

Appendix B - Northernness and Canonicity

[Abstract](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Appendix A](#)

[Appendix B](#)

[Appendix C](#)

[Appendix D](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Walk into the lobby of the Canadian Music Centre in Toronto, and you will see a poster that proclaims "Canadian Composers Live." The final "n" of the word "Canadian" is tilted to one side, and shown as the cartographic symbol for North, invoking mapping, exploration, and northernness.

A mythology of the Canadian artist as northern explorer defined for decades what constituted a specifically Canadian visual art. In her discussion of the National Gallery's project to reproduce Canadian art and distribute these reproductions to schools, Joyce Zemans has argued that this was a constructed mythology, intended to inspire young artists of Canada with a heroic image of Canadian romantic adventurers.¹

The moral order of nature and the mythic notion of the heroic wilderness shaped the new Canadian icon. Little matter that the site of the wilderness was often, in reality, cottage country to the Toronto (and American) elite or had been designated national parkland decades earlier. The American transcendentalist vision of the land as the spiritual site of nationhood would equally serve Canada's twentieth-century search for national symbols.... That the goal was to construct a coherent history and an autonomous identity through the aesthetic construct of the landscape is clear ... Thomson and the Group of Seven were presented as the culmination of that tradition. (Zemans 1995: 17)

Zemans notes that no urban scenes were included in the reproduction series, and few questions were raised about the lack of representation of women artists "in an aesthetic construct in which ruggedness, vigour and drama (terms regularly employed by Lismer in his description of works included in the National Gallery series) were considered the highest praise" (Zemans 1995: 30). Maria Tippett notes that those women who were recognized were judged by their similarity to this dominant aesthetic:

The closer these women came in style and content to the Group of Seven in their interpretation of their particular region, the more chance they had of selling their work, attracting favourable reviews and of seeing it exhibited by the leading organizations and the private and public art galleries. When they diverged from the norm their work was politely set aside. (1992: 85)

This strong mythology of the artist as rugged explorer had a profound influence on what constituted Canadian landscape painting during this period.

The situation of music initially seems somewhat different. The power of the concept of absolute purity or self-referentiality embodied in the ideal of absolute music has led some contemporary Canadian composers to view music that refers to place as somehow suspect, using terms such as "mediocre" to describe "nationalist" music, avoiding the labelling that is accorded to composers who use folk motifs, or rejecting the use of descriptive titles as limiting the perspective of the audience. Within music, the idea of the autonomy and purity of "the music itself" means that few composers have been willing to be thought of as Canadian composers, and even fewer have aspired to the label of "regional" composers, by writing music that specifically refers to the environment around them. Unlike with landscape artists following the Group of Seven, there has not been an approach to Canadian nationalist music defined by a school following the work of an individual or group of composers of like mind. Even some of those composers whose works have been perceived by others as Canadian, northern, or regional, such as Harry Somers or Murray Adaskin, have shown evidence of discomfort with this role. Ford notes:

Where a composer has consciously directed his musical expression in a distinctively Canadian way, such as Beckwith, no following has been developed ... most composers have called upon texts, landscape painting, or subjects of a Canadian nature, but this represents only a fraction of their total output. (1985: 241)

Nevertheless, there are a few Canadian composers, with increasing numbers in the last few decades, who have written music that specifically refers to the Canadian environment, and have also been unequivocal in their assertion of the importance of the environment in the compositional process. I decided it would be interesting to look at the canonical positions of these composers, to see whether, as with the Group of Seven, an "idea of North" defines what counts as Canadian music, within the circumscribed category of music that refers to place.

In order to understand the canonical positions of these composers, I looked at several markers. I consulted the library catalogues of several Canadian and international libraries² to compile data on the numbers of works held by a selection of Canadian composers. I referred to the major Canadian music historical texts to see how often these composers and their works were mentioned. I checked to see how many works by each of these composers were held by the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) distribution service, and how much each of these composers was represented in the CMC's Teacher's Guide to Canadian Music, produced as a syllabus guide for secondary schools in Canada. I consulted the Encyclopedia of Canadian Music to see how extensive entries were for each of these composers. The results of this research are summarized at the end of this Appendix. It could be argued that this research is neither extensive nor specific enough to provide a definitive index of canonicity. For instance, I do not include any American Ivy League universities, nor any information on which specific works are included at each

library. Had the canonic question been the primary one in this dissertation, I would have undertaken such detailed work. However, it is beyond the scope of this study. This library and textual research does provide some valuable indicators of the relative visibility of different Canadian composers in a number of different contexts, both in Canada and internationally.

I chose some composers for my sample who are portrayed in the literature primarily as composers of absolute or 'universal' music, even though they may have produced a few pieces that referred to the Canadian environment. Barbara Pentland is described as "an artist fully at home with the abstract (or 'absolute') prototypes of Western music" (Winters and Beckwith 1992: 1033), and her biographers describe her as "not a nationalistic composer" (Eastman and McGee: 1983: 9).³ John Weinzweig is discussed as the writer of the "first Canadian music to explore serial technique" (Henninger and Beckwith 1992: 1392).⁴ Gilles Tremblay's work is described in absolute terms: "a preoccupation with sound elements is the primary unifying force of Tremblay's work" (Richard 1992: 1312).⁵ Harry Somers is included as an example of a composer who has sometimes been ambivalent about his references to the sound environment, but is nevertheless recognized for this work. Violet Archer is not recognized for her use of natural imagery, but has described a Canadian aesthetic based on natural imagery, including her own music in this description. Claude Champagne, John Beckwith, and Murray Schafer are all composers who unequivocally turn to the sound environment as a musical source.

There is a distinction between the music-historical textbooks, published up until the early 1980s, and the current library holdings. In the music-historical texts, Somers is referenced the most in every text, followed by Weinzweig, Schafer (in Proctor these two are reversed), Pentland and then Beckwith (in Ford these two are reversed), then Champagne, Tremblay and Archer. This gives more recognition to the composers concerned with absolute and universal music than to nationalist or regional composers, except for Schafer and perhaps Somers. At the end of his book, Proctor signals a possible change. The last chapter, entitled "Recent Trends," begins with an excerpt from Schafer's "Music in the Cold." It ends with a quote by Yehudi Menuhin, who commented:

that he found Canadian music ... to be particularly sensitive to the sounds of nature. It would be nice to think that this is so [says Proctor] and that down the road of history men and women will link Canadian music to nature in this way (1980: 214)

More recent references in the Canadian Music Centre catalogue and guide, Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, and my current library research indicates a change to favour Canadian music that refers to nature and northernness. The encyclopedia references are fairly even-handed: most of the older composers receive between two and three pages, the younger composers less. Schafer's is the only entry to exceed three pages. It is in the library references that Schafer receives by far the most attention of all the composers. Within Canada there are almost twice as many (744) as Harry Somers, the next most-referenced composer (430). This is similar to the difference between Schafer (33) and Somers (19) in the CMC recording research. In the library references, composers that I defined as more concerned with absolute music seem to be mixed fairly evenly with those who produce more music concerned with the environment: Weinzweig comes right after Somers but ahead of Beckwith, Pentland ahead of Champagne. The francophone composers, near the bottom of the library list, are referenced much more at the University of Toronto and in francophone universities than elsewhere in Canada. Library references to Schafer's work are much more extensive than for other composers. What is the basis of this renown? I will suggest some possibilities later in this chapter.

Beckwith's positioning surprised me. Anhalt says of John Beckwith "By the end of the 1970s, Beckwith ... had ... asserted himself as perhaps the most characteristically English- Canadian voice in composition" (Anhalt 1992: 99), and McGee writes in 1995: "It is not an exaggeration to say that John Beckwith has been the single most important influence on Canadian music over the past forty years" (1995: 5), yet Beckwith (289) has fewer references than Schafer, Somers, and Weinzweig (357), and just a few more than Violet Archer (261) in Canadian library references in my sample. Also, he is low in the textbook references chart and the CMC recordings chart. Is this diminished canonical position in part because of his refusal to promulgate a northern Canadian mythology, focusing more on particular times and places in the history and geography of southern Ontario?

Internationally, the gap between Schafer and other composers widens considerably. He is the only Canadian composer in my sample to be represented at all of the libraries that I contacted. There are four times as many references to Schafer (81) as to Beckwith (19), the next composer on the list. And many of the others almost disappear, except in the library of Southwest Germany.

There are several possible explanations for the increased references to Schafer. He is prolific. Like John Cage, he has written extensively as well as composed. He has also been very active as a researcher and educator, publishing many books on listening exercises and music education.⁶ Yet Somers and Beckwith have also published actively. Perhaps because of his university position, more of Beckwith's writing has focused on other composers: note that many of the entries in the Encyclopedia of Canadian Music are co-authored by Beckwith. Schafer has also established his own publishing company, taking more control over the process of disseminating his work.

Schafer's work is innovative, opening up new ways of thinking about spatiality and performance, and the integration of music with other disciplines. This could also be said of Beckwith's work, as well as Westerkamp's, although no other Canadian composer has produced music theatre on the scale that Schafer has.

Schafer's work also accepts and promulgates a mythology of northernness, as set out in "Music in the Cold" (ACM 1: 1979). He uses imagery that emphasizes rugged individuality and exploration similar in many ways to the image constructed around the Group of Seven. "Music in the Cold," like the image of Tom Thomson, is a heroic image of northern endurance and fortitude that would fit with the more positive aspects of international stereotypical conceptions of Canada as a northern country. "Music in the Cold" emphasizes purity and form, qualities also associated with absolute music. It can thus allay fears of excessive subjectivity. It associates the composer's work with the stereotypically masculine virtues of form, ruggedness, strength, purity, and exploration.

Several articles have appeared recently that discuss Schafer's work as depictions of authentic Canadian culture linked to ideas of wilderness, ruggedness, and austerity.⁷ Only passing references are made to several issues that I have raised here in relation to the construction of Canadian identity: that Schafer uses Native themes to represent wilderness within a Western art framework; that his wilderness locations, as with the Group of Seven, are cottage areas and parks; that his mythology is constructed to excise the urban and the technological, as I discuss further in the chapter on Westerkamp's Cricket Voice. These recent additions to the Canadian musicological literature celebrate Schafer's work as emblematic of an authentic Canadian mythology, glossing over how this mythology is constructed, and what it might exclude or appropriate.

Literary and art critics such as Northrop Frye and Arthur Lismer have contrasted an exploratory-romantic mythology with a pastoral one in the artistic composition of Canadian identity, clearly privileging the former in their construction. Might the work of such composers as John Beckwith and Hildegard Westerkamp, concerned more often with local, urban, multiple, and multi-layered mythologies of particular places more than an over-arching mythological vision of northernness as the essential Canadian attribute, be construed as musical versions of pastoral mythologies, and thus valued less than the work which represents the romantic-exploratory myth?

While the idea of the artist as northern explorer dominated the Canadian art scene for decades, it has never exerted quite the same hold in Canadian music. At the same time, the idea of North still appears to affect canonicity to some extent in Canadian concert music, especially in more recent years. In particular, composer R. Murray Schafer's "Music in the Cold" has created an image of the Canadian composer as northern explorer which has suffused his later writings, aspects of his music, and writings about him by others. Schafer's actual practice of composition could be characterized as concerned as much with surface as with form, as much colourful social spectacle as strong and free isolation. Nevertheless, he does not represent it this way. His music and the myth of rugged purity that surrounds it, more than that of any other composer in my sample, currently represents contemporary Canadian concert music both nationally and internationally.

References to Selected Canadian Composers in Canadian Music Historical Texts These are from index listings. Where listings included pieces as well as general references to the composers, the numbers of references to pieces are indicated in parentheses.

Name Walter '69 Proctor '80 Ford '82 McGee '85 Total Harry Somers 33 (14) 94 (45) 13 8 147 (59) John Weinzweig 30 (10) 67 (32) 10 8 115 (42) R. Murray Schafer 14 (8) 82 (35) 10 7 113 (43) Barbara Pentland 14 (10) 52 (27) 4 5 75 (37) John Beckwith 13 (4) 39 (22) 10 4 66 (26) Claude Champagne 25 (10) 25 (10) 5 7 62 (20) Gilles Tremblay 5 (3) 29 (9) 2 4 40 (12) Violet Archer 5 (4) 26 (20) 2 3 36 (24)

Such, 1972: Discussions of John Weinzweig, Harry Somers, John Beckwith, Murray Schafer.

Inclusion of Selected Canadian Composers in CMC Teacher Guide and CD Catalogue

Totals are included for references to the numbers of pieces by each composer listed in the CMC catalogue, which includes CMC Centre disk recordings as well as independent publishers; the Teacher's Guide audiocassette contents; OAC suggested listening guide with CMC references.

Name Catalogue TG Listening OAC listing Total R. Murray Schafer 27 3 3 33 Harry Somers 11 3 5 19 John Weinzweig 14 2 3 19 Gilles Tremblay 7 0 1 8 John Beckwith 4 1 2 7 Barbara Pentland 2 1 3 6 Claude Champagne 2 1 1 4 Violet Archer 2 1 1 4

Holdings authored by Selected Canadian Composers at Selected Canadian and International Libraries.

Canada Name Dal. York UT UWO SFU UQ Con. UM Total R. Murray Schafer 61 97 149 142 98 48 36 113 744 Harry Somers 31 60 68 109 30 28 20 84 430 John Weinzweig 37 51 99 84 26 18 18 24 357 John Beckwith 17 44 68 89 25 15 9 22 289 Violet Archer 9 21 64 91 16 15 17 28 261 Barbara Pentland 22 27 18 42 25 17 8 17 176 Claude Champagne 6 17 16 45 6 41 1 23 155 Gilles Tremblay 12 17 18 31 11 27 3 36 155

International UKY Sto. Mel. SWG UCR Tok. NYC BPI Total R. Murray Schafer 1 1 44 4 15
1 12 3 81 John Beckwith 0 1 1 2 4 0 5 6 19 John Weinzweig 0 0 3 1 7 1 0 0 12 Violet
Archer 1 0 0 4 0 0 2 0 7 Harry Somers 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 2 Barbara Pentland 0 0 0 1 0 0 0
1 2 Claude Champagne 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 1 2 Gilles Tremblay 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 1

SFU=Simon Fraser U. UQAM=Universit  de Qu bec   Montr al York=York U., Toronto
Dal.=Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS UT=University of Toronto UWO=Univ. of Western
Ontario Con=Concordia University UM=Universit  de Montr al UKY=U. of York, England
Sto.=Stockholm University, Sweden Mel.=Univ. of Melbourne SWG=SouthWest German
Library UCR=Univ. of California, Riverside Tok=University of Tokyo, Japan NYC=Columbia
U., NYC, USA BPI=Biblioth que Publique d'Information, Paris FR

1 I remember going to the McMichael collection with my parents shortly after arriving in
Canada at the age of twelve. It was a mythic and romantic image that particularly
appealed to us as new immigrants. I was especially drawn to the spiritual sparseness in
the far northern work of Lawren Harris.

2 This library search was completed in the spring and summer of 1997. My selection of
both Canadian and international libraries was partly determined by their ease of use over
the internet. If I found it particularly difficult to make or maintain a connection with a
particular library, as happened frequently, I excluded it from my search. I included Simon
Fraser University because it is the institution most closely associated with Westerkamp.
Beyond that, I attempted to include institutions with large music programs, if possible.
Because this search was conducted over the internet, there is a preponderance of
libraries in North America, Europe, and Japan, where internet use was most extensive in
1997. It would be interesting, but was beyond the scope of this study, to look at which
specific works were referenced in each library. As in Appendix C, I did not have
information regarding the total holdings or budgetary restrictions of each library.

3 One environmentally-inspired piece is Suite Borealis, which Pentland describes as "an
imaginative journey across Canada as our forefathers might have experienced it ... suite
of the North" (Proctor 1980: 167).

4 Weinzweig also composed a great deal of film music, including that for the Story of Tom
Thomson, and music for radio dramas. It is his concert music which is represented in most
detail in the musicological literature, however. His one famous piece that uses Inuit music
as a theme is Edge of the World. This was modified from music originally produced for a
radio drama.

5 Tremblay has composed a piece that refer to an outside environment, but a universal
one rather than a specific Canadian place: Solstices (1971) "whose charts are intended
for different realizations according to the hemispheric location, the season, and the time
of day" (Beckwith 1979: unpaginated).

6 The Thinking Ear: Complete Writings on Music Education. Toronto: Arcana, 1986. A
Sound Education. Indian River: Arcana, 1992. The Book of Noise. Indian River: arcana,
1998.

7 See for instance Maria Anna Harley, 1998; Ellen Waterman, 1998 a and b.

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