

Modernisms on the Air: CBC Radio in the 1960s

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To reflect a nation's culture—and help create it—a broadcasting system must not minister solely to the comfort of the people. It must not always play safe. Its guiding rule cannot be to give the people what they want, for at best this can be only what the broadcasters think the people want; they may not know, and the people themselves may not know. One of the essential tasks of a broadcasting system is to stir up the minds and emotions of the people, and occasionally to make large numbers of them acutely uncomfortable.

—*Report of the Committee on Broadcasting* (the Fowler Report), 1965¹

Introduction

In the 1960s, contemporary music became a more audible part of Canadian life. The Canadian Music Centre and the Canada Council for the Arts had emerged as bulwarks of support for Canadian composers, who had relied on patchwork networks for resources, promotion, and advocacy²; adventurous independent presenters such as Ten Centuries Concerts in Toronto and the Société de musique contemporain du Québec in Montreal had begun to stake out territory on concert stages, programming concerts of new and “unheard of” musics;³ and, the centennial celebrations of 1967 produced nearly 130 new musical works by Canadian composers.⁴ Throughout the decade, CBC Radio and Radio-Canada⁵ played a central part in disseminating musical modernisms with weekly programs such as *World of Music* (until 1963) and *Music of Today* (from 1964 through to 1977), in addition to special programs, live concert broadcasts, and in 1967, Canada's centennial year, the ambitious seventeen-LP series *Music and Musicians of Canada* produced by the CBC's International Service in partnership with RCA Victor. Radio documentaries on Canadian composers and other international modernist icons were expertly researched and produced to draw listeners into the myriad sound worlds of

twentieth-century composition. Glenn Gould, having famously abandoned live performance in 1964, took refuge in the climate of creative freedom afforded by CBC management during the decade to explore the possibilities of sound, recording, and listening in radiophonic composition.

This chapter considers CBC Radio's role in that milieu as part of broader transitions in Canadian media history. Indeed, the sixties brought a mix of challenge and opportunity: facing acute pressures from dwindling listenership in the dual wake of television's ascendance, along with the proliferation of private and commercial radio stations, the Corporation responded by undertaking major changes in its infrastructure and programming. Radio had evolved into a more personalized medium by the mid-1960s, providing "individual companionship" for listeners at home, as John P. L. Roberts wrote in 1968.⁶ CBC turned its focus on radio's medium-specific possibilities that could cater to specialized listener tastes. The range and scope of its programming were elaborated with its expansion into FM transmission, and an increasingly robust commissioning mandate (after 1964) bolstered the amount of Canadian-composed music heard alongside contemporary works obtained by CBC's International Service. Although by decade's end listenership had diminished so much that its radio service was nearly shuttered altogether,⁷ prompting a rethinking of radio's place in a Canadian media ecology dominated by television, the convergence of these cultural-technological factors allowed—or perhaps forced—CBC Radio to not only embrace the rise of musical modernisms and the tensions of mass versus elite culture they embodied, but to become a critical part of their cultivation and institutionalization.

Culture, Modernism, and Broadcasting in Canada

On 4 April 1960, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation launched an experiment in FM network broadcasting. Slated to run during an eighteen-month trial period, CBC-FM broadcast for five hours during the week, from seven p.m. until midnight, and from noon until midnight on Saturdays and Sundays. The initial network was limited to Toronto and Montreal, featuring live bilingual content drawn from the Trans-Canada and French networks, and recordings provided by the International Service of CBC-Radio Canada. Since the introduction of television in Canada in 1952, radio was increasingly no longer able to serve the Canadian public as the nation's main broadcast medium as effectively as it once did, and the Corporation was looking for ways to adapt to the new technocultural landscape. Jody Berland writes of early radio's "space-binding magic" in crafting Canada's "origin story" as a nation in the 1920s and thirties, which "established a new topos whose participants could transcend their regional isolation and join in the realization of a political ideal, making explicit the technical process of their own geopolitical construction."⁸ Yet by the late 1950s, television had largely displaced radio's centrality in shaping a national imaginary: between 1952 (when the Corporation aired its first nationally transmitted broadcast in black and white) and 1956, the number of Canadians owning television sets increased from 146,000 to 2.3 million in *just three-and-a-half years*. Radio had "moved out of the living room," as the authors of the 1957 *Royal Commission on Broadcasting* wrote⁹—meaning that listening practices were transitioning from collective to something more personalized.

“Postwar programming and cultural policy,” Berland continues, “furthered the idea that it is not identity that produces national culture, rather cultural and political activity that engender—or conversely, threaten to disassemble—the nation.”¹⁰

Listening to radio by the late 1950s was becoming, increasingly, a solitary activity, and CBCs’ expansion into FM airwaves, with its greater frequency range, meant that music, and specifically concert music, became ideally suited to this new media ecology in Canadian life. John P. L. Roberts noted that despite the increasing number of televisions in homes across the country, Canadians were purchasing even greater numbers of personal radio sets in the early 1960s, and programming was beginning to reflect this opportunity to meet specialized tastes.¹¹ There was now, following Berland, a ripe opportunity for radio listening to become such a site of cultural activity in a manner and scope not previously imagined. Recounting a conversation with Eugene Hallman, then Director of Network Program Planning at CBC, the conductor Leslie Bell noted that FM broadcasting provided a timely alternative for audiences who’d made the move to television. Rather than trying to woo them back, “CBC Radio, said Hallman, need no longer concern itself with mass audiences and mass ratings.”¹² There was assumption on the part of CBC programmers that those who tuned in to the FM network were “cultured, intellectual listeners who want something better than AM radio quality normally provides.”¹³

Writing in 1963, Albert A. Shea emphasized the urgency felt by many about the role that a national public broadcaster had to play in the larger context of cultivating Canada’s identity. “It is no exaggeration to say that the survival of Canada depends on making use of modern communication to maintain the integrity and unity of the nation,”

he cautions in the foreword to *Broadcasting the Canadian Way*, a concise but highly polemical overview of Canadian broadcasting's turbulent history. "CBC-Radio Canada," argues Shea, encapsulating the Masseyist nationalism which had dominated arts and cultural policy for ten years, "is the principal instrument of communication available to provide the means of cultural survival."¹⁴

"Cultural industries were perceived as dangerous to the collective trust," Berland argues in a 2000 essay; "they were calculated, profit-oriented, geographically confined, continentalist smooth operators from which a potentially genuine culture needed to defend itself. It was not hard to build political consensus for the need to establish agencies and resources for the funding of Canadian art."¹⁵ Nationalism and modernism were intimately bound to each other in the 1950s and 1960s, as intellectual currents in post-war Canada flowed from what Berland calls as the "Massey-Innis constellation."¹⁶ The "covenant" of English Canadian modernism, writes Berland elsewhere,¹⁷ was a combination of several interlocking ideas that arose from a notion of the modern that was manifestly distinct from that of war-ravaged Europe. It eschewed the outright disavowal of traditional values, institutions, and privileges associated with pre-war European ideals in favour of a uniquely defensive formulation of nation-building that rejected American presence on airwaves; Canada's post-war nationhood depended on an increasing sovereignty of its communications infrastructure.

Yet, the onset of the 1960s was marked by structural upheaval in Canadian broadcasting. Two years before CBC Radio began its initial test-run into FM, the *Broadcasting Act* of 1958 had inaugurated a drastically new paradigm for public and private broadcasting in Canada: with the establishment of the Board of Broadcast

Governors (BBG), private broadcasters were no longer regulated by the CBC, which until that time retained the dual and conflicting identity of broadcaster *and* regulator; and further to this, the CBC itself, with its newly independent board of directors, reported directly to Parliament whilst simultaneously functioning under the regulatory purview of the BBG. More importantly, the notion of broadcasting as public service was made explicit in the *Act*: the BBG, under the new legislation, would be tasked with “ensuring the continued existence and efficient operation of a national broadcasting system and the provision of a varied and comprehensive broadcasting service of a high standard that is basically Canadian in content and character,” and would require any new licensees to “broadcast network programs of public interest or significance.”¹⁸

The CBC, as John P. L. Roberts relayed in a 1988 lecture at the University of Victoria on the history of broadcasting in Canada, was now faced with an uncertain mandate at the beginning of the 1960s as a “reduced” entity, operating on an equal level as private broadcasters, with an unclear direction. In the 1957 *Royal Commission on Broadcasting* (containing recommendations on which the 1958 *Act* was based), the CBC was urged to engage “with skill and vigour”¹⁹ in commercial activities—sponsorships, advertisements, and paid programming that the commissioners felt were “a proper feature of the Canadian system”²⁰; yet, under the new design of a bifurcated public and private landscape, as laid out in the *Act*, the CBC was left somewhat rudderless by the conflicting policy recommendations as well as the convoluted architectures of regulation and governance in which it was supposed to subsist. As Roberts recalls, it was more “by accident than by design [that] CBC Radio increasingly became the bastion of public

service broadcasting,”²¹ which by 1964, had done away with commercial programming and advertising altogether.

Marc Raboy, in his 2005 Graham Spry Memorial Lecture “Making Media: Creating the Conditions for Communication in the Public Good,” notes that the very notion of the ‘public good’ “highlights the historic tension between commerce and culture that has marked the development of communications in Canada and continues to mark it; it is in many respects the flashpoint of what different people mean when they talk about being ‘Canadian.’”²² This flashpoint of “historic tension,” as it became evident in policy, infrastructure, and programming in the 1960s, materialized in the proliferation of content on CBC Radio that, I suggest, reflected the anxieties felt by Canadian policymakers about American commercialization of private airwaves as well as it did Canada’s uniquely irresolute identity politics at the time—a politics marked by Canada’s geographical dispersal across a vast territory marked by centres of ‘culture’ and their antipodal peripheries, yet united in its emergence as a post-war middle power of tolerance, plurality, and multi-brow modernism. As Ryan Edwardson remarks, nationalism in 1960s Canada was itself a splintered affair between the Anglophilic modernism of the Masseyist regime, and the ‘new’ nationalists, who felt that Canadian sovereignty could be reclaimed from within. Both, he writes, shared a vision that the quest for nationhood was indeed a cultural pursuit.²³

“I Didn’t Mean to Cause You Pain”: Listening to the Avant-Garde on CBC Radio

Programming on CBC Radio during this decade included several series produced by freelance contributors who, under the supervision of Roberts (who, until 1964, was

Program Organizer of the National Music Department), were given a remarkable amount of creative independence. Composer John Beckwith, who by then had become a leading advocate for Canadian music, produced a number of programs and documentaries on CBC radio from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1960s, juggling other duties lecturing at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto and, as of 1959, writing music criticism at the *Toronto Daily Star*. His one-act opera *Night Blooming Cereus*, a major collaborative effort with the poet James Reaney, was premiered on *CBC Wednesday Night* on 4 March 1959, and rebroadcast a year later on 16 March. Chester Duncan, on the *Critically Speaking* program in 1959, remarked that Beckwith's opera was "the best Canadian work of its kind yet to appear. Best of all it gave you that tingling sensation that comes when you recognize a form, a manner, a talent with a future...in this case the right poet found the right composer."²⁴

Beckwith's program *The World of Music*, which aired from 1956 through to 1963, remains perhaps the most noteworthy of example of CBC Radio's engagement with modernist music as the 1950s drew to an end: adventurous in its curation, the show revealed Beckwith's catholic listening tastes, penchant for intellectual curiosity, and his keen awareness of contemporary international developments in composition. Originally broadcast on Tuesday nights, after 1960 it aired Sunday evenings from 11pm to midnight. Beckwith, in his 2012 memoir *Unheard Of*, recalls of *The World of Music* that his "programming ideas emphasized contemporary works but delved into corners of the classical (and sometimes non-Western) repertoire that had had little broadcast exposure but were starting to achieve a presence in the recording catalogues."²⁵ In one humorous recollection, Beckwith admits to having played Pierre Henry's *La Voile d'Orphée*, an

early example of *musique concrète* from 1953, at the wrong speed—having borrowed a tape produced in France, the calibration was wrong, and neither he nor any of the CBC technicians were aware of the error.²⁶

This broadcast, as Beckwith speculates, was likely the first time electro-acoustic music had ever been heard on Canadian airwaves; and, other broadcasts from *The World of Music* similarly exposed listeners to experimental and avant-garde sounds not previously heard on Canadian radio. In a December 1959 program, Beckwith featured the work of John Cage and David Tudor, and included as part of the show a lengthy excerpt of Cage's *Indeterminacy*. (It's likely that Beckwith would have been playing the recently issued LP on Folkways²⁷). The work, now an iconoclastic example of mid-twentieth century experimentalism, was at the time a daring injunction into the parameters of musical composition, recording, and intermediality: in one room, Cage read ninety stories within the interval of one minute each; increasing the pace of his speaking for some, and drawing out the text in others; in another space, separated acoustically from Cage, Tudor performed selections from Cage's *Concert for Piano* and played tape segments of the composer's *Fontana Mix*. Beckwith's broadcast received a large number of appreciative letters from listeners—more than any other broadcast. One, however, wrote a passionate missive to Beckwith arguing that what they'd heard didn't resemble music at all. He replied, apologetically, "I'm sorry if the program caused you pain. It wasn't meant to."²⁸

Indeed, at the beginning of the sixties, the sounds of the modernist musical world were increasingly starting to filter out of radio sets late at night on the national broadcaster; other examples from *The World of Music*'s playlists demonstrate Beckwith's expansive musical vision for the show. On 5 January 1960, program included Alan

Hovhaness' expressionistic *Duet for Violin and Harpsichord*, the dodecaphonic *String Quartet No. 2* by the American modernist Wallingford Reigger, and other works by Marga Richter, and Daniel Pinkham. For 19 January's program, "Contemporary Italian Music," Beckwith played Luigi Dallapiccola's *Tre Laudi*, the *Serenata I* for flute and fourteen instruments by Luciano Berio, and Riccardo Malipero's Second Violin Concerto. On 23 February, an extraordinary selection of experimental compositions by Japanese composers: Makoto Moroi's *Cantata da Camera* no. 1, Michio Mamiya's *Composition for Mixed Chorus*, Moroi and Toshior Mayuzumi's *Variations on Seven*, and Toru Takemitsu's *concrète* essay *Sky, Horse, and Death*.

In the spring of 1961, concerts, talks, and interviews with composers who attended the *International Conference of Composers* in Stratford the previous summer were broadcast on *The World of Music*. Now something of a footnote in Canadian music history, this symposium (held in the sleepy southern Ontario town known primarily for its Shakespeare Festival) brought more than thirty international composer delegates for a week of lectures, panels, and concerts—among the attendees were Berio, Blomdahl, Henri Dutilleux, Edgard Varèse, and Ernst Krenek; and remarkably for the time, Otar Taktakishvili from the USSR and Aurelio de la Vega from Cuba. Louis Applebaum, conference director (Beckwith and Udo Kasemets were conference secretaries), wrote in the foreword to the published proceedings that the CBC was "efficient and effective" in getting the conference broadcast nationally, and, with evident pride, recounted that the Corporation's International Service received and replied to some sixty requests for materials related to the conference: "It seems that throughout the world, interest in the Stratford meeting was even more widespread than we expected."²⁹

CBC Radio and Support for Canadian Composers

The International Service of the Corporation played an integral role as a “defence” mechanism for Canadian culture, both procuring for domestic broadcast recordings of news and later musical programming from networks in Europe, but also as an instrument of foreign policy: since the Second World War, the International Service (after 1970, Radio Canada International) began broadcasting to servicemen stationed in Western Europe, later sending transmissions to Scandinavia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. James L. Hall notes that during the 1960s, the International Service of the CBC was beset by two crises that threatened to spell the demise of the service. The first in 1963–64, began with a rumour circulated by an Ottawa insider that the International Service was going to be subject to “drastic curtailment, if not outright abolishment”³⁰ which sparked an “information campaign” waged by International Service management. Following the Fowler Report of 1965, which praised the efforts and efficacy of the International Service as a powerful contribution to Canadian foreign diplomacy, the International Service’s future seemed less uncertain—the Report recommended that the Service’s mandate be given clearer focus by its formal recognition within the Corporation, and that budgetary appropriations remain flexible to ensure its continued operation at pace with current technological requirements for sending and receiving transmissions abroad.³¹

Gilles Potvin was in the late 1960s the Chief of Music Production for CBC’s Transcription Service, the operations branch of International Service, which sent vinyl recordings for network broadcast around the globe. He recalls in a 1968 article in *Music Scene* that performances of Canadian compositions began to augment the news

broadcasts being disseminated to post-war allies, “projecting to foreign countries an image of musical life” across Canada.³² During Canada’s centenary year of 1967, as Hall observes (citing the broadcaster’s annual report), the Service had shipped over 46,000 hours of Canadian music recordings overseas.³³ Perhaps more so than any other year in the nation’s history, 1967 marked a year of extraordinary breakthroughs for Canadian music, and more specifically, for Canadian composers. Aside from big-ticket Centennial commissions broadcast by the CBC—such as Harry Somers’ *Louis Riel*, Murray Adaskin’s *Grant: Warden of the Plains*, and Kelsey Jones’ *Sam Slick*, Harry Freedman’s *Rose LaTulippe*, Schafer’s *Requiems for the Party Girl*, and Beckwith’s three-part soundscape composition *Canada Dash-Canada Dot*³⁴—the International Service, in partnership with RCA Victor label, undertook a project to anthologize Canadian music in recording that was without precedent in terms of its size, scope, and impact: the seventeen-LP set *Music and Musicians of Canada—Centennial Edition*.

It is difficult to overestimate the success of this initiative: the series was reviewed in American press (notably in the *New York Times* and the *Saturday Review*³⁵); featured on American radio;³⁶ a lengthy scholarly review by Kurt Stone appeared in *The Musical Quarterly*;³⁷ and, almost unbelievably, 77,000 copies of the LPs had sold within a year. “From general opinion,” Potvin concluded, “this initiative marks a red-letter day in the history of music in Canada and represents the first break-through of importance for Canadian music in the international world of records.”³⁸

The series featured works by thirty-two Canadian composers (see Appendix 1), and as Stone makes sure to highlight, at least half of the pieces date from the 1950s and before, and only one—Norma Beecroft’s *From Dreams of Brass*, on Vol. 11—features

electronic music. “In our era of constant change and intense search for new forms of musical expression,” he writes, “at least the more adventurous and experimental composers should have been represented by their most recent works.”³⁹ Stephen Godfrey and Val Ross, writing in 1992 in *The Globe and Mail*, made note of the series in a recollection of the Centennial’s zeitgeist, as being part of the “recording bonanzas which we will certainly never see again.”⁴⁰ The *New York Times* review by Howard Klein positioned *Music and Musicians of Canada* as a declaration of Canada’s firm place in the musical map as a “major power,” but not as a “world center of 20th-century composition.”⁴¹ Like Stone, Klein notes the avoidance of more current avant-garde trends predominant in Europe and the U.S., and as does Stone, hears in one of these records the “French influence” in Canadian composition. Yet where Stone in the *Musical Quarterly* observes RCA Victor’s uneven recording quality across the whole of the seventeen LPs, to the *New York Times* reviewer the sound was “quite good.”

One line from Klein’s review warrants special mention here, the penultimate sentence in an otherwise laudatory overview of the set: “It can be argued that Canadian composers are following the lead of musicians in centers such as New York, Fountainbleau, and Darmstadt, and the lack of electronic music in this survey shows that our immense neighbor to the north is lagging on that point.” An Americanized misspelling of Fontainebleau aside, Klein’s cavalier dismissal of Canadian music smacks of the condescension that composers and policymakers in the post-war years strove to temper with cultural exports such as these. John Beckwith was unimpressed, and wrote that aside from this particular (high-profile) review suffering from gaffes—including Klein’s ignorance of Canada’s robust electronic music activity and experimental

composition,⁴² and that there weren't enough Canadian composers to fill sides on the LPs⁴³—that “none of the public reviews ... seem to me to have shown either competence or thoroughness.”⁴⁴

Despite this ignorance, or perhaps because of it, John P. L. Roberts recalled that during the 1960s “the CBC paid more attention to Canadian Music and the commissioning of Canadian composers than ever before.”⁴⁵ By the middle of the decade, Roberts had become National Music Supervisor at the Corporation. His unfailing commitment to nurturing the critical relationship between national broadcasting and contemporary Canadian concert music is well known, and articulated at length in the many public lectures he gave on the history of CBC music policy. As he noted in his Masters thesis, “The Golden Age of Achievement: Four Aspects of CBC Music Programming 1950–1980,” Canadian concert music was indeed to play an increasingly important part of CBC’s mandate as the 1960s hurtled towards the centenary and its manifold displays of nationhood and modernity. Yet the Corporation’s robust support of home-grown art music was not without its tensions amongst listeners. “In daring to play a leadership role in this area,” he writes, “the CBC received a certain amount of abuse from members of the public who were not used to the sounds of contemporary music, and in some cases from the press as well as certain affiliated commercial stations.”⁴⁶ Worth noting is that throughout the 1960s, the CBC recorded a 60% increase in commissions, most of which came after 1964—and importantly, that after about 1970, the Canada Council became the main source of funding for Canadian composers. The CBC filled that role in the 1960s, marking a period in the history of Canadian art music that remains unmatched to this day. This was due in no small part to the unparalleled amount of live

broadcasts by the CBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Geoffrey Waddington, and produced by Keith MacMillan, later the Executive Secretary of the Canadian Music Centre in the latter half of the 1960s. Until its dissolution in 1964, the orchestra became a central conduit for Canadian composers to have their works performed live on air. Its last public concert on 7 March 1964, at the official opening of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto's Edward Johnson Building included Beckwith's *Concertino* for horn (with Eugene Rittich, soloist) and the then-teenaged Steven Gellman's *Piano Concerto* (who also soloed).⁴⁷ Roberts suggests part of the reason for its disbandment was its "tendency in later years" to veer away from Canadian music and to perform more traditional orchestral repertoire.⁴⁸

Norma Beecroft's *Music of Today*

In 1964, The FM network expanded to broadcasting in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver, and began "playing a vital role in CBC broadcasting by providing alternative programming to CBC AM stations in the cities in which it exists," as Roberts reported in 1968; "It caters to a variety of music audiences ranging from jazz buffs to those interested in the avant-garde."⁴⁹ That year, following the cancellation of Beckwith's *World of Music* in 1963, its successor, *Music of Today* began airing weekly on Sunday nights. Norma Beecroft, aside from her international reputation working in the metier of electroacoustic composition, had already ten years' experience in television and radio broadcasting. She began with CBC TV in 1954, and moved on later to work as a music consultant and later script assistant. For *Music of Today*, Beecroft first worked initially off the mic, with composer Harry Somers as the host until 1969; after, she acted

as host (but resigned as producer) until its demise 1977. Of this program, Somers wrote with evident admiration of its accomplishments, that it aired “interviews with some of the leading figures of the world contemporary music scene...together with their music [it] gave us in music the equivalent of the awareness of the world scene as art shows and literary conferences.”⁵⁰

An incomplete collection of scripts from *Music of Today* resides in the Special Collections of the University of Calgary Archives as part of the Norma Beecroft Fonds, and the author is grateful for the provision of a tabulation made of program themes, which provide a glimpse into the evolving nature of *Music of Today* over its thirteen-year run.⁵¹ In its first few years, the program focused on presenting composers from different geographical regions, as indicated by a representative selection of these broadcasts: Music from the Far East, airing 12 January 1964 (Isang Yun, *Music for Seven Instruments*; Yoritsune Matsudaira, *Somaksah*, Toshiro Mayuzumi, *Nirvana Symphony*); Italian-born composers, airing 22 December 1964 (Dallapiccola, Nono, Castiglione, Berio); and 1965’s calendar included programs by German, French, Scandinavian, British, Viennese, and Canadian composers. Although it is impossible to say for certain whether 1968’s programming decisions were in response to the reviews of *Music and Musicians in Canada*, that year featured a marked concentration on electronic music, with features on particular studios (Studio di Fonologia Musicale Rai, airing 24 July; Columbia-Princeton Music Centre, airing 7 August); longer compositions (Karl-Birger Blomdahl’s *Aniara*, airing 14 and 21 August); electronic music and ballet (16 October); and the voice (23 October); and, of course, electronic music in Canada (4 December). In 1969, jazz, third stream, and improvisatory musics featured prominently throughout the

year, with multiple programs highlighting the contributions of individual composers (Ellington, Gershwin) as well as non-Western expressions of jazz, innovations in jazz orchestration, and the manifold interconnections between aleatoric, improvised, and notated post-war musics.

Documentaries and Glenn Gould's Modernist Sounding of the Nation

Yet another important development on 1960s CBC radio was the proliferation of sound documentaries on modern music and composers that were produced and aired on various programs. *Music of Today* regularly broadcast hour-long documentaries on Canadian composers, which helped disseminate the oral history of musical modernism in Canada through in-depth and well-researched audio portraits; and Beckwith, contracted independently, produced features on modernist luminaries—Harry Partch, Wanda Landowska, Paul Hindemith, Pierre Boulez (for his 1965 Toronto visit), and Bela Bartók.⁵² Stravinsky's travels to Toronto during this time (see Kimberly Francis, this volume) resulted in two from 1962—the radio documentary “Igor Stravinsky: Inventor of Music,” and the CBC TV special “Stravinsky at 80” that aired in June, with commentary by Harry Somers, both created with enthusiastic participation of the composer.⁵³

Undoubtedly the most influential documentary to air on CBC radio in the 1960s was Glenn Gould's *The Idea of North*, commissioned for broadcast during Canada's Centennial. In a move that he admits was “not quite legal,”⁵⁴ Roberts had given Glenn Gould an office in the music department at CBC's Toronto Radio Office on Jarvis Street, after becoming National Music Supervisor. Gould's relationship with CBC radio during the sixties was a productive, multivaried one, and his withdrawal from the concert stage

in 1964 into the recording studio resulted in eight documentaries produced for the network that foreground the medium's possibilities. Karen Keiser suggests that "it was the radio documentaries that most demonstrated Gould's extraordinary appetite for auditory challenge and formal experiment," and more pointedly, that Gould was able to retain total control in all aspects of the creative process, revelling "in his precise determination of the finished product."⁵⁵

The first, a two-hour documentary on Arnold Schoenberg titled "The Man Who Changed Music," was broadcast 8 August 1962 on CBC's flagship program for concert music, *CBC Wednesday Night*. A well-received and "sophisticated mélange of interviews and recorded music,"⁵⁶ Gould later felt that even it was "too linear."⁵⁷ His next, produced five years later, evidenced the multidirectional, immersive, and mosaicized aspects of McLuhanist media theory, of which Gould was a notable adherent. This documentary, "The Search for Petula Clark," aired on 11 December 1967 on the program *Ideas*.⁵⁸ Gould begins the piece by describing the journey northward to the timber town of Marathon, Ontario in a not-so-subtle rhetorical move that also signals a psychological transformation into some remote, solitary state of mind, when suddenly the current object of his obsession appears on the radio in his car, Petula Clark's current hit "Who Am I?," a then-ubiquitous presence on the radio. Gould pivots from Clark into a lengthy excursus about contemporary pop music, subjecting her hits to analytic scrutiny with awkward and misplaced structural observations about the harmonic language used in her arrangements and other examples from the contemporary popular repertoire. The documentary appears to blur the line between tongue-in-cheek cultural analysis and morbid fascination, replete

with disdainful throwaway lines about popular culture, and hints of repressed sexual tensions that make passing appearances in the script in the guise of casual misogyny.⁵⁹

Gould here might be poking fun at music criticism of the period, with its high-mindedness, tendency towards armchair musicology (towards the end he pokes at the “Princetonian Babbity” of musical analysis) and moral loftiness in the age of youth culture and generational dissonance between the old and the new; but as it draws near its conclusion, listeners are drawn into Gould’s real reason for harbouring such zealous attraction to Clark’s hit: in the refrain ‘Who am I,’ Gould hears the question resonate unsettlingly along the lines of cultural identity, and as we’re returned to the northern climes of Marathon from the twisting and kaleidoscopic narrative, it is clear that Gould is asking questions about radio’s role in Canada’s maturation from a dominion colony to cultural sovereign. ‘Who Am I’ he posits, is an introspective question of growth: “Clearly it’s a question of identity crisis, vertiginous and claustrophobic, induced through the traumatic experience of a metropolitan environment (and quite possible aggravated by sore feet).” The song is the thematic obverse of Clark’s first hit “Downtown,” with its exhortations of innocence, wonder, and immersion in the urban bustle; and, as *The Search for Petula Clark* fades out, we hear a panoply of mock overseas broadcasts (recited by Gould in his best impressions of foreign radio voices) as an imagined listener scrolls the dial, in contemplative solitude.

In this view, *The Search for Petula Clark* might best be thought of as an injunction against the fairly monolithic view, operative in so much post-war cultural policy, of (American) mass culture’s dangerous vacuity and deleterious effects on national growth, as Gould makes an initially vexatious but ultimately piercing case for

Petula Clark's artistry—pleaded with the humorous eccentricity for which Gould is well known. But in another, *The Search for Petula Clark* is prelude to Gould's iconic work *The Idea of North*, which aired only two weeks later, on 28 December. Both thematize travel (actual and metaphorical) from metropole to antipode as a narrative starting point, and both investigate the unsettled contours of geographical identity. *The Idea of North* was a breakthrough in production techniques, as Gould's so-called "contrapuntal radio" featured overlapping voices weaving a polyphonic narrative about white settler experiences of Canada's north. Scholars have lauded Gould's method in *the Idea of North* as a means of centring a notion of listening as "proactive"⁶⁰—one participates in its plural vocality by asking radio listeners to attend to the simultaneity of democratic discourse. Ajay Heble writes that "Refusing to privilege one voice or meaning at the expense of others, Gould, in effect, invites us to recognize that the combination of simultaneous voices (each significant in itself) results in a complex, but nevertheless coherent, structure."⁶¹ Heble, a few years later, suggests that Gould's *Idea of North* is about "the need to learn *how* to listen,"⁶² that the aural simultaneity of Gould's speakers amounts to a modality of listening marked by its "salutary process of dehierarchization," which allows for ways to "recognize and revalue underrepresented voices and perspectives, to pay attention to those voices that have traditionally been marginalized or neglected."⁶³

In *The Idea of North*, the narration of environment coalesces around the notion that north, more than a physical geography, represents a fundamental disquiet at the heart of the Canadian persona. Gould interviewed five settler Canadians about their experience living in the north, and what drew them there, and methodically assembles them into a nonetheless monologic imagining of north that conforms to post-war Canada's desire for

national myth. “The idea of North is a Canadian myth,” R. Murray Schafer says. “Without a myth the nation dies.”⁶⁴ As an assembly of ideology, rhetorical moves, performative representations that are shifting, unfinalizable, and unstable, north as a Foucauldian discursive formation shows us the “crucial constitutive activity of discourse at work.”⁶⁵ Gould composes north as a *terra nullius* (in the words of one of his interviewees), with its Indigenous inhabitants subject to a compositional erasure that paralleled Canada’s attempts at removing Inuit communities as a part of its intense post-war colonization of the Arctic. North is a sickness that infects the minds of settlers otherwise sound in mind and body—described variously as “impossible,” “inconceivable,” and a landscape of noise and incoherence. Indeed, for all the artifice of multivocality in Gould’s piece, a persistently singular thread unfolds across its compositional arc: that Canada’s north is “war,” as the documentary’s main narrator Wally McLean puts it, a surrogate battlefield where unresolved tensions of cultural identity play out in a time of uneasy post-war introspection.

Conclusion

Zeroing in on Gould’s two documentaries from 1967 might appear to offset the balance of this chapter’s otherwise bird’s-eye overview of musical modernisms on CBC Radio in the 1960s under John P. L. Roberts’ leadership; but they are illustrative examples not only of Canada’s conflicting visions of its post-war cultural identity, but equally of how experimental approaches to programming became part of an unofficial national broadcasting strategy. They encapsulate the new vision of radio hinted at in the *Royal Commission on Broadcasting* in 1957, although probably not precisely as

policymakers imagined: radio could be, in this new television age, not just a medium for sound-based programming, but a critical locus of Canadian modernity with all of its anxieties, antinomies, and aspirations.

Roberts writes that “up until 1970, the policy of CBC management was to allow those in charge of music to operate freely, without written objectives, in order to provide what they believed to be the best and most imaginative kind of public service broadcasting.”⁶⁶ But as the decade ended, so did this progressive environment. The 1970 Meggs-Ward Report, written to prepare CBC Radio for the next generation of the television age, warned if the CBC did not create more information and news-based programming it would become irrelevant. In cautioning against a continuation of the CBC’s role as a de facto state patron of art and culture, they write that the Corporation should not be in the business of “merely making grants to writers and musicians.... The Canada Council and the growing number of provincial and local arts boards fill this role.”⁶⁷ As Roberts sums it up: the “experts were ‘out.’ Ordinary folk were ‘in.’”⁶⁸

As well, the dual system of governance that separated public from private established by the 1958 *Broadcast Act* was eradicated with an update to the *Act* in 1968—the same policy change that eliminated the Board of Broadcast Governors and created the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC). So as the 1950s drew to a close, so did the 1960s with yet another refiguring of the broadcast and communications regulatory landscape. After 1970, concert music and newer forms of music were considered elitist. The limited channels of CBC and competition with commercial radio meant striking a balance was an ever-greater challenge. But it was not all news and sports: *Music of Today* remained a bastion of contemporary composition

until 1977, and its successor, *Two New Hours* premiered in 1978, hosted first by Warren Davis, and later Augusta La Paix and Larry Lake, aired weekly until 2007, providing a singular resource for Canadian composers for nearly thirty years. Gould's experimental documentaries continued apace throughout 1970s as well: after *The Latecomers* (1969), he produced *Stokowski: a Portrait for Radio* (1970, created at the suggestion of Roberts⁶⁹) *Casals: a Portrait for Radio* (1974); *Schoenberg: the First Hundred Years*, (1974); and *The Quiet in the Land* (1977).

Many other initiatives by Roberts and the CBC were platforms for new Canadian music throughout the sixties—and contemporary music from around the world—to thrive on air, but it is impossible to list them all here. Roberts himself, after retiring from the CBC following his thirty-year tenure at the helm of music supervisor, delivered a number of public lectures on CBC Radio policy during the 1980s and 1990s, several of which I quote in this chapter. They provide a more extensive chronology of radio programming choices, special concerts, festivals, and series where musical modernism sounded across airwaves in an abundance that was unique to the 1960s.⁷⁰ As a champion of Canadian contemporary music in particular, Roberts was instrumental in fostering a climate of optimism and creativity for home-grown composers during the sixties that has never quite been matched. Music, at least, on CBC Radio during this decade was perhaps a vehicle for innovation of the kind urged by the authors of the 1965 Fowler Report. “To all radio broadcasters we say: Free your radio policies from the shackles of past practices and traditions. Get going!”⁷¹

Notes

¹ Canada, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer, 1965), 4.

² The Canadian League of Composers was one early resource, founded in 1951 by a small handful of composers frustrated with the isolation and lack of awareness about Canadian music.

³ See John Beckwith, *Music Papers* (Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1997), 72–90, for an overview of the growth of specialist music groups dedicated to presenting avant-garde programs to subscription-based audiences in Toronto during the 1960s. He writes, “small groups—in Montreal with composers like [Serge] Garant and [Gilles] Tremblay, and in Toronto with Udo Kasemets—started devoting workshop-like presentations to music that was seldom heard in live conventional concerts at that time—music by composers such as Webern, Ives, Varèse, John Cage” (74–75).

⁴ George Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 151.

⁵ This chapter is concerned primarily with English broadcasting. This is not to ignore the important developments of the French network, Radio-Canada, which played an equal if separate role in disseminating contemporary music during the 1960s. Maryvonne Kendergi was especially important in this regard, who was host and producer for numerous radio and television programs.

⁶ John P. L. Roberts, “Communications Media,” in *Aspects of Music in Canada*, ed. Arnold Walter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 180.

⁷ Barry Kiefl, “CBC’s Future Should Look Like its Radio Past,” *The Globe and Mail* (6 January 2014), A9.

⁸ Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 105.

⁹ Government of Canada, *Report: Royal Commission on Broadcasting* (Ottawa: Edmund Cloutier, Queen's Printer, 1957), 205.

¹⁰ Berland, *North of Empire*, 107.

¹¹ Roberts, “Communications Media,” 187.

¹² Leslie Bell, “An Experiment in Network Broadcasting,” *Canadian Music Journal* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1961), 14.

¹³ Bell, “An Experiment in Network Broadcasting,” 17.

¹⁴ Albert A. Shea, *Broadcasting the Canadian Way* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1963), xiii.

¹⁵ Jody Berland, “The Politics of the Exasperated: Arts and Culture in Canada,” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 3 (September 2007), 24–25.

¹⁶ Referring here to the view of nation and culture espoused by the statesman Vincent Massey (1887–1967) and the influential political (and early communications) theorist Harold A. Innis (1894–1952).

¹⁷ Jody Berland, “Nationalism and the Modernist Legacy: Dialogues with Innis,” in *Capital Culture: a Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art*, eds. Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 17.

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- ¹⁸ Government of Canada, *An Act Respecting Broadcasting* [Broadcasting Act of 1958] (Ottawa: Edmund Cloutier, Queen's Printer, 1958), 140.
- ¹⁹ Canada, *Report: Royal Commission on Broadcasting*, 186.
- ²⁰ Canada, *Report: Royal Commission on Broadcasting*, 174.
- ²¹ John P. L. Roberts, "Canadian Broadcast Policy and the Development of Concert Music 1930–1980," (Lecture, March 25, 1988, University of Victoria), 30.
- ²² Marc Raboy, "Making Media: Creating the Conditions for Communication in the Public Good (2005 Graham Spry Memorial Lecture)," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, no. 2 (2006), 294.
- ²³ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 136–137.
- ²⁴ *CBC Times*, 12, no. 36 (December 1959), 12.
- ²⁵ John Beckwith, *Unheard Of: Memoirs of a Canadian Composer* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 122.
- ²⁶ Beckwith, *Unheard Of*, 123.
- ²⁷ John Cage and David Tudor, *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music*, Folkways FT 3704 (LP), 1959.
- ²⁸ John Beckwith Papers, Faculty of Music Library, University of Toronto. CA OTUFM 10-C-1.1956-63-78596 rbsc.
- ²⁹ Louis Applebaum, "Foreword," *The Modern Composer and His World*, eds. John Beckwith and Udo Kasemets (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), ix.
- ³⁰ James L. Hall, *Radio Canada International: Voice of a Middle Power* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 102.
- ³¹ Canada, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting*, 188–89.
- ³² Gilles Potvin, "180 Years of Canadian Music," *Music Scene* 244 (November-December 1968), 5. The first three records produced for dissemination were: Claude Champagne's *Suite Canadienne* and Healey Willan's Concerto in C Minor; music by John Weinzwieg, Jean Coulthard, Georges-Émile Tanguay, and Ernest MacMillan performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra; and finally, the music of Alexander Brott and Tanguay performed by the CBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jean Beaudet. By the late 1960s, Potvin writes, more than 130 works by Canadian composers had been recorded and sent out.
- ³³ Hall, *Radio Canada International*, 111.
- ³⁴ Commissioned for *CBC Tuesday Night*. Part one, "The Line Across," aired November 1965; part two, "The Line Up and Down," in December 1966; and part three, "Canada Dot," in November 1967.
- ³⁵ Howard Klein, "You Can Stay at Home and Still Hear the Music of Canada," *New York Times* 7 May 1967, 158; Patricia Ashley, "Music and Musicians of Canada," *Saturday Review* 29 April 1967, 66–67.
- ³⁶ According to radio schedules posted in the *Boston Globe*, selections from *Music and Musicians of Canada* aired Sunday evenings from 8–9pm WGBH 97.1 FM in August and September, 1967; similar broadcasts occurred in Chicago in October, and the series was likely aired elsewhere.
- ³⁷ Kurt Stone, Review, "Music and Musicians of Canada," *The Musical Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (July 1967), 440–452.

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- ³⁸ Potvin, “180 Years of Canadian Music,” 6.
- ³⁹ Stone, Review, 443.
- ⁴⁰ Stephen Godfrey and Val Ross, “Oh What a Time it Was,” *The Globe and Mail* 1 July 1992, C1.
- ⁴¹ Klein, “You Can Stay at Home and Still Hear the Music of Canada,” 158.
- ⁴² Electroacoustic music studios at Toronto and McGill had been, as is well known, operative since the 1950s; Otto Joachim and Udo Kasemets had been, since the early 1960s, composing aleatoric works to considerable notice.
- ⁴³ Several non-Canadians appear on the series, whose works Klein assumes “were used to fill remaining side space.”
- ⁴⁴ John Beckwith, “Notes on Criticism,” *Music Scene* (September-October 1967), 4.
- ⁴⁵ Roberts, “Canadian Broadcast Policy,” 32.
- ⁴⁶ John P. L. Roberts, “The Golden Age of Achievement: Four Aspects of CBC Music Programming 1950–1980” (Masters Thesis, Carleton University, 1987), 119.
- ⁴⁷ Roberts, “The Golden Age of Achievement,” 124.
- ⁴⁸ The CBC relied also on the services of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, but due to a lack of any written contract, this proved problematic to both parties—the latter of whom expected the Corporation to hire the symphony in full. Roberts, “The Golden Age of Achievement,” 125.
- ⁴⁹ Roberts, “Communications Media,” 195.
- ⁵⁰ Quoted in Roberts, “The Golden Age of Achievement,” 133.
- ⁵¹ My thanks extend to Allison Wagner, Senior Rare Books and Manuscripts Advisor, for sending this list.
- ⁵² Beckwith recalls these projects in *Unheard Of*, and the research and preparation involved in preparing each for broadcast (pp. 129, and 357, n. 14).
- ⁵³ It merits note that another CBC documentary, in partnership with the National Film Board, details the CBC Symphony Orchestra and the Festival Singers of Toronto’s recording of Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms* at Massey Hall, conducted by the composer. The work was recorded in 1963 and released on Columbia Records. The documentary, *Stravinsky*, was directed by the German expatriate Wolf Koenig in 1966.
- ⁵⁴ John P. L. Roberts and Ghyslaine Guertin, eds., *Glenn Gould: Selected Letters* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), vii.
- ⁵⁵ Karen Kieser, “Glenn Gould and the CBC,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (date unknown), http://www.cbc.ca/glenngould/KIESER_1.pdf Accessed 12 February 2018. .
- ⁵⁶ Kevin Bazanna, *Wondrous Strange: the Life and Art of Glenn Gould* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003), 228.
- ⁵⁷ Quoted in Ghyslaine Guertin, *Glenn Gould: Universe of a Genius* (Quebec City: Osmora, 2007). ePub.
- ⁵⁸ Gould had published, earlier that year, an article of the same. Glenn Gould, “The Search for Petula Clark,” *High Fidelity/Musical America* 17 (November 1967), 67–71.
- ⁵⁹ “Bound as she might be by limitations of timbre and range,” he reads in a backhanded compliment, “she would not accept any corresponding restrictions of theme and sentiment” in her music; later, “. . .and with a voice, figure, and—at a respectable distance—face that betray few of the ravages of [being a mother of two at thirty-four years of age] she is pop music’s most persuasive embodiment of the ‘gidget’ syndrome.”

⁶⁰ Kevin McNeilly, “Listening, Nordicity, Community: Glenn Gould’s “The Idea of North,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 59 (Fall 1996), 87. McNeilly writes, “For [Gould], listening is a means of participating, directly, crucially, in the multiple streams of human presence in the world. And it is precisely that complex humanity that the North demands its apologists face and embrace, not simply for its pleasant illusions, but also for its difficult and forbidding beauties.”

⁶¹ Heble, “New Contexts in Canadian Criticism: Democracy, Counterpoint, Responsibility,” in *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, eds. Ajay Heble, Donna Palmateer Pennee, and J. R. (Tim) Struthers (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 1997), 90. Heble uses Gould’s contrapuntal method as a model for criticism: “While Gould’s contrapuntal radio techniques have been criticized for the absence of ‘coherent series of statements,’ his abandonment of authoritarian structures of meaning and his emphasis on multiple voices speaking simultaneously have the potential to encourage the kind of critical climate...[that is] conducive to the production of responsible scholarship.” “New Contexts of Canadian Criticism,” 90.

⁶² Ajay Heble, “Sounds of Change: Dissonance, History, and Cultural Listening,” *Essays on Canadian Writing* 71 (Fall 2000), 28.

⁶³ Heble, “Sounds of Change,” 29.

⁶⁴ R. Murray Shafer, *On Canadian Music* (Bancroft, ON: Arcana, 1984), 63.

⁶⁵ Sherrill Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 27.

⁶⁶ Roberts, “Canadian Broadcast Policy,” 27.

⁶⁷ Cited in Ross Allan Eaman, “‘The Story is Only the Platter on Which the Personality is Served’: The Debate Over Media Integrity on CBC’s Literary Arts Programming, 1948–1985,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 40, no. 3 (2015), 531.

⁶⁸ Roberts, “Canadian Broadcast Policy,” 38. The report, written by Peter Meggs and Douglas Ward, was written in consultation with called for more information-based programming on the English network.

⁶⁹ Bazanna, *Wondrous Strange*, 308.

⁷⁰ Many of these are available to view on the “John P.L. Roberts, the CBC and Music in Canada Digital Collection,” an initiative of the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections. It is online at:

<https://cdm22007.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/jpr>

⁷¹ Canada. *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting*, 270.