

CANADIAN WOMEN COMPOSERS CONFERENCE

-Deborah Wills

Leddy Library, University of Windsor

It was my great pleasure to help organize a conference on Canadian women composers that took place at the University of Windsor, March 11-12. The initiative came from Janice Drakich, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, who envisioned a public celebration for a group that often goes unrecognized. Instead of a conventional academic conference, Dr. Drakich wanted to include the creative contributions of artists and community members. She won the support of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Windsor, the Canadian Federation of University Women, and fifteen sponsoring groups at the University of Windsor. It was a truly interdisciplinary venture!

Beginning with a concert by the Windsor Symphony that featured two works by Barbara Pentland, it continued with panel discussions by scholars and composers, a keynote address by Elaine Keillor, dramatic performances celebrating composers from Canada's past, and an exhibit combining the contributions of past and present composers. Over 60 scholars, musicians, educators and others attended the conference. Some highlights:

Pre-Conference Talk

One of the most enjoyable events was a pre-conference talk by Tamara Bernstein, a Toronto musician and arts journalist, who helped us celebrate International Women's Day. She discussed connections between feminism and music, using lively examples from her own experience and well-chosen excerpts from the music of Ann Southam, Hildegard Westerkamp and others. Her talk, accessible to musicians and non-musicians alike, left the audience clamouring to hear more works by Canadian women.

Video

As we waited for the conference to begin, we were entertained by a video produced to promote the conference. Lori Krech, a communications student, did a superb job of integrating interviews with conference organizers, key moments from rehearsals, items from the exhibit, and music by featured composers.

Scholars' Panel

The issues included: finding a place for women's music, the growing interest in Quebec's women composers, music and power, and the reality of "feminine" musical constructions. Participants: Virginia Caputo, Marie Thérèse Lefebvre, Geraldine Finn and Elaine Keillor.

Composers' Panel

Carol Ann Weaver began with a well-researched talk on feminine themes in composition. Then Mary Gardiner described her experience of raising a family before turning seriously to composition; although she calls herself "late-blooming," she impressed us with her life-long drive to compose. Andra McCartney brought to life the experience of a woman in the male-dominated realm of electroacoustic music. To conclude, Elma Miller provided a lively, off-beat

Our Canada, From Sea To Sea

ARTHUR STRINGER

GENA BRANSCOMBE

Maestoso con anima

1. Our Ca-na-da, from sea to sea, Four signs of va-lour know; The
2. But as our nor-land summers wane, And all our flow'rs have fled, The
3. And tho' they wandered far, and felt The an-cient tie wear thin, The
4. Lord God, Who made this good-ly land, Keep us, Thy chil-dren meek, But

this-tle and the flour-de-lys, The sham-rock and the rose. For
home-sick heart turns home a-gain, When ma-ple leaves turn red. Re-
knew the wait-ing mo-ther kneit To take her chil-dren in. So
let us still u-ni-ted stand, From sea to moun-tain peak... Lord

hard-i-hood the this-tle stands, The sham-rock is for grief; The
gret-ful broods the an-tumn air, The green fades out to gold; And
all our ma-ple hill by hill, As sum-mer meets its close, A-
God, Who kept our fa-thers strong, Give us their strength of
soul, To

li-ly and the rose join hands To make the Ma-ple Leaf
back the out-land bro-thers fare To hearths they knew of old.
-wake and flame, and give us still The red of Eng-land's rose.
know Thy voice thro' clam-rous wrong And keep our Em-pire whole.

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summation of her experience as a composer; she demonstrated her ability to constantly reexamine and reinvent her world.

Dramatic Presentations

The dramatic presentations were a special highlight of the conference: University of Windsor students researched the lives and music of three composers, creating original dramatizations and delighting us all with their skill and enthusiasm. At the end, a conference member who had worked with one of the composers congratulated the actress on having exactly captured this composer's spirit.

Lionel Walsh directed Roula Khayatt as Sophie Eckhardt-Gramatté, Rachel Lai as La Bolduc, and Claire Jullien as Gena Branscombe. The students were fortunate to receive help and encouragement from the families and descendants of the composers.

Exhibit

The exhibit, housed at Leddy Library, brought together photographs, manuscripts, recordings, books, and memorabilia of the featured composers. The designer, Barrie Jones, made a backdrop of banners with the names of past and present composers, interspersed with some of their own words. One of my favourite quotations: "I believe in music which encourages participation rather than just admiration" (Micheline Coulombe-Saint-Marcoux).

We had great luck collecting materials for the exhibit. For example, Ferdinald Eckhardt lent a number of striking photographs of his wife, and donated several CDs. We obtained pictures and memorabilia of La Bolduc from le Musée de la Gaspésie. To find material on Gena Branscombe, I sent messages to the CAML and MLA listservs. The result: a phone call from Gena Tenney Phenix, Gena Branscombe's daughter, who provided photographs, manuscripts, tapes and other valuable items. The tapes have now joined the Branscombe collection at the National Library, and the other materials are at the University of Toronto.

Aftermath

We were delighted with the response from the conference attendees, one of whom was kind enough to write: "it was one of the most innovative, intellectually stimulating and uniformly excellent conferences I have ever attended on any subject."

Special thanks to Ramona Lumpkin, Dean of Continuing Education, for leading us through the last busy months. Proceedings will be available from the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Windsor.

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| Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté | |
| CD1 Sonata No. 1 (1923), E. 45 ① (i) <i>Allegro moderato</i> ② (ii) <i>Andante</i> ③ (iii) <i>Allegro</i> Sonata No. 2 (1923), E.46 <i>"Die Biscaya Sonate"</i> ④ (i) <i>"Landscape" - Lento ma non troppo</i> ⑤ (ii) <i>"Storm" - Allegro risoluto</i> ⑥ (iii) <i>"Lonesome Biscaya after storm" - Andante</i> ⑦ (iv) <i>"Final (El Puerto)" - Allegro</i> Sonata No. 3 (1924), E. 52 ⑧ (i) <i>Lento, Allegro ma non troppo</i> ⑨ (ii) <i>"Ländlicher Tanz (Rondo)" - Vivo e marcato</i> ⑩ (iii) <i>"Kronung" - Largo sostenuto</i> ⑪ (iv) <i>"Spanischer Tanz 'Villa rosa'" - Lebhaft rhythmisch</i> | CD2 Sonata No. 4 (1927-31), E.68 <i>"Die Belirete Sonate"</i> ① (i) <i>Allegro agitato e con fuoco</i> ② (ii) <i>"Nocturne" - Lento</i> ③ (iii) <i>"La Comida de ratas del campo" - Prestissimo e molto preciso</i> ④ (iv) <i>"Preciso"</i> Sonata No. 5 (1950), E. 126 <i>"Klavierstück"</i> ⑤ (i) <i>Mässig, jedoch lustiges Tempo, grotesk, rhythmisch -</i> (ii) <i>Ruhiger, frei fantasierend, klangerreich und nicht schleppend</i> ⑥ (iii) <i>Vivo ma non troppo</i> Sonata No. 6 (1952), E.130 <i>"Drei Klavierstücke"</i> ⑦ (i) <i>For left hand alone, Prestissimo, e molto preciso</i> ⑧ (ii) <i>For right hand alone, Lustig und mit Witz</i> ⑨ (iii) <i>For both hands, Vivo assai e marcato</i> |
| Marc-André Hamelin, piano | |
| <small>Recorded in the concert hall of the Chapelle du Bon Pasteur, Montreal. PIANO BY FAZOLI. Manufactured in Great Britain. © 1991 The Eckhardt-Gramatté Foundation and Altarus Records Limited.</small> | |

S.C. Eckhardt-Gramatté
The Six Piano Sonatas



Walter Gramatté • Somnambules Maedchen, 1923

Marc-André Hamelin



The Eckhardt-Gramatté Foundation