Compositional Crossroads

Music, McGill, Montreal

Edited by Eleanor V. Stubley

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Edited by

ELEANOR STUBLEY

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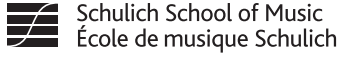
From the Dean



Dear Friends

Welcome to *Compositional Crossroads*. As Dean of the Schulich School of Music of McGill University, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this volume of essays that are both reflections on, and a celebration of, "new music" at McGill: reflective because new music continues to require careful introspection to meet its challenging and challenged status in contemporary society; celebratory because *Compositional Crossroads* marks both an intersection and a turning point in the history of music at McGill. The idea for this volume evolved during the planning of our one-hundredth anniversary season in 2004–05. That same season witnessed an exceptional range of events, including – to cite but a few of the more than 650 concerts and special projects that took place – honorary degrees for Joni Mitchell and Jane Eaglen; the successful revival of Canada's national opera *Louis Riel*, by Harry Somers and Mavor Moore; the second edition of the international new music Montréal, Nouvelles musiques festival international; the official opening of our state-of-the-art New Music Building expansion; and the naming of the Faculty as the Schulich School of Music in recognition of an unprecedented philanthropic gift to arts and higher education in Canada from McGill alumnus and businessman Seymour Schulich. New music at McGill has been a driving force in the development of our unique profile, which today balances the finest professional training in musical creation and performance with demanding humanities-based study of music and groundbreaking scientific-technological and interdisciplinary research on music and sound. Without losing its championship of traditional compositional craft, new music at McGill has

taken us from early specialization in electronic music, to sound recording, to music technology, to digital composition, to a university-leading interdisciplinary position in musical research and creation. We do not know what the future will bring, but if the past is any indication we can expect many exciting new directions to emerge. Now, I invite you to pause with us at this intersection, and then to continue the journey together as we forge new paths for new music in the times ahead.

Don McLean,
Dean, Schulich School of Music of McGill University

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INTRODUCTION

Crossroads

Crossroads …
– a place where two or more roads intersect
– an oasis between destinations where travellers gather for refreshment and renewal before continuing their own individual journeys
– a critical turning point in a spiritual quest for self-hood.[1]

The idea that Canada has a musical history worthy of being told is relatively recent, having first been articulated by Helmut Kallmann in 1960.[2] Rather than harvesting the fruits of a thousand generations of civilization, however, that story has been one of an emerging "new music" culled from the struggle and toil of pioneers preoccupied not with matters of high culture but with the physical and economic realities of founding a nation. Initially the story focused on the musical pastimes of the people of Canada, the concern being not so much the music itself as the role it played in people's lives. Then, as the nation evolved, this musical history became a quest for the seeds of a national identity, a search to discover what aspects of this "new music" made it distinctly Canadian. It was an approach plagued with problems, the very variety of compositional techniques and sonorous languages used by Canadian composers reflecting a global musical landscape that, like "new music," was continually changing and evolving. We have subsequently entered what Linda Hutcheson describes as a post-national era.[3] While all that is Canadian remains its ground, the goal is to understand that which is "new" in music.

In this task, *Compositional Crossroads* charts untravelled terrain, taking as its object the emergence of the Faculty of Music, McGill University as "a centre of new music." In so doing, it conceptually aligns itself with recent studies of nineteenth-century musical life in the Royal Academy and the Paris Conservatoire, as well as Henry Kingsbury's

ethnomusicological study of the twentieth-century American conservatory.[4] Only where these studies focus primarily on the internal life of the academy as a place apart, *Compositional Crossroads* recognizes the integral public role that the Canadian university music academy plays, both in the training of musicians and in the production and celebration of "new music" more generally. It is also written by the creative musical voices of insiders – the composers, students, and musicologists who, having invested the place with the richness of their own imaginations, are its life. The approach acknowledges the growing importance currently attached to memory and self-representation in archival documentation, while simultaneously recognizing the intricate inter-relatedness between place and identity, community and individual, faculty and students. The result is a series of snapshots that, flashed one after the other in quick succession, capture the vibrant life of a prestigious North American music academy at the turn of the twenty-first century standing on the threshold of a new beginning as the McGill University, Schulich School of Music.

The study is divided into two parts. Part one considers the various institutional pathways that, through a confluence of historical circumstances, have come to define the architectural infrastructure of the Faculty of Music as "a centre of new music" – the compositional programs, the Electronic Music Studio and its supporting research facilities, the visiting scholar programs, the catalytic inspiration of composer-performer collaborations, and the impact of McGill Records. Part two uses composer-work studies to explore the different musical languages sustaining this architectural infrastructure. The intent is not to provide a comprehensive listing of those languages but to document how the musical expression of composers, musicologists, and students, while part of this place, both feeds on and enriches the global "new music" landscape more generally. A closing epilogue uses the sound of the "new" at the beginning of the twenty-first century as a means of looking to the future. It, in turn, is followed by a chronology and an appendix that lists commercial recordings of the works cited in the body of the study.

As historical self-representation, the study focuses primarily on the explosion of "new music" activity that occurred during the last half of the twentieth century and through which the Faculty's sense of itself as a "centre of new music" evolved. Chapter topics were the outgrowth of an internal dialogue begun in 2004 during the Faculty's celebration of 100 years of music at McGill. Authors were selected for their expertise or relationship to a particular institutional pathway (for example,

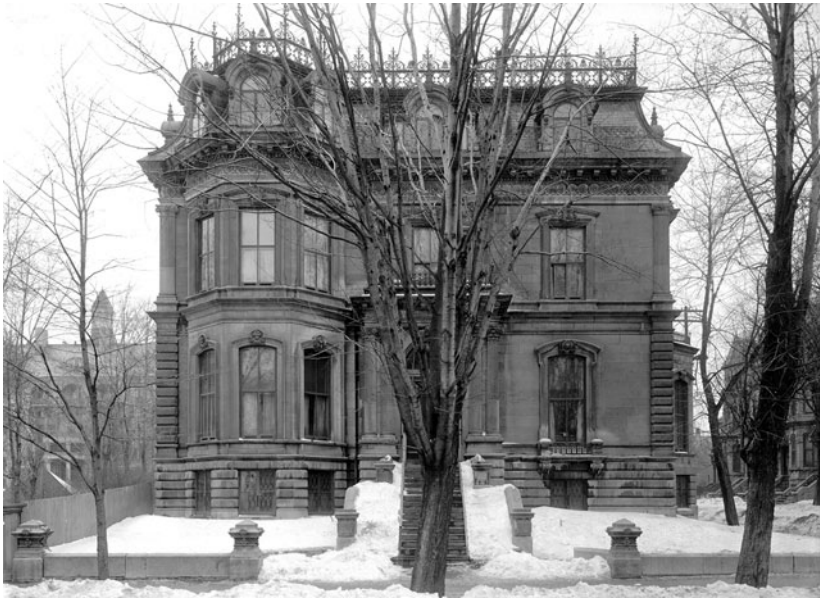
director of the Electronic Music Studio, founder of McGill Records, active role in a visiting artist program), musical genre, compositional language, or composer's work to allow for a mixing of individual personalities, as well as faculty, student, and research perspectives, that would reflect what McGill composer and Canadian music scholar Brian Cherney has described as the "eclecticism of the period."[5] Since this eclecticism defies a linear approach, the two parts are preceded by introductions designed to outline the broad strokes of the over-arching historical narrative. The brief biographical sketches placed at the beginning of each chapter serve to contextualize authors and their methodological approaches. As self-representation, moreover, individual chapters should be read not only for their scholarly content but also for the ways in which various themes, events, and people identified by the different authors recur, resonate, and otherwise interact with one another. Readers are, consequently, encouraged to explore the book's offerings in a variety of ways, allowing the authors' voices to be heard against the background of their own memories and experiences, the "snapshots" that, according to ethnographer Caroline Brettell, are the essence of self-representation "lying not only in the record, but also the ways in which readers find meaning in it."[6]

The story begins not in 2004, however, but in 1899. Montreal lies in the fork of the Ottawa and St Lawrence Rivers at the exact point where, according to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the two founding directorates of Canada meet.[7] A traveller coming up the St Lawrence sees glittering steeples and copper domes against the pastoral grandeur of a distant mountain and finds in the scene an ancient spiritualism that seems to emanate from the land itself.[8] Another coming across from the mainland admires the beauty of a bridge, seeing in its contoured arcs and finely tuned suspension a city of the future.[9] Yet another, arriving by rail from New York, sees the city first from the inside and compares it to the fruits of the Dead Sea, "fair and tempting to look upon, but when tasted … against the bite of the cold wind … nothing but ashes and bitterness."[10] All three travellers are going to McGill University. Two are visitors curious to see what pen and pencil artist John Argyll described in 1885 as "a seat of wisdom, well worth taking in."[11] The third, Clara Lichtenstein, has been invited by Chancellor Lord Strathcona to develop a music program for young women at the Royal Victoria College. His is the vision of a colonial imagination that sees Montreal as a city in need of cultural reproduction, a makeover befitting its status as the largest and wealthiest city in Canada. He has chosen Clara Lichtenstein because of

her reputation as both a talented performer and an inspired pedagogue. "Tall, willowy, with well-formed shoulders and thighs, and a pale face suggesting frailty," she is also the perfect image of the Victorian woman born of class and privilege.[12]

Music having always lent a certain dignity to the ambience of the University as a "seat of wisdom," it is not the first time that music has been heard at McGill. Nor is Lord Strathcona's vision shared by all. While many would agree that musical training is an essential attribute of the cultivated young woman about to be wed, most would argue that it is not an intellectual pursuit worthy of academic credit.[13] But Clara Lichtenstein, in addition to instilling in her students "a good and proper technique," will introduce classes in theory and music history, believing that the application of expressive performance techniques demands an understanding of the language of music itself.[14] Her vision more closely aligns the study of music with the formalist aesthetic feeding the University's other arts and literature courses.[15] Several of her more talented students receive rave reviews in Europe and New York, making it possible to re-envision Lord Strathcona's cultural makeover not simply as a matter of recapturing a way of life left behind but as an integral part of the commodity exchange that financially sustains Montreal itself.[16] Capitalizing on the change in the prevailing wind, Charles Harriss, "a veritable musical Napoleon, always engaged in a tonal campaign somewhere,"[17] forges an alliance with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in London and in 1904 music achieves what philosopher Edward Casey defines as the first two attributes of place: a name – The McGill Conservatorium of Music – and a physical space of its own – the Workman Mansion at 799 Sherbrooke Street West.[18]

With the change in status, there is much to applaud. New instructors are hired to extend course offerings to include selected orchestral instruments. Distinguished Montreal composer, conductor, and critic Guillaume Couture, later described by Léo-Pol Morin as "the first great musician in the history of Canadian music," improves instruction in voice and sight-singing.[19] Ties to the larger academic community are strengthened through the addition of two science courses, one in musical acoustics, the other in vocal physiology and hygiene. Degree requirements in turn demand that students demonstrate their mastery of the language of music by completing at the bachelor's level a "compositional exercise," a twenty-minute work for four-part chorus with string accompaniment, and at the doctoral level a fully orchestrated oratorio, opera, or cantata containing eight-part writing and a fugue.[20]



McGill Conservatorium of Music, the Workman Mansion. Reproduced by permission of the McGill University Archives, www.archives.mcgill.ca/resources/db/photosarchives.

For the first time, Director Charles Harriss notes in his end of year report, the musical offerings at McGill cater to the needs of both the "cultivated woman and the educated man of letters."[21] The language spoken, however, is largely that of the British Anglican cathedral tradition, a situation that ultimately serves to enflame the deep-seeded religious and linguistic tensions dividing the French and the English. Although many continue to assert that the Conservatorium has the potential to "propagat[e] a high musical standard across the Dominion," the Mountain that casts its shadow across the Workman Mansion and that has historically made McGill "a seat of wisdom, well worth taking in," appears an obstacle yet to be surmounted.[22]

The next chapter of the story begins in 1920. In 1909, in an effort to improve community relations, Charles Harriss's successor H.C. Perrin had used his newly acquired powers and privileges as a professor to develop a uniquely Canadian system of examinations supported by graded syllabi that included, in addition to standard repertoire, compositions by local musicians – himself, Charles Harriss, Graham Moore, Saul Brant, H. Barbieri, and two French composers who had once

taught at the Conservatorium, Guillaume Couture and T. Dubois. This new system severed the Conservatorium's relationship with the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music. Tied to the development of a Canadian music publishing industry, it also initiated a tradition of writing music that lay outside the ritual of the Church, which subsequently linked compositional identity to Canada as a distinct nation (albeit for educational purposes). The Conservatorium, however, remained largely isolated, geographically and metaphorically, on the peripheral edges of the University, the director's elevation to professor, the first such appointment in Music, having come at the expense of a reduction in teaching staff that left instruction a reflection of the tattered sitting rooms and parlours in which it unfolded. The First World War had also had an impact, music, as one examiner put it, "being essentially an art for times of peace."[23]

In 1920, though, hope springs eternal. Montreal, swollen by a giant wave of immigrants and a renewed measure of prosperity, has grown such that the Mountain now marks the place where country and city, old and new, meet. The once colonial imagination has been replaced by a sense of national pride, an awareness of the way in which battles won and lost overseas have come to define us not as French or English but as Canadian. And everywhere music seems to be bringing people together, using the cloak of darkness on long and blustery winter evenings to build bridges between communities that would otherwise be divided by language or social class. As one railway porter working the Chicago-Montreal run will recount thirty years later, it was not unusual to look in the window of a tavern and see a Negro at the piano, a French-Canadian with a cello, and a singer, "face hidden, bending over the piano … held together in the strange rapture" of a moment that despite "its curious discords" knows "nothing but the lonely little theme being repeated over and over."[24]

In these times of change, H.C. Perrin, quoting William Blake, writes to the new principal, "Music need only follow its own example as an art in which the ordering of materials aligns itself with the soul."[25] This short letter, couched in a language that appeals to the principal's sense of moral responsibility as the general who led Canadians to victory at Vimy Ridge, is enough for Sir Arthur Currie. Music at McGill is reborn – this time as a Faculty, an autonomous space within the University that has equal stature as a particular domain of knowledge with the other arts and sciences. Its future, however, is anything but secure. The University lacks both the concert hall facilities and the

critical body of musicians necessary to sustain the first-rate orchestra on which Perrin's vision hangs.[26] There is also a growing perception amongst the intellectual elite of the University that the curriculum is "falling behind the times."[27] Part of this stems from Perrin's public disdain for what he describes as "ultra-modern" music, music that in its "freedom from restraint ... hair-raising chords ... [and] unexpected endings" fills the listener's ears "with such a jumble of sounds as to stupefy him [sic]."[28] Equally important is an emerging new aesthetic that, fed by a growing historical consciousness and the literary criticism of the McGill Modern Movement, frames art as an emotional expression of or a response to a particular time and place.[29] Perrin's orchestral programming, while presenting Montreal premieres of works by Beethoven and Schubert, reflects a romantic idealism out of step with the harsh urban dissonances that, not unlike the effect of "a broken and wind-battered branch" in a Group of Seven landscape, make Montreal a "scarred" and "lonely land."[30]

The situation is not helped by the Depression and the economic devastation resulting from a city plan that, in failing to anticipate the winter closure of the harbour, leaves Montreal trapped four months of the year. The idea of Montreal as a "lonely land," however, fosters a new sense of identity, not merely as a crossroads but as a place to be mined for its own riches.[31] It is a sense of self as unique that, when combined with the emerging expressionistic aesthetic, manifests itself artistically in new poetic forms and in what has since become known as the Beaver Hall Group, an educational program in the visual arts that encourages the development of the artist's individual voice.[32] The new climate initiates a gradual change in the focus of instruction within the Faculty that transforms composition from an activity or "exercise" through which one demonstrates one's mastery of a language into an expressive act in and of itself.[33] Central to the process is the inspired teaching of Alfred Whitehead and Claude Champagne, both of whom emphasize a consummate technique put to the service of originality. Claude Champagne also leads by example, having developed through his *Suite Canadienne* (1927) a reputation with the French elite in Paris for investing the arts of modern Canada with a really homegrown flavour.

Perrin's successor, Douglas Clarke, uses his position as conductor of the newly formed, fully professional Montreal Orchestra to showcase the compositions of both staff and students, arguing that if students are to develop their own voices they must be able to hear their works.[34]

His programming is part of a larger vision that promotes music not as a form of social entertainment but as a human need, a spiritual essential with the power to "transmute … the dullness of grubbing minds … into something which shines with the stars."[35] His vision is intended to strengthen the position of the Faculty within the University by framing it as (what we today would call) a Foucaultian hub or centre that feeds and sustains the needs of the masses in a time otherwise seemingly bereft of hope.[36] Unfortunately Clarke's modern tastes rarely extend beyond Vaughan Williams, Grainger, Elgar, and Holst, while the French embrace Bartók, Debussy, Ravel, and Scriabin. By the 1940s the Montreal Orchestra has folded, Claude Champagne has left to assume a position at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, and the Faculty once again stands lost in the shadow of the Mountain, at odds with the French and curtailed by the tragedy and despair of another world war.

The next chapter of the story begins in the early 1950s. Canada's war efforts have capped our growing sense of nationhood through a seat at the United Nations. Montreal, however, despite its contributions to those efforts, seems once again trapped within itself, this time as a haphazard urban sprawl shackled by the conservative and Catholic policies of a Union National government intent on preserving a French way of life found only in the spiritual havens of the rural countryside. It is, in the words of the avant-garde painter Paul-Émile Borduas, a time for "refus global," a time for the people to reject the "prejudices of the past" and take "charge of their own destiny."[37] But union calls for the separation of church and state go unheard. Veterans have joined the ranks of the unemployed that "flow in two rivers along St Catherine Street," oblivious to the glitter of the unobtainable goods hidden behind the street's glass facades and the grittiness of its sidewalks.[38] The port, its impending facelift as part of the new St Lawrence Seaway not yet imagined, is "a jumble of ancient relics," filled with what poet/songwriter Leonard Cohen calls "public men" who speak what are now "Montreal's many different languages."[39]

The Mountain, with the city now sprawled haphazardly around it, has become, in the words of poet F.R. Scott, "a house of peace amidst the tumult," "an oasis away from unruly wilderness or the floodtide of faraway seas" where one can envision the possibilities of the future.[40] At its foot, the Faculty of Music seeks to resurrect itself from the rubble of the demolished Workman Mansion in the Shaughnessey House, another old mansion located at 40 Drummond St. Spearheading the effort are three

men. Two – Alexander Brott and Marvin Duchow – are homebred, having completed compositional studies with Claude Champagne. The third, Helmut Blume, is a relatively new arrival whose long and circuitous journey to McGill from internment camps for "enemy aliens" includes a continuing career with the CBC as head of the International Service. While the University administration actually believes that the Faculty has become a corpse, their talk is only of expansion and growth, the goal a program of study that will distinguish the offerings of the Faculty from those of the government-supported Conservatoire de Montréal.[41]

Their proposal resembles the star-shaped urban map of Copenhagen that will come to serve as the template for the redevelopment of Montreal in the 1960s and 1970s – with the five prongs representing professional career options jutting out from a core of theoretical and historical studies. These career options, embracing performance, composition, radio, opera, and school music, are innovative for the time, and are, the three men believe, a Canadian-made solution designed to fit the needs of the community and carry the reputation of the University into the future as a leader.[42] Principal Cyril James is not easily persuaded. First, the Faculty has only three full-time staff and virtually no students. Second, the plan, by disassociating the curriculum of the Conservatorium from that of the Faculty, grants degree status to performance. It is not the first such degree in Canada, performance degrees having been introduced at Acadia University some years earlier, but for James, there remains, as in 1899, a question of academic integrity.

As discussions continue, a fourth man, István Anhalt, is using cold and blustery winter evenings to introduce Montreal audiences to the music of Bartók, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg. He has come to McGill through the philanthropy of Lady Isabelle Henriette Davis, a wealthy aristocratic woman dedicated to the betterment of humanity through scholarship and the arts. Anhalt finds Canada "a wonderfully, exotic, interesting, exciting country full of opportunities," a place where he can put down roots, "a country with which he can grow."[43] Intent on understanding Canada's "keys" and developing his own artistic voice as a response to them, he also frames composition as an experiment. In the eyes of Cyril James, his is an approach that aligns music with the progressive character of research in the sciences.[44] It is not much, but when combined with the persistence of the "three deans" as they had come to be known, it is enough to prevent the immediate closure of the Faculty. For Marvin Duchow, and later Helmut Blume, it is an

opportunity to "make the impossible happen."[45] And although the five prongs of the original star have been reduced to three – composition, school music, and performance – the seeds that will ultimately define the potential of the Faculty of Music as a "centre of new music" (among other things) have been sown.

NOTES

1 This definition of a crossroads was metaphorically composed from a variety of sources, including *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); *Kopernickus*, an opera by Montreal composer Claude Vivier; and John Argyll's *Canadian Pictures: Drawn with Pen and Pencil* (London: Clay and Sons, 1885).

2 Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada, 1534–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).

3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

4 See, for example, Rafael Cadoso Denis and Colin Trodd, *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

5 Email correspondence with Eleanor Stubley, 14 September 2006.

6 Caroline Brettell, *Writing against the Wind: A Mother's Life History* (Wilmington, Delaware: S. R. Books, 1999), 12.

7 See, for example, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's speech on the occasion of his inauguration as prime minister of Canada, 11 July 1896. It is a theme that runs throughout his tenure.

8 Clara Lichtenstein, letter to Lord Sherbrooke, 12 July 1899, McGill University Archives, RG39, Administration Records, 1904–1966, Subject and Information Files, ca. 1908–1968, container 0028, file 00120, Clara Lichtenstein.

9 Geologist B.W. Sleigh, letter to Principal William Peterson, 14 September 1899, McGill University Archives, RG2, Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Office of the Principal William Peterson, Administrative Records, Memorandum, container 0017, file 00016. One of McGill's famous landmarks at the time was a geology museum.

10 Sara James, letter to her husband, 13 February 1899, *Scenes of Montreal*, McCord Museum Archives, RG147, Miscellaneous Correspondence, container 49, file 13.

11 John Argyll, *Canadian Pictures: Drawn with Pen and Pencil* (London: Clay and Sons, 1885), 66.

12 Lord Sherbrooke, memo to Principal William Peterson, 12 October 1898, McGill University Archives, RG 2, Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Office of the Principal William Peterson, Administrative Records, Royal Victoria College, container 0010, file 0003.

13 Associate Dean Bruce Minorgan notes, for example, that as early as 1894 G. (presumably Guillaume) Couture is reported as suggesting that a chair of music theory be created at McGill, as it "would be of much greater benefit to the country than the establishment of a conservatory," email correspondence with Eleanor Stubley, 12 October 2005.

14 Lord Sherbrooke quotes Graham Moore in a memo of 2 February 1904 to Principal Peterson. Moore makes the point himself in his 1905 end of the year Examiner's Report on the Conservatory, McGill University Archives, RG2, Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Office of the Principal William Peterson, Administrative Records, Royal Victoria College, container 10, file 00229; RG39, Faculty of Music and Curriculum, Administrative Records, container 0010, file 00229.

15 At the time, the basic premise behind arts courses was that one taught literature as a means of acquiring the language of writing and that the best instructors were those who were writers themselves. This can be seen most directly by the list of instructors and the titles of the courses offered. The power of this formalist aesthetic within the academic setting has also been noted by Denis and Trodd in *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century.*

16 In a memo to Lord Sherbrooke of 13 March 1905, Principal William Peterson writes, "we can no longer think of ourselves as a land to be tamed, but a homestead capable of spawning and sustaining its own expressive artistic voices." McGill University Archives, RG2, Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Office of Principal William Peterson, Administrative Records, Royal Victoria College, container 0010, file 0003.

17 Percy Scholes, quoted in "Charles A.E. Harriss," in *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, ed. Helmut Kallmann and Gilles Potvin, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 587c.

18 Edward Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (New York: School of American Research Press, 1996).

19 Léo-Pol Morin goes on to describe Couture as "the most intelligent, the most learned, and the most cultured (musician) of his time." See "Guillaume Couture," Papiers de musique, Archives Université de Montréal, 1930. Guillaume Couture was the grandfather of composer Jean Papineau-Couture, who taught at the Conservatoire de musique du Montréal (1946–63) and the Faculté de musique, Université de Montréal (1951–82).

20 McGill Conservatorium Syllabus, 1904–05.

21 Charles Harriss, 1904–05 End of Year Report to Principal William Peterson, McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, container 0010, file 00229.

22 Graham Moore, "Examiner's Report," 1905. Moore, the representative of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, composed several examination pieces in the early years.

23 Saul Brant, "Conservatorium Sessional Report, 1915–16," in *Conservatorium Calendar, 1915–16*, McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, container 0010, file 00231.

24 This scene was told to author Morley Callaghan in a café on St Antoine St. Callaghan later incorporated it in *The Loved and the Lost* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1951), a novel which explores the sensitive subject of race relations in Montreal.

25 Perrin, letter to Sir Arthur Currie, 13 March 1920, McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, Records of the Dean and Director, container 0001, file 0015.

26 Charles Harriss had given performances in the large, open-air stadium used for sports events. Perrin's model of the ideal concert hall, similar to halls in London, is held in McGill University Archives; see, www.archives.mcgill.ca/resources/db/photosarchives, PR 027736.

27 Sir Arthur Currie, letter to the chancellor, 22 October 1929, McGill University Archives, RG2, Office of Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Office of the Principal Arthur Currie, Arthur Eustace and Lewis Williams Douglas, Administrative Records of Principal Currie, Records Relating to Academic Matters, container 0061, file 00132; Currie's letter is concerned primarily with a conversation with two Montreal poets, F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith, who eventually became part of the McGill Movement. See note 29 below.

28 H.C. Perrin, "Some Thoughts on Contemporaneous Music," lecture notes, McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, Curriculum, container 0046, file 02494. Beginning in 1916, Perrin also gave regular public lectures on "Mannerisms of Music from Different Times."

29 In the first years of the Conservatorium, the compositional thread was understood as the "modern." The growing historical consciousness was part of a larger world phenomenon that led to history courses entitled "Historical and Modern Musics." Within the University it was fed by Perrin's centenary celebration performances of works by Beethoven and Schubert. The McGill Movement, later known as the Montreal Movement, was a group of anglophone Montreal poets who, rejecting the pastoral images of the countryside typical of Québec and Canadian poetry at the turn of the century, cultivated a more socially

critical orientation inspired by T.S. Eliot. It was to become a poetic genre that was to be embraced by English Canada at large. See Peter Stevens, *The McGill Movement: Critical Views on Canadian Writers* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969).

30 A.J.M Smith, "The Lonely Land," in Stevens, *The McGill Movement*, 96; Smith was one of the founders of The McGill Movement.

31 For further discussion of the mythology of isolation as it pertains to Canadian identity and islands more generally, see Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972); Carolyn Strange, *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

32 The Beaver Hall Group was a group of Montreal artists who developed an educational program for the community that made mastery of language and technique subservient to imagination or vision. One of the primary forces behind this movement was Anne Savage.

33 This shift is documented in the end of year sessional reports that make specific reference to the compositional teaching, rather than simply documenting the appearances of Faculty and Conservatorium staff as performers. See also Alexander Brott's *My Lives in Music* (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 2005).

34 This viewpoint is most fully and clearly expressed in Graham Clarke's article, "Young Composer Needs Guidance in His Writing," in *McGill News*, 1954, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Conservatorium; McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Records of Director and Dean, container 0001, file 00090.

35 Douglas Clarke, undated lecture to students, McGill University Archives RG39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, Curriculum, container 46, file 02496.

36 This position is articulated in particular in Douglas Clarke's 1937 end of session report, McGill University Archives, RG39, Faculty of Music and Curriculum, Administrative Records, Annual Reports, container 0046, file 02451.

37 See Paul-Émile Borduas, *Écrits/Writings, 1942–58* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).

38 Hugh McLennan reflecting on his memories of the years leading to the Quiet Revolution of the sixties, cited in Bryan Demchinksy and Elaine Kalman Naves, *Storied Streets: Montreal in the Literary Imagination* (Toronto: MacFarlane, Walter and Ross, 2000), 89.

39 Leonard Cohen, "Les Vieux," in *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1956), 17.

40 The McGill Movement, F.R. Scott, "Reflections on Montréal," McCord Museum Archives RG 169, The McGill Movement, container 62, file 12.

41 Paul Helmer, "McGill University," unpublished manuscript, 2005, notes that this was a goal imposed by Principal Cyril James, who saw music at McGill best

defined not as a faculty but as a department that taught the language of music and trained teachers for the schools.

42 This plan is detailed in a twenty-five-page report completed in 1955, "On Plans for the Re-organization of the Faculty and the Conservatorium of Music of McGill University," McGill University Archives, RG 39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Curriculum Records, container 36, file 00433. There were plans to include at a later date a ballet school and a national theatre school. This is the first document that defines the Faculty of Music as a "centre," though it was framed as a centre for music within the University. Emphasis is also placed on McGill as the university that would serve the English community.

43 Quoted in Helmer, "McGill University," 14–15.

44 See, for example, Cyril James' letter to Helmut Blume, 14 April 1958, McGill University Archives, RG 39, Faculty of Music and Conservatorium, Administrative Records, Records of the Dean, container 0044, file 02371. This phenomenon was experienced more generally in the academy in the United States and Europe at this time – the idea of the university as being a place for not only passing on knowledge but creating new knowledge, a place of experimentation.

45 Helmer, "McGill University," 15.

PART ONE

Mapping the Infrastructures of the Faculty of Music, McGill University, as a Centre of New Music

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Introduction

Edward Casey writes that while place begins with a name and a physical space, its identity ultimately hangs on the way in which it "gathers" and "holds" people "to reflect the continuous contours or layout of the local landscape."[1] The Faculty of Music, as a school, is by definition a crossroads, a stopping off place or "oasis between destinations" where students gather to learn the craft of their art. And it is, given the nature of that craft, as much a spiritual quest for voice as a path to knowledge. At the beginning of the 1960s, however, the Faculty had few students. It was a crossroads primarily in terms of the cosmopolitan nature of its staff and the way in which the European experiences of István Anhalt and Helmut Blume mixed with the Canadian experiences of other staff to sustain a vision of the "new" that was shaped not by the tastes of the French or the English but by an understanding of a larger new music landscape that was continually evolving. As an "unwanted" Faculty, it also had a certain openness about its walls that made it easy to reach beyond the University to cultivate musical relationships with other composers and musicians who had similar interests and proclivities. Not all were associated with the leading edge of the "new" – Kelsey Jones's mark was contrapuntal ingenuity while Morley Calvert used dissonance only for dramatic purposes – but all were bound together by a pioneering spirit and a belief in themselves as visionary artists, "senses on full alert, wits sharpened, soul attuned, caught up in the mortal game of life."[2]

New appointments necessitated by departures and a growing student population did little to change the cosmopolitan atmosphere, even when a new public policy demanded that hiring priority be given to Canadian citizens: the first Canadian professors – Bruce Mather, Alan

Heard, John Rea, Paul Pedersen, and Brian Cherney – had been schooled in the diverse languages of the "new" and were themselves travellers, each having completed comprehensive studies at the University of Toronto with John Weinzweig and/or at one of the major "new music" centres in Europe and the United States – Paris, Darmstadt, Cologne, Princeton, and New York – with now legendary musicians such as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Schaeffer, Olivier Messiaen, Vladimir Ussachevsky, Milton Babbitt, and György Ligeti. The Canadians were also young composers and were – just as their future students would be – in search of their own individual voices. The travellers from outside Canada – Bengt Hambræus from Sweden, alcides lanza from Argentina, Robert Jones from the United States, and Peter Paul Koprowski from Poland – brought other "global" connections, such that by the end of the 1970s, through a series of visiting professorships, the Faculty had become a crossroads where, as John Rea describes it, "East meets West," "North meets South." With exchanges between travellers inspiring and shaping compositions by both students and faculty, these meetings spawned a "world" awareness that, like the evolving multicultural character of Montreal at the time, was itself new.[3]

The draw or pull of the Faculty as a "centre of new music" first revolved around the Electronic Music Studio (EMS). It was not the first electronic music studio in Canada,[4] nor was it anything special in design or conception. But Montreal had a reputation as a centre for technological innovation and sound experimentation dating back to the 1950s that made it of immediate interest. At the National Film Board, for example, Norman McLaren was using a technique that had originated in Russia to create utterly captivating percussive soundtracks by "drawing" directly onto film. In Europe young Montreal musicians such as Andrée Desautels, Gilles Tremblay, Serge Garant, Pierre Mercure, and Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux were distinguishing themselves as students of sound, an orientation inspired by the avant-garde ideas of the automatiste painters who had penned the 1948 *Refus global* manifesto. There was also the interest generated by the creative fervour leading up to Expo '67. Not only did the theme "Man and His World" provide an opportunity for Montreal to present itself to the international community as a city of the future, Expo '67 was supported by government funds that, linked with the celebration of Canada's centennial, placed a high value on the arts.[5]

The success of the EMS in those first years was due in large part to a sense of creative freedom that allowed composers to "harmonize a

Royal Victoria College (later, the Strathcona Music Building), 1904. Reproduced by permission of McGill University Archives, www.archives.mcgill.ca/resources/db/photosarchives, PR 002669.

personal path with the evolution of the world in which" they were living.[6] At the heart of this creative freedom was the capacity of the EMS to evolve with technological changes and developments in electroacoustic music. This capacity was cultivated by each EMS director (István Anhalt, Paul Pedersen, Bengt Hambræus, and alcides lanza), and was aided by their ability to garner financial support from within McGill University, and the studio's continuing collaboration with inventor Hugh Le Caine and with Eric Johnstone, one of its supporting technicians.[7] While neither Le Caine nor Johnstone regarded themselves as composers,[8] both were involved in continual experimentation in an effort to understand the composer's interest and, as was later the case with the Polyphone commissioned by Paul Pedersen, often worked closely with a composer as an instrument was being designed and built. Le Caine's pursuit of touch-sensitive instruments that would allow "nuance-filled expressive performances," moreover, balanced the "measure/control/check the UV meter" approach used in Cologne with the "sentire" approach (feel and/or listen) favoured in Milan.[9] It was a model, according to Bengt Hambræus, that even composers untrained in the mechanics of science felt capable of

emulating.[10] It also nurtured composer-performer relationships like those formed between István Anhalt and violinist Otto Joachim, Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux and percussionist Pierre Béluse, that were to have a profound effect on the development of the performance department in later years and on the performance and production of electroacoustic music in Montreal more generally.[11]

Initially, however, the EMS existed on the periphery of the Faculty where its creative mission outside the curriculum – as a space apart – was seen in much the same way as a scientist's laboratory. For the undergraduate student, the path to the "new" was the last step of a journey that traced the evolution of genres and the development of tonal languages through the history of western music. This approach was, in one sense, an extension of the Faculty's past and reflected the importance that the British Cathedral tradition had attached to the development of a consummate technique through mastery of tonal harmony and counterpoint. Not to be dismissed, though, was an internal debate that, having defined the curriculum around a core set of skills and knowledge to be shared by all musicians, pitted the needs of the performer, whose career trajectory revolved around the masterpieces of the Western canon, against the needs of the composer who, in developing a new Canadian voice not yet in existence, would be charting new frontiers. Over the years this debate has been fanned by the bias of the University administration toward an academic composer-musicologist model[12] as well as the pedagogical authority of ear training instructors such as Donald Mackey, who as McGill graduates often trained under the watchful ear of Kelsey Jones, treated the composer's hand as an extension of the ear best developed through that which has already been heard.[13]

In the early 1970s two developments allowed composition to disentangle its path from that of the core music theory and music history courses: the disciplinary evolution of musicology and theory as distinct career paths in and of themselves, and the recognition achieved by Canadian composers through the commissioning and programming policy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). These developments changed not only the profile of the composers as teachers but also the sequence and range of courses offered. The composition area now supports an undergraduate program, a master's in music program, and two doctoral programs: a DMus and a more research-oriented PhD. While each has its own curricular integrity, the programs are bound together by an approach that views the "new" as the

music of our time in all its historical depth, placing understanding at the service of the composer's individual voice. Andrew Culver, a McGill graduate and a former assistant to John Cage, describes this approach as an outgrowth of the new music landscape itself, Luciano Berio having said that the "easiest way for a musician to talk coherently about himself is to talk about other people, about things he has around him and behind him ... about those things richly impregnated with history" and about those things which, while not the language of music per se, inspire it, sustain it, and feed it.[14] Although expanded in scope, the approach remains rooted in the foundational practice of István Anhalt, maintaining the importance of listening, the inspiration to be gained from guest composers, and the use of analytical models drawn from a wide variety of disciplines.

While the compositional programs provide the core of the Faculty's infrastructure as a centre of new music, their internal synergy and dynamic is fed in part by a labyrinth of spaces shared with the department of performance.[15] In the early years of the Faculty's rebirth, the performance of new music was restricted largely to a Friday Composers Series driven solely by the industry and energy of the Faculty's composers as performer-producers. Today, it is a specialty sustained by a student composer-in-residence program, various ensembles associated with the Electronic Music Studio, the Contemporary Music Ensemble (CME), and the Percussion Ensemble. While the latter two ensembles struggled for resources in their first years, under the leadership of conductors Pierre Béluse, D'Arcy Gray, Bruce Mather, and Denys Bouliane they have become a regular forum for the performance of student compositions. The scope of new music heard at McGill has increased in both breadth and depth to include some of the most difficult and complex scores of our time. What is more, since the early 1980s the performer-composer dialogues nurtured in these shared spaces have also been constantly renewed and invigorated by initiatives such as the Contemporary Music Festival, the Electroacoustic Music Festival, and, more recently, MusMars and Montréal/Nouvelles musiques festival international. These festivals, which offer a series of concerts, lectures, and workshops with internationally recognized composers and performers, have made McGill and Montreal, if only for a few short days every year, the locus of the "new" as a "vibrating field hypnotically shared by people."[16]

Over the years, a variety of factors have shaped the cultivation of these shared spaces. In the beginning, it was Helmut Blume's persistent

representation of performance to the University administration as a peer-reviewed activity equivalent to the research report.[17] His success in making the case led to the first full-time appointments in performance, a number of which were filled by musicians with well-developed interests in and established reputations for the performance of new music.[18] The long tenure of Paul Pedersen, first as chair of the theory department and then as dean, led to the development of a balanced large ensemble programming policy that required representation from all genres, styles, and historical periods and encouraged ensemble conductors to commission faculty composers.[19] Such collaborations, as noted by historian Gilles Potvin, played a particularly important role in the early 1970s when one of the major challenges facing the evolution of new music in Canada was the absence of an interested audience and opportunities to perform works that required larger choral, wind, and orchestral resources, the "new" as something other than the revitalization of Canadian folk songs having been associated primarily with dissonance and noise.[20] As an educational forum, the McGill large ensembles were a required component of the core program for all students, which would ensure, as Pedersen noted at the time, a ready-made audience by simultaneously nurturing understanding and interest in the students who would become the performers and audiences of the future.[21] The programming policy has since been facilitated by a flexible administrative structure that, allowing a performer – John Grew – to be appointed dean, and a composer – Donald Steven – to be appointed chair of the performance department, has ensured the continuing cross-fertilization of perspectives and interests. John Rea's tenure as dean, in turn, fuelled the growth of the opera program and nurtured joint initiatives with various francophone universities and new music ensembles in the larger Montreal community.[22] The ingenuity and initiative of students have also played an important role; lasting friendships grounded in the pursuit of both shared and divergent interests motivated GEMS (The Group of the Electronic Music Studio), various performer-composer collaborations sponsored by the Graduate Student Symposium, and an ever-increasing number of recitals, master classes, and workshop demonstrations.[23]

But the dynamic synergy of the shared spaces could not have been maintained for any length of time without the opening of Pollack Hall in 1975. By 1970, the Faculty had outgrown the mansion on Drummond Street; the pursuit of the "new" – or anything else musical

for that matter – involved a journey that took students across the University campus from one mansion to another. There were no large ensemble rehearsal spaces, and concert venues were limited to Redpath Hall, a renovated reading room that had been McGill University's first library, and Moyse Hall, a theatre in the Arts Building. While Redpath Hall remains an important performance venue today, its live resonance and historical aura providing a beautiful ambience for many choral works, recitals, and small chamber ensembles, particularly in the field of early music, the acoustics, size, and performance resources of Moyse Hall in the Arts Building were "less than adequate for large orchestral, wind ensemble, and new music concerts requiring extensive technical support." As Associate Dean Bruce Minorgan recalls, "everything changed with the move in 1971 to the Strathcona Music Building,"[24] the refurbished east wing of the Royal Victoria College Residence at 555 Sherbrooke Street West. Where sense of place had initially been a function solely of curriculum, it now coalesced around the physical geography of the music building itself, with Pollack Hall as its gravitational centre. Not only did imagination have room to fly, but collaborative exchanges became a product of the way in which staff and students moved in, around, and through the building. Pollack Hall, the gravitational centre of that building, with its state-of-the-art acoustical design – at the time, the "envy of even Montreal's premiere venue for the performing arts, Place des Arts" – and its close proximity to the EMS and to what McGill graduate and frequent guest instructor Laurie Radford describes as the "new's changing instrumentarium," ensuring a steady stream of visitors from the outside, including the Société de musique contemporain à Québec (SMCQ), the professional Montreal ensemble most frequently associated with the leading edge of the "new."[25]

Beginning in 1977, the flow of the "new" through Pollack Hall has also been shaped by McGill Records, with commissions drawing in outstanding Canadian performers including Maureen Forrester, Lawrence Cherney, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Arminda Canteros, and Rivka Golani, and celebrating the "exuberant performances and brilliant techniques" of the Gerald Danovitch Saxophone Quartet, the "precision and versatility" of the McGill Percussion Ensemble,[26] or the interpretative sensitivity of the piano teachers. A modern reworking of Helmut Blume's original vision of the Faculty as a "radio school," McGill Records was conceived by Paul Pedersen as part of a larger cultural initiative that,

beginning with the CBC's Canadian composers series, sought to bring new music to a larger audience. According to Violet Archer, one of the Faculty's earliest composition graduates, the initiative represented a coming of age.[27] Not only did Canada now have its own musical culture, it was a tradition in which new music was meant to be listened to, appreciated, and valued over time. To this end, the top priorities of McGill Records were the development of a supporting infrastructure that would ensure the musical and technological distinction of its recordings on the open market, and a marketing plan that could distribute them across Canada. The latter was based on an alliance with Polygram forged in the early 1990s by Abe Kestenberg, the second director of McGill Records. For new music, however, sound recording has not had the democratizing impact seen with classical and popular music, the very fact that the "new" now embraces an entire century of diverse musical activity having endowed it, as cultural theorist Will Straw points out, with a longevity that renders it unmarketable as "new."[28] The financial viability of McGill Records has also been challenged by changing technology, the Internet, and its status as a small academic label, with the result, that sound recording as a shared space within the Faculty has become less about the production of new music per se and increasingly more about the ways in which sound recording research and techniques feed the timbral and spatial interests of composers.[29]

The change is part of an expanding internal network of pathways and corridors that has seen technology itself become a portal into the Faculty with a gravitational pull not unlike that of Pollack Hall. But where movement in, around, and through Pollack Hall is primarily a matter of musicians and their public audiences, technology, as a distinct career trajectory, also draws in computer scientists, engineers, sound technicians, and cognitive scientists. It is a portal that can be accessed from a variety of paths within the University as well as from outside.[30] Initially energized by the vision and efforts of composer Bruce Pennycook, first as chair of the music technology area, then as vice principal (information systems and technology), the change in many ways reflects the global landscape, technology having become so entangled and intertwined in our daily lives that it is difficult to remember a time, "just thirty or thirty-five years ago," when the fastest computers filled entire wings of buildings and the model used to send astronauts to the moon took twenty-eight minutes to generate an

unperformable six-minute work in which all parameters were based on a single twelve-tone row.[31] Within the Faculty, the turn to technology has always been motivated by just such compositional challenges and – whether driven by notational problems, a need for more efficient computer code, or more sensitive performer-instrument interfaces, – was initially prompted by a musical vision, a sense of something that might be achieved if only one had the technological capacity.[32] As the computer has increasingly become a shared instrument through which sound is conceptualized by composers, performers, and scientists, music has literally become a space for the meeting of minds, with a notational problem inspiring research on the connection between sound and sight, research on gestures becoming the inspiration for composition. And, as with any instrument, the computer has left its own mark, ultimately engendering a self-reflexive dialogue that requires us to rethink the paradigms and models through which we understand the possibilities of music and what it means to compose in an era when, as Bruce Pennycook once put it, "sound has become a recyclable commodity, authorship the domain of the unschooled."[33]

This dialogue has spilled into and been nurtured by the Marvin Duchow Library. In the early years of the Faculty's rebirth, the library consisted of a small collection of recordings donated in 1939 by Deutsch Grammophon, and as such, was, as Marvin Duchow put it, the "Faculty's Achilles heel," the absence of books and scholarly material only serving to confirm the University's view that music was not a subject worthy of academic pursuit.[34] Today, the library is a microcosm of the Faculty itself, with book, score, journal, audio, and virtual collections providing a portal to seemingly limitless thinking in and about music. As a gathering place, it has been fed by open graduate seminars that draw together theorists, musicologists, performers, composers, opera singers, jazz performers, sound recording engineers, scientists, early music specialists, and music educators, each of which brings to the dialogue their own disciplinary ideologies, analytical approaches, and conceptions of what it means to be "new." With the passing of time, the library has come to have its own drawing power as the seat of the Faculty's memory, the repository where its ever-deepening history testifies to its longevity as place. As a crossroads, the Faculty is no longer defined only by what unfolds within its walls but also by the many roads taken by its visitors, faculty, and students as they continue their journeys out into and across the world.