

Summer 2014

NOTATIONS

Confronting childhood trauma through music
Evan Ware

In Focus
Art as/is therapy

Generations/Conversations
with Norman Sherman, Alan Torok, and Mark Sirett

Album reviews, noteworthy news, CMC project updates, and more!

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SUMMER 2014, VOL. 21, NO. 2

The Canadian Music Centre, Ontario Region, produces *Notations* and distributes it to supporters of Canadian Music

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily the opinions of the Canadian Music Centre.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

WARNING

Several articles in this newsletter pertain to sexual assault

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION is a natural outlet for storytelling, allowing us to reflect on individual and shared experiences. An extension of artistic expression becomes the ability for creation or reception to provide alternative ways of confronting and discussing our individual and shared hardships. This serves as a focal point for our current *Notations* issue.

CMC Associate Composer Evan Ware elected to use musical expression in order to articulate his personal history of childhood sexual assault. His compositional strategies give voice to a fractured and harmful narrative that can result from a traumatic experience, while the article he contributes also illuminates his attempt to acknowledge that history and regain a sense of self through music making. There is a broader message concerning how the music community at large can be mindful of our role in supporting family, friends, and colleagues through traumatic experiences.

Guest contributor Roxana Vahed expands on this discussion in our *In Focus* section, which explores the field of arts-based therapy. Various artistic disciplines, whether one interacts with them as a listener, viewer, or creator, can have profound effects when coping with trauma.

This *Notations* issue resumes several of our regular features including three articles from our Generations/Conversations project, which connects young artists with some of our senior composers. Avid chorister and composer Jason Caron compiles some of his discussion with celebrated choral composer and conductor Mark Sirett from Kingston. Composer-pianist Samuel Bayefsky speaks with composer, guitarist, and educator Alan Torok about his writing and ongoing efforts to bridge contemporary music with his students. Lastly, Patrick Horrigan, a recent graduate from the University of Guelph, speaks with CMC Associate Composer Norman Sherman who earlier this year celebrated his 90 birthday; we hear more about Sherman's impressive career as a performer, educator, and composer.

Our album review section features recent Centrediscs releases including a collection of works performed by the Rubbing Stone ensemble, and the first album of the Canadian Art Song Project dedicated to the vocal music of Derek Holman.

We conclude this issue with a tribute to CMC Associate Composer Udo Kasemets, who passed away in early 2014. Linda Catlin Smith, a close colleague of Kasemets, shares a personal reflection on his personality and spirit, while Jeremy Strachan (who has conducted extensive research into Kasemets's career) explores the unprecedented role that Kasemets played in the Canadian avant-garde.

We hope you enjoy the current issue, and as always we welcome your feedback and involvement!

Notations Editorial Collective
Matthew Fava
Jeremy Strachan
Alexa Woloshyn

REGIONAL COUNCIL REPORT



I SAID IT LAST YEAR, but CMC Ontario Region has been very busy over the past year. In particular, there has been a lot going on at Chalmers House, as the new performance space gets more and more use. There are not only concerts happening; there are meetings, workshops, readings, rehearsals, recordings, CD launches, and even parties! From the Council's perspective, it's great to see the CMC becoming an even more vital part of the new music scene in Toronto and beyond, with the impact being felt throughout Ontario.

With our newly minted Strategic Plan as a guide, CMC staff and councils are now working on ways to implement improvements in operations and relevancy, for Associate Composers and for all other stakeholders. That includes you! So, please give us your feedback as you join us on the journey forward.

At the Ontario Regional Annual Meeting in May, Andrea Warren was elected as the new Chair of Council, with Alan Stanbridge taking over her post as Vice Chair. We also welcomed four new members to Council: David Jaeger, Tilly Kooyman, Monica Pearce, and Roxane Prevost. We look forward to working with these fine folks. I should also note that we welcomed seventeen incoming voting members during the RAM. These new voices provide vital support for council, and we greatly appreciate the input of these and all the other voting members—eighty-five in total.

As for me, by the time you read this, I should be confirmed as the new Vice President of the CMC National Board, taking over from Nicolas Gilbert, who is the new President. For those who are unaware, there are five Regional Councils: B.C., Prairie, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic. The National Board is made up of representatives of the Regional Councils, along with the Executive positions (President, Vice President, Treasurer). Andrea and Alan will be the new Ontario representatives there, along with Monica Pearce. I look forward to all their input at the National level.

As I pass the Chair over to Andrea, I will close by encouraging all Associate Composers to make full use of CMC services and resources, so that the world knows what is going on here in Ontario.

Jim Harley
Vice President, CMC National



THE CANADIAN MUSIC CENTRE could not be at a more exciting juncture, and I'm both thrilled and humbled to begin my work as Chair of the Ontario Region. We have a winning team of volunteers, council, and staff, and we are advocating for the most worthy of mandates: the flourishing of new creation.

It's this new creation that brought me to the CMC years ago. As a young music student, my familiarity with new music stopped where the RCM history syllabus did, but the Atlantic Region CMC, conveniently located in my university's conservatory (at Mount Allison University), helped open my world to incredible possibility. New sound led to new questions, critical thinking, and—without exaggeration—an entirely new worldview. My story is echoed by thousands of inquisitive folks nationwide. The CMC, and its stakeholders' investment in its good work, bolsters something worth having: a nation that values musical creativity both for its own sake, and because it fosters the kind of diversity that defines our country.

I am looking forward to working with all of you. Please beat me to the punch and get in touch! I'd love to hear from you.

Very best!

Andrea Warren
Chair, Ontario Regional Council
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ONTARIO PROJECT UPDATES

Information about recent and ongoing projects in
the Ontario region of the Canadian Music Centre



Group shot during rehearsal of the Cecilia String Quartet. L to R: Min-Jeong Koh, Peter Wiegold, Sarah Nematallah, Rachel Desoer, Juliet Palmer, André Mestre, Nick Storrington, Alec Hall, Jason Doell, Caitlin Boyle, Shuying Li, Ye Xiaogang

Soundstreams Emerging Composer Workshop

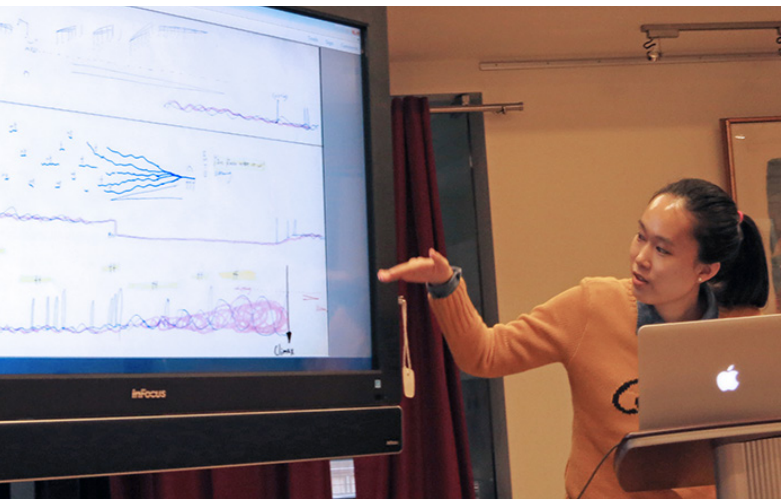
For the second year, six outstanding emerging composers originally from Canada, the U.S.A., Brazil, France, and China converged in Toronto for the Soundstreams Emerging Composer workshop held in the CMCs performance space. The workshop brings together six exciting emerging voices in contemporary music to participate in a variety of activities designed to support their artistic and professional development. This year's participants were Jason Doell, Alec Hall, Tova Kardonne, Shuying Li, André Mestre, and Nick Storrington.

Participants had the unique privilege to work with Ye Xiaogang from Beijing who served as guest composer during the first half of the workshop. In addition to teaching private lessons, Ye also offered public seminars. A prominent international figure, he provided valuable career insights and challenged the composers to situate their work within a broader global context.

CMC Associate Composer Juliet Palmer served as the local mentor composer, and she worked closely with the participating composers as they finalized their pieces written for the resident ensemble, the Cecilia String Quartet. Juliet was exceptional in intervening with the right questions at the right time, while encouraging self-directed study from the participants.

The participants shared in many sessions over the course of the workshop. UK composer, conductor, and improviser Peter Wiegold led the composers in an improvisation session while discussing his unique approach to musical collaboration. Career Counsellor and Coach Anne Carbert from the Artists' Health Alliance led the group in a discussion of career goals, measuring success, and managing stress as an artist. David Parsons from the Ontario Arts Council and Jeff Morton from the Canada Council joined the composers in a discussion about grants, commissions, and various ways to seek council support for creative projects.

On the final day of the workshop, the Cecilia String Quartet premiered six new pieces to a capacity crowd at Chalmers House. It was a fitting conclusion to a productive workshop that emphasizes creativity and collaboration among young artists.



Top left: Soundstreams Artistic Associate Kyle Brenders (R) introduces Ye Xiaogang during a public seminar; **Top right:** Ye Xiaogang (centre) discusses his music with the workshop composers; **Bottom left:** Shuying Li displays one of her illustrations that determined a composition; **Bottom right:** Peter Wiegold (L) conducts an improvisation workshop from the keyboard. Nick Storrington on the right on cello



You can accomplish a lot with a bunch of band geeks

The CMC and the Ontario Band Association team up

On Sunday, April 13, band music enthusiasts assembled at the CMC offices in Toronto for the first installment of a new workshop and reading project jointly presented with the Ontario Band Association. Thirteen composers from across Canada submitted pieces written for beginner and intermediate level concert band, and a group of 20 performers and educators had a chance to read through the works and provide insightful feedback to the composers about notation and levels for each instrument. Composers from Thunder Bay, Timmins, Vancouver, and elsewhere in Canada were able to join via video conference and share in the dialogue with the performers.

CMC Associate Composer Michael Colgrass began the session with a presentation on his experience writing for winds, and working with students. He also conducted a graphic score workshop with participants, and shared examples of music composed by students using similar methods.

Following the workshop, the pieces were prepared by Mary Evered and the senior wind symphony at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts. The CMC and the OBA hope to generate greater interest in contemporary composition for band, and more opportunities for performances of new Canadian works among student, community, and professional ensembles. The Workshop was made possible by CMC Associate Composer Chris Dickson who also serves as an OBA Board Member.

Top: Musicians perform as part of the reading project; **Left:** Michael Colgrass presents at the workshop





Left to Right: Kevin Lau, John Adams, Zosha Di Castri, Brian Current, Daniel Bjarnason

New Creations Festival at the CMC

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra held its 10th annual New Creations Festival in March, and the CMC was honoured to take part by hosting an off-site event at the CMC performance space. CMC Associate Composer and TSO RBC Affiliate Composer Kevin Lau moderated a panel discussion that included Zosha Di Castri, Brian Current, Daniel Bjarnason, and the festival's resident composer, John Adams. The five composers discussed the shifting identity of contemporary composition, and the current relationship between composers, ensembles, and audiences. Each composer discussed the music programmed during the festival, while sharing thoughtful anecdotes from their careers.

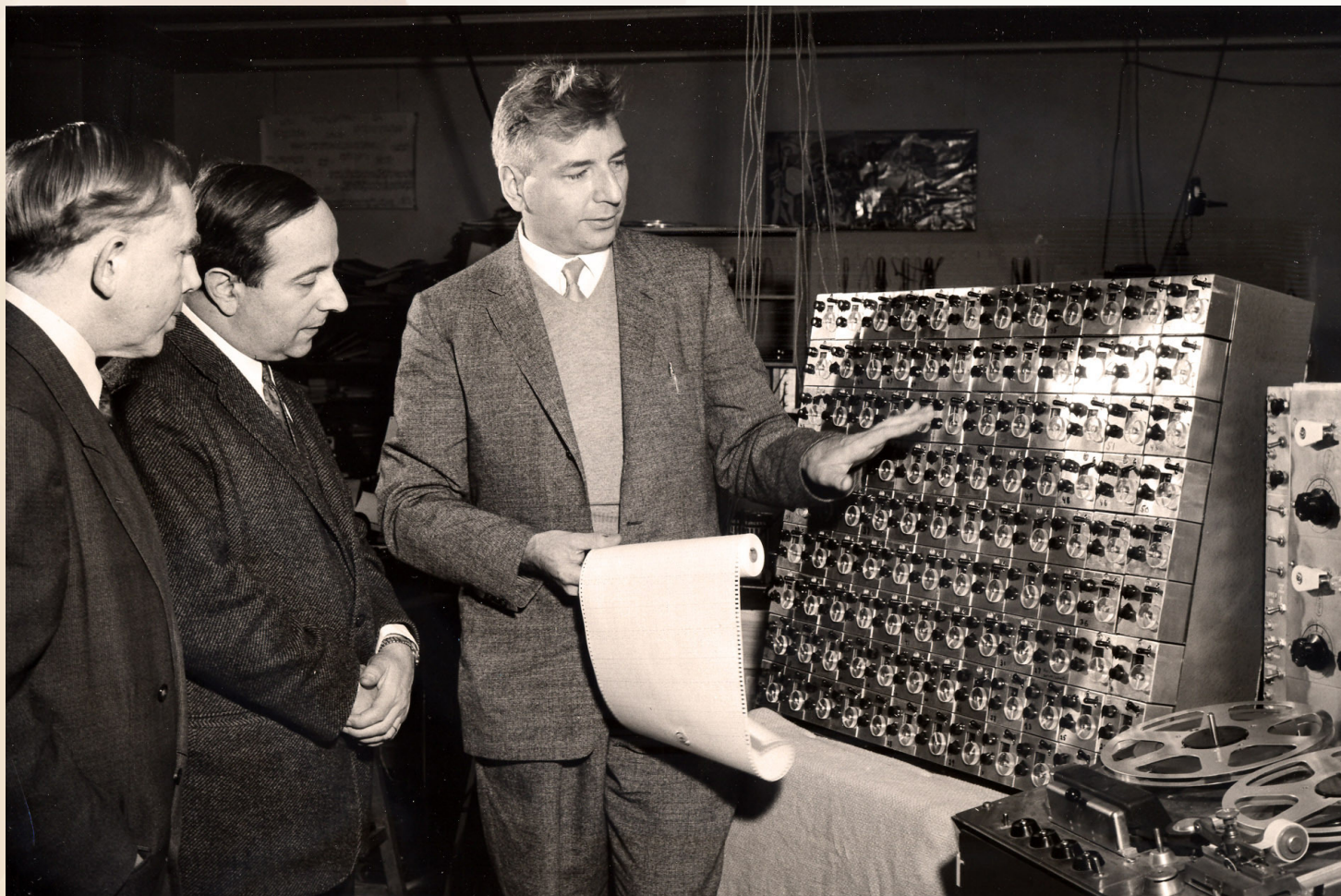
Celebrating Victor Feldbrill's 90th Birthday

In April, Victor Feldbrill celebrated his 90th birthday with a glowing reception at the CMC. Feldbrill has been a devoted supporter of contemporary music and Canadian composers throughout his conducting career. He almost single handedly carved out a space for Canadian orchestral writing with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra where he served as conductor from 1958 to 1968. It was fitting to host the event at the CMC given his close relationship with the composers who founded the organization. Feldbrill was joined by family members and many long standing colleagues from the arts community.

Feldbrill was subsequently honoured by the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto with the Sir Ernest MacMillan Memorial Award.



Feldbrill with three CMC Executive Directors.
Left to Right: Elisabeth Bihl, Victor Feldbrill, Simone Auger, and current ED Glenn Hodgins



One Hundred Years of Hugh Le Caine

Hugh Le Caine would have been 100 on May 27, 2014. Later that week, on May 30, in partnership with the Music Gallery, the CMC hosted a special evening of performances and reflections that expressed the unique and creative role that Le Caine played in electronic music as a composer, musician, and inventor. The event was curated by Music Gallery Artistic Director David Dacks, and CMC Associate (and Le Caine biographer) Gayle Young hosted. The audience was treated to rare, insightful, and at times amusing, commentary from Alcides Lanza, Norma Beecroft, Robert Aitken, and Pauline Oliveros (the latter via Skype), alongside performances by Rob Cruikshank and Dave MacKinnon. Here are some of the thoughts shared that evening:

“There has been a lot of recontextualization of electronic pioneers around the world, and this is really a tribute to what has gone on in Canada for many decades, and we are extremely fortunate to have many of the people who worked with *Le Caine* during his lifetime and have been inspired by him over the past many, many years. He is not as well known as he should be, having contributed to the evolution of the synthesizer in such a fundamental way, and considering the role that it plays in modern music, it is a story that deserves to be told.”

—David Dacks

“As he grew up he studied both science and music, and in a way when he started to work on musical instruments he was bringing these two areas together. One hundred years ago they were considered to be separate; 200 years ago they were considered to be closely linked; so he was closing that period in cultural history when we thought science and music were different, and bringing scientific insight to sound. And one of the things that he did was make it possible to work with sound in ways that had never been done before, but even more important had never been imagined.”—

—Gayle Young

“My memories of Hugh Le Caine are of course like everyone else’s: somewhat ephemeral, he was always a presence at any event in the 70s that involved electronic music. A quiet presence, however, but an imposing figure, whose intense manner one could not help but notice. One had the impression that he was very shy but as Gayle has informed us in her book, *Sackbut Blues*, Hugh Le Caine could be the life of a party if he chose. It seems as though most of the time his thoughts were directed to his intense love of music, whether playing the piano or one of



Opposite: Hugh Le Caine (R) leads visitors through the National Research Council Music Lab, 1959. Photo courtesy of the NRC; **Top Left:** Rob Cruickshank's rig for his adaptation and performance of *Dripsody*; **Top right:** Norma Beecroft introduces her piece *Elegy and two went to sleep*; **Bottom left:** Gayle Young; **Bottom right:** Dave MacKinnon introduces his homage to Le Caine's multi-track tape machine

his instruments, or designing instruments for musical purposes. There was no small talk with Hugh Le Caine.”

—Norma Beecroft

“The 20th century is dotted with experimental musical instruments based on available technology, in some cases electricity, and consequently it fits an umbrella term: electronic music. Le Caine was a walking encyclopedia on this information. He could describe instruments that were built and he could conjure up the kind of sound they made. He was an extremely important person.”

—Gustav Ciamaga, quoted from an interview conducted by Norma Beecroft

“Hugh was very personable. I liked him very much, and I enjoyed his teaching. And I also enjoyed being involved in the studio there at the University of Toronto. I was going to be the director of the new tape music centre at Mills College starting in the fall, and I had only done my work around electronic music at the San Francisco Tape Music Centre. I wanted to see what it was like in another studio and see what I could learn since I was going to be directing this studio. So I noticed the summer course—I knew about Le Caine’s music and engineering. We played *Dripsody*, for example, at the San Francisco Tape Music Centre at one of our concerts in the early 60s. I found the studio to be really amazing, and well organized, and very well maintained compared to the SF Tape Music Centre, which had been put together by hook and by crook; it was pretty funky, so to speak, by comparison. I worked with his 20-channel loop machine to do this piece, *Participle Dangling*, in honor of Gertrude Stein. It was a very wonderful piece of equipment to have a single cap stand with 20 loops going that could be coordinated very well. I had tried a number of loops on a series of PR10 Ampex recorders—loop machines—and they wouldn’t stay together. It was analogue and very iffy. But combining them on a single cap stand was really amazing; it was really wonderful.”

—Pauline Oliveros, relaying her experience as part of a graduate course on the technology of electronic music in the Summer of 1966 taught by Gustav Ciamaga, and Hugh Le Caine.



Score Reading Club

CMC Ontario presented two more editions of the score reading club this spring. The first session took place in March and featured Jason Doell presenting *Sofia Gubaidulina's Meditation on the Bach Chorale*. CMC Associate Composer and guitarist Chris Dickson presented selections from *Contrasts* by John Weinzwieg. Anastasia Tchernikova presented *Not a Single Stone* by Peter Hannan. A second session was hosted in late May, which featured Montreal-based pianist Gregory Millar performing *3 Preludes* by Stewart Grant. This session was co-presented with Arraymusic, and coincided with their Young Composers workshop; artistic director Rick Sacks participated by performing *Apollo's Touch* for solo vibraphone by Rodney Sharman, and Sharman—participating in the Array workshop as mentor composer—presented *Madame Press Died Last Week at Ninety* by Morton Feldman, one of his mentors.

The Score Reading Club allows presenters to explore their relationship to a given piece and composer, and audiences enjoy a unique introduction to a variety of new music. Planning is under way for the next season of Score Reading Club events. Do you want to get involved?

Contact the Ontario Region of the CMC!

Doors Open Toronto

Chalmers House, the location of the National and Ontario offices of the CMC, was built in 1892 and is a Toronto Heritage Property. Having gone through several transformations—a family home, boarding house, and then various renovations under the auspices of the CMC—we had the opportunity to share the building's unique history with visitors during Doors Open Toronto. The annual event creates an opportunity for people to access major buildings for free. Visitors to the CMC had a chance to view the library, performance space, board room, and Executive Director's office, while taking in a rotation of performances throughout the day.

Opus: Testing with Musica Reflecta

Already underway, the CMC is working with Toronto-based collective Musica Reflecta to present Opus: Testing, a free monthly music writing workshop open to musical authors of all flavours. Be on the lookout for monthly themes and opportunities to submit proposals!

The first workshop took place in late June featuring vocalists Alex Samaras and Graham Robinson.



Rodney Sharman elaborates on the structural aspects of Feldman's *Madame Press*

Opposite Page – **Top:** Chris Dickson performs Weinzwieg's *Contrasts* for guitar; **Middle:** Rick Sacks introduces Sharman's *Apollo's Touch*; **Bottom:** Gregory Millar demonstrates a passage from Stewart's *3 Preludes*



Left to right: Matthew Fava, Patrick Arteaga, Alex Samaras, and Graham Robinson during the June Opus: Testing workshop

Harry Freedman Award

CMC Associate Composer Andrew Staniland is the recipient of the 2014 Harry Freedman Award for Recording! The CMC-administered award provides a \$1500 prize to a composer to support the rehearsal of a solo or chamber piece for inclusion on a forthcoming commercial recording. The award money will support the recording of Staniland's *Talking Down the Tiger*, which will be published by NAXOS on a disc featuring several solo pieces by Staniland. The winning piece is performed by celebrated percussionist Ryan Scott, and involves an ambitious electronic setup that allows for live looping.

Toronto Emerging Composer Award

In March, Jason Doell was announced as the recipient of the 2014 CMC Toronto Emerging Composer Award. Jason will receive \$6,000 to work on a piece for guitar with variable electroacoustic components, to be performed by celebrated guitarist Rob MacDonald. Jason was recognized publicly at the Esprit Orchestra concert in May, which took place during the Royal Conservatory's 21C Music Festival. Jason will be working on his piece this summer, and Toronto audiences can look forward to a premiere in the fall.

The annual CMC Toronto Emerging Composer Award is given to a composer who demonstrates innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking in their work. The award is made possible through the generous support of philanthropists Roger D. Moore and Michael Koerner.



Andrew Staniland

A CONVERSATION WITH NORMAN SHERMAN

by Patrick Horrigan

Patrick Horrigan with Norman Sherman



Generations/Conversations is an inter-generational interview series that connects young artists with established composers across Ontario. Through this series we document an oral history of composition, while also fostering professional relationships and friendships.



Above: Norman Sherman speaks with CMC Staff Steve Wingfield

PH: How did you originally get into music?

NS: I started as a young child; my mother wanted me to take piano lessons. I didn't work a serious way at it. I was more interested in playing outside with other children. But as I grew older, my liking to music became more and more involved.

PH: At what point did you start getting into bassoon playing?

NS: I didn't get into bassoon until I was in my early twenties. I started to get a bit more interested when I started to take saxophone lessons. At twelve or thirteen, I had a liking for popular music and I became more interested in jazz. I can remember the very first time that I heard the Benny Goodman band in the 1930s, I think. Of course, I'd never heard of Benny Goodman or anything of that sort before, and the first time I heard it I was just amazed. It was just sensational. From that time on, more or less, my interest grew, mostly in the popular field. I didn't get involved into serious music, or what you call serious music, until later on in my teen years and my early twenties.

PH: So you were really influenced by the jazz and big band music of the 1930s and 1940s?

NS: Very much so. It was the popular music of that time, and there were many good bands. As I grew older, and I became more familiar with them, I liked them more. The music that was written for them was full of innovations, it was full of excitement, and they played it in an exciting way. And then, when I saw students in high school having little dance bands, playing that kind of music, I became more and more interested and finally I became involved to the point where music was my goal: it was everything for me.

PH: So what was it about the bassoon that really interested you?

NS: It was an unusual instrument. I liked the sound of it. It was different, it was a challenge. I was born and raised in Boston, where, at that time, in my early years, the Boston Symphony was the most famous and best orchestra in the world. The standard was exceedingly high, the wind players were all from France, and at that time the school of playing in France in the early twentieth-century was extremely high.

PH: You studied composition with Dr. Roselyn Brogue Henning. Tell me more about that experience.

NS: She, as far as I'm concerned, is the finest teacher that ever existed. She started in the music of the Renaissance period; she would go through that and analyze every piece. We went through all the music, starting in the 15th century with people like Josquin Desprez, and she analyzed the pieces. She showed why the intervals were written that way, why it sounded good, what was done, what was the custom of the period and so forth. And she did that all the way up to the beginning of serial music. And so, as the music

Born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1924, Norman Sherman currently resides in London, Ontario and has lived in Canada since 1975. Entwined in music from a young age, Sherman's life has been defined by his career as a musician, having played bassoon in orchestras from Israel to The Hague, Kansas City to Boston, and Kingston to Winnipeg. Composition has been another passion for Sherman, and I had the good fortune of speaking with him during his 90th year as he reflected on his expansive career in music.

PH: To start off, I wanted to get a bit of background information from you. A bit about you growing up in Boston: what was your family's situation like?

NS: My father was in the clothing business; he had a factory that manufactured women's clothing. And that was it: he wanted me to go into that business but music took precedence over my other interests.



Pictured with members of the Blythwood Winds Quintet (L to R) Anthony Thompson, Tim Crouch, Norman Sherman, Gwen Buttemer, Michael Macauley, and Curtis Vander Hyden. Taken at the CMC in Toronto following a performance of Sherman's *Quintessant*

develops, you develop. She had me reproducing, for exercises, music of each period that we were studying in. I think that is absolutely the best way to teach composition. What it does, is it develops your technique. The fact that a composer is great and is famous doesn't necessarily make him a good teacher. You must try to exploit the students' desires, personalities, and all their aptitudes and so forth.

PH: After you studied with Dr. Henning, you would've gone on to study with Olivier Messiaen.

NS: I met Olivier Messiaen when I went to Tanglewood one year. I showed him some of my compositions, and he told me if I came to France I could attend his class. I was overjoyed and I thought it was a great thing. Here's a person who, whether you like his music or not, is a great composer. I grabbed the opportunity. I stayed in France about four months, and I went back to the States after that. There were some positions opening up in various orchestras and I wanted to do some work with my bassoon.

PH: What are some of your pieces that you're most proud of?

NS: One piece is an orchestral piece, *Through the Rainbow and/or Across the Valley*. I had a most marvelous performance by Bruno

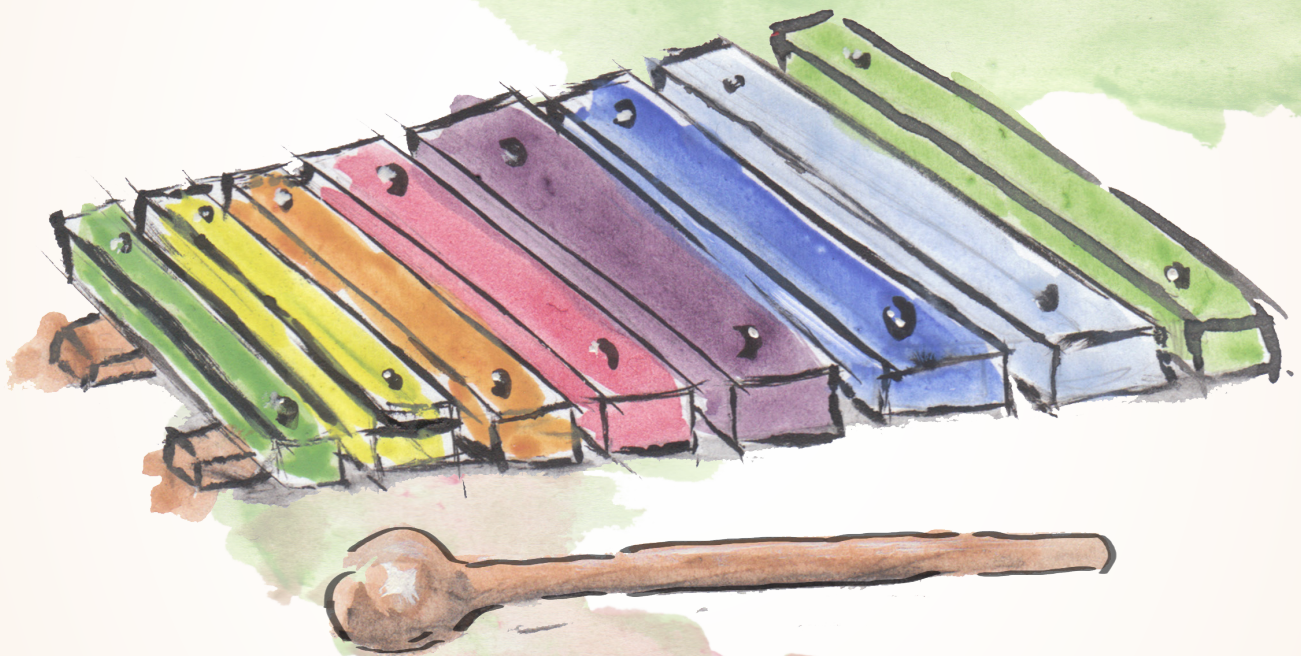
Maderna and the Rotterdam Philharmonic. I never discussed the piece with him; he just got the score and he played it exactly as I had intended it and I had written. And he said to me, "Norman, this is a very good piece, and do you know why?" And I said, "Okay Bruno, why?" And he says, "Because it's you." Whatever he meant, that I don't know. That was one of the best performances I've ever had.

PH: Can you tell me a bit about what you are up to these days?

NS: I am revising a particular piece. I won't say which one it is. I have several good performances of it but I'm not really satisfied with it and I've started re-writing it. This is the only time in my life, ever, that I have re-written a piece. I think that I have enough compositions, around 30 or so, for various instruments or orchestras, chamber music and so forth, if people want to see my music they can see that. I don't expect, at this stage in my life, to produce very much more. But what you have to do, is when you write, do the best job you can. It sounds kind of corny, but it's true. You have to believe in what you're doing. §

One in Six

On composing and perceiving
The Quietest of Whispers



by Evan Ware

WARNING

This article pertains to sexual assault

“

We (can) truly perceive that something is more important than what we fear. And there is. We are more important than what we fear. This is what is meant by courage.

—James Hollis, *The Swamplands of the Soul*



Click here to listen to clips and the full piece on [Soundcloud.com](#)

Writing *The Quietest of Whispers* for chamber orchestra involved two years of disquiet. My unease arose for many reasons, not the least of them being that the piece represented a great number of firsts for me and, as such, was a foray into the unknown—always an effective ladle for stirring the pot of anxiety. It was, most importantly, my first attempt to write music from a single generative concept, a simple ratio—one in six. Far from being some above-board tool for generating specific forms or sets of pitches, this ratio instead underlay the compositional process. One in six. In the interstices of my bursts of activity, it would emerge to remind me of the reason I was choosing specific forms or pitches; it haunted me with a sense for how important those choices were, not just for me, but for anybody I might reach through the music I was struggling to put to paper. The project is now completed, performed, edited... and yet the weight of that simple ratio remains with me as I write these words. I expect it always will.

At current reporting rates, one in six is the ratio of boys who are sexually abused before the age of 18. But by virtue of the toxic masculinity that inhabits our culture, this reporting rate is considered to be inaccurate. It is thought that the ratio might be as high as one in four, bringing it into alignment with the rate of the sexual abuse of girls. Sexual abuse of children is not—as is so often thought—a problem that is occasional and that only happens to “other people.” Instead, it is common; yet, while other artistic communities such as literature and theatre, have begun addressing the issue, it is rarely, if ever, spoken of in new music circles despite its certain presence among us. With these words I hope to begin discussing it. I do so because I have been affected by childhood sexual abuse, and I have spent most of my adult life coming to terms with this truth.

I am one in six.

When I began writing the symphony two years ago, I had it in mind to write a log of my experiences in the process of recovery. I didn’t want to represent the abuse itself, which happened a long time ago and is now only a set of receding memories. Instead, I wanted to deal with abuse’s aftereffects, how it infiltrated all aspects of my life, how it darkened me, how it obliterated my boundaries and left me habitually in a state of alarm and confusion that I could not account for to myself or others. But as my work on the piece progressed, I became keenly aware of another, deeper, and more pressing reason to compose. I had been fortunate enough to realize that I was suffering which was necessary in order to identify the source of my suffering and to begin working on the slow and difficult path that leads away from my suffering. North American culture, however, rarely affords men the means of doing this, and certainly doesn’t make it easy. Patriarchy tells us that men must never be vulnerable, men must never be weak, men must never be confused, falter, refuse sex, or feel any kind of deep emotion other than rage. The results are frequently devastating. Anger turns inwards in the form of unhealthy compulsions and addictions, self-hatred, and depression; anger turns outwards, harming those we love and perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Individuals will cope with these experiences in different ways and employ different strategies to make progress towards dealing with them. Having swum in these turbulent waters for many years and—with the help of some profoundly compassionate people—found a way out, I started to realize that by opening up about my own experiences, other men might do the same and perhaps stop the negative cycles they experience.

I started healing when I accepted that the lonely child I thought I had left behind, who had been so betrayed, was still hurting deep inside me. I had to learn to hear that child, to comfort him, and to love him. The key to my liberation was not confrontation, violence, power, revenge, or rage: it was softening, opening, becoming vulnerable, letting pain in, and witnessing that it could not destroy me. I thought that perhaps I could share with other men the release of listening to pain instead of inflicting it; opening instead of fortifying the battlements and retrenching into desperate loneliness; coming through anguish to know a more richly human experience of living and loving. Maybe I could help simply by telling others that they are not alone because I have been there, I am there, and I am going there: flawed, blemished, and striving.

From the beginning, I felt that *The Quietest of Whispers* could only be a symphony since the form has persisted over the past two centuries as the vessel for ideas, both monumental and intimate, of great importance to their composers. Gustav Mahler's life and death struggles; Dimitri Shostakovich's horror at the growing Soviet totalitarianism and his role in it; Henryk Górecki's confrontation with his hometown's Nazi past; Jean Sibelius's and John Adams's grappling with the immense difficulty of creation itself; Michel Longtin's deeply affecting journeys to Ainola, to the past, to the future, through loss, and through joy; all of these lived vividly in my imagination and became the fertile soil I tilled for the sowing of my own seeds.

Abuse works to disrupt narratives; survivors often dissociate events in their lives, not understanding how the events of childhood have a persistent effect on the present, and some even suppress the memory of their abuse altogether. People's stories become fractured into shards of memory that are left on the floor, never to be reassembled. Healing, then, is the painstaking and mindful work of fitting those shards together again, of making whole what has been smashed. I thus chose to cast the narrative in one movement that would boil down my symphonic world to a single continuous utterance. But I also needed a narrative that could be ruptured and eventually reconciled, and for that to be clear, I chose one that would be familiar to anyone from our culture. The story of *The Quietest of Whispers*, then, is the story of an emergent cadence in A major that is interrupted and, after a long series of forays, detours, and moments of being adrift, redefines its component chords and therein finds its resolution.

I begin my symphony in the quiet, voluminous inner space of memory. A single high A gradually fans out to a small diatonic cluster, a brief backward glance at the opening of Ligeti's *Lontano*, itself a meditation on childhood memories. But the music soon takes on a different path, slowly expanding through widening

Ex. 1

Introduction
(0'00")

I
(4'58")

(V)

clusters and gradually slowing rhythmic pulses to a moment of rhythmic and harmonic unity, all the notes of A major sounding together over the dominant E. This is the end of the introduction and the beginning of the first section (or “movement”). Like a question not yet fully formed, the soprano saxophone sings a melody that, like the sense of the dominant, merges and emerges with the general texture. When the timpani and brass introduce loud notes outside of the mode, forming an F7 chord—a different dominant—they clash harshly with the texture and ultimately overpower the febrile sense of A major, projecting the music onto an

Evan Ware pictured during rehearsals of his piece, *The Quietest of Whispers*

Ex. 2

The musical score for Ex. 2 is presented in two staves, Treble and Bass clef. It is divided into four measures labeled (I), II, III, and IV. Measure (I) has a time signature of 6'55". Measure II has a time signature of 9'49". Measure III has a time signature of 17'36". Measure IV has a time signature of 27'32". The score features complex chordal textures with many accidentals. A box labeled 'A' is drawn around the first measure of the bass staff. A box labeled 'B' is drawn around the final measure of the treble staff. A dotted line points from the text 'Harmonic digressions occur here' to the bottom of the score between measures II and III.

entirely different course. The question that had just begun to be asked, the melody just begun to be heard, the key whose identity only just began crystallizing, are—just like the childhood of the survivor—ruptured, shattered, and—presumably—irrevocably left behind.

Since the life of an abuse survivor is one dominated by desire on many levels (addictions, urges for power or powerlessness, release, and even death), the music turns from an emergent tonality toward a musical space of unfulfilled desires. The dominant seventh chord has a number of fascinating possible “resolu-

tions” that don’t remove the tensions the chord elicits. I use a succession of alternating dominant seventh/half-diminished seventh chords—similar to the one made famous by Wagner in the *Tristan und Isolde* prelude—over a second set of dominant seventh chords descending chromatically. This succession unites two venerable tropes in Western music: unfulfilled longing and lament. It also provides a lot of raw material to draw from: 26 distinct pitch collections, four moments when the coinciding of both processes results in the same chord (clear note heads in Ex. 2), and the seeds of the eventual resolution of this potentially endlessly

3 “B”), the beginning of the coda. This final section brings back the straining bass clarinet melody, now in a comfortable middle register in the string section. When this is interrupted one last time by the F7 chord, the unresolved chord succession is again hinted at in reverse order (see Ex. 2 and 3 “B”). But this reversal also changes the meaning of the chords: they become a part of A major as well and lead directly into a dominant chord, stripped of all the overlay from sections I and IV, and this dominant slowly resolves to the home key of A major. The incursions have been integrated, the progression is complete, the narrative is, at long last, restored.

The above is not meant as a listening guide to *The Quietest of Whispers*, though I suppose anyone who reads this might well use it as one. I wrote nothing of this in the program notes of the piece, nor did I mention any of the technical matters in my remarks before the premiere in Ann Arbor in March of this year; I much prefer that others form their own meanings from my music. But music is not infinitely interpretable, and I composed this symphony to express something definite and important to me. The reason I wrote this article was to share how I tried to do this, to proffer my own interpretation of the music I wrote. Without any foreknowledge of this article, I do not expect anyone to immediately think “childhood sexual abuse” when they listen to *The Quietest of Whispers*. That is too great a leap to make given music’s innate polysemy. Instead, I hope survivors of abuse can intuitively recognize some essence of their own experience in the music. These words, then, are meant to begin cultivating a space wherein the members of our community can feel safe to speak about experience of and support survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Childhood sexual abuse, and indeed all childhood trauma, thrives in a terrible silence where we cannot even hear the quietest of whispers: that we all belong, that we are worthy of love, that we are good people. Men are particularly imprisoned in this silence, and I can think of no better way of dashing it than by making music, all of us, together. §

For more on the rate of male childhood sexual abuse, see 1in6.org/the-1-in-6-statistic

“

It is about realizing that the harmful experiences can no longer damage us without our permission.



IN FOCUS

Creative Arts and Healing by Roxanna Vahed

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you”

—Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

There is a remarkable transformative power that comes from creating something that can express our untold stories—of agony, of grief, of chaos, confusion, violence, distress, even joy, love, change, and uncertainty. As you probably have experienced yourself, the process of witnessing creative expression is also incredibly powerful, even therapeutic—seeing a moving theatre or dance performance, experiencing a live music event, listening to spoken word.

In my own experience, as a person living in the world, as a maker of creative work, and as an expressive arts therapist, I regularly have the chance to see the powerful and healing impact that creative expression offers. Through art, we exert our existence and ability to shape our reality. We create moments of shared understanding and compassion that can lead to mutual transformation.

Theories and research in various disciplines support this, including art and creative arts therapies, creativity, counseling, neurobiology, and even public health. However, we don't have to go any further than our own lived experience to understand the ways in which creative expression can affect our mood and mental health.

In fact, many of us are exposed to the foundations of creative expression throughout our lives, even if we don't always call it that. You may have had the experience of soothing an infant, communicating with various vocal tones and movement such as rocking. Also, you have likely found your own body calming down and feeling soothed as the infant becomes soothed. The ways we communicate love, hope, affection, limits, anger, fear, despair, and other emotions in creative art forms are rooted in our every day gestures, and are constantly translated into symbols or other modes of communication. As humans we literally thrive through healthy connections. Creative expression is one way for us to do this.

The field of interpersonal neurobiology, among other disciplines, identifies the integration of the whole self (such as emotions, experiences, identity, memory, body, and so on), and the ability of an individual to return to a state of flexible responsiveness to be the key to mental health. In other words, finding relief from emotional experiences that are over- or under-stimulating (fight/flight/hyper vigilance or depression/emotional numbness) is a key function of psychotherapeutic interventions. In my experience with clients as well as my own therapy, I have seen how the creative arts support this through whole body sensory integration including focused attention, awareness, and responsiveness to physiological changes and cues, and resonance with our own internal states. Integral to this is often the experience of having others witness or share in the experience, such as when working with a therapist, or performing for an audience, for example.

So how does engaging with creative arts help with healing emotional wounds? In the various fields of creative/expressive arts therapy and art therapy, including music, voice movement, drama, and integrative expressive arts therapy, the role of the arts has many functions. In some of these practices the art is a vehicle for therapeutic work, and in others the art is the therapeutic work. The therapeutic impact of the artistic expression is not limited to the person creating the work, but also extends to those who experience or witness the process or final product, so the witness/experiencer of a creative expression also has the potential to experience psychological healing. While it is beyond the scope of this current article, it is important to note that the therapeutic use of creative arts is not new. Many healing traditions make use of creative expression such as dance, movement, painting, mask carving, poetry, and song as an integral part of balancing mental, physical and community health and well-being.

Creative arts therapies and trauma

One way to explain deeply painful and traumatic experiences is to describe them as experiences that disconnect, disorganize, or fracture ways we know and make sense of the world. These experiences are destabilizing and often are marked by the sense of a loss of safety. The impact of these experiences is far reaching—emotionally/psychologically and physiologically. Such experiences can affect our memories/cognition, bodies, emotions, sense of self, our ability to relate to and connect with other people, and can change our beliefs about others, the world and our place in it.

As discussed by art therapist Annette Shore, and other practitioners, the arts, particularly used in/as therapy, may be effective because they support the integration of various parts of the brain, particularly those that support empathy, affect regulation, and flexible creative thinking.

Documentation and reflection exists for various projects and practices involving the therapeutic impact of the arts such as the *Love Art Laboratory*, a multi-year project created by artists Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle. In their chapter from *Live Through This: on Creativity and Self Destruction*, the artists describe the motivation for the project this way: “We hoped that the practice of exhibiting love could be a powerful antidote to the violence and hatred in the world and would engender hope and healing.” When Sprinkle developed breast cancer a year into the project, and they wondered how they would survive it, they decided to incorporate it into the art project. As part of the art project they created, among other things, visual art pieces, a theatre play, and performance art. Sprinkle describes one community event/performance piece where they created a Love Infusion Centre (a play depicting the chemotherapy room she had been visiting for treatment), explaining “[i]n our Love Infusion room, I became the ‘doctor’ for a change. It helped me frame the chemo as a positive healing thing, and not a poisoning of my whole body, which is what it felt like.” The empowering use of art to create a new way to engage with this painful and challenging experience is revealed in Sprinkle’s description. Reflecting on the documentation of her experience with cancer, Sprinkle says that “Making art helped me to both examine what I was experiencing, or to get my mind off it and to contextualize my cancer, to write my own history about it.”

There are aspects of creating and experiencing art that we tend not to consider every day. However, our our creativity and imaginations allow us to share our deepest sorrows and struggles as well as our most incredible joys, alleviating the agony of the untold stories, and providing a medium for sharing the wisdom formed in our individual and collective struggles.

2014-2015 NEW MUSIC CONCERTS

Sunday November 16, 2014

Generation 2014

L'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal | Véronique Lacroix
Co-presented with The Music Gallery | 197 John St.

Thursday December 11, 2014

Marco Stroppa & Benny Sluchin

Marco Stroppa composer | Benny Sluchin trombone
Co-presented with The Music Gallery | 197 John St.

Tuesday January 20, 2015

Canadian Music Ambassador Barbara Pritchard

Music Toronto co-production | Jane Mallett Theatre, 27 Front St. E.

Saturday February 14, 2015

New Works from East and West

Weiwei Lan pipa | Stacie Dunlop soprano | Véronique Mathieu violin
New Music Concerts Ensemble | Robert Aitken direction
Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St.

Saturday March 14, 2015

Duo Szathmáry/Tzschoppe

Zsigmond Szathmáry organ | Olaf Tzschoppe percussion
Co-presented with Organix | Holy Trinity Church, 10 Trinity Square

Saturday April 4, 2015

The Ukrainian-Canadian Connection

New Music Concerts Ensemble | Robert Aitken direction
Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St.

Saturday May 16, 2015

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A wooden boardwalk winds through a sun-dappled forest. The path is made of light-colored wooden planks and is bordered by low wooden railings. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees and lush green foliage. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow and casting long shadows on the path. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

NOTEWORTHY

**Updates and achievements related to associate
composers of the Canadian Music Centre**



Luc Martin all over Ontario

CMC Associate Composer **Luc Martin** has enjoyed a wave of performances and premieres in the first half of 2014. His piece *Petits Oiseaux* was performed by the NOVO ensemble in Vancouver in March, followed shortly thereafter by the world premiere at Wilfred Laurier University of his song cycle *Dans les yeux des petits enfants* for tenor and piano, commissioned and performed by Zacharie Fogal for his graduate recital. Martin also enjoyed a world premiere in his home town, where the Timmins Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Matthew Jones, performed *Arracheuse de temps*. A separate arrangement for concert band was performed by the Wind Ensemble of De Lasalle High School in Ottawa, under the direction of Micheline Cuerrier-Legault.

Martin is currently working on a new commission for recorder and double bass concerto to be premiered by the Georgian Bay orchestra in February 2015, and performed in the 2015-16 seasons by the North Bay Symphony Orchestra and the Timmins Symphony Orchestra.



Gideon Kim in the US

CMC Associate Composer **Gideon Kim** recently established the Toronto Messiaen Ensemble (TME), which he currently serves as artistic director. The ensemble has been appointed as guest ensemble at Colorado College in Colorado Springs where members will perform two pieces by Kim: *Kangkangsullae* for string trio and *You Raise Me Up* for violin, clarinet, cello and piano. The concert, entitled “Wisdom in Folk Music,” will take place in February 2015.

Kim enjoyed a more recent performance south of the border, and *Kangkangsullae* was also selected for the Mise-En Music Festival which took place in June in New York City.



Jan Jarvlepp and the musical globe-trot

The music of Ottawa-based Associate Composer **Jan Jarvlepp** has been on a rather epic tour recently. In December 2013, his *Garbage Concerto* landed in Serbia where the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Fabrice Bollon, included the piece as part of the “Bizarre” concert series with Studio Percussion Graz as the featured percussion ensemble. In February of 2014, The Griffyn Ensemble presented Jarvlepp’s *Tarantella* at the National Library of Australia, Parkes Place, Canberra, Australia with live illustrations projected while Chris Stone (violin) and Michael Sollis (guitar) performed. In March, the Strathcona String Quartet premiered Jarvlepp’s *String Quartet No. 1* in Edmonton during the New Music Edmonton Festival. Jarvlepp’s *Pierrot Solaire* was realized in its original quintet instrumentation by the Onix Ensemble in Mexico City in May, and in August the orchestra version will be premiered by the Spokane Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Exkart Preu.



Ted Dawson in Estonia

On June 13, the great Estonian organist Piret Aidulo premiered CMC Associate Composer **Ted Dawson's** Preludes 1 and 2 (from a set of 6 Organ Preludes) at the 12th International Organ Festival, held at the St. Elizabeth Church in Parnu, Estonia. Dawson wrote these compositions specifically for Aidulo after her previous collaborations with Dawson in 2006 and 2011. Later this summer, Ontario-based pianist Yuri Meyrowitz will premiere Dawson's recent piano work *A Mondrian Triptych* as part of a recital program at Alatskivi Castle in Alatskivi, Estonia, which will be repeated in Cesis, Latvia at Exhibition House (part of the medieval Cesis Castle complex). Following this performance, Dawson will visit Tallinn, Estonia, where Piret Aidulo will be recording his complete Organ Preludes at the Kaarli Church.



Juliet Palmer Gives us *Shelter*

It has been more than ten years since Associate Composer **Juliet Palmer** met librettist Julie Salverson through the Tapestry New Opera composer/librettist laboratory. Salverson and Palmer found common creative ground very quickly, and among various parallel interests they began to explore their respective histories and research surrounding the Cold War, atomic energy, and its application in warfare.

Their collaboration recently culminated in the production of *Shelter* by Toronto-based Tapestry. *Shelter* is an opera about a nuclear family struggling for normalcy with a glowing (literally radiating) daughter named Hope. Palmer uses contrasting musical styles to act as sign-posts from the history of atomic warfare, while also projecting into a post-atomic age.



Left: Organist Piret Aidulo (L) with her assistant at Kaarli Church.
Above: Scenes from Juliet Palmer's *Shelter*. Photo credit: Kate Zagorskis & Derek Kwan



John Beckwith recognized for research

Associate Composer **John Beckwith** is the 2014 recipient of the SOCAN/MusCan Award for Excellence in the Advancement of Research in Canadian Music. The Award was presented in May during the annual conference of the Canadian University Music Society at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Besides his continuing compositional career of more than sixty years, Beckwith has been the author, editor, or co-editor of about a dozen books, and has published many articles and reviews, most of them dealing with music and musical life in Canada.



Byron Bellows celebrates the saxophone

Byron Bellows joined the CMC as an Associate Composer in 2013 and has enjoyed a prolific period in his compositional life. He has had six world premieres in New York of his music written for classical saxophone and chamber orchestra. In April 2014, two of his works, *Mein Trauer Fur Bluma* and *Simone, C'est ma Folie*, had Canadian premieres in Wetaskiwin, Alberta performed by the Wetaskiwin String Ensemble with saxophonist Dennis Rusinak. More recently, two of Bellows' new works, *Lazy Afternoon* and *Good Night*, were performed at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall on June 4th, 2014 in celebration of the 200th birthday of Adolphe Sax, father of the saxophone; the event coincided with Bellows' CD launch of *Lazy Afternoon* featuring salon music for classical saxophone, performed by classical saxophonist Javier Oviedo and the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble conducted by Jean-Pierre Schmitt.

The Canadian launch of *Lazy Afternoon* was held at the Canadian Music Centre in Toronto in June with the renowned Cecilia Quartet performing two of Bellows' works.

[Click here to find out more about the album](#)





Maria Molinari is feeling filmic

CMC Associate Composer **Maria Molinari**, long active in both concert and film music, recently completed the music score for the horror feature film *Hellbox* from director/producers David Scott and Sheldon Inkol. Soon after completing that project she began scoring the dark comedy feature film *End of Days* at Godfrey Global Inventory, which stars Mark O'Brien (Republic of Doyle) and Anna Ferguson (Anne of Green Gables). The film is from the award-winning team of director Jennifer Liao and producer Sandy Kellerman.



Robert Rival returns to Ontario

CMC Associate Composer **Robert Rival** has completed a 3-year appointment as Resident Composer with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, and is heading back to Ontario, having accepted a 2-year position teaching theory and composition at Queen's University in Kingston. Lingering ties to Edmonton have kept Rival busy this summer, and he is working on a viola sonata commission for the ESO's Assistant Principal Violist.



Matthew Tran-Adams brings the 21 to the 21C

CMC Associate Composer **Matthew Tran-Adams** responded to a call for works by emerging Toronto-based composers issued by Royal Conservatory of Music in the lead up to the first annual 21C Contemporary Music Festival in May. The festival was looking for the 21st piece that would be premiered during their multi-day event. Tran-Adams won for his submitted piece to-BEI-ron-JING-to/多—北—伦—京—多 REMIX I, which was presented during the opening event of the festival.



From left: David Passmore, Cheryl Duvall, Ilana Waniuk, Maureen Batt performing as part of the Essential Opera production. Photo: Terry Lim

Evelyn Stroobach in Bulgaria and on the radio

The third movement of CMC Associate Composer **Evelyn Stroobach's** *Into the Wind* for solo violin was performed by violinist Ralitsa Tcholakova at Sofia Music Weeks International Festival at the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, Bulgaria in late June. Stroobach also had three of her pieces - *Aurora Borealis* composed for orchestra and *Aria for Strings* and *La Petite Danse* both composed for string orchestra - broadcast on WOMR radio on the Latest Score program out of Provincetown, Massachusetts.

A triple bill: Featuring Denburg, Pearce, and Thornborrow

CMC Associate Composer **Monica Pearce** had her one-act opera, *Etiquette*, premiered by Essential Opera as part of their recent triple bill of new Canadian operas. With libretto by John Terauds, the opera examines the influence of etiquette on society, seen through the lenses of "Mistress of American Manners" Emily Post, trailblazing politician Nancy Astor, and the sharp-witted Dorothy Parker. The program also included the premiere of *Elisha Denburg's Regina*, which tells the story of Regina Jonas, the world's first female rabbi, with libretto by Maya Rabinovitch. The third piece, *Heather (Cindy + Mindy = BFFs 4EVA)* by **Chris Thornborrow** with libretto by Julie Tepperman, is an unflinching introduction to the vicious reality of online bullying and slut shaming. The triple bill, which took place on April 5th in Toronto, was remounted at the Open Ears Festival in Kitchener-Waterloo on June 15th.



A busy autumn for Dean Burry

CMC Associate Composer **Dean Burry** will have a busy fall with a string of performances, and a commercial recording release. His much-celebrated opera *The Brothers Grimm* will be performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago in October, and in that same month, Burry's *Tempest in a Teacup* will be performed in Guiyang. In November, Burry's operatic adaptation *The Hobbit* will be performed by Sarasota Opera in Sarasota, Florida. In addition, the Centrediscs release of Burry's radio opera, *Baby Kintyre*, is also slated for a fall release.

A CONVERSATION WITH ALAN TOROK

by
SAMMY
BAYEFSKY

MANY CMC associates care greatly about the growth of contemporary music. Beyond composing and performing, many individuals actively engage new audiences and inspire other artists. One such associate, whom I've had the pleasure of knowing very well, is not only a contributing member of the contemporary scene but is also involved in developing the next generation of new music practitioners. For decades CMC Associate Composer Alan Torok has invested his time and energy in the education of young musicians and composers-to-be.

Torok is the head of the music department at Earl Haig Secondary School in Toronto (host to the Claude Watson Arts Program). Each day during my studies there, he taught me music theory, chamber strings, and after school in orchestra rehearsals. Torok is largely responsible for my interest in contemporary music as well as my involvement with the CMC—and I am not the only student who has been so influenced by him. Many young musicians now studying composition or performance at major music schools have passed through his classroom. (This includes new CMC Associate Composer Eugene Astapov.) I talked with Alan recently about his work as a musician, composer and educator, and to learn more about his relationship to music. Over the course of our discussion, I began to appreciate how this relationship to music and composition influenced Torok as an educator.

Torok was a visual art student at the Minneapolis School of Art in 1967, the year he began music studies. He was motivated to take up the guitar when a close friend bought himself a very expensive classical guitar but never got around to playing it. Torok's first interests were in Spanish flamenco music. Only later did he develop a fascination with contemporary classical idioms. As a result he says he “never acquired the traditional biases picked up by conservatively trained classical musicians.”

His interests eventually led him in 1971 to Toronto, where classical guitar guru Eli Kassner accepted him as a student and promptly hired him to teach at his guitar academy. His new patron then involved him with the Toronto Guitar Society—which Kassner founded in 1955—and remained a supporter for many years. Torok also studied at the RCM with composer Samuel Dolin from 1974 to 1982, completing most of Dolin's ARCT program in composition by 1978. Dolin was both his teacher and a mentor, for which Torok remains immensely grateful. Around 1976 he composed his first pieces and these were, as to be expected, guitar-centric.

Torok's compositional language has been influenced by a variety of factors. “When I think back to my high school years in Detroit of the early 60s, a time when I had no special interest in music...much of the stuff that was in the airwaves got stuck in my head: James Brown, Martha and the Vandellas, the Supremes. A lot of what has stamped itself in my expressive DNA comes from there—a liking for syncopated rhythms, for instance.”

“In my music, I'm not primarily trying to be original all the time. I am, however, always trying to create an emotional experience for the listener. In order to achieve such an experience I often give that listener something familiar—as a starting point. I will use some of the clichés stuck in my musical DNA to create that familiarity. A recent set of pieces I wrote for clarinet and piano, *Motor-City Collection* (2012), exemplifies this. Each of its ten movements develops out of a stereotypical musical kernel associated with black popular music I first heard in Detroit in the 1960s.”

In 1986, Alan Torok landed a job at the University of Western Ontario as a contract professor of guitar, something he had always wanted. By 1991, however, he realized he needed to move on and went to teachers college to get an education degree. Some years later he received a call from a vice principal at Earl Haig Secondary School offering him a job interview. Torok was subsequently hired to teach visual art and music at its specialized Claude Watson Arts Program.

In 2000, Torok began teaching the Claude Watson Grade 12 music theory/composition course and has had a major influence on the music curriculum of the arts program. It is in music theory classes that Torok really pushes his students (myself included). Through his mentorship and instruction performers often discover that they are also composers. In first attempts (and often second and third...) Torok notes that “absolutely every student uses something out of their performing experience as the basis for their compositions... that’s one of the big things I’ve tried to influence over the years: I have students analyze music that doesn’t come out of their personal performing experience, music that will lead them into fresh stylistic and expressive territory.”

Torok has collaborated with many professional organizations to enrich the Claude Watson Music Program: ACNMP (Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects), CMC, Gryphon Trio, Amici Ensemble, Esprit Orchestra, Soundstreams, and individual composers like Andrew Staniland, Jeffrey Ryan, Omar Daniel, Alice Ho, Maria Molinari, David Schotzko, and Laura Silberberg. All of these organizations and individuals have spent extended periods working in Torok’s classes.

“Why do so many performers play the same predictable repertoire?” This exasperated exclamation from his early years in guitar performance has greatly influenced his teaching in performance classes. As a result, countless Torok students over the last 10 years have been immersed in contemporary Canadian solo, chamber, and orchestral music. His ensembles have performed dozens of contemporary Canadian pieces and his example has been followed by colleagues in Earl Haig’s music department.

Torok advocated for the development of projects such as CMC’s New Music For Young Musicians Project and has now performed many of the commissioned string ensemble pieces that have come out of that program. Having built the reputation of the Earl Haig/Claude Watson Music Program as providing a progressive and unusually advanced curriculum, Torok happily remarks, “I love the idea that many composers now think of the Claude Watson Music Program when considering to write educational music.”

While discussing plans for the future, Torok mentions that he frequently invites former students to speak to and teach his current classes. “I bring them in because I think it’s important to connect our outstanding music graduates of past years with current students...for them to speak of their experience before and after leaving our music program. Last year for instance, we enjoyed several visits by composer Riho Maimets, who is now involved in post-graduate composition studies at the Curtis Institute in Boston. He was in town to attend a performance of a new choral work of his by Soundstreams.”

As for his own writing, Torok reminisced that during his performing days his choice of repertoire was often colored by a technical bias—to demonstrate mastery: the harder, the better, “but my students have changed this attitude. We need instant results in our classroom environment. Nowadays I often favour greater simplicity and direct emotional expression—in my own music and in the repertoire I choose for my ensembles to play.”

As a pivotal figure in music education, radiating enthusiasm for new Canadian music, Torok teaches and inspires his students with simplicity and direct expression. §

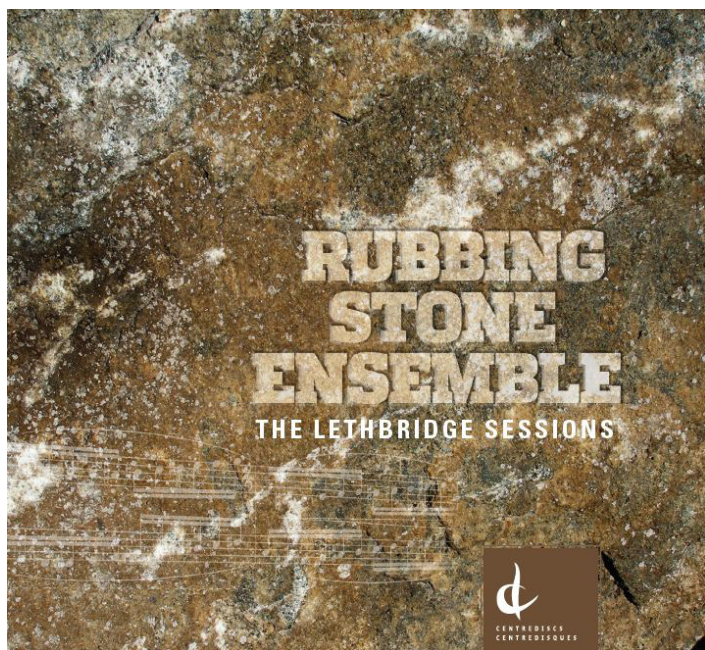


REVIEWS

by Cecilia Livingston

Rubbing Stone Ensemble

The Lethbridge Sessions



This new release from Calgary-based Rubbing Stone Ensemble (founded in 2007) celebrates their commissioning of Canadian composers. The CD gathers seven Canadian works from 2006-2011, showcasing the ensemble's versatility.

The collection is sensitively curated: the pieces flow well, with the longer works for larger ensemble in the middle and more intimate pieces introducing and closing the album. Alain Perron's *Cycle 4* opens the CD. The dialogue of colours and timbres is unusual; a real celebration of the tremendous palette of the contemporary saxophone. Artistic Director Jeremy Brown dazzles with his virtuosic playing. The tight ensemble work is clear from the start and after a jagged, even aggressive opening, the more

languid passages draw the percussion and saxophone together in novel duet. Percussionist Graeme Tofflemire deserves a special mention—his playing shines throughout the CD.

Several of the pieces involve electronics: David Eagle's *Resound - Soundplay5*, which captures one performance of this work for saxophone and live electronics (including randomly triggered electronic events which give the work new shape each time). The saxophone writing is spectacular, and Brown plays with flair. In Laurie Radford's *Infold-ing* the larger ensemble is joined by electronics that are successfully integrated as an equal member of the ensemble; the interplay is completely convincing and tantalize the ear as they fold sound in and out of the acoustic and electronic worlds. *Ikos - kun tu'bar ba* by Arlan N. Schultz is the longest work on the CD, beginning with a striking, whispered text. Inspired by the chant of the monks of a monastery in Southwest India, Schultz finds strange and beautiful instrumental evocations of chant in a huge range of textures in which the ensemble seems to revel.

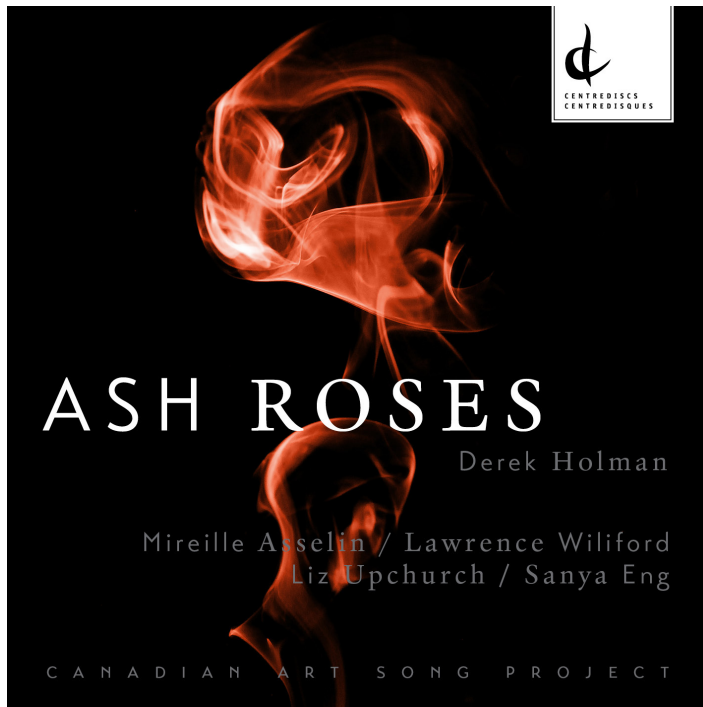
Three shorter pieces follow this longer work. Shelley Marwood's *Merge* is radically different from the rest of the album, rooted in a more traditional tonal and melodic language, with a lyrical, even folk-like opening. The percussion writing is full of personality, the contrapuntal interplay of instrumental voices is engaging, and the clear structure evokes the spacious landscapes she describes in her program note. Anthony Tan's *UnRavel* is a showpiece for violinist Donovan Seidle; after a spectacular "unraveling" of the violin's traditional sound into percussive noise, the interweaving of the violin's singing tone and the ondes Martenot is novel and gripping. The album concludes with Nova Pon's *Wayfaring*, a gentle, glowing work for harp and saxophone. Gianetta Baril's harp playing is exquisite, and the pairing of instruments sounds entirely natural and deserves a wider repertoire.

The Lethbridge Sessions is a highly satisfying CD: beautifully paced, eclectic but coherent, with impeccable playing by

these Calgary musicians. This is a fine collection of new Canadian chamber music, and also a great resource for those interested in contemporary music for saxophone. Here's to many more six-year anniversary releases!

Canadian Art Song Project

Ash Roses



This superb CD should be on the shelf of every music lover with an interest in art song, and anyone who is passionate about poetry or the human voice. The inaugural release of the Canadian Art Song Project, this is the first recording to feature exclusively Derek Holman's art song (all previously unrecorded selections), which is evidently a wonderful catalogue of work.

The album features three song cycles (for tenor and piano; soprano and piano; and tenor and harp) and a stand-alone duet for soprano, tenor and piano. They are highly listenable—wonderful examples of contemporary music that will delight a hugely varied audience—and explore a tremendous range of poetry, from Shakespeare to Canadian poet Tricia Postle. These songs could share any lieder program, and in writing with such assurance and skill Holman stands as an equal with the great composers of the art song repertoire.

Setting excellent poetry is a daunting task: such strong verse has its own music and it takes a refined and thoughtful ear to hear this and still find room for music of equal strength. Holman's writing is a continuous unfolding of delights; simple, lyrical, eminently singable melodic lines full of character and life, understated and subtle word

painting, and an ease—a naturalness—in the piano role which seems to breath an effortless, living dimension into these beautiful poems. Truly great art song makes sung poetry seem more natural than speech, and these songs are, one after another, absolute gems.

Lawrence Wiliford and Mireille Asselin are in top form, both with a clear translucency of tone and diction—perfect singers for these subtle, lyrical pieces. The performances are completely unaffected: the clarity of line, phrasing, and diction make the liner notes unnecessary, and both singers obviously share the composer's thoughtful readings and poetic sensitivities. Wiliford shines particularly in the stunning "Fair Daffodils" (on poetry by Robert Herrick), in music that is plangent, bittersweet, wise, and from which Wiliford draws a haunting, shimmering performance. Asselin is especially stunning in her use of dramatic vocal colours in *Sweet Breath at Night*, and finds otherworldly beauty in *Geology* and the unaccompanied moments of *Arabesque*. Pianist Liz Upchurch is remarkable—a consummate musician who gives new meaning to the term "collaborative pianist," and in this top-flight material her playing sings as an equally sensitive partner. Holman's accompaniments (although that can hardly be the right term for such rich writing) are endlessly varied, always perfectly suited, and incredibly evocative of character, place, and mood. *Three Songs for High Voice and Harp* showcases Sanya Eng's beautiful, luminous playing and must be a welcome addition to the harp repertoire indeed.

The title of the CD comes from the set of songs for soprano and piano, *Ash Roses*, on poetry by Tricia Postle. These deserve particular mention because the poetry is so remarkable. A trained musician herself, Postle is highly sensitive to the rhythm, cadence, and sonorous possibilities she sculpts, and her lyrical use of simple words and the powerful images that result are a composer's dream for text-setting. (The liner notes present a luxurious level of detail: texts in English and French translation, an introductory essay which places these pieces in the broader context of Canadian musical history and compositional style, program notes from the composer, and performer biographies.)

All in all, this is a virtuosic display at every level. But always it is subtle, seemingly simple, limpid and lyrical, full of ease. This recording will no doubt bring these wonderful songs to the wider audience it seeks. I'm delighted to say I've already heard some of these pieces on recent recital programs, and this CD will be the reference point for future performances. The Canadian Art Song Project has set a new standard of excellence as they (to quote their introductory essay) "attempt to increase our understanding of what it is to be human." A profound and noble goal, matched by profound and noble music. *Ash Roses* is not to be missed.

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK SIRETT

by Jason Caron



CMC Associate Composer Mark Sirett is among the most accomplished figures in Canadian choral music: his experience as a conductor, composer, and clinician are far reaching. Sirett began exploring composition relatively late in his career; thus, his writing has been informed by the practical understanding of choral communities that he developed as the founding Artistic Director of the Cantabile Choirs in Kingston. As a chorister and composer interested in writing for voice myself, I was delighted to spend an afternoon with Sirett learning more about his artistic practice and his involvement in choral communities. Here is an excerpt of our discussion.

JC: What is your approach to and method of composition?

MS: My method of composition varies somewhat depending on the type of piece I'm working on. Very often, because I'm working with voices and text, what is really important for me is the choice of the poetry. Most often, I tend to like to select that myself; I tend to favour things that are public domain because you don't have to worry about copyright permissions.

JC: I can certainly relate to that!

MS: That's right! I also find with some of those ancient words, those classic poems, there's a reason for them being passed down for centuries. If the poetry speaks to me, that's the source of the inspiration. As a former organist and having been trained at the piano, I love exploring at the keyboard. Very often I come up with very small harmonic ideas that will be expanded at the keyboard. I know that this was a surprise to a colleague of mine who was asking about my process, but very often I try to find what I think is the major pivotal point in the poetry. I try to concentrate on getting some musical ideas surrounding that pivotal point, and then begin to work in both directions. I feel like I need to know what the destination of the composition will be, the climactic point, before I actually begin to write that opening statement.

JC: What thoughts do you have on the division between choral and instrumental music? Do you think there is a distinct difference, or is there lots of overlap?

MS: I think there is a distinct difference. I have written some instrumental compositions, organ, and brass, a couple of choral things that have full symphonic orchestration... but generally speaking, I think there is a huge difference between the mindset of instrumentalists and singers. The human voice is not capable of either plunking down a key or placing your finger on a finger board, or coming up with the right fingering, to produce a pitch. I tend to work largely with amateur singers rather than professionals, so I know how labour intensive that can be. I read somewhere that most amateur choirs probably spend four times the amount of time preparing a simple score than instrumentalists, simply because of this. As well, one of the major complications for singers is that they're encumbered by text; but of course, that is also a huge enhancement once learned.

JC: I'm a chorister myself, so I completely understand.

MS: I think this is also why most people perceive choral music as relatively conservative in its musical language compared to instrumental music.

JC: And this is largely by necessity.

MS: It is. Many of the choral works are still conceived for spiritual spaces as well, so there's an inherent tradition that can often be associated with certain denominations, certain traditions, that are hard to ignore. My upbringing was largely in the Anglican church, and then consequently at a cathedral. There are certain sounds that one automatically associates with those sacred spaces that have a resonant acoustic, and sometimes a reverb time of four or five

seconds. There are certain harmonies that you know are going to sound fantastic, so it's hard to prevent your ear going there!

JC: How do you feel about your earliest compositions? Do you make an effort to remain conscious of your development as a composer?

MS: Most of my earlier works, and I think probably most composers and artists would agree, I'd really like to go back and rewrite a lot of them. I've been fairly lucky though. I didn't write for many decades; it was not until I was almost forty before I started to compose, largely because I felt that I didn't have a whole lot new that I had to offer. But as I worked with choirs, I recognized I was very often looking for a specific piece for a particular program or event, and I couldn't find the right piece with the right poetry. That's when I really launched into writing a few things of my own. That being said, there have been lots of times when I've gone back to something that was written ten, twenty years ago and think oh... I wish hadn't done that...

JC: I think I look back six months and think that!

MS: That's right! That's one of the great things about being able to go back and review your own music. You realize that you're not static yourself as a musician.

JC: How do you feel the composing, teaching, and conducting worlds intersect?

MS: I think because I'm constantly working with the choral instrument, that



Left to Right: Sirett poses with Sarah Quartel, Australian composer Stephen Leek, and Ben Bolden. Leek was composer/conductor in residence with Cantabile Choirs in February 2014

informs my own compositions. I've heard from countless other conductors that they appreciate what I write largely because it's vocally healthy, it's well suited to the voice, it sits well usually for the whole choir, and that comes from years of experience of actually working with the instrument. You would be surprised, though, at how few of my own compositions I've conducted!

JC: An important part of an artist's development is mentorship. Can you tell me about some of your mentors? How did they shape your artistic career?

MS: As I mentioned, there was a number of years when I didn't feel that I had any great burning desire to write music. However, I always loved teaching harmony, theory, and counterpoint. That was a field I thought

I was going to go into before I went into choral conducting. So I took courses with people such as F.R.C. Clarke (Fred Clarke), and Graham George, someone I had great respect for; he was a student of Hindemith many decades ago. As well, I was also a teaching assistant for Violet Archer at the University of Alberta. My compositional style bears no resemblance to either Violet's or Fred's or Graham's. I came away with a great appreciation for the discipline, the technique. I marveled at them, especially Violet, who would dedicate a couple of hours every day exclusively for composing, and recognizing that it wasn't necessarily toward a deadline, but just for the sheer joy of writing, and knowing that as she was writing she was continuing to develop skill, understanding, and technique. That is one of the things I've noticed in the last few years: I'm much faster at getting things down on paper! Part of it is that ease with the technique, and being able to transfer


those ideas on to the page faster. And also trusting myself. I think as a young composer you tend to be thinking about every single note, and obsessing over every single note, and losing track of the big picture. §



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Udo Kasemets 1919–2014



Udo Kasemets (L) pictured with pianist Stephen Clarke during rehearsals for New Music Concerts's Happy Birthday Udo presentation at the Betty Oliphant Theatre in Toronto

by Jeremy Strachan

On January 19th of this year, Canada lost one of its most ardent proponents of experimental music: Udo Kasemets passed away in his 94th year after a lengthy illness at a long-term care facility in Toronto. Known primarily as an adherent of the thinking of John Cage, Kasemets's numerous contributions to musical life in Canada during the second half of the twentieth century have often been overlooked by wider audiences. As a composer, conductor, critic, concert organizer, and later teacher, Udo Kasemets influenced generations of young minds in Canada.

Kasemets arrived in Hamilton in 1951 as an émigré from Estonia, after spending six years as a refugee in Germany following the Soviet reoccupation of the Baltic region in 1945. In Germany, Kasemets attended classes at the Kranachstein Institut (later the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music) where he became exposed to modernist trends in European composition. There he studied with Varèse, Krenek, and the progressive conductor Hermann Scherchen. Kasemets heard for the first time at Kranachstein Varèse's groundbreaking work for percussion *Ionisation*, whose

revolutionary approach to the organization of sound and time left a lasting impact on the young composer.

In Canada, Kasemets quickly became involved in the crusade for new music in the 50s. As a writer for the *Toronto Daily Star*, he contributed over 150 reviews, editorials, and columns between 1959 and 1963. Music criticism in the 1960s was a lively and at times nasty business, and Kasemets became known for his uncompromising views on Toronto's parochial culture. After negatively reviewing a recital by pianist Reginald Godden in 1961, Lady Flora McRae Eaton (wife of department store magnate Timothy Eaton) wrote to complain, in a tone more befitting of 1861 than 1961: "Who is Udo Kasemets? Whence cometh he? What are his achievements? What are his credentials?"

Throughout the 1960s, Kasemets undertook a number of initiatives as a concert promoter and organizer, activities for which he remains best known. *Men, Minds, and Music* (1963) is often regarded as Toronto's first all "avant-garde" concert series, and happened in Paul Brodie's busy dance and

music school on Eglinton Avenue West. *Globe and Mail* critic John Kraglund called Kasemets's attempt at acquainting Toronto audiences with the avant-garde "herculean." Later, his association with Isaacs Gallery from 1965-68 resulted in numerous mixed media events, happenings, and Fluxus-style performances at Avrom Isaacs' Yonge Street Gallery. One concert from 1966 dedicated to the poetry of e.e. cummings garnered a hostile review in *MacLeans* magazine, bringing Kasemets (who the reviewer described as having "a predictable beard and unlikely name") to a national audience. Patrons of the CMC library will likely have come across the iconic scores of *Canavanguard: Music of the 1960s and After*, which Kasemets spearheaded throughout the 60s. *Canavanguard* was an ambitious project that presented graphic scores by Canadian and American composers as a new kind of communications media capable of recalibrating the relationship between composers, performers, and their listeners. Perhaps most famously, Kasemets organized the week-long *SightSoundSystems* festival at Ryerson Polytechnic Institute in March 1968, where John Cage and Marcel Duchamp met on stage to play a game of

amplified chess. That event, Reunion, and many of the original participants (including Kasemets's long-time colleague Gordon Mumma) were reunited when artist Sarah Robayo Sheridan organized a performance of it for 2010's *Nuit Blanche*.

Yet perhaps more than any of these achievements, Kasemets's real impact on creative music in Canada has come with the inspiration he provided to hundreds of students, performers, and colleagues. From 1971 to 1987, he taught courses in experimental art at OCAD, and many of his students went on to careers of their own as practitioners of mixed media art. In the early 80s, Kasemets was heavily involved in Toronto's Music Gallery and the scene that emerged from that space—young, community-minded, and DIY musicians and composers responsible for making Toronto's creative music scene dynamic. One of Kasemets's most ambitious projects, 1983's massive *Counterbomb Renga*, brought together the creative effort of one hundred poets, musicians, and speakers in a performance at Toronto's Trinity St. Paul's church to protest nuclear proliferation.

Kasemets, up until only a few years ago, continued to work and collaborate on new projects. His legacy in Canada will remain as more than a composer or organizer: as someone who brought people and ideas together, who always was trying to explore the contours of one basic question again and again. As he told me, that question was: "what is music, and how does it work?"

Thinking of Udo Kasemets by Linda Smith

I met Udo Kasemets in Toronto in 1983 when I was hired by CBC Radio to assist him with the production of his large work *Counterbomb Renga*, a work that brought together musicians and poets in a performance advocating the abolition of nuclear arms. I mention this piece because it is the purest example of Udo's work: bringing words and music together with a philosophical stance, something he did all of his life.

Udo was committed to the idea that every person is a valued part of creation, whether through composing, performing, or listening to new work. He sought out musicians, writers, artists, and dancers who were willing to engage in his ideas, by bringing their

own interpretive skills to his scores (which were often open-ended in terms of timings or other modes of expression), inviting each performer to listen deeply and contribute their sound (or visual art or movement) in their own way at their own time, within the boundaries of his notation.

Over the past 15 years or so, I spent many an afternoon with Udo at his apartment. There were a number of us who visited Udo, and he would always have coffee and cake at the ready. He and I would sit together for several hours, talking about his work, about my work, or worldly things (he was deeply concerned with world politics and with the environment). Not one for casual chatter, his conversations were deeply focused and went directly to the heart of any issue. There were always several newspapers on his sofa, including the *New York Times* and often the *New York Review of Books*. Behind us was a wall of books, and there were more books stacked on his coffee table, newly purchased or borrowed from the library. These would range from scientific books on chaos theory and quantum physics to poetry (Susan Howe, Robert Creeley, Octavio Paz) and the visual arts. I almost never saw a novel there, though in the last months that I visited, I noticed a book by William Burroughs.

Udo loved teaching, and these afternoons were like mini lectures—he would get into a subject and talk deeply about it; it was obvious that he was always processing his ideas. Among his favorite subjects was John Cage, who Udo championed all of his life. He knew almost all of Cage's work and writings, and had incorporated many of Cage's ideas into his own practice.

Udo discovered Cage shortly after he came to Canada in 1951. Not long after he arrived, he went to New York City for the first time, where he came across Cage's book *Silence* in a bookstore; as he loved to tell it, he never really saw New York during that visit because he spent the entire time in his hotel room reading this book that profoundly changed his life.

Udo worked with musicians, artists, and dancers, but first and foremost, he loved to work with words. English was his fourth language (Udo spoke Estonian, Russian, and German), and it was a language he embraced with great love and passion. He made many pieces out of texts by poets such as Creeley, Joyce, Paz, Zukovsky,

and Shakespeare through what he called "translations": he would create an 'alphabet' of sounds for each letter of the English alphabet, and then translate the poetry into a series of sounds.

Standing outside the mainstream of the already marginalized world of new music, he was not performed often by the new music ensembles in Canada, (with the exception of a handful of concerts in recent years by Arraymusic, New Music Concerts, and the Glass Orchestra). Instead, he gathered together like-minded musicians and performers and produced his own concerts in galleries or in churches, with himself usually at the piano. Udo's piano playing was strong and forthright, and I was always made aware that, in his hands, the piano was a percussion instrument.

Udo was committed to the philosophical idea that every sound is beautiful, and every moment is different. One of the last things he said to me was:

"When you play a Beethoven sonata you play it in a certain way...at that time. And never again in that way. And that is the beauty of music."

Udo was an outsider, a loner, a staunch individualist. Not long ago, during one of my visits, he said to me "Unfortunately, I think for myself." This was Udo's way—to convey a thought with wit and depth at the same time. I treasure that statement; thinking for himself is what he always did. Fiercely independent to the end, Udo was (and is) a brilliant model of how, in a world of ever-broadening sameness, one can maintain one's sense of creative independence and individuality.



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