

CANADA COMES OF AGE MUSICALLY

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The last 25 years have seen many important developments on the Canadian serious music scene culminating in recent years with international recognition for several of our composers and increasingly in performances of Canadian works by American and European artists and orchestras. Indeed, Canadians themselves are just beginning to discover they have a vital culture blossoming within their own borders and to realize that Canada now is in a position unique in our history to play an active role in contributing to the growth of Western music.

Perhaps the rest of the world has ignored Canadian music so long because we Canadians ourselves have shown so little regard for the domestic product. We have been importers of cultures to the extent that our own native creations have been overlooked. We convinced ourselves we could not hope to create our own distinctive culture with a genuine Canadian flavour. Internationalism, being such a strong force in the modern world and our own cultural institutions lacking or so far behind, how could we ever hope to compete?

Expo '67 and all the marvellous cultural events that occurred within Canada during Canada's centennial year helped to convince many of us that it was possible to "do our own thing" and do it as well as anyone else! This came as a delightful surprise and a bit of shock to most of us. Reaction and reviews from around the world helped us realize that a certain maturity had been achieved.

The credit for this achievement must go to a remarkably few Canadians and Canadian institutions which have appeared and progressed against mighty odds.

The most significant force for Canadian music has been the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Its national radio AM network has been programming countless hours of Canadian music, played by Canadian performers throughout the land for many years. The CBS has had an FM "network" for some time, using tapes mailed from point to point, encompassing the cities of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Win-

ipeg and Vancouver. All these centres (except possibly Winnipeg) are now broadcasting in stereo, making the costs of an instantaneous microwave network even more expensive and less likely to be implemented soon. But the tape exchange "network" will continue.

The CBS is as important to our present day cultural scene as the CPR railway was to the Canadian pioneers of yesteryear. Indeed, many of the Canadian compositions heard today in Canada and abroad were commissioned by the CBS and given their world premiere live on this network. The CBC International Service has secured performances of Canadian music around the world.

The Canadian League of Composers has also furthered the cause of Canadian music. In the early 50s concerts were organized by the League devoted exclusively to Canadian music at a time when Canadian compositions frequently were unable to obtain a first performance. Today most Canadian works are performed more than once. Practically all new works of any consequence are given at least a premiere although the second performance seems as elusive here as elsewhere.

Another major event in the advancement of Canadian music was the opening of the Canadian Music Centre in 1959. Founded by the Canadian Music Council with a grant from the Canada Council, the Canadian Music Centre had become by far the most important promoter of Canadian music in Canada throughout the 60s and increasingly has turned its attention to promoting Canadian music on an international scale. The Centre has catalogued and made copies available of most of the Canadian output. Tapes are also available of many works.

National musical associations have become increasingly active and effective in recent years. The Canadian Music Council hosts an annual conference with one aspect of the Canadian music scene in the spotlight each year. The Canadian Association of University Schools of Music (CAUSM) is a

reflection of the growth of music education in Canada with many new universities opening up in smaller Canadian cities, offering undergraduate degrees in music and several offering graduate degrees.

Canada has impressive conservatory systems including the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto and the Montreal Conservatoire which issue their own syllabi and regularly conduct examinations for diplomas and teaching certificates. The syllabi listings have of late become increasingly Canadian. Mention should be made of an institution unique in North America: the six Conservatoires de Musique du Québec (Montréal, Québec City, Chicoutimi, Trois Rivières, Val D'Or and Hull), financed entirely by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the province, so that no talented student, no matter how poor, need be saddled by instruction fees. The Western Board of Music is an examining body.

The competitive music festival is another well-established feature of Canadian musical life, as oft damned as praised, and represents one of noticeable differences from the American musical scene. Recent years have seen the addition of Canadian composer sections in the festival syllabi and 1970 witnessed the first Canadian music festival (held in Toronto) devoted exclusively to music of Canadian composers — mostly contemporary.

Books on, and records of Canadian music, are still scarce but increasing somewhat. Our small population, separated by large geographical distances, dictates against a significant output without more government subsidization. This is now happening through the Canadian Music Council in regard to the editing and publication of books on music in Canada. The Canada Council (in collaboration with the Centre) is carrying out a project for the subsidy of publication of music. (The Canada Council and the Canadian Music Council are often confused with each other.) Hopefully funds will be made available soon for recording Canadian works as well.