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The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada

The two print editions of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (EMC) have been the authoritative general reference work on Canadian music for the past twenty years and more. But for the past ten years, the EMC board of directors wrestled with the dual problem of how to find funding for EMC and take it into the realm of new digital information technology.

An interim solution was to make the contents of the second edition of EMC available on the National Library of Canada web site. Funding from the Canada Council allowed a limited amount of the material to be updated in recent years. But the majority of the content in the National Library of Canada version of EMC was at best over a decade old – antediluvian in terms of Internet information content. The solution to both problems, which was adopted by the EMC board of directors at a meeting on 24 March 2003 in Toronto, was to donate EMC to the Historica Foundation.

Historica was created in 1999 in response to a perceived need to improve the quality of history instruction in Canadian schools, and more generally to make Canadians better aware of their past. The co-founders were Charles R. Bronfman (chairman of the CRB Foundation, which initiated the Heritage Minutes series for television) and L.R. (Red) Wilson (chairman of Bell Canada Enterprises). Initiatives supported by Historica since 1999 have included books, videos, radio and television programming, field trips to historic

sites, and heritage fairs. The foundation maintains an informative web site at www.histori.ca.

Historica acquired *The Canadian Encyclopedia* in November 2000, and launched an online version in October 2001. Historica also provided financial assistance for the digitization of the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, which went online in October 2003 (visit www.biographi.ca). The timeline from acquisition to the Internet was even more streamlined in the case of EMC, which was launched as part of the Historica web site on 15 October 2003. Updating of the EMC articles will now be an ongoing process under the supervision of the editor-in-chief James H. Marsh.

The next *ICM Newsletter* will appear in May 2004; the deadline for submissions is April 15th.

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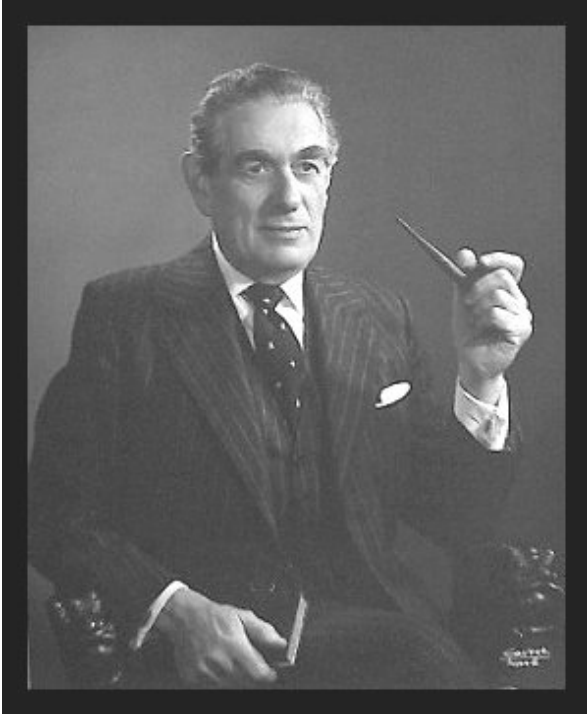
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Harvey (Joel) Olnick 1917-2003



Harvey (Joel) Olnick
Photo portrait by Cavouk

The musicologist Harvey Olnick died in Toronto on October 30th, 2003 at age 85. He was educated in his native New York at The City University of New York and Columbia University, completing the MA degree at the latter institution in 1948. Olnick moved to Toronto in 1954 and remained there until his death. He taught from 1954 to 1983 at the Faculty of Music in the University of Toronto, and kept up a lively interest in the faculty thereafter. His areas of specialty were Italian baroque music and Beethoven, but his interests ranged widely over the entire history of European art music. When the Graduate Department of Music at the University of Toronto was founded in 1954, Olnick served as founding secretary until 1971 (the position was renamed chairman in 1968). He was instrumental in setting up the university's electronic music studio (an interest he did not keep up after the 1960s), and was on the planning committee for the construction of the Edward Johnson Building. He became a senior fellow at Trinity College, University of Toronto in 1963, won the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations teaching award for 1981, and was made a professor emeritus upon his retirement.

Olnick is often regarded as the founder of serious musicological study in Canada. He concentrated on teaching, building up the profile of music and musicology, and creating a significant music research library at the University of Toronto, at the expense of his own scholarly publishing. Of his published work, the finest item is an article on Harry Somers, written for the *Canadian Music Journal* (vol. 3, no. 4 [Summer 1959]: 3-23). When I praised this article to him once, Olnick modestly and characteristically dismissed it out of hand: 'That was just some propaganda I wrote as a favour to Harry' was how he put it. It is, of course, very much more than that: it is a thoughtful and literate critique, combining a

probing character portrait of the 33-year-old Somers with a dispassionate and informed analysis of his most important compositions, including a fine discussion of the Third String Quartet, which had been completed just a month or so before the article was written.

Although resident for so long in Toronto, Olnick in many ways remained American in outlook until the end. Indeed, one of the main attractions to the position in Toronto for Olnick was the easy proximity to New York City. He was a faithful reader of the *New York Times* up until his death, and one of his proudest accomplishments was to get the American Musicological Society and the College Music Society to hold their joint annual meeting in Toronto in 1970 (the first time this meeting was held outside of the United States). He was involved with the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont (a reflection of his love for the chamber music repertoire), as director and leader of the collegium musicum from 1956 to 1958, and as a board member thereafter.¹

Olnick was born in New York City on 18 December 1917, and he grew up in Oyster Bay on Long Island. His parents were musical and often took him to concerts – he heard Rachmaninoff and Paderewski at Carnegie Hall and attended concerts and rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic under Toscanini. At the age of six and a half he enrolled in the Institute of Musical Art (later the Juilliard School) for lessons in piano, music theory, singing, and Dalcroze eurhythmics. He commuted to New York three times a week (on his own from the age of nine), while at the same time attending regular school.

His studies at CUNY were in physics and mathematics. Olnick acquired the BSc degree in 1940, and later put this learning to use in the University of Toronto's Electronic Music Studio. He began graduate studies at Columbia University in 1941, but war service soon intervened. During the Second World War Olnick trained for the United States Air Force and acquired a commercial pilot's license, but due to his red/green colour blindness he could not fly during the war and so instead completed his war service as a meteorologist.

Olnick's initial musical interests centred on performance and composition. As a student he explored the piano four-hand repertoire with his brother (who was six years younger) and he also composed in the style of Brahms. He destroyed all his compositions when his interest turned to musicology. As a graduate student at Columbia University he studied with Paul Henry Lang and Erich Hertzmann, and also briefly with Manfred Bukofzer, for whose book *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York: Norton, 1947) Olnick had an abiding admiration. Other musicologists whose lectures and presentations Olnick was able to attend included Gustave Reese, Curt Sachs, and Oliver Strunk. His graduate work at Columbia centred on early 18th century instrumental music in Paris; he completed the course work and exams towards a doctoral degree, but did not write his dissertation.

¹ In the recent biography of Rudolf Serkin, Olnick is praised for his efforts to increase the professionalism and profile of the Marlboro Festival [Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber, *Rudolf Serkin: A Life* (Oxford UP, 2003): 225].

After teaching at Vassar College for a year Olnick was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to travel to Italy and study the early sources of the baroque concerto. In the spring of 1954 he was invited by Arnold Walter to the University of Toronto to assume the first position in musicology to be created at a Canadian university. Olnick found that Walter wanted a musicologist on staff for academic respectability, but that his real interests lay in performance. Disillusionment would have set in quickly for Olnick but for the comradeship and mutual support of two fellow staff members: John Beckwith and Godfrey Ridout. With the latter in particular Olnick developed an extremely close friendship. 'He was a fixture at our Sunday evening family dinners,' remembers Ridout's daughter Naomi, 'and was godfather to my brother Michael. After my father's death in 1984 he remained in very close contact with my mother and the rest of the family.' Olnick contributed a fine article on Ridout to the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Jonathan Freeman-Attwood (who is Vice-Principal and Director of Studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London and a former pupil) recalls that Olnick was a considerate and caring companion to friends in need: he nursed Freeman-Attwood's aunt through her last twelve years, for instance. 'His modesty and sense of privacy meant that these gentler aspects of his character were not always recognised,' Freeman-Attwood notes.

Olnick also had a close but on occasion adversarial association with the pianist Glenn Gould in the 1950s. Gould sent Olnick a copy of his recording of late Beethoven piano sonatas, and on the cover inscribed it as follows: 'To Harvey – with the hope and indeed the conviction that 2 or more listenings will get the message across and spare us further Hegelian arguments. Best, Glenn, Nov/56' [see p. 14].

Throughout the 1960s Olnick worked hard at developing the music curriculum at the University of Toronto, pioneering not only the graduate programme in musicology, but also undergraduate offerings in the Faculty of Arts and Science. His commonsense view was that it is equally or perhaps even more important for the university to develop educated listeners as well as professionally trained musicians. For many years Olnick taught the introductory music course for the Faculty of Arts and Science himself. At the same time, he built up a specialist undergraduate programme in musicology at the Faculty of Music. Survey courses meeting for one hour a week had been the norm previously; Olnick introduced specialized courses that met for three hours a week, and the scope of the music history curriculum was broadened to encompass everything from medieval to modern music.

Faculty development was another priority for Olnick beginning in the 1960s. His former student Rika Maniates was the first musicology appointment that Olnick made, in 1965, followed by Robert Falck in 1967. Christoph Wolff from Germany was appointed in 1968 but left in 1970 and was replaced by Carl Morey (another former pupil).²

² Wolff sent Olnick his book *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music* with a note (dated 20 May 1991) that reads 'We haven't been in touch for a very long time, but I have not forgotten Toronto. The book records my gratitude. Since I won't be able to give a copy to all my former colleagues I'd like to single you out. You and your confidence in me and my work have not at all been forgotten.'

Other appointments made while Olnick was chairman of the music history division included Andrew Hughes in 1969, Gaynor Jones in 1972, and Timothy McGee in 1973. With the exception of Wolff, all of these appointees were still on staff when Olnick retired.

Olnick could be an intimidating presence, both inside and outside of the classroom. He did not suffer fools gladly, had neither the time nor the inclination for small talk or trivialities, and was impatient with students if he felt that they did not give of their best and have something worthwhile to contribute. He liked to point out that those who were not serious about their studies were not just wasting his time and their own, they were also wasting taxpayers' money. Students were expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the music in detail, with well studied scores in hand. Those who did not measure up to his standards could receive stern treatment and not a few were expelled from his classes over the years. But for those who weathered the storms and found favour in his books, he was an inspiring and extraordinarily helpful mentor. His pupils went on to occupy leading positions in the academic world of music across Canada and abroad. He was singularly proud of their accomplishments and always liked to hear of their activities, preferably at first hand.

Olnick was an inveterate pipe smoker for many years, enjoyed good food and a fine glass of wine, dressed well, and lived on his own in an immaculate and beautifully furnished apartment in Sutton Place on Bay Street, just a seven minute walk from the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. He was, in fact, a wine connoisseur: he belonged to several wine clubs and was able to discuss details of oenology with the professionals. He was also knowledgeable about art and had catholic taste in that area, ranging from classical antiquity to modern Canadiana. A particularly fine canvas by Ken Danby, acquired before the artist became famous, was the pride of his own small but handsome private collection. Olnick was also a talented amateur photographer in his youth. In his last years he was forced to use a cane and then a wheelchair, and he had to cope with various health problems, including macular degeneration, a progressive loss of hearing, and an embolism. He died peacefully, sitting in his wheelchair in his apartment. A well-attended memorial gathering was held at Trinity College, University of Toronto on 22 November 2003. R.E.



Grand Central Station, New York. Photo: Harvey Olnick, 1935
Source: *The Magpie* (literary magazine of DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx) May 1935 (web site: <http://newdeal.feri.org/magpie>)

Asian Influences in the Music of Alexina Louie

Jennifer Bennett

[H]e eats cake out of pastry windows and is hungrier and more potent and more powerful and more omnivorous than the paper-mâché lion run by two guys and he is the great earthworm of lucky life filled with flowing Chinese semen and he considers his own and our existence in its most profound sense.¹

The huge dragon puppet that wends its way through Vancouver’s Chinatown at Chinese New Year is not only a visual spectacle and an exotic messenger of good fortune and vitality, but also a player in an exciting musical drama. Alexina Louie, who was born in Vancouver in 1949, once followed the dragon past the shops of Chinatown, where she had lived as a child. Microphone and tape recorder in hand, she recorded the loud drum rolls and the clanging of cymbals that accompanied the brightly coloured dragon. Her father thought she was ‘off her rocker,’ Louie said, but ‘I knew that I’d use the dance some day in my music.’²

She was right. The sound of the dragon can be heard in her orchestral work *The Eternal Earth* (1986), and it also features in her chamber composition *Demon Gate* (1987) and in *Music for Heaven and Earth* (1992), an orchestral work that calls for four percussionists. The dragon parade is the kind of sound that is one of the distinguishing features of Louie’s music, which frequently includes distinctively Asian references. But it was not until Louie was an adult with a degree in piano performance, a B.Mus. from the University of British Columbia and an MA from the University of California at San Diego that she began to study her Chinese musical heritage.

In California, her composition teachers Robert Erickson and Pauline Oliveros had challenged the shy, conservative Canadian with the newest ideas about chance and indeterminate music. After graduation, she was so in need of time to assimilate all she had learned and experienced that she stopped composing for years:

From 1973 to ‘78 I read a lot, all the things that inspire me now – oriental literature and philosophy, I studied the Chinese zither, the *ch’in*, and tried to fashion my own voice with a very specific oriental flavour. Oriental music touched me deeply, even though I’m a third-generation Canadian and grew up practising Bach and Beethoven.³

The ‘oriental flavour’ that Louie desired sounds foreign to Western ears not only because of its

melodies, but also because of its rhythms, the aspect of her music this essay will explore. Diane Bégay wrote

[Louie] revels in complex rhythmic structures.

Dizzying changes of meter and swirling kaleidoscopes of rhythmic patterns are aspects of her music that she thoroughly enjoys.⁴

When the pianist Jon Kimura Parker heard one of her chamber works, *Music for a Thousand Autumns* (1983, revised 1985) for the first time, he was impressed by her use of ‘exotic percussion instruments and piano to achieve unusual timbres and effects.’⁵ It may have been Louie’s rhythmic sophistication that prompted Mavor Moore to write, after hearing one of her compositions on CBC radio, ‘I wondered whether anyone missing the opening credits could have guessed whether the composer was male or female.’⁶ As Louie’s music is often both introspective and strongly percussive, it may be significant that her surname can be translated as ‘thunder,’ since it corresponds to the Chinese character that represents ‘Louie,’ meaning ‘rain on the field.’⁷

Asian rhythms are not necessarily complex. One of the rhythmic patterns common in Chinese music is that of continuous quarter and half notes. This simplicity can be seen in a passage from Louie’s *Music for a Thousand Autumns*,⁸ in which she states the first melody she learned on the *ch’in* – ‘Yearning on the River Shiang’ (Example 1).

Example 1: *Music for a Thousand Autumns*, 2nd mvt.



Such apparent simplicity, according to Marnix St. J. Wells, led to the misconception that rhythm was less important in Chinese music than melody, and that all Chinese music is in duple rhythm. It didn’t help that ancient Chinese writings ‘contain minute discussions of the mathematics of tuning, but scarcely a word about

¹ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, ‘The Great Chinese Dragon,’ *Endless Life: Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1981): 76.

² William Littler, ‘Louie captures roar of lion dance,’ *Toronto Star* (29 March 1987): C1.

³ Ulla Colgrass, ‘It was the best of years for Alexina Louie,’ *Toronto Globe and Mail* (23 Dec. 1999): R5.

⁴ Diane Bégay, *Contemporary Music in Canada: Alexina Louie* (Master’s thesis, University of Ottawa, 1994): 95.

⁵ Jon Kimura Parker, ‘East and West in the music of Alexina Louie,’ *Soundnotes* no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1993): 15.

⁶ Mavor Moore, ‘Music and gender: is there a relationship?’ *Toronto Globe and Mail* (10 May 1990): E2.

⁷ Bégay (as n. 4): 85.

⁸ Descriptive titles employing themes from nature, such as Louie often uses, are typical of Asian instrumental music. ‘Music for a Thousand Autumns’ is a translation of the title of one of the pieces of Japanese Gagaku repertoire. In *Gagaku: The Music and the Dances of the Japanese Imperial Household* (New York: Theater Arts, 1959): n.p., Robert Garfias states that this title signifies the end of something, such as the end of a sumo wrestling match or the funeral of a noble person.

rhythm.⁹ Subtleties of rhythm were not written down, but rather were transmitted from teacher to student. The first scores that do indicate rhythm, from the end of the sixteenth century, are ‘most often in free time with a beat coming only after the end of each verse-line, or with unequal numbers of beats per line.’¹⁰ So while some pieces (such as Louie’s solo *ch’in* melody) do have a straightforward duple beat, other pieces, especially those for ensemble, may have rhythms that seem irregular and complex by Western standards.

Garfias notes that in Asian music ‘changes in tempo are less often defined by change of pulse as by change in the number of beats to each accent.’¹¹ This means that despite an unchanging pulse, the music may seem to speed up or slow down by the gradual addition or subtraction of notes. The same effect can be seen in *Music for Heaven and Earth*, at the point where Louie heralds the arrival of the Thunder Dragon (Ex. 2a, 2b):

Example 2a: *Music for Heaven and Earth*, 1st mvmt., last bar of rehearsal no. 9: decelerando



Example 2b: *Music for Heaven and Earth*, 1st mvmt., a rapid accelerando for one bar



This rhythmic complexity may also appear as sections that are *senza misura*. In gagaku, Japanese court music, ‘Tempo and rhythm are far from strict. Every piece begins waveringly, *senza tempo*, yet ends rather fast.’¹² ‘At the last strong taiko (large drum) stroke the strict rhythm breaks and the solo instruments play in free tempo ... This is the standard performance format for all the Gagaku compositions.’¹³ Some of Louie’s compositions, such ‘Distant Memories’ the third of four pieces that make up the suite *Music for Piano* (1993),¹⁴ include sections that lack barlines, and *Music for Heaven and Earth* also includes passages in which some instruments perform *senza misura* but are accompanied by others that are barred.

Not only pulse but also percussion instruments lend a distinctive sound to most Asian ensemble music.

Eta Harich-Schneider writes that the instrumental form of gagaku called togaku has three instrumental groups: 1) three high-pitched woodwinds; 2) three percussion instruments of contrasting pitch (side-drum, metal gong and big drum); 3) two low-pitched string instruments.¹⁵ The traditional orchestra for the Beijing Opera (an inspiration for *Music for Heaven and Earth*), consists of two main sections, percussion / non-percussion, the latter consisting of strings and winds. The percussion section includes clappers, a small, single-headed drum, a small gong, a large gong, and a pair of cymbals.¹⁶

While clappers produce a sound that resembles wood blocks, the predominance of bent pitches from gongs and cymbals would be less familiar to Western ears. As Louie writes in the forward to the score of *Music for Heaven and Earth*, ‘The listener might detect the use of some exotic instruments in the percussion section among which are to be found Chinese opera gongs (“bender gongs,”) and hand cymbals, Japanese temple bowls, a waterphone, a lion’s roar.’ This work also uses ‘kabuki blocks’ (clappers), a Chinese gong ‘about ten inches in diameter, not a bender gong,’ two water gongs, and an elephant bell, which is a metal bell suspended from a wooden frame meant to hang from a collar around the animal’s neck. All these instruments produce a sound that alters slightly or bends as much as a tone or more after the initial strike. (String and wind instruments are also required to produce glissandi.) Subtlety of inflection, then, is as important to Chinese music as it is to Chinese language.

The ‘lion’s roar,’ or string drum, one of the more dramatic bending instruments in *Music for Heaven and Earth*, is a drum with one end open and the other closed. The closed, upper surface has a central hole through which passes a length of cord or resined gut string, which is pulled up through the instrument to make a roaring sound. In Louie’s work it is played in the second movement as soon as the stage has been set for the arrival of the Thunder Dragon.

The temple bowls are reserved for the quiet third movement, titled ‘The Void.’ These are metal bowls whose inner rim is stroked in a circular pattern to create a continuous but subtly bending musical sound. Louie writes about the bowls in the score, ‘One must be large enough to have inside rim rubbed with a leather mallet. If unavailable, contact composer.’ The percussionist Gary Nagata, who studied with a master drummer in Japan, says of the temple bowls that

they don’t have a single pure tone. They have several overtones, so depending on how you’re listening you can hear a number of different sounds. They’re sym-

⁹ Marnix St. J. Wells, ‘Rhythm and phrasing in Chinese tune-title lyrics: old eight-beat and its 3-2-3 meter,’ *Asian Music* 23.1 (1991-92): 119-83.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Robert Garfias, *Music for a Thousand Autumns: The Togaku Style of Japanese Court Music* (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1975): n.p..

¹² Eta Harich-Schneider, *The Rhythmical Patterns in Gagaku and Bugaku* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954): 6.

¹³ Garfias (as n. 8).

¹⁴ Alexina Louie, “Distant Memories,” *Music for Piano* (Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson Music, 1993): 9, 12.

¹⁵ Harich-Schneider (as n. 12): introduction.

¹⁶ Nancy Guy, ‘Beijing Opera,’ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed.

bolic, too. They represent the fact that within one thing there are complexities.¹⁷

Louie strove for even more dramatic pitch bending from additional instruments. The watergong is a tubular bell that is struck, then lowered into a tub of water to bend the pitch downward 'to create a kind of Doppler effect.'¹⁸ If it is struck while in the water and then raised, the pitch bends upward.

The waterphone is a 20th-century instrument invented in the United States. It consists of a metal bowl containing water, with a domed lid that opens into a cylindrical tube. Around the edge of the dome are 25 to 35 nearly vertical tuned rods, which are to be played with mallets, sticks or a bow. 'The use of water in the bowl produces timbre changes and glissandi.'¹⁹

Bent pitches were also a feature of Louie's *Distant Thunder* (1992) for oboe and percussionist, a composition which calls for lowering a tubular bell into a basin of water and playing a cymbal laid on the head of a kettle drum while the percussionist shapes the pitch with the foot pedal to create a particularly eerie sound. Meanwhile, the oboist performs 'a kind of sonic sorcery, her oboe transformed into a reed pipe, full of bent pitches and exotic flavours.'²⁰

Jon Kimura Parker cites another example of an unusual combination of instruments that Louie uses to achieve bent tones. In *Music for a Thousand Autumns*, the initial attack on each beat is given by a vibraphone, and as this note dies away, a pizzicato-glissando on the contrabass is heard. 'This combination of sonorities and "bent" pitches calls to mind oriental instrumental combinations and performance practise on them.'²¹

From the first bar of *Music for Heaven and Earth*, 'Procession of Celestial Deities,' the Asian rhythmic influence is obvious. The stroke of a bass drum is followed by kabuki blocks and elephant bell, and then later, after a passage in which the strings play bent tones *senza misura*, a fairly conventional Western-sounding brass fanfare leads to a rapid accelerando over one bar on the bass drum (see Example 2b), an exciting sound that is reminiscent of the Chinese New Year dragon parade and a more pronounced effect than the decelerando in Example 2a. This is followed by an accelerando passage which alternates the sound of a bender gong that bends upward and one that bends downward, soon accompanied by the jingle of Chinese hand cymbals. The movement concludes with the

Chinese gong. The second movement, 'Thunder Dragon,' opens with the sound of kabuki blocks that accompany bending pitches in the flutes and oboes. The second measure brings a rapid accelerando to a 'jet whistle blast' accompanied by an upward bend from the bender gong.

Music for Heaven and Earth was commissioned by the Toronto Symphony. In the score, Louie writes 'It offered me the opportunity to continue to explore the elements of my musical language (an integration of oriental musical concepts and Western art music) in a large orchestra context. Echoes of Gagaku music (Imperial court music of Japan) are heard in 'Procession of Celestial Deities' [first movement] and elements of Peking opera summon the 'Thunder Dragon.'

Louie works hard to understand the possibilities of every instrument she encounters, talking to performers, asking them to produce certain effects, trying instruments herself and fine tuning her effects in rehearsal. She has said that when she was a student in California, Pauline Oliveros made her account for every note she wrote. It is in part it is this attention to detail, as well as a blending of eastern and western influences, that makes Louie's compositions so richly rewarding, revealing greater depth with each exposure.

Kenneth DeWoskin writes that in early China, sages were often depicted with large ears. 'Acute aural perception was of paramount importance in man's perception of the world around him. The ability to distinguish and analyze sound was tantamount to the ability to distinguish and analyze all that was recurrent and intelligible in nature.'²²

There may be a little of the Chinese sage in Louie, a perceptive listener whose music is not just something to listen to, but a journey into herself. 'My music reflects who I am as a human being on this earth, and I am a strange mixture of East and West. When you mix East and West I think you come up with something very rich, and I'm very happy that I feel comfortable with that mix in my music.'²³

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¹⁷ Errol Nazareth, 'Title fits right note: Tenkai perfect for Japanese drummer Gary Nagata,' *Toronto Sun* (5 Dec. 1997).

¹⁸ Michael Scott, 'Sonic sorcery quickens the percussive pulse,' *The Vancouver Sun* (29 Jan. 1992): C5.

¹⁹ Hugh Davies, 'Sound sculpture,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed.

²⁰ Scott (as n. 17).

²¹ Kimura-Parker (as n.5): 17-18.

²² Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1982): 4.

²³ Larry Weinstein, director, *The Eternal Earth* (Rhombus Media / National Film Board of Canada, 1987), videocassette.

Toronto Asian Karaoke and Karaoke Bars

by William Chun

The Asian population of Toronto has grown rapidly in the past 25 years, and some 825,000 Asians currently live in the city.¹ In a related development, many Asian-style karaoke bars have sprung up recently within the city of Toronto and the GTA (Greater Toronto Area). This essay will examine the distinctive role that Asian karaoke in Toronto plays in the lives of the karaoke participants who are of Asian background.

The origins of karaoke (the recording of orchestral accompaniments for singers) date back to 1972 in Japan, and the first commercial karaoke equipment was developed by the Clarion Company in 1976. The term “karaoke” is coined from two Japanese words, “kara” (empty) and “oke” (orchestra) – “empty orchestra,” that is, an orchestral accompaniment without singing. The term “karaoke box” comes from the fact that large metal containers which had been used for shipping goods were remodelled as rooms for singing karaoke. Later these “karaoke boxes” were replaced by smaller “karaoke rooms,” equipped with couches and karaoke machines.

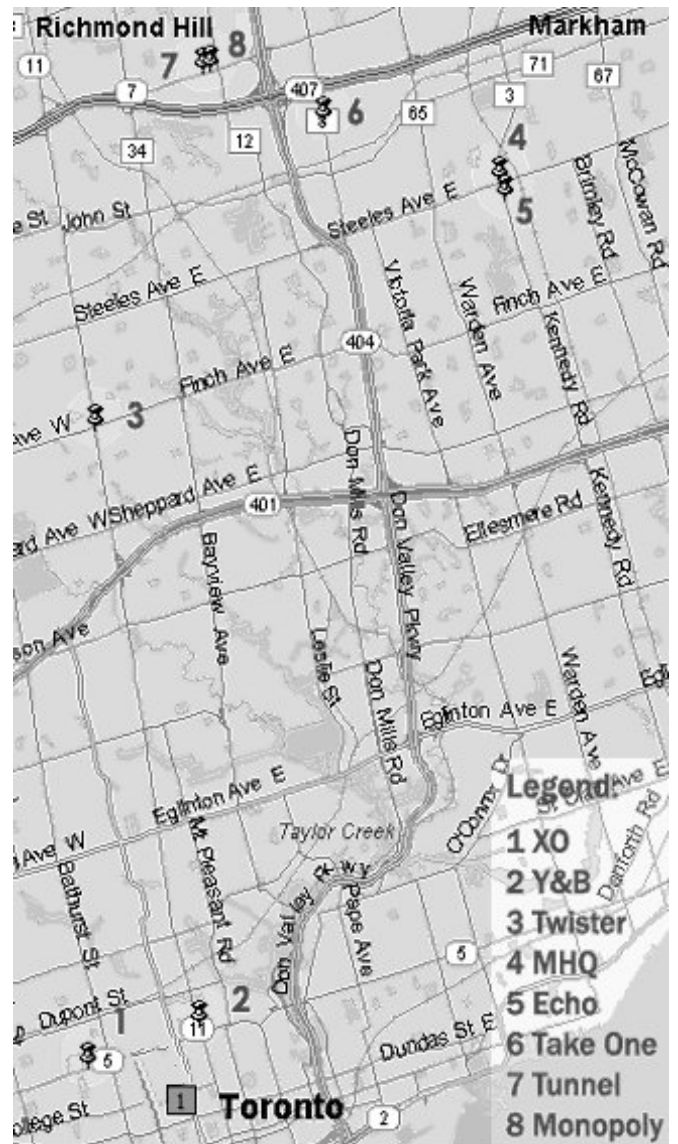
A typical Asian karaoke bar usually contains many karaoke rooms of different sizes to accommodate different varieties of social groups. “Karaoke machines include playback equipment that amplifies a live performance of a song’s main vocal part and mixes this with the song’s often familiar instrumental tracks. Typically, a video screen that can be read easily by the singer and the spectators displays the lyrics of the song” (Shelemay, p. 257). A typical karaoke setup features a karaoke player, two speakers, a small TV and a Karaoke jockey that operates the karaoke equipment and ensures a good selection of songs. Participants take turns performing for the patrons of the establishment.

All participants support each other in the karaoke space. Everyone is expected to take a turn at performing for the enjoyment of others, no matter how well or how badly they perform. The dual role people play in the karaoke space (as both performer and spectator) helps to facilitate social bonding among the participants. Collectivism comes before individualism in the karaoke environment. This is especially relevant to the Asian ‘minority’ groups in Toronto, since a sense of group membership is established, which gives the participants a feeling of shared identity, security, and mutual support. Participants establish a comfort zone for the collective whole before they venture on stage to perform in front of the others as individuals.

Many non-Asian establishments in Toronto feature karaoke as a supplementary pastime, but Asians

dominate the more specialized genre of karaoke bars in the city. Some of the most popular Asian karaoke bars in the GTA are shown in Figure 1. With the exception of Y&B Karaoke, located at Yonge and Bloor, all these bars are located in areas with large Asian populations, often near ethnic malls and restaurants. Asian karaoke bars thus provide an invaluable source of entertainment for the Asian communities in Toronto. These karaoke bars can be considered ‘ethnic businesses,’ with principally Asian clientele.

Figure 1: Locations of Asian karaoke bars in GTA



The two examples of popular karaoke bars studied in this paper are the XO Karaoke Bar, located in Korea Town, downtown Toronto and MHQ Karaoke, located in the Pacific Mall, Markham (in an area with a large Chinese population). In these two karaoke bars, it is

¹ Metropolitan Toronto Population Survey 2001

estimated that at least 90% of the clientele is of Asian background. The XO Karaoke Bar opens late at night and operates with a liquor license, hence the target audience is aimed more towards young adults. In contrast, MHQ Karaoke opens earlier and does not have a liquor license, thus it is oriented more towards the youth and family market. From this it is seen that different karaoke bars may serve specific demographic constituencies within the Asian migrant population.

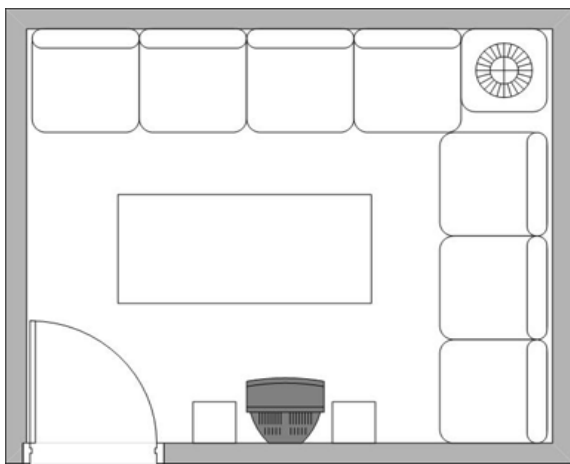
XO Karaoke Bar, 693 Bloor Street West

Hours: Su-Th 4 pm-3am; Fr-Sa 4pm-5am

Managed by Koreans, XO Karaoke Bar is located in the heart of Korea town, 2 km from University of Toronto. It is easily accessible both by car and public transportation (the TTC Christie Subway station is just 65 yards away). This Asian-style karaoke bar has a capacity of 160 people from a combination of 14 small, medium and large rooms, and it serves mainly Korean and Chinese university students. The song selection is extensive, with many varieties of songs that range from North American hip-hop to Japanese enka. Languages sung include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The bar has a liquor license and an Asian-style kitchen menu. Judging from the late opening hours of XO Karaoke Bar, it is a source of Asian nightlife entertainment, offering an alternative to non-Asian after-hours bars for the Asian diaspora.

Figure 2 shows a floor plan of a small room at XO Karaoke Bar, with a capacity of six to eight people.

Figure 2: XO Karaoke Bar, Small Room Layout



The room is approximately 120 square feet (12 × 10) and has soundproof walls to provide better sound quality and ambience and prevent sound from leaking into the next room. The room contains a 32 inch flat screen TV with two speakers, an amplifier and two microphones. Notice that the room is constructed so that everyone is seated facing the TV, thus providing each person in the social group with an equal view and opportunity to sing. Given that space is limited within

the karaoke box setting, mobility is also limited and consequently, people typically sit while they sing. This cramped setting originates from the earliest karaoke bars in Asia and may limit the quality of performance, but most people simply enjoy being in a group setting to sing their favorite song.

MHQ Karaoke, 4300 Steeles Ave East

Hours: Su-Th 12 pm-2am; Fr-Sa 12pm-3am

MHQ is one of the most sophisticated modern and ‘hip’ karaoke bars on the scene. Located inside Pacific Mall in Markham, MHQ Karaoke is more family-oriented in character, opening at earlier hours and catering mainly to the youth market. Although located approximately 26 km from downtown Toronto, it is situated in the heart of one of the Chinatowns north of Toronto and is surrounded by a predominantly middle-class Asian suburb. There are 21 rooms that come in various sizes and can cater to parties as small as 5 or as large as 76 people. The karaoke system is state-of-the-art and uses a network of computers and audio equipment. The song selection available includes Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and English songs. The bar has an extensive kitchen menu of Asian meals but does not have a liquor license.

The popularity of karaoke within the Asian diasporic community of Toronto can be explained by its ethnic and national associations. Karaoke plays an important role in integrating those in the Asian diaspora with their roots and culture; it offers an opportunity for Asians to meet with other migrants and sing songs (either popular or traditional) in their language and from their homeland. The patrons of these karaoke establishments tend to be in the age range of teens to early 30s. These migrants are able to catch up with the latest Asian music videos, and consequently, the latest trends, fashions and other aspects of pop culture back home. Furthermore, Asian food and drinks are served in these establishments. Karaoke bars provide one of the few distinctively Asian social gatherings in Toronto besides Asian malls and restaurants.

One may ask why karaoke seems to be more popular in Asia and the Asian diaspora, as compared to its standing with non-Asian Canadians. The answer lies both in the superior development of the Asian karaoke industry as well as in cultural differences. Whereas karaoke was a \$300 million business in the United States in 1999, in Japan it was already a \$10 billion industry by 1996. In Asia, karaoke bars are abundant and many aspects of the general culture have become integrated with the karaoke industry and lifestyle. In addition the majority of Asian karaoke songs retain the original music (i.e. same pitch, key, and melody) as well as the original music video. In North America, karaoke music is usually not accompanied by the original music video (sometimes only the lyrics are

shown) and the music is made to sound somewhat different to avoid copyright infringements.

Culturally, modern Japan is a corporate society in which individuals are identified with the corporation where they work and excessively long work hours are the norm for a corporate person. In Japan, karaoke is often used as a form of recreational 'business' meeting. Traditionally in Japan, social and artistic activities function as part of the production cycle. As a result, the constraints placed on individual creativity have become needlessly binding. Furthermore, the high value placed on harmony and group thinking restrain people from expressing their individual wishes and opinions. This suppression of individualism may be one of the biggest factors contributing to the boom of karaoke in Japan. One can see how liberating karaoke is for people who have been taught to obey and conform to their group. Participants are able to construct and maintain an individual identity without jeopardizing their group membership. These values are contrary to those that prevail in North American society. As Matsui writes,

[T]he collectivistic, fixed form of karaoke that requires the participants to follow a set of rules not of their own making, where the individual should come after the group, seems to contradict the Anglo-American individualistic cultural pathos. Being individualistic means, to many people in the United States, being independent of others in thought and action, being distinct from others (66-7).

In addition, the population densities in Asia tend to be much higher than in Canada, where there is more space for outdoor leisure activities. This may explain why the karaoke bar industry in Asia is much more developed and this has translated to Asian karaoke bars in Toronto due to migration.

Amongst Asian migrants in Toronto, the usage of karaoke seems to be dependent on their level of assimilation to Canadian society. Karaoke tends to be more popular with recent Asian immigrants to Toronto who are less acculturated to the 'mainstream Canadian' lifestyle. Furthermore, karaoke as a source of entertainment can even be said to impede the assimilation of new Asian immigrants towards a 'Canadian' lifestyle. Newer Asian immigrants will find karaoke more appealing since they are more tied to their homeland as compared to older immigrants. For newer immigrants unfamiliar with mainstream Canadian customs and language, karaoke and karaoke bars are a source of entertainment similar to that back home, so migrants can identify with one another without having to cross cultural boundaries into mainstream Canadian society. Participants of karaoke are able to congregate in their own groups, sing in their own language and maintain cultural links to their origins without having to interact with mainstream Canadian society. In addition to

attending karaoke bars, many newer immigrants also have karaoke systems installed in their homes. As a result of advances in technology and the ready availability of ethnic malls, restaurants and entertainment almost identical to that found in Asia, new groups of Asian immigrants tend to be increasingly transnational in nature and thus may experience a slower rate of assimilation towards Canadian society. Older immigrants who are already assimilated to mainstream Canadian lifestyle may find Asian-style karaoke less appealing, since they have weaker ties to their homeland as compared to newer immigrants. Karaoke is a relatively new technology; older Asian immigrants in the past were fewer in number and karaoke bars did not yet exist in Toronto. In addition, second, third and further generations of Asian immigrants tend to be more assimilated into Canadian society and further removed both culturally and linguistically from Asia; thus they do not relate as closely with Asian karaoke-culture from back home and may find karaoke less beneficial in maintaining their identities, since many have become assimilated and 'Canadianized.'

Karaoke, then, is not just a musical experience where one can be a star for a few minutes. Karaoke and karaoke bars are important to the Asian community in Toronto, since they carry a range of associations with Asian culture and provide a comfortable social environment for the Asian diaspora. It can be argued that karaoke bars are more culturally acceptable and adaptable for Asians since karaoke originated in Asia. Furthermore, karaoke tends to be more valuable for newer Asian immigrants who are struggling to adapt to their new environment. This is in contrast to the older immigrants, who are already more assimilated into the mainstream Canadian society and are less likely to find karaoke as appealing.

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Molinari Quartet – Integral Performance of the Schafer String Quartets

The eight string quartets of R. Murray Schafer are unquestionably the most important contribution to the medium by a Canadian composer, and bear comparison with other major quartet cycles of the post-Bartók era.¹ In November 2003 the Molinari Quartet of Montreal presented integral performances of the Schafer quartets in two concerts on one day (Nos. 1-4 in the afternoon concert, Nos. 5-8 in the evening) in five cities across Canada. The marathons began in Edmonton (Nov. 16), continued in Banff (Nov. 18), Montreal (Nov. 23), and Kitchener-Waterloo (Nov. 26), and ended in Toronto (New Music Concerts, Glenn Gould Studio, Nov. 30, with a large audience and the composer present).

Formed in 1997, the quartet is named after and takes inspiration from the Montreal painter Guido Molinari, and also rehearses in his studio. Molinari, as it happens, is Schafer's exact contemporary (the two were born within three months of each other in 1933). The painter's use of colour is reflected in the staging and apparel of the quartet. Four triangular shapes, each about 1.5 metres high and painted a different colour (green, yellow, blue, and red) were onstage behind the performers, and each musician wore black pants and a top that corresponded to one of these colours: red for the first violinist (fire), blue for the second violinist (water), yellow for the violist (air/light), and green for the cellist (earth/forest). This colour symbolism is explored in Schafer's String Quartet No. 7.

Olga Ranzenhofer, the quartet's first violinist, has been with the ensemble since its inception. She was previously the second violinist of the Morency Quartet, which also worked closely with Schafer. The excellent second violinist, Johannes Jansonius, joined the group in 1998, the cellist Julie Trudeau arrived in 2000, and the violist Jasmine Schnarr joined in 2002. The quartet specializes in the contemporary repertoire, and does not play anything written before 1900. It is difficult to make a full-time career out of quartet playing, and nearly impossible to do so by playing only the modern repertoire; the Kronos and Arditti quartets are notable exceptions to this rule. No doubt the Molinari would like to play quartets full-time, but for the moment, other individual commitments help to make ends meet and the group rehearses together for eight or nine hours each week and more intensively before a concert.²

¹ Schafer's eight quartets are roughly the same total duration as the six quartets of Bartók: the Emerson Quartet Bartók set on Deutsche Grammophon 423 657-2 (1988) is 2 hours, 40 minutes in duration; the Molinari Quartet's recorded performance of the eight Schafer string quartets (see n.3) is 2 hours, 47 minutes in duration.

² Lucie Renaud, 'La palette sonore du Quatuor Molinari / (transl. Jane Brierley) The Molinari Quartet: a palette of sound,' *La Scena Musicale* 6.7 (April 2001): 5.

From the start, the Molinari Quartet has made a point of specializing in the works of Schafer. The group learned the first six string quartets in just two years and played them all in Montreal on 11 December 1999; on that same day it premiered the 'stage version' of the seventh quartet, which was written for it (it premiered the concert version of the seventh quartet in Ottawa on 4 May 1999). The eighth quartet (composed in 2000, revised in 2001) was also written for the ensemble. Between December 1999 and June 2002 the Molinari Quartet recorded all eight string quartets and also Schafer's *Theseus* for string quartet and harp and his *Beauty and the Beast* for singer and string quartet.³

The Molinari Quartet follows in a distinguished line of Canadian ensembles that have performed the Schafer quartets. The first five quartets were written for the Purcell String Quartet of Vancouver (Nos. 1 [1970], 2 [1976], 4 [1989]) and the Orford String Quartet of Toronto (Nos. 3 [1981] and 5 [1989]) and both groups played the works regularly (the Orford played the first quartet over 100 times). Both groups made recordings of individual Schafer quartets, and the Orford Quartet recorded the first five works as a set in 1990.⁴ The violinist Andrew Dawes, first violinist of the Orford Quartet, also wrote about Schafer's quartets (as has Ranzenhofer).⁵ With the disbanding of the Purcell and Orford quartets in 1991, the flame passed on to a new generation: the St. Lawrence, Penderecki, and Molinari quartets. These three groups collaborated on 2 August 2000 to present all the Schafer quartets in a concert for Festival Vancouver. Other Canadian quartets to feature Schafer in their repertoire include the Quatuor Arthur-LeBlanc (No. 4), the Borealis String Quartet (protégés of Andrew Dawes), the Diabelli String Quartet (No. 3, at the 2001 Banff string quartet competition), and the Lafayette Quartet.⁶ The St. Lawrence plays Nos. 3 and 6, the Penderecki performs Nos. 1, 4, and 5, but only the Molinari has the entire set of eight in its repertoire.

³ String Quartets 1-7 are on Atma Classique ACD 2 2188/89 (2000) and String Quartet No. 8, *Theseus* (with harpist Jennifer Swartz), and *Beauty and the Beast* (with mezzo Julie Nesrallah) are on Atma Classique ACD 2 2201 (2003).

⁴ *Schafer: 5*, Centrediscs/Centrediscques CMC-CD 39/4090.

⁵ Andrew Dawes, 'R. Murray Schafer,' *Strings* 5.6 (1991): 50-55; Jean Portugais and Olga Ranzenhofer, 'Îles de la Nuit: parcours dans l'œuvre pour quatuor à cordes de R. Murray Schafer,' *Circuit* 11.2 (2000): 15-52. The article provides detailed notes on the first seven quartets of Schafer. The entire issue of *Circuit* cited (11.2) is titled 'Le quatuor à cordes selon Schafer,' and includes Schafer's own article 'La «quaternité» et le quatuor' (pp. 11-13) and a review by Sean Ferguson of the Molinari recording of the first seven of the Schafer quartets (pp. 90-93), among other articles.

⁶ David Rounds, *The Four and the One: In Praise of String Quartets* (Fort Bragg, CA: Lost Coast Press, 1999): 178-83 is about Schafer's first quartet, which the author heard the Lafayette Quartet perform.

To hear the eight Schafer quartets performed in chronological order in a single day highlights the many connections between the individual works in the cycle. The first three works are strongly etched individual portraits; each explodes the string quartet medium and creates something new and striking from the shards. Nos. 4 to 6 and No. 8 do less violence to the medium (though they do stretch it in different ways), while No. 7 does more (indeed, it is hardly a string quartet at all).

One of the most memorable moments in the entire cycle is the opening of the first quartet. As one audience member remarked, it sounds 'like the Indy 500.' For four minutes the players snarl and writhe in dense tone clusters, as if enacting the violent death throws of the string quartet medium. The Molinari Quartet attacked this opening with flare and gusto, getting their cycle off to a memorable start. At the end of the first quartet there is a series of reminiscences of music that was heard earlier in the work, a gesture that foreshadows the organicism that later evolved between separate works in the cycle. In the first quartet (and indeed in all the quartets except the eighth) the players read from the full score rather than separate parts. It was mildly troubling to see that the members of the Molinari Quartet each seemed to be playing from a different taped together photocopied version. Evidently Schafer did not quite account for page turning needs in the final published version of the scores.

The second quartet, subtitled 'Waves,' forms the maximum possible contrast with the first. Anger gives way to meditation, artifice to nature. The two scores look similar at first glance, in that each uses a combination of traditional rhythmic values for short durations and proportional notation for anything longer than a quarter note. The phrase lengths and large-scale proportions of the second quartet, though, were guided by Schafer's study of the ebb and flow of waves. The conclusion of the second quartet has to be experienced 'live' for the full effect, as the upper three players in turn get up and leave the stage, taking the music into the distance with them. The effect in the Glenn Gould Studio was enchanting, as the sound was stretched out to fill the studio from front to back by the departing performers. In the final moments of the quartet, the cellist is instructed to take up a spyglass and stare after the other players. In a note to the performers in the published score, Schafer writes 'I am not absolutely convinced that the spyglass effect on the last page is vital to the composition's effectiveness; and unless it is handled with great care it may even be inimical to it.'⁷ The Molinari's cellist, Julie Trudeau, handled the effect with a quiet dignity and seriousness that had exactly the intended effect.

⁷ R. Murray Schafer, *String Quartet No. 2 Waves* (Toronto: Berandol Music Ltd., 1978): 1.

The third quartet begins with the cellist alone onstage, as at the end of the second quartet. The work opens with a very demanding solo which certainly taxed Trudeau's abilities to the maximum. The spatial qualities of the third quartet in live performance are vital features of the opening and close of the work. In the first movement, the three absent players gradually converge on stage to join the cellist, and the work ends when all four are together. The Molinari performance of the third quartet was particularly riveting, as the maximum possible contrast was made between the second and third movements. The enthusiastic chanting of the vocables in the second movement underscored the vigorous physical energy of the performance. The end of the quartet was played with transcendent beauty, as Ranzenhofer slowly got up and left the stage, taking the simple but haunting music into the distance. Part of the charm of the conclusion of the work is that it is not entirely clear when it ends. The players hum and play simple melodic patterns over and over, the music gets softer and softer, and finally the audibility threshold is passed – the last notes are imagined rather than heard.

The fourth quartet begins as the third ended, with the first violinist offstage. The first three quartets seriously challenge received notions about the string quartet as a medium, but the fourth relies on purely musical argument. Ranzenhofer feels that Schafer achieved maturity as a string quartet composer with this work.⁸ It certainly bears the closest relationship of any of the eight works to the historical string quartet repertoire. In the final pages an offstage third violin and voice are added (presumably pre-recorded in the Molinari live performances). The third quartet certainly left hanging the question of how Schafer could further challenge the limitations of the medium, and the fourth quartet represents a decision to follow a different path from the one travelled in the first three works. String quartets with added voice have not been common, but there have been a fair number of examples ever since Schoenberg's second quartet of 1907-08.⁹ The fact that Schafer uses only the syllable 'ah' for the voice part in his fourth quartet minimizes the disruption to the string quartet medium. Two features of the fourth quartet – the added voice and the use of pre-recorded music – are explored further in the seventh and eighth quartets. The fourth quartet brought the afternoon concert to an end and resulted in a well deserved standing ovation for both the quartet players and the composer.

⁸ As quoted in Robert Everett-Green, 'A quartet's passion for Schafer,' (Toronto) *Globe and Mail*, 28 Nov. 2003 (online edition).

⁹ In my PhD thesis (*The String Quartet in Canada*, University of Toronto, 1990: p. 196) I list 16 other works titled string quartet that feature an added voice part, including works by Milhaud (No. 3 – 1916), Rochberg (No. 2 – 1959-61), Ginastera (No. 3 – 1973), and Buczynski (No. 3 – 1987).

The second concert in the Molinari marathon featured Schafer's fifth through eighth quartets. In the fourth quartet the use of thematic material from the Patria series is subtle and was almost subconsciously arrived at, as the composer explains in his note in the published edition of the score.¹⁰ The fourth quartet is dedicated to the memory of bp Nichol, and makes use of a theme from Nichol's role as the Presenter in the Prologue to the Patria series. Much of the fifth quartet is dominated by the Wolf motive from the Patria series, with its characteristic descending glissando. Another tie linking the fourth and fifth quartets is that the fifth quartet begins with the very theme for first violin that concludes the fourth. The Molinari performance of the fifth quartet was spellbinding, especially the conclusion with the use of struck and bowed crotales (played in turn by the violist and cellist), whose timbre blends perfectly with the artificial harmonics of the quartet. Crotales (small cymbals, tuned here to the pitches C and G) were used in ancient Egypt and Greece, and so it is fitting that in the fifth quartet they are used to accompany Ariadne's theme from the Patria series.

The Sixth Quartet is the only one of the eight written for performers with whom Schafer did not enjoy a close working relationship. The premiere performance was given at the Scotia Festival in Halifax by the Gould Quartet.¹¹ The work is subtitled 'Parting Wild Horse's Mane,' which is the name of a Tai Chi exercise. The quartet takes its inspiration from this form of Chinese martial art, and is divided into 108 sections that correspond to the 108 movements that constitute a complete sequence of Tai Chi exercises. Of the eight quartets, the first and sixth are the only two which do not require additional musical forces or ask the players to leave the stage. The sixth quartet does allow, though, for the participation of a Tai Chi master, who performs the 108 exercises as the music is being played. This is an optional feature, and the Molinari decided not to include it in their concert.¹² The music of this quartet is almost entirely derived from the first five quartets; the only new theme, labelled Tapio after the Forest Spirit of the Finnish Kalevala legends, is developed at greater length in the seventh quartet. The sixth quartet has a rather valedictory quality to it, as though Schafer wanted to revisit earlier ideas for one

last time before finally abandoning the medium. To this listener, the musical results are not as compelling as in the earlier quartets; the quotations from the first quartet in particular seem overly intrusive in their new context.

The enthusiasm of the Molinari Quartet for his quartets rekindled Schafer's interest in the medium and led to the creation of the two most recent works. The seventh quartet exists in concert and stage versions, and it is the latter that was presented by the Molinari. The stage version is more chamber opera than chamber music, with a prominent role for soprano, the use of costumes and lighting effects, and much perambulating by the musicians. A special sling was constructed for the cellist to allow her to walk and play at the same time (shades of Woody Allen's film *Take the Money and Run*, in which he plays cello in a marching band). Trudeau's rather cumbersome looking costume made her look like a moss-covered tree, complete with a cone-shaped hat that could be opened at the back to reveal a face (Tapio). The soprano (Marie-Danielle Parent, in fine voice), sang a series of four arias to texts collected in a psychiatric clinic from a schizophrenic woman.¹³ Parent wore a white straight-jacketed dress, emphasizing the relationship of this role to the Party Girl in Patria 2 (Schafer notes that in ancient China white symbolized death and funerals¹⁴). She engaged in histrionic altercations with the quartet, which led one reviewer to find the quartet 'reminiscent of a goofy school play.'¹⁵ I certainly prefer the concert version of the work, but it was very courageous of the Molinari to tackle the theatrical version. I cannot imagine that there are many professional quartets who are willing to do it.

The eighth quartet, premiered by the Molinari Quartet on 1 March 2002 in Redpath Hall, Montreal, is in two movements (all the rest except No. 3 are in one). The first movement is related to Patria 8, which was written at the same time, and is based on a Chinese motive from that work. The second movement includes subtle use of a pre-recorded string quartet and makes use of the BACH motive. It is one of the highpoints of the entire cycle – solemn, complex, intense, and very moving, but never striving for effect. The Molinari performance was utterly gripping and resulted in the second standing ovation of the day. Their commitment to this music is unquestionable and their musicianship is compelling. What the Molinari Quartet now needs, and deserves, is a permanent residency at a leading music institution to allow them to devote their efforts to string quartet playing on a full-time basis. R.E.

¹⁰ R. Murray Schafer, 'In Memorium [sic] bp Nichol,' *Fourth String Quartet* (Indian River, ON: Arcana Editions, 1989): 1.

¹¹ The Gould Quartet was created in 1992 for a concert that took place as part of a Glenn Gould conference in Toronto. The concert featured works inspired by Gould and composed by Morawetz, Anhalt, and Héту. The Gould Quartet does not seem to have been active beyond the 1992-93 concert season.

¹² The Vancouver concert that featured all seven of Schafer's quartets did include the Tai Chi movements for the Sixth Quartet; see Christopher Dafoe, 'Ambitious Schafer concert holds audience spellbound,' *Vancouver Sun* (4 Aug 2000): D9.

¹³ The texts are from *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947) by Hungarian émigré Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy.

¹⁴ As quoted in *R. Murray Schafer: Complete String Quartets*, New Music Concerts (Toronto) programme (30 Nov. 2003): [12].

¹⁵ Bill Rankin, 'Schafer's music suited more to DVD than CD,' *Edmonton Journal* (18 Nov. 2003): online edition.

Reviews

Kevin Bazzana. *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003. 528 pp., ill. ISBN 0-7710-1101-6. \$39.99 (cloth).

This latest addition to the ever-growing literature on Canada's most celebrated musician, *Wondrous Strange: the Life and Art of Glenn Gould* by Kevin Bazzana, is lively and thoroughly readable. This ambitious book – its text is 490 pages in length – offers a painstakingly researched and highly detailed account of Gould's life, from his birth in Toronto in 1932 to his death in the same city half a century later.

There are several previously published biographies of Gould: Otto Friedrich's *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989) for instance, or Peter F. Oswald's *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997). Bazzana, well aware he was walking a well-trodden path, chose a different approach. In his introductory comments he distances himself from those biographers who 'saw Gould as an unclassifiable entity who came out of nowhere in 1955' (p. 13), announcing his own intention to affirm Gould's Canadian roots and identity. This decision, says Bazzana – a Canadian musicologist living on Vancouver Island – was motivated not by patriotism, but by a desire for 'accuracy' and 'comprehensiveness.' Bazzana has been true to his intentions, creating a biography that underscores his subject's connections to his native country at every possible opportunity. Indeed, *Wondrous Strange* is perhaps more Canadian than its author consciously realizes – and this may account for both the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

The first two chapters are devoted to Gould's formative years in and around Toronto. Bazzana also has much to say about Toronto itself, painting a portrait of a provincial city that was still loyal to King and Empire; where 'Anglo-Protestant values were reflected in both public and private life' (p. 17). Gould, we learn, grew up in a particularly British part of town – known simply as the Beach – where 'Others' were not welcome. As well, Bazzana provides some interesting information about the Gould (originally Gold) family's roots in rural Ontario. Concerning the young Glenn's parents, we are introduced to a respectable if somewhat remote father, and a doting mother with strong musical inclinations. Their frail 'only child' loved animals and the outdoors, disliked school, and took to the piano like a fish to water.

This is good writing: for Torontonians, Bazzana's descriptions of civic life from the 1930s to the 1950s will ring true, and for those unfamiliar with the city, his account of the place is clear and

informative. Moreover, he convincingly attributes Gould's development to the values of his middle-class family, and also to a city whose musical culture was becoming increasingly sophisticated. There were many fine choirs and also a professional orchestra, and Toronto's Massey Hall attracted such renowned pianists as Joseph Hofmann, Claudio Arrau, Robert Casadesus, Rudolf Serkin and Vladimir Horowitz. As well, there was the Toronto Conservatory of Music, where Gould studied under an excellent teacher, the Chilean pianist Alberto Guerrero, and there was the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, where the increasingly renowned Gould gave almost thirty radio recitals between 1950 and 1955. Bazzana makes his point well: Gould did not spring from a void.

In chronicling Gould's years on the international concert circuit, from 1955 to 1964, Bazzana, of necessity, says much that has already been said elsewhere: most Gould enthusiasts already know about his performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto in D minor with the New York Philharmonic, for instance, and Leonard Bernstein's remarks that preceded it. Fortunately, *Wondrous Strange* brings some fresh insight to Gould's decade on the road, including details of his 1957 tour to the Soviet Union, where he thrilled audiences with his performances – and shocked them with a lecture on twelve-tone music, which was then frowned upon in the USSR. Bazzana sheds a favourable light on the pianist's decision, in 1964, to abandon the concert stage, presenting it as a beginning, rather than an ending. 'Gould's new life liberated him, and he began exploring new repertoire with relish,' states our author (p. 244). He goes on to explain that Gould remained a very busy and productive artist, releasing 32 recordings in the first decade of his 'retirement.'

This major shift in Gould's career placed him squarely back in Toronto, and his post-concert career in his hometown occupies the second half of this book. We read of Gould's copious writings on musical and philosophical subjects, his unique radio documentaries, his work in film and television, and his growing interest in conducting. Bazzana even hints that Gould might eventually have given up playing the piano altogether to pursue his other activities, had he lived much beyond 50. Again, this is all good stuff – but when Bazzana turns his attention to Gould as a man, *Wondrous Strange* becomes just plain strange. Addressing the controversial issues of Gould's personality and personal life, Bazzana appears to

present several contradictory arguments at the same time. This Canadian tendency to give equal weight to all sides of an argument can be a virtue – it has made Canadian soldiers the finest peacekeepers in the world – but here it clouds, rather than clarifies, our understanding of Gould.

Bazzana admits that Gould was ‘a queer duck’ – but he also asserts that he was in some respects ‘downright normal,’ dismissing as sensationalistic the idea that Gould was ‘a misanthropic, paranoid hermit, perhaps autistic or mentally ill’ (p. 316). Nevertheless, Bazzana goes on to discuss a number of traits that make Gould sound maladjusted, phobic and alarmingly withdrawn. His apartment was ‘heated to 80 degrees F, and his windows were permanently sealed against fresh air’ (p. 322). ‘His shirts and socks might be full of holes, pants split up the seat, shoes held intact by a rubber band’ (p. 324). ‘He would cancel a concert or an airplane flight if he believed it would turn out to be “unlucky”’ (p. 333). And ‘sometimes close friends of long standing found themselves suddenly shut out of Gould’s life, for reasons he would not share’ (p. 376).

Eccentricities? Perhaps, but it is harder to explain away Gould’s hypochondria. Reports Bazzana: ‘When an unavoidable emotional confrontation with another person loomed, he needed more than spinal resilience to deal with it; he needed Valium’ (p. 330). Gould also took prescription drugs such as Librax, Placidyl, Dalmane, Nembutal, Luminal, Aldomet, Indoral – the list goes on – and in 1976 was prescribed the anti-psychotic drug Stelazine. In fact, Gould seems to have had a mild psychotic episode in 1959: he imagined he was being spied upon and that people were communicating with him in code; and he rearranged his rooms because he did not like the way a piece of furniture was staring at him (p. 368-69). He had a small army of medical practitioners attending to his ailments, both imaginary and real, and he measured his own blood pressure several times a day. All of this surely exceeds any definition of eccentricity – there were, unfortunately, things *wrong* with Gould. Even Bazzana seems to grow unsure of his subject’s normalcy, noting

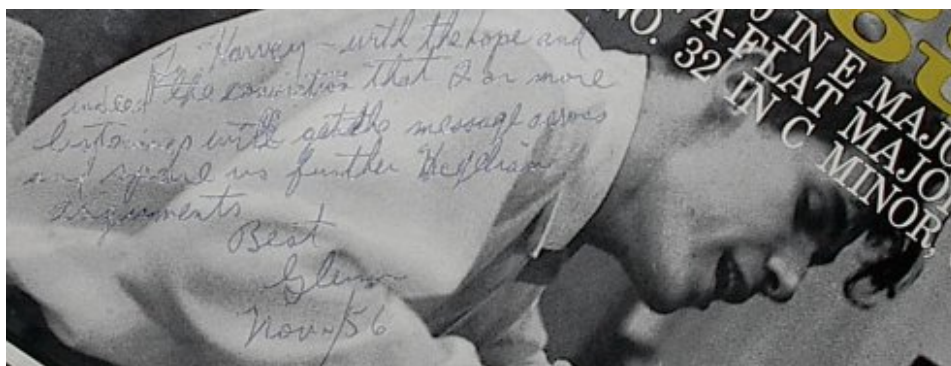
that he ‘manifested a variety of obsessional, schizoid and narcissistic traits’ (p. 370).

Bazzana pointedly intertwines his discussion of Gould’s personal problems with accounts of his more admirable qualities. ‘He loved children all his life’ (p. 347) and ‘with the right people, he enjoyed nothing more than hanging around and shooting the breeze’ (p. 380) He also argues that, for a recluse, Gould knew a great many of people. Fair enough – but is Bazzana trying to say that Gould’s endearing characteristics somehow mitigated his more disturbing traits? Is not a hypochondriac who loves children still a hypochondriac? In his efforts to be supremely even-handed, Bazzana’s message becomes confused.

There is one more disappointment that should not pass without mention. For reasons not entirely made clear, Bazzana declines to name names when writing about Gould’s love life – although he implies that he could if he wanted to. Other Gould biographers have taken a similar approach (one might almost call it a tradition), but it is hard to see what good purpose is served by such discretion twenty-one years after Gould’s death. It would have been far more useful for Bazzana to clear the matter up once and for all, so that Gould fans could at last move on to weightier issues.

Bazzana did not know Gould personally, as did others who have written about him, such as Geoffrey Payzant and John Roberts. And it is possibly for this reason that he felt the need to hedge his bets when describing his subject’s personality, quoting from many sources and balancing all assertions with counter-assertions. As an account of Glenn Gould’s origins, art and career, *Wondrous Strange* is a unified and purposeful contribution to the Gould literature. But as an account of Glenn Gould the man, it is a patchwork quilt of conflicting evidence, testimonials and opinions – interesting, but hardly a definitive statement on this brilliant, enigmatic artist. Colin Eatock

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Columbia Masterworks ML5130, as autographed for Harvey Olnick by Glenn Gould [see p. 3]

Hommage à Marius Barbeau. Danielle Martineau, voix et direction artistique / voice and artistic direction; Lisan Hubert, André Marchand, Éric Beaudry, voix / voice; Lisa Ornstein, violon /violin; Daniel Roy, percussion, flûtes / flutes, guimbarde / jew's harp, shruti, harmonica, dulcimer, voix / voice. Société Radio-Canada / Canadian Broadcasting Corporation TRCS 3004. Released in March 2003. \$17.98.

Throughout his long career at the National Museum in Ottawa, his extensive fieldwork, and tireless efforts at promoting folk culture as a means of building a national Canadian consciousness through artistic production, Marius Barbeau (1883-1969) built a lasting reputation as a prodigious collector, commentator, and scholar on First Peoples' and Québécois culture. Within broad frames of social history and politics, Barbeau's work may also be considered significant in shaping ideas associated with paradigms of nationalism and identity in twentieth-century Canadian contexts.

Hommage à Marius Barbeau is a compact disc recording of 28 songs originally recorded on Edison wax cylinders by Barbeau in the early years of his career (1915-20). Funded by the CBC and produced in 2003 in cooperation with the Barbeau Fonds at the Canadian Museum of Civilisation, the project was directed by the Quebec singer and folklorist, Danielle Martineau, and also includes vocal performances by Daniel Roy, Éric Beaudry, André Marchand, and varied instrumental accompaniments on violin (played by Lisa Ornstein), and whistles, shruti (drone), bombard, dulcimer, harmonica, tambourine, and rattle (played by Daniel Roy). Within a historical framework, *Hommage à Marius Barbeau* might be considered as a legacy in sound of Barbeau's ethnographic work in his home province of Quebec.

In the liner notes to the recording, Martineau explains how she and each of the other performers were drawn to the study and performance of Quebec folk music. In addition, we are told about Barbeau's extensive, indeed pioneering role, in recording, documenting, and thereby preserving traditional French-language songs in North America, the result of which is 'a cultural treasure of great value.' The performances on the compact disc have been reconstructed from listening to the wax cylinders, as well as studying available 'scores.' This process also involved finding out about the original informants from Barbeau's documentation, and then attempting to balance the characters of the informants with those of the performers. Clearly, as indicated in the liner notes, and in the detail and care in the musical performances of the songs, *Hommage à Marius Barbeau* is a project of dedication and passion on the part of the participants.

In addition to the information about the performers, it would be interesting to know more about the reconstruction process in this recording project,

including answers to questions, such as how valuable listening to the wax cylinders (with their known problematic sound quality) actually is, and what the criteria were for selecting the songs for the compact disc. For example, were some cylinders in better shape than others? Or, were there other reasons (i.e., thematic/musical variety) behind the choice of the songs? And which collections were consulted? Certain sections in the notes suggest that Lawrence Nowry's *Man of Mana, Marius Barbeau: A Biography* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995) served as a source (cf. Nowry's account of Barbeau's summer fieldtrip to Tadoussac in 1916, and his 'discovery' of Louis Simard 'dit L'Aveugle'; pp. 150-52). In a perusal of Barbeau's collections, I located a number of concordances between songs on the compact disc [indicated in square brackets] and transcriptions in *Romancero du Canada* (1936) [song 20], *Le Rossignol y chante* (1979) [15 and 22], *En Roulant ma boule* (1982) [6, 12, 26, 27], and *Le Roi boit* [19 and 23].

It would be helpful to have a listing of these concordances, as well as a more systematic way to track the *titre critique* of each song in Conrad Laforte's *Catalogue de la chanson française*. From my own tracking of the songs to Laforte's catalogue, at least ten on *Hommage à Marius Barbeau* are categorized as 'chansons strophiques,' four are 'chansons en laisse,' three are 'chansons énumératives,' and two are 'chansons sur les timbres.' The Laforte catalogue is a valuable research tool for searching song variants, as well as for explaining poetic distinctions in the song texts. Indeed, this kind of information can prove invaluable in reconstructing performances of the music. Along with providing the *titres critiques* for each song as Martineau has done here, I think it would be helpful if the scope and importance of Laforte's catalogue were explained.

It would also be interesting to know about the musicians' decisions related to performances of the songs. For example, how did the performers come to 'select' certain songs for their performance? Were voice quality and language pronunciation deliberately 'matched' to certain songs? Nonetheless, the overall result is a pleasing one, with the voices and instruments being combined to recreate 'traditional' performance contexts, combinations which are particularly effective in songs where there is a solo and a group [song 26], solo and instruments [many of the songs], and sung and spoken text [song 13]. The contrasting colour of the

singers' voices is also used effectively to portray the varied messages in the song texts (e.g., compare Lisan Hubert's performance of 'En revenant de l'Esse' [song 11] and Danielle Martineau's performance of 'Quand le bonhomme revient du champ' [song 19]; and Éric Beaudry's performance of 'J'ai la plus jolie maîtresse' [song 5] and André Marchand's performance of 'Nous voilà tous à table' [song 7].

A final comment concerns the repertory represented on this compact disc recording within the context of Barbeau's work as a folklorist. Barbeau had strong beliefs about what constituted authentic folklore. As a 'salvage ethnographer,' there was an urgency about his work. Barbeau believed that the cultural essence of Canada could still be found on what he took to be the margins of modern life, in the case of his work in Quebec – elderly descendants of European settlers living in isolated rural communities. To this end, he was delighted to find informants such as Mme Jean 'Français' Bouchard, Louis Simard 'L'Aveugle,' and Édouard Hovington, each of whom is represented

in songs on *Hommage à Marius Barbeau*. These prolific informants sang songs with qualities that confirmed to Barbeau their authenticity as folk songs: textual complexities and variety, and rhythmic, modal, and melodic qualities, all of which suggested a kind of artistic sophistication. A good example on *Hommage à Marius Barbeau* is Éric Beaudry's moving performance of 'La complainte du coureur du bois.'

Hommage à Marius Barbeau is a rare example of the revival of a folk music repertory through musical performances. It is to be hoped that it will serve as a starting point for further such projects. In many interesting ways, *Hommage à Marius Barbeau* reflects ideas and ideals of Marius Barbeau. Undoubtedly, he would be pleased. *Gordon E. Smith*

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Briefly Noted

Beautiful: A Tribute to Gordon Lightfoot. Various artists. Borealis Recording Co. / NorthernBlues Music Inc. BCDNBM 500. Released September 2003. \$24.25.

Hard to believe, but this is the first tribute album for this great Canadian songwriter. Plans for the recording were already underway when Lightfoot experienced the serious illness in August 2002 that lent an extra urgency to the project. (Lightfoot is still recovering, but plans to release a new recording in 2004 and resume public appearances in 2005.) Most of the artists on this CD are Canadian, including Blue Rodeo, Bruce Cockburn, the Cowboy Junkies, James Keelaghan, and

Murray McLauchlan. Fourteen songs by Lightfoot are covered, with one original song, 'Lightfoot' by Aengus Finnan. The liner booklet includes written tributes from the artists, but no lyrics. A standout performance is The Tragically Hip's angry and raucous version of 'Black Day in July,' (they give the music a political edge that Lightfoot himself has always been rather reluctant to express), but all of the versions have something distinctive and attractive to say about the music. *R.E.*

SheBOP: A Century of Jazz Compositions by Canadian Women. Mother of Pearl. Mopster Records MOP 02. Released March 2003. Internet: www.motherofpearljazz.com. \$22.99.

Mother of Pearl, an all-female jazz and blues quintet from Vancouver, began researching this project in 2000 and first presented it as a multi-media event (with over 100 slides) at Vancouver's East Cultural Centre on 28 September 2001. The CD version of the project includes 12 songs by 12 different women, and ranges through ragtime, swing, Latin, bebop, fusion, and blues, taking in along the way a few songs that are not actually jazz in origin, such as 'Les Policemen' by the Quebec chansonnière La Bolduc, the *Hockey Night in Canada* theme song by Dolores Claman, and a couple of pop songs. The earliest song recorded here is 'If You Only Knew' (1921) by Montreal ragtime pianist Vera

Guilaroff, and the most recent is 'Look Ma, No Hands' (1997) by Karen Young. Among the better known tracks are 'I'll Never Smile Again' by Ruth Lowe (a big hit for Frank Sinatra, and wonderfully sung here by the 83-year-old Canadian jazz veteran Eleanor Collins), 'Blue Motel Room' by Joni Mitchell (a torch song from her 1976 album *Hejira*), and 'Bluebird on Your Windowsill' by the Vancouver nurse Elizabeth Clarke (recorded by Bing Crosby and Doris Day, and familiar in more recent times from its use in the 1986 film *My American Cousin*). A handsomely produced 20-page booklet tells the story of each song, some of which have never been recorded before. *R.E.*