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About Canadian Music: the P.R. Success

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REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

HELMUT KALLMANN, GILLES POTVIN, and KENNETH WINTERS, eds. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981, xxix, 1076 pp.

About Canadian Music: the P.R. Success

"Canada; the country that one forgets." So said the commentator on a German current affairs television program in 1978. Anyone who has been out of Canada for any length of time cannot help but notice the lack of coverage of all things Canadian, political as well as artistic, in the international press. It was not surprising, then, that John Beckwith, in his seminal article, "About Canadian Music: the P.R. Failure," which first appeared in 1969 in *Musicanada*, cited editor and critic Robert Fulford as saying that "Canada appears as a great blank on the literary map." Now, thanks to the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (EMC), no one in the musical community, at home or abroad, can ignore the fact that Canada has a thriving musical life and an interesting and varied past. Without underestimating the individual achievements of scholars such as Willy Amtmann, Beckwith, Kallman, Keith MacMillan, George Proctor, and Clifford Ford, it is the EMC which has put Canada firmly on the musical map.

Beckwith's article, reprinted with additional material in *Music* (the magazine of the American Guild of Organists and Royal College of Organists) in the summer of 1970, became a kind of classic. It revealed all the blatant misinformation published or the dearth of information available about Canadian music in the world encyclopedias and reference books. It was the kind of model answer you would give your bibliography classes to read in the early seventies, after having asked them to look up "Canada" in the works on the reference shelves of the music library. In its original form in *Musicanada*, this article was distributed through the foresight of the Canadian Music Centre, to subscribers of *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* in the United States. It was to have far more widespread implications. Beckwith threw stones at a large international pond of misinformation. The ripples spread out far and wide. Even if you were unaware of the current state of new music, performance, musical institutions, or scholarship in or about Canadian music, you were aware of Beckwith's articles.

Everyone in the musical community today knows that it was Beckwith's article which became the impetus for publisher and philanthropist Floyd Chalmers to remedy the situation by generously providing the initial funding for a comprehensive musical reference work. He believed that it was essential for Canada herself to fully document her

musical achievements before the rest of the world could be expected to talk intelligently about them. This story and its consequences have become history. It is documented in the introduction to the EMC (p. xii) and repeated in most of the reviews. Yet a word of caution is necessary. Beckwith himself is the first to admit that this story, though good public relations, is an oversimplification which does not correspond historically with what happened. Beckwith's article was not a bolt from the blue. Rather, it struck a nerve and in so doing gained a positive response. For Kallmann had already been planning, ever since the appearance of his path-breaking book, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914*, to bring out some kind of reference book in conventional dictionary format as a follow-up. No one can overestimate Kallmann's contribution to our knowledge about Canadian musical life and history and the success of the EMC is due in no small part to him and to his own tremendous personal knowledge.

With Kallmann at the helm to oversee content, Gilles Potvin and Kenneth Winters responsible for the French and English texts, respectively, this venture grew and grew — like Topsy, as the *Toronto Star's* William Littler put it — until it finally emerged in that magnificent volume which should be on every Canadian musician's reference shelf. Today, at the end of August 1982, after a decade of research and updating that is still continuing as the French-language edition nears publication, the total cost has been something like \$1,750,000, of which Chalmers donated \$200,000 and the Chalmers Foundation \$157,875, the Canada Council \$416,000 plus \$81,500 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, with the next largest contributions from Wintario, \$262,000, and the Ontario Arts Council, \$136,666. Other substantial grants came from the British Columbia Cultural Fund and the Western Canada Lottery Foundation, Alberta Culture, the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts and the Western Canada Lottery Foundation (Alberta Division) and the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec.

The handsome red-bound volume is a joy to own. In fact, one wonders how one ever did without it. Not a day passes without consulting this work, which truly deserves the title of encyclopedia, so thorough is its investigation of music in Canada, so broad its scope, and so far-reaching its implications. The intriguing thing about the EMC is that no matter how much or how little one may know about a particular subject, one finds the book hard to put down. The more questions one asks the book, the more it answers; the more one peruses it, the more absorbing the process becomes. One can go on a geographical trip through this large and wonderful land, looking up the names of places large and small to see what musical institutions exist in which communities or what musicians are active there. Then one wants to follow up on composers, performers, or teachers. Another day one goes on a historical trip, following church music through its various guises,

or opera, or symphonic music. Again one has to stop to turn to articles on composers, performers, and institutions. "No articles under 'Canada'," some critics complain. Why, this would be as unnecessary as looking for an article under "Music" in most of our music dictionaries and encyclopedias. For the *EMC* is a vast undertaking, covering as it does every facet of Canada's rich and varied musical life past and present. It documents not only classical, but also popular, folk, and native music within its pages. It traces the music of various immigrant groups who have made their home in Canada, contributing to what has so often been called the Canadian mosaic. Thus although the work may function as a quick reference tool, it can never be merely that, so rich are its resources.

There are things about the *EMC* that are unique, such as the fascinating tidbits on lakes, rivers, winter sports, transportation (the last named, unfortunately, does not describe how the opening up of the west affected music history) and, most Canadian of all, the Maple Leaf and the Beaver. Where else can you find lists of musicals based on the turn-of-the-century gold rush ("history of Canada in music") or literary or visual works with musical content? Among the more interesting historical articles is that on piano manufacture, that most important of late nineteenth-century industries. Then there are the families of musicians such as Adaskin, Brott, Létourneau, and MacMillan. Of course, there are entries under individual operas and folk songs, pop groups and ensembles. There are historical surveys of jazz, the Mennonites, early music, neoclassicism, and impressionism. To get a glimpse of the range of articles, one has only to look up the cross-reference under "songs": not just chansons, folk songs, and pop songs but college, patriotic, and political songs, national and royal anthems and trade union songs. And it makes fascinating reading to look up the history of a song such as "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre." There are among the *EMC*'s diverse contents articles on the blind, on the Children of Peace, on prodigies, and a little gem on that most controversial of subjects: Muzak.

That the encyclopedia is able to do so much so well has taken everyone, mostly Canadians, by surprise. I am reminded of an article by Robertson Davies, "Is Canada Neurotic? A Country in Search of its Soul," in the current issue of *Vogue* (September 1982): "Canadians will have to stop playing innocent country jakes (which has been a disguise for at least fifty years) and admit that we are a special breed of North Americans, tough, resilient, and determined. That will not please our friends, as did our earlier role, but it will be more honest and, in the long run, it will work better. We shall have achieved our revolution. We shall have found our own soul, whatever it may be, and whatever it may cost" (p. 32). The *EMC*'s sophistication may well revolutionize our own — as well as the outside world's — thinking about music in Canada. Last fall, on the occasion of the American Musicological

Society's Annual Meeting in Boston, I challenged Stanley Sadie about his *New Grove Dictionary of Music in the United States*, affectionately known as "AmeriGrove." Why was it not going to cover North America and include Canada, I asked. "Why should it?" he replied. "You already have your own splendid music encyclopedia." It should come as no surprise to us, then, that sources of Indian music had already been documented elsewhere in Robert Stevenson's article, "Written Sources for Indian Music Until 1882," *Ethnomusicology*, XVII/1 (1973). Stevenson includes Lescarbot's 1617 quotation of three Micmac melodies, Sagard's description of Indian dance and song, and Mersenne's quotation of a *Chanson Canadoise* in 1636. Yet if an outsider was responsible for finding these earliest-known printed references for Indian music, it was Canadians who did the work for the EMC. For many of the subjects were hitherto undocumented, especially those concerning regional music history. The EMC is a work which stimulated and generated research — and is still continuing to do so.

For this and many other reasons, no one person can do justice to it other than Kallmann himself and a couple of others all closely connected with its evolution. To review it, one would feel rather like Joshua Rifkin who, assigned to review *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXXV/1 (1982), wrote: "Besides, does Grove truly need a review in the first place? Early experience has already confirmed suspicions that it would fast become an integral indispensable part of our scholarly lives; one may just as soon review one's right arm" (p. 182). This said, Rifkin then proceeds with seventeen double-column pages of detailed commentary on the work in question. This writer believes that yet another review of the EMC at this stage would be redundant — rather like explaining a sacred mystery to the initiated. In one way Rifkin's task is more difficult, for he had twenty volumes (875 pages each on average) to read. In another way, his job is easier, since so much of what he is covering is well-trodden territory. What we have in the EMC is a major comprehensive reference work, one which can proudly stand alongside that of any country in the world, one which seems thorough from its inception but which represents, in many ways, the beginning rather than the last word. Just think of all six editions (plus supplements) that *Grove's Dictionary* has been through, starting with the first in 1878-90, and that should give us courage to proceed.

Everyone will by now have his or her own list of favorite things and pet peeves about the EMC. No one can point out its shortcomings effectively just by nature of his or her own particular bias or training or geographical location. Thus it takes a west-coast CBC commentator to point out that Vancouver is represented by a picture of "some lumberjacks dancing at the turn of the century" whereas Toronto is repre-

sented by a picture of slick new Roy Thomson Hall, still under construction. Thus it would seem more appropriate to assess the current situation with regard to the critical response it has received, now that most of the Canadian reviews are in and a few of the foreign ones too. The response has been unanimously positive. Reviews, both national and international, wax eloquent about the merits of the publication.

Some of the reviews are uncritical, many of them borrowing liberally from the introduction. Relatively few are written by musicians. It is strange in this regard that Robert Fulford would have selected a man of the theatre, Urjo Kareeda, to review the EMC for *Saturday Night*, or that the University of Toronto's *Bulletin* would have assigned a staff journalist to review it with so many academics on hand, including a musicologist at the rank of Associate Dean who had volunteered for the task. Among the more interesting newspaper reviews are ones which point out the achievements of local musicians and the documentation of their achievements in the EMC, for instance those appearing in the local press in Vancouver, Victoria, Windsor, Oshawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Mississauga, which reveal how broad-reaching are the implications of the EMC.

Only one review as far as I know, that by Carl Morey in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, LI/4 (1982), assesses the accomplishment of the EMC in relation to that of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He points out that even though *The New Grove* "contains far more entries about Canadian music and musicians than probably all other previously published foreign encyclopedias combined, it still betrays a bias. It is the tendency in this Grove to give folk music about twice the space that it gives art music in the entries on non-European countries" (p. 501). *The New Grove* includes entries on about forty-six Canadian composers compared to the eight represented in the fifth edition. In *The New Grove*, the article on Canada's art music is by Morey himself and reflects his usual high standard of objective scholarship. That on Canada's folk music is almost three times as long and far from consistent in content.

To get a true picture of the achievement of the EMC in the ethnomusicological articles, one has to refer to Elaine Keillor's penetrating assessment in her review for *The Yearbook for Traditional Music*, XIV (1982). Would that there were more specialized reviews of specific areas rather than the generalized overviews that one finds in the majority of the reviews. Keillor covers all aspects of her area: folk, popular, jazz, and native peoples. She contrasts "the relatively healthy state of Inuit musicological research as compared to Indian for which, in some areas, no collecting has been done or else no analysis and transcription has been completed on already collected material." She points to the "Eastern Woodlands" section of the Indian music article, with its analysis of an Iroquoian song but lack of reference to the Micmac, Malecite, and other eastern tribes.

Many reviewers include their own choice of people who should have been included or reasons why X should have more space than Y. Since the prefatory matter of the *EMC* is clear on its selection criteria, it seems misanthropic to quibble that there are too few conductors included. It is easy to "cavil on the ninth part of a hair" like Hotspur in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*. The introduction also clearly states that the length of an article does not reflect the importance of its subject. When one looks at the enormity of the task and how well it is done, then some of the suggested omissions recede in importance. The editors, after all, confess two prejudices: "that towards performers and ensembles who make a specialty of introducing new Canadian works, and that towards composers of concert music" (p. xiii), and rightly so. Few reviewers are constructively critical in the way that Keillor is and most of the reviews thus are, on the whole, descriptive rather than analytical, save for a few minor gripes.

When John Kraglund in *The Globe and Mail* (5 December 1981) wryly pointed out that "it is easy to discover a great deal one did not particularly want to know about some Canadian composers," this prompted Paul McIntyre, Vice-President of the Canadian League of Composers, to write objecting that "Mr. Kraglund's curiosity about Canada's composers is restrained to the point of incompatibility with the duties of his office" (letter, *The Globe and Mail*, 21 December 1981). Kraglund proceeds in his article to point out that in the case of Gilles Tremblay, the *EMC* entry never tells whether or not the composer is a major one or whether he wrote listenable music. On the article on Harry Somers, he notes: "One gets the impression everything is equally good, despite concert hall evidence to the contrary. This is possibly the most irritating element about the encyclopedia. It either omits value judgements or includes only favorable ones, with a few exceptions."

Kraglund does have a point, for the *EMC*'s tone and policy seem deliberately to accentuate the positive. Not that one wants an encyclopedia to air the details of various conflicts within the histories of various organizations such as the Toronto Symphony, the Festival Singers, or the National Youth Orchestra in its early days. Yet it might give a more realistic view if it pointed out that there was, for example, a controversy surrounding the early years of the National Youth Orchestra as revealed in its minutes. I cannot imagine an English reference work which would not allude to the suicide of the brilliant early music specialist David Munrow. It is no discredit to the memory of Sheila Henig nor to her surviving family that she took her own life, yet this fact is not recorded in the *EMC*. And if not all the composers have stylistic assessments, nor do all the performers. One is unsure of the stature of, say Janet Stubbs (whose date of birth is not such a mystery) compared with that of Lilian Sukis from merely reading the two entries. One wonders why there is nothing in the biographies of Kuerti

and Staryk to suggest political involvement, though some of the items in the bibliographies allude to it.

To return to the composers, who are after all as a group one of the EMC's main *raison d'être*, one is continually aware of the comprehensiveness of the EMC's treatment, especially when one consults the composer files in the Canadian Music Centre to check out just how much has been done. Some reviewers have been bothered by the lack of homogeneity of writing style, but this is an asset. Compare, for example, the Dahlhaus article on Wagner with that of the Sadie article on Mozart in *The New Grove*. The style differs greatly, yet each is fascinating reading. Sometimes there is, however, a disturbing dichotomy between scholarship and journalism in the EMC. Take for instance the article on Marjan Mozetich and "his inspiration in the music of Canadian Indian and Inuit" or the article on Alex Pauk which mentions a commission from the Canadian Brass which was never realized. Such statements bear challenging in a national reference work. For the younger composers, there is sometimes only room for a laundry list of compositions within the body of an article without adequate stylistic assessment, which again is a drawback.

As for the foreign reviews, the EMC received uniformly enthusiastic response from the United States in reviews by Gordana Lazarevich in *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association*, XXXIX/1 (1982), in two library reference journals (including *Choice*), and by H. Wiley Hitchcock in the *Newsletter* of the Institute for Studies in American Music, XI/1 (1981). Hitchcock comments on "what is 'trailblazing' about the work" — "its extraordinary inclusiveness: besides the predictable, biographical and topical articles, there is a phenomenal diversity of topics considered and discussed in interesting, informative ways."

The situation with the overseas reviews is, to date, a little more disappointing. Only one review has yet appeared. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the University of Toronto Press waited for the second printing in February 1982 before sending out the European review copies. The only review now published in a European periodical is that of George Proctor in *Fontes Artis Musicae*, XXIX/1-2 (1982). This is a strange case of a review pirated, without permission of either author or editor, from the Canadian Association of Music Libraries *Newsletter*. Proctor himself admitted that he might have used a different perspective rather than a more local one were he to have known it to be for international consumption. Is it indicative of a prevalent attitude toward things Canadian that so little attention was given to the EMC in *Fontes* that a readymade review was copied verbatim from a professional newsletter? In any case, Proctor's review is one of the most forthright and critical. He rightly points out what the EMC is, its scope and success. His main reproach to the editors concerns the absence of musicologists on the board of directors. More important, "it is unfortu-

nate," he says, "that their professional expertise in writing about music was ignored in determining the selection of entries. That the bias against musicologists is more than a simple oversight is underlined by the lack of an entry for Harvey Olnick . . . [who] has ten entries under his name in the *Index* and whose name is synonymous with the building of musicology at the graduate level in Canada."

Proctor's comments prompted me to go back to Kallmann's article on musicology in the *EMC* and to Olnick's single contribution to the *EMC* in the form of the entry on Godfrey Ridout. Kallmann's article is a model of clarity and objectivity; his definition of musicology: "the pursuit of musical knowledge and insight by accurate, objective, and critical methods of fact-finding, analysis, and interpretation" (p. 660). Musicologists, it seems, are experts in research and stylistic analysis. Let us look at Olnick's article on Ridout. It is not, as Arthur Kaptainis accuses it in *Quill and Quire* (January 1982) a "hysterical panegyric." Rather, it is a virtuoso piece of writing which assesses Ridout's style and achievement without superlatives, points out the flaws in the television opera, and tells much about the man and his music. One gets an idea of Ridout's style from reading Olnick's words. He whets the appetite for more, provoking the reader to listen to the music in order to make up his or her mind.

Elsewhere in his article on musicology Kallmann points out that "EMC has in the main been a mobilizer of musicological activity" (p. 661). It is apparent, however, that a surprisingly small percentage of this activity has been carried out by musicologists. One might hope that, with dozens of highly-trained musicologists in our graduate schools, that there will be less fear of musicology in future. It is true that "articles on music composed after 1950, in particular, . . . appear sometimes to mimic scientific papers in the way that South American bugs and flies will mimic the dreaded carpenter wasp," as Joseph Kerman points out in "The State of Academic Music Criticism" in Kingsley-Price, ed., *On Criticizing Music: Five Philosophical Perspectives* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, p. 39). Yet after perusing the *EMC*, this writer can find only one article written by a musicologist that is fairly indigestible to a lay person. If reading the reviews tells us anything, it is about the tremendous success and comprehensibility of *EMC*. Of the very sparse critical assessments, those of both journalists and musicologists concur: the lack of consistent stylistic assessment of composers and lack of critical assessment of performers, which are, after all, its primary focus. What the *EMC* has achieved, however, is so impressive, it is only because the editors at the close of their introduction (p. xiv) modestly claim it to be a beginning that one dares proffer such criticism. "EMC is . . . the beginning of an orderly all-encompassing record of Canadian musical life." They "fervently hope" that it "also will create a new consciousness of, and a new pride in, Canada's multifaceted record of musical achievement." The

story is by no means ended. We anxiously await the French edition and look forward to the continuing work on all facets of Canadian musical life.

Gaynor Jones

CLIFFORD FORD. *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey*. Agincourt, Ontario: GLC Publishers Limited, 1982, viii, 278 pp.

IAN L. BRADLEY. *Twentieth Century Canadian Composers*, Vol. II. Agincourt, Ontario: GLC Publishers Limited, 1982, xii, 281 pp.

For those of us who have been struggling to teach courses on Canadian music without adequate resources, we can at last say that the situation has drastically changed. The *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* has been quickly followed by two notable publications from GLC Publishers.

Clifford Ford's book is the first overview of the development of Canadian music from its origins to the present day. Ford has chosen, and cogently argues for, the kind of sociological approach adopted by Helmut Kallmann in *A History of Music in Canada, 1534-1914* (1960). As a complement to Kallmann's now out-of-print study, Ford devotes half his coverage to the post-World War I years, a period of decisive change that saw the gradual disappearance of colonial thinking in Canadian culture, particularly music, as Canada gained the status of fully independent nationhood. Ford pulls together several threads in his treatment of changing Canadian musical institutions, the impact of the emerging broadcasting and recording industries, the organization of instrumental ensembles, the beginnings of state support for the arts, as he explores their accumulative effects on music education, music publishing, instrument making, performance, and composition.

Ford's analyses of the sociological data are generally sound, despite the occasional tendency to lapse into generalizations and distortions of historical fact. For instance, the general competitive music festival began in Edmonton in 1908, not 1906 (as stated on pp. 12 & 86) when only preliminary plans were formulated. Rousseau's opera, *Le Devin du village*, was not "unfinished," as it had had numerous performances in Europe before its Quebec performance in May 1846. Napoléon Aubin, in writing out the parts, might have added some instrumentation to airs that originally had only continuo accompaniment. Ford seems to be somewhat confused about the existing organs at the Sharon Museum, which presently owns only one barrel organ (not more, as indicated on p. 232), and one keyboard pipe organ (1848). The extant barrel organ (ca. 1820) had two barrels containing ten sacred