

**Canadian Music and Music Education: An Annotated Bibliography of Theses and Dissertations.** By Diane E. Peters. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997. xvii, 476 p. \$62 U.S. ISBN 0-8108-3275-5

Writing a thesis can be a thankless business. You lock yourself away from society for years on end and stare numbly at a blank sheet or computer screen, hoping that you have a thesis in you and wondering how to make it come out if you do. As you persevere with your obsession, eventually you become an erudite bore on the subject of your elucubrations and a pariah to family and friends alike. ("For heaven's sake, Aunt Audrey, if he corners you, don't ask him about the thesis!").

Somehow, though it costs you your sanity, you manage to finish your thesis one day and proudly have a few copies of it bound. Shining trophies to your selfless advancement of human knowledge, and a surefire ticket to a job in academia, you think. Well, maybe. But the sad truth of the matter is that your work is more likely destined to become roadkill on the information highway.

It gets worse: rampant academic inflation diminishes the value of your thesis every year. There was a time within living memory when you could reasonably expect to be eligible for a university teaching position with a master's degree. Now you need a doctorate and a string of publications, and preferably Ivy League teaching experience.

No wonder graduate students are prone to serious cases of despair and depression. Indeed, you can consider yourself lucky if you manage to finish your thesis and live to tell about it, judging by the titles of some self-help manuals for graduate students (e.g., *Surviving Your Dissertation* and *How*

*to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation*).

But none of this deters people from getting on with the business of writing the things. *Dissertation Abstracts OnDisc* (DAO) currently has a million and a half graduate dissertations on file, and 45,000 more are added each year. DAO covers virtually every graduate school in the United States and Canada, and many in Europe, so one would think that there is nothing more to add, but Diane E. Peters has shown otherwise. Her book lists theses and dissertations written on the subject of Canadian music and music education, and it includes many works not covered by DAO.

Peters is a librarian at Wilfrid Laurier University. She had previously compiled *Music in Canada: A Bibliography of Resources in W.L.U. Library*, but now has cast her net over a much wider field. She admits in the introduction that the present book was begun as an exercise in learning to use a new word processing program. It was intended to be a limited project, but grew into a book of substantial dimensions. I was surprised to see how many works she had unearthed on the subject of Canadian music (1,204 in all), until I realized how inclusive her selection criteria were. Many of the theses have little to do with Canadian music, and others, quite frankly, will be unlikely to excite much interest.

One which did excite my interest, or at least my curiosity, was no. 1082, a Ph.D. thesis on male and female exotic dancers. After reflecting upon the strenuous research that the author must have done, I found myself wondering

what his work has to do with Canadian music. On closer reading, I learned that some of the subjects involved were students at the School of Music at the University of Windsor (they were controls, incidentally, not exotic dancers). I can appreciate that the temptation to include this thesis must have been irresistible, but it does rather stretch the boundaries of our conception of Canadian music studies.

To test one measure of the usefulness of this book, I decided to determine how many of the theses I would actually like to see. In the first place, I eliminated all the composition theses, because most composers that I know are not even interested in their own such works. Then I ruled out theses in the psychology of music category. These are mostly pseudo-scientific studies that test self-evident hypotheses such as "Different sorts of people enjoy different sorts of music" or "Some people find listening to some kinds of music relaxing." (Maybe I have a distorted view because I almost failed first-year psychology once upon a time, but there you go.)

Next to be eliminated were the music education theses, another field in which I have little interest. I went on to exclude historical and biographical studies of organizations or individuals that I have not heard of, and the excruciatingly detailed analyses of compositions that I do not know. At the end of this process, I was left with four items that caught my interest (well, three if you leave out my own thesis).

My conclusion, though, is that even if most of these theses do not interest you, it is still worth your while to consult this book to find the three or four that do. The problem then will be getting your hands on them. If they

are available through University Microfilms International or the National Library of Canada (and luckily my three were), they can be ordered by phone. Otherwise, you will have to track them down through the interlibrary loan system. A few of these dissertations have been published, making them more readily available (e.g., no. 150 by Beverley Cavanagh and no. 287 by Maria Calderisi), but Peters unfortunately does not provide this information.

About 60 per cent of these theses were written in English and 40 per cent in French (I found only one in German, no. 1148, a study of Mennonite hymnody in North America). Nearly 200 of them were written at American universities, a handful were done at European institutions, and the rest are Canadian in origin. A dozen or so are bachelor's theses, but the rest are master's or doctoral level studies. The earliest thesis in the book is no. 132, a study of Native dance written by Martha Warren Beckwith at Columbia University in 1906. The most recent one seems to be no. 345, a dissertation completed in 1995 on the subject of the country music performer Art Fitt, written by the appropriately named John Wisdom Mackay.

The actual cutoff date, though, seems to have been 1994. With so many theses included here, it seems churlish to point out omissions, but there are a number of theses from 1994 that did not get included, e.g., Diane Begay's M.Mus. thesis from the University of Ottawa on Alexina Louie, and Frederick Schipizky's D.Mus. composition, a double bass concerto, from the University of Toronto.

The book is handsomely indexed, with separate listings by author, title, institution, and subject. The index of institutions reveals that only a handful

of universities seem to encourage Canadian music studies. The top five, with the number of theses completed there in brackets, are University of Toronto (175), Université de Montréal (132), University of Western Ontario (108), Université Laval (85), and University of Alberta (76); they account for nearly half of the theses listed in the book.

The subject index shows that some favoured topics have included music in Quebec (113) and Ontario (70), folk music (82), Native music (53), curriculum planning and evaluation (41), and women composers (26). Only seven Canadian composers have been the subject of more than five theses: Violet Archer, John Beckwith, Barbara Pentland, Murray Schafer, Harry Somers, John Weinzweig, and Healey Willan.

A curious feature of the subject index is that it sometimes includes more information than the actual entries do. Thesis no. 21, for instance, is a study of piano music by Canadian composers. The annotation gives only the names of the composers whose works are included in the study, but the subject index gives the names of the pieces as well. This is contrary to normal indexing practice, but it works well here.

Most of the annotations seem to be abbreviated versions of the summaries provided for *Dissertation Abstracts* by the author of the respective theses. The annotations vary greatly in length, from just a word or two (or even none at all) for the compositions, up to about 250 words. Even the longer annotations, though, feature a distinct lack of definite and indefinite articles, making them sound rather like news reports filed by telegram: for example, "Survey of string quartet in Canada from 1790 to 1989 ... Discusses number of notable

Canadian quartet ensembles," (no. 28).

The book is not without its errors. Kenneth Winters did not edit the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (p. xvi); Alan Forte should read Allen Forte (no. 42); for Beverly read Beverley Cavanagh (no. 150); the capital of Newfoundland is St. John's, not St. Johns (no. 181); for George David Wiebe read Robert Allan Wiebe in no. 436; 1976 should read 1876 in no. 518; Wing-Wah Chan used a p'i-p'a, not a p'a-p'a in his Symphony no. 2 (no. 803); Sasha Weinstangel completed his D.Mus. thesis (no. 988) in 1990, not 1988; and what M.Sc.L. stands for (the degree earned by no. 1184) is not explained in the list of abbreviations on p. xiii.

But I quibble. In point of fact, I admire the sheer tenacity and sleuthful resourcefulness which it must have taken to compile this book. I do not envy Peters the task of having done it, but I am glad that she took on the job, for now we can and will all profit from the fruit of her labour.

Addendum: Plans are afoot for an electronic searchable archive called Canadian Music Dissertation Abstracts. This will contain theses written in Canada and abroad, both by and about Canadians and their musical enterprises. It will be edited by James Deaville at McMaster University (he has consulted with Peters, so there will be no overlap of effort here), and accessible at the Canadian University Music Society website [www.utoronto.ca/cums/](http://www.utoronto.ca/cums/). The archive will be updated annually, which means that the splendid work that Peters has already done will be continued indefinitely on into the future.

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