

ICM  
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MusiCan

Q: What do Susan Aglukark, Jann Arden, Jane Bunnett, the Doodlebops, Great Big Sea, the Tragically Hip, and Shania Twain all have in common?

A: They are among the many Canadian musicians who have supported MusiCan.

MusiCan is a music education initiative of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS), and is dedicated to providing well-equipped music programs for all schools in Canada. Among the projects which help to fund MusiCan are the Juno Cup (a hockey game in which musicians face off against NHL greats) and the annual Juno Awards compilation CD. The Rolling Stones have supported the MusiCan Teacher of the Year Award, which was created in 2005.

The MusiCan motto is 'Enlighten. Empower. Elevate.' The Band Aid programme, which is part of MusiCan, awards \$10,000 grants for the purchase of musical instruments; 37 schools have been assisted by Band Aid this year alone. To date CARAS has donated \$1 million in grants and scholarships, and has reached 75,000 students through its music education initiatives. CARAS began supporting music education in 1997 with profits from *Oh What a Feeling*, the 25th anniversary Juno Awards commemorative CD set; the programme was named MusiCan in 2004.

The next application deadline for Band Aid grants is August 1, 2006; information and forms are available online at [www.carasonline.ca](http://www.carasonline.ca). Only public schools are eligible for Band Aid grants; the intention

is to provide assistance for school music programmes which are threatened because of the erosion of public funding for education. 'Frills' such as field trips, play-ground equipment, and music are often the first items to be cut when there are budgetary constraints.

As the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario web site ([www.efto.ca](http://www.efto.ca)) points out, there has been a concerted effort to push public education into the private realm in the past couple of decades. Public schools are ever more dependent on parent fundraising, corporate partnerships, and other privately generated income. While CARAS is to be lauded for helping to address the cutbacks in public funding for music, it is regrettable that the cutbacks exist in the first place.

The next issue of the *ICM Newsletter* appears in September 2006; submissions deadline is 15 August.

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# Learning about North American Native Music: A Case Study

by Gordon E. Smith

This text is experiential and collaborative.<sup>1</sup> What I share here are aspects of teaching and learning about North American Native<sup>2</sup> music in a course I taught at Queen's University in the winter of 2005. This is the story of that course in my voice and, as much as possible, in the voices of the 20 students in the class, and the voices of a women's drum group from the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre at Queen's, who shared experiences with us on two occasions and interacted with individual students from the course throughout the term. The following is also about exploring Otherness through music, a fundamental point of departure for the discipline of ethnomusicology, defined variously, but perhaps most pervasively as 'the study of music in culture.'<sup>3</sup> As a discipline, ethnomusicology emerged alongside anthropology in the 20th century, and is rooted in the ethnographic processes of participant observation, and more recently, postmodern ideas of reciprocity and reflexivity in fieldwork and modes of representation. Indeed, North American Native music research played an important role in the emergence of ethnomusicology through the 20th century.

This discussion is in three parts. The first deals with the context of the course, including the aspects of the organization, and some of the issues I anticipated as the course instructor. In the second part, we consider critical implications of a series of class discussions, and the third focuses on a video documentary made by one of the students in the class. Throughout, we consider frameworks and strategies for approaching three

critical areas in studying Native music: **Definitions**, **History**, and **Representation**. Class discussions intersected with these frameworks, and included topics that flowed from ideas surrounding *Boundaries*, *Relationships*, and *Real*. These frameworks and class discussion topics are represented graphically in Figure 1 (p. 3); they are situated in triangular formation around a circle, a fundamental concept in Native thought.

Considering Native history and culture as difference and related ethnographic biases, comments from recent writers from different disciplines and perspectives helped to extend out discussions. We include two examples here. First, Edward Bruner reminds us that the stories of Native peoples, including past glories, disorganization, assimilation, oppression, resistance, and resurgence, dominate anthropological literature and ethnographic discourse. 'Our anthropological stories about Indians are representations, not to be confused with concrete existence or real facts. In other words, life experience is richer than discourse.'<sup>4</sup> And literary critic bell hooks says that despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism in education, not nearly enough is being done to make the learning experience inclusive. Pointing out that most of us were taught in classrooms where teaching styles reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal, she comments that 'If the effort to respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society who are nonwhite is to be reflected in the pedagogical process, then as teachers – on all levels, from elementary to university settings – we must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change.'<sup>5</sup> The learning experiences we are discussing here stand out in a transformative way for me in that, in my role as the course instructor, I attempted to bring alternative teaching and learning strategies to the classroom – strategies that I believed mapped onto essential notions of Native thought: for example, interactive teaching – involving the students in discussions and decision-making about the directions of the course; and talking about relatedness in terms of 'deep listening,' meaning learning to listen and respect what is said by others, as well as learning to listen to ourselves. In this process we sought to listen to music – and to view music – from new, alternative perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is based on a paper I presented at the Inter 2005 conference on International Undergraduate Education at the Queen's University International Study Centre, Herstonceux Castle, East Sussex, England, July 2005. I am grateful to the students in the course for their suggestions and contributions to this paper: Nicole Armstrong, Ali Bachert, Neil Bailey, Haley Batchilder, Angela Beam, Richard Bell, Melissa Blom, Mary Caldwell, Soraiya Campbell, Moira Demorest, Hilary Evans, Nicole Kelly, Ariel Lin, Helen Patterson, Javiera Quintana, Erika Reuter, Lindsey Sneyd, Angie Tang, Kelly-Anne Vander Meer, and Lauren Wood. Sincere thanks also to Heather Sparling, who provided helpful suggestions about learning and collaborative strategies in the classroom.

<sup>2</sup> We use 'Native' here to refer to the Aboriginal peoples of North America. In Canada, the term Aboriginal includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. In the U.S., 'Indigenous' or 'Native American' appear to be preferred over 'Aboriginal.' Embedded in these terms are emergent issues of perspective deriving from aspects of identity, including history, race, politics, culture, societal factors, and community, group, and individual experience.

<sup>3</sup> See Alan Merriam, 'Discussions and definitions of the field,' *Ethnomusicology* 4 (1960): 109. Of the many definitions of the field of ethnomusicology, Merriam's is the most pervasive, and is still used today in discussions of the discipline.

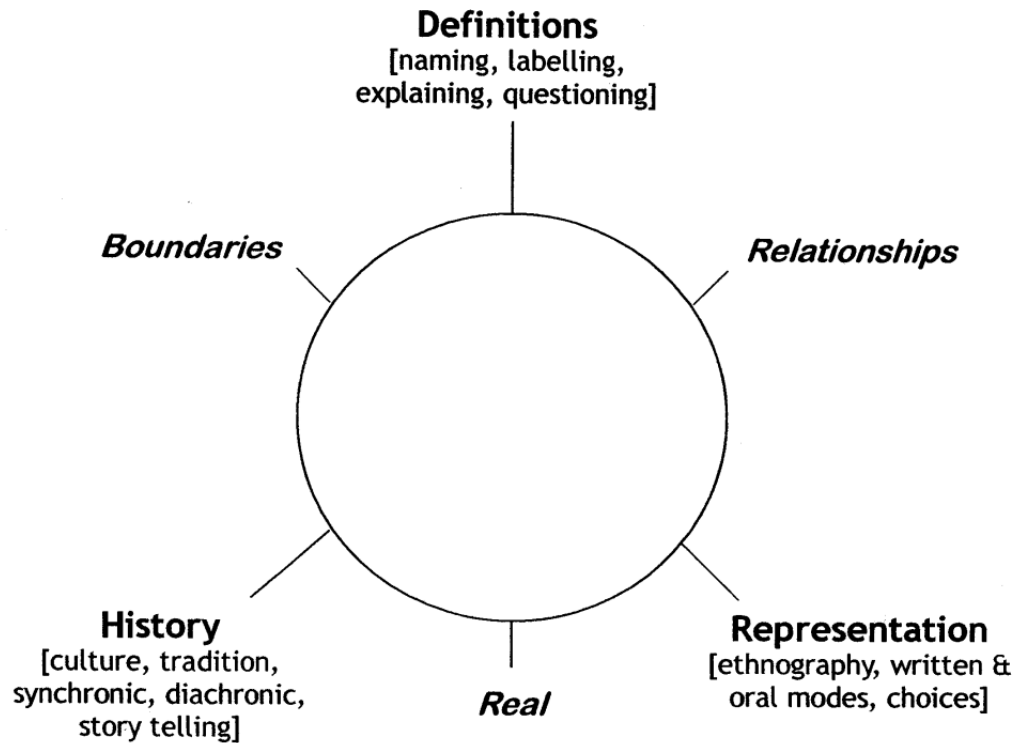
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<sup>4</sup> Edward Bruner, 'Ethnography as narrative' in *The Anthropology of Experience*, eds. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 143

<sup>5</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 35

Figure 1

→ **Frameworks - Definitions, Representation, History** ←  
→ **Class Discussions - Boundaries, Relationships, Real** ←



### Context

As a group, myself and the students, enabled by reading and listening to different voices, including those of Native visitors to the class, came to understand that music has multiple meanings in Native contexts, and that it is not an isolatable sound phenomenon that can be separated from contextual forces. We learned that Native music is socially based, and is intimately connected to fundamental concepts of Native knowledge, such as relatedness. This idea is embedded in the expression ‘All my Relations,’ meaning the extended relationship we share with all human beings, the natural world (animals, birds, fish, plants) and to all animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. And as Thomas King has pointed out, ‘all my relations’ is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner.’<sup>6</sup> This notion is captured powerfully in many texts by both Native and non-Native writers, and to illustrate, we cite an excerpt from Robin Ridington’s book, *Trail to Heaven*:

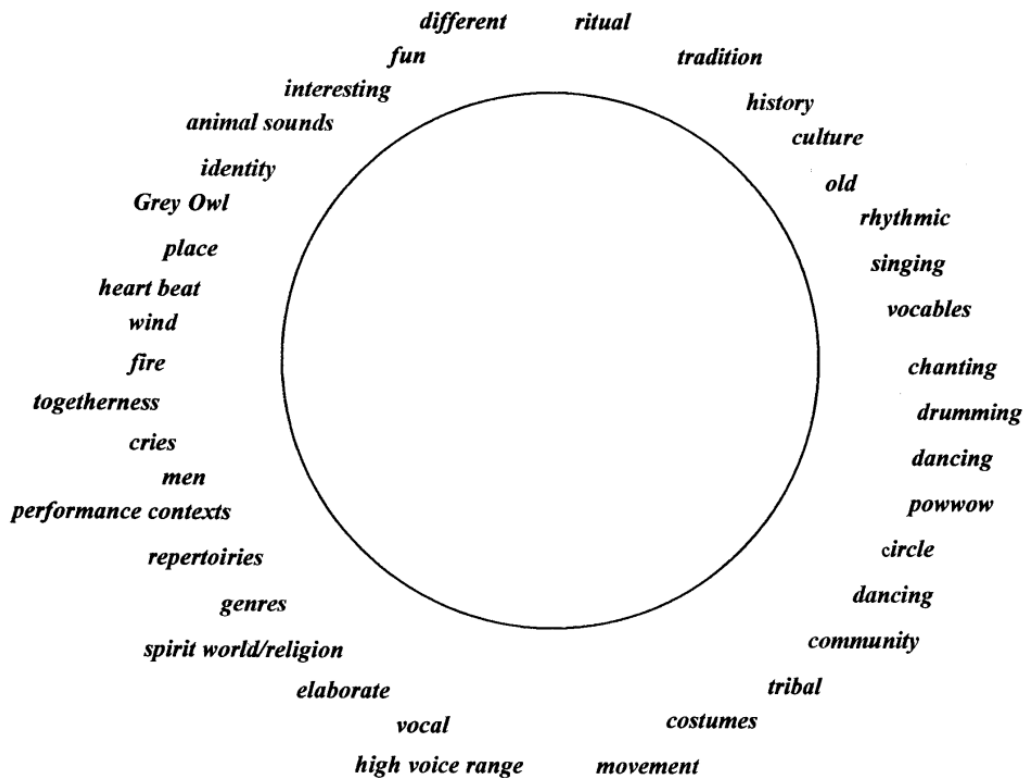
The Dreamers speak of the Trail to Heaven as a song. They say a good person can grab hold of its turns with his or her mind. The good person is light and sensitive to messages coming from distant places. They give themselves to the person who gives to others. The Dreamers say if people are always together with one another, if they sing and dance together often, they will remain in perfect communication with the animals. The Dunne-za of old recognized Maketenunatane as a Dreamer because he told them how to create a perfect surround. When each person knew his or her place in relation to every other, they were able to walk up to the moose and kill it with an axe.<sup>7</sup>

Keeping in mind the power of story telling as a means of understanding Native life ways, as well as the power of first impressions and learned ideas about otherness, in the first class I asked the students – 20 of them (18 women, 2 men) – to write down two or three words in response to the question ‘What comes to mind when you think of First Nations Music?’ We collected these and collated them. Figure 2 is a collated list in a kind of prioritized order (not exact).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas King, ‘Introduction’ in *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*, ed. Thomas King (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990): ix

<sup>7</sup> Robin Ridington, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988): 279

Figure 2



As the course progressed, at times we revisited this list and attempted to problematize, and even group some of these terms. Our initial discussion centered on issues of definitions, naming, labelling, and stereotyping. We wondered why, for example, so many of us think of Native music as traditional, historical, or old, and in musical terms, consider it to be rhythmic chant in high pitched falsetto with vocables, accompanied by drums, and used in dancing rituals such as powwows, when in fact, the musical worlds of Native peoples are incredibly emergent and varied. Some of us were drawn to wondering what possible ways music could link to ‘fire,’ wind,’ ‘heart beat,’ or ‘story telling.’ And one student commented that it was interesting, especially as there were mostly women in the class, that ‘men’ made it onto the list, but not ‘women.’ To shift our thinking beyond words and ideas, we listened to and watched video excerpts of perhaps the most pervasive, stereotypical musical genres in Native music, the War Dance – also known by other names (Grass Dance, Powwow Dance).

As the course instructor, I felt obliged to ensure that we ‘covered’ enough material. I felt a responsibility to the students and believed that I would have succeeded if the students went away with a basic understanding about North American Native music and concepts. As individuals trained in the Western art music tradition, that privileges certain kinds of musical concepts (for

example, melody or pitched parts and musical notation over rhythm-oriented music, orally transmitted or improvised music), and the music of Beethoven and Stravinsky over music by non-Western musicians, how could we find ways to unlock ‘other’ approaches to knowing about music. In my mind, I could hear the voices of Native consultants saying that concepts such as knowledge are relational, experiential, and spiritual in Native contexts. ‘You don’t learn from books – you learn from living,’ in the words of one. Or, ‘you don’t compose music, it composes itself,’ in the words of another. As an instructor, how can one balance these kinds of contrasts? On what levels and from what perspectives should one approach these issues? Or, do these kinds of questions really matter, if we are exploring music as an experiential and relational phenomenon?

I envisioned the classes, at least at the beginning of course, as consisting of a combination of discussions about what I called ‘information’ (i.e., the history of ethnomusicology, and connections with that history and the emergence of Native music studies; approaches and strategies in historical studies of Native music; the contributions of individuals), and discussions of a particular theme (i.e., discrimination; authenticity; roles that music plays). That way, I told myself, the students will get both – information and ideas, a learning model embedded in my experience as a

university instructor. I quickly discovered that the students were passionately interested in the ideas part of this pedagogical equation, a realization that was exciting, but that took the class in directions I had not anticipated. And significantly, my role shifted from ‘instructor’ to learner, along with the others in the class.

## **Discussions**

To illustrate further, we turn now to a summary of three class discussions, which took place at the beginning of the course. Each of these discussions was led by a small group of students, and was based on readings from, among other sources, *Visions of Sound*, a book on Native musical instruments.<sup>8</sup> The conflation of these discussions is due to space constraints, but also shows how the three discussion topics are interconnected and invoke notions of the three themes identified earlier in Figure 1: definitions, history, and representation. The topics of the chapters – **boundaries, relationships**, and what the authors of the text refer to as ‘**real**,’ served as points of entry for thinking about ways of approaching music as process (context) as well as product (sound). To emphasize the circular shape of these discussions, and how these kinds of concepts tend to map onto each other, I have made the discussion topics part of the circle in Figure 1, combining them with the frameworks introduced earlier: **definitions, history**, and **representation**. After each of the topics, I have added several keywords that surfaced through the course of the discussion; these ideas functioned as extensions of the discussions and prompted us to search for understanding in multiple directions. For example, at times we found ourselves in a kind of disciplinary modelling process, as we considered concepts and ideas in Native music in relation to the field of study of ethnomusicology.

To facilitate discussion, I asked the students to write down three ideas that struck them about each reading, and pass them in to me at the beginning of the class. In addition, I attempted to emphasize the importance of every student’s voice being heard, and to create a climate in the classroom where every comment was treated with respect. An ideal situation, to be sure, but I think the effort paid off, as some students who were reluctant to speak in discussions at the beginning of the course, gradually entered the discussions, with the result that it was not unusual to have the discussion leaders acting as moderators, keeping track of whose turn it was to speak. Without overstating it, or sounding self congratulatory, the class discussions worked

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<sup>8</sup> Beverley Diamond, M. Sam Cronk, and Franziska von Rosen, *Visions of Sound: Musical Instruments of First Nations Communities in Northeastern America* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994); readings were also taken from the work of scholars such as David McAllester, Nicole Beaudry, Bruno Nettl, and Judith Vander.

amazingly well, often extending past the regular class time, and continuing in hallways and, on several occasions, on the street. Using the students’ words, below we have summarized questions, comments, and issues that arose in these discussions.

### **Discussion 1 – ‘Cultural Knowledge: Searching at the Boundaries’**

Aware of the open-endedness of most of the topics, the students leading the first two discussions opted for question-based frameworks, which inevitably led to questions upon questions.

- 1) Why might it be important to first analyze our own perspectives before approaching a new subject? How does our ancestry shape our thinking? From what position are we speaking, writing and reading?
- 2) What is a boundary? Is there a space between Native and non-Native identities? Does our decision to analyze Native communities augment this space or bridge it?
- 3) What does it mean to know? What is knowledge?
- 4) Is there a fundamental difference in the way we (Western peoples and First Nations peoples) view the world, and our lives?

### **Discussion 2 – ‘Relationship, Complementarity, and Twinness’**

- 1) How do you relate to the world around you? Can you create a visual representation of your world view? What, or who, is the focus of your image?
- 2) How are Native and non-Native world views and identities manifested in music and the process of music making?
  - Note the pre-eminence and sameness of ‘great’ composers in the Western music tradition, and the multiple ways music figures in and out of Native traditions.
  - Note the processes of musical creation in Native culture, as well as the functions of music, the sharing of knowledge, and the responsibility of the instrument maker/performer to the instrument and to the music being performed. This relates to the idea of responsibility.

### **Discussion 3 – ‘Real’**

The students leading this discussion used a different, less interrogative approach, and identified specific areas in the reading that they found to be especially powerful with respect to notions of authenticity, stereotyping, and identity patterning.

- This is an important topic that plays into our fundamental, often entrenched views, of the Other.

- It can invoke deep-rooted – historical – stereotypes that are racist and discriminatory. It can also invoke the idea of history as a linear construct.
- What is real and/or authentic is a frequently-asked question in the field of ethnomusicology, and one that is often asked by students, both in and out of the classroom. What is ‘real’ Native music? What are its characteristics? Does it have a ‘style’? How can we analyze it, explain about it to others, and fundamentally, understand its meanings ourselves? Are these ‘real’ questions?

Why did the discussions work? Why did the students respond positively, consistently, and enthusiastically? Truthfully, we are not sure, and this is a point we reflected upon as part of the preparation for this paper. The individuals in the class? The subject matter? Other things? We would like to think that the synergies that were generated in these discussions derived from a combination of elements, as well as a desire on the part of each one of us to understand the music of another culture through careful reflection and respect.

#### *Women’s Drum Group Video Documentary*<sup>9</sup>

We continue reflecting on these questions within the context of a video documentary made by a student in the course, Neil Bailey. Neil is a film student major with a strong interest in music and, along with other students in the course from disciplinary areas other than music, he brought engaging, multiple perspectives to the course discussions. The video is a seven-minute documentary version cut from over one hour of filming in the final class of the course, during which a women’s drum group from the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre at Queen’s shared their experiences and performed. Some of these women drum regularly as part of ‘Voices of our Grandmothers,’ a drum group of six women that is based at the First Directions Aboriginal Student Centre. The five women who visited the class on the evening the video was shot were Pat Crawford, Alison Farrant (group facilitator), Barbara Hooper (‘Nokomis,’ grandmother at the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre), Kelly Maracle, and Georgina Riel (Manager of the Four Directions Aboriginal Centre); the group also included Georgina’s young son, Miles Riel Walker. Mitch Shewell, a drum maker and coordinator of the Native Friendship Centre in Kingston, Ontario, also attended the class.

For the sake of discussion, Neil and I sectioned the video into five segments, and we have represented

those segments below, along with comments and ideas. Neil says that, as the filmmaker in this documentary, his choices were informed by his experience in the course: he was looking to represent in the documentary ideas and themes we had been discussing in the course, and we are sharing with you in this paper.

#### 1. Preparation – smudging the drums – ‘Little Deer’ song excerpt.

- Alison (drum group facilitator) speaking (see Figure 3).
- Instructor; students; drum group (5 women and Miles, the son of Georgina); Mitch (the partner of Allison, the facilitator of the drum group).

*Figure 3*



#### 2. ‘Strong woman’ – ‘Togetherness’ – prison song for women (see Figure 4).

- Images; ‘All My Relations’; Miles (Georgina’s son); family; generations.
- How music can express ‘All My Relations.’
- Juxtaposition of drums and picture of the trumpets on the wall of the classroom in the background.
- Juxtaposition of the board in the background with music staff lines, and the music being sung (written and oral traditions).

*Figure 4*



<sup>9</sup> This short video is available in the library at the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre, 146 Barrie Street, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6.



3. Talking about the drums (Pat, Kelly, Georgina) (see Figure 5).

- Individuals tell their drum's stories: drums are more than instruments; drum stories become the stories of individuals; drums embody personal, individualized, and spiritual significances; they can heal and empower.

- Sense of spirituality and space in Georgina's story; she is keeping the drum for her son, Miles.
- Students participate; circles; 'Tapwé' – fun, social song

Figure 5



4. Mitch (drum maker) speaks

- Observer.
- As with Georgina's drum story, Mitch's drum story is a spiritual story.

5. Mi'kmaq Honour Song

Neil's video captures in engaging ways a number of the points we have attempted to articulate in this paper. It is yet another part of the circle that expresses concepts and ideas stemming from All My Relations. As a document made by a student in the class, it is experiential and relational. It prompts us to ask questions about the multiple ways music can function in people's lives, specifically questions about music as a marker of identities, music as spiritual expression, music as healing, musical style, and gender roles in music making. And it reminds us that music can be a powerful symbol 'that can be manipulated in the creation and contestation of nationhood and identity,'<sup>10</sup> as well a powerful means to respect and break down difference, whether cultural, ethnic, racial, or generational.

We hope that the learning experience we have shared in part with you in this paper helps to affirm that teaching and learning about North American Native music in reflexive, reciprocal ways, can lead us to an essential understanding of a cultural, racialized Other. To be sure, learning about North American Native music reinforces the fact that experiencing music of other cultures can also teach us important lessons about ourselves. We end with another quotation from Robin Ridington's *Trail to Heaven*, which encapsulates the powerful notion of relatedness and oneness in the Aboriginal world of knowing.

The Trail to Heaven begins at the place where you meet your relatives. It begins when the people you knew from long ago come down to meet you. It begins when they give you a song. It begins when your own voice and the voices of your relatives become as one.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Diamond, Cronk, von Rosen, 16

<sup>11</sup> Ridington, 291

## Ideas about Popular Native Music in Canada

by Leela Gilday

The definition of contemporary indigenous popular music is very broad and includes all of the popular genres of music including hip-hop, rock, funk, soul, rap, folk, blues, jazz, country, bluegrass, metal, roots, etc. The only other music classification that encompasses all of these styles is 'World' music. There are many problems with classifying music in this way both from a consumer and academic standpoint, but I would like to examine Native music in particular.

Since I cannot speak to other forms of indigenous music, I would like to discuss Canadian Native music and to my experience within the Native music industry.

### ***How to define Native music?***

Because I define myself as a Native musician, because I encounter quite a few people who have preconceived notions of what it is, and because I get asked a lot of the time what it is, I would like to talk about what I perceive the definition of Native music to be.

So what is Native music? Native music is music made by Native people. To question the validity of our expression is to cast judgement on what 'culture' is. Culture is fluid and ever-changing, and defies one solid definition. I am Dene. Being Dene is a major part of my identity, and therefore informs the music that I make. The Native experience is not just a 'traditional' experience. It is also lived in the cities, on the reserves, in other countries. Native people, like every other people, have become more global and this is reflected in creative expression.

The songs that I write, I write because they are issues or things that I care about, or that inspire me. I do not sit down and write a 'Native song' to please my consumers, or to fit into some sort of box, just as I do not write a leftist song to be perceived as a political activist. I use vocables in my songs because I like the sound, and because I think they fit the feeling of the song, the spirit of the song, and not so people can say 'oh that's a Native song, good this is Native music. How curious, how exotic.'

Who makes the decisions about what Native music is? The artist does. And the Native music industry does. The Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards are moving into their eighth year in 2006, and are adding new categories every year. Just as most Native artists do, the Native music industry believes that Native music is music made by Native people.

### ***Concerns about the Native music industry***

The major questions that I come across today from people in the industry are not 'What is Native music?', but more: 'Is the Native music industry promoting mediocrity by handing out awards to everyone and their brother?' or 'By making a special Juno category for us, or by differentiating us from the mainstream, are they ghettoizing Native music?'

My answer to this, and it is the same answer I have always given, is no. Everyone in this industry has something that differentiates them – a hook. It is a tough industry all around, and given the chance, Native people will rise to the challenge. Diversity is important. The development of a specialized industry that has ties to the mainstream is key to encouraging our growing musicians – people who have just been born and teenagers who are just building their chops. I think perhaps the best example in another industry that I can point to is the Aboriginal People's Television Network. Born in the 1990s from its predecessor, TVNC, APTN has grown into an impressive television network with some great programming and diverse representation of Native people. It is still not an established network like CTV or Global, but my point is that it is a great achievement, and people are proud of it. And it has encouraged Native producers and storytellers to produce their own shows.

### ***What does it mean for me as an artist to embrace the 'Native musician' label?***

I came to music as a child. My dad is a musician, and I ended up studying music in university (Bachelor of Music). I began songwriting after university when I realized that the music I was singing was not reflective of my inner creative voice and identity, including being a Native woman. I embraced the 'Native musician' label because I am already a part of my community, so why not recognize that, and take advantage of the opportunities it affords. I am not beholden to my first nation to represent, just as they are not beholden to consume my music. When I get on stage, I am there as a conglomerate of factors representing the whole of my identity: woman, Dene, northerner, musician, bandleader, etc.

The most significant thing about accepting that label is that I do feel a responsibility to the Native community as a whole to be a role model (to a certain degree), and to give back to the community. I do this in the form of workshops for Native youth – empowerment through finding their voice.



One of the most positive things I have noticed about the whole popular Native music industry, and to some degree, the whole Native arts community, is that it has provided me with comrades. Colleagues, companions. People who understand what it is to be a Native musician. It is much easier when you are a musician to relate to other musicians, but it is even easier when they are Native. And you get asked the same questions over and over and face the same constant dilemmas. An activist friend of mine, one who started the West Coast Warriors, said to me a little while ago 'I wish the activist community had the same degree of unity and love that the arts community has.' There is very little rivalry among Native musicians, and much love and support. It is a hard road to walk,

and there are lots of obstacles, so it is nice to have friends.

*This article is adapted from a presentation given for the panel discussion 'Perspectives on Contemporary Indigenous Popular Music' at the University of Regina on 5 May 2006. The event was organized by Charity Marsh for 'Spanning the Distance: Regionalism and Reflections on Popular Music in Canada,' the IASPM-Canada annual meeting.*

*Leela Gilday is an award-winning singer/songwriter from the Dene Nation in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. To find out more about her, go to [www.leelagilday.com](http://www.leelagilday.com)*

## Perspectives on Music in Canada

A Conference held at the University of Calgary, January 2006

by Albrecht Gaub

*This is a report on 'Perspectives on Music in Canada,' a symposium which was held at the University of Calgary from January 25 to January 27, 2006 in conjunction with 'Happening,' the University of Calgary New Music Festival. See <http://newmusic.ffa.ucalgary.ca/index.html> for details.*

In the beginning, there was the Massey Commission of 1949; then came cultural nation building, overseen by government bodies such as the Canada Council, culminating in the Centennial celebrations of 1967. After that followed official bilingualism, multiculturalism – and possibly a decline. What influence did Canadian politics have on Canadian music, or, to avoid that problematic term, on music in Canada? Did Canadian musicians, especially composers, actually benefit from the continual intervention of the federal government?

These were the outlines that Carl Morey (University of Toronto) sketched in his inaugural keynote address. The address literally 'struck the key' and became the point of reference for almost all subsequent papers, including two more keynote addresses. Morey, the sole Torontonian and also the oldest participant at the conference, reflected on sixty years of Canadian history, which he described as a transition from a 'pre-national' to a 'post-national' statehood through an era of overt nationalism. While he recalled the optimism of the nationalist years up to 1967 not without nostalgia and affirmed the persistent necessity of a natural cultural policy, he declared a return to the former nationalist pattern both impossible and undesirable. He deplored the 'paucity of studies in Canadian music,' even with regard to performers of popular music. 'Music,' he concluded, 'has always been a fifth column in Canada.' He added that the idea of 'Canadian music' was probably more problematic

than ever because the identity of Canada and the term 'music' have become more diffuse in themselves. Yet Morey also pointed out that many of the woes of contemporary music, especially the public neglect of avant garde composers and their music, are not specific to Canada.

The second keynote speaker, taking his turn a few hours later, was John Rea (McGill University). His was the position of an elder, if still active, avant garde composer, and his contribution was the most engaging, albeit controversial, of the conference. He stated that while literature in Canada, dance in Canada, art in Canada, cinema in Canada are generally referred to as Canadian literature, dance, art, and cinema, this is not the case with music, where the dualism of 'music in Canada' and 'Canadian music' persists. He went one step beyond that, openly questioning the existence of 'Canadian music.' In the subsequent discussion, Rea conceded the possibility that all official efforts to establish 'Canadian music' (again starting with the Massey Report, from which he quoted extensively) failed because 'Canadian music' was impossible per se. But like Morey, Rea went on to discuss problems not specific to Canada. Citing the US 'anti-psychiatrist' Thomas Sass, he deplored the vanishing of 'adulthood' in modern (or post-modern?) society: Children are treated as adults and become 'unruly'; adults are treated like children and become (or stay) 'childish.' After this grim review, Rea gave exhortations to young Canadians who want to become composers in spite of the indifferent surroundings. They would not have been very different in any other country.

Mary Ingraham (University of Alberta) delivered the third and last third keynote address on the second

day. Again starting with the Massey Report, she pointed out the massive implementation of cultural policy as manifested in countless committees, reports, authorities, and organizations. While until 1967 this government action at least produced visible, if sometimes controversial, results, in more recent years this has been less evident. Ingraham insinuated that these government bodies have become a bureaucracy rather interested in its own ends than in the ends of culture. The question was raised whether creative artists should take control of cultural policy in their own hands, but there was neither an undisputed precedent that could have been cited nor a plan as to how such a transition could be achieved.

Some of the other papers sought to assert the idea of 'Canadian music' and turn it into something palpable, presenting examples of music considered typically Canadian. Pauline Minevich and Sophie Bouffard (both University of Regina) turned to music expressly inspired by the Canadian geography and climate, invoking thoughts of (and music by) R. Murray Schafer. Elaine Keillor (Carleton University) spoke about 'rubbaboo' compositions, works that consciously combine traditional First Nation and Western styles and languages, such as Rohahes Iain Philips's *Ron Wa Sen Naiens* (2003) and Elma Miller's *The Earth is Full* (2005). Kenneth DeLong (University of Alberta) introduced the opera *Turtle Wakes* by his faculty colleague Allan Bell. He discussed the opera, which is set at the time of the landslide caused when Turtle Mountain, Alberta collapsed in 1903, as a possible example of a new regionalism in Canadian opera, but he expressed his hope that the work would gain nationwide circulation – following in the footsteps of John Estacio's *Filumena*, a work that was frequently invoked in the course of the conference.

The remaining papers were less concerned with the idea of Canadian music, though their subject matter was no less Canadian – with one exception, discussed later. Stephanie Lind (University of British Columbia) presented a set-theory analysis of Jacques Hétu's *Prélude* op. 24, while Arlan Schultz (University of Lethbridge) gave a less formal analysis of Michel-Georges Brégent's *Sapho* for soprano, flute, and guitar. Albrecht Gaub (A-R Editions, Middleton, Wisconsin), a German citizen, discussed the music that Walter Kaufmann, another German by birth, had written for Gweneth Lloyd's Winnipeg Ballet in 1949. Donna Zapf (Duke University) offered a paper on Rodney Sharman's opera *Elsewherelessness* (1998), which she, unfortunately, could not read herself, as she was unable to attend the conference. Ellen Waterman (University of Guelph) gave an overview of venues (festivals, etc.) for experimental music in Canada and emphasized the performative character of much of this music, and then

discussed a specific performance by Lori Freedman. In a highly instructive manner, Gordon Rumson (Calgary, unaffiliated) lectured on R. Murray Schafer's complicated love-hate relationship with the piano.

The conference was embedded in 'Happening,' a six-day festival of contemporary music with a subtitle, 'Perspectives on New Music in Canada.' This subtitle, distinguished from that of the conference by the word 'new,' would also have suited the conference itself, since all but one of the papers dealt with music since 1945, if not since 1980. The one exception, a paper on the music of the Ursulines in 17th-century Quebec by Janet Danielson (Simon Fraser University), no matter how good it was, seemed strangely out of touch with the rest of the conference.

The same could be said, if for different reasons, about the contribution of Kevin Austin (Concordia University). He presented a lecture on acoustics and electroacoustics that was not a paper but rather a happening. Shoelaces open, Austin paced through the room, lay down on the floor, with his head in a corner, to demonstrate the effect this had on the sound of his voice, and involved Ellen Waterman as his dummy for an experiment. There was, incidentally, nothing that was specifically Canadian about it. In spite of the participation of several Canadian celebrities and in spite of many interesting encounters, the sole foreigner at the conference cannot help but feel that he witnessed a spectacle that was at the same time hermetic and thoroughly provincial. If 'Canadian music' remains a doubtful concept, this may well be due to the absence of an international outreach. The organizers at the University of Calgary cannot be blamed for that; after all, they timely posted the call for papers on the websites of the American Musicological Society and Royal Holloway College. How many foreigners, whether American or European, know art music from Canada, perform it, listen to it, write about it? This is different with Canadian literature, art, dance, and cinema, all of which have found international recognition. Apart from a few performers, the only Canadian musicians of international fame are representatives of popular music, including jazz, but this kind of music was conspicuously absent from the conference – and also from the festival, if one does not count the crossover experiments of the Dutch all-female quartet Electra, which gave its Canadian debut. All this confirms what Carl Morey said in his keynote address: namely that these celebrities are hardly studied in Canada. Does Canadian music have to be marginal to be recognized as Canadian and worthy of study?

*Albrecht Gaub is an editor with A-R Editions. His article on Karl Steiner appeared in vol. 1, no. 2 (May 2003) of this newsletter.*

## The Lives of Gods and Humans

... *the timber of those times* ... (... *a theogony* ...)

I *Vista (the Pantheon)*

II *Procession (the king and his retinue)*

III *The lame wizard and the mechanical bride*

IV *The warrior and the foam-goddess*

V ... *a guide of souls* ...

Premiere of a new orchestral work by Istvan Anhalt  
Kingston Symphony, Glen Fast conductor  
Kingston Gospel Temple, 23 April 2006

Just eleven days after Istvan Anhalt's 87th birthday, the Kingston Symphony gave the premiere performance of his ... *the timber of those times* ... (... *a theogony* ...).

This is the third piece that Anhalt has written for this orchestra in four years. At over 35 minutes in duration, it is every bit as substantial as the other two works in this trilogy of 'T' works. *Twilight~Fire (Baucis' and Philemon's Feast)*, was given in September 2002; *The Tents of Abraham (A Mirage~Midrash)* was premiered in January 2004. *The Tents of Abraham* was issued on a CD recording (Centrediscs CMC CD 10204) and won a Juno Award for Best Classical Composition in 2005. All three works have been conducted by Glen Fast, currently in his fifteenth season as the music director of the Kingston Symphony Association. This triptych is every bit as engaging as Anhalt's earlier trio of 'S' works – *Simulacrum* (1987), *Sparkskraps* (1988), and *Sonance-Resonance (Welche Töne?)* (1989). Indeed, a perspicacious analyst could very likely find musical and hermeneutic links between these two triptychs ...

The title of this new work is rather intriguing. 'Timber' may be a variant of timbre, meaning perhaps something like 'sound world,' but one would not want to rule out the possibility that a still wider meaning is implied. The phrase 'those times' is ambiguous – what time period is meant by it? A clue is provided by the bracketed subtitle: *Theogony* is the title of a poem by Hesiod that tells of the origins of the ancient Greek gods. The titles of the individual movements are also open to interpretation. Pantheon, procession, wizard, bride, warrior, souls – these all may refer to ancient Greek people/things, but are also applicable to other times/places. 'The mechanical bride,' for instance, refers here to Pandora, but it is also the title of a famous book by Marshall McLuhan (1951) which updates Greek mythology to the industrial era.

A series of stark, powerful chords opens the work. A sense of timelessness is created by the absence of a noticeable beat, and also by the open sonority of the chords (root – fifth – octave). These chords soon alternate with a series of increasingly long melodic lines, initially in the brass and lower strings. At the end of the first movement, a march-like dactylic rhythm is gradually established; perhaps it is not a coincidence

that this was the basic metric unit of ancient Greek poetry. This rhythm ushers in the second movement, in which a succession of musical ideas portrays Zeus and the pantheon of ancient Greek gods (five of whom will be observed in more detail in subsequent movements). The large percussion section (a pianist, and also four percussionists who play a rich variety of instruments) first rises to prominence in this movement.

The third movement begins by portraying Hephaestus, the 'lame wizard' who is the god of metals and of blacksmiths. Low brass instruments introduce an evocative rhythmic figure that represents the god's awkward gait, and the percussion (notably the anvil) portrays him hammering away in his forge to create Pandora, the 'mechanical bride'. Pandora is in turn represented by a beautiful, wide ranging violin solo.

The fourth movement introduces Hephaestus's brother Ares, the god of war. In this movement, the Kimco appears. The Kimco consists of suspended pieces of scrap metal that are struck by mallets; it first appeared in *The Tents of Abraham* (Kimco is a local scrap yard which donated the metal). In the earlier work, the instrument was attacked vigorously in order to portray Abraham destroying his father's idols; in this work, it is struck softly, and the result is surprisingly expressive. Brass fanfares herald the warrior god, while an expressive melodic line for oboe d'amore represents his mistress Aphrodite, the 'foam-goddess'.

The last movement opens with rapid triplet figures that alternate between full orchestra and solo timpani. Gradually the tempo gets slower and the dynamics fade away. Short recollections of the faster rhythmic figure, this time played on the rim of a drum, disperse the energy of the movement. The title of this fifth movement refers to Hermes, the messenger god and 'guide of souls'. The work ends with questioning, unresolved chords that leave the composition, and its message, open-ended; it is up to each listener to supply his or her own conclusion.

Fast gave an impromptu and informative spoken introduction from the podium. His conducting communicated his ideas about the piece clearly and effectively to both orchestra members and audience; every gesture served to aid the musical interpretation rather than draw attention to himself. Solo turns were beautifully handled by the various orchestra members – Anhalt by now obviously knows the capabilities of the orchestra inside out. The capacity audience gave the work a standing ovation; this was a signal moment in the history of the orchestra, indeed of the community. As the second work of this triptych is available on CD, it is now a matter of urgent priority to have the first and third recorded by these same performers. *R.E.*

## Reviews

Marjorie Doyle. *Reels, Rock and Rosaries: Confessions of a Newfoundland Musician*. Lawrencetown Beach, NS: Pottersfield Press, 2005. 159 pp., ill. ISBN 1-895900-73-5. \$19.95 (paper)

Music, Newfoundland, and Catholicism are the main themes in Marjorie Doyle's autobiography. Growing up Catholic in Newfoundland, she notes that 'the church was the centre of my existence' (93). She was educated by the nuns of Presentation Convent, and music was an essential part of that schooling. For the annual visits of music examiners from Trinity College, London, convent girls were fitted out in their school uniforms and put through their paces. Doyle notes how music, religion, and colonialism intersected on those visits: 'Once a year, on that examination day, the senior classroom at Presentation Convent was transformed to a sacred place, a temple to Trinity College' (102). Even the nuns deferred to the authority of British examiners.

As a young Newfoundlander, born not long after the province joined Canada, Doyle was also immersed in Irish musical traditions. Her father, Gerald S. Doyle, was a noted businessman and a collector of Newfoundland folksongs; he visited Ireland to trace his ancestry, though his family had been Newfoundlanders for some six generations. The Presentation Convent was another source of Irish identity; the schoolgirls

would sing Irish folk songs 'as if we ourselves had been born and raised in the streets of Limerick or Cork or Tipperary' (20). Curiously, though, Doyle notes that despite 'wriggling through childhood under a heavy Irish shroud ... of Ireland itself I knew nothing' (23). In that lack of attachment to the political/geographical entity that is Ireland (as opposed to the Ireland of the imagination), there was room for Doyle's own identity as a Newfoundlander and a Canadian to flourish.

The author's love of music runs throughout the book, as does her impatience with anyone who would impose rigid categories (secular / sacred; traditional / classical; popular song / art song) in order to promote one aesthetic at the expense of another. Lovers and husbands flit unnamed through the pages of her story, a slight diversion at best from her love affair with music. There is also scarcely any mention of her professional life as a writer and a CBC radio host. Music is front and centre here, so it is fitting that the conclusion is a paean to the 'Ode to Newfoundland,' the patriotic air in which Doyle's identity as a Newfoundlander and her identity as a musician meet in harmonious union. *R.E.*

Walter Pitman. *Music Makers: The Lives of Harry Freedman and Mary Morrison*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2006. 312 pp., ill. ISBN 1-55002-589-9. \$40 (hardcover)

Pitman's biography of Louis Applebaum (see John Beckwith's review, *ICM Newsletter* 1.2, May 2003) contained 90 pages of endnotes, which was excessive; this book has none whatsoever, which is scandalous. His writing is verbose but says nothing; there are lots of platitudes here but few real insights. He offers frequent irrelevant homilies on world peace, but clearly has little

idea of the how music functions in creating individual or group identity. Chapter 9, on this couple's political and environmental activism, is the only one where the writer seems to be on safe ground; the rest of the book is either boring or misinformed, or both. It was a nice idea to do a joint biography of this vital and important couple; pity that the result is so disappointing. *R.E.*

Ezra Schabas. *There's Music in These Walls: A History of the Royal Conservatory of Music*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2005. 288 pp., ill. ISBN 1-55002-540-6. \$50 (hardcover)

Sometimes you *can* tell a book by its cover. The dust jacket photo by Brenda Liu of McMaster Hall, the Royal Conservatory of Music's Bloor Street home in Toronto, makes the building look much better than it does in reality. Schabas's book does a similar job on the institution itself. For decades now the Con has been a rather depressing presence in Canada's musical life – conflicted about its own mandate and goals, always grubbing for money but continually broke, trading on its storied past and promising a great future, but never consistently delivering the goods on a day-to-day basis. Schabas is a real insider (he worked for the RCM for 50 years, including a stint as Principal) and he goes to bat for the Con, taking its side in his account of the long

battle with the University of Toronto that resulted in a divorce between the two institutions in 1991 after 72 years of marriage. This is not quite an official history, though, because Schabas was unwilling to surrender editorial independence in return for the official RCM imprimatur. And so we get the seamier side of the story, such as the Paul Wells suicide (62-3) and Lubka Kolessa's affair with Arnold Walter (107), as well as the songs of praise and glory. Schabas has certainly done his homework; he interviewed 35 people and combed the archives (with Dorith Cooper's help). He does not quite manage to explain why the Con is a truly national institution, focused as he is on its Toronto shop, but all told he does the subject more than justice. *R.E.*