for this continuing survey of contemporary Canadian music.² Harry Freedman (b.1922) and Harry Somers (b.1925) are by no means the most technically advanced composers active in Canada, but they must certainly be considered two of the more substantial creative minds in Canadian music today. Freedman's early interests in both painting and jazz have, by his own admission, significantly coloured his attitude to music. A visual imagination, in the romantic sense, pervades many of the composer's best-known works, most significantly the atmospheric *Tableau* (1952), a highly contrapuntal and atonal evocation of Arctic barrenness and solitude, and *Images* (1957-58), musical impressions of three paintings by Canadian artists: 'Blue Mountain' by Lauren Harris, 'Structure at Dusk' by Kazuo Nakamura and 'Landscape' by Jean-Paul Riopelle.

Although Freedman's early work – for example, the *Fives Pieces* for String Orchestra and the *Nocturne*, both dating from 1949 – written under the influence of his principal teacher, Weinzweig, reveal a competent and individualistic handling of twelve-note technique, the composer gradually abandoned the system in search of a more expansive and in his view less restrictive means of musical expression. By the early 1950s – after a period of study with Ernst Krenek, himself a composer of diverse tendencies – Freedman discovered, largely through the example of Bartók, alternatives to the pervasive techniques of the Second Viennese School. The *First Symphony* (1953-61), written partly under the influence of Krenek, is the first major work of Freedman's to reveal a subtle shift from the Schoenbergian to the Bartókian idiom. It is an impressive work of considerable expressive power which displays to great advantage the composer's marked sensitivity to orchestral colour and his assured mastery of polyphonic techniques.

Soon after the successful premiere of the *First Symphony* in Washington in April 1961, Freedman composed a *Wind Quintet* in which one senses a release of certain tendencies which had lain close to the surface from the beginning, most notably jazz. Of his *Quintet*, the composer has written:

The work is designed to display the potential of the woodwind quintet, particularly the variety of colour. The first movement involves two elements: a rhythmic figure, urgent and constantly varied, and a quiet

section of sustained harmonic interest in which the tempo of the previous section is not so much maintained as suggested by the widely separated entries of the individual instruments. The slow movement is a fantasia exploiting the expressive colour of the solo instruments. The last movement is again rhythmic in spirit. It is sort of a jazz rondo, with short excursions into blues and Latin-American music.³

The range – perhaps somewhat limited – of Freedman's aesthetic boundaries can be felt in the Wind Quintet: the classic formal construction of the whole, the extraordinary aural sensitivity of the central slow movement and the characteristic play of asymmetrical metres and heterometric structures in the final movement.

In more recent years Freedman has produced several notable film scores and a very successful ballet, *Rose Latulippe* (1967), written on a Centennial Commission for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, which have consolidated his position as a craftsman who has managed to speak simply and directly without succumbing to naivety and conventionality. His fellow composer Udo Kasemets provided a balanced assessment of Freedman's achievement when he pointed to a "lack of depth . . . in Freedman's work which separates him from the foremost rank of Canadian composers. Otherwise," Kasemets goes on to say, "he has all the making of becoming a prominent figure on the Canadian scene, especially since he has captured in his music much of the spiritual atmosphere of this country."⁴

It is safe to say that the prolific Harry Somers is the most widely performed composer in Canada today. A student of Weinzwieg and Darius Milhaud, Somers has created an impressive number of works in many forms, including two symphonies and a number of other large orchestral works, two piano concertos, three string quartets, two violin sonatas and five piano sonatas, several vocal-chamber works and seven stage works, of which the opera *Louis Riel* (1967) may be considered the first truly successful Canadian work of its kind.

Although Somers managed to develop a distinctive and natural mode of musical expression early in his career, his musical style, more so than Freedman's, has undergone a process of subtle transformation and refinement, becoming in the works of the last five years or so increasingly abstract and economical. From the outset Somers has had a fascination for the manifold expressive possibilities of the human voice. This, along with an intense interest in contrapuntal techniques and procedures, has marked the composer's best and most characteristic scores. Concerning the latter point, Somers himself has noted:

I was very involved with contrapuntal technique – attempting to unify conceptions of the Baroque and earlier periods, which appealed to me greatly, with high-tension elements of our time. A characteristic of my work has been "line" . . . whether you use the qualifying term "melodic" line, or simply "line", to signify a use of pitches in consecutive order, often completely exposed, of varying durations and intensities. This is a characteristic in some of my earliest work and is in some of my most recent. It is present in the *Suite for Harp and Chamber Orchestra* and in the *North Country Suite for string orchestra* of the 1940's. It is present in the works of the 1950's . . . with an ever-widening range of pitch and dynamic contrast, and reaches into works of the 1960's.⁵

Baroque formal techniques, in particular fugal procedure, has become a personal element in much of the composer's music, a fact reflected in the very titles of some of his most successful works of the 1950s: *Passacaglia and Fugue for Orchestra* (1954), *Chorale and Fugue ('Where Do We Stand Oh Lord')* for mixed voices a capella (1955), *Fantasia for Orchestra* (1958) and the set of twelve piano fugues on twelve-note subjects entitled *12 x 12* (1951).

Somers does not respond negatively to the accusation that he is a 'romantic', even though his abiding interest in classical structural procedures might imply otherwise. A diversity of styles can be felt in Somers's music, all of them put to use as tools of expression which, in the romantic sense, is of primary concern to the composer. "It must be accepted," he has noted, "that the resources of my intellect are being used in order to give full and artistic voice to those things which I feel as a human being."⁶ And on another occasion: "The demands of the material are the primary factors which determine the shape of the final composition and the material *itself* is determined by what I *feel* I want to say. . ."⁷ Nowhere are these precepts better demonstrated than in his most recent compositions for voice: *Twelve Miniatures for Voice and Instrumental Trio* (1964), *Evocations* (1966), *Kuyas* (1967), *Improvisation* (1969) and *Voiceplay* (1971).

The twelve Miniatures, commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1963, are settings of Haiku texts for medium voice, recorder (or flute), viola da gamba (or cello) and spinet (or piano). Like the Oriental masters of this remarkable species of poetry, Somers has attempted to achieve a maximum depth with a minimum means. Although the Miniatures rarely lapse into an obvious kind of orientalism

evocative microtonal passages (No. 5) and subtle washes of pentatonic colour (No. 6) – the pieces do convey something of a ‘Japanese’ atmosphere, largely through the shakuhachi-like timbre of the recorder and the koto-like sonority of the spinet. Typical is the fourth song of the set, ‘Night Lightning’ (Example 1), which creates a dramatic and satisfying effect in a single bold gesture.

Example 1. Somers: ‘Night Lightning’ from Twelve Miniatures for Voice and Instrumental Trio.

The musical score for 'Night Lightning' is arranged for five parts: Voice, Recorder (Flute), Violin/Guitar (Cello), and Spinet (Piano). The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the vocal line and the recorder part. The second system includes the violin/guitar, spinet, and piano parts. The tempo markings are Moderato, Presto, and molto rit. The dynamic markings range from ff to pppp. The lyrics are: 'A light-ning gleam: in-to dark-ness trav-els a night heron's scream.' The score includes various performance instructions such as 'flutter', 'rall. sempre', 'laissez vib.', and 'sempre dim. e rall.'.

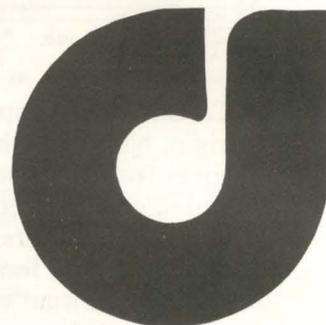
Music in French Canada quite properly deserves an entire study of its own. Francophone composers, mostly of Quebec origin, have contributed to Canadian music significantly out of proportion to their numbers. It should not be forgotten that the earliest roots of Canadian culture have their origin in France, specifically in those harsh northwestern regions of the Mother Country which provided the New World with a continuous stream of explorers, priests, men and women of courage and vision. Not surprisingly, French-Canadian composers have looked to France quite as much as their English-speaking colleagues have looked to England for spiritual sustenance. However, inasmuch as France in the early years of this century was culturally liberated to a degree far beyond England, contemporary French-Canadian composers have inherited a freedom of musical expression denied most of their English-speaking counterparts. They have, as it were, drunk at the source of avantgardism while their Anglophone brothers remained for an unconscionable time locked in the moribund ‘Edwardian’ aesthetic imported wholesale to Canada in the early years of the century by Ernest MacMillan, Healey Willan and company.

To be sure, a great deal of contemporary French-Canadian composition is imitative to a high degree; but, as has been suggested, the chosen models have been invariably progressive, stimulating and worthy of imitation. The Symphony No. 2 (1957) by Clermont Pépin (b.1926) absolutely revels in the bracing dissonant counterpoint, massive polytonal harmonies and driving motor rhythms characteristic of the music of his teacher, Honegger, while Jacques Héту (b.1938), a student of Pépin and Papineau-Couture in Montreal and Jolivet and Messiaen in Paris, has managed to speak with conviction within the framework of post-Schoenbergian serialism, as is amply demonstrated by his Variations (1964) for piano solo. *Rituel de l'espace* (1956-58) by François Morel (b.1926) reflects this composer's intensive study of Varèse and the early works of Stravinsky, in particular *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces*. Although ostensibly in rondo form, *Rituel de l'espace* replaces traditional development in favour of an athematic cellular construction wherein spatially conceived sonorities – winds, piano clusters, bells – are juxtaposed with extraordinary aural sensitivity. The composer's early fascination with Debussy, Webern, Varèse and Messiaen has dominated his musical thinking to the point where sonority, timbre and nuance override considerations of theme and structure.

This same concern for what might be called a 'painterly' concept of sound distinguishes the music of Pierre Mercure (1927-66). Mercure, whose brilliant career was tragically cut short by a car accident in France, did not escape the influence of Stravinsky (in *Pantomime*, 1948) or of Ravel (in *Kaleidoscope*, also 1948). But by the early 1950s, at a time when many composers in English Canada were still grappling with the spectres of Vaughan Williams and Copland, Mercure had discovered Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* and the music of Boulez, Stockhausen, Dallapiccola and Cage. The result was a series of iconoclastic scores linking electronically amplified and modulated sound with 'sculpting action' (*Structures Métalliques*, 1961, composed in collaboration with the sculptor Armand Vaillancourt), with dance (*Tetrachromie*, 1963, a work for winds, percussion and tape recorder commissioned by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens for the grand opening of Montreal's Place des Arts) and with film (*H₂O per Severino*, 1965, an electronically extended series of eight improvisations for flute composed for a UNESCO-commissioned National Film Board documentary on water pollution).

With Mercure's untimely death Canada lost one of its brightest hopes, a musician who brought Canadian composition squarely into the mainstream of the Western avantgarde. However, through Serge Garant (b.1929), Gilles Tremblay (b.1932) and a handful of others, Quebec has maintained its lead as a centre of avantgarde activity in Canada. Like many of his compatriots, Garant completed his studies in Paris (with Messiaen and Mme Arthur Honegger) before settling in Montreal as a professor of composition at the Université de Montréal. Whereas Mercure attached himself particularly to *musique concrète*, Garant began his career as a follower of Boulez and a practitioner of that composer's rigorously controlled serialism. A case in point is *Asymetries No. 2* (1959) for clarinet and piano. The whole structure of the work rests on the use of asymmetrical sets of pitches, durations, attacks and dynamics. The first movement is based on twelve pitches, six cells of duration (2-4-6-8-10-12), five attacks and seven dynamics; likewise the second movement is built around twelve pitches, six cells of durations (this time 1-3-5-7-9-11), five attacks and seven dynamics, while the third movement combines factors from the first two. The character of the work is fixed through multiple permutations and combinations of tiny musical cells, its sole *raison d'être* the superimposition of these different structures.

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In Garant's later works – *Ouranos* and *Ennéade* (both 1964) might be singled out – chance procedures intrude, a result, perhaps, of the composer's meeting with Stockhausen in Montreal in 1964, although as early as 1961 Garant was experimenting with aleatoric techniques in a tentative way as can be seen in *Anerca* (1961, revised 1963), a setting of two Eskimo poems in English translation for soprano and eight instruments. A perusal of the opening page of the first song, with special attention to the performing instructions, shows that *Anerca* relies a great deal on improvisation for its successful realisation (see Example 2).

After a period of study with Claude Champagne in Montreal, Gilles Tremblay moved to Paris where he came under the spell of Messiaen whom he claims as a 'spiritual father'. While in Paris Tremblay also worked with Yvonne Loriod and the inventor Maurice Martenot, a fact reflected in the scoring of his *Kékoba* (1965), a chamber work for Ondes Martenot, vocal trio and a large percussion section (one player). Along with serial techniques, Tremblay familiarised himself in the late 1950s with electro-acoustical techniques, first at Darmstadt and later in Paris with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales de la R.T.F. under the direction of Pierre Schaeffer.

Example 2. Garant: *Anerca*, I, beginning.

ANERCA
I

SERGE GARANT
1961; revised 1963

DURÉE: ad lib

FLÛTE
CLAR
BASSON
VIOLON
ALTO
VIOLE
HARPE
PERC.

CAISSE CLAIRE

avec bag. de TRIANGLE
GLISS SUR
CASSIDE

CROTALES

ad lib., à l'intérieur du solo de la clar

(1) S.D.C. = SIGNE DU CHEF

(2) DURÉES + NUANCES ad lib.

Les nuances + attaques doivent être brutalement opposées. Les durées doivent être de moyennes à courtes; jamais longues. Petites notes: rapides, arrêts: courts.

Spatial relationships are of particular concern to Tremblay. Following a remarkable pair of piano pieces, *Phases* (1956) and *Réseaux* (1958), first performed by Yvonne Loriod in Cologne in 1959, he composed *Cantique des durées* (1960-62), a work for large orchestra which exploits spatial effects

through division of the orchestral forces into seven instrumental groups. The composer's most impressive achievement along these lines is the 24-channel sound environment he created for the Quebec Pavilion at Expo 67, a work more than vaguely reminiscent of Varèse's similar conception for Brussels.

In more recent years Tremblay has allowed a kind of musical pantheism to come to the fore, a legacy no doubt of his mentor Messiaen. In a programme note for *Solstices* (1972), the composer speaks of nocturnal and diurnal progressions, of seasonal times of activity and non-activity, of terrestrial zones and planetary motions, of regions of light and shade. Influenced, perhaps, by Stockhausen's recent megalomaniacal inventions, Tremblay suggests a division of the musical forces of *Solstices* into four (seasonal) groups, either within the same enclosure or ideally via Telstar between cities.

Montreal's McGill University has long been a centre of intense musical activity, rivalled in Quebec only by the neighbouring Université de Montréal. István Anhalt (b.1919) and Bruce Mather (b.1939) are two of the stronger musical personalities connected with McGill in recent years. The Hungarian-born Anhalt has the distinction of being one of Canada's most admired composers. The list of his compositions is relatively short, but each one is a product of a penetrating intelligence and a highly developed critical sense.

Almost in defiance of his principal teachers, Zoltán Kodály and Nadia Boulanger, Anhalt began his compositional career as an orthodox follower of Schoenberg. A typical product of this early period is the *Fantasia* (1954) for piano solo, an impressive twelve-note work which has gained for the composer admirers beyond the borders of Canada. Perhaps the best description of the piece has been provided by the mercurial Glenn Gould, who includes the work in his large and increasingly unorthodox repertoire. In his inimitable literary style, Gould writes:

Though in some respects it [the *Fantasia*] acknowledges a debt to the later style of Schoenberg, especially in the unselfconscious use of ostinato and the generally expansive attitude toward tone-row motivation, it delivers its timely homilies in an accent that is both arresting and spontaneous. Perhaps the most impressive quality about Anhalt's music is its total lack of ostentation. While always persuasively projected, his structures never strain to make a point; organized with superb coherence, they never strive to impress us with virtuosity. His music paces itself so judiciously that one cannot be distracted by the ingenuity of its manipulation. Inverted canons come and go; four-tone splinters detach from the row, unravel into lethargic ostinatos, recoil into clusters; climactic paragraphs are delineated by the unmannered persistence of a treble or bass outline, secured with a Berg-like inexorability, uncompromised by any Berg-like exaggeration. And so one remains aware not of the method of operation, but only of the singularly purposeful voice which is allowed to speak because of it.⁸

Other notable works of the composer's first period include a fine *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1954), *Chansons d'Aurore* (1955), four songs for soprano, flute and piano on poems of André Verdet and *Comments* (1954) for contralto, violin, cello and piano, a highly unusual collage in three movements based on clippings from the *Montreal Star* relating to the murder of a famous Balinese dancer, the spectacular rescue of a trapeze star and, in a more prosaic vein, the daily weather report. Anhalt's serially oriented period culminates in the powerful *Symphony No. 1* (1958), essentially a large variation form governed by a central four-note pitch-group. Like all of Anhalt's works, the *Symphony* is a meticulously organised and beautifully proportioned composition of great emotional power.

Anhalt was one of the first Canadian composers to make a serious investigation of the vast new possibilities of electronic music. The period 1959-62 was an exploratory stage in the composer's development which was devoted exclusively to experimentation in the new medium at various studios, among them the Electronic Music Laboratory of the National Research Council in Ottawa, under the direction of Hugh LeCaine, and the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center.

Four works simply titled *Electronic Composition*, each an exploration of a particular aspect of synthesized sound production, are the only compositions of this short middle period and the composer's only essays in this branch of electronic music. Over a period of more than a decade which has seen a tremendous proliferation of electronic composition, the vast bulk of it decidedly second rate, Anhalt's electronic studies have stood up exceptionally well as eloquent and persuasive arguments for the medium.

Since 1962 Anhalt has composed four large works which in different ways expand upon his earlier creative experiences while moving into a world of mixed media on a grand scale. The lavishly scored *Symphony of Modules* (1967) is a transitional work which combines in a surreal fashion a multiplicity of stylistic elements ranging from literal quotations from works of the classical era to a dense but strictly organised dodecaphony. More characteristic of Anhalt's latest style is *Cento on Eldon Grier's 'An*

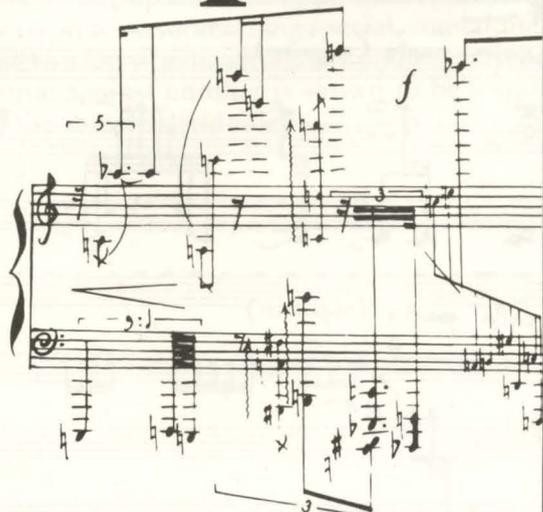
Ecstasy' (1967), a 'Cantata Urbana' as the composer calls it, for twelve speaking voices and taped sounds consisting of spoken words, percussive effects and electro-acoustical signals. The work, based on fragments of 'An Ecstasy' by the Montreal poet Eldon Grier, is conceived as a homogeneous blending of live and recorded sounds, of real and unreal elements. Fragments of speech flow in and out of dense sound textures, creating an effect both haunting and disturbing.

Anhalt's most impressive work to date is *Foci* (1969), a richly textured work in nine sections for soprano, ten instrumentalists and four tape recorder operators. 29 voices, speaking/singing in nine languages on six channels of tape, are submerged in a dense and extraordinarily sensuous montage of live vocal, live instrumental and electronic sounds. Abstract images projected on surrounding wall surfaces add a visual dimension to the piece, while a ritualistic element is injected through a series of mannered and carefully staged entrances and exits of the performers, including the conductor. The speech-sounds of *Foci*, drawn from such diverse sources as the New Testament, Voodoo ritual, the Odyssey and a dictionary of psychology, lend a symbolic level of meaning to the work which, in the deliberately vague words of the composer, is "a series of views on life; glimpses of contemporary existence, and glimpses of past situations. . . . The piece is primarily about people, about individuals, and about small groups, in diverse contexts."⁹

No one musical example can adequately convey the idea of a work which embraces within its half-hour time-span tonality, improvisation, song/speech and electronic sound. Example 3, the opening page of the ninth and final section of *Foci*, entitled 'Testimony', communicates something of the textural complexity of the work. (It might be noted that the six channels of tape mentioned in the scoring do not appear in 'Testimony' until very near the end.)

Anhalt's most recent work, *La Tourangelle*, received its premiere in Toronto on July 17, 1975 under the direction of Marius Constant with the assistance of the composer. *La Tourangelle* is a "musical tableau in seven sections" based on the life of Marie Guyart, born at Tours in 1599 and known as Marie de l'Incarnation, founder of the Ursuline Order in New France. Again the composer calls for a heterogeneous array of musical forces consisting of a large and varied chamber orchestra, five vocalists who sing and declaim in French and English and two tape machines controlled in live performance from a master console. Like *Foci*, *La Tourangelle* brings together a diversity of styles in unorthodox

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relationships in an attempt to communicate ideas and emotions which are of spiritual significance to the composer.

Example 3. Anhalt: 'Testimony' from *Foci*, beginning.

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *colla parte (soprano)*

FLUTE

CLARINET

TROMBONE

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *colla parte (soprano)*

VIOLIN

VIOLONCELLO

DOUBLE BASS

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *"Recitativo Appassionato" (Like an anguished plea) Largo*

SOPRANO*

ACTION / THAT ENABLES ONE / TO ADJUST / TO THE

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *colla parte (soprano)*

PIANO

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *colla parte (soprano)*

CELESTA

♩ = ca. 96 *Rall.* ----- *colla parte (soprano)*

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** Bongos, Conga, Tom-toms

At least passing mention must be made of Bruce Mather, a student of Oscar Morawetz, John Weinzweig, Roy Harris, Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen, who has in a very short time managed to develop a musical language of considerable individuality. Although he received the majority of his training in Toronto and California, Mather has long had an affinity for French culture. Accordingly, his music is governed by what might be called Gallic notions of order and restraint. A kind of neo-impressionism of the Boulez *Le Marteau sans Maître* kind characterises a great deal of the composer's music. In works such as *Orphée* (1963) for soprano, piano and percussion and *Madrigal II* (1968) for soprano, contralto, flute, harp, violin, viola and cello, settings of poems by Paul Valéry and Saint Denys Garneau, respectively, rarefield sonorities and refined textures prevail to the virtual exclusion of grandiloquence.

Finally we come to two composers who perhaps more than any others have given Canadian music an international reputation in recent years. Udo Kasemets (b.1919) and R. Murray Schafer (b.1933) are the most highly regarded representatives of what might be termed the experimental wing of the avantgarde in Canada. Both Kasemets and Schafer, in quite different ways, have derived an enormous percentage of their musical thought from the mind and the music of John Cage. Since 1960 Kasemets has made much use of chance operations and unusual performance methods in an attempt to approach a Cageian fusion of art and technology. Like Cage he sees art as a ritualistic and symbolic expression of the fullness of life here-and-now. In this context the creative act assumes preeminence over the art work itself, since artistic practice has been elevated to the status of a celebratory activity.

Kasemets's preoccupation with Cage's philosophy and Cage's own cultural heroes is indicated by the titles and the performance media of many of his most recent works. *T^t* (T to the power of t) subtitled 'Tribute to Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, John Cage' (1968) is 'composed' by members of an audience, who fill out computer cards – indicating their choice of frequency, amplitude, colour and intensity – which are then analysed and developed into graphs to be projected in the audience's view and followed by performers. Another audience-activated piece is *Music for Nothing* (1971) for four readers, four tape recorders and pendulum-pushers. In this piece pendulum sounds are fed into a cybernetic sound-system where they are allowed to interact with words on 'nothing' by Samuel Beckett, Norman O. Brown and John Cage.

Like the composer of *4' 33"*, Kasemets expects his audiences to participate creatively, to respond imaginatively to the infinite variety of sounds in the environment, in order that they might achieve a more intense awareness and appreciation of everyday life. With this existential goal in mind, Kasemets has channelled a great deal of his energy into the creation of ingenious 'perception exercises'. *Musicgames* (1971) is conceived as a series of seven sound perception and conception group exercises: *Songbirdsong* (1971) is a tape-recorded birdsong-cognition exercise, *Colourwalk* (1971) a colour-perception/notation exercise, while *Senslalom* (1972) is intended to exercise all five senses. As John Beckwith has noted, Kasemets "clearly sees his role as that of an artist-prophet, involved in a common quest for human survival, in which the arts must 'build a bridge between technology and humanities' ".¹⁰

R. Murray Schafer brings to his work a similar sense of mission, and like Kasemets he has devoted much of his time to the education of audiences, particularly young audiences. His educational booklets – *The Composer in the Classroom* (1965), *Ear Cleaning* (1967), *The New Soundscape* (1969) and *When Words Sing* (1970) illustrate the composer's experiences with young students and are among the first attempts to introduce Cageian concepts of creative hearing and sensory awareness into the Canadian classroom.

As an adjunct to his pedagogical activities, Schafer has composed several very successful works for youth orchestra and choir. *Statement in Blue* (1964) for woodwinds, brass, piano, percussion and strings and *Epitaph for Moonlight* (1968) for mixed chorus with optional bells are intriguing miniatures which effectively introduce young musicians to an unusual range of sounds, while *Threnody* (1966, revised 1967) for five speakers, chorus, winds, brass, percussion, strings and magnetic tape is a moving and bitter commentary on the bombing of Nagasaki, based on letters written by children who survived the holocaust.

As the self-styled "father of acoustic ecology", Schafer is concerned about the damaging effects of technological sounds on humans, especially those living in the "sonic sewers" of urban environments. His most recent booklets, *The Book of Noise* (1970) and *The Music of the Environment* (1973), are reasoned but impassioned pleas for anti-noise legislation and improvement of the urban soundscape through elimination of potentially destructive sounds.

Despite his extensive proselytising on behalf of the new soundscape, Schafer has continued to compose, and such is his stature in Canadian music today that each new work is something of an event in

the cultural life of this country. Beginning in the mid-60s with the bilingual television opera *Loving/Toi* (1965), Schafer has drawn upon the most advanced techniques of mid 20 th century composition to explore the mythology and symbolism of modern life; he is without question a contemporary romantic whose creative products can be viewed as dramatisations of the human condition. Several of Schafer's most representative works are studies on the theme of alienation, an aspect of modern life which the composer has explored with chilling effectiveness. *Requiems for the Party Girl* (1966, revised 1972), for example, documents the mental collapse and suicide of a young woman, The Party Girl, described by the composer as "the prototype of those strange, Harlequinesque creatures one meets occasionally at parties, beneath whose furious demonstrations of gregariousness and joie de vivre one detects obscured signs of terror and alienation".¹¹ Characteristically, Schafer utilises the full resources of the multi-media theatre to dramatise his theme. The result is a hybrid form which the composer likes to refer to as a "Theatre of Confluence", in effect a kind of neo-Gesamtkunstwerk.

Schafer's music knows no ethnic, stylistic or linguistic boundaries. In his constant search for new means of expression he wanders freely throughout the corridors of 'the global village'. *Okeanos* (1971), for example, fuses sounds of the sea with readings from Hesiod, Homer, Melville and Pound, while *Arcana* (1972) is based on a text by the composer translated into Middle Egyptian hieroglyphs and transformed into phonemes. Both *Music for the Morning of the World* (1970) and *Divan I Shams I Tabriz* (1970), based on ecstatic love poems of the 13th century Moslem mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi, were inspired by a trip to Turkey and Iran in 1969. Reacting to the premiere performance of *Lustro* (1973), a large triptych of which *Music for the Morning of the World* and *Divan I Shams I Tabriz* form the first two parts, the Toronto critic William Littler concluded that "listening to *Lustro* is like stepping into the middle of an aural sensorium, in which the ear is not only massaged, but perfumed, powdered and benignly walloped. There is nothing quite like it in Canadian music."¹² Like many young intellectuals, Schafer rejoices in the inexorable collapse of encapsulating specialisms and looks optimistically to a time when the growth of interdisciplinary undertakings will make possible a renewed appreciation of the relationships between the sister arts. Like Cage and Kasemets and many others, Schafer has visions of a world without boundaries.

NOTES:

¹ Udo Kasemets, *Canavanguard* (Don Mills, Ont.: BMI Canada Limited, 1968), p.109.

² For the first part of this survey see CONTACT 11 (Summer 1975), pp.3-13.

³ Harry Freedman, sleeve notes for Freedman, Quintet for Winds (CBC International Service Album 208-S).

⁴ Udo Kasemets, 'New Music', *The Canadian Music Journal*, V, No. 2 (Winter 1961), pp.51-52.

⁵ Quoted in Peter Such, *Soundprints: Contemporary Composers* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972), p.44.

⁶ Quoted in Harvey Olnick, 'Harry Somers', *The Canadian Music Journal*, III, No. 4 (Summer 1959), p.11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁸ Glenn Gould, sleeve notes for Anhalt, Fantasia (CBS 32 11 0046).

⁹ István Anhalt, sleeve notes for Anhalt, *Foci* (Radio Canada International RCI-357).

¹⁰ John Beckwith, 'Kasemets - Torrents of Reaction', *The Music Scene*, No. 251 (January-February 1970), p.5.

¹¹ Quoted in 'Requiems for the Party Girl', *CBC Times*, November 18-24, 1967, p.12.

¹² William Littler, 'Murray Schafer's *Lustro* Puts Listener Into Orbit', *The Toronto Star*, Friday June 1, 1973, p.58.

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