

**THE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OF JEAN COULTHARD:  
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT**

by

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We accept this dissertation as conforming  
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I hereby give permission to David Gordon Duke to make such quotations and references to my published and unpublished musical scores, manuscript partituras, and published and unpublished writings as are required for inclusion in his Doctoral thesis "The Orchestral Music of Jean Coulthard: a critical assessment", prepared for the University of Victoria, 1993.

Jean Coulthard  
West Vancouver, British Columbia

## PROGRAMME

### I.

Chromatic Fantasie and Fugue Bach

### II.

Pastorale Sonata Beethoven

Allegro

Andante

Scherzo

Rondo

### III.

Fairy Tale, F sharp minor Medtner

La sérénade interrompue Debussy

La fille aux cheveux de lin Debussy

Danse du Meunier De Falla

Steinway Grand loaned by courtesy of

J. W. Kelly Piano Co. Ltd.

## COMPOSITIONS BY JEAN COULTHARD

### IV.

#### SONGS

Cradle Song Poem by Padriac Colum

Frolic " " Æ

Weep you no more " " Anon

Faery Song " " John Keats

The Bargain (Wedding Song) " " Sir Phillip Sidney

Violin Obligato (Charles E. Shaw)

### V.

#### P. NO QUINTET

Andante Leggiero

Chorale and Variations

Grace Hastings Dresser, 1st Violin.

Freda Setter, Cel'lo

Charles E. Shaw, 2nd Violin

A. J. Talbot, Viola

# The Orchestral Music of Jean Coulthard: A Critical Assessment

David Gordon Duke, 1993

Supervisor: Dr. Gordana Lazarevich

## ABSTRACT

During a long and distinguished career, the Canadian composer Jean Coulthard (b. 1908) has become widely recognized for her many works for voice, keyboard, choir and chamber ensembles. Until recently, however, her large and diverse catalogue of works for orchestra has been overshadowed. The present study presents a critical assessment of her orchestral catalogue of music composed from the late 1930s until the present. In a biographical introduction, Coulthard's initial training with Vaughan Williams in London is discussed, as is her life-long identification with the early French modern figures Debussy and Ravel. As her career progressed, her earliest orchestral scores were championed by the Australian-born composer/conductor Arthur Benjamin (who resided in Coulthard's native Vancouver, Canada, during the formative years of her development as an orchestral composer). Further training brought her into contact with figures such as Copland, Milhaud, Bartók, and Schoenberg, as well as studies with Bernard Wagenaar in New York. Following her protracted apprenticeship, Coulthard began to teach at the University of British Columbia and to commit to the major genres of orchestral writing. In this later respect she was somewhat atypical of Canadian composers of her generation, and has been viewed by earlier scholars as an exponent of the "conservative tradition" in Canadian music of the 20th century. More recent perspectives stress the quality of her work, her regional significance, and the uniqueness of her achievement in a field of music not traditionally associated with women. Paralleling Coulthard's personal and artistic development, a consideration of Canadian orchestras and the emergence of a Canadian orchestral repertoire is presented. Coulthard's orchestral repertoire includes orchestral suites, small scale orchestra compositions, works for strings, works for soloist(s) and orchestra, concerti, and symphonies. A comprehensive overview of Coulthard's extant orchestral works is presented, with a number of particularly important compositions singled out for detailed analysis. As well major style elements, aspects of Coulthard's role in Canadian music and a brief assessment of her creative personality are included.

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	<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
	<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iii</i>
	<i>Table of Figures</i>	<i>iv</i>
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vi</i>
	<i>Frontispiece</i>	<i>x</i>
<b>1</b>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>Biography</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>Canadian Music and Canadian Orchestras</i>	<i>63</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>Suites</i>	<i>85</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>Smaller Orchestral Works</i>	<i>101</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>Works for String Orchestra</i>	<i>119</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>Other Works for Soloists and Orchestra</i>	<i>130</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>Concerti</i>	<i>148</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>Symphonies</i>	<i>164</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>191</i>
	<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>204</i>
	<i>Index</i>	<i>216</i>

## Table of Figures

- Figure 1.1.a *IODE Recital Programme, 1932* 21  
Figure 1.1.b *IODE Recital Programme, 1932* 22
- Example 4.1 *Canadian Fantasy* [measures 3-6] 88  
Example 4.2 *Canadian Fantasy* [measures 127-138] 89  
Example 4.3 *Excursion i* [measures 1-2] 92  
Example 4.4 *Excursion ii* [measures 1-6] 92  
Example 4.5 *Excursion iv* [measures 4-6] 93
- Example 5.1 *Convoy* [measures 3-5] 103  
Example 5.2 *Convoy* [measures 30-31] 103  
Example 5.3 *Convoy* [measures 42-46] 103  
Example 5.4 *Music to Saint Cecilia* [measures 1-2] 109  
Example 5.5 *Endymion* [measures 2-4] 116  
Example 5.6 *Endymion* [measures 55-56] 117
- Example 6.1 *A Prayer for Elizabeth* [measures 1-2] 123  
Example 6.2 *A Prayer for Elizabeth* [measure 37] 123
- Example 7.1 *The Bird of Dawning* [reduction measures 3, 64] 134  
Example 7.2 *Burlesca* [measure 3] 136  
Example 7.3 *Symphonic Ode* [measures 11-13] 141  
Example 7.4 *Symphonic Ode* [measures 44-45] 141  
Example 7.5 *Symphonic Ode* [measures 173-175] 142  
Example 7.6 *Fantasy* [measures 88-89] 145
- Example 8.1 *Piano Concerto i* [measures 1-3] 157  
Example 8.2 *Piano Concerto i* [measures 44-45] 158  
Example 8.3 *Piano Concerto i* [measures 72-74] 158  
Example 8.4 *Piano Concerto i* [measures 186-189] 159  
Example 8.5 *Piano Concerto ii* [measures 75-77] 160  
Example 8.6 *Piano Concerto iii* [measures 6-10] 161  
Example 8.7 *Piano Concerto iii* [measures 41-42] 161  
Example 8.8 *Piano Concerto iii* [measures 116-117] 161

*The Orchestral Music of Jean Coulthard*

- Example 9.1 *First Symphony* i [measures 1-6] 165  
Example 9.2 *First Symphony* i [measure 9] 165  
Example 9.3 *First Symphony* i [measures 10-13] 166  
Example 9.4 *First Symphony* i [measures 31-34] 166  
Example 9.5 *First Symphony* i [measures 71-74] 166  
Example 9.6 *First Symphony* i [measures 97-102] 167  
Example 9.7 *Lyric Symphony* ii [measure 29] 172  
Example 9.8 *Autumn Symphony* i [reduction - measure 1] 175  
Example 9.9 *Autumn Symphony* i [measures 16-20] 175  
Example 9.10 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 1-5] 176  
Example 9.11 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 7-12] 176  
Example 9.12 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 13-14] 176  
Example 9.13 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 19-23] 177  
Example 9.14 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 24-29] 177  
Example 9.15 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 34-39] 178  
Example 9.16 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 40-44] 178  
Example 9.17 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 45-47] 179  
Example 9.18 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 53-55] 180  
Example 9.19 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 60-69] 181  
Example 9.20 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 71-73] 182  
Example 9.21 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 77-79] 182  
Example 9.22 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 130-133] 184  
Example 9.23 *Autumn Symphony* ii [measures 169-171] 184  
Example 9.24 *Autumn Symphony* iii [measures 4-6] 185  
Example 9.25 *Autumn Symphony* iii [measures 37-39] 185  
Example 9.26 *Autumn Symphony* iii [measures 189-90] 186  
Example 9.27 *Autumn Symphony* iii [measures 189-90] 186  
Example 9.28 *Autumn Symphony* iv [measures 5-7] 187  
Example 9.29 *Autumn Symphony* iv [measures 23-25] 187  
Example 9.30 *Autumn Symphony* iv [measures 34-36] 188  
Example 9.31 *Autumn Symphony* iv [measures 64-65] 189  
Example 9.32 *Autumn Symphony* iv [measures 74-77] 189

## Acknowledgments

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While it is somewhat unusual to begin an academic thesis with a personal disclaimer, nothing less will do as a preface to this study of Jean Coulthard's orchestral music. As a young musician growing up in Vancouver, I came to know the music of Coulthard early in my development; I recall hearing her *Cradle Song* while still a schoolboy, and delighting in its evocative melodic lines and modal harmonies. By the time I enrolled in the music department of the University of British Columbia I had heard several Coulthard compositions and often seen her at concert performances.

As an undergraduate increasingly interested in composition and musicology, it was not a matter of course that I would have the opportunity to study with Coulthard herself (see Chapter 2), but in the fall of 1969 I found myself assigned to her 20th century theory class. Immediately I discovered that her approach to teaching, her skills in analysis, and, above all, her view of music were of a standard to which I had previously not been exposed while at University. As we assessed and discussed the music of the modern period — beginning with Mahler and extending to the then *avant garde* compositions of Penderecki, Crumb, and Xenakis, as well as to my first exposure to the work of Canadian composers — I gathered sufficient courage to disclose my plan to continue my education at graduate school and to admit my interest in composition.

Coulthard's response was simply overwhelming; a few weeks after the end of spring term, I was ringing the doorbell at 2747 Southwest Marine Drive regularly for lessons *and* was working (rather inexpertly) as her copyist and occasional secretary. Thus I gratefully acknowledge that much of my musical technique and virtually all of my musical values have been shaped by the teaching of Jean Coulthard, a remarkable combination of excellent guidance, solid criticism, and lavish encouragement.

This is in no way unique; virtually all of Coulthard's advanced composition students could write a similar *hommage*. But in my case I have also been continuously fascinated by Coulthard's own music, which has for me a parallel but quite separate importance.

Anyone privileged to observe at close range a creative artist of stature is struck by the essentially different people one comes to know: the artist as person, and the person as artist. Though I have known Jean Coulthard for just over twenty years I have, more often than I can recount, been shocked, perplexed, astounded, delighted, and inspired by her music. While many of her works are a natural and eloquent manifestation of her gracious public persona, others (and I think most immediately of the *Second String Quartet*, the *Octet*, and the *Autumn Symphony*) reveal a very different personality — one that can perhaps only be revealed through music.

Being the first to admit my privileged relationship to Jean Coulthard and her music, I hope readers will understand the complicated responsibilities I have felt on occasion; but as a student of Coulthard, the only honest way I know to approach her work is with those techniques of analysis and those standards of

criticism which she established. To apply those standards in anything but the most dispassionate manner would trivialize her very real achievement.

I would like to single out a number of people to whom I am gratefully indebted, beginning with the late Dr. George Halpern (by whose virtual fiat I returned to graduate studies and whose affectionate generosity I fondly acknowledge); my colleagues at Vancouver Community College, especially the former head of the Music Department, Jerry Domer; Odean Long, who has allowed me access to her unpublished catalogue of Jean Coulthard's music; my friends Sylvia Rickard and Russell Wodell; Marc Baril, who computer typeset the musical examples; Ian Docherty, whose encyclopedic knowledge of the Vancouver musical milieu I have often consulted; Mrs. David Brock and Jane Coulthard Adams, who have generously helped me with details pertaining to the Coulthard and Adams families; and Mrs B.C. Binning, Dr. and Mrs. George Woodcock, Thomas Rolston, Ron Napier, Hans Burndorfer, Lady Bliss, Ian Hampton, and Dr. Violet Archer who have, over the last few years, deepened my understanding of Canadian cultural life and the music of Coulthard.

I would also like to extend formal thanks to the scholars of the University of Victoria community: the members of my committee: Dr. Elizabeth Tumasonis, Dr. Erich Schwandt, Dr. Harald Krebs, and Dr. Bryan N. S. Gooch; faculty members Dr. William Kinderman and Dr. Joan Backus, and, especially, my supervisor, Dean Gordana Lazarevich. As a student returning to graduate work after a long absence, I am entirely grateful to the faculty for making my time at the University of Victoria such a pleasure and inspiration.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Jean Coulthard. I am indebted to her for permission to work with her annotated scores, her manuscript *particellas*,<sup>1</sup> tape recordings and writings, and for her kind permission to make quotations from her published and unpublished writings.

David Gordon Duke

10 February 1993

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<sup>1</sup>In quoting from sketch scores and the composer's manuscripts I have occasionally altered inconsistent spellings and capitalization to reflect standard practices.

*mezzoso drammatico* *ff*  
Sing

there. Sing there.

*aliv.* *ff*

*rit.*

## **Introduction**

---

The long and productive career of the Canadian composer Jean Coulthard should attract attention for three fundamental reasons: her prodigious output of exemplary music in all genres; her role as a pioneer composer and teacher in British Columbia; and her identity as a successful composer who is female. While her work is known and valued, it can be argued that the extent of her contribution to the broad picture of 20th century musical life in Canada has not yet been satisfactorily established.

Studies of the development of music in Canada written prior to the 1980s tend to focus on the establishment and growth of organisations such as the Canadian League of Composers and the Canadian Music Centre and on the careers and music of those composers engaged in the active exploration of so-called modernist idioms. As a direct result, composers who have been perceived to be among the first to espouse *avant garde* compositional styles have tended to receive a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention; composers whose careers have been rather more regional have been viewed as less significant than those who have chosen to work in the national mainstream of the anglophone music industry centred in Toronto; and the achievement of composers who are female has been viewed as being of lesser intrinsic importance than the more professional careers of composers who are male.

Elements of this conventional perspective are clearly revealed in the currently extant major surveys of Canadian music history. As a "conservative" female composer from British Columbia, Coulthard has drawn little notice in Timothy J. McGee's *The Music of Canada*. McGee mentions Coulthard twice: once in a list of works performed by the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and again in a brief discussion of "conservatism" in Canadian composition.<sup>1</sup> George A. Proctor, in his *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century*, lists a number of specific Coulthard works<sup>2</sup> but offers little if any criticism or comment. Her work is all but invisible to Ford<sup>3</sup>, Schafer,<sup>4</sup> and MacMillan.<sup>5</sup>

Recently a number of scholars have broadened their perspective to present a more inclusive examination of Canadian composers and repertoire, and a new perspective has begun to emerge. In the preface to the *Proceedings* of the Queen's University conference "Canadian Music in the 1930s and 1940s", Beverly Diamond Cavanagh writes:

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Coulthard (Vancouver, 1908) shows in her music the English romantic influence of her teachers R. O. Morris, Vaughan Williams, and Gordon Jacob" (Timothy J. McGee, *The Music of Canada* [New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1985], 124).

<sup>2</sup>Proctor perpetuates the Vaughan Williams connection: "Jean Coulthard also uses parallel fifths to capture the essence of native poetry in her *Two Songs of the Haida Indians*. In addition, folk-like melodies and romantic expressiveness find their way into these songs, features no doubt derived from one of her teachers, Vaughan Williams" (George A. Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980], 48).

<sup>3</sup>Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Toronto: GLC, 1982).

<sup>4</sup>R. Murray Schafer, *On Canadian Music* (Bancroft, Ontario: Arcana, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>Keith MacMillan, various writings including articles for *Encyclopedia Americana*, *New Grove Dictionary*, *Canadian Annual Review*, and *Musicanada*.

The history of Canadian compositional activity . . . is usually written with reference to the watershed of 1951, the founding of the Canadian League of Composers. The crucial transitional decades before 1951, years which span "colonialism" and "modernism" are perhaps given less than their due. . . . My own personal concern with the 30s and 40s was rooted in the political assumption that regarding composition as the chief measure of a nation's musical development locked us into a colonial mentality. That is, the "modernism" of the Canadian "music" of the 50s was somehow viewed as a coming of age, while the music of the earlier period is often described as a reflection of European tradition.<sup>6</sup>

After editing the various papers, presentations and discussions, Cavanagh had modified her view:

While I have not relinquished the opinion stated above, my work on the production of these papers led me to a somewhat different perspective; namely, that discontinuities of style and approach in the writing of Canada's music history are as essential as consistency of approach. The discontinuities represent differences in perspective which help shape our knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

Cavanagh's reconsideration of perspective in Canadian music history was almost exactly contemporary with the publication of a landmark essay, "The Conservative Tradition in Canadian Music" by Elaine Keillor, in which she

---

<sup>6</sup>Beverly Diamond Cavanagh, ed., "Preface," *Canadian Music in the 1930s and 1940s* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1986):1.

<sup>7</sup>Cavanagh, "Preface," *Proceedings*, 1.

discusses the "conservative" compositional ideologies of composers "born in 1934 or earlier and those under the age of fifty".<sup>8</sup> Coulthard is mentioned extensively in Keillor's article, which concludes:

In one sense the conservative tradition in Canadian composition during the past twenty-five years has completed a full circle. The epithets of "old-fashioned", "full of clichés" and "derivative" that are flung at the minimalist works of [Lubomyr] Melnyk are the same as those faced by Ridout and his conservative colleagues in the late 1950s. In reply, those composers would say that good music does not depend on the technique used or the roots of the style but on quality. To prove their point they should underline the fact that chamber, orchestral and vocal works by Archer, Coulthard, Fleming, Héту, Jones, Matton, Merawetz, Ridout and Turner are among the most performed in Canada and abroad.<sup>9</sup>

Still another scholar, Roseanne Kydd, has chosen Coulthard as an example of a composer whose contribution has been underestimated not by stylistic but by sexist biases.<sup>10</sup>

To what extent these three alternate perspectives will further shape the direction of Canadian musical scholarship remains, at this time, very much an

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<sup>8</sup>Elaine Keillor, "The Conservative Tradition in Canadian Music," In *Celebration: Essays on Aspects of Canadian Music*, ed. Godfrey Ridout and Talivaldis Kenins (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 1984): 49.

<sup>9</sup>Keillor, "Conservative Tradition," *Celebration*, 56.

<sup>10</sup>Roseanne Kydd, "Jean Coulthard: a Revised View", *SoundNotes* 2 (Spring/Summer 1992): 14-24.

open (and contentious) question: at a time when issues of gender and sexuality are provocative and topical in musicology, when the cultural validity of modernism is questioned by a myriad of postmodern alternatives, and when the continuation of a Canadian federal identity appears (to some) unsustainable, inclusive musicologies from pluralistic viewpoints such as those espoused by Kydd, Keillor, and Cavanagh are fundamentally more attractive than the centralist exclusivity of Schafer, Proctor, and McGee.

It is in this light that a critical assessment of the work of Coulthard is both required and overdue. In view of Coulthard's massive catalogue, a comprehensive assessment in anything other than grossly simplistic terms is impossible within a study of this scope. Given the existing studies of Coulthard's keyboard work by Vivienne Rowley<sup>11</sup> and Barbara Lee<sup>12</sup>, ongoing research by Glenn Colton<sup>13</sup>, Roseanne Kydd<sup>14</sup>, Dale Maves<sup>15</sup>, Mark Neumann<sup>16</sup> and, perhaps of greatest significance, a definitive catalogue of Coulthard's work prepared

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<sup>11</sup>Vivienne W. Rowley, "The Solo Piano Music of the Canadian Composer Jean Coulthard," DMA thesis (Boston: Boston University, 1973).

<sup>12</sup>Barbara Lee, "The Solo Piano Works of Jean Coulthard," DMA thesis (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1986).

<sup>13</sup>A Ph.D. dissertation on Coulthard's piano music at the University of Victoria.

<sup>14</sup>Currently working on her Ph.D. at York University.

<sup>15</sup>Completing his Ph.D. dissertation "The Art Songs for Voice and Piano by Canadian Composer Jean Coulthard: An Eclectic Analysis of Selected Works" at New York University.

<sup>16</sup>Working on a D.M.A. at The Juilliard School.

by Odean Long,<sup>17</sup> I have decided to focus on the most neglected facet of Coulthard's oeuvre, her orchestral music.

Coulthard began her career as an orchestral composer in the mid-1930s and has continued to write works for orchestral forces until the present. She has written works for all orchestral genres, including:

three orchestral suites: *Canadian Fantasy* (1939); the ballet suite *Excursion* (1940); and *Canada Mosaic* (1974);

five single-movement works for orchestra: *Convoy* or *Song to [of] the Sea* (1942); *Rider on the Sands* (1953); *Music to Saint Cecilia* (1954;68;79); *Endymion* (1966); and *Kalamalka "Lake of Many Colours"* (1973);

four works for strings alone: the *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* (1941); *A Prayer for Elizabeth* (1953); *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* (1961); and *Symphonic Image "Of the North"* (1989);

two three-movement concerti;

two "Symphonic Odes": for *Cello* (1967) and *Viola* (1976);

four works for soloist(s) and strings: *Music on a Quiet Song* for flute and strings (1946), *Music for Saint Cecilia* for organ and strings (1954/68), *The Bird of Dawning* for violin, harp and strings (1960), and the *Burlesca* for piano and strings (1977);

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<sup>17</sup>I am indebted to Odean Long for making the typescript of her catalogue available to me and have based the definitive titles, dates of composition and first performances on her exhaustively detailed and so very much needed research.

two single movement works for soloist(s) and chamber orchestra: the *Fantasy* (1961) for violin, piano, and chamber orchestra and the *Ballade "Of the West"* (1983) for piano and orchestra; and four symphonies.

Two orchestral compositions, *Portrait* (1936) and *Two Poems* (1942), have been withdrawn by the composer. Coulthard has also written extensively for voices and orchestra, but these works will not be examined in the present study.<sup>18</sup>

As well as providing biographical information and an assessment of all Coulthard's extant orchestral music, this study will assess Coulthard's developing style and will consider her place in the development of the Canadian orchestral repertoire. While this investigation will not focus, explicitly, on Coulthard as a female composer, certain issues will perforce be raised,<sup>19</sup> as will the broader question of the relationship between Canadian orchestras and Canadian orchestral repertoire.

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<sup>18</sup>Coulthard has been particularly drawn to literature throughout her long career. The intricacies of her response to literary inspirations and her complex, personal approach to text setting require detailed study in themselves.

<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, Canada's three preeminent female composers, Violet Archer, Jean Coulthard, and Barbara Pentland, have all made their careers in Western Canada.

## Chapter 2: Biography

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### *An Edwardian Introduction*

Jean Coulthard was born on 10 February 1908 in Vancouver's West End, the first child of Dr. Walter Coulthard (1872-1937) of Toronto and Jean Blake Robinson (1882-1933) of Moncton, New Brunswick.<sup>1</sup> Her physician father had come to the British Columbia interior just after the turn of the century; her mother, a singer and pianist, was a graduate of the New England Conservatory in Boston, and became a pre-eminent participant and driving force in early musical life in Vancouver.<sup>2</sup>

Coulthard's parents were married on 12 January 1904 in Rossland; following a year spent in Boston, they settled in the young city of Vancouver in 1905. Coulthard began to study music with her mother at the age of five. She has often described how her first compositions dealt in a spontaneous and natural way with the day to day life of the Coulthard household;<sup>3</sup> the manuscripts, written in a gradually developing hand, are preserved in a treasured green morocco album.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Her only sister Margaret Isobel (Babs) was born in 1911.

<sup>2</sup> See Janice Butier, "Jean Blake Coulthard," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, ed. Helmut Kallmann and Gilles Potvin, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 319.

<sup>3</sup> Most recently in 1990: *Maclean's Magazine*, December 31, 1990, 32.

<sup>4</sup> A number of these early works were adapted for use as teaching pieces and published.

In 1913 the Coulthard family moved to Shaughnessy Heights, just developed by the Canadian Pacific Railway as a garden suburb for professional families and quickly established as Vancouver's "best" address. As a matter of course Coulthard and her sister became familiar with the developing social scene in Vancouver. This provided distinct advantages: in later years Coulthard had a network of friends from the more prominent old-Vancouver families,<sup>5</sup> while at the time she had free access to the various musical salons that were of critical importance in that era.<sup>6</sup>

As Coulthard progressed in her development as a serious young music student she began to study piano with Jan Cherniavsky<sup>7</sup> and theory with Dr. Frederick Chubb,<sup>8</sup> receiving her ATCM diploma from the Toronto Conservatory at the age of 18. Beyond her formal studies, Coulthard's home environment was intensely musical and just as intensely professional: from her earliest days Coulthard was familiar not only with the keyboard and vocal

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<sup>5</sup>In later years Coulthard was passionately involved in numerous schemes to promote Canadian music and the work of young composers. She would shamelessly capitalize on her friendships, on more than one occasion approaching a not-especially-keen social acquaintance with the proposal "You can buy a concert ticket for \$10 or, if you don't want to come, it'll be \$25!" Her social position also brought the issue of Canadian music and composers to the attention of a number of potential patrons and supporters who, in other circumstances, might have been entirely unaware of the aspirations and problems of composers; latter-day Coulthard enthusiasts included J.V. Clyne and George Bradley.

<sup>6</sup>Especially that of Mrs B.T. Rogers. See John Becker, *Discord: The Story of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra* (Vancouver: Brighthouse Press, 1989), 1-6, and Jean Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer* (unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard).

<sup>7</sup>Pianist Jan Cherniavsky (1892-1989). See *EMC2*, 252.

<sup>8</sup>Organist, teacher and occasional composer Frederick Chubb (1885-1966) came to Vancouver in 1912. See D. Barry Waterlow, "Frederick Chubb," *EMC2*, 270.

repertoires but also with the day to day administration of a burgeoning music studio.<sup>9</sup>

Another pattern that was set early was Coulthard's love of travel: until well into the 1920s the Coulthard girls and their mother would travel up the British Columbia coast to Heriot Bay on Quadra Island for a summer retreat.<sup>10</sup> Then, just after the end of the First World War, they travelled across the continent to Wellsburg, West Virginia (close to Steubenville, Ohio) to stay with Coulthard's grandparents while her mother took a course of voice lessons in New York.

Vancouver had grown dramatically in the first decades of the twentieth century. A brash transportation- and resource-based centre, the city seemed an unfertile ground for the arts. However, several components of the nascent local style were already apparent: the genteel colonial art culture of the upper middle class British (who formed the social core of the city); elements from the aboriginal cultures of the Pacific Northwest coast natives; and the considerable influence of Asian cultures from across the Pacific. While a long colonial twilight in the arts prevailed well into the 1930s, a fourth element, various forms of European modernism, began to assume greater and greater importance.

Cultural institutions *per se* were few, but in the salons, music rooms and studios of a small number of citizens the artistic climate was informed and

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<sup>9</sup>With several separate teaching studios and, at one point, four pianos.

<sup>10</sup>Suggesting, perhaps, the island locale of Coulthard's 1940 ballet, *Excursion*.

active.<sup>11</sup> Indeed an assessment of the early programmes of Vancouver's musical institutions gives only a partial view of the complete musical picture; for those involved in music as performers, students or serious amateurs, the musical scene was surprisingly rich,<sup>12</sup> if somewhat colonial in its orientation. Despite the limited scope of the salon-based artistic culture, appreciation of the arts was intense and could stretch to the unexpectedly experimental.<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. Walter Coulthard was a central figure in music, not just as a teacher and performer but as one of the founders of the Vancouver Woman's Musical Club and the British Columbia Music Teachers' Federation.<sup>14</sup> Beyond her excellent professional training, she was an ardent exponent of the then radical music of the impressionists. Coulthard was very much inspired by the "new music" so identified with her mother: the work of various turn-of-the-century English figures, Ravel, even Satie and, above all, Debussy. The latter's work was to become the touchstone for Coulthard's aesthetic development. Significantly, even in the 1920s the epigonal style associated with the large

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<sup>11</sup>See Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Vancouver," *EMC2*, 1355-7.

<sup>12</sup> As a birthday book of autographs collected by Mrs Walter Coulthard demonstrates. Signatures include those of Sir Frederick Bridge, Josef Hofmann, Leopold Godowsky, Benno Moisewitsch, Harold Samuel, Liza Lehmann, and Kathleen Parlow.

<sup>13</sup>Given the local tradition of "remittance men", there was familiarity, if not appreciation, of the individualistic and the non-conforming. Shared conservative standards in the arts, such as those associated with most of the more established eastern North American centres, were not universal. The pioneer British Columbia painter Emily Carr's autobiography, *Growing Pains*, and her more candid diaries *Hundreds and Thousands: the Journals of Emily Carr* provide a good deal of background to the ambience, both in late 19th-century Victoria and in Vancouver in the early years of the century.

<sup>14</sup>And, as well, the socially prominent Georgian Club.

contingent of expatriate British organists practising in Canada held little appeal for Coulthard.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the '20s, Coulthard had received a sound basic training in music, and had a practical, unsentimental view of the life of a working musician. She had also clearly developed a plan for her own career: she would make composition her profession.<sup>16</sup> What was of immediate and very real concern was how best to continue her career preparation. After spending an academic year at the fledgling University of British Columbia studying arts courses,<sup>17</sup> it was obvious that to complete her professional training Coulthard would have to leave Vancouver. Plans were made to move on.

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<sup>15</sup>Coulthard has often referred to herself as the "first 'full time professional' composer in British Columbia" (Jean Coulthard, "Proceedings," *Canadian Music in the 1930s and 1940s*, ed. Beverly Cavanagh, [Kingston: Queen's University], 36); but as a child she knew (and rather snobbishly disapproved of) the songs and "little pieces" of her mother's "crony" J.D.A. Tripp (1867-1945). Coulthard has consistently rejected the use of the term "conservative" to apply to her music; she maintains that this term should be reserved for composers such as Healey Willan, who rejected the language of the early modern period in favour of continuing the functional harmonic idiom of the late Romantics. Finally, one notes virtually no liturgical works or organ works in Coulthard's catalogue. See also John Beckwith, "Music," in *The Culture of Contemporary Canada*, ed. Julian Park (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), 157.

<sup>16</sup>While it is outside the scope of the current study to consider the feminist implications of this decision, it seems that she anticipated no problems as a woman planning a career as a composer. She was certainly aware of the careers and music of figures such as Ethyl Smythe, Cecile Chaminade, and Gena Branscome (though she loathed the music of the last). Perhaps with her mother as her primary role-model as a professional musician, the issue of being a female composer seemed of relative unimportance.

<sup>17</sup>No courses in music were given at UBC until the 1940s.

***London, Vaughan Williams, and the Royal College of Music***

As Coulthard approached her twenties, she made a musical and professional decision of lasting importance: she would study in London at the Royal College of Music,<sup>18</sup> rather than in New York or at her mother's alma mater, the New England Conservatory in Boston. Beyond the obvious cultural advantages of life in London and the unassailable stature of the Royal College, there was a practical family reason for choosing England: the composer's uncle Howard Coulthard lived at "The Beeches", Alton Road, Roehampton, a pleasant suburb southwest of the capital, together with Captain Ernest Haskett-Smith, and Coulthard would be able to stay at their home while she attended college. With a scholarship from the Vancouver Woman's Musical Club, Coulthard sailed from Montréal for London in the early fall of 1928.

It was Coulthard's first extended stay away from home and, as one might anticipate, her adjustment was not initially smooth. She has often remarked that she wasted the whole first term dealing with devastating homesickness. But gradually the allure of the London environment and the quality of her instruction (not to mention the civilized comfort of the home of her "uncles" where she was a welcomed and, by her own admission, an indulgently spoiled guest) were too strong to resist. By spring term, Coulthard's lifelong anglophilia

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<sup>18</sup>With the view to working with Ralph Vaughan Williams; Coulthard was not especially familiar with his work, knowing only "a few of his songs" that were in her mother's repertoire.

was rampant; after her return to the "wilds" of Vancouver in 1930 Coulthard found herself homesick in reverse, for the sophistication of London.<sup>19</sup>

In its formidable Albertopolis building, the Royal College of Music was (as it still is) one of London's two major professional schools and an outstanding training ground for performers and conductors. Its composition programmes were then more controversial, and the charge of amateurism has been levelled more than once against the easygoing atmosphere in the '20s and '30s.<sup>20</sup> In an initial muddle, Coulthard was assigned to two instructors; not knowing any better, she went for lessons with both John Ireland and Ralph Vaughan Williams until the mix-up was discovered and, after a hurried consultation, Vaughan Williams won out.

Just entering his prime years as a composer (at work on the composition of the "masque for dancing" *Job*), Vaughan Williams had then completed his first three symphonies, as well as the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, *The Lark Ascending*, and *Sancta Civitas*. Unfortunately, however, Vaughan Williams was a disorganized and essentially ineffectual teacher of composers<sup>21</sup> — though, as Coulthard has hastened to point out, a "great

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<sup>19</sup>Parallels with the basic situation of Coulthard's later opera *The Return of the Native* — Eustacia's longing for the bright lights and sophistication of the world beyond Wessex and Clym's return from Paris to his home country to teach — are obvious.

<sup>20</sup>See Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 164-65.

<sup>21</sup>The best description of the ambience at the Royal College in the early '30s is to be found in several biographies of Benjamin Britten (whom Coulthard used to see as a boy in the College halls); Christopher Headington comments that teachers at the Royal College "thought of free composition in much the same way as they regarded harmony and counterpoint exercises: as 'paper music' in which the teacher merely noted observance of otherwise accepted rules, and in which the assessment of quality was related only to known techniques" (Christopher

presence and inspiration". In her diary entry for 28 January 1931 the young composer recorded her private thoughts regarding her lessons:

I saw part of Vaughan Williams' "London Symphony" today. He begins the slow movement by moving minor chords by tone then a melody comes played by a cor anglais. The whole suggests the *outskirts* of London. I would like to know what he pictured when he wrote this movement. I remember at my lessons with him, there was never time for him to do any of his compositions over with me, half an hour and my time was up. I was too young to insist. The thought never seemed to have entered my head to bring one of his symphonies without first asking. I cannot remember if I was plain stupid or too young, or whether V.W. had no idea how to tackle a pupil in an unorthodox manner. I never felt the thrill of inspiration at his lessons, though he twice patted me on the back, like any old man might! and would say, "Now you are beginning to do well". I think perhaps I was frightened of his knowledge, & retired in a shell of inferiority, & he instead of trying to encourage me out gave me the feeling that indeed he must never find out how little I knew. On the other hand I was with him one term only, and I'm sure it was not long enough to judge a man as great as V.W. Still I feel I am capable of judging him 3 months' worth! I have found

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Headington, *Britten* [London: Eyre Methuen, 1981], 27). Michael Kennedy is even more blunt, asserting not only that entrance standards of the RCM were "lower than now" but also, commenting on Vaughan Williams, that "to those out of sympathy with him, his outlook was regarded as parochial . . . He also distrusted brilliance in any form, including technical virtuosity for its own sake, and he held the opinion that [Frank] Bridge's music was 'the deepest abyss of the result of writing 'effectively'." (Michael Kennedy, *Benjamin Britten* [London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1981], 9-10).

out that I appreciate him more now that I have studied music farther, and also farther from London, possible the little free counterpoint he made me write, the suite etc. helped me, but I can't honestly say that V.W. gave me one thought to brood or bite on. I felt so homesick, miserable & squashed. If only he had said the magic word, I feel sure I might have done something, but what! I have wanted to argue this out for some time. One day he remarked on the pretty clothes I wore, & said how sweet of me to cheer up an old man in a dingy college room by wearing a light green dress. I gasped inside the room but when I went out I remember wishing fervently my music had called forth a few remarks instead of my spring frock. He would treat me as [if] I was a little girl [—] no he treated me as a *little little* girl & that was younger than I was!

I am writing a pretty little song to a verse of Padriac Colum, it is planned out but not written much as yet.<sup>22</sup>

It is pointless to speculate on what a more rigorous training in the *craft* of composition might have done for Coulthard at this stage: perhaps it would have provided her with a more sure sense of direction during the '30s and early '40s; equally, it might have turned her into an unquestioning disciple of a particular style and approach rather than fostering her quest for an original voice.

While at the Royal College, Coulthard also continued her studies in piano with Kathleen Long and in advanced theory with R.O. Morris, as well as conducting and playing percussion in the school's "second" orchestra. Of almost

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<sup>22</sup>Jean Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer* (unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard), 28 January 1931 [52-5].

as much lasting significance as her official course of studies at the College were Coulthard's explorations of the galleries and museums of the great city, and her regular attendance at the theatre, ballet and opera. She was introduced to her "uncles"<sup>23</sup> prominent (if, for the young Coulthard, stuffy) social circle and toured the home counties. A particular friend was the Australian pianist and fellow college student Ruth Pascoe; together they made a short trip to Germany, travelling by steamer on the Rhine and hearing a production of Hindemith's *Cardillac* in Cologne.

Beyond gaining exposure to the gamut of the London cultural scene, Coulthard solidified her taste in repertoire, familiarising herself more deeply with the music of the impressionists (she saw Ravel "in his plum-coloured suit"<sup>23</sup> at the College), and of the modern English school (including Ireland, Vaughan Williams, Holst and, a particular favourite, Delius).<sup>24</sup> She also had her first, albeit brief, exposure to the more modern idioms of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, and the French "*Les six*"; as well as attending *Cardillac* (and subsequently studying the score bought in London), Coulthard also heard an evening of Hindemith's chamber music presented in the Burlington Arcade, the composer himself playing viola.

By the end of her time at the Royal College, she received her first British review, in the *Daily Express* — and not, as one would expect, as a pianist or

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<sup>23</sup>Jean Coulthard, "Proceedings," 36.

<sup>24</sup>See Coulthard, "Proceedings," 36.

composer, but as a conductor at the College term-end open examinations.<sup>25</sup> As Coulthard's London sojourn drew to an end, her mother travelled to England to join her, and at the end of the term they went on to Paris before returning home at the end of the summer.

Coulthard's time in London was, on the whole, positive, despite the inadequacies of her actual training. Unquestionably the London year solidified Coulthard's view of herself *as a composer*. Beyond that it introduced her to the notion of European-centred culture. While so many similar students have found the transition from North America difficult and a confirmation of their own sense of North American-ness, for Coulthard the experience was different. The privileged atmosphere of her doting "uncles" and her omnivorous discoveries of the great cultural richness of the city was to colour her view of life, of education, and of civilization throughout her career.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Conductor followed conductor, seven being men and five women. Curiously enough, the women were less graceful than the men, save for one, Miss Jean Coulthard, who conducted the andante movement of Mozart's *E♭ Concerto* most admirably, and without a baton." *London Daily Express*, 17 July 1929.

<sup>26</sup>Even in the '60s and '70s Coulthard regularly advised her students to finish off their educations in Europe. While she had come to appreciate the technical effectiveness of American and some Canadian graduate programmes, she remained a committed advocate for direct experience with European culture — in Europe.

### *The Return of the Native*

The Vancouver to which Coulthard returned in 1930 was a city very different from the one she had left. With all North America hit by the Great Depression, the boom years of the 1920s were definitively over. But despite the impact of the Depression, many events in the cultural life of Vancouver were positive. The 1920s and early 1930s saw the founding of a number of Vancouver's most important cultural institutions: the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art in 1925, and the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1931.<sup>27</sup>

In music an equally important institution was revived: on October 5th, 1930 the "resurrected" Vancouver Symphony Society performed its first concert since 1921. At first the orchestra drew heavily on the local pool of talent for soloists.

To quote John Becker:

Mayor W. H. Malkin was present to hear his daughter, Ursula Malkin, perform Beethoven's *Piano Concerto #4* . . . . At the second concert, on December 7, Jan Cherniavsky performed Schumann's *Concerto for Piano Op. 54*, for the first

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<sup>27</sup>The Art School's Charles H. Scott (1864-1964) hired Fred H. Varley (1881-1969) from Toronto and Jock Macdonald (1897-1960) from England and, as well, added Glasgow-trained Grace Melvin (1890-1977) to his early staff. Other figures active at this time included photographer John Vanderpant (1884-1939), W.P. Weston (1874-67), and Mortimer Lamb (1872-1970). The establishment of the School provided a vital training centre in British Columbia, while the Gallery acted as a focal point for the gathering group of artists who were then resident in the Vancouver area. As Edward Gibson and Irena Onufrijchuck noted in the preface to their recent exhibition commemorating the VSA, "If there is one institution which can claim to have moulded individual artists, teachers, art courses, student projects, ideas, dreams and expectations into a West Coast movement of modern art it is the Vancouver School of Art." (Edward Gibson and Irena Onufrijchuck, *A Crucible of Modernism: Vancouver School of Art 1949-56* [Burnaby, British Columbia: Simon Fraser University, 1989], 2). Though perhaps of less direct impact, Emily Carr's return to painting was of some significance during these years. The doyenne of B.C. painters, Carr lived and worked in Victoria; during the 1930s she was perceived as reclusive and self-absorbed, but her impact on younger figures (especially Jack Shadbolt) cannot be ignored.

of his many appearances with the VSO. Later that season the young Jean Coulthard performed with her mother and two other pianists in J.S. Bach's *Concerto for Four Keyboards*.<sup>28</sup>

The Bach performance was not what the young composer-pianist had in mind as a *début* piece, however. Indeed Coulthard felt bitterly rejected by the orchestra's conductor Allard de Ridder when he cancelled a planned performance of César Franck's *Variations symphoniques*.<sup>29</sup> Insult was added to injury when Coulthard was invited to perform in the local *première* of Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*, a work Coulthard thought distinctly beneath her at the time.<sup>30</sup>

After her return to Vancouver, Coulthard began to prepare her *début* recital, which was held in the Vancouver Hotel under the auspices of the IODE on Friday, 21 April, 1932 (see Figures 1.1a and 1.1b, following), and to work seriously with Frederick Chubb on the traditional syllabus of theory skills.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Becker *Discord*, 7. Coulthard, however, recalls the performance of Bach's *Concerto for Three Keyboards* performed by herself, Nancy Reed and Else de Ridder.

<sup>29</sup>"Last evening I went to Mme. Drefus to play at a French *soirée*. I played two Debussy Preludes: a Spanish Dance of De Falla, & for an encore a Chopin after-dinner *minut*. There were about 3 French people at this *soirée* & most of the conversation was carried on in English. Later Mr. & Mrs. De Ridder arrived, hence my depression today. I am not to play the *Variations* with the orchestra. It is a bitter disappointment & why bother relating the details. Mix-ups bore me. Mother is very disappointed, almost as much as I am. I must say I was told of it in a most undignified manner. The committee might have at least written a note. I shall be making excuses for myself till February — something which I dislike doing & it hurts because my pride is touched" (Jean Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer*, 1 December 1930:[16-17]).

<sup>30</sup>See Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer*, [78].

<sup>31</sup>See Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer*, [17-18].

**PIANO RECITAL**

**JEAN COULTHARD**  
**COMPOSER - PIANIST**

**ASSISTED BY**  
**AVIS PHILLIPS**  
**SOPRANO**

**AND**  
**A STRING QUARTET**

**AUSPICES OF**  
**CORONATION CHAPTER I.O.D.E.**

**OAK ROOM**  
**HOTEL VANCOUVER**

**SAT. NOV. 19, 8:30 P.M.**  
1932

**TICKETS 75c**  
**J. W. KELLY PIANO CO.**  
**WESTERN MUSIC CO.**

*Figure 1.1.a: IODE Recital Programme, 1932*

*The Orchestral Music of Jean Coulthard*

*Biography 22*

**PROGRAMME**

- I.**  
Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue Bach
- II.**  
Pastorale Sonata Beethoven  
Allegro  
Andante  
Scherzo  
Rondo
- III.**  
Fairy Tale, F, sharp minor Medtner  
La sérénade interrompue Debussy  
La fille aux cheveux de lin Debussy  
Danse du Meunier De Falla

Steinway Grand loaned by courtesy of  
J. W. Kelly Piano Co. Ltd.

**COMPOSITIONS BY JEAN COULTHARD**

**IV.**

**SONGS**

- |   |          |                    |
|---|----------|--------------------|
| Cradle Song   | Poets by | Padriac Colum      |
| Frolie  | " "      | JE                 |
| Weep you no more  | " "      | Anon               |
| Faery Song  | " "      | John Keats         |
| The Bargain (Wedding Song)<br>Violin Obligato (Charles E. Shaw) | " "      | Sir Phillip Sidney |

**V.**

**PIANO QUINTET**

- Andante Leggiero  
Chorale and Variations

- |                                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Grace Hastings Dresser, 1st Violin. | Freda Setter, Cello |
| Charles E. Shaw, 2nd Violin         | A. J. Talbot, Viola |

*Figure 1.1.b: IODE Recital Programme, 1932*

She began to teach, both privately in her mother's studio and then at St. Anthony's College and Queen's Hall Schools for Girls. During these years Coulthard also attempted to continue her work as a conductor, organising a small theatre orchestra for the Vancouver Little Theatre's presentations;<sup>32</sup> as well, in the late '30s, she worked with writer Michael Dyne on a series of broadcasts presenting the lives of composers — often with a humorous, even satiric slant.

On a personal level, the '30s were a turbulent decade: the depression years were financially hard and professionally uncertain. In her reminiscences of the decade Coulthard has written:

At this time I can remember my own extremes of mood: upon returning to Canada there was an initial joyous feeling of a "spring of the arts" in the West — a tremendous sensation of hope that everything in the creative arts was about to burgeon forth; but it really was a forlorn hope, musically speaking. . . . I think the community as a whole was no more or less advanced than any other Canadian city at this time, and for a while I came to feel that there was really nothing for the young composer.<sup>33</sup>

Then, in 1933, Coulthard's mother died suddenly and prematurely. The devastating emotional effect of Mrs. Coulthard's death cannot be overstated.

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<sup>32</sup>Coulthard wrote a few (now lost) pieces for her little orchestra.

<sup>33</sup>Coulthard, "Proceedings," 37.

To begin with, Coulthard and her sister tried to maintain their family home and their mother's active music studio. Then, on Christmas Eve, 1935, Coulthard married Donald Marvin Adams.<sup>34</sup> Victoria-born, Don Adams had returned to British Columbia from several years in California. Coulthard had first met him years earlier when they were both 15, and had become re-acquainted with him just after her return to Vancouver. Coulthard has noted that Adams, a fine pianist himself,

returned to Vancouver from his years living in California and introduced me to music developments from the U.S. perspective: I became acquainted with the work of Copland, Harris, Cowell (whose *New Music* magazine we all read and studied) and even the early fascinating and controversial ideas of John Cage.<sup>35</sup>

Immediately after their marriage, the young couple lived in Coulthard's father's Marpole Street home, establishing what amounted to a separate apartment in the large house. In the years immediately following Coulthard's mother's death, her father's health began to fail, and he died in 1937. Coulthard and her sister were advised (ill-advised, as it turned out) to sell the family property. In the fall of 1937, Coulthard and Adams bought a small home of

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<sup>34</sup>Donald Marvin Adams (1908-1985).

<sup>35</sup>Coulthard, "Proceedings," 37. Copies of Cowell's *New Musical Resources* and Horace Alden Miller's *New Harmonic Devices*, brought back from Berkeley by Adams, remain in Coulthard's personal library.

their own on what was then Sperling Street,<sup>36</sup> just south of 41st Avenue, and Babs and her new husband David Brock<sup>37</sup> went to Europe.

Coulthard's social and professional set in the 1930s was mixed, including various friends from the Shaughnessy social milieu, professional colleagues and acquaintances from the growing musical community, and, as well, a number of figures who were to become increasingly important in the West Coast art scene. Coulthard was photographed in a series of remarkable pictures by John Vanderpant, was friends with the young then-watercolourist Jack Shadbolt,<sup>38</sup> and celebrated the marriage of her close friend Jessie Wyllie and painter Bertram (a.k.a. B.C.) Binning in 1937. Another younger friend was Mortimer Lamb's daughter Molly, later to make her reputation as the painter Molly Lamb Bobak.<sup>39</sup> And it was through Lamb that Coulthard and Adams bought an Emily Carr picture and met the great West Coast painter.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Now Wiltshire Street.

<sup>37</sup>David Brock (1910-78), broadcaster and writer for publications such as *Punch*, *Time and Tide*, the *Manchester Guardian* and *Atlantic*.

<sup>38</sup>A Shadbolt painting in Coulthard's personal collection is marked "Souvenir of the King's Visit and Luncheon on May 29th 1938" — a watercolour still-life of the table (with recognizable family silver) after a festive lunch.

<sup>39</sup>Coulthard's contemporary piano work *Molly and the Indians* was suggested by Molly's not-entirely-respectable (at that time) fascination with Native life.

<sup>40</sup>The meeting was something of a social disaster: Carr was initially not at all pleased to hear that Mortimer Lamb had sold, for a tidy profit, a work she had given to him. But after a few disparaging remarks about Lamb's sharp practices, Carr decided it was probably just as well, saying that "I would rather two young people have it now anyway." (Jean Coulthard, *Biographical Sketches* [unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard], IV:2).

For Coulthard the composer the '30s were to be a frustrating and trying time. The preliminary lessons in composition that she received from Vaughan Williams were simply inadequate preparation for a career as a professional composer, let alone a young composer struggling far from any of the centres of new music. Vaughan Williams may have established a certain "atmosphere" about composition and the compositional process, but since practical emphasis on the technique and craft of composition was neglected, Coulthard had few resources on which to fall back. In later years, Coulthard rather guiltily agreed with Gordon Jacob that in hard terms they learned next to nothing from Vaughan Williams.<sup>41</sup>

The return to the British Columbia coast had not marked the most productive stage in Coulthard's development as a composer. Although she was busy writing during the 1930s, a high proportion of her works from this era have been withdrawn, and in some ways it can be viewed as a lost decade in terms of the ongoing advancement of Coulthard's craft.

In the mid-1930s, Coulthard's orchestral music took a significant leap forward. Coulthard became aware of the Reading (Pennsylvania) Orchestra's search for new scores. With more enthusiasm than experience, she submitted her only symphonic work to that date, entitled *Portrait*. To her elation (and

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<sup>41</sup>During a meeting in the 1960s, Jacob bluntly asked Coulthard, "Did you learn anything from VW?" and, without waiting for a reply, continued, "I didn't learn a thing either!"

surprise), it was accepted, and Coulthard's career as a performed orchestral composer began.<sup>42</sup>

Following her marriage, Coulthard and her new husband travelled to New York over the Christmas season of 1936 to visit Coulthard's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Millen Robinson. It was at that time that Coulthard sought out Aaron Copland for a short course of criticism sessions and lessons. While Copland's lean, spare style was far removed from Coulthard's, the meetings were entirely successful. Coulthard appreciated the contact with another composer (and one working in the post-Debussy French tradition as well) and was completely charmed with Copland's affectionate, helpful manner: not only were the lessons a success, but Copland went out of his way with invitations, tickets, and other contacts and connections. It was to prove the best possible re-introduction to the broader world of music, a re-invigorating contact that Coulthard had missed since London.<sup>43</sup> Then in 1938 another event changed Coulthard's musical life: the arrival in Vancouver of the Australian-born conductor and composer Arthur Benjamin.

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<sup>42</sup>Coulthard herself is not at all enthusiastic about this early score, dismissing it as of no value at all. The only manuscript, now withdrawn, remains in the composer's possession.

<sup>43</sup>On one occasion Coulthard asked Copland to show her some of his own work; Copland played her his complete *Piano Variations* (1930). Initially she was somewhat shocked by the aggressive modernism of the percussive pianistic idiom (no doubt intensified by Copland's "composerly" piano technique). If the idiom was of no direct effect on Coulthard, the variational process used in the Copland proved to be a significant inspiration, one assimilated in Coulthard's own *Variations on BACH* (1952).

***Arthur Benjamin and the War Years***

The Second World War years were, of course, a major interruption in the development of all the arts in Canada, but in another sense they saw a period of rapid growth and expansion.<sup>44</sup> Many younger figures received their first local or national recognition at this time; visual artists had unforeseen exposure beyond provincial boundaries through the War Artists Programme or through their experiences in the services.<sup>45</sup> Composers found that their music was broadcast and performed with greatly increased frequency. As Gordana Lazarevich has written,

Artists continued to function as an important source of fund-raising and morale boosting throughout the war years. . . . Painters were fighting, metaphorically, with their brushes, lending their support for the war effort through their art. . . . Another organization that played an essential role during the war years was the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

After describing the various concert, documentary and drama offerings of the Corporation, she continues:

The CBC . . . assumed another important function within Canada's cultural history: over a period of five years the medium served as a forum for the composition and performance of music by Canadian composers. Through its

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<sup>44</sup>In an interview with the author, the Canadian composer Barbara Pentland pointed out that the war years gave the then-young artists a sense of purpose as well as a greater audience, a sense that a distinct Canadian culture did exist and had come into being, one which should be protected and nurtured.

<sup>45</sup>Jack Shadbolt, "A Personal Recollection," *Vancouver Art and Artists: 1931-1983* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983): 34-42, as well as Lorna Farrell-Ward, "Tradition/Transition: The Keys to Change," *op. cit.*: 31-32.

policy of support for Canadian talent, it provided a source of income for a generation of young composers, as well as valuable experience and an opportunity to have their music heard. . . . The feelings of nationalism generated by the social climate of the war years were expressed in numerous . . . broadcasts of music by Canadians. A phenomenon unique to the times, these programs in a sense reflected the necessity for the country to take stock of its native talent.<sup>46</sup>

Unquestionably, the war years exposed Canadians to an array of international modernist ideas, encouraged the exchange of parochial values for increasingly international ones, and fostered, in artists, a greater sense of confidence and self-worth, as well as a belief in the seriousness and value of art.

The beginning of the war years found Vancouver very much in transition. In 1940, Emily Carr's Eastern Canadian colleague (and, in some ways, mentor) Lawren Harris settled in Vancouver. Harris did not have the direct and obvious effect on the developing style of the younger Vancouver artists that the Art School/College of Art teachers did, but his presence brought a great sense of authority and gave a deeper resonance to local artistic life.<sup>47</sup>

Yet another change in the Vancouver scene took place as the result of an influx of newcomers to Vancouver; the city became the preferred centre for a significant number of highly cultured Central European Jews who re-located

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<sup>46</sup>Gordana Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 74, 77.

<sup>47</sup>Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), 201. Harris quickly became the centre of a virtual salon, introducing many of the younger Vancouver artists to each other and fostering informal discussions.

in the city. The musical lines of development changed overnight with the arrival of such imports as musicologist-critic Ida Halpern and patrons Walter and Thea Koerner, to name just a few.<sup>48</sup> But, for Coulthard, none of the new Vancouverites was to play a more significant role than Arthur Benjamin. Born in Sydney, Australia in 1893, Benjamin had been based in London since 1921, coming to Vancouver in the 1930s as an adjudicator. As Europe moved inexorably to war in 1939 Benjamin, a non-practising Jew, decided to remain in Vancouver, bringing his elderly mother out shortly afterwards to join him.

Besides his work as a pianist, composer, and conductor, Benjamin was an enthusiastic teacher; very soon he had an important class of students including not only Coulthard, but Robert Barclay, Robert Fleming, Hugh MacLean, Gregory Miller, Phyllis Schuldt, and Ira Swartz. He challenged the conventional approach to orchestral programming and performance (to the considerable disapproval of the staid Vancouver Symphony Society) through the establishment of the Vancouver Sun Promenade Symphony Concerts (1941-42) and as conductor of the CBR Radio Symphony Orchestra from 1941-46).<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the Benjamin years, Coulthard was to recall:

Right at the end of the '30s decade, came the arrival of Arthur Benjamin, the British-Australian composer — just one of so many splendid musicians who came to both the U.S. and Canada to escape the war. The impact of these world-ranking musicians in the American and Canadian West can scarcely be

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<sup>48</sup>Clifford Ford, "Koerner Foundation," *EMC2*, 691.

<sup>49</sup>Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Arthur Benjamin," *EMC2*, 110.

overestimated; just think of the change that took place within a few years with the relocation of Benjamin, Ernest Bloch, Stravinsky, Milhaud and Schoenberg, to name just a few.

From virtually the moment of his arrival, Arthur Benjamin began to perform new music — both international and home grown. He organized the now famous "Prom Concerts" of Vancouver and did his utmost to stimulate young composers, of which at this time in Vancouver Leonard Basham [Robert Barclay] and myself were the most advanced.<sup>50</sup>

Benjamin almost immediately inspired Coulthard to write for orchestra. With his active encouragement, Coulthard began the series of orchestral works which were to be the true beginning of her orchestral catalogue: the *Canadian Fantasy* (1939), *Excursion* (1940), *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* (1942), and *Convoy* (1942).<sup>51</sup>

During the earlier years of the war, Coulthard was able to benefit dramatically from the massive emigration of fine European artists to the west coast. In the summer of 1942 she began a study trip to California, first to the San Francisco suburb of Oakland, where she worked with Darius Milhaud,<sup>52</sup> then on to Los Angeles, where she had criticism sessions with Arnold Schoenberg.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>See Coulthard, "Proceedings," 37.

<sup>51</sup>Despite a "Feb 1st 1944" date on the composer's manuscript, Coulthard recalls that the work was written earlier during the war years.

<sup>52</sup>Darius Milhaud (1892-1974).

<sup>53</sup>Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951). See Coulthard, "Proceedings," 44.

As the war progressed, Don Adams decided that he should join the Canadian Forces, and accepted a commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Navy<sup>54</sup> where he joined his elder brother Captain Kenneth Adams.<sup>55</sup> On May 24th, 1943, Coulthard gave birth to her only child, daughter Jane. When her husband was stationed in Halifax, Coulthard decided to spend the rest of the war in New York and went to live with her grandmother.

It was in New York that she was able to establish contact with Béla Bartók,<sup>56</sup> whom she approached for lessons in 1944. By 1944 Bartók's health was rapidly deteriorating, his financial situation precarious. Somehow he had expected a male composer, and when Coulthard appeared at the door of his apartment, he was nonplussed. Bartók's dislike of teaching (indeed, refusal to teach) composers has been well documented, but by focusing on elements of criticism, rhythm, and the like, Coulthard was able to benefit from her contact with him. She wrote:

During my first winter in New York I had met Bartók and had hoped to go to him for a period of study. So much has been written now of his last years and the hardships in New York that all one can do is add a personal remembrance of this great composer. He seemed to me a man of gentleness on the outside coupled with a rather nervous retiring manner. I went several

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<sup>54</sup>Adams was first stationed in Prince Rupert, then trained in Winnipeg before a brief assignment in Windsor, Ontario. Most of Adams' war service took place in Halifax, where he was in charge of Special Services.

<sup>55</sup>Capt. Adams was responsible for the famous North Atlantic supply convoys to Britain. The score of Coulthard's *Convoy* is dedicated to him. See Chapter 5.

<sup>56</sup> Béla Bartók (1881-1945).

times to his flat which he shared with his petite second wife who was much younger. . . . He was very surprised that I wanted to study composition, saying he rarely taught it and never before to a woman! He stressed very much aural training, though I had a pretty good ear, he didn't feel I was quick enough in perceiving complicated rhythms.<sup>57</sup>

But the most significant development of the New York years were her lessons with Bernard Wagenaar,<sup>58</sup> head of the composition department at the Juilliard School. Here was the figure that Coulthard had been looking for since the early '30s. Not much remembered as a composer, Wagenaar had a solid reputation and was, for Coulthard at least, the perfect teacher at just the right time. Indeed, she was later to write:

A turning point in my musical life [occurred when] I was accepted as a private student by . . . Bernard Wagenaar. . . . He inspired me and opened many vistas and I cherished every moment of every lesson period. . . . Of all the eminent teachers I've had I truly believe that no one reached me as deeply as Wagenaar was able to do.<sup>59</sup>

While in New York she worked with him regularly for about six months, exploring construction of phrases of varied lengths, extensions and developments of material, formal logic and preliminary use of tone rows.

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<sup>57</sup>Coulthard, *Biographical Sketches*, II:2-3.

<sup>58</sup>Bernard Wagenaar (1894-1971).

<sup>59</sup>Coulthard, *Biographical Sketches*, II:2.

It could be argued that it was only *after* Coulthard had grappled, on her own, with the very real problems of composition that the solid approach to craft stressed by Wagenaar actually helped her establish a unique and personal voice as a composer; and it is futile to speculate whether exposure to a similar figure ten years earlier would have led to such fruitful results. In any case, her lessons with Wagenaar amounted to a graduate course in composition. They clarified her outlook on form and the formal organization of her materials; solidified her approach to harmony, particularly an expanded tonal vocabulary; encouraged her to use aspects of twelve-tone music;<sup>60</sup> instilled a sense of professionalism; and definitively confirmed her sense of the value of her work.

Arthur Benjamin had acted as a catalyst, infusing the composer with the self confidence (as well as providing the practical advice *and* the performance opportunities) to progress to large scale works. Bernard Wagenaar gave Coulthard a real grounding in the technique of composition and helped her establish her own mature path. This is more than borne out by the obvious contrast between her "pre-" and "post-Wagenaar" compositions, the four early orchestral works and the *Études* for piano on the one hand and the three instrumental *Sonatas* she was to write in 1947 on the other. A single orchestral work, *Music on a Quiet Song* (1946), marks the transition.

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<sup>60</sup>Two manuscript notebooks have been preserved which graphically demonstrate Coulthard's work with Wagenaar, progressing from small examples in various phrase-length combinations to more extended problems and 12-tone studies. At least two of the exercises composed for Wagenaar were later expanded, one into the first *Etude* for piano, another as the basis of *Music on a Quiet Song*. Characteristically, virtually all Coulthard's exercise materials are fully edited and brought to a performance level of polish.

***Post-war Developments; University of British Columbia***

Coulthard returned to Canada to be reunited with her husband in May of 1945, staying with him in St. John, New Brunswick for a month before the entire family was able to return to Vancouver and the house on Wiltshire Street. After the peregrinations of the war years, Coulthard was entirely happy to be back on the west coast, establishing a normal family life and continuing her career. When she was ready for school in 1949, Jane was enrolled in Maple Grove Elementary,<sup>61</sup> Don Adams began to think about establishing himself in business, and Coulthard resumed private teaching and composing.

The cultural environment in post-war Vancouver exploded; the protracted interruption of the war years had in effect bottled up the energies of the cultural community which, when released after 1945, detonated with surprising energy and enthusiasm. In the visual arts the preeminent figures of the immediate post-war period were Jack Shadbolt (1909-)<sup>62</sup> and B.C. Binning

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<sup>61</sup>She went on to Queen's Hall School in 1954 and Crofton House in 1957, graduating from the latter in 1961.

<sup>62</sup>Born in England, Shadbolt grew up in Victoria where he knew Emily Carr and her circle. He studied at the Vancouver School of Art with Varley in the mid-1930s, then for a year in London and Paris. From 1938 until 1942 he taught at the Vancouver School of Art and then, in 1942, joined the armed forces; he was appointed an official war artist in 1944.

Recognition came slowly to Shadbolt. According to Paul Duval, "[H]is isolation in British Columbia helped to keep him from gaining proper notice in the East, where the dominant art markets were then centred." (Paul Duval, *Four Decades: The Canadian Group of Painters and their Contemporaries, 1930-1970* [Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1972], 157. But by the 1950s Shadbolt had developed a reputation as a major teacher (he was by then Director of the Drawing and Painting Department at the Vancouver School of Art) and as a painter of real stature.

(1909-76).<sup>63</sup> Coulthard had known Binning and Shadbolt well since before the war. She was to meet the noted Canadian poet Earle Birney at the University of British Columbia where he taught in the English Department.<sup>64</sup> In the idealistic return to normality of the post-war period, they were collectively to shape a vibrant new attitude towards the arts in Vancouver and to create a unique brand of regional modernism.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Born in Alberta, Binning came to the coast as a young child; his initial studies in art took place at the Vancouver School of Art from 1927 until 1932. He became an instructor there in 1934. Immediately prior to the Second World War Binning left Vancouver for studies in London and New York.

In England Binning intentionally wished to avoid the regimented attitude of any specific school and studied with Bernard Meninsky (at the Central School of Art), Mark Gertler (at the Westminster School of Art) and Morris Kantor at the Art Students' League. He was particularly influenced by Henry Moore and the French painter Amédée Ozenfant, with whom he worked at the Ozenfant Academy.

Binning returned to Vancouver and to teaching at the School of Art, then in 1949 was appointed Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia; in 1955 he became Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Fine Arts at UBC, a position he retained until 1968. He retired from the University in 1974.

Binning's contribution to Vancouver art was significant. His first works to attract attention were "witty, beautifully full line drawings" (Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, [Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973], 285). After 1948 his oils, murals and mosaics became increasingly known. As one would expect from his connection with Ozenfant, Binning was especially concerned with the integration of all the arts and was involved in the Art in Living group: in his essay "Postwar Architecture in Vancouver", Douglas Shadbolt noted that "with remarkable foresight, two artists teaching at the Vancouver School of Art, Fred Amess and Bert Binning, anticipated the postwar boom and problems of urbanization." (Douglas Shadbolt, "Postwar Architecture in Vancouver," *Vancouver Art and Artists*, 108). Binning put his theories into practice with the construction of his own home in the early 1940s. In the 1950s he was the mentor of the young Arthur Erickson and in the 1960s the co-founder of the influential UBC Contemporary Arts Festivals.

<sup>64</sup>Earle Birney (1904- ). Coulthard has set several of Birney's poems, including *Québec May*, *Vancouver Lights*, and smaller works.

<sup>65</sup>See G. Campbell Trowsdale, "The Furthest West: The Beginnings of Modernism in Vancouver," *Celebration: Essays on Aspects of Canadian Music*, eds. Godfrey Ridout and Talivaldis Kennins, 87-98.

The focal point was the University of British Columbia and the newly established departments of music and fine arts. During the early 1940s Ida Halpern<sup>66</sup> had introduced music courses to the UBC campus; in 1946 a music department was established, headed not by ethnomusicologist Halpern but by the charismatic Toronto violinist Harry Adaskin.<sup>67</sup>

In 1947 Coulthard was appointed to the staff of the Music Department of the University of British Columbia. The appointment, which lasted until her retirement in 1973, became the final component in the protracted process of her maturation as a composer. Like Adaskin, Coulthard was not an "academic" *per se* (Coulthard held no university degrees until she received her two honorary doctorates from UBC and Concordia). Appointed at the rank of Senior Lecturer, she remained at that level in the academic hierarchy throughout her quarter of a century at UBC. From the outset, her "parallel career" as a university teacher had an immediate effect on her creative work: as she prepared exhaustively for her classes in theory and composition<sup>68</sup> a new level of seriousness and a more comprehensive scope was established, a self-conscious awareness of the composer's craft that remained a basic feature of her music and a preoccupation of her teaching.

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<sup>66</sup>Charles E. Borden, "Ida Halpern," *EMC2*, 571.

<sup>67</sup>See Harry Adaskin, *A Fiddler's Choice: Memoires 1938-1980* (Vancouver: November House, 1982); also Terrence Bailey, "University of British Columbia," *EMC2*, 1339.

<sup>68</sup>Basing her approach to composition lessons on that of Wagenaar. Here preparation for theory teaching was more involved; in her first post-war trip to England in the summer of 1949 she obtained a reader's card at the British Museum in order to immerse herself in manuscripts of Medieval and Renaissance polyphony.

But while her work with students at the university was rewarding, her career at the university was never unproblematic. After designing the curriculum of the department's theory courses and teaching theory, composition and related subjects with great success, she was summarily dismissed from her position in 1951, supposedly due to budgetary concerns.<sup>69</sup> After the initial shock of her termination changed to indignation, Coulthard sought redress from Dean Geoffrey Andrew and UBC President Norman MacKenzie. The dismissal was withdrawn.

In 1958 Adaskin was replaced as department head by theorist and former film composer G. Welton Marquis<sup>70</sup>; rapid expansion "from 27 students and 8 faculty in 1959 to 170 students and 41 teachers by 1964"<sup>71</sup> drastically changed the nature and standards of the department. To expand his staff, Marquis recruited and hired a group of younger American teachers. Coulthard came to feel that her interests, standards and goals were at odds with the tenor of the department. From the '60s until her retirement, Coulthard's role was increasingly trivialized: through the choice of composition students and course assignments, and lack of academic advancement, her potential contribution to the University was marginalized.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>The continued employment of Barbara Pentland (who joined the UBC staff in 1949) was not threatened.

<sup>70</sup>Unsigned, *EMC2*, 806.

<sup>71</sup>Bailey, "University of British Columbia," *EMC2*, 1339.

<sup>72</sup>Coulthard herself has always maintained that she was too interested in composition to be particularly affected by the ups and downs of, to use her term, the "academic rat-race".

As a composer, Coulthard began the early post-war years as she meant to go on: with the production of a significant series of three full scale instrumental sonatas in the *annus mirabilis* 1947.<sup>73</sup> These works mark a new maturity. Coulthard's compositional concerns were two-fold: to write works on a larger scale than before, works that reflected her growing preoccupation with formal logic and architecture; and to use expanded harmonic resources, often a form of what she viewed as polytonality,<sup>74</sup> to centre the harmonic language in an appropriately modern idiom. The three 1947 *Sonatas* were a measure of her growing powers as a composer of stature and originality.

Several small scale orchestral works date from the early 1950s: *A Prayer for Elizabeth* of 1953 and the first draft of *Music to Saint Cecilia*. The work of greatest significance from this time, however, is Coulthard's three-movement *First Symphony* of 1950, the only orchestral work from this period with the same scope and intensity as the three 1947 *Sonatas*, the *Variations on BACH* (1951) or the *Duo Sonata* (1952).

The immediate post-war years saw Coulthard emerge as a complete professional with a fully mature idiom. It also saw her reputation very much on the rise both in national and international terms. Her career and reputation looked secure; but they were decidedly not so.

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<sup>73</sup>The *Sonatas* for piano, oboe and piano, and cello and piano.

<sup>74</sup>Usually the result of bonding two triad forms together, not the consistent juxtaposition of two or more tonal planes.

### ***Snakes and Ladders***

Following the professional advances and artistic consolidations of the immediate post-war period, the '50s were to prove another difficult decade for Coulthard. Increasingly the direction she was exploring in her work found little favour with other Canadian composers, especially the Toronto school of neoclassical serialists. At first these stylistic dissimilarities seemed insignificant, and Coulthard continued to be actively involved in the promotion of Canadian music and the activities of the fledgling Canadian League of Composers.<sup>75</sup>

While the committed audience for new art was small in the 1950s, interest and awareness was continually growing. Excellent non-specialist propaganda for the cause of regional modernist architecture, art, and craft was provided by the popular design and architecture magazine *Western Homes and Living*,<sup>76</sup> which began publication in 1950. Another vital aspect of the local art scene was the strong linkage between visual artists and architects, writers and musicians.

Perhaps because of the notorious sense of West Coast isolation, there was natural (or essential) interplay between most Vancouver figures concerned with post-war modernism.<sup>77</sup> Artists, audiences and institutions all interacted to make

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<sup>75</sup>See Coulthard's comments in "Proceedings," 38.

<sup>76</sup>*Western Homes and Living* featured photo essays on both the Coulthard/Adams house on Wiltshire (the issue of May, 1956, 14-16) and the Adams-designed studio home of violinist Charles Shaw (the issue of May, 1952, 14-15).

<sup>77</sup>Consider Binning's friendship with Jean Coulthard, Smith's work with architect Arthur Erickson, Shadbolt's relationship with writer George Woodcock and his wife, potter Inge Woodcock, and Ira Swartz's friendship with Charles Shaw, with Alistair Bell, and with Coulthard and Adams; here is a complex topic well worthy of further investigation.

the "period lasting from the end of the Second World War until around 1962" one in which "Vancouver was seen locally and nationally as the city where modernism was most at home in Canada."<sup>78</sup>

On a domestic level, Coulthard's husband established his highly influential and successful design firm, Don Adams Interiors, in 1952. Since the war Adams had become increasingly interested in interior design and by 1952 had decided to branch out on his own. He was to become renowned for his eclectic blend of a number of different materials: the best in new European design, Central and South American traditional furniture, art and accent pieces from the Orient, and folk art and crafts from the Mediterranean and North Africa. Until

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<sup>78</sup>Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties," *Vancouver Art and Artists*, 83. While Binning and Shadbolt may in retrospect be seen as the two greatest forces in Vancouver art in the 1950s, they were by no means the only artists of importance; as Dennis Reid notes, "a surprisingly large number of painters with a similar persuasion appeared in Vancouver during the fifties" (Reid, *Concise History*, 286).

An especially influential show, organized in 1959 as part of the Vancouver International Festival by Ian McNairn, "was shown across the country in 1959 . . . These painters, exploring their subjective reactions to nature, dominated the art scene in Vancouver into the sixties, and (partly as a result of the McNairn show) were then seen nationally as the most coherent 'group' working outside of Montréal" (Reid, *Concise History*, 287).

Besides Shadbolt, the McNairn show included work by John Korner (1913-); Don Jarvis (1923-); Gordon Smith (1919-); Takao Tanabe (1926-); and Peter Aspell (1918-). The figurative work of Joe Plaskett (1918-) also attracted attention in the 1950s, though he was shortly to leave the coast (for France, where he currently lives) as did Bruno Bobak (1923-) and Molly Lamb Bobak (1922-), who left Vancouver at the end of the '50s for New Brunswick.

Charles Stegeman (1924-) and Françoise André (1926-), two European-trained painters, were also briefly prominent in the 1950s. Both "became close to Mark Tobey [and] . . . practised a kind of surrealism which allies their work to animistic painters. However, their roots were in European surrealism. As a result their work often has an intoxicating richness that made it seem overwrought at the time" (Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties," 84).

Finally, by the end of the '50s the work of two English-born artists, Toni Onley (1928-) and Alistair Bell (1913-), had begun to be noticed.

the business was sold in 1981, Adams made several buying trips a year, frequently circling the globe.<sup>79</sup>

Right after the war Coulthard had met the English composer Elizabeth Poston<sup>80</sup> through cellist Audry Piggott. Poston and Coulthard became "great friends" almost immediately, Poston providing a tangible link with post-war British music and the growing support network of British women composers. She was well connected in Britain through both her literary and war work, and it was through Poston that Coulthard encountered such luminaries as E.M. Forster in 1949, and Elizabeth Lutyens and Vita Sackville-West in the '60s.

In 1957 (just after Coulthard's return from a sabbatical year in France) the family decided to move house, leaving the well documented but by now too small Wiltshire Street cottage for 2747 Southwest Marine Drive, an early building by pioneer Vancouver architect Ned Pratt, formerly owned by watercolourist Lillette Mahon. This quickly became a showplace for Adams's design theories, complemented by the creation of his own Japanese-inspired garden of exquisite charm.

In professional terms, the '50s began inauspiciously. In 1950, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra hosted the 1st Symposium of Canadian Music, an event

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<sup>79</sup>The degree of independence in the Coulthard/Adams marriage was, to put it mildly, untypical in North American society at the time — far more in keeping with more sophisticated European models. In family circles, Coulthard's first sabbatical was referred to in years to come as "the time Jean left Don".

<sup>80</sup>Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987), composer, editor, folksong collector and broadcaster. See Michael Huré, "Elizabeth Poston," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1981), 15:156.

referred to as "the largest festival of Canadian music prior to that at Expo '67".<sup>81</sup> The accidental overhearing of a disparaging assessment of her music from an Eastern colleague<sup>82</sup> was Coulthard's first indication that her work was to fall increasingly out of favour with the central Canadian musical establishment of that era. Ironically, it was just at this time that Coulthard saw her first international recognition, including CAPAC Prizes for the *Piano Études*, and the *Cello* and *Piano Sonatas*; awards from the 1948 London and 1952 Helsinki Olympiads; the McGill Chamber Music Award and the Alfred J. Clement Memorial Prize for the *First String Quartet*; a grant from the American Learned Societies; an Australian Broadcasting Commission prize for the *First Symphony*; and a performance at the 1954 ISCM Festival in Haifa, Israel.<sup>83</sup>

Coulthard herself has never publicly commented on the events of the 1950s and has left to others speculation about the stylistic, personal, and/or political nature of her estrangement. Unquestionably, Coulthard realized by the end of the decade that the local audience was fundamentally disinterested in new music, that the cause of Canadian music was of little or no interest to her new American-born colleagues at the University of British Columbia, and that her erstwhile colleagues in the Canadian East were travelling in fundamentally different musical directions.

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<sup>81</sup>Helmut Kallmann, "First Symposium of Canadian Contemporary Music," *EMC2*, 465.

<sup>82</sup>Jean Coulthard, in conversation with the author.

<sup>83</sup>This was one of the last ISCM performances by a Canadian prior to the withdrawal by the CLC from the ISCM in 1956; see Sheila Eastman and Timothy J. McGee, *Barbara Pentland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 75-6.

While retaining her teaching commitments, her virtually instinctive solution was to return to Europe whenever possible. Her first post-war trip was in 1949. She stopped first in New York (for further study with Wagenaar), then went on to war-scarred London, where she renewed her friendship with Elizabeth Poston. In 1952 she made her first extended trip to France, driving through the countryside as far as the Mediterranean with Poston. Then, during the 1955/56 school year, Coulthard took her first UBC sabbatical; with the help of a Royal Society Fellowship she spent a full year in France, first based in Paris, then Rocquebrunne Village in the Alpes Maritime. It was during this time that she began work on her three-act opera *The Return of the Native*, and composed the first movement of the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*.<sup>84</sup>

Characteristically, Coulthard planned to continue her studies during her months in Paris; like so many other North American composers, she found her way to the famous Rue Ballu studio of Nadia Boulanger. The encounter was not a success. Boulanger's famous emphasis on *sofège* and sight singing seemed (to the by now experienced composer of nearly 50!) inappropriate; the cult of the long-dead Lili<sup>85</sup> cloying; and Boulanger's critiques weak and off the mark.

Coulthard has never criticised Boulanger, publicly hailing her "tremendous prowess as a sightreader and great knowledge of music". But neither did Boulanger have any lasting effect on Coulthard.

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<sup>84</sup>Daughter Jane Adams joined Coulthard in England before going on to Paris, a passenger on the first scheduled "transpolar" flight from Vancouver (stopping at Edmonton, Churchill, Manitoba, Prestwick, Scotland and Amsterdam before arriving, some 26 hours later, in London).

<sup>85</sup>Lili Boulanger (1893-1918).

Contrary to many who claim they gained a great deal from her, I do not think that I did. . . . To me the criticisms of my work were not given from the heart of another composer. But then she was not a composer and there is the great difference in comparison with others I have worked with.<sup>86</sup>

There can be no mistaking the disappointing nature of the episode.<sup>87</sup> The end of Coulthard's French year was marked by a family trip to Italy.

In 1958 Coulthard returned to London, then continued on to the Edinburgh Festival with Elizabeth Poston to hear the British première of *More Lovely Grows the Earth*; they then embarked on an extended tour of Greece. In 1961 she returned with her daughter Jane to England (where Jane was to enrol in the Chelsea School of Art), taking with them a young Vancouver pianist and friend of her daughter, Margaret Phillips (later Margaret Bruce), who became a student at the Royal College of Music;<sup>88</sup> during this trip Coulthard represented Canada at a conference of British Women Composers, which was partially organized by Poston.

While the composerly establishment looked with disfavour at Coulthard's music, a number of Canadian and international musicians began to realize the stature of her work. Coulthard had become familiar with a number of important

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<sup>86</sup>Coulthard, *Biographical Sketches*, III:3.

<sup>87</sup>The article in the first edition of *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*'s emphasis on Coulthard's indebtedness to Boulanger was entirely inaccurate and has been corrected in the revised edition.

<sup>88</sup>Remaining in England, Phillips subsequently married Peter Bruce and then the Hon. Henry Peregrine Lumley Saville. In the 1980s Bruce established the "Canadians and Classics" concert series at St. John's, Smith Square.

musicians in Great Britain and Europe,<sup>89</sup> but it would be the committed performances of young Canadian artists that brought her music to the wider attention of the international audience. And it was to be these vital connections with musicians that sustained Coulthard when she composed her mature works for orchestra. Her prime years as an orchestral composer began with the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* of 1959; one of her most ambitious works, it was composed for the young Canadian violinist Thomas Rolston,<sup>90</sup> a consistent champion of Coulthard's music. The following year Coulthard composed the popular small-scale work *The Bird of Dawning*, then, in the next year, the *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* and the *Fantasy* (written for Rolston and his pianist wife Isobel Moore). The first version of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* was completed in 1962 (though re-worked, prior to its première, in 1963 and 1967).

### *Turbulence: Coulthard in the '60s*

What Coulthard so tragically lacked during her middle years was an orchestral champion: while Arthur Benjamin during his short Vancouver years had encouraged and assisted Coulthard with her orchestral work, no similar

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<sup>89</sup>Most significantly Gina Bachauer (for whom she wrote the *Aegean Sketches*) and John Ogden.

<sup>90</sup>Thomas Rolston (1932- ), violinist, educator, administrator, and Isobel Moore (Rolston) (1931- ) pianist, accompanist and administrator, had established contact with Coulthard for advice in performing Coulthard's *Duo Sonata*. After meeting in Vancouver they quickly became close friends and life-long professional associates. See Brian Harris, "Rolston," *EMC2*, 1143-4.

figure had a place in Coulthard's later life.<sup>91</sup> That Coulthard had no orchestral mentor during the '50s and '60s led to a slow though continuous mastering of the medium through an (at best) cumbersome and inefficient process. Not since the Benjamin years could Coulthard count on reasonably rapid performance dates for her orchestral compositions, which rarely received subsequent performances; it was well into the '60s before Coulthard had the opportunity to create, then hear, assess, and revise her orchestral music. Arguably this meant the creation of an original voice — one not conditioned by the conventional wisdom regarding scoring, balance, and technique.<sup>92</sup>

An assessment of Coulthard's career from a feminist perspective is not a feature of the present study (though it is assumed that, given current interest in similar topics, such an assessment will soon be undertaken). But there is a distinct relationship between her rather slow development as an orchestral composer and the realities of being a composer who was female. For the male composer in Canada, both before and after the Second World War, four types of careers were the rule: teaching, administration, commercial work, or orchestral playing. While all these parallel careers (to use Coulthard's term) had their costs in creative terms, it is apparent that the final category —

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<sup>91</sup>Three conductors, John Avison, Meredith Davies, and Ettore Mazzolini demonstrated some measure of interest in Coulthard's work, but, for whatever reasons, none were in a position to present more than occasional performances. It was only in the 1980s that a conductor, Mario Bernardi, began the systematic performance of Coulthard's orchestral music.

<sup>92</sup>After joining the VSO in 1964, the English conductor Meredith Davies began to be associated with Coulthard's work, conducting a few performances and commissioning a work that was to become the major *Choral Symphony "This Land"*; unfortunately, when Davies' tenure at the VSO ended in controversy following the 1970/71 season, the work had not been performed, nor was it presented by his successors. See Becker, *Discord*, 28.

composers with careers as orchestral players or conductors — captured a disproportionate slice of the available "Canadian content" pie (as will be discussed in Chapter 3).

For a female composer these options were virtually unavailable. Few women played in orchestras, and, with the single exception of the Montréal Women's Orchestra, none were led by women. When Coulthard returned to Vancouver and established her own ensemble, she was working in the face of the conventional orchestral establishment. Even if she had wanted to conduct on a professional level, there would have been no positions available to her: the simple fact remains that the Canadian orchestral establishment was not prepared to consider the aspirations of a female conductor (and probably still is not). With no chance of playing in an orchestra or conducting one, Coulthard was removed from the practical day-to-day experience of the orchestral repertoire in a way that becomes second nature for composers who either play or conduct. Her experience derived, at best, from veteran teachers, then from scores, live performances (recalling that there were few, if any, local performances of the "advanced" repertoire of modern works of compositional interest to Coulthard), then recordings.<sup>93</sup> Coulthard herself appears to have recognized her deficiencies. In a virtually unprecedented move for an entirely

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<sup>93</sup>To be frank, Coulthard's lack of actual orchestral experience from the inside, as it were, shows: in matters of notation and presentation — for example, cues, *fermatas*, notation of accidentals, vague details regarding percussion, brass, articulation, etc. — a certain degree of polish is lacking. Similarly, prior to the 1960s, her approach to balance, while excellent at the *mezzo forte* through *pianissimo* range, is not always clear in the full orchestral *tutti*, her string figuration is occasionally awkward and limited, and her approach to percussion and brass tends toward the stereotypical.

mature composer, she embarked on studies with Gordon Jacob in 1965/66 specifically to deal with issues of scoring.<sup>94</sup> During her sabbatical year again in London, she also attended musicologist Thurston Dart's lectures on early music at King's College, University of London.

Towards the end of the 1960s new directions were established in the Vancouver cultural scene, though not instantly. Indeed, in the words of critic Joan Lowndes, "The spirit of the sixties, that great wave of euphoria bearing the ideas of McLuhan and Leary, did not crash on our Pacific shores until the mid-decade, streaming into the seventies."<sup>95</sup> At UBC the Festivals of Contemporary Art<sup>96</sup> were begun in 1961 (running until 1971), based on the idea of Coulthard's old friend B.C. Binning and June Binkert.<sup>97</sup>

The younger figures who were especially prominent in the '60s include Michael Morris (1942- ); Gary Lee-Nova (1943- ); Brian Fisher (1939- ); and

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<sup>94</sup>The result is immediately apparent in the new transparency of the impressionistic tone poem *Endymion*, worked on with Jacob in London.

<sup>95</sup>Joan Lowndes, "The Spirit of the Sixties," *Vancouver: Art and Artists*, 142.

<sup>96</sup>UBC Art Gallery curator Alvin Balkind (late of the New Design Gallery) described the Festivals as "a response to the surge of postwar artistic energy first released by the abstract expressionists in New York [designed] to catalyze and regenerate local artists by putting them in direct touch with the makers of the charged ideas then current largely in New York and California" ("Chronology," *Vancouver: Art and Artists*, 191).

<sup>97</sup>New ideas in art at the time included Pop Art, Post Painterly Abstraction, Hard Edge Abstraction, Multimedia, Installations, Happenings and Theatre Pieces. The Vancouver gallery scene during the mid and late 1960s was particularly vital. The VAG "mausoleum" had become, under the direction of Tony Emery, "a downtown drop-in centre and pavilion of delights" (Lowndes, "The Spirit of the Sixties," *Vancouver Art and Artists*, 146). The Douglas Gallery, the SFU Centre for Communications and the Arts, the UBC Fine Arts Gallery and Paul Huang's Bau-Xi Gallery all participated in a cumulative intermingling of the arts that reached a wide and disparate audience.

Claude Breeze (1938- ). New ideas also affected the work of the established painters in the late 1960s. Though Shadbolt continued in his "basically expressionist style," he remained "at the centre of things, both intellectually and socially" and "continued to advance the boundaries of his art".<sup>98</sup> Binning and Smith, on the other hand, embraced a hard-edge abstract style that was more fashionable.<sup>99</sup>

Like Shadbolt, Coulthard was essentially interested in holding to her own course; indeed, she was privately critical of much of the neo-dadaist experimentation that passed as new art on the UBC campus.<sup>100</sup> But she was also aware of then contemporary developments, including in her lectures at UBC discussions of such prominent figures as George Crumb, Krzysztof Penderecki, Iannis Xenakis, Pierre Boulez, and John Cage.

An especially important friendship was re-established with Sir Arthur Bliss<sup>101</sup> and his wife Trudy in 1967. Though Bliss was essentially a generation older than Coulthard, she found many of his musical attitudes and observations sympathetic. For his part, Bliss became an enthusiastic champion of Coulthard's

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<sup>98</sup>J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 365.

<sup>99</sup>Harper feels, however, that Smith's "bright, complex geometric pictures of the mid-sixties . . . seem concerned more with local trends than with conviction" (Harper, *Painting in Canada*, 365).

<sup>100</sup> In conversation with the author.

<sup>101</sup>Sir Arthur Bliss, (1891-1975), half-American British composer, was appointed Master of the Queen's Music in 1953; Coulthard first met Bliss and his California-born wife Trudy in 1930. They became reacquainted in 1966 when Bliss conducted his choral symphony *Morning Heroes* in Vancouver. See Andrew Burn, ed., *Arthur Bliss Centenary Brochure* (London: The Bliss Trust, 1988); also author's conversations with Lady Bliss, July 9th, 1991.

works and encouraged her to continue seeking out British performances and publishers. Coulthard attended many of the important British music events with the couple, including the 1969 and 1972 Cheltenham Festivals, the 1970 Aldeburgh Festival (where she met Benjamin Britten and Mstislav Rostropovich),<sup>102</sup> and the 1971 and 1972 Purbeck Festivals. At this time she also met the English critic and painter George Dannatt who, like Bliss, became an enthusiastic admirer of her music.

A number of major works date from the end of the 1960s, including the orchestral poem *Endymion* (1966), the *Symphonic Ode* for cello and orchestra, and the massive *Choral Symphony "This Land"* (*Symphony #2*) (both 1967); the following year saw the revision of *Music to Saint Cecilia* (first drafted in 1954). Frustratingly, the two most significant works of this period, the *Choral Symphony* and the *Symphonic Ode* for cello and orchestra, still await their debut performances.

Throughout the '60's, Coulthard's work received merely cursory critical attention. At the time, conventional wisdom agreed with Richard L. Crocker's vociferous assertion in his *A History of Musical Style* (published in 1966) that "the main lines of development in the 1900's were, by [1952] clear. Schoenberg and Webern had been right all along."<sup>103</sup> Through her teaching, her writings and talks and, above all, her music, Coulthard could not have agreed less.

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<sup>102</sup>She had something of a political row with Galina Vishnevskaya, over, of all things, U.S. social and international policies. (Though often very British indeed in the U.S., Coulthard could be just as North American while in Europe.)

<sup>103</sup>Richard L. Crocker, *A History of Musical Style* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 524.

***"Rehabilitation" and "Retirement"***

Coulthard's Canadian reputation was at its lowest ebb in the 1960s. As musicologist Roseanne Kydd has pointed out,<sup>104</sup> much of the critical assessment of her work at that time was riddled with patronizing assumptions. Though several of her early works (including the *Ballade* and *Music on a Quiet Song*) had been among the first Canadian works to be recorded, these recordings had long been unavailable. Significantly, the only Coulthard work recorded in 1967 for the prestigious CBC/RCA series of recordings was the *Five Part Songs*, a collection of unrepresentative small scale choral works. Publications were similarly scant.

Three factors were to rescue Coulthard's music from temporary obscurity. First, she had always maintained a junior catalogue of educational works for young performers, and thus her work had become familiar to and appreciated by a generation of young performers with new attitudes towards Canadian music. Second, her work had attracted the attention of established performers of the first rank interested in adding Canadian work to their repertoires. Finally,

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<sup>104</sup>Roseanne Kydd, "Jean Coulthard: A Revised View," *SoundNotes* 2 (Spring/Summer 1992): 14-24.

an increasing number of musicians were prepared to consider the issues of up-to-date style and content and quality as separable.<sup>105</sup>

Despite Coulthard's long years of service and her fundamental pleasure in teaching, her retirement from UBC in the spring of 1973 was welcome. Increasingly, the September-to-May academic year interfered with her production as a composer and made extended travel impossible, except in the summer months.<sup>106</sup> Coulthard could look with satisfaction at the results of her quarter century of university teaching. In assessing the development of new music in British Columbia, John Oliver has written:

The first names that come to mind when discussing senior BC composers who are, or have been, associated with university music faculties are Jean Coulthard, Barbara Pentland and Elliot Weisgarber — all of whom taught at UBC — and Murray Adaskin, who taught at U Vic after his arrival in BC from Saskatchewan. . . . Jean Coulthard has had by far the widest influence, having taught at UBC from the opening of the music school in 1947 until her retirement in 1973. Her teaching of tonal traditions and their extensions into polytonality and other tonally based systems accounts for the continuation of these traditions in most of her students.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>See Elaine Keillor, "The Conservative Tradition in Canadian Music," in *Celebration: Essays on Aspects of Canadian Music*.

<sup>106</sup>Coulthard made five trips to Europe in the '70s, visiting Vienna in 1970, Paris in 1975 (for Robert Verebes' European première of the *Sonata Rhapsody* for viola and piano) and more extended stays in England during 1970, 1971, 1972, 1975, and 1978.

<sup>107</sup>John Oliver, "New Music in British Columbia," *SoundNotes* 3 (Fall/Winter 1992):29.

An impressive number of her UBC students had gone on to professional careers as composers and teachers. Oliver enumerates seven: Edward Arteaga, Michael Conway Baker, Lloyd Burritt, David Duke, Jean Ethridge, Sylvia Rickard, Frederick Schipizky, and Ernst Schneider, who are all associates of the Canadian Music Centre; other prominent students include Chan Ka-Nin, Roger Knox (both also associates of the CMC) and Joan Hansen. As her students went out to work as teachers themselves, most (rather in the manner of César Franck's class) tried, in their own ways, to promote the work of their teacher.<sup>108</sup>

With official retirement, Coulthard resolved to attend any major performances that were scheduled, as well as spending December through March at work in her winter retreat in Hawaii. But she did not abandon teaching entirely: several private students continued to work with her, and she began to teach in summer music classes at several institutions. The years 1974, 1975, and 1976 saw her at the Shawnigan Lake Summer School of the Arts on Vancouver Island; in 1977 she conducted Master Classes at the Victoria Conservatory; and in 1978 and 1979 she joined her old friends Tom and Isobel Rolston at the Banff Centre Composer's Workshop.

Perhaps recalling the circumstances of her own study trips, Coulthard welcomed the opportunity to work with young professional composers in the various summer programs. Unlike semester-long classes, the summer programmes combined individual lessons and master classes on aspects of

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<sup>108</sup>Baker, Ethridge and Duke, especially, had had the experience of having work passed over as a result of their stylistic conservatism, and were thus particularly sympathetic.

composition, and more often than not included the analysis of scores Coulthard found of particular interest or importance. Something of her proselytising strategies was transmitted to her students as well. At the Shawnigan camp, no real thought had been given to the performance of works by the composition class, nor were the young professionals taking upgrading classes with world-famous performers especially anxious to spend time on new works. Always prepared to use social means to advance new music, Coulthard decided that the composers would host an informal series of "Sherry Concerts", late afternoon do-it-yourself programmes on Fridays. By the end of the summer composers and performers were the best of friends, and performances of new music abounded.

Coulthard presented fewer formal classes at the Banff Centre but did, on one occasion, give an extended lecture on her own music,<sup>109</sup> dividing her work up not, as might have been expected, chronologically, but rather in terms of the varied problems that a composer faces in a long career of writing for different circumstances and conditions: commissions, works for friends, works for competitions, film and theatre work, and abstract compositions.<sup>110</sup> Through her work at Banff, Coulthard came in contact with a new crop of students, most significantly Robert Rosen and Alan Bell.

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<sup>109</sup>"The Eclectic Composer of Today" (reprinted in *Music Magazine* 2:6, December, 1979, p. 29) was her theme.

<sup>110</sup>As a teacher Coulthard showed little enthusiasm for talking about her works or analyzing her own compositions; nor has she ever seemed particularly concerned about their performance lives after premières. It appears that for her it was the process of composition that mattered; individual products were of far less significance.

Yet another scheme for the advancement of new music and young composers was Coulthard's enthusiastic involvement in the Okanagan Music Festival for Composers. Established in 1972 by Alys Monod, the Festival was

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creative solution to the scarcity of opportunities available for young composers . . . . Works were selected competitively from four classes: middle school, high school, university, and open class for graduates. The festival featured a guest artist who would conduct a workshop exploring his or her own vocal or instrumental specialty.<sup>111</sup>

Another significant development in the '70s and '80s was Coulthard's growing association with the musical community in Montréal. On 6 September, 1969 her artist daughter Jane married cinematographer and photographer Andreas Poulsson<sup>112</sup> and moved to Montréal (where Poulsson worked for the National Film Board). Montréal became Coulthard's second home; she

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<sup>111</sup>Kydd, "Jean Coulthard," 18. Coulthard considered the Okanagan an excellent setting for the Festival, not just because of its natural beauty (and excellent fresh wild asparagus, always ready at festival time) but also as the perfect logistic locale, since it was almost exactly half way between the centres of Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary. Her expectation was that it would provide a yearly forum for young professional composers, an opportunity to meet, discuss, and perform new works. A side effect of the festival was the development of friendships between Coulthard and Violet Archer and Oskar Morawetz, two colleagues invited to adjudicate at the Festival. Unfortunately, the Festival concept was drastically changed in 1983; after a controversy that stemmed from the outright refusal of a young hired professional to perform a work by invited adjudicator Gilles Tremblay, the outside composers and the local supporters of the festival became increasingly estranged. Following 1983, the Festival was down-sized to be exclusively devoted to the compositions of local school-aged children.

<sup>112</sup>Andreas Poulsson, born in Oslo, Norway of Norwegian and Danish parents in 1944, was a photographer and cinematographer with the National Film Board of Canada, 1967-81, and thereafter a free-lance cinematographer.

commuted several times a year, especially after the birth of her only grandchild, Alexa, in 1975.<sup>113</sup>

Beyond the obvious family attraction, Coulthard had always been sympathetic to the distinct culture of French Canada, first setting folksong materials in the *Canadian Fantasy*, then continuing her interested involvement with the choral work *Québec May* (1948), the *Two French Songs* (1957, to texts by Émile Nelligan), and *Les chansons du coeur* (1979).<sup>114</sup> Several of Coulthard's favourite musicians lived in Montréal, including pianist Ross Pratt, violist Robert Verebes, critic Gilles Potvin, and broadcaster Monique Grenier. Other musical friends and acquaintances were made, and by the mid-1980s Coulthard had more regular performances in Québec than anywhere besides her native British Columbia. In 1988 she was asked by the Music Department of Concordia University to write a new work, *A Shelley Portrait*, especially for the opening of their new concert hall. In 1991 she was awarded her second honorary degree, this one from Concordia.

Significant honours accrued to Coulthard with regularity following her 70th birthday in 1978. On 2 April, 1978 a gala concert of her music performed by many of the prominent artists associated with her career, including Ross Pratt, Thomas and Isobel Rolston, and Maureen Forrester, was organized as a fundraiser for the Vancouver Woman's Musical Club's Scholarship endowment.

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<sup>113</sup>In the '80s Coulthard spent so much time in Montréal that she equipped a second small studio in the basement of her daughter's Westmont townhouse so that she would be able to work.

<sup>114</sup>Coulthard is a convinced and enthusiastic federalist, but also a strong believer in distinct regional identities.

That evening she was named a Freeman of the City of Vancouver and an Officer of the Order of Canada. Coulthard undoubtedly enjoyed the recognition; beyond the considerable personal satisfaction it gave her, she felt that it was also a realization of the growing importance Canadians allotted to their own music. On a practical level, her two new titles were of use both in her various on-going schemes to assist younger composers and in the promotion of her own work through concerts and, increasingly, recordings.

In this latter field, the '70s and '80s saw a complete reversal of her earlier fortunes. Many of her early CBC recordings were re-issued on the RCI Anthology of Canadian Music series devoted to her work;<sup>115</sup> as well, many first rate new recordings were produced, featuring artists such as Antonin Kubalek and Jon Vickers. From being one of the most under-represented major Canadian composers, Coulthard became one of the more extensively recorded.

The re-evaluation of Coulthard that began in the 1970s saw her work as increasingly relevant. The extent to which Coulthard's steadfast retention of tonality assisted this process is a significant question. Coulthard had always maintained great respect for serial music of the highest calibre, but she did not especially value the many academic serial compositions of composers in the '50s and '60s<sup>116</sup> and never seriously saw serial techniques as appropriate for

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<sup>115</sup>Unfortunately the standards of the early recordings tend to make the performances mainly of historical interest.

<sup>116</sup>In conversation with the author, composer Violet Archer has commented on the negative influence of academic serialists within university music schools of the '60s.

her thoughts.<sup>117</sup> With the gradual move beyond serialism that began in the early '70s, Coulthard came to be considered something of a premature post-serialist.

To interpret Coulthard . . . as "pioneering" in any sense — particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, when any music smacking of romanticism was considered passé, if not downright traitorous to the cause of Canadian music — would strike the serialists who were once prominent in university music departments as curious in the extreme. But the passing of time plays wonderful tricks with our judgement. . . . An argument could be constructed in which a revised portrait of Coulthard would classify her as a post-modern, ahead of her time.<sup>118</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Coulthard's willingness to adapt "new music" techniques to her own language was also typical of her pragmatic eclecticism. From the early '70s on, effects from Crumb and Penderecki (to name just two clear sources of inspiration) were assimilated in a natural and, for the most part effective way, especially in compositions for piano.<sup>119</sup>

Coulthard began the '70s with two landmark compositions: the elegiac *Second String Quartet* (1969) and her unquestionable masterwork in the

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<sup>117</sup>Coulthard did use aspects of serialism nonetheless; as early as 1945 Bernard Wagenaar set serial technique exercises for her. In later works Coulthard often used 12-note themes (in the manner of Bartók or Britten) and wrote (albeit with no great enthusiasm) several serial teaching pieces for students.

<sup>118</sup>Kydd, "Jean Coulthard," 18.

<sup>119</sup>Such as the *Burlesca* or *Image Astrale*.

chamber music genre, the *Octet "Twelve Essays on a Cantabile Theme"* (1973).<sup>120</sup> A short interlude in Coulthard's production as an orchestral composer occurred at the end of the '60s and early '70s (the years of the re-working of the *Second String Quartet* and the *Octet*). New orchestral works appeared from 1973 onward: the orchestral prelude *Kalamalka* (1973), *Canada Mosaic* (1974), the *Lyric Symphony* for bassoon and chamber orchestra (*Symphony #3*) (1975), the *Symphonic Ode* for viola and orchestra (1976), and the *Burlesca* for piano and strings (1977).

By the 1980s Coulthard began to feel that she could no longer continue at quite the pace she had previously maintained, and cut back addresses, adjudication, and teaching slightly to allow more time for composition. Perhaps the hardest decision was made in 1983 when she and her husband decided to sell the house and garden at 2747 South West Marine Drive and move to the Vancouver suburb of West Vancouver, to a townhouse in the woods just above rugged Lighthouse Park. Sad as it was to move from Marine Drive, there were compensations: the new house was close to Coulthard's sister, was smaller and more efficient to maintain, and was close to a number of seaside or wooded walks (which were an important part of Coulthard's composing process, a daily opportunity to think in peace and quiet). Don Adams, however, was in increasingly poor health. In September 1980 he underwent a major operation that left him seriously debilitated; then, quite suddenly, he died on 9 July 1985.

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<sup>120</sup>It is interesting to hear again the première broadcast of the *Octet*; the commentator, who has obviously not heard the work, describes it as if it were a dated exercise in Anglophile nostalgia.

Coulthard's eightieth birthday in 1988 was, like her seventieth, the cause of much attention, culminating in an honorary degree from the University of British Columbia. Given her long connection with the university, she was asked to address the full convocation; despite a few quite natural reservations about speaking to an assembly of over three thousand, Coulthard prepared a typical propaganda piece on the importance of music, specifically Canadian music, in cultural and educational life (an address seasoned with a number of witty, even slightly disparaging remarks about the development of UBC and the role of music on campus.)<sup>121</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Coulthard resolved to retire from active participation in workshops and public events and to devote all her energies to composition or the supervision of broadcasts and performances. Though keeping the details to herself and her family, Coulthard found that two aspects of her health were increasingly vexing: her eyesight, never good, had significantly deteriorated, and her hearing was becoming distorted. For a still-working composer, both difficulties proved extremely frustrating. Visual problems curtailed working

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<sup>121</sup>At this time Coulthard decided to present her papers to the UBC Library's Special Collections; a copy of her convocation address is in the Coulthard archive.

hours and, for a time, precluded orchestral scoring<sup>122</sup> while aural distortion made critical listening at rehearsals and performances untrustworthy.<sup>123</sup>

The spring of 1990 saw another move, this time to a spacious Ambleside apartment, but in the happiest of circumstances: Jane, Andreas, and Alexa moved back to the West Coast, taking over the Lighthouse Park townhouse.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a vigorous continuation of musical activity, tempered with a growing tendency to adapt and re-work earlier compositions. Beginning with the cantata *Vancouver Lights (A Soliloquy)* (1980) — a "present" to the city of Vancouver in appreciation for being named a Freeman of the City — Coulthard composed the *Ballade "Of the West"* for piano and chamber orchestra (1983) and the *Autumn Symphony (Symphony #4)*, 1984). Adaptations include the *Introduction and Three Folksongs* (1987), derived from *Canada Mosaic*; the *Serenade* adapted for viola solo and strings (1988); and the suite *Where Tempests Rise* (1989), drawn from the opera *The Return of the Native*. *Symphonic Image "Of the North"* (1989), a work requested by the Guildhall String Ensemble, is Coulthard's most recent composition for orchestra.

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<sup>122</sup>Until enlarged music manuscript was prepared allowing Coulthard to produce acceptable first drafts which were then re-worked by a copyist.

<sup>123</sup>Again partially overcome through the use of former students as assistants. Indeed this strategy was used to advantage: in a tense rehearsal situation Coulthard could (and would!) grandly declare that the performance in question was "simply magnificent," leaving the assistant to point out the manifest deficiencies.

### **Chapter 3:**

## **Canadian Music and Canadian Orchestras**

In her excellent short survey of Canadian music for orchestra, Elaine Keillor notes that the "dawn of the 'symphonic age' in Canadian composition"<sup>1</sup> was signalled by the composition of Healey Willan's *Symphony #1* in 1936. She goes on to outline the "establishment of an orchestral repertoire in the 1940s and 1950's" — noting that "a certain official timidity in the face of contemporary idioms, not to mention the high cost of copying, led the new commissioning agencies to request more short works than long"<sup>2</sup> — before discussing further additions to the repertoire in the '60s, '70s and '80s.

Before analyzing Coulthard's work as an orchestral composer, it is of some importance to consider the role of Canadian orchestras in the creation and performance of the Canadian orchestral repertoire, and to establish a dispassionate view of the conditions faced by the would-be orchestral composer from the mid-1930s until the present.

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<sup>1</sup>Elaine Keillor, "Orchestral Composition," *EMC2*, 978.

<sup>2</sup>Keillor, "Orchestral Composition," *EMC2*, 978.

### ***Introduction***

Canadian orchestral organizations can be divided into five recognizable categories, each with a mandate to serve a distinct constituency and each with different priorities in programming. In terms of historical continuity, size of budget, length of season, diversity of services and size of audience (not to mention performance standards), symphony orchestras in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver can be considered, at present, the preeminent Canadian professional ensembles. While these orchestras have been of unquestionable significance in the development of Canadian music, the growth of other professional ensembles during the last 40 years has been impressive; today there are professional or quasi-professional orchestral ensembles in all major population centres in the country. Beyond the level of professional music making are a large and varied number of community orchestras, including some whose personnel may contain a core of professional musicians but whose ranks are primarily, if not exclusively, made up of amateur musicians.

Radio orchestras, especially the CBC Symphony in Toronto and its companion organizations in Winnipeg and Vancouver,<sup>3</sup> form another distinctive type of orchestra, one which has had an especially important role in the commissioning, broadcast and recording of Canadian music.

Two ensembles — the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra — are distinct from other orchestras through their state-

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<sup>3</sup>Montréal and Québec City had other broadcast ensembles not expressly formed by the CBC.

supported rôle as *national* ensembles with national, not regional accessibility through extensive touring. Recently the establishment of the Esprit Orchestra of Toronto and the Tafelmusik Baroque Ensemble have given Canada two further national ensembles, each devoted to specific repertoires.

Finally, two chamber orchestras, the Hart House Orchestra of Toronto and the McGill Chamber Orchestra of Montréal, have played a special role through the high quality performance of Canadian works for chamber orchestra in their respective regions, nationally and abroad.

All Canadian orchestras have promoted the work of Canadian composers in a number of different ways: through direct commissions to composers; through the recording and broadcasting of Canadian music; through the performance of Canadian music on national and international tours; and through regular programming. While lobby groups acting for composers have often expressed disappointment at the extent of orchestras' commitment to Canadian composers, the issue, as we will see, is many-sided. Indeed, to consider the varied contribution made by orchestras is an extensive task;<sup>4</sup> the present assessment will discuss programmes, commissions, touring, broadcasting and recording in the context of the major centres Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver, other professional orchestras, community orchestras, radio orchestras, national orchestras, and chamber orchestras.

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<sup>4</sup>Restricted, for the present, to information collated from *EMC2* and other published sources, augmented with information regarding the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the CBC Vancouver Orchestra.

***Orchestral Performance of Canadian Music  
in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver***

Prior to the establishment of a national broadcasting network in 1936, Canadian music had been a feature (albeit a minor one) in the programmes of several existing Canadian orchestras. While there were orchestral performances prior to 1914,<sup>5</sup> in the period between the two World Wars only the Toronto Symphony, the various Montréal orchestras, and the Vancouver Symphony can be said to have performed Canadian music with anything approximating regularity.

DEVELOPMENTS IN MONTRÉAL BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The history of the development of orchestras in Montréal is complex. The first organization was founded in 1875 as the Montréal Philharmonic Society and performed some 87 concerts prior to its dissolution in 1899. Remarkably, its programming included a major work by C.A.E. Harriss, the oratorio *Daniel Before the King*, which was performed under the direction of composer, conductor, and critic Guillaume Couture in 1890.<sup>6</sup> In 1894 a succession of "four successive Montréal Symphonic Ensembles"<sup>7</sup> began. The "Goulet MSO of 1898-

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<sup>5</sup>See Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>See Pierre Quenneville, Guillaume Couture (1851-1915) *Animateur de la vie musicale Montréalaise* (M.A. thesis, Montréal: Université de Montréal, 1980).

<sup>7</sup>Cécile Huot, Gilles Potvin, and Claire Rhéaume, "Montréal Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 639.

1919" performed a *Concertstück* by pianist Émiliano Renaud. The "Gagnier MSO of 1927-9" performed no Canadian repertoire.<sup>8</sup> From 1930 until 1941, the Montréal Orchestra under the direction of Douglas Clarke did much to promote the music of Canadian composers, performing works by the English-born bassoonist and writer Reginald Tupper, as well as works by Alexander Brott, Bernard Naylor, Violet Archer, Henri Miro, and Healey Willan, and two of Clarke's own compositions.<sup>9</sup> The only work by a francophone composer Clarke included was Claude Champagne's *Suite canadienne*.

Yet another Montréal Orchestra, the Société des concerts symphonique de Montréal, was established in 1935, in part to redress the unquestionably anglophone domination of Clarke's Montréal Orchestra. With the appointment of Wilfred Pelletier as the conductor of the new ensemble in 1935, the promotion of Canadian music in Montréal took a new turn. The establishment of an annual Prix Jean-Lallemand for composition in 1936 did much to stimulate the production of new orchestral scores. Early winners included August Descarries, Henri Miro, Hector Gratton, and Graham George.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Huot, Potvin, and Rhéaume, "Montréal Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 639-40.

<sup>9</sup>Eric McLean, "The Montréal Orchestra," *EMC2*, 632 and "Douglas Clarke," *EMC2*, 199.

<sup>10</sup>George reminisced about Pelletier and the Lallemand prize in his remarks published in *Canadian Music in the 1930s and 1940s* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1986), 39. See also: Huot, Potvin, and Rhéaume, "Montréal Symphony," *EMC2*, 880 and Agathe de Vaux, *La petite histoire de l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal* (Montréal: Louise Courteau, E.I.P., 1984).

DEVELOPMENTS IN TORONTO BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Various Toronto orchestral societies were founded in the nineteenth century,<sup>11</sup> though no Canadian work seems to have been presented.<sup>12</sup> Nor do Canadian works appear to have been performed during the Toronto Symphony's 1906-18 seasons. During the years 1922-31, two works were launched: Luigi von Kunitz's *Violin Concerto* and Ernest MacMillan's *Concert Overture in A* were both performed in 1924. In 1930 von Kunitz broadcast an entire hour-long programme of Canadian music sponsored by the CNR.<sup>13</sup> Following von Kunitz's death in 1931, the orchestra was substantially reorganized by MacMillan in 1931/2; no further Canadian repertoire seems to have been presented in the early years of MacMillan's conductorship.

Beside the Toronto Symphony, Canadian repertoire was actively espoused in the 1930s by the "Promenade Symphony Concerts" formed and conducted by Reginald Stewart. Works performed by this ensemble included Percival Price's *St Lawrence Symphony* (1939) and three works of Healey Willan, the *Symphony in D minor* (1936), *Coronation Te Deum*, and *March solennelle* (1937).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>1845-7, 1848-50, 1853-5, 1872-94; see John Beckwith, "Toronto Symphony," *EMC2*, 1300-5.

<sup>12</sup>Despite the involvement of Canada's first Doctor of Music, composer James P. Clarke.

<sup>13</sup>Beckwith, "Toronto Symphony," *EMC2*, 1302.

<sup>14</sup>Robert W. Judge, "Promenade Symphony Concerts," *EMC2*, 1083.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN VANCOUVER UNTIL THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Like orchestras in Toronto and Montréal, the Vancouver Symphony had a complex genesis, beginning with a handful of concerts in 1919 and 1920 followed by more ambitious seasons commencing in 1930. The Dutch-born conductor Allard de Ridder conducted the orchestra in 1930 and was appointed its regular conductor in 1933, retaining his position until 1941.<sup>15</sup> During his tenure he programmed several of his own works (*Intermezzo*, 1935; *Overture*, 1935; *Violin Concerto*, 1938); near the end of de Ridder's tenure a scheduled performance of a work by MacMillan failed to take place.<sup>16</sup> Vancouverites' attitudes to Canadian music underwent a significant change during the 1939/40 season of "Promenade Concerts" conducted by Arthur Benjamin. During a single series, Benjamin programmed new orchestral works by Jean Coulthard, Hugh Bancroft, and Robert Barclay (né Leonard Basham).<sup>17</sup>

#### POST-WAR MONTRÉAL

With the ascendancy of the SCMS (from 1953, the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal), attitudes towards the performance of Canadian orchestral music shifted in emphasis.<sup>18</sup> In particular, the Prix Jean-Lallemand continued

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<sup>15</sup>Lawrence Cluderay and Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Vancouver Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 1361-62.

<sup>16</sup>Programmes of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, 1930-1941.

<sup>17</sup>See files at the Vancouver Civic Archives.

<sup>18</sup>Huot, Potvin, and Rhéaume, "Montréal Symphony," *EMC2*, 879.

significantly to encourage the production of new orchestral music in the 1940s.<sup>19</sup> After a relatively fallow period in the late '40s and early '50s, the OSM became revitalised under the direction of Igor Markevitch; in 1958 an extensive series of commissions was begun,<sup>20</sup> and an impressive list of recordings produced. In fact, the OSM included Canadian works on all but one of their five pre-1980 recordings. As well, the Little Symphony of Montréal, founded in 1942 by Bernard Naylor, was active until 1952; though primarily a "classical orchestra," it did perform and broadcast some contemporary music, including that of Alexander Brott.<sup>21</sup>

#### POST-WAR TORONTO

Sir Ernest MacMillan continued to conduct the Toronto Symphony until 1956. During his tenure, the TSO performed works by Farnon, Fleming, de Ridder, Walter, and Willan; in 1948 MacMillan conducted a special concert of Canadian music sponsored by CAPAC, featuring works by Champagne, Dela, Ridout, Leo Smith, Vallerand, Weinzwieg, and Willan.<sup>22</sup> During this time

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<sup>19</sup>Prize-winners included Maurice Blackburn (1942); Jean Vallerand (1942); Claude Champagne (1945); Alexander Brott (1945 and 1950); Clermont Pépin (1948); and François Morel (1962).

<sup>20</sup>Commissions included: Papineau-Couture's *Pièce Concertante #3*; Somers' *Fantasia*; Morel's *Boréal*; Brott's *Spheres in Orbit*; Matton's *Mouvement symphonique I*; Morawetz' *Fiano Concerto*; Pépin's *Quasars*, *3rd Symphony*, and *Prismes et cristaux*; Frévo's *Fantasmes*; Mercure's *Lignes et points*; Morawetz' *Sinfonietta*; Garant's *Phrases II*; Schafer's *Son of Heldenleben*; Saint-Marcoux' *Hétéromorphie*; Héту's *Passacaille*; and Tremblay's *Fleuves*. See Huot, Potvin, and Rhéaume "Montréal Symphony," *EMC2*, 880.

<sup>21</sup>Nadia Turbide, "The Little Symphony of Montréal," *EMC2*, 767.

<sup>22</sup>Louis Applebaum, "CAPAC," *EMC2*, 218.

MacMillan also recorded works by himself, Adaskin, Morel, Fleming, Coulthard, Weinzweig, McMullin, Rathburn, Freedman, Morawetz, Somers, Rideout, and Vallerand for RCI; about 40% of his recordings featured Canadian repertoire.<sup>23</sup>

Walter Susskind held the post of conductor until 1965. While Susskind was sympathetic to newer repertoire, his record in programming Canadian work was not especially distinguished.<sup>24</sup> In 1962 the German-born impresario and administrator Walter Homburger became the TSO's manager. Susskind was succeeded by Seiji Ozawa (1965-1969) and Karl Ančerl (1969-73). Ozawa led the orchestra during centennial year celebrations in 1967 and performed and recorded an impressive number of Canadian works during his term, including a centennial commission work by Otto Joachim. He also recorded works by MacMillan, Freedman, and Mercure for Columbia. Ančerl recorded works by Pépin and Willan.

By the late 1960s the TSO had begun to be "criticized for performing fewer Canadian composed works than other Canadian orchestras."<sup>25</sup> In 1970-71 Harry Freedman was appointed as composer-in-residence. From that date, however, the TSO's recording of Canadian music became far less frequent and its programmes and commissions emphasized short works by well-established composers.<sup>26</sup> Beginning in the 1950s and 60s the Toronto Symphony toured

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<sup>23</sup>Beckwith, "Toronto Symphony," *EMC2*, 1302.

<sup>24</sup>Though he did record works by Marton and Morawetz.

<sup>25</sup>Beckwith, "Toronto Symphony," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, (1st ed.), 927, a quotation rather surprisingly omitted from the second edition.

<sup>26</sup>See Kenneth Winters, "Orchestras," *EMC2*, 982.

extensively.<sup>27</sup> Its repertoire occasionally featured token Canadian content, but by the end of the Homburger regime, the TSO's touring repertoire sparked bitter controversy.<sup>28</sup> The role of orchestral management in programme decisions has become an issue of increasing importance for orchestras like the TSO and VSO.

#### POST-WAR VANCOUVER

Allard de Ridder left Vancouver in 1941,<sup>29</sup> and for a number of years the VSO was directed by guest conductors. Only in 1947 was a permanent music director hired, Jacques Singer, who remained with the orchestra until 1950. Singer's regular programming was adventurous, and in the final months of his tenure he conducted and directed what Helmut Kallmann called "the largest festival of Canadian music prior to that at Expo 67,"<sup>30</sup> The Symposium of Canadian Contemporary Music, held over four days, featured 33 composers from all Canadian regions.

The VSO's next permanent conductor was Irwin Hoffman, who led the orchestra from 1952 until 1964. Hoffman's repertoire was more circumspect

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<sup>27</sup>Detroit, 1951; New York, Boston, Philadelphia, 1952; New York, 1963; Great Britain and France, 1966; Japan, 1969; Europe, 1974; New York and Washington, 1977; China and Japan, 1978; California, 1979.

<sup>28</sup>See John Beckwith and Dorith Cooper, eds., *Hello Out There!* (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1988), 2, 25, 35.

<sup>29</sup>Returning in 1952. See Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Allard de Ridder," *EMC2*, 1129.

<sup>30</sup>Helmut Kallmann, "First Symposium of Canadian Music," *EMC2*, 465.

than Singer's, but during his years with the orchestra he "was responsible for the premières of works by 11 Canadian composers."<sup>31</sup>

Hoffman's controversial successor Meredith Davies placed a greatly increased emphasis on contemporary music of all varieties "through a commercially sponsored Twentieth-Century Music Series unique in Canada."<sup>32</sup> Davies' enthusiastic promotion of then *avant-garde* repertoire, including works by Schafer and Lloyd Burritt, was unpopular with many of the orchestras' supporters, and by the final years of his appointment his artistic vision was increasingly under attack from both board and management of the orchestra.<sup>33</sup>

After two further years of interim conductors, Kazuyoshi Akiyama succeeded Davies in 1972 and established a fairly good record for the performance of Canadian repertoire (if of a far more middle-of-the-road nature) with his performance of Coulthard's *Canada Mosaic* on the orchestra's Japanese tour of 1974 and Robert Turner's *Capriccio Concertante* during a Canadian tour in 1976. Akiyama particularly championed the work of Vancouver composer Michael Conway Baker, performing his *A Struggle for Dominion* in 1976 and *Symphony* in 1978. In the 1980s, the orchestra suffered severe financial, artistic,

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<sup>31</sup>Lawrence Cluderay and Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Vancouver Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 1361. Works included Robert Turner's *Lyric Interlude*, Ernst Friedlander's *Second Cello Concerto*, and a single performance of Jean Coulthard's *Violin Concerto*.

<sup>32</sup>Cluderay and Gooch, "Vancouver Symphony," *EMC2*, 1361.

<sup>33</sup>During this time, Coulthard's expansive *Choral Symphony 'This Land'* [*Symphony #2*], commissioned by the Orchestra in honour of the 1967 Centennial, was refused performance by the orchestra.

and managerial problems;<sup>34</sup> only the most routine small scale works were programmed by Akiyama's successors, until the end of the decade.

### ***Other Professional Orchestras***

Although the Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver orchestras remain Canada's front-ranking orchestras, by the 1980s significant ensembles existed in virtually all major population centres. All "the 14 orchestras receiving Canada Council assistance" now include some Canadian repertoire since "the Canada Council's imposition of a 10 percent Canadian program content" during the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

For some orchestras, this has amounted to the regular performance of a handful of tested small-scale works; but despite some token responses to what has been viewed as compulsory "Canadian Content programming," several orchestras have established particularly good records in the performance and commissioning of Canadian music. These orchestras include: Orchestra London,<sup>36</sup> the Hamilton Philharmonic,<sup>37</sup> the Edmonton Symphony

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<sup>34</sup>See John Becker, *Discord: The Story of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra* (Vancouver: Brighthouse Press, 1989).

<sup>35</sup>Winters, "Orchestras," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (1st ed.), 705.

<sup>36</sup>Which commissioned works by Clements, Koprowski, Miller, Prévost, Rose and Somers, as well as performing 25 other works by Canadians. Janet Baldwin, "Orchestra London Canada," *EMC2*, 979-80.

<sup>37</sup>Which commissioned works from Betts, Brott, Glick, Rathburn, Symonds, and Wallace, as well as performing works by Applebaum, Betts, Brott, Gellman, McCauley, and Wallace. Stanley Saunders, "Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra," *EMC2*, 76-77.

Orchestra,<sup>38</sup> and the Québec Symphony Orchestra.<sup>39</sup>

An especially active centre was Saskatoon, where "the orchestra commissioned a Canadian composition for the first time in 1957 while under the leadership of Murray Adaskin; subsequently it has attempted to commission a Canadian work each year."<sup>40</sup> Composers whose work has been involved include: Adaskin, Archer, Cable, Chotem, Fleming, Freedman, Kasemets, Kenins, Papineau-Couture, Rathburn, Weinzweig, Zaninelli, and Eckhardt-Gramatté.

### *Community Orchestras*

Orchestras made up of non-professional community musicians have flourished in Canada for several decades, often growing from purely recreational ensembles to quasi-professional or professional stature. (Several ensembles technically considered community orchestras have been considered above.) While performance standards, length of season, and size of audience vary enormously from ensemble to ensemble, one of the most interesting effects

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<sup>38</sup>With performances and commissions from Applebaum, Archer, Forsyth, Morel, and Sasonkin, as well as a recording by Adaskin. Unsigned, "Edmonton Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 404-5.

<sup>39</sup>Which commissioned or premiered works by Matton, Gagné, Garant, Gagnon, Hétu, Angelillo, Chotem, Prévost, Bouliane, Pauk, Lauber, Sasseville, and Dion. Claire Grégoire-Reid, Annick Poussart, and Marc Samson, "Québec Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 1096-98.

<sup>40</sup>Florrie Elvin, "Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 1181-82. See also Muriel Leeper, *Sounds of Music 1931-1981: A fifty-year history of the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra* (Saskatoon: Saskatoon Symphony, 1981) and Gordana Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

of the growth of interest in Canadian music that has taken place since the 1960s has been the grass roots performance of Canadian repertoire, at the community ensemble level. It is worth noting that in the province of British Columbia alone, the Okanagan, Nanaimo, Vancouver Philharmonic, and Vancouver Youth Orchestras have commissioned works, and that those orchestras as well as the New Westminster, Prince George, and Kamloops Orchestras have performed Canadian repertoire. The Fraser Valley Symphony has presented an entire programme of Canadian repertoire, and the Vancouver Philharmonic performed a concert devoted to works of British Columbia composers.

### *Radio Orchestras CBC Vancouver/Winnipeg/Toronto*

The establishment of the CBC in 1936 was of inestimable importance to Canadian music. The networks of the CBC considered it their mandate to become the major exponents of Canadian music through "commercial musical assignments to meet the CBC's production assignments" by encouraging "the composition of original music through the less direct means of assuring broadcast of works by individual composers or of works commissioned by other organizations" and by "the direct CBC commissioning of works for radio broadcast."<sup>41</sup> Of particular significance in this strategy were the CBC radio orchestras in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. The CBC Vancouver Chamber

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<sup>41</sup>Patricia Kellogg, "Sounds in the Wilderness: Fifty Years of CBC Commissions" in *Musical Canada*, eds. John Beckwith and Frederick A. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 240.

Orchestra (now the CBC Vancouver Orchestra) was the first to be established. Founded with 25 members in 1938 by Ira Dilworth, it was primarily designed "to fill a need both of the radio audience and the musicians. Dr. Dilworth was concerned that Vancouver was not a large enough city to support and retain first class musicians"<sup>42</sup> in the period following the completion of the regular Vancouver Symphony season. The ensemble was conducted by John Avison until his retirement in 1980; thereafter it was briefly directed by John Elliott Gardiner and is now conducted by Mario Bernardi. In the 1950s, it was increased to 35 players and continues to be active today. It appears that the ensemble was originally designed as a radio orchestra specializing (though not exclusively) in the performance of international contemporary music, rather than in the performance of Canadian repertoire. This trend was especially apparent in the 1950s and 1960s, when the orchestra's broadcasts were produced by Robert Turner. The 1961 "Short History of the CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra" states that "over the years all of Canada's leading composers have been presented — Somers, Beckwith, Mercure, Weinzweig, Brott, Adaskin, Pentland, Freedman, Morel, Morawetz, Papineau-Couture, Champagne and many others," but the emphasis on international new music premiered by the orchestra is given pride of place. This emphasis is also demonstrated by the orchestra's recordings. In the 55 recordings listed in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (2nd ed.) discography, 22 feature Canadian

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<sup>42</sup>*A Short History of the CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra* [unsigned] (Vancouver: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, [1961]).

repertoire in whole or in part.<sup>43</sup>

The CBC Winnipeg orchestra was the next to be founded.<sup>44</sup> "Its programming has varied according to the various CBC program directors' wishes and in relation to the product of CBC orchestras in other centres . . . . The repertoire has centred on standard light classics scored for medium-sized orchestra (some 50 players) and as well contains many contemporary Canadian works."<sup>45</sup> Of the Winnipeg Orchestra's nine recordings in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* discography, six contain Canadian repertoire.

The CBC Symphony Orchestra was formed in Toronto in 1952 and survived, as such, until 1964;<sup>46</sup> it was especially designed as a broadcast orchestra specializing in new repertoire. "Famous for its sight-reading abilities, the CBC SO established a particular reputation for its performances of contemporary works, Canadian and other." It premiered many CBC commissions.<sup>47</sup> The *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* Discography lists 16 recordings featuring the orchestra, including its famous Stravinsky and Schoenberg series, one recording

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<sup>43</sup>Including no less than four works by Turner; no music by Pentland, Coulthard or any Francophone composers was recorded prior to 1980. See Bryan N.S. Gooch and Max Wyman, "CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra," *EMC2*, 233.

<sup>44</sup>Though it had been "preceded by a CBC concert orchestra conducted by Geoffrey Waddington" and various string ensembles since 1940 before it "became a permanent ensemble in 1947." Nancy McGregor and Tom Taylor, "CBC Winnipeg Orchestra," *EMC2*, 233-34.

<sup>45</sup>McGregor and Taylor, "CBC Winnipeg Orchestra," *EMC2*, 234.

<sup>46</sup>After an agreement to recruit CBC Toronto orchestras from TSO ranks. Several of these later contract orchestras recorded or broadcast under the name CBC SO, CBC Orchestra, or CBC Toronto Orchestra." Clifford Ford and Patricia Wardrop, "CBC Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 232.

<sup>47</sup>Ford and Wardrop, "CBC Symphony Orchestra," *EMC2*, 232.

of Mozart, and 15 recordings of Canadian repertoire.<sup>48</sup>

No CBC orchestra existed in Montréal per se; instead Les Petites Symphonies, "a large chamber ensemble . . . founded in 1948 by Roland Lesautour" produced "weekly 30-minute broadcasts " until 1965. Originally designed as a "classical" ensemble "in 1957 it began to commission and/or give premières of Canadian works"<sup>49</sup> including music by Pépin, Morel, Archer, and Champagne. The CBC Québec Chamber Orchestra's genesis was similar. Founded "as the regular orchestra for 'Les Petits Concerts'," it originally specialized in baroque and pre-classical works.<sup>50</sup>

Without doubt, all of the CBC ensembles brought Canadian repertoire to the attention of the broadcast audience in an unprecedented manner. Their record of commissions, premières, recordings, and occasional live performances at home and on tour all created a greater awareness of Canadian repertoire. In her paper "Sounds in the Wilderness: Fifty Years of CBC Commissions," Patricia Kellogg points out that prior to 1986 the CBC had commissioned almost 300 orchestral works.<sup>51</sup> However, in terms of fostering a balanced view of Canadian orchestral repertoire — or, for that matter, helping in the process of developing Canadian orchestral writing — there is room for criticism. The contribution of radio orchestras has been fundamentally inconsistent, based on

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<sup>48</sup>With an understandable emphasis on Toronto composers.

<sup>49</sup>Annick Poussart, "The Little Symphonies," *EMC2*, 766-67.

<sup>50</sup>Madeleine Bodier-Little, "CBC Québec Chamber Orchestra," *EMC2*, 229.

<sup>51</sup>Kellogg, "CBC Comissions," *Musical Canada*, 260.

the personal agendas of producers and conductors, often with little thought of long term planning.<sup>52</sup>

While both the CBC Vancouver and Toronto orchestras undertook major retrospective projects devoted to the music of international modern composers, no such project was attempted where Canadian figures were concerned (though orchestral repertoire, where previously recorded, was made available through RCI's anthology project). The lack of a consistent policy regarding the performance of historical repertoire and landmark works by major figures, the encouragement of regional composers, or the exploration of new musical styles has, all too often, created a hit-or-miss approach to programming, commissioning, and recording.

### *National Ensembles*

Of unique importance to the Canadian musical scene are two national ensembles: the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra.

The National Arts Centre Orchestra was formed in 1969 as a "classical" orchestra of 44 to 46 players designed especially for the performance of "baroque, and . . . classical, certain nineteenth century music, and much

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<sup>52</sup>See Kellogg, "CBC Commissions," *Musical Canada*, 246. The ongoing emphasis on "program content needs" has often led to programming of a quixotic nature; a recent performance of Coulthard's entirely non-literary *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* was prepared by the CBC Vancouver orchestra and broadcast as part of a programme of music "inspired by Shakespeare."

contemporary music including, by 1979, 17 works commissioned from Canadian composers.<sup>53</sup> As well as playing a regular season of performances in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre, the orchestra has toured extensively in Canada, North America, and abroad, usually performing works from its Canadian repertoire. Of particular interest in the commissioned repertoire of the NAC Orchestra is the truly national scope of commissions. The NAC's recordings include works by Forsyth, Adaskin, Morel, Weinzweig, Beecroft, Eckhardt-Gramatté, Somers, Prévost, and Schafer; of a total of 16 recordings, nine contain Canadian repertoire.<sup>54</sup>

Canada's other national ensemble, the National Youth Orchestra, was founded in 1960. The ensemble has toured each summer and has developed a reputation for well prepared and enthusiastic performances. Designed as a training orchestra, it has always included Canadian repertoire. "Each year at least one Canadian work has been studied and performed, and several have been commissioned. . . . Canadian composers have assisted in preparing their own works."<sup>55</sup> Composers whose works have been performed or commissioned by the NYO include Weinzweig, Freedman, Garant, Aitken, Schafer, Somers, Symonds, and Mercure.

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<sup>53</sup>Clifford Ford and Kenneth Winters, "National Arts Centre Orchestra," *EMC2*, 919-20.

<sup>54</sup>Ford and Winters, "National Arts Centre," *EMC2*, 920.

<sup>55</sup>Patricia Shand and Susan Spier, "National Youth Orchestra," *EMC2*, 922.

### ***Chamber Orchestras***

Two independent chamber orchestras have played significant roles in the promotion of Canadian music: the Hart House Orchestra of Toronto, and the McGill Chamber Orchestra of Montréal.

The McGill Chamber Orchestra was founded in 1946 by Alexander Brott and has presented "programmes ranging from the baroque to contemporary. The many premières have included a number of Brott's compositions and a number of works commissioned by the Samuel Lapitsky Foundation."<sup>56</sup> It performed regular concerts in Montréal and toured in North America and Europe. A number of recordings of Canadian works have been prepared by the ensemble, including music by Freedman, Vallerand, Glick, Pépin, Mercure, and seven works by Brott himself.

Founded in 1954 by Boyd Neel as a Canadian equivalent of his famous Boyd Neel Orchestra in Britain, the Hart House Orchestra performed regularly in Canada and abroad until 1971. Neel's longstanding interest in contemporary music resulted in the performance of a significant number of Canadian works by composers including Blackburn, Bissell, Freedman, Surdin, Symonds, Willan, Morawetz, Ridout, Champagne, and MacMillan. The Hart House orchestra regularly performed Canadian music on its frequent tours in Canada and abroad and introduced Canadian works at the Brussels World Fair of 1958,

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<sup>56</sup>Gilles Potvin, "McGill Chamber Orchestra," *EMC2*, 828-29. Lapitsky Foundation commissions include Mercure's *Divertissement*, Freedman's *Images*, Vallerand's *Cordes en mouvement*, Brott's *Three Astral Visions* and *Profundum praedictum*, Joachim's *Concertante No. 2*, Pépin's *Monade I*, and Papineau-Couture's *Suite Lapitsky*. All works, except Freedman's *Images*, were premiered by the McGill Chamber Orchestra between 1956 and 1965.

the Commonwealth Institute, London in 1966, and the Aldeburgh Festival. It recorded works by Blackburn, MacMillan, Surdin, Somers, Champagne, MacMillan, Symonds, and Freedman.<sup>57</sup>

### *Comments and Conclusions*

Canadian orchestras' record for the regular programming of Canadian repertoire is neither as grim as composers' lobby groups often imply, nor as committed as orchestra apologists would often have us believe. The Canada Council "quota" approach of the 1970s and 1980s did produce a certain frequency of performance, though it in no way guaranteed the performance of significant repertoire. It is apparent that individual conductors and animateurs have had a dramatic effect on the programming of Canadian repertoire. It may also be noted that the performance of works by composers affiliated with orchestras as conductors or musicians, or by composers who have been active as radio producers, has been disproportionately high.

The CBC has been the largest source of regular commissions of Canadian orchestral music and has established a regular (if *laissez faire*) commissioning programme which has resulted in the compositions of well over 300 works. The CBC has also been, by far, the most significant exponent of Canadian orchestral music through extensive broadcasts and recordings.

Flurries of commissioning activity marked both the 1952 Coronation Year

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<sup>57</sup>Barry J. Edwards, "Hart House Orchestra," *EMC2*, 588-89.

and the 1967 Centennial Year. A smaller number of orchestras, particularly the OSM and the Saskatoon Symphony, have had extensive ongoing commissioning programmes.

The OSM and the McGill Chamber Orchestra have benefited from the Prix Jean-Lallemant and the Lapinsky Foundation commissions, which, in turn, have fostered a vital orchestral repertoire composed by Québec composers.

Many Canadian ensembles have chosen to present Canadian music while on tour, but smaller orchestras have more consistently performed Canadian repertoire. The Hart House Orchestra, The McGill Chamber Orchestra and the National Arts Centre Orchestra have given Canadian music an especially high profile on tour. The National Youth Orchestra has also featured Canadian music regularly.

The extent to which Coulthard responded to the perceived realities of her era will be very much an issue to remember when considering Coulthard's actual contributions to the Canadian orchestral repertoire. In some regards it is apparent that she was well aware of certain limitations on the scope and style; it will become evident that some of her orchestral works are designed to accommodate both audiences and orchestras. On the other hand, her very real commitment to the major orchestral genres suggests either a quixotic individualism or a visionary anticipation of a more supportive national climate for orchestral composition.

## Chapter 4: Orchestral Suites

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During her career as an orchestral composer, Coulthard has written three titled suites: *Canadian Fantasy* (1939); the ballet suite *Excursion* (1940); and *Canada Mosaic* (1974).<sup>1</sup> Almost by definition these are "public" works, designed as accessible music for domestic audiences, or, in the case of *Excursion*, for theatre as well as concert use. It is interesting to note that each of the orchestral suites has direct nationalist appeal: the *Fantasy* and *Canada Mosaic* explore folksong materials, while the scenario of the ballet is quintessentially related to coastal British Columbia life.

Coulthard's first suite, indeed her first extant work for orchestra,<sup>2</sup> was the *Canadian Fantasy*, written at the suggestion of Arthur Benjamin. Benjamin was responsible during the war years for a series of Vancouver "promenade concerts" loosely patterned on the famous Albert Hall Proms in London, which attempted to present the same mixture of new works, popular favourites and standard repertoire in an informal setting. Sponsored by the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper, the Vancouver Proms were held in the Georgia Auditorium. The series prospered in the 1941-42 season, with Vancouverites taking enthusiastically to the Proms' blend of informality and innovation. Unfortunately, the series was viewed as a threat by the fledgling Vancouver Symphony, and after considerable pressure the Benjamin series was discontinued.

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<sup>1</sup>The latter work is also known in two adapted versions: *Introduction and Three Folksongs* for chamber orchestra (1986) and *Three Vancouver Scenes* for large orchestra (1991).

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the "withdrawn" orchestral works of the earlier 1930s.

In addition to presenting several works of his own (such as the well-known *Oboe Concerto after Cimarosa* and the *Prelude to Holiday*)<sup>3</sup>, Benjamin encouraged several of the young figures in the Vancouver musical scene to write for the concerts, including Robert Barclay and Coulthard. While Coulthard had already composed *Portrait*,<sup>4</sup> it was at this time that she first seriously considered embarking on major orchestral works; the climate of professionalism around Benjamin and his supportive encouragement played a significant part in Coulthard's decision to focus on orchestral pieces. In choosing to write a fantasy, Coulthard was well aware of the varied implications of such a decision. It was not a full scale symphony (it would be nearly a decade before Coulthard felt confident enough to tackle such a composition), but neither was it a set of simple folk song settings. Recalling Brahms's orchestral *Serenades* or Bruckner's *Symphony "0"*, Coulthard wrote three developmental fantasies based on then-popular folk tunes from French Canada, orchestrated in a fairly traditional mode for standard symphonic forces.

Folk-song use in Coulthard's work requires some further explanation. Few, if any, of her uses of folk materials are literal settings (in the manner of, say, Britten) nor, for that matter, are they completely integrated into her compositional language (as with Bartók or Janáček). Rather, they are used as thematic materials for variation and development — subject to the same sort of composerly investigation as original thematic materials and treated in a way

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<sup>3</sup>Bryan N.S. Gooch, "Arthur Benjamin," *EMC2*, 110.

<sup>4</sup>And minor works for the Vancouver Little Theatre's house orchestra (see above).

consistent with standard early 20th-century developmental techniques. They are, in this respect, close to the English school approach as exemplified in the works her teacher Vaughan Williams or in Holst's *St. Paul's Suite*.

*Canadian Fantasy* (titled "A Canadian Fantasy" in the composer's *particella*) is scored for double winds (with piccolo and English horn doubling as well as the composer's characteristic use of both A and B $\flat$  clarinets), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. Dedicated to Benjamin, the work was first performed on 6 December 1940, with a subsequent Montréal Symphony performance (conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan) on 25 February 1941 and with a Vancouver revival in March. The three "movements" of the work are *Mon doux berger*, *Jesus Ahatonia*, and *C'est la belle Françoise*, but this subdivision gives a misleading impression. The work is continuous: the short *Mon doux berger* amounts to an introduction, a very straightforward harmonization of the gentle tune including very "English" parallel 6/4 triads (*Example 4.1*, following page). Here, however, the shift in triad forms to include the augmented form on the 2nd and 4th beats of the final measure of the example creates a harmonic effect presaging Coulthard's career-long focus on harmony and even suggesting the "mystic" harmonic preoccupations of many later works.<sup>5</sup> From a formal perspective, the very brief opening is out of proportion to the more extended fantasy movements that follow; doubtless a more experienced composer might have extended the opening materials. But their charming simplicity and the evocative orchestral

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<sup>5</sup>See, for example, *Music to Saint Cecilia*, *The Bird of Dawn*, the *Sonata for Two Pianos "Of the Universe"*, the *Requiem Piece*, or *Image Astrale*.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Clarinet I, Solo Viola, and Strings. The Clarinet I part is on a single staff with a treble clef, showing a melodic line with some grace notes. The Solo Viola part is on a single staff with a treble clef, showing a more active melodic line with a 'f' dynamic and 'espressivo' marking. The Strings part is on a single staff with a bass clef, showing a rhythmic accompaniment starting with a piano (pp) dynamic. The score is in 3/4 time and covers measures 3-6.

**Example 4.1** *Canadian Fantasy* [measures 3-6]

setting give the opening a unique character that more than compensates for the brevity.<sup>6</sup>

The subsequent fantasia on *Jesus Ahatonia* (labelled "Indian carol" in the score) is more extended, comprising two varied statements of the complete tune followed by a developmental section of some length. The first orchestral climax of the work occurs at the conclusion of this developmental section, a noisy and effective *maestoso* (reminiscent of Holst); again, a composer of greater maturity might have questioned the elaborate treatment of such slight materials, but the clear exuberance of the climax and the effective mastery of orchestration mark a point of arrival in Coulthard's use of orchestral resources. The setting concludes with a return to the lean opening textures (with, for programmatic resonance, emphasis on quiet timpani and bass drum).

Where the introductory *Mon doux berger* leads in a natural and uncomplicated way to the *Huron Carol*, Coulthard constructs a stereotypical link passage (Example 4.2) to connect *Jesus Ahatonia* to the concluding *C'est la belle*

<sup>6</sup>Interestingly, the figuration and the use of harp in the opening strongly suggest a similar texture used to begin *Canada Mosaic*.

*Françoise*. As in the treatment of *Jesus Ahatonia*, the material here is subject

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Cello' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Bass and viola'. Both staves contain a sequence of eighth notes, with several groups of three notes marked with a '3' above them, indicating triplets. There are also dynamic markings, including 'tr' (trill) and 'f' (forte), interspersed with the notes.

*Example 4.2 Canadian Fantasy [measures 127-138]*

to a variational development process, with confident though occasionally Holstian orchestration (for example, the wind figures after N); the music is effective throughout, though marked by an occasionally uneven sense of pacing which mitigates against the ultimate *giocoso* climax.

Considered in its entirety, the *Canadian Fantasy* amounts to an impressive orchestral advance over the withdrawn (or lost) orchestral works of the 1930s; it is a viable and attractive work, worthy of a place in the repertoire. It remains, however, an early work by a composer at the end of her apprenticeship, and understandably reveals some measure of inexperience, particularly with regard to the scope and compositional treatment of the folk-derived materials.

Coulthard's next work for full orchestra was the ballet suite *Excursion*, written in 1940 and premiered by Benjamin the following year. Benjamin revived the work in 1942, and in 1943 it was broadcast to Europe in a CBC Montréal Orchestra performance conducted by Jean-Marie Beaudet. VSO conductor Allard de Ridder conducted the European première by the Residential Orchestra at the Hague in 1947, as well as a further B.C. Electric

Summer Symphony performance (for 4,000!) in Stanley Park's Malkin Bowl<sup>7</sup> in 1946. The composition has yet to be presented in a danced version,<sup>8</sup> though a new recording of the suite was released in 1990, in a performance by Symphony Nova Scotia conducted by Georg Tintner.<sup>9</sup>

The work is a suite of dance tableaux, each relating to a specific balletic situation but musically complete and more or less self-contained. The scenario, written by the composer's brother-in-law David Brock, is a portrait of the coastal environment of the Gulf Islands:

The scene is a typical wharf on any one of British Columbia's Gulf Islands. The *time* is a summer day at the height of the holiday season. The *action* begins before the arrival of the steamer and continues through its brief call at the wharf. The *characters* are 1. the lonely seagull 2. an old man who lives permanently on the island and has become one of the local eccentrics<sup>10</sup> 3. a pair of summer lovers who are being separated by the ship's departure 4. a crowd of islanders 5. a strident group of boys on bicycles 6. an athletic group of female physical culturists 7. and a sailor from the steamer. The *costumes* range from the briefest of shorts on the largest females to pyjamas that look as if they were made by "Omar the tentmaker." The scene is a colourful one.

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<sup>7</sup>See David Duke, "Malkin Bowl," *EMC2*, 796.

<sup>8</sup>*Excursion* was written long before the establishment of any permanent dance company in British Columbia and conceived without thought of any specific performance.

<sup>9</sup>*Down Under*, CBC SM500, 2-2088.

<sup>10</sup>A fictionalized character based on Galiano Island's eccentric "Burrill boys."

In the score the composer notes that

The five scenes chosen for [the] concert suite are *Prelude: Lonely Dance of the Seagull* which takes place on the empty wharf as the curtain rises; *Polka*: danced by the island eccentric — an old man who brings his flute with him to meet the boat; he plays abominably and as he dances it is hard to tell if he has been sampling his home made wine, or if he is always as odd as this!; *Summer Romance ('Pas de deux')*: a pair of lovers dance a slow waltz as they take leave of each other; *Bicycle Boy's Parade*: the wharf is invaded by a cavalcade of noisy little boys on bicycles, the bells ring loudly, for no particular reason and the whir of wheels and pedals is heard *The Departure*: The steamer has now arrived and after the briefest of stays is ready to depart. The whole company dances on the crowded wharf mid the greatest excitement. Everyone is waving and calling the last banal messages. As the steamer moves rapidly away from the wharf, the crowd melts away, leaving the stage to the lonely sea-gull and the sorrowful weeping girl.

On brief assessment the colourful and bright music seems descriptive of the scene, tuneful but with little greater distinction. On closer consideration, several quite noteworthy aspects of the score and of the composer's approach to the ballet are worthy of comment. Two elements betray the rather rare influence of Stravinsky on Coulthard's work: both the extended piano cadenzas in the opening movement and the bittersweet, quiet ending suggest *Petruschka*.

The portrayal of island life is a somewhat surprising blend of the sentimental, the ironic, and the grotesque, written in a brash, Waltonian idiom

(virtually unique in the composer's work, although elements of parody and satire do occur in her major chamber work, the *Octet*). The flip, decidedly pointed humour of the score serves to remind us of the composer's links with the "bright young things" of the '20s.<sup>11</sup> Of even greater interest, given its composition in the early years of the Second World War, is the dark undertone injected by the sub-plot describing the parting of the summer lovers.

The music for the first scene is developmental, an exploration of a "seagull" motive (*Example 4.3*) interrupted by the previously mentioned piano cadenzas.



*Example 4.3 Excursion I [measures 1-2]*

The *Polka*, danced by the eccentric old man, is intentionally grotesque with a banal vamp accompaniment (but built on the interval of a tritone!) and an equally banal dance tune (*Example 4.4*) — a bitonal effect very much in the style

Flute

Bassoon

*f*

*Example 4.4 Excursion II [measures 1-6]*

of *Les six* (and composed just months before Coulthard's actual study sessions with Darius Milhaud).

<sup>11</sup>The last of whom Coulthard must certainly have encountered in her year at the Royal College of Music.

*Summer Romance* is the lyrical core of the work, a slow *con sentimento* waltz. An effective touch is the musical personification of the "weeping girl" both through a particular theme and through her specific association with a solo violin. Implicitly, her departing lover is suggested by the solo horn — in a musical as well as a choreographic *pas de deux*.<sup>12</sup>

The robust *Bicycle Parade* returns to the objective mood of the polka with a sea shanty-like theme (Example 4.5), marked with an obvious Scotch snap rhythm.

Horn I Boisterously, in clowning mood

Violin I mf

Example 4.5 Excursion iv [measures 4-6]

The *Final Departure* and *Epilogue* are, like the first tableau, more developmental, with the musical materials of the opening returning in the quiet concluding *Epilogue*, emphasized by short cadenzas in the piano, the reprise of the "seagull" motive and, somewhat chillingly, a final *morendo* statement of the material in the solo horn.

<sup>12</sup>A phrase that Coulthard was to re-use in the *Pas de Deux: Sonatina for flute and bassoon* — a musical wedding present for two musician friends.

As the record of early performances demonstrates, the work was initially a considerable success. Given its robust charm and effectiveness, it is perhaps surprising that Coulthard never returned to the sort of quasi-narrative structure used in the suite.<sup>13</sup> Considered in the broader scope of her career, however, it is easy to see her implicit rejection of this work as a youthful experiment. Neither the simplified harmonic vocabulary nor the rather orthodox approach to orchestral scoring appear to have held much further interest for the composer, and the work, successful and appealing as it may be, marks the end of her exploration of this conventional compositional idiom. Indeed, Coulthard was to neglect the suite until very much later in her career, returning to the genre only as the result of a very specific commission. *Canada Mosaic* (and its later adaptations *Introduction and Three Folk Songs* and *Three Vancouver Scenes*), Coulthard's second 'folksong' suite, was not composed until 30 years after the *Canadian Fantasy* and *Excursion*, the result of one of the most unusual (and in some ways) frustrating commissions of her career.

In the winter of 1973 plans were well under way for a tour by the Vancouver Symphony of the People's Republic of China. In an official request, the Chinese authorities asked for a new, commissioned work to be drawn from the folk-music of the Canadian people, in an "accessible" idiom. In what amounted to a left-handed compliment, the orchestra turned to Coulthard. Mindful of the problems relating to the imposed stylistic restrictions, Coulthard had serious reservations about the commission. Ultimately she accepted,

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<sup>13</sup>Except, of course, in her opera, *The Return of the Native*.

recognizing that her orchestral style, with its solid basis in traditional orchestral idioms, would be acceptable "as is." Similarly, though she felt that the request to base the work on "folk melodies of the people" was naïve, even humorous, she felt she could accept the terms of the commission as outlined by the Chinese authorities through the VSO. Coulthard commented in an unpublished programme note:

[I] was required to base my composition on "folk-melodies of the people" to placate the Chinese authorities (this was in the years of the Cultural Revolution). While I wasn't initially pleased with this political posturing, I ultimately decided that I could be true to my own creative priorities and still meet the terms of the commission.<sup>14</sup>

Only one further problem remained: the question of the commission came up while Coulthard was at her holiday home in Hawaii, and the work would have to be substantially composed at once to meet the rather pressing deadline set by the orchestra.<sup>15</sup> In any case, Coulthard requested a number of source materials from a diverse range of cultures<sup>16</sup> and ultimately settled on tunes from Québec, the Ottawa valley, the Ukrainian settlers in Saskatchewan and two fragments of Coast Salish music. To these she added "folksong-like" tunes of her own in the opening and closing movements, as well as intriguing quasi-

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<sup>14</sup>Coulthard later noted that she had felt that any "doors opened" to the people of China were, at the time, worthwhile.

<sup>15</sup>Suggesting that the commission had been originally designed for another, more stylish composer who proved unacceptable to the Chinese authorities.

<sup>16</sup>Found in the UBC Music Library collections by the author.

autobiographical quotations from three earlier works: the "seagull" motive from *Excursion* makes an appearance in the passacaglia *Harbour Sounds*; the textures of the opening *Lullaby* strongly suggest the *Mon doux berger* section of *Canadian Fantasy*;<sup>17</sup> and a fugue subject in the concluding movement, *Happy New Year*, was taken from the 1946 choral work *Québec May*.

In the programme note Coulthard continues:

Let me introduce the work itself, which is based on folk-materials from virtually all Canadian regions and many ethnic groups in Canada (not simply the few tried-and-true folk melodies that seem to appear whenever Canadian composers turn to folk themes). I also decided to produce something of a concerto-for-orchestra with virtuoso solos for all the orchestral instruments (even the more unlovely ones). The work was intentionally designed as light music in the best sense of the word, an attractive, audience pleasing composition with no great profundity, but one hoped, taste and a certain originality. Almost never do the folk materials appear as simple folk song settings; rather the work is a connected series of short fantasias on varied folk themes.

With the orchestral forces dictated by the rest of the tour repertoire,<sup>18</sup> the forces are grandiose: triple winds, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 4 trombones and tuba, timpani, extensive percussion, harp, piano (doubling celeste) and strings. The

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<sup>17</sup>The actual theme of the movement is developed from one of the *Songs from the Distaff Muse*, a setting of a fragment of Sappho.

<sup>18</sup>Including Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*.

work was first played by the Vancouver Symphony in the early fall of 1974, then repeated on the Orchestra's Japanese tour that winter.

The format of the work is that of a multi-section suite of short, self-contained movements: the initial *Lullaby on a Snowy Night* is entirely derived from original materials (but of "folksong" simplicity); *Mam'zelle Québécoise* is a setting of a less well-known tune for *La belle Française*; *D'Sonoqua's Song* is derived from fragments and rhythms of Coast Salish native music (collected by Helen Densmore); *Harbour Sounds* is a short passacaglia using the *courier de bois* tune *C'est l'aviron* and the "seagull" motive from *Excursion*; *The Contented House* is a setting of *A la claire fontaine*; *Billowing Fields of Golden Wheat* is based on a Ukrainian tune from the Prairies; and *Happy New Year* contains original materials in a Chinese pentatonic mode.

Unlike the earlier linked segments of *Canadian Fantasy*, all of the movements of *Canada Mosaic* are self-contained, often using simple juxtapositional forms. Since the work was designed for immediate public appeal, the harmonic idiom is often simpler than that employed by the composer in other more abstract works of the '60s and '70s.<sup>19</sup>

Orchestrally, the work is Coulthard's most extroverted and colourful score. As noted above, early in the compositional process Coulthard decided to produce characteristic solo material for virtually all members of the large orchestra that was slated to tour; thus the work (in the original format) is filled with passages which feature orchestral soloists: bass clarinet, piccolo, cor

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<sup>19</sup>Though it should be noted that Coulthard's harmonic style became gradually more triadic after the 1950s.

anglais, percussion and piano,<sup>20</sup> to name just a few of the instruments singled out. The writing for brass and percussion is especially effective, with heavy brass figuring in both the *Passacaglia* and the *Finale*. The percussion forces are extremely varied and featured in a quite unique way throughout the score, with various movements virtually built around idiomatic percussion: the orchestral bells of the *Lullaby*, sleigh bells in *Mam'zelle Québécoise*, tympani in *D'Sonoqua*, and Chinese gongs and "firework" whips in the *Finale*. An especially effective device is the intricate doubling of low piano and percussion at the end of the *passacaglia*.

Incongruously, *Canada Mosaic* became for a time one of the most controversy-plagued works in Coulthard's catalogue. When it was finally premièred by the VSO prior to their tour (which, due to the Cultural Revolution, went to Japan, not China), the work was vilified.<sup>21</sup> At best it was called "travelogue music", while at worst the composer was accused of pandering to the politics of the Maoists. Although enthusiastically received in Japan, the work was not revived in Vancouver or performed elsewhere in Canada or abroad for a number of years. Only at the end of the 1980s did it return to the active repertoire, in no small way because of CBC producer George Laverock, who asked the composer to adapt some of the work's quieter movements for

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<sup>20</sup>The composer had heard that Maestro Kazuyoshi Akyama was particularly interested in having the orchestra's pianist accompany the tour; Coulthard diplomatically included the significant use of piano in her score, something of an anomaly in her later orchestrational style (though piano had been used in the early orchestrations of *Excursion* and *Rider on the Sands*).

<sup>21</sup>The *Vancouver Sun's* Max Wyman, often a Coulthard enthusiast, was especially and uncharacteristically negative.

the CBC Vancouver Orchestra. Coulthard, who has always shown a certain antipathy for revising, re-working, or adapting her music, was not particularly anxious to undertake the task of reducing the lavish scoring of *Canada Mosaic*. One of her former students was invited to consider the task and, looking at the score, discovered that the "re-orchestration" amounted to little more than a small number of instrumental re-assignments and substitutions.<sup>22</sup>

In order to integrate the four sections used in the new version of the score, Coulthard decided to write new link passages and a short coda-epilogue (based on the lullaby theme). The resulting *Introduction and Three Folksongs (from Canada Mosaic)*, containing the opening *Lullaby*, *Mam'zelle Québécoise*, *The Contented House*, and *Billowing Fields of Golden Wheat*, was broadcast by the CBC Vancouver Orchestra under the direction of Mario Bernardi, then revived by the VSO, directed by Peter McCoppin. The Bernardi performance was later released as a commercial recording in 1989<sup>23</sup> and nominated for a 1991 Juno award. The work has since become something of a VSO staple, frequently used for open air Canada Day programmes, while excerpts from the recording are regularly broadcast. In the spring of 1991 the remaining movements were "rehabilitated", being performed by the VSO's new conductor Sergiu Comissiona as his first Canadian repertoire with his new orchestra. For the occasion,

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<sup>22</sup>In fact the author was able to produce a usable conductor's score by taking a xeroxed copy of the full score and removing the omitted instruments with an Xacto knife(!), then adding new cues in red ink. (The same expedient process was used to adapt portions of the opera *The Return of the Native* for the new "suite" *Where Tempests Rise*. After the adapted version, re-named *Introduction and Three Folksongs*, was recorded, a new score was copied.)

<sup>23</sup>Tableau, CBC SMCD 5081.

*Harbour Sounds*, *D'Sonoqua's Song*, and *Happy New Year* were renamed *Three Vancouver Scenes (from Canada Mosaic)*.

To date, Coulthard's three orchestral suites have attracted an almost disproportionate amount of attention. The two early works from the 1940s helped significantly in establishing Coulthard's presence as a Canadian composer; *Canada Mosaic* and the two compositions derived from it have become widely known. But while the suites have won the composer considerable popularity and acclaim, taken out of the broader context of all of Coulthard's work they could suggest a composer of charming light music — not, as will shortly be illustrated, a more complex figure committed to all the forms of orchestral expression.

## Chapter 5: Smaller scale orchestral works

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Five single-movement works for orchestra remain extant in Coulthard's catalogue: *Convoy* or *Song to [of] the Sea* (1942); *Rider on the Sands* (1953); *Music to Saint Cecilia* (1954;68;79); *Endymion* (1966); and *Kalamalka "Lake of Many Colours"* (1973). As mentioned earlier, two compositions, *Portrait* (1936) and *Two Poems* (1942), have been withdrawn by the composer.

Coulthard's overture *Convoy* (also referred to as *Song to the Sea*) was written during the early years of the Second World War. The title underwent a number of changes: the composer's *particella* is headed "Sketches for Sea Chantey"; the autograph full score was originally titled "Convoy" with a subtitle "Overture for Orchestra"; in the composer's hand and in ink, the frontispiece continues "Jean Coulthard Adams (Adams was later scratched out) Feb 1st 1944 dedicated to Capt. K.F. Adams R.C.N."<sup>1</sup> At a later date "Convoy" was scratched out and the new title *Song to the Sea*<sup>2</sup> added; still later this second title was crossed through and the original title returned. Coulthard also added "about 1942 or" before the February 1st 1944 date. At the head of the first page of music, the score reads, "In the style of a Sea Chantey."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 2, p. 32. It was Arthur Benjamin who suggested renaming the work for post-war audiences.

<sup>2</sup>And also *Song of the Sea*.

<sup>3</sup>In 1992 Coulthard believed the work to have been composed in the earlier war years, certainly before she left for New York in 1944.

piccolo doubling),<sup>4</sup> 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, percussion and strings. The composer's card index records indicate a CBC (but doubtless CBR Radio Symphony Orchestra) Vancouver Orchestra première conducted by Arthur Benjamin 16 March 1942 in the Vancouver Hotel, with a subsequent performance conducted by John Avison in 1943. Further performances include one by the Atlantic Symphony under Kenneth Elloway in 1971<sup>5</sup> and another by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Brian Jackson in 1981.

The overture is in a free ternary design with a three theme A section contrasted with a slower middle section, then a truncated return of selected opening materials and a coda.<sup>6</sup> The initial materials are quasi-programmatic, broadly descriptive of turbulence and conflict, impressionist in a sense, but more in the style of English descriptive music than French. Indeed, many aspects of these opening materials are reminiscent of Vaughan Williams, Holst, or, to go beyond English models, Sibelius, especially the sombre horn chorale at the opening (*Example 5.1*):

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<sup>4</sup>It seems from the manuscript that the 2nd oboe and B♭ clarinets were a somewhat later addition.

<sup>5</sup>Subsequently included on the RCI *Anthology of Canadian Music* recordings.

<sup>6</sup>While the texture of the work is often scherzo-like, the free ternary form of the composition does not suggest the conventions of the minuet and trio/scherzo formal design, a form type rarely found in Coulthard's work.



Example 5.1 Convoy [measures 3-5]

or the *vivace ben marcato* figuration after letter **B** (Example 5.2).



Example 5.2 Convoy [measures 30-31]

Only the third theme (Example 5.3), marked *allegro con energia*, suggests an actual chantey:



Example 5.3 Convoy [measures 42-46]

The middle of the overture is devoted to a sober *lento cantabile* which explores solo wind textures over simple accompaniment figures in the horns and winds relieved by orchestral sub-climaxes. At [K] the opening *Lento drammatico* materials return until [Q], when an *allegro con energia* coda drives to the intense but neither rousing nor affirmative conclusion.

The harmonic language of the overture is tonal and functional, without the significant focus on upper tertial chord structures of later works. The orchestrational idiom is full, even aggressive, but rarely original. It is a demonstration of the composer's mastery of conservative 20th-century orchestrational idioms and filled with effective and exciting detail, but it in no way suggests the extreme orchestral sensitivity that Coulthard was to attain in further orchestral essays. Without being overly literal in the interpretation of this often dark and tempestuous music, it remains hard to accept the validity of the neutral title "*Song to the Sea*" rather than the original *Convoy*. Arguably the reference to the Second World War naval convoys may have seemed over-specific and unfashionable in the immediate post-war years, but with over 40 years of hindsight, the original title seems best to suit the nature of the music.

Unlike the lyric pastoralism of the *Canadian Fantasy* or the ironic grotesqueries of *Excursion*, *Convoy* is an attempt to use the orchestra at its broadest and most intense. Considered in the light of such war-specific works as Samuel Barber's *A Stopwatch and an Ordinance Map* and the *Commando March*, or Copland's *Letter from Home* or *Fanfare for the Common Man* (not

to mention the war symphonies of Vaughan Williams, Shostakovich, or Prokofiev), the work is entirely representative of its time and situation.

Two devices are rather rare in Coulthard's orchestral work: the full orchestral *tutti* and the true symphonic scherzo.<sup>7</sup> *Convoy* contains elements of both, and as such retains an intriguing role in her catalogue. Its shortcomings also highlight problems that the composer was actively to consider in later works: the issue of large-scale form in single movement compositions, and the creation of an original (not simply effective) orchestral palette.

It was in 1953 that Coulthard next wrote a small-scale orchestral work: *Rider on the Sands* was commissioned for the CBC radio programme "Opportunity Knocks". In the years between 1947 and 1957 this "national talent competition . . . initiated and directed by John Adaskin" auditioned young artists and broadcast performances across Canada, demonstrably furthering the careers of a wide and distinguished assortment of performers and composers.<sup>8</sup> The competition was not only for performers; announcers and, later, composers were also encouraged.<sup>9</sup> The specific nature of the commission (which suggested a short "populist" work with an orchestration redolent of theatre orchestras) provided Coulthard with neither the scope nor the venue that was sympathetic. The resulting work is a brief orchestral *perpetuum mobile*, a bright and direct

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<sup>7</sup>As opposed to Coulthard's characteristic intermingling of scherzo and finale elements, used in the conclusions of both *Concertos* and the first and third *Symphonies*.

<sup>8</sup>Unsigned, "Opportunity Knocks," *EMC2*, 975-76.

<sup>9</sup>Winners in the competition were determined by a combination of studio-audience response, mail-in votes, and judges' opinions.

work that pits straightforward melodies in doubled strings or solo winds against virtually continuous 16th-note figuration in guitar, harp, and piano. However useful the guitar may have been in commercial music of the era, its inclusion in the ensemble seems to have been particularly irksome to the composer; with the exception of a few rolled chords (which could just as easily be presented by the harp or piano) the part is entirely dispensable. Similarly, the required use of 3 trumpets and 2 trombones but no horns was at odds with Coulthard's developing concept of the orchestra: much of the busy harp/piano/guitar figuration is needed to provide the harmonic core of the work that is given to quiet horns in her more mature orchestrations.

The most interesting detail of the score (beyond, of course, simply coping with the unadvantageously combined forces) is the use of bitonality, very much the same harmonic idiom explored in the three 1947 *Sonatas*. The translation of this idiom into an orchestral texture is not entirely successful. The composer's command of orchestral colour and the creation of apt orchestral figuration is merely suggested by the busy and only partially effective pattern-making of this bright but undistinguished work. Perhaps the best lesson that Coulthard learned from *Rider on the Sands* was a realization of her innate inability to produce the sort of facile, professional music extensively required for the film and broadcast industries; any temptations this specialized form of composing career may once have had for Coulthard were gradually dispelled. The focus of her orchestral music, from this point on, would be in the directions (if not the idiom) established by the idealistic (if then impractical)

*First Symphony*, not the pragmatic (but ultimately unfulfilling) commercial world of "Opportunity Knocks".

The next year, Coulthard began work on *Music to Saint Cecilia*, a composition with perhaps the most complex compositional provenance of any Coulthard work. Both her current SOCAN brochure and the 1971 *Catalogue of Works* indicate that the first composition of the work took place in 1954. The composer's *particella* has no date, but does contain a full sketch of the Junior Choral piece *The Seagulls*, apparently also written in 1954. In the composer's three copies of the score various confusing annotations appear; the earliest score is marked, "This version withdrawn, see organ & strings C.M.C.". In a later hand "withdrawn" is crossed out and "redone in 1979 - summer" added; on another score (marked *Canadian Music Centre 550 Avenue Road Toronto*), a partially erased pencilled note in Coulthard's hand reads, "organ strings & tape stand this version—opt" with a further note in ink: "Now revised 1969 1979. J.C."; the composer's most recent score reads "From an Italian painting of the Saint (Florence. Italy 1956) (composition date early 60's J.C.)".

There are thus no less than five versions of the score, each demonstrating differing stages in the composer's view of her work: the piano *particella* (prepared, apparently, in 1954), the first orchestral version (produced in the same year), the second orchestral version with optional electronic tape,<sup>10</sup> the version for organ and strings (prepared in 1969/70), and the third orchestral version (1979). The second (now withdrawn) and third versions of the score

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<sup>10</sup>The now withdrawn electronic tape was prepared by the author with Coulthard's supervision in 1970 at the University of British Columbia.

differ from the first version through the alteration of a number of small details — changed rhythms, altered pitches, corrections to dynamics, and so forth, plus the more significant addition of some new phrases, frequently for solo strings. The organ and string adaptation (discussed in Chapter 7) creates an organ *obbligato* out of the wind and brass parts.

The work is thus a hybrid: the organ and string version must be considered as a work for soloist and strings (despite the *obbligato* but not soloistic nature of the organ part); the extant orchestral version should be considered as a typical single-movement orchestral prelude (indeed that is the subtitle on the original composer's *particella*). As such, *Music to Saint Cecilia* is the first of Coulthard's three single-movement sonata-form works for orchestra, and should be considered in the context of her work in the middle 1950s, despite the few significant revisions made in the 1979 version of the score.

Both versions of *Music to Saint Cecilia* remained unperformed until the organ and strings arrangement was premiered by Arpaad Joo with the Calgary Philharmonic, 24 February 1980. The orchestral version of the score was subsequently performed by the Edmonton Symphony conducted by Uri Meyer, and used as a test piece for that orchestra's Young Conductors Competition.

Scored for double winds (with piccolo and cor anglais doubling), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celeste, and strings, the work is striking, immediately characterized by its memorable chromatic figuration — similar, to a certain extent, to that of *Rider on the Sands*

but also presaging similar figural textures in the *Burlesca* (as well as the *Sonata for Two Pianos "Of the Universe"*, and *Image Astrale*).

The first theme (*Example 5.4*) in fact suggests a serial organization through interval cell patterns of thirds and fourths. The sonata-form design is

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Flutes, with the tempo marking 'Lento, ma non troppo' and the mood 'tranquillo'. The bottom staff is for Clarinet, with the dynamic marking 'mp'. Both staves show a melodic line with a series of intervals, primarily thirds and fourths, as mentioned in the text. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

*Example 5.4 Music to Saint Cecilia [measures 1-2]*

constructed along ternary lines. The exposition contains four themes, quite clearly delineated, with tonal planning based on the cycle of fifths: a first theme beginning in C, a bridge theme (partially derived from the first theme material) beginning in F, the second and closing group themes moving through B $\flat$  to E $\flat$ . The development, which begins in A, presents and varies an augmented and syncopated version of the first theme. The recapitulation, which begins in G, offers a truncated version of the opening materials in a freely reversed order, ending with a return to the central C tonality.

The most atypical aspect of the score is its rhythmic vocabulary. Despite the rhapsodic and mystical nature of the subject matter, Coulthard keeps her rhythmic ideas to (for her) continuous, even *toccata*-like figures of regular 8th or 16th notes; the more impressionist-based duple and triple subdivisions expected in her work are untypically absent. More typical is Coulthard's

exploration of what can be termed "mystical" writing, a focus on figural melody characterized by extreme chromatic inflection, often including augmented interval scale forms, used here as a programmatic representation of the Saint.

Coulthard's next single-movement orchestral work is the orchestral poem *Endymion*. The composer's *particella* is undated but does contain an original title, "*Endymion's Spell*"; it is also headed "for chamber orchestra." At what time Coulthard re-considered the scoring is not apparent, though it was written before her 1965/66 sabbatical year in London, at the time of her studies in advanced orchestration with Gordon Jacob. Purely in terms of the command of orchestral craft, the advances in the score are considerable.<sup>11</sup> The completed score (end-dated 1964-5-6) uses one of Coulthard's largest orchestrations with double winds plus piccolo and cor anglais, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celeste, and strings. It was given its only public performance to date by Klaro Mizerit and the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, 24 April 1970; at that time the critic of the *Halifax Mail-Star*, Gretchen Pierce, hailed the composition as the "highlight" of the orchestra's programme, commenting that "the poem is romantic yet

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<sup>11</sup>In the composer's copy of the score an interesting passage leading to an orchestral tutti allows for the comparison of a significant change in the scoring, the replacement of a complex figural pattern in the winds by a more clear (and more clearly effective) doubling of the major melodic lines and drastically simplified figuration for the harmonic support. In pencil is the admonition "B lowest note of C[or] A[nglais]" followed, in Coulthard's hand, by "(from Gordon Jacob!) *mf* Background."

modern.<sup>12</sup> The work is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Ettore Mazzoleni (who had conducted the première of Coulthard's *First Symphony*).

In a short preface, Coulthard outlines the explanatory programme: Selene, Goddess of the Moon, became enamoured of Endymion, a beautiful youth of Elis. Descending from Olympus in her chariot, she kept him asleep forever, fearful that he might escape from her embraces if he awakened. The exposition of this symphonic poem presents three main themes representing — the enchanted sleep — the love motive — and that of the Goddess in her chariot. The music follows with a development of the themes ending with a tranquil coda based on the motive of perpetual sleep.<sup>13</sup>

In the composer's copy of the orchestral score are two photo reproductions of the Horse of Selene, a fragment from the east pediment of the Parthenon, now in the British Museum.

While to many, the symphonic poem genre implies a free, narrative-based formal design, Coulthard's work immediately refutes this notion.<sup>14</sup> In the *particella*, the notations "theme — sleep — enchantment; love theme (moonlight over the earth; vision of Goddess Silene [sic]" accompany the music; simplified versions of these attributions are included in the orchestral score. But despite

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<sup>12</sup>*Halifax Mail-Star*, 2[5] April 1970 (n.p.; unpaginated clipping, *Jean Coulthard Papers*, University of British Columbia: Special Collections).

<sup>13</sup>In other versions of the legend it is Endymion who begs Zeus to give him perpetual sleep, not Selene's enchantment. The legend inspired Keats (*Endymion*, 1817) and Longfellow, among others.

<sup>14</sup>In her UBC analysis classes Coulthard often referred to the Richard Strauss tone poems as examples of expanded sonata-form.

the programmatic nature of these tags, the actual structure of the music is that of a sonata, irregular only in the thematic nature of the bridge or transitional materials (which are connected to the second "Selene" theme by a passage marked "moonlight over the earth [;]love themes" in the *particella*) and the relative unimportance of the closing theme or coda materials (a nine-measure long passage marked *poco a poco meno mosso*). In all other respects, the opening comprises a full-scale sonata exposition.

From this point on, however, the form is slightly more flexible. In her note, Coulthard consciously refers to a "development" and a "coda" but nowhere refers to a "recapitulation". The developmental middle section of the piece (beginning *lento misterioso; a tempo primo*), combines and extends the three named themes. To conclude, the themes return in freely reversed order, beginning with the *allegro animato* "Selene" material; here, however, the *allegro animato* gradually builds to a significant orchestral climax (depicting the Goddess splendid in her chariot), followed by the closing theme in augmentation at [10]. This, in turn, ebbs into a *lento dolce coda* at [11], where a fusion of the "Endymion" first theme and the "love themes" bridge in a gradually dissolving texture poetically depicting Endymion's enchanted sleep.

The harmonic content of the work is continuously enriched with tertial extension, added note, and chromatically altered chords and a continuously active scheme of progressions. Despite these complexities, the tonal planning is clear and revealing: the first theme establishes the central E $\flat$  minor tonality of the work then moves to G; the bridge materials begin in E then establish

F#, the initial key of the second theme; the conclusion of the exposition is in C minor. The development returns to the E♭ (enharmonically presented as D#) tonality, then moves to G major; by the end of the work the E♭ tonality has once again been established.

Of all the musical elements present in this rich and attractive score, none is more worthy of assessment than Coulthard's new mastery of orchestral colour. While she has assembled a large orchestra, she rarely uses it to create bombastic orchestral effects; rather, it is there to provide a wealth of colour. *Endymion* amounts to Coulthard's most overtly impressionistic score, strongly evocative of the orchestral colours of Debussy and early Ravel.

Two sections should be singled out for special attention. The orchestral climax depicting Selene 10 measures before 10 demonstrates a full orchestral *tutti* of both depth and complexity, with the strings well disposed for maximum clarity but intricately varied with *sforzando*, *pizzicato*, *tremolo*, accent and *spiccato* articulations; the brass is employed in brilliant fanfare flourishes (with effective use of low tuba for flashes of added sonority), the winds as a quasi-antiphonal echo of the brass, and an accent texture is created from rolled timpani, harp *glissandi* and accented bass drum.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most evocative measures of the work occur at the end of the coda. Here, muted string figures and *espressivo* solo winds gradually subside into a pedal chord, giving a shimmering texture through the combination of

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<sup>15</sup>The effect ends with the inclusion of the cymbals in an unclear notation: an accented third note of over two bars length. Since there is no indication of a suspended cymbal roll, a shorter note value with *laissez vibrer* would be less ambiguous.

low *tenuto* violins, *tremolo* violas, sustained celli, and *pizzicati* basses juxtaposed with harp *glissandi*, *staccato* points of sound in the celeste, and an *espressivo* muted horn solo. The final gesture of the work transfers the celeste's earlier *staccato* notes to a far darker low register in the harp, while a triplet figure in the winds melts from piccolo and oboe to flutes then clarinets and bassoons; the final depiction of Endymion's enchanted sleep is created by solo flute, harp, celeste, timpani, and strings, with percussion accents of triangle, and then a very quiet gong.

Given the emphasis on orchestral effects revealed in *Endymion*, it is almost tempting to refer to the orchestral techniques as being of *Klangfarben* inspiration. This would imply, however, that the orchestration is of structural and not decorative importance, which is not the case. Colour and texture are used pictorially and programmatically, not to delineate the formal components of the sonata structure. They are, in short, used exactly as any impressionist composer would use them.

To a certain extent, *Endymion* is as epigonal as the contemporary *Fantasy* and *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, except that it is neo-impressionist rather than neo-romantic in inspiration. If nothing else, *Endymion* should dispel the still too prevalent belief that Coulthard's work is in the English tradition of her one-time teacher Vaughan Williams. For a composer approaching her 60s to lavish such care and attention on an orchestral *hommage* to the turn of the century French orchestral idiom amounts to an important affirmation of a personal aesthetic perspective.

Like *Music to Saint Cecilia* and *Endymion*, the prelude for orchestra *Kalamalka (Lake of Many Colours)*, composed in 1973 as a CBC commission for the Atlantic Symphony, is in a single movement of modified sonata design. Scored for a standard orchestra of double winds (with piccolo and, unusually, no English horn), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani and percussion (including tuned antique cymbals),<sup>16</sup> harp, and strings, the work was premièred by the Atlantic Symphony under the direction of Klaro Mizerit on 3 December 1974. Coulthard has blurred the generic identity of the work: called a "prelude," it in no way suggests the preludial quality of an overture.<sup>17</sup> *Kalamalka's* programme suggests a tone poem: the composer's note envisions early morning on the quiet British Columbia lake,<sup>18</sup> flocks of birds,<sup>19</sup> and the suggestion of a summer storm with distant thunder and lightning. This apparatus is certainly justifiable and the musical imagery could easily suggest just these situations. If there is a trite or even naïve quality to this imagery, it is belied by the sophisticated quality of the musical invention.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>With glockenspiel or orchestral bells suggested as a substitute.

<sup>17</sup>Nor does it reflect a "prelude" form with monothematic development.

<sup>18</sup>*Kalamalka*, in the Okanagan region, is reputed to be a name of native origin meaning "lake of many colours". Coulthard intentionally chose a British Columbian theme when asked to compose a work for a Maritime orchestra.

<sup>19</sup>Depicted by *spiccato* figurations akin to the various avian depictions in the chamber works *The Birds of Lansdowne* and *the Octet*.

<sup>20</sup>The programmatic imagery amounts, one feels, to a sop for the popular audience. The work is, in purely musical terms, the equivalent of works such as Honegger's three *Movements symphoniques*. One also recalls that Honegger ironically noted that the first two, *Pacific 231* and *Rugby*, achieved popularity; the third, with its abstract title *Movement Symphonique*, did not.

The opening is clearly in four distinct sections or theme areas: an initial *Lento misterioso* featuring wind solos over *tremolo* string pedals and *pizzicato* figures (Example 5.5); a *lento misterioso a piacere* — three *glissandi* in harp and

The musical score for Example 5.5, measures 2-4, is presented in two systems. The first system features a Flute I part with notes and dynamics markings (pp, p) and a string part with 'Pizz.' and 'p' markings. The second system features a Flute II part with notes and dynamics markings (pp) and a string part. The tempo/mood is 'Lento misterioso'.

**Example 5.5 *Endymion* [measures 2-4]**

strings with antique cymbal figures and wind interjections;<sup>21</sup> a *poco piu mosso*, for fuller orchestra with *spiccato* string figures leading to an initial orchestral climax; and a concluding *lento ma non troppo (grazioso)* closing theme (Example 5.6, following page). A brief transitional coda rounds out the exposition with a G<sup>11</sup> cadence chord.

The developmental middle section comprises 26 throughcomposed measures of full — even thick — orchestration and a second *pesante, poco allargando* climax (prefaced by the composer's characteristic double anacrusis) of 10

<sup>21</sup>Representing the "many colours" of the lake.



Example 5.6 *Endymion* [measures 55-56]

measures before a  $D^{13}$  chord closes the development section in textures similar to the conclusion of the exposition.

All of the exposition materials return in the recapitulation, but with truncation and modification, and in reverse order: the *lento ma non troppo (grazioso)*; the *poco piu mosso* (concluding in a *poco maestoso* orchestral climax, the last moment of large scale orchestral scoring in the work); the *lento misterioso glissandi* section; and, finally, the return to the opening materials (here marked *molto legato*). The work concludes on an added note A chord or an  $A^{11}$ , a return to the opening A tonality.

Coulthard's use of sonata form here is characteristic: the tonal organization of a "traditional" structure with first and second keys in a dominant/tonic or major/minor relative relationship connected by a modulatory bridge is not explored, while the notion of four distinct and contrasting theme areas is. The developmental principle is maintained, as is the notion of recapitulation, though the palindromic return of the materials suggests an arch design.<sup>22</sup> Overall the tonal planning is also typical of her approach: initial and concluding use of an

<sup>22</sup>Implying the potent influence of Bartók in Coulthard's work.

A tonality, slow harmonic drift in the exposition to a G (or modal 7th relationship), rapid harmonic change to a stable D (or plagal) conclusion of the development, and a return to the home tonality for the recapitulation. Coulthard's harmonic language is constantly enriched by upper tertial chord forms; melodic passages are consistently and extensively subject to chromatic inflection (with particular stress given to augmented interval patterns).

Throughout, the orchestrational style is neo-impressionist, very much a continuation of the orchestral idiom of *Endymion*. The most memorable orchestrational effect in the work is that of the *glissando* passage, aurally reminiscent of Stravinsky's *Firebird* but with the use of the antique cymbals, a conscious (if impractical) homage to Debussy's orchestral palette.

Coulthard's single movement orchestral works reveal a consistently practical composerly perspective. With the exception of the *Convoy* overture and the commissioned *Rider on the Sands*, all use adapted sonata-form structures, similar tonal plans and harmonic vocabularies, and even similar orchestral forces. All have been designed as public music written in accessible idioms and of undemanding lengths. All have distinct programmatic elements, ranging from the specific topicality of *Convoy* and the mystical or mythological in *Music to Saint Cecilia* and *Endymion* to the scenically descriptive *Kalamalka*. In the broadest sense, they are orchestral *Gebrauchsmusik* designed to add to the repertoire of performable Canadian music for standard professional orchestras.

## **Chapter 6: Works For String Orchestra**

Coulthard has written a series of five works for strings alone: the *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* (1941); *A Prayer for Elizabeth* (1953); *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* (1961); *Autumn Symphony (Symphony #4)* (1984);<sup>1</sup> and *Symphonic Image "Of the North"* (1989). Other works for strings and soloist(s), including *Music on a Quiet Song*, *The Bird of Dawning*, *Music to Saint Cecilia* and *Burlesca*, are discussed in Chapter 7.

Coulthard began work on *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"*, her first composition for string orchestra, in the early 1940s, very much with the encouragement of Arthur Benjamin. The notes to the CBC Anthology recording (a reissue of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's performance conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan) state that:

*The Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* (1942) was Coulthard's first work for string orchestra. Characteristically, it is not at all in the well-known style of many English works for string orchestra. Broadly programmatic, the work "foretells the story of one who strives to attain a high ideal, setting aside earthly pleasures to do so. The contrasting theme is that of a mystical slow dance, representing the temptations that distract one from one's path through a long life of perseverance."<sup>2</sup>

The high-minded programme establishes two themes that occur and recur in Coulthard's work (and it is characteristic that they make their appearance even

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 9.

<sup>2</sup>David Duke, "Notes," *Anthology of Canadian Music 10: Jean Coulthard* (Vancouver: Radio Canada International, 1982): 7.

in her second major ensemble composition): that of the idealist at odds with the environment (most overtly considered in the opera *The Return of the Native*), and the "mystical" as a state expressed in musical terms.

The dissimilarity between the *Ballade* and some of the more obvious models of 20th-century string music is worth discussing. Coulthard was certainly familiar with the traditions of English string music<sup>3</sup> through works such as Holst's *St. Paul's Suite*, Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, or Vaughan Williams' paradigmatic *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*. But in the *Ballade* she seems consciously to avoid many of the hallmark characteristics of these models: it is chromatic rather than modal, through-composed rather than a suite, and, most significantly, the string disposition and scoring is not in the English tradition.

Taken as a whole, the *Ballade* is an ambitious first composition for string orchestra. Unlike the string works of Vaughan Williams, Holst, and Warlock, the thickness of Coulthard's scoring, her choice of key areas, and the chromaticism of her idiom make accurate string tuning difficult; the overscoring of *divisi* celli and bass results in heaviness, not richness, and many of the melodic lines and accompanying figures suggest pianistic idioms. On a musical level, the two-part but developmental nature of the music reveals craft and growing sophistication, but ultimately the overall effect of the work is

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<sup>3</sup>British composer Sir Michael Tippett has gone so far as to remark (about his *Concerto for Double String Orchestra*), "In using a double string orchestra I was attaching myself to a specifically English tradition, viz., the *Introduction and Allegro* for string quartet and string orchestra of Edward Elgar and the *Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis* of Ralph Vaughan Williams. It can almost be said that the string orchestra in this sense was an English invention (Michael Tippett in *The Orchestral Composer's Point of View*, ed. Robert Steven Hines [Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969], 208).

comprised by the composer's relative lack of experience with strings at that time.

Notwithstanding, the *Ballade* has had an impressive performance history. Following the 21 October 1945 performance by the strings of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gregor Garbovitsky. The *Vancouver Sun's* Stanley Bligh commented on its "modern" and "intriguing" idiom.<sup>4</sup> The *Vancouver Province's* R[hynd], J[amieson], singled out the "depth and spirituality" of the work.<sup>5</sup> The Toronto Symphony's first performance of the work in 1943 is the performance recorded on the RCI *Anthology* of Coulthard's work. Unlike the positive reviews of the Vancouver critics, the *Telegram's* Edward Wodson found the work "soporific"<sup>6</sup> in a subsequent Toronto performance.

The European première of *Ballade* took place in Paris at the prestigious concert of Canadian music conducted by Gaston Poulet<sup>7</sup> at the Theatre Champs Elysées in 1956. Two years later, a further Vancouver Symphony Orchestra performance was conducted by Irwin Hoffmann in 1958. Recently

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<sup>4</sup>*Vancouver Sun*, 22 October 1945, 7.

<sup>5</sup>*Vancouver Province*, 22 October 1945, 5. For the first few years following her marriage, Coulthard used the professional name Jean Coulthard Adams, later reverting to Jean Coulthard. Coulthard Adams, Coulthard-Adams, Mrs Adams and even Mrs Donald Adams all appear in the '40s and '50s, especially in Vancouver (where professional and social names were more easily confused).

<sup>6</sup>*Telegram*, 21 January 1953 (n.p.; unpaginated clipping, *Jean Coulthard Papers*, University of British Columbia: Special Collections).

<sup>7</sup>Who, as a young violinist, premièred Debussy's *Violin Sonata* with the composer himself in his last public appearance before his death, a coincidence greatly appreciated by Coulthard.

a new broadcast performance by CBC Vancouver Orchestra was conducted by Mario Bernardi, as part of what amounts to his on-going series of Coulthard performances.

In the mid-1940s Coulthard composed *Music on a Quiet Song* for strings and flute (discussed in Chapter 7). Then, in 1953, she received a commission from the CBC to write a work marking the coronation of Elizabeth II.<sup>8</sup> *A Prayer for Elizabeth* is unexpectedly muted, not at all the type of work usually produced for such a ceremonial event. Decidedly "postwar" in feeling (either consciously or unconsciously), *A Prayer for Elizabeth* reflects the seriousness of the moment, not its pomp and circumstance.<sup>9</sup> Deliberately avoiding the ceremonial and the grandiose, Coulthard's work is quiet and meditative — in its own way an intense reaction to the devastation of the preceding war years, and a deeply personal utterance.

Like the *Ballade*, *Prayer* is prefaced with a quasi-programmatic explanation; the composer notes that the music was directly suggested by the young Queen's first broadcast to the Commonwealth when she said:

At my coronation next June. . . I want to ask you all whatever your religion may be to pray for me on that day. . . to pray that God may give me wisdom

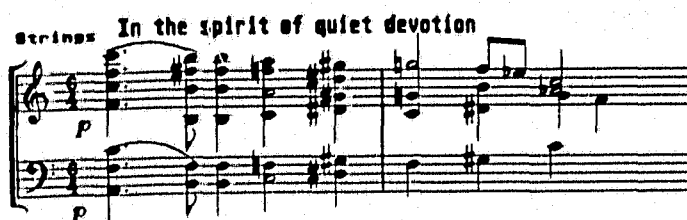
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<sup>8</sup>At that time, numerous Canadian composers received commissions. See Helmut Kallmann, "Coronations," *EMC2*, 319.

<sup>9</sup>It is worth contrasting the essentially pensive nature of several of Coulthard's most anglophile works, the *Second String Quartet* ["*Threnody*"] (very much a post-war elegy) and the choral *Auguries of Innocence* (a tribute to Winston Churchill) with the "ceremonial" works composed for the Canadian centennial (the *Choral Symphony*) and two civic celebrations (*Vancouver Lights* and *Fanfare Overture*) which are significantly more festive.

and strength to carry out the solemn promise I shall be making and that I may faithfully serve Him and you all the days of my life.

Formally, *Prayer* is cast in a single, developmental movement: the opening texture (*Example 6.1*) of widely spaced triads establishes a chill, grey mood from which the music slowly gathers momentum.<sup>10</sup> A middle section, more or less



*Example 6.1 A Prayer for Elizabeth [measures 1-2]*

through-composed, presents warmer textures, more orthodoxly spaced, though with a restless melodic chromaticism. A characteristically "mystic" figure (*Example 6.2*) is added as the music moves towards thinner, contrapuntal



*Example 6.2 A Prayer for Elizabeth [measure 37]*

textures before establishing the central climax of the work, a *forte* C# minor triad, which heralds a gradual return to the opening textures, this time featuring the addition of passages in solo cello, viola, and violin.

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<sup>10</sup>Partially cribbed from the second movement of the *First Symphony* written three years earlier.

Harmonically, the work is rich in the characteristic idioms explored by the composer at this time in her career: it is unquestionably tonal but far from the conventions of traditional functional harmony. The vertical vocabulary is extended to include upper tertial chord forms. Local progressions are often "modal"; the overall tonal organization moves from F minor through the climactic C# minor to a Bb conclusion, resulting in the outline of a Bb minor triad. Tension between tonalities with sharp inflections and resolution in tonalities with flats is used not only as an aspect of harmonic organization but also as a manifestation of harmonic colour.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of orchestration, the range of string colours is far more muted and simplified than the rich, even thick palette of the *Ballade*: there are no double or triple stops (though there are some *divisi* for richness, including the characteristic use of divided celli);<sup>12</sup> there is virtually no *pizzicato* (which, combined with the frequent use of *divisi* basses, makes a delicate performance more difficult), and no *tremolo* (though there is use of pulsing 16th notes in two places, and the employment of mutes at the end of the composition).

*Prayer* was well received at the time of its initial broadcasts (by the strings of the CBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Geoffrey Waddington) and was published shortly thereafter by BMI Canada. After the first public performance

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<sup>11</sup>Perhaps the best example of this process in Coulthard's work is in the opening of her *Spring Rhapsody*; here the melting of the last winter ice is symbolized by a harmonic shift from an Ab based sonority to a C<sup>o</sup> chord.

<sup>12</sup>An orchestrational idiom suggested in Gordon Jacob's excellent *Orchestral Technique* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), but an idiom which can produce infelicitous bass textures if improperly handled. Until the 1960s, Coulthard consistently overscored her bass lines (perhaps in response to the timbres of the Canadian orchestras she heard at that time).

by the Vancouver Symphony, Stanley Bligh felt the work contained "appealing music with reverent melodies and an unusual but dignified harmonic structure."<sup>13</sup> Ida Halpern commented that it is "a very musicianly composition with warmth of feeling and romantic inclinations. The work is written in modern style as regards its relationship from tone to tone, but it is kept in a definite tonal or modal quality and along definite melodic lines."<sup>14</sup> The most recent recording of the work was by the strings of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mario Bernardi.<sup>15</sup>

Two works featuring strings appeared at the beginning of the 1960s: the *Bird of Dawning*, for violin, harp, and strings (discussed in Chapter 7), and the *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* for strings alone. The *Serenade* was composed in 1961, the result of a commission for Hugh McLean's CBC Radio's programme "Evening Concert." During the 1960s, Coulthard was increasingly dissatisfied with the more austere style of the previous decade and — in something of a personal "romantic reaction" to the "neoclassical" and "serial" approaches so popular in Canadian music of that time<sup>16</sup> -- she returned to a more neo-romantic perspective. This reaction, so apparent in the *Piano Concerto* and the *Fantasy*, is also to a certain extent revealed in the *Serenade*.

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<sup>13</sup>*Vancouver Sun*, 21 February 1955, 38.

<sup>14</sup>*Vancouver Province*, 21 February 1955, 8.

<sup>15</sup>Centrediscs CMC-2887.

<sup>16</sup>See David Duke, "Neoclassical Composition Procedures in Selected Works by Harry Somers: 1949-1959," M.A. thesis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1973).

The work is, first of all, a string serenade and evokes earlier works of the same title by Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Dvořák, Suk, and others. In Coulthard's *Serenade* the harmonic idiom is unquestionably that of the 20th century, but other amiable and accessible aspects of the earlier models are emulated. In four movements, the piece begins with a short *Meditation* followed by a more extended section labelled *Phantom* (*Phantom Waltz* in the composer's revised score). A *lento* link passage connects to a *Saraband*, and the work concludes with a fugal *Scherzino* which reprises some earlier materials and a *drammatico* coda. In its original format, the work is one of Coulthard's least successful. In this first attempt at a multi-movement string piece, the sections are not especially satisfying as movements on their own, nor do the thematic links and cyclic recapitulations work well in performance. Much of the scoring suggests chamber ensemble and not string orchestra. In many passages, overscoring in the celli and bass muddies the bass textures, while the violin *tessitura* is unusually low. String figurations and passage work, while always technically playable, are often ineffectual at any speed. To establish clarity, the composer often turns to extensive solo writing (and the solo passages do work much more effectively). Finally, the choice of key centre (B in the *Meditation*, *Phantom* and *Scherzino*) precludes many of the multiple stop effects used with such effect in many string orchestra pieces. In short, the work bears marks of ill-conceived, hasty preparation.

The work was first played by the CBC Vancouver Orchestra conducted by Hugh McLean in June of 1962. Perhaps not surprisingly, the first broadcast

performance was somewhat unsuccessful.<sup>17</sup> A subsequent performance was given by the CBC Strings of Halifax; the international première took place in Rome during a broadcast on Italian Television.

For a recent revival by the Toronto Symphony conducted by Sergiu Commissiona in 1989, the composer prepared an extensive list of addenda and revisions.<sup>18</sup> Even more telling was her decision, at virtually the same time, to rework the composition completely for solo viola and strings at the request of the Montréal-based violist Robert Verebes (see Chapter 7).<sup>19</sup>

Coulthard's next two works for strings are the revised *Music to Saint Cecilia* (discussed in Chapter 7) and the *Autumn Symphony* (discussed in Chapter 9). Just as Coulthard's fundamental approach to orchestral writing changed following her work with Gordon Jacob in the mid-1960s, so her understanding and concept of string writing changed irrevocably following the composition of her *Second* and *Third String Quartets* and her masterly *Octet*.

Coulthard's most recent work for strings is *Symphonic Image "Of the North"*, written for the Guildhall Ensemble of London and premièred by them on 20 April 1993. *Symphonic Image* is a hybrid work, not exactly chamber music, but not for a traditional string orchestra either. Harmonically similar to *Image*

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<sup>17</sup>As is demonstrated on the air-check recording.

<sup>18</sup>Cleaning up mistakes in the notation, thinning the bass textures, altering octave registrations and reducing some passages to solo work.

<sup>19</sup>Unlike the process used in the adaptations of *Canada Mosaic* and *The Return of the Native*, Coulthard began by having a new reduction of the score prepared (by Bliss Johnson), then extensively annotating her own score with revisions, re-assigning virtually all of the important thematic materials to the solo viola.

*Astrale* and the *Autumn Symphony*, the work is cast in a five-part single movement structure: a three-part sonata-design flanked by an introduction and coda, materials characterized by an extremely colourful presentation of parallel fourth based sonorities in multi-*divisi* artificial harmonics, *tremolo*. As in Coulthard's other sonata structures, the exposition presents clear, contrasting form components which are extensively developed and then reprised.

The exceptional quality of *Symphonic Image* comes from the score's wealth of texture and colour. Here, as in the *Octet* and the *Autumn Symphony*, Coulthard demonstrates an intense interest in string colours and creates a subtle and complex range of sonority within the monochromatic palette of the string ensemble. Like the writing in the *Octet*, the music here demands players of the highest calibre: all parts are of virtually equal importance and feature such virtuoso effects as extremely rapid *pizzicato* passage work and extended high register writing.<sup>20</sup> Other colouristic effects include the use of natural and artificial harmonics, *tremolo*, *ponticello*, *pizzicato* and, at the conclusion, harmonic *glissandi*.

Viewed as a whole, Coulthard's catalogue for string orchestra ranges from such early essays as the *Ballade* to her remarkable late works the *Autumn Symphony* and the *Symphonic Image*. It is always apparent in Coulthard's string writing that she is not a string player — she does not exploit the tricks of the idiom as a string player might — but this is of little consequence given her ability to conceive music that, in essence, transcends the clichés of ordinary

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<sup>20</sup>In, for example, the extremely soloistic bass part.

string writing. An on-going weakness until the late '60s is her inability to conceive effective string figuration, a problem brilliantly solved in the later quartets, the *Octet* and the *Autumn Symphony*. Similarly, her key choices and notational idioms do make her string music difficult to perform; as is so often the case in Coulthard's music, it cannot be effectively presented by less than first rate performers.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Which raises the complicated issue of editing or otherwise altering works for greater accessibility. Certainly definitive editions of all Coulthard's orchestral work would, in themselves, eliminate many purely mechanical problems which slow down the rehearsal process and compromise performance. To edit early works to improve balance and clarity (as was done in the revisions to the *Serenade*) could also assist future conductors and orchestras. More radical revisions, not undertaken by the composer herself, would alter the nature of Coulthard's musical expression too significantly and should not be contemplated.

## **Chapter 7: Works for Soloist(s) and Orchestra**

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Besides her two three-movement concerti (discussed in Chapter 8) and the *Lyric Symphony* for bassoon and chamber orchestra (discussed in Chapter 9), Coulthard has composed two *Symphonic Odes*: for cello and orchestra (1967) and viola and orchestra (1976); four works for soloist(s) and strings: *Music on a Quiet Song* for flute and strings (1946), *Music for Saint Cecilia* for organ and strings (1954/68), *The Bird of Dawning* for violin, harp and strings (1960), and the *Burlesca* for piano and strings (1977); and two single movement works for soloist(s) and chamber orchestra: the *Fantasy* (1961) for violin, piano, and chamber orchestra and the *Ballade "Of the West"* (1983) for piano and chamber orchestra.

While works featuring soloists comprise the largest single classification of orchestral work in the catalogue, Coulthard did not begin writing for soloist and orchestra until quite late: her first such work is the set of variations *Music on a Quiet Song* (1946), for flute and strings. With the exception of two works for voice and orchestra (*Night Wind* [1951] and the orchestral version of the *Three Love Songs* [1954]), Coulthard did not turn to works for soloist and orchestra again until the composition of her epic *Violin Concerto* in the mid-1950s. The '60s saw the composition of the bulk of her works for soloist with a number of *concertante* works written in the 1970s and 1980s.

***Works for soloists and strings***

Coulthard's first work for soloist and orchestra was *Music on a Quiet Song* for flute and strings. According to the RCI Anthology notes:

*Music on a Quiet Song* marks the end of Coulthard's long period of apprenticeship and her discovery of a mature and truly personal style; it was begun while she was a student of Bernard Wagenaar at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. Impressed by her engaging short theme, Wagenaar encouraged Coulthard to expand it into its ultimate format, comprising the theme, six contrasting variations, and a final coda.

Several neo-Baroque references in the score (such as the [dotted] rhythm of a French overture in the third variation, or the sixth variation written in the style of a chorale prelude) foreshadow the *Symphony #1*, completed in 1950. Perhaps the most beautiful moments in the work occur in the fifth variation, the still and poetic adagio which presages the harmonic idiom of the *Sonata* (1947) for cello and piano.<sup>1</sup>

The work was premièreed under the direction of Jean-Marie Beaudet by the Concerts Symphoniques de Montréal in 1948, and was played extensively in Scandinavia (as well as on a broadcast concert) by the BBC Scottish orchestra and the renowned English flautist Jeffrey Gilbert during the 1949-50 season. In a newspaper review in the *Algemeen Handelshod* of Amsterdam, a Dutch critic noted:

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<sup>1</sup>David Duke, "Notes," *Anthology of Canadian Music 10: Jean Coulthard* (Vancouver: Radio Canada International, 1982): 8.

Among the group of distinguished Canadian composers was Jean Adams from British Columbia. Her "Music on a Quiet Song" was melancholic but pleasing to the ear, with great possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Orchestrally, *Music on a Quiet Song* marks not only a breakthrough, but also a road not taken: considering Coulthard's idiom in the *Ballade* written only four years earlier, the style and technique are significantly advanced. The use of variations is, in the context of Coulthard's orchestral work, atypical: *Music on a Quiet Song* marks her only freestanding set of variations for orchestral forces.<sup>3</sup> The neo-baroque qualities of the work are similarly atypical. Flirtations with "back to Bach" neoclassicism were, for Coulthard, something of a dead end: the neo-baroque figurations used (in the final variation of the *Wenceslaus* set or the *First Symphony*) amount to an exploration of an essentially Hindemithian idiom.<sup>4</sup>

In 1954 Coulthard adapted the 1948 *Three Love Songs* (texts of Louis A. McKay) for mezzo-soprano and strings. Her next instrumental work was the

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted by John Yocom, *Saturday Night*, 19 July 1949, 8.

<sup>3</sup>And one of two named variations for orchestra. In fact, Coulthard used the theme and variations form only in *Variations on BACH*, and *Music on a Scottish Folk Song* and the early *Variations on Good King Wenceslaus* (as opposed to passacaglia/chaconne variations and fantasy variations in the *Octet "Twelve Essays on a Cantabile Theme"* and *Canada Music* and the *Canadian Fantasy*, or the variational second movement of the *Violin Concerto*).

<sup>4</sup>Coulthard's indebtedness to the baroque is considerable; the pervasive influence of J.S. Bach is demonstrated in the *Variations on BACH* and the *Requiem Piece*; canon, fugato and fugue are of increasing importance in her music from the 1950s on. (Fugue, named as such, occurs only in the *Octet*, which also uses canon in the parody movement *The Academicians*.)

first orchestral version of *Music to Saint Cecilia* — a withdrawn composition replaced by later orchestral and organ and strings versions.<sup>5</sup>

In a somewhat similar character to *Music to Saint Cecilia* is the popular *The Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long* (1960) for violin, harp, and strings.<sup>6</sup> This short *concertante* work was originally composed for violin and piano in the 1950s as a Christmas memento for the composer's grandmother and then later scored for violin, harp, and strings for Tom and Isobel Rolston.<sup>7</sup> It was recorded by the CBC Vancouver Orchestra, conducted by Mario Bernardi, in 1986.<sup>8</sup> The title is drawn from a speech of Marcellus in the first scene of *Hamlet*:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;  
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

The mood throughout is one of quiet lyricism suffused with the particular feeling of nocturnal mystery so characteristic of the composer. The work has

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<sup>5</sup>See Chapter 5.

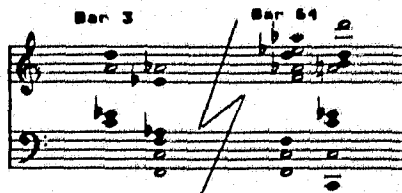
<sup>6</sup>The score specifies nine strings, but the piece may be played by a full string orchestra.

<sup>7</sup>Isobel Rolston had recently begun to play the harp.

<sup>8</sup>*Entre Amis*, CBC SMC 5050-2.

often suggested Vaughan Williams (*The Lark Ascending*) to commentators familiar with Coulthard's early studies with that composer, while in actuality the work more strongly evokes French models, particularly those by Debussy. The handling of the solo violin arabesques is particularly indebted to Debussy's rhythmic style, especially in the diverse subdivided beat figures. Similarly, the harmonic idiom is almost never triadic; virtually all of the harmonic content of the piece demonstrates upper extension harmonies. Characteristic Vaughan Williams idioms (which, to be sure, had appeared in some early Coulthard works) such as parallel inverted triads, modal chord progressions, and, from an orchestration context, extensive *divisi* strings are rarely, if ever, used here. The writing for soloists is difficult but never overly virtuosic; mature technique is required but is always subordinate to the establishment of the pervading mood and atmosphere.

Tonally, the frame of reference of the work is established by an opening gesture which moves from a C<sup>13</sup> to F<sup>7</sup> sonority, a gesture reversed in the closing chords of the work (F<sup>7</sup> to C<sup>9</sup>) (*Example 7.1*). Fourths are frequently of special



*Example 7.1 The Bird of Dawning [reduction measures 3, 64]*

significance in the violin arabesques, and are also prominent in the chordal voicings, especially between upper voices.

Coulthard's next work for soloist and strings is the 1969 adaptation of the 1954 orchestral prelude *Music to Saint Cecilia*. As stated in Chapter 5, *Music to Saint Cecilia* has had a complex history. The work was suggested by the image of music's patron saint, familiar from so many early paintings; the score itself is prefaced with a quotation from W.H. Auden. The version for organ and strings was produced at the end of the 1960s by a fairly straightforward transfer of the wind, brass, harp and celesta parts of the orchestral score to the organ. The organ version of *Music to Saint Cecilia* was first performed by Arpaad Joo and the Calgary Philharmonic, and was recorded by that ensemble, directed by Mario Bernardi and with Patrick Wedd as organ soloist, in 1992,<sup>9</sup> and nominated for a 1993 Juno award.

Since Coulthard has shown remarkably little interest in the organ,<sup>10</sup> it is perhaps anomalous that she would use it as a featured instrument in such a significant work. On the other hand, the obvious programmatic image of the early Christian saint with her instrument was potent and obviously appropriate.

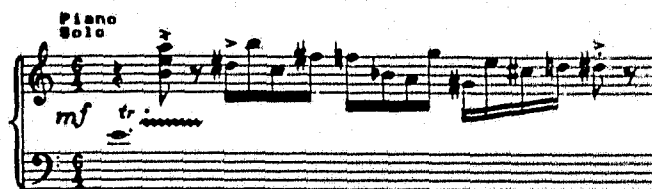
*Burlesca* (1977) is a one-movement work for piano and strings, designed for piano and string orchestra or, as a chamber music composition, for featured piano and five strings. (It is in this version that the work was performed and broadcast by pianist Margaret Bruce and members of the Purcell String Quartet.) Like many of Coulthard's single-movement compositions, the *Burlesca* is in a sonata design, comprised of a four-theme exposition, a fairly extensive

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<sup>9</sup>Patrick Wedd, *Organ/Orgue*, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Mario Bernardi, CBC SMCD 5113.

<sup>10</sup>Using it only once previously: in the *Pastorale Cantata*.

development encompassing a *cadenza*, and a slightly truncated recapitulation fused with a short three-stage coda. Much of the work is an exploration of the composer's rather atypical scherzo style: all thematic materials, with the exception of the *leggiero con grazia* second theme, are in rapid tempos with a high degree of chromaticism, as in, for example, the 12-note first theme (Example 7.2).<sup>11</sup> Also prominent are vertical sonorities with added note



Example 7.2 *Burlesca* [measure 3]

dissonances, figuration doubled in seconds, sevenths, or tritones, and the frequent use of fourths or fourth-based chords.

Some of the thematic material veers towards the grotesque: the mechanistic 12-note first theme figuration, the angular leaps of the codetta, the extreme low register triads at the beginning of the development, and the impudent concluding measures of the coda; but all are appropriate to the work's ironic humour. The crisp, brittle figuration found throughout much of the *Burlesca* suggests similar passage work in the *Sonata for Two Pianos "Of the Universe"* (1979) and *Image Astrale* (1981). Unlike the virtually contemporary second *Symphonic Ode*, the virtuoso aspects of the piece are forthright. Much of the

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<sup>11</sup>The use of non-serial 12-note themes occurs in several works written during the 1970s, for example, in the *Lyric Sonatina for Flute and Piano* (1971).

pianistic passage work is of a traditional nature; certain of the piano techniques (including the *glissandi* in the development and the "cluster" trill in the *cadenza*) suggest the more *avant garde* pianistic idioms that Coulthard was to explore with increasing frequency in the '70s and '80s. But, on the whole, the work assumes a traditional soloist/orchestra stance.

While the composer directs that the work can be performed either by string orchestra, string ensemble, or five solo strings, the nature of the music suggests that chamber-scale performances might be most effective: the absence of clear and practical accompanying patterns in the string parts creates lines that are consistently complex; the parts are of virtual equality and, despite the frequent expedient of *pizzicato*, can easily become busy when multiplied by the 6 to 12 members of an orchestral section.

At the end of the 1980s Coulthard re-worked her earlier *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* as a work featuring solo viola. The process was essentially straightforward; many passages in the original work featured solo viola (or solo violin or cello) and transferred easily and effectively to the new solo part. In other sections, the complex and, ultimately, unsuccessful balance of the work was greatly improved by the simplification of internal parts and the assigning of rapid chromatic passage-work to a single solo instrument. Still further additions and revisions to the score saw the simplification of the cello and bass lines, the addition of more colourful orchestral string textures, changes in octave registration, and the insertion of an effective new *cadenza* to improve the pacing of the conclusion.

### *The Symphonic Odes*

The first of Coulthard's two symphonic odes — the *Symphonic Ode* for cello and orchestra — was begun in 1964, finished in 1965, and partially revised in 1967. The composer's *particella* indicates: "First idea - a symphonic work. Afterwards re-written. Symphonic Ode for cello and Orchestra. Symphonic Ode (For the Atomic Age!) cello and (Full orchestra) 1st sketch." The "sketch" (a three staff *particella* with scoring detail!) is undated. The serious nature of the work, which will become evident, seems originally to have suggested the gravity of a single-movement orchestral work; the idea of using a solo cello grew out of the composer's intention to write a work featuring Vancouver cellist Ernst Friedlander,<sup>12</sup> who had just performed in the première recording of Coulthard's *Cello Sonata* for Columbia. In the event, the work was not played by Friedlander prior to his death in 1966,<sup>13</sup> nor has it been subsequently performed.

Just barely readable under the pencilled title "Symphonic Ode" is the erased original title "Poem of the Atomic Age"; as well as analytical designations, the *particella* also includes programmatic tags for the themes. Thus, the introductory *Lento Serioso* is marked "(Lament)"; the *allegro agitato* first theme, "Strife and agony"; the "episode" or bridge, "futility and hopelessness", later "(heroic)"; and the *lento dolce poco a poco tranquillo* "thema 2 (serene — lull) *quasi choral[e]*."

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<sup>12</sup>See David Duke, "Ernst Friedlander," *EMC2*, 358.

<sup>13</sup>The *Requiem Piece* for piano was Coulthard's musical commemoration of Friedlander's life and career; it was first broadcast by his widow Marie.

No indication is provided for the codetta material. The developmental middle section is an extensive *lento misterioso*, exploring the "transcendental" materials prior to a reverse order recapitulation, notably with the "quasi chorale" embroidered with extensive passage work.

The *Symphonic Ode* is the third of Coulthard's single-movement sonata structure works, the successor of *Music to Saint Cecilia* and *Endymion*, though the first such work to employ a soloist, a practice Coulthard was to continue in the *Symphonic Ode* for viola and orchestra, the *Burlesca*, and the *Ballade "Of the West."* The *Symphonic Ode* for cello is unique, however, in its extremely rich orchestration, which includes 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes and cor anglais, 3 A clarinets and bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contra-bassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings, as well as the cello soloist. This lavish scoring is somewhat impractical. The bass clarinet and third clarinet parts could be easily combined; the second bassoon and contrabassoon parts could also be combined with little actual loss of effect. Since in much of the work the large orchestra is restrained to allow the cello solo prominence, it is only for large orchestral *tuttis* or, more rarely, special colour effects that the enriching instruments are used, and in most instances these effects and reinforcements could be more efficiently produced. The composer's later revisions make it apparent that these scoring problems have been considered: many passages have been corrected or altered, no doubt with the additional orchestrational insight gained through Coulthard's course of scoring lessons with Gordon Jacob. Even so, further revision of the manuscript

would doubtless improve the work's performance prospects as well as the overall efficacy of the orchestral writing and the orchestral-soloist balance.

The solo cello part is of virtuoso difficulty throughout, more in the nature of a concerto than the *obbligato* part in the *Symphonic Ode* for viola (or the organ part in *Music to Saint Cecilia* or *The Bird of Dawning*). Unlike the more practical second *Ode*, the cello composition is more reminiscent of the lavish scale and scope of the two concerti — which, no doubt, has contributed to its performance record. The work remains, however, of great significance in Coulthard's *oeuvre* and should long since have been performed and assessed, then revised, if necessary. It is too important a work and of too much potential importance to the Canadian repertoire to remain unperformed.

The second *Symphonic Ode*, for viola and orchestra, was composed in 1977 at the request of Hungarian-born Robert Verebes, then principal viola of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. As in many of the other single-movement orchestral pieces (such as the contemporary *Kalamalka* and *Burlesca*), Coulthard again turns to a modified sonata structure to provide a basically tripartite design, enhanced with extended *cadenzas*. Scored for somewhat reduced orchestra, the work features 2 flutes (with piccolo doubling), single oboe,<sup>14</sup> 2 A clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, percussion (cymbals, tam tam, glockenspiel, triangle and side drum<sup>15</sup>), harp and strings.

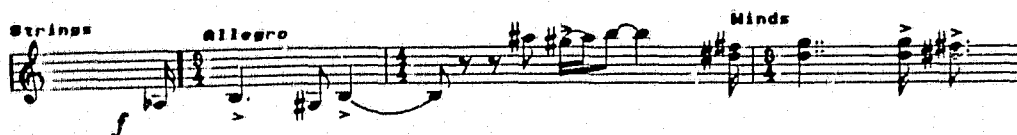
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<sup>14</sup>Another orchestrational device suggested by Gordon Jacob.

<sup>15</sup>Growing evidence of Coulthard's heightened interest in percussion, first indicated in *Canada Mosaic* and explored still further in *Hymn of Creation* (1975) and the *Five Lyrics from the Chinese* (1986).

Verebes first played the work with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra on a broadcast concert in 1979, then publicly premièred the work later that year with the OSM.

The viola's role in the second *Ode* is not entirely that of a soloist in the standard concerto manner. Passage work and virtuoso effects are present but subordinate, and more frequently the viola provides solo commentary on thematic materials or solo transitions that link areas of formal importance. The viola is very much featured in the short *lento espressivo* introduction, then relegated to 16th-note passage work connecting the thematic fragments of the first theme (*Example 7.3*), which is one strongly marked by the composer's characteristic dotted rhythms. Transitional material connecting the first and



*Example 7.3* Symphonic Ode [measures 11-13]

second theme areas features the soloist in a more emphatic way before the texture thins to a *lento espressivo* "quasi *cadenza*" which bridges to the *tranquillo* second theme (*Example 7.4*); here the viola interacts with thematic fragments in solo flute. The soloist is featured once again to ease into a transitional passage (the *misterioso* before **H**) prior to the concluding materials of the exposition.



*Example 7.4* Symphonic Ode [measures 44-45]

The development section is begun *attacca allegro ma non troppo*, a preamble to an orchestral *maestoso* without the soloist; a quasi-cadenza (at **L**) with orchestral interjections leads to an accompanied passage of virtuoso display (at **M**) before another quasi-cadenza leads to a new section of the development (at **N**) marked *poco meno mosso (viola sonare cantabile)*. Still another quasi-cadenza link acts as a transition to the final phase of the development and a second purely orchestral climax (at **P**).

Rather than a literal return of materials to begin the recapitulation, a dramatic *cadenza brillante* (rather like a terminal soliloquy) combines a functional virtuoso *cadenza* with an interjection of fragments from the first theme. A truncated transition and *lento espressivo* quasi *cadenza* lead to the second *lento tranquillo* theme. A very quiet and intriguing coda (Example 7.5) begins at **V**. It is one of Coulthard's most enigmatic conclusions: a *misterioso* phrase with the soloist in harmonics is supported by muted brass, *pizzicato* strings, and harp. Throughout, Coulthard's melodic idiom is chromatic, the

Example 7.5 Symphonic Ode [measures 173-175]

contrapuntal density complex, and the orchestration colourful — very much the logical outgrowth of the impressionistic orchestral palette of the 1960s and '70s. The handling of the viola (with its notorious acoustic problems) may well have been suggested by the great viola soloist William Primrose.<sup>16</sup>

When the first public performance of the *Ode* was given by the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal in 1979, the critic of *Le Devoir*, Gilles Potvin, demonstrated a uniquely sensitive appreciation of Coulthard and her achievement. He wrote:

Maintenant septuagenaire, Jean Coulthard compose sans relâche depuis une quarantaine d'années avec le résultat que son catalogue est aujourd'hui l'un des plus imposants d'un compositeur canadien. . . . Avec un art consommé Jean Coulthard utilise les ressources de l'orchestre de chambre qu'elle oppose à l'alto solo dont la voix plaintive est comme un commentaire du discours purement orchestral. De l'oeuvre se dégage surtout un sentiment de paix et de tendresse même s'il s'y trouve quelques sursauts où l'émotion devient plus tourmentée.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>In the year prior to completion of the *Ode*, Coulthard spent a portion of the summer at the Banff Centre. The composer asked Primrose about his view of orchestral scoring in a viola and orchestral work. The exact nature of Primrose's suggestions is unknown, but it is entirely apparent (given the style of the *Violin* and *Piano* concerti and the *Cello Ode*) that the composer was well aware of the very special nature of the viola as solo instrument, and that she tried consistently to allow it a solo role which could be heard above a full and often complex orchestral part.

<sup>17</sup>*Le Devoir*, 29 novembre 1979, 21.

Coulthard has written a number of vocal and orchestral works, including the *Two Songs of the Haida Indians*, *Night Wind*, and the orchestral version of *Spring Rhapsody*, as well as such works for vocal soloists and/or choir and orchestra as the orchestral version of *Québec May* (partially orchestrated by her student Frederick Schipizky), *Vancouver Lights: A Soliloquy*, the *Fanfare Overture*, and the *Choral Symphony "This Land" (Symphony #2)*. Because of the innate compositional differences between works with texts and those without, none of the former will be considered in the present study.

#### ***Works for soloist(s) and chamber orchestra***

Two works for soloist(s) and chamber ensembles round out this discussion of Coulthard's orchestral works featuring soloists. The *Fantasy* for violin, piano and chamber orchestra was composed in 1960-61, after the *Violin Concerto* but before the beginning of the *Piano Concerto*. Written for Thomas and Isobel Rolston, the *Fantasy* is unlike the later *Symphonic Odes* in its rhapsodic formal structure with many contrasting *tempi* and themes. The work exploits virtuoso solo writing to the fullest, though the two soloists are of exactly equal importance.

It could be argued that the earlier *Violin Concerto* is of symphonic proportions; it could also be suggested that, despite the wealth of worthwhile material, it lacks the demonstrative virtuosity expected of a concertante work. The *Fantasy* could never prompt such an accusation: it is one of Coulthard's

most theatrical works in the traditional virtuoso manner. Frequent tempo changes generate just as frequent solo outbursts, interjections, quasi-*cadenzas*, and an especially effective extended "*cadenza* for Duo."

The use of the chamber orchestra (consisting of single winds, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, percussion, and strings) is a model of clarity; while much of the orchestral writing is restrained, especially in the many accompanying passages, the orchestral colours are nonetheless effective and, in the frequent climaxes, far more genuinely *maestoso* than the rather limited resources might suggest.

The harmonic language of the work shows clearly the gradual change in Coulthard's writing as the '60s began: polytonal effects, so central to orchestral works prior to the *Violin Concerto*, are absent; the triad, often in functional contexts, has become the basic harmonic level, though melodic writing continues to be subject to a high degree of chromatic inflection. Figural patterns, especially those in the keyboard part, present a wealth of filigree; most characteristic is the use of parallel seventh passages (*Example 7.6*), such as those on p. 24 of the orchestral score. In many ways the approach to the



Example 7.6 Fantasy [measures 88-89]

keyboard is reminiscent of Coulthard's contemporary *Two Night Songs* (1960),

for baritone, piano, and string quartet. If the early '60s marked the period of Coulthard's "romantic reaction", then the *Fantasy* and the *Night Songs* constitute two of the most extreme examples of this impulse in her catalogue. Even so, the work did not initially please. First performed by the Rolstons with the Victoria Symphony directed by Hans Gruber, the work made little impact. Difficult as it may now seem to believe, the critic of Victoria's *Daily Colonist* wrote: "As a matter of fact the Coulthard *Fantasy* was quite hard to digest, uninspiring and esoteric."<sup>18</sup> Far more space in the newspaper was devoted to a complete list of the invited guests who attended the reception following the concert! A later performance by Simon Streatfeild and the Orchestre de Québec proved far more successful. But the Victoria review highlights the double sided problem faced by many so-called "conservative" composers: simultaneous rejection by both the new music and commercial music establishments.

No *concertante* work of Coulthard (with the possible exception of the *Piano Concerto*) provides audiences with the traditional virtuoso style so abidingly popular. If the *Fantasy* is not Coulthard's best, most original, or most profound work, it may easily be the orchestral composition that provides audiences and musicians with the most effective introduction to her orchestral catalogue.

Coulthard's most recent work for soloist and orchestra is the *Ballade "Of the West"*, for piano and chamber orchestra, written in 1982-83. In many ways the piano and orchestral equivalent of the two symphonic odes, *Ballade "Of the*

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<sup>18</sup>Bert Binny, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 November 1962, p. 14.

*West*" was composed for the young pianist Katja Cerovsek;<sup>19</sup> it is scored for an ensemble of two flutes and piccolo, oboe, double clarinets, bassoons, horns, single trumpet and trombone, timpani, percussion, strings, and piano solo.

Like the symphonic odes, the work is a single movement sonata structure, prefaced by a more lyrical introduction. Here, however, the quasi-programmatic title seems clearly to ally the work with such "western" compositions as *Kulamalka*, *Sketches from the Western Woods*, *The Pines of Emily Carr*, and *The Birds of Lansdowne*. As in the solo piano *Sketches from the Western Woods*, the pictorial imagery of the *Ballade* suggests the West Coast environment through some of Coulthard's most extroverted bravura writing, thick, aggressive textures, and an overriding tempestuousness so often invoked when the composer describes her native environment.

Coulthard's extensive catalogue of smaller works demonstrates evidence of an interesting (and, apparently, at least partially calculated) compositional strategy: the creation of solo vehicles significantly shorter than traditional concerti, written for the growing network of sympathetic performers willing to introduce new music. These works range from such effective virtuoso showpieces as the *Fantasy* to the idiomatic (if "difficult") second *Symphonic Ode*. Taken as a whole, they are an especially important facet of Coulthard's work, and provide an excellent representation of her orchestral repertoire at virtually every stage of her development.

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<sup>19</sup> Cerovsek was introduced to the composer by Phyllis Schuldt in the mid-1970s. Coulthard often invited Cerovsek to perform educational works from the *Music of Our Time* series in lectures and workshops and watched the development of her career and that of her violinist brother Corey with interest.

## Chapter 8: The Concerti

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With the *First Symphony* (1950), Coulthard established her commitment to the traditional genres of orchestral music at a time when these genres were increasingly viewed as outmoded. By committing herself to them, Coulthard displayed, very clearly, two deeply held convictions: that the traditional forms and genres of the classical repertoire were valid and capable of a near infinite re-interpretation by new generations of composers, and that the growing repertoire of Canadian music for orchestra could use (indeed, desperately required) full-scale works in the traditional genres.

Neither view was popular. With few exceptions, her composer colleagues were temporarily moving away from such genres, while Canadian orchestras and performers were unwilling to cultivate compositional work in these formats.<sup>1</sup> Coulthard's determination to write both symphonies and concerti amounted to the creation of a repertoire "on spec," a body of work written not for the present but for the future, in the conviction that a time would come when such works would once again be appreciated.

Coulthard's first full-scale concerto was begun in 1955 during her year in France (possibly as a second symphony). After Coulthard returned to Vancouver she came to know Thomas Rolston and began what was to be a life-long collaboration with the musician and his pianist wife Isobel Moore (not

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<sup>1</sup>One recalls R. Murray Schafer's perceptive burlesque of the standard orchestral commission of the late 50s and 60s implied by his *No Longer than Ten (10) Minutes* (1970) for large orchestra.

to mention their daughter, cellist Shauna Rolston). When Coulthard returned to the unfinished work, she began to reconsider its direction and to recast her materials as a concerto featuring Rolston as soloist.

In a press comment about the work, Coulthard mentioned that she used the violin as a narrator and had tried to evoke some of her impressions of the countryside surrounding Paris. Designed as much as a showpiece for the composer as for the soloist, the *Concerto* marked an even greater advance in scale and scope than the *First Symphony* composed five years earlier. In a very real sense, the *Violin Concerto* was conceived as a measure of the composer's powers in early mid-career. Though the work superficially accepts the received model of a three-movement concerto, on closer inspection the *Violin Concerto* has links to the symphonic concerto tradition: there is virtuoso writing of formidable difficulty, but the soloist is always part of a larger symphonic conception. The concerto is scored for double winds, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion,<sup>2</sup> strings, and solo violin.

Length alone marks the work as a major composition — at well over 40 minutes, it is long for any violin concerto. Similarly, its neo-Romantic language sets it apart from other 20th-century concerti for violin.<sup>3</sup> A valid parallel (though not an influence) would be Elgar's *Concerto in B minor* for violin and orchestra Op.61 (1909-10).

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<sup>2</sup>Used impractically: percussion features in just over a dozen measures but requires two performers.

<sup>3</sup>Eschewing the neoclassical idiom of Stravinsky and Hindemith, the nationalist modernism of Prokofiev, Szymanowski or, to a less obvious extent, Bartók, and the expressionism of Berg.

Given the extended nature of the 20-minute first movement, there is a wealth of thematic material presented in the exposition. Fully worked out theme groups are presented in an orthodox pattern of first theme, bridge, second contrasting theme, and codetta. The development is in several sections, followed by a full recapitulation, cadenza, and coda. The composer's copy of the full score indicates a high degree of revision, for instance, the provision of *ossias* for the soloist, in many cases to add in more virtuoso effects, but in a smaller number of cases to simplify unviolinistic material. There are also changes in the orchestration, almost always designed to allow the soloist to be heard more clearly. An ill-advised cut is indicated in the recapitulation (which would omit the reprise of important thematic materials from the bridge and second theme).

The second movement, *Improvisation on a quiet theme*, is a set of free variations. Growing out of a cool orchestral preface, the theme is stated in measures 6 to 42. The next presentations are a *sicilienne* beginning at measure 44, an *allegro marcato* beginning at measure 80, and a slow march beginning at measure 109; a pensive *cadenza*, then a rather wistful coda punctuated by muted trumpets (which foreshadow the *finale*) round out the movement. The use of variations for the central movement, even when cast as a more flexible set of "improvisations," suggests *Music on a Quiet Song*, conceived ten years earlier.

The finale combines elements of a traditional virtuoso conclusion with a scherzo and a tragic symphonic epilogue. Despite the ambitious intent of the movement, the range of materials seems too disparate to be integrated

effectively. It remains to be said that the concluding pages of the work offer a paradox; in contrast to the lyrical nature of the earlier sections, the last pages, in a very sober F# minor, seem unexpectedly bleak.

Though it could be argued that the *First Symphony* of 1950 is a more effective work in performance, it is the *Violin Concerto*, with all its faults, that is by far the greater achievement. The *First Symphony* was Coulthard's first attempt at an "epic" orchestral genre. While this is fine music in an effective orchestral idiom, the style of the work, both in terms of conception and orchestration, is not yet entirely original. The *Violin Concerto* is superior simply because of its originality. In this work Coulthard created one of her largest canvases, and did so in a fresh and idiomatic way: the *Violin Concerto* amounts to her discovery of her own unique and original stance as an orchestral composer.

During the planning stages of the work, Coulthard and Rolston had definite performances in mind; after completion it was quickly premièred by Rolston with the Vancouver Symphony during the 1959 season. In the event, the première was not entirely satisfactory: the performance was respectable<sup>4</sup> but the VSO board balked at the notion of scheduling the work on both of the regular subscription concerts, and so the work was heard only once.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Though, from the evidence of the extant air check tape, an incompletely prepared read-through that in no way represents the complex detail of the work in a finished form.

<sup>5</sup> In a note to the author, Coulthard has commented: "The VSO were so afraid of my *Violin Concerto* they only permitted it *one* performance on the Sunday afternoon! On the following Monday Jan Cherniavsky filled in with the Schumann *Piano Concerto*. This was a real shocker for me as, first, I was on the Symphony Board and secondly the fact that Jan had been a great friend and my former piano teacher and didn't refuse."

Critical reviews of the work at the time were quite good. Stanley Bligh of the *Vancouver Sun* noted:

Richness of colour was evident in the orchestral scoring which called for all the timbre and fascinating complexities of strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. This colour was exploited to the full with great exuberance. Unfortunately the soloist was many times overwhelmed by the thick web of accompaniment . . . . Irwin Hoffman treated the work as a symphony. Perhaps he thought of it in that medium with the violin merely playing an obbligato. Whatever the reason there was little sense of expressive balance with the soloist.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Province* Laurence Cluderay wrote:

Intensely lyrical for the most part, the work is profuse in thematic matter which is most skilfully developed to build up edifices of sound which fell most persuasively on my ear. This was the Concerto's first performance and, since there are too many first and too few second performances, I hope we shall be allowed to hear this piece again soon before the first impression fades. Only with repeated hearings will one be able finally to decide whether the promise and fulfilment of the first two movements is successfully carried over through the *Allegro majestico*. On a single hearing I was not fully convinced.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>14 December 1959, 13.

<sup>7</sup>14 December 1959, 12.

The work was revived the following year by the Edmonton Symphony conducted by Rolston's then brother-in-law Lee Hepner, but has not been performed subsequently.

Only two years separate the completion of the *Violin Concerto* and the start of the composition of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* in 1961; the score was completed in 1962, reworked in 1963, and revised in 1967.<sup>8</sup> If the *Violin Concerto* represents one of Coulthard's largest and most complex works, the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* presents a similar picture — but one marked by the more confident sense of direction the composer had, by this point, established in her work.

From the outset, the *Piano Concerto* is a *concertante* work in the grand tradition, one which quite consciously harkens back to the 19th century tradition of concerto writing in concept, form, harmonic language, and scoring. Where the *Violin Concerto* edges towards a symphony with a prominent violin *obbligato*, the *Piano Concerto* implicitly accepts the conventions of the heroic soloist against an orchestral adversary.

The notes for the RCI *Anthology* comment:

The *Concerto for Piano* was conceived as a large-scale dialogue between a virtuoso soloist and full orchestra, an idiom reminiscent of the grand concerto tradition of Beethoven and Schumann. Coulthard brings the piano to the fore in strongly idealized terms, theatrically alternating heroic and discursive

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<sup>8</sup>Thus the final pre-performance revision took place after Coulthard's work with Gordon Jacob, even though the music of the concerto more accurately reflects Coulthard's early-1960s style.

sections; the percussive, more economical 20th-century style of writing that Coulthard had explored in the *Variations on BACH* (1951) or the *Sonata for Two Pianos: Of the Universe* (1978) was deliberately rejected in favour of the poetic dialogue and intense climaxes of the traditional concerto format. As such the piano Concerto represents an extreme in Coulthard's mature work: an unabashedly grandiose conception which contrasts a soloist of virtuoso stature with a large, vibrantly colourful orchestra.<sup>9</sup>

The composer's dilemma was not unique in Canadian music at that time, but it is immediately apparent that her confidence in her own orchestral voice was shaken. The relative failure (in terms of audience acceptance) of such a major achievement as the *Violin Concerto* was an unquestionable setback; it is obvious that Coulthard resolved, like many composers before (for instance, Copland and Shostakovich), to write in a more accessible style for the mass orchestral audience. It is also obvious that at this moment Coulthard believed that she had found her own unique voice as a composer and as an orchestral composer. It was a direction that would continue in all future work, which would combine traditional approaches to form, an advanced colouristic but ultimately tonal harmonic vocabulary and a neo-impressionist approach to orchestral colour. This synthesis could be complex and personal (as was the case in the *Second String Quartet*, the *Octet*, or to a lesser extent the orchestral works of the '70s) or more accessible, as in the *Serenade*, the *Fantasy* or, in perhaps the most extreme example, the *Piano Concerto*.

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<sup>9</sup>David Duke, "Notes," *Anthology of Canadian Music 10, Jean Coulthard* (Vancouver: Radio Canada International, 1982), 12.

What compounded the problem for Coulthard was the rapid change in Canadian musical taste in the 1960s. Coulthard had become increasingly distanced from the so-called neoclassical/serial style of the Toronto school during the 1950s, and, as noted above, had developed her own post-Debussy approach little indebted either to Stravinskyan neoclassicism or to the composers exploring '20s-oriented serialism. (The then current post-Webern serialism of the Darmstadt group held even less appeal).

Coulthard was by no means alone in her dilemma at this time; composers such as Robert Fleming and Oskar Morawetz faced similar situations. Working in the relative isolation of the far West (and teaching in a professional environment actively disinterested in the furtherance of Canadian music), Coulthard turned inward; if her confidence as a composer had been shaken, her resolve was ultimately strengthened. She assessed her work to date, her achievement as a composer, and her creative goals: she would continue in *her* direction.

The composer herself has always rejected the assessment of the *Concerto* as a "conservative" work, believing that the harmonic language, despite the neo-romantic thematic content and posture, nonetheless reflects mainstream post-Debussy harmonic and thematic idioms.<sup>10</sup> While this is true, it is easy to see the difficulties some critics had with the presentation of a work like the *Concerto* at its première in 1967, unfamiliar as they were with the on-going process of growth and development in Coulthard's work. But the reception

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<sup>10</sup> In conversation with the author.

which greeted the *Piano Concerto* following its première was a shock. The mass orchestral audience remained implacably suspicious of "home grown" orchestral music, no matter what its stylistic orientation. Orchestras, conductors and soloists had a tokenistic commitment at best to Canadian work; critics, as Rosanne Kydd has pointed out,<sup>11</sup> misunderstood or patronized Coulthard's music; and the bulk of Coulthard's composer-colleagues were for the most part unsympathetic to her unfashionable idiom.

The *Piano Concerto* was completed, for the most part, in the early '60s, but it was only premièred on 14 November 1967, by pianist Marie-Aimée Varro<sup>12</sup> and the Ottawa Civic Symphony Orchestra. Despite a certain measure of popular acclaim, the work was not well received by either Ottawa critic. Following the première it remained unperformed until it was recorded as part of the RCI *Anthology of Canadian Music*; while this reading was partially compromised by the insufficient forces of the CBC Vancouver orchestra it was, happily, redeemed by a brilliant performance by soloist Robert Silverman.

The concerto is scored for a moderately large orchestra of double winds (and piccolo), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings, and piano solo. The first of its three movements, *Allegro ma non troppo*, begins with a thematic fragment in the lower strings answered by a *semplice* response in the solo piano (*Example 8.1*, following page). While the tonality

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<sup>11</sup>Rosanne Kidd, "Jean Coulthard: a Revised View," *SoundNotes* 2 (Spring/Summer 1992): 14-24.

<sup>12</sup>Varro discovered the composition on her own while searching for Canadian concerto repertoire.

The image shows a musical score for the first three measures of the Piano Concerto I. It features three staves: Piano Solo (treble clef), Cello + Bass (bass clef), and a combined Cello + Bass staff (bass clef). The tempo is 'Allegro ma non troppo'. The piano part is marked 'pp' and 'semplice'. The cello and bass part is also marked 'pp'. The key signature is F minor.

*Example 8.1 Piano Concerto I [measures 1-3]*

of F minor is established by the outline of the string phrase and the first keyboard triad, there is no clear feeling of tonic and the presence of an incipient F to E semi-tonal relationship. Later *poco agitato* and *poco accelerando* materials confirm the soloist's virtuoso presence, but the opening mood is tentative, almost improvisatory; indeed, the section resembles an introduction more than the exposition of a clear first theme.

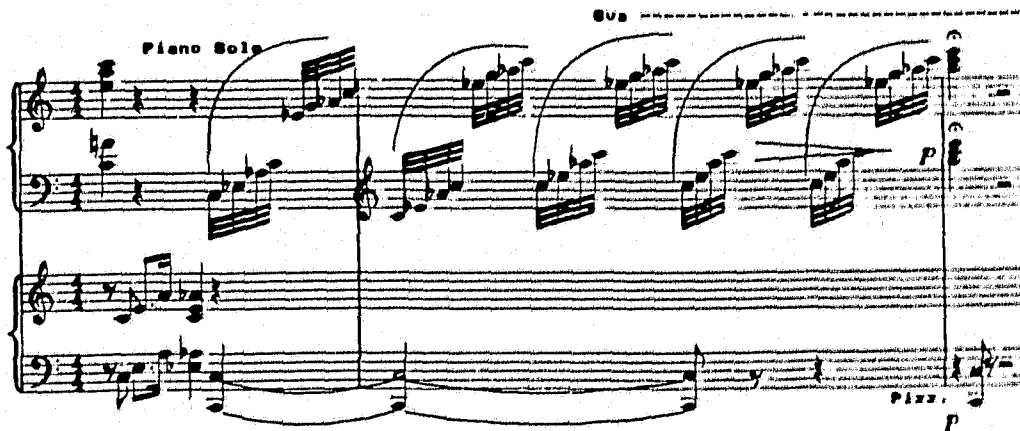
The bridge is in two parts, a *tempo giusto* section beginning in B minor that explores 16th-note passage work in the solo part, and a *tranquillo meno mosso* section, beginning in B $\flat$ , with more rhapsodic figuration in the solo instrument. The two sections (which also reflect a semi-tonal relationship) are connected by a two-measure long "quasi cadenza".

The second theme (*Example 8.2*), initially in D minor (with, once again, a prominent D-C $\sharp$  semi-tonal relationship implicit), and marked *quasi improvisando, dolce*, is first presented by the piano. Later this intensely lyrical material is given to the horns as the solo moves to a dramatic virtuoso *obbligato*. The closing theme is very brief; a scherzo-like fragment in the piano



Example 8.2 Piano Concerto I [measures 44-45]

is answered by a fragment of the opening theme in the strings and by final *cadenza* figuration in the piano (Example 8.3), oscillating between  $A\flat$  major and  $A$  minor triads:



Example 8.3 Piano Concerto I [measures 72-74]

After the moody, improvisatory exposition, the development begins dramatically with a *risoluto* trumpet flourish and keyboard pyrotechnics. While the development contains several delineated sections, the solo piano is active throughout with elaborate virtuoso figuration. Only at the end of the entire

development section does the soloistic material fade away, signalling the start of an extended link to the recapitulation beginning two measures before **10** and concluding in the *attacca con fuoco drammatico* transformation of the first theme in the brass, juxtaposed with elaborate toccata-like figuration in the solo piano.

At **11**, the first phase of the bridge materials returns (this time in the strings), and leads to the brilliant *cadenza* (rather than to the *tranquillo* second bridge theme). Following the *cadenza*, there is a fully developed variant of the previously short closing theme which provides a dramatic lead-in to the *tranquillo* second theme. The shortest of codas returns to the mood and textures of the opening, re-establishing the home key with a cryptic E minor/F minor cadence (*Example 8.4*) confirming the importance of the semi-tonal relationships established in the exposition. Unlike the opening movement of the *Violin Concerto*, the tone here is consummately assured, tightly organized, and theatrically paced. The delicate balance between lyric and dramatic elements is handled with particular care; lyric elements are presented as the outgrowth and desired goal of dramatic conflict, rather than as moments of relief.



Example 8.4 Piano Concerto I [measures 186-189]

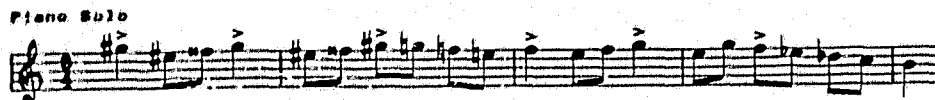
In seemingly complete contrast to the first movement, the *lento semplice Arioso* is lightly scored and rarely preoccupied with the soloist's virtuoso prowess. The form is essentially double binary with a slight developmental extension of the first set of B materials. The tonal playing of the movement is of some interest: the initial A section begins in G# minor, then cadences in E major; the initial B section starts a tritone away in A#/Bb, establishes D minor at mid-point, then concludes in B major; the return of the A section begins in G# minor, as does the second B section; the breathless final coda juxtaposes E major, G# minor, and A minor chords (*Example 8.5*). The entire

*Example 8.5 Piano Concerto II [measures 75-77]*

movement thus reveals a tonal order of tertial- and tritone-based key areas — G# E Bb D B G# — while the final cadential gesture recalls the similar importance of leading-tone/tonic local progressions at the end of the exposition and the recapitulation in the first movement, and allows for the orderly tonal progression to the subsequent preface to the finale.

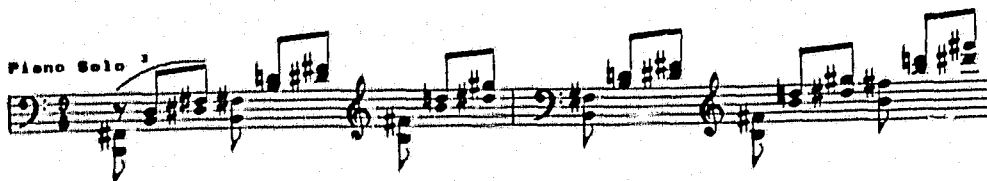
A short introduction, beginning in the F minor tonality of the opening movement, resolves upwards to establish the G# tonic of the *Finale*, a conclusion, like that of the *Violin Concerto*, which combines three entirely

different types of materials, a dramatic *Allegro energico* with shifting accents  
(Example 8.6):



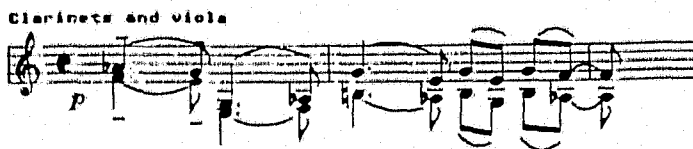
Example 8.6 Piano Concerto III [measures 6-10]

a scherzo-like *l'istesso tempo* theme (Example 8.7) rich in false relation thirds:



Example 8.7 Piano Concerto III [measures 41-42]

and an expansive, almost Brahmsian, *andante grazioso* (Example 8.8):



Example 8.8 Piano Concerto III [measures 116-117]

These materials are formally combined to create a large-scale ternary structure with the central section, the lyric *andante grazioso*, flanked by the more dramatic materials. However, the subsections themselves are ingeniously designed in a ternary format, with the *scherzando* materials in the opening and

closing sections flanked by the *allegro energico* theme and the central *andante grazioso* containing at its centre a short *cadenza* that brings back the first theme from the opening movement. Short link passages used to connect the various subsections are usually *cadenza*-like flourishes for the solo piano.

Tonally the movement begins and ends in G# with the central *andante* in F. This unusual relationship is clearly planned; the confirming cadence chords in the final two measures of the entire work are C# major/F minor/G# major, emphasizing the contrast between the motivational F minor tonality of the first movement, the introduction to the *Finale*, and the central *andante* and G# major, the tonality of the *Arioso* and the *Finale* itself, the tonality of resolution. Viewed in another manner, the central tonalities of the entire work relate to a C# major triad.<sup>13</sup>

Both Coulthard's *Concertos* are major works, written at a time when such extended compositions were unfashionable with most other Canadian composers and unlikely to be programmed by Canadian orchestras. Nonetheless, the concertos and the symphonies represent the high point of Coulthard's contribution to the Canadian orchestral repertoire. They reveal the idealistic side of Coulthard's work, an idealism that other composers might find almost naive. Yet they mark a sense of firm conviction, indeed a stubborn toughness in the creative personality of the composer, a determination to write the sort of music that Coulthard thought she could write and *should* write, despite the

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<sup>13</sup>Just as the tonalities of *A Prayer for Elizabeth* define a Bb minor triad.

conditions of the moment. With the recording of the *Piano Concerto* and its subsequent recognition, it would seem that Coulthard's perspective was, indeed, correct.

## Chapter 9: Symphonies

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Coulthard has composed a series of four symphonies, though only the first is without a designating and, to some degree, qualifying subtitle.<sup>1</sup> There has been a certain ambiguity to Coulthard's view of the symphony *as a genre*, which becomes increasingly apparent when the four works are closely considered. Two of them, the *First* and the *Third*, are in a three-movement format, while the *Second* is more in a two-part cantata-like structure made up of many subsections, determined by the composite text by a number of Canadian authors. Only the *Fourth* is in a four-movement format, but it comprises two extended central movements framed by a brief introductory *Prelude* and an *Epilogue*.

### *First Symphony*

Coulthard began to work on what was to be her first symphony in the early years of her tenure at UBC. She was just in her early 40s and was intent on creating a work worthy of the title "symphony." While she seems consciously to have rejected the four-movement model for symphonic structures (as explored by Copland and Vaughan Williams) in favour of a three-movement<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In fact the classification of the works and the numbers were assigned somewhat arbitrarily, at the time of the 1971 catalogue, and extended with the completion of the *Lyric Symphony* and the *Autumn Symphony*.

<sup>2</sup>Recalling her early enthusiasm for César Franck, perhaps? See Jean Coulthard, *Diary of a Young Composer* (unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard).

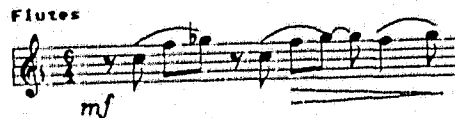
model, the actual work is patterned, very closely, on the work of a composer not usually associated with Coulthard: Paul Hindemith.

At the end of the century, Hindemith's reputation has eroded significantly, but at the end of the 1940s it was at its highest.<sup>3</sup> Close assessment of the attractive but derivative first movement reveals much of the work's content and style. It begins with a ternary introduction, a first section exploring a fragmentary rising theme (*Example 9.1*) in an E $\flat$ -based tonality. Before



*Example 9.1 First Symphony i [measures 1-6]*

progressing to the next formal element of the introduction, an important motive is presented by the flutes (*Example 9.2*), a figure that pervades the sonata structure that is to follow. Then a middle section presents a slow chorale-like



*Example 9.2 First Symphony i [measure 9]*

tune in the trombone juxtaposed with string figuration (*Example 9.3*); through the course of this B section the bass line pitches slowly descend, from E $\flat$  thorough F and G to a concluding A $\flat$ . The initial idea returns to round out

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<sup>3</sup>In notes for a UBC lecture on Hindemith, Coulthard remarks on Hindemith's "mid-way" position between Schoenberg and Stravinsky and defends him against charges of more concern with "technique" than "romantic feeling". She concludes, "For myself I have found many marvellous and glowing passages [in Hindemith, especially in] *Mathias the Painter*" (Jean Coulthard, *University of British Columbia Lecture Notes* [1949?]) (unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard).

Musical score for Trombone and Cello (and Viola, Ova). The Trombone part is marked *Foco mosso* and *p*. The Cello part is marked *pp*. The score shows two staves with musical notation and dynamic markings.

Example 9.3 First Symphony I [measures 10-13]

the introduction, but here in an  $A\flat$ -based tonality.

Following a double bar and two beats of silence, the exposition begins with the first theme in an A tonality (Example 9.4). This establishes the essential

Musical score for Violin I and flute, and Violin II and Cello. The Violin I and flute part is marked *Lurically moving*. The Violin II and Cello part is marked *mp*. The score shows two staves with musical notation and dynamic markings.

Example 9.4 First Symphony I [measures 31-34]

tonal juxtaposition for the movement,  $E\flat$  from the introduction in opposition to A, the tonic of the sonata-structure. A multi-stage bridge links the first and second themes, with materials growing out of the first theme. The second theme (Example 9.5), marked "in singing style," begins with a return of the introductory  $E\flat$  tonality:

Musical score for Violin I and Horn. The Violin I part is marked *In singing style*. The Horn part is marked *mp* and *Dolce*. The score shows two staves with musical notation and dynamic markings.

Example 9.5 First Symphony I [measures 71-74]

The second theme group is not tonally stable and is repeated a number of times with transposition to new pitch areas before a closing theme clearly based on C is presented at 6 (Example 9.6), a theme defined, rather traditionally, as much by texture and an 8th-note figural pattern as by melodic character *per se*. By the close of the exposition, C has been re-established, through a

Example 9.6 First Symphony I [measures 97-102]

significant progression that highlights C-F-E $\flat$ -D $\flat$ -C.

The tonal plan of the introduction and exposition is unambiguous but unorthodox:

Introduction: E $\flat$  E B F G A $\flat$

Exposition: A G F $\sharp$  A D E E $\flat$  F G C

The development section flows on, without a break, from the *pianissimo* close of the exposition. An extended through-composed phase combines the 8th-note figuration of the bridge with a quasi-fugal presentation of the first part of the second theme; later, the head of the first theme is also added, creating a complex web of harmonically unstable counterpoint. To end this section the

composer establishes an E $\flat$ /D $\sharp$  pedal, then, following a chromatic descent from G, a strong C $\sharp$  cadence.

At  $\boxed{9}$ , a second section of the development (which could, admittedly, be confused with the start of the recapitulation) begins a tone lower with the return of the introductory trombone chorale presented over variants of the first theme, codetta figurations, and occasional fragments of the second theme. A second full orchestral climax is reached at  $\boxed{10}$  where the E $\flat$  tonality returns; the textures gradually thin into a short link passage which heralds the return of the first theme, marking the beginning of the recapitulation.

Just as the tonal plan of the exposition was somewhat unorthodox, so is that of the recapitulation, which is characterized by a rearrangement of the formal components and unexpected, though logical, tonal relationships. The first theme, marked "a little slower than beginning", returns with an altered orchestration, and at  $\boxed{F}$  it is followed by a link based on materials from the closing theme. Finally, a very truncated second theme returns, initially based in E. It returns to the home key of A only as it fuses with a short coda entirely presented over a tonic pedal.

The second movement is far less formally intricate, a ternary slow movement, originally called *Threnody*.<sup>4</sup> Following nine bars of introduction in a *sicilienne* rhythm, the first section presents lyrical, syncopated lines in the flute, oboe, and clarinet over a continuation of the *sicilienne* patterns in the

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<sup>4</sup>"Threnody" has been a favourite title or subtitle in Coulthard's work since the 1934 choral setting of Robert Herrick's *Threnody* (written in memory of the composer's mother). Other Threnodies (*never Elegies*) include the slow movement of the 1947 *Piano Sonata* and the *Second String Quartet*, subtitled "Threnody".

strings. The more robust middle section begins at 17, a free development of the initial materials leading to a full orchestral climax. Following a two-bar link, the initial texture returns at 18 with an especially effective orchestration featuring high *divisi* upper strings and a duet between horn and trombone. A short coda brings back the introductory measures, then slowly fades into a quiet concluding phrase for muted horn and strings. Uncomplicated and straightforward, the movement is especially successful. Aspects of the orchestration, especially the use of quiet horn solos, recall the ballet suite *Excursion. A Prayer for Elizabeth*, composed three years later, is thematically very similar to the movement, though developed and extended in entirely different ways. Tonally the movement begins and ends in F (though, rather characteristically, the return of the first section begins a third away in A).

The *Finale* displays a complex sectional design: an initial zone comprised of a dramatic introduction and a longwinded, developmental section in 9/8;<sup>5</sup> a slower *espressivo* section (which includes recapitulated fragments from the first movement in augmentation); and a third section which brings back materials from the first, then moves to a polyrhythmic choral-prelude texture and, ultimately, a grandiose terminal coda. The plethora of ideas and the episodic structure weaken the effectiveness of the movement as a whole.

The tonal planning of the movement does, however, indicate convincing evidence of an overall design: with E♭ minor as the central key, the second

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<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately all too reminiscent of Stravinsky's comment "The characteristics of the Hindemith school were its interminable 9/8 movements" (Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Memoirs and Conversations* [New York: Doubleday, 1960], 117).

section returns to the F-based tonality of the slow movement, while the third section (albeit through the somewhat unsubtle use of an extended pedal) re-establishes the A tonality of much of the opening movement before concluding in the central E♭.

To date the *First Symphony* has been performed only once, by the CBC Symphony Orchestra directed by Ettore Mazzoleni, in 1954. The overall focus of the work demonstrates a mature attempt to grapple with the problems of large scale form and organization. While at the time of its composition Coulthard could demonstrate a considerable expertise as a composer, her decision to compose in the major genres of the classical tradition was effectively announced in this work. If elements of its style and structure unquestionably suggest Hindemithian models, it remains a composition of considerable power and persuasiveness. That it is an anomalous work, quite unique in Coulthard's catalogue, demonstrates just how quickly she was to outgrow the conventions of what was a productive, but temporary influence.

Coulthard's *Choral Symphony: This Land [Symphony #2]* was composed in 1966-67 as a Centennial commission for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, but remains unperformed to date. The work is lavishly scored for large orchestra, choir, and four vocal soloists, setting a selection of texts by eight Canadian authors.<sup>6</sup> Conceived as a two-part composition, the work is essentially

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<sup>6</sup>Coulthard's first title of *Choral Symphony: This Land* was extended in her 1971 *Preliminary Catalogue* to include the attribution "Symphony #2" — an attempt to rationalise the increasingly confusing register of Coulthard works.

a choral/vocal cantata with orchestra, and thus will not be considered in this study.

***Lyric Symphony for bassoon and chamber orchestra [Symphony #3]***

The third of Coulthard's named symphonies, the *Lyric Symphony* for bassoon and chamber orchestra, was composed for Vancouver bassoonist George Zukerman.<sup>7</sup> In the 1970s Zukerman had performed Coulthard's *Lyric Sonatina* for bassoon and piano (1969) literally around the world; while not prepared to commit to an actual bassoon concerto, Coulthard did conceive of a significant orchestral work with a featured bassoon part, hence the hybrid designation of the work, *Lyric Symphony*. In fact there has always been something of a grey area between Coulthard's symphonic and *concertante* works; recall the original symphonic origins of the *Violin Concerto* and the *Symphonic Ode* for cello and orchestra, not to mention *Music to Saint Cecilia* and the *Serenade*. Most notable about the *Lyric Symphony* is its "lyric" designation and its chamber symphony scoring. Scored for solo bassoon and a small orchestra of 2 flutes (with piccolo doubling), single oboe, 2 A clarinets, single bassoon, 2 horns, timpani, percussion, and strings, the work is of chamber proportion as well.

The first movement is shaped as a sonatina with a full exposition comprised of *Moderato grazioso*, *allegro agitato*, *moderato dolce cantabile* and *poco meno mosso* themes, very much the expected complement of four distinct formal

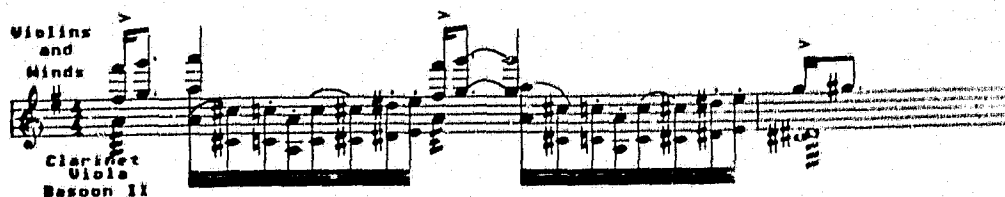
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<sup>7</sup>George Zukerman, (1927-). See Bryan N.S. Gooch and Max Wyman, *ECM2*, 1438-39.

components usual in Coulthard's work by this time; the scale of these materials is reduced, however, with the exposition comprising just over 75 measures.

As befits the sonatina design, the development amounts to little more than a ten-measure interlude before the orderly return of the themes in the recapitulation. A brief bassoon *cadenza* is added (between the first theme and the *allegro agitato* bridge), and the closing theme fuses with a minuscule coda.

The second movement, *Song for a Spring Night*, is just as lyrical as the opening, a ternary *Lento espressivo* prefaced by a short improvisatory introduction; throughout, the solo bassoon presents a rhapsodic commentary (often in dialogue with other solo winds). The short middle section provides a *con forza* climax for full orchestra, marked by characteristic Scotch snap rhythms and an equally characteristic 32nd-note figure in the clarinets, bassoon and viola (*Example 9.7*). The finale is cast as a simple *rondo* with a recurring



Example 9.7 *Lyric Symphony ii* [measure 29]

*Allegro agitato* theme relieved by a *l'istesso tempo drammatico* and *meno mosso moderato* episodes and a tiny *brillante* coda — an exploration of Coulthard's scherzo-finale idiom.

The scale is small and intimate; the *Lyric Symphony* is a work designed to charm, not overwhelm. The treatment of the soloist is fundamentally restrained: while the soloist is given extensive showy *cadenzas*, important themes, and

rhapsodic commentary, flashy concerto-style passage work is reduced to a minimum. As in the *Lyrical Sonatina* for bassoon and piano, the conception of the bassoon is first and foremost as a lyric instrument capable of an effective long-lined *cantabile*; almost of equal importance is its light and surprisingly agile *staccato*, especially in burbling *arpeggio* figures. To date the *Lyrical Symphony* remains unheard.<sup>8</sup> Its best prospect for performance seems to be as a showpiece work for an orchestral first desk bassoon, not a virtuoso soloist.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Autumn Symphony for strings [Symphony #4]*

Coulthard began work on what was to be her next symphony in 1983 when, after an interval of nearly 15 years, she returned to writing for string orchestra. The working title for the composition, completed in 1984, was *Symphonic Images* (for strings), a title which she retained only until the first broadcast performance by the CBC Vancouver orchestra under the direction of Mario Bernardi. After that, Coulthard admitted that the work was more "symphonic" than "images" and, agreeing that the work was, in essence, her fourth symphony, changed its name.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>It may be the work's demonstrative lack of traditional virtuoso elements that accounts for its dedicatee's tepid reception of the work.

<sup>9</sup>Perhaps it should be adapted for performance by saxophone or cello; either instrument would be effective, though obviously different from the composer's original intention.

<sup>10</sup>While, as I recall, driving to the Bernardi recording session.

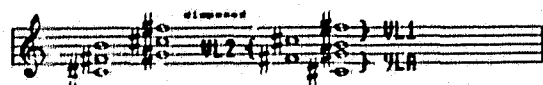
While Coulthard had often written music descriptive of her native Pacific Coast or of the seasons of the year, the title here is more metaphysical: it is a reflective, even meditative composition from the autumn years of the composer's career. With few models of such major works composed from the perspective of a septuagenarian,<sup>11</sup> the title seems especially apt and poetic. But this is not to say that the work is pastoral or even elegiac in spirit — far from it, as it contrasts moods of poetic introspection with turbulent, even tempestuous outbursts. The work is a magisterial demonstration of Coulthard's craft at its best and her inspiration at its highest. The *Autumn Symphony* was broadcast by Mario Bernardi and the CBC Vancouver orchestra in 1987; Peter Gellhorn conducted the European première in London, at St. John's, Smith Square as part of Margaret Bruce's *Canadians and Classics* series in 1989. The Canadian public première took place in Winnipeg by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra conducted by Simon Streatfeild.

Though it is in four movements, the form of the *Symphony* is in no way that of a usual 4-movement work; rather, Coulthard's own variant of cyclic form is explored in a comprehensive structure that comprises an *adagio Prelude*, a *Sonata (with classic grace)*; a scherzo, *Turbulent*, which fuses a scherzo and fugato; and a concluding epilogue, *Prophetic*.

The opening *Prelude* grows out of a gently pulsing pedal sonority created from two 3-note 4th chords a perfect 5th apart (*Example 9.8*, following page):

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<sup>11</sup>Janáček, Strauss, and Vaughan Williams, to name a select few.



Example 9.8 Autumn Symphony I [reduction - measure 1]

The formal structure is double binary. The initial phrase in the cello grows out of a C# sonority and resolves in a C/F fourth. An answering phrase describes a slow decorated descent from B to an F<sup>+7</sup> chord in 2nd inversion. The third phrase is a transposed and extended variant of the initial phrase, significantly enriched in texture through the addition of bass doubling; it culminates in a climactic D/G fourth. The concluding phrase (Example 9.9) repeats the decorated descent, this time from F# to a sparsely spaced B<sup>11</sup> sonority.



Example 9.9 Autumn Symphony I [measures 16-20]

After the briefest of *caesuras*, the 2nd movement begins in E,<sup>12</sup> in what appears to be a clear, almost "text-book" manifestation of sonata form. To begin, a figural first sub-theme of partially neo-classical inspiration is presented by the first violins (Example 9.10, following page). The phrase is six

<sup>12</sup>Thus "resolving" the *Prelude's* concluding sonority as the dominant of the home key.

Piu mosso, Moderato grazioso

Violin I

mp

Example 9.10 Autumn Symphony ii [measures 1-5]

measures in length and harmonically stable in E. At measure 7 a second, more contrapuntally oriented six-bar sub-theme in an E $\flat$ -based tonality is presented (Example 9.11).

Violin I

mf

Example 9.11 Autumn Symphony ii [measures 7-12]

At measure 13 the first material returns in a modified format (Example 9.12), transposed to a B $\flat$  tonality. At measure 19, a third sub-theme, five

Viola

mf

En dehors

Example 9.12 Autumn Symphony ii [measures 13-14]

measures long, establishes a sequential pattern of interlocking motives (Example 9.13, following page); here the tonality is unstable, though C $\sharp$  is

Example 9.13 Autumn Symphony II [measures 19-23]

temporarily established at the end of the phrase. Yet another variant of the initial material appears at bar 24 (Example 9.14), this time modified to include

Example 9.14 Autumn Symphony II [measures 24-29]

elements of the second sub-theme in the accompanying voices, answered by a four measure return to the third sub-theme materials, which now return to the home E tonality. A concluding presentation of the opening material begins in measure 34 (Example 9.15, following page), initially over an E pedal.

Violin I  
Violin II  
Bass  
Contra

*f*

*Pizz*

This musical score shows three staves. The top staff is Violin I, the middle is Violin II, and the bottom is Bass/Contrabass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Violin I part starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a melodic line with many slurs. The Violin II part provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments. The Bass/Contrabass part has a steady rhythmic accompaniment. A *Pizz* (pizzicato) marking is present in the Violin I part towards the end of the excerpt.

*mf*

*Pizz*

*arco*

*Pizz*

This musical score shows two staves. The top staff is Violin I and the bottom is Bass/Contrabass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Violin I part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs. The Bass/Contrabass part has a steady rhythmic accompaniment. There are *Pizz* (pizzicato) markings in both parts and an *arco* (arco) marking in the Bass/Contrabass part.

Example 9.15 Autumn Symphony II [measures 34-39]

At measure 40, a short coda-like phrase is presented over an E pedal (Example 9.16), then, in a single elongated bar, transposed up a third to G,

Cello  
Bass

*f*

*pp*

This musical score shows two staves. The top staff is Cello and the bottom is Bass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Cello part features a melodic line with slurs and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The Bass part has a steady rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo).

Example 9.16 Autumn Symphony II [measures 40-44]

which, in turn, is succeeded by C, the opening tonality of the second theme.

In the composer's own formal gloss (included in the score), these materials correspond to a first theme and bridge; in actuality the interrelationship of

these elements amounts to a rondo-like initial structure. The formal components produce an  $AB A' C A^2 [A+B] C A^3 D D'$  structure which encompasses contrasting developmental and modulatory sub-themes. The first sub-theme is subject to ongoing variation; the tonal plan, while ultimately stable over the section as a whole, is complex and active: E E $\flat$  B $\flat$  A G $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  C B E G. The interplay between the subsections of the first theme is intensified by the stable (if atypical) six-bar A phrases contrasted with the five-, four- and three- and one-bar phrases associated with the B, C, D, and D' sections. The interaction of materials produces a striking coherence as well as vitality; the tertian key shifts, emphasized in measures 40-44, establish a structural logic while simultaneously emphasizing the harmonic freshness of the second theme materials.

The second theme (*Example 9.17*) begins *dolce cantabile en dehors* after a one-bar vamp used to stabilize the new C-based tonality. This four-bar theme



*Example 9.17 Autumn Symphony II [measures 45-47]*

is immediately repeated (at pitch levels of A and D) before a third phrase is interjected, a phrase at least texturally reminiscent of materials from the "first theme" group (*Example 9.18*). The initial material returns at the pitch level of D in the basses in a truncated four-bar presentation in bars 57-59.

The image shows a musical score for Violin I and II and Viola. The top staff is labeled "Violin I and II" and the bottom staff is labeled "Viola". Both staves are in 2/4 time and feature a melodic line with various intervals and rests. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

*Example 9.18 Autumn Symphony II [measures 53-55]*

In measure 60 the second phase of the second theme group is presented (*Example 9.19*, following page), a virtually through-composed ten-bar phrase which extends and develops the *B* material from the first theme group.

Unlike the rondo-like complexity of the first theme group, the second theme area is fairly simple, an essentially binary structure with three developmental presentations of new thematic material (albeit interrupted by a four-bar interjection) and a developmental return of materials from the first theme group.

Strings *Poco a poco cresc.*

*mp* *mf* *Molto cresc.* *RITARD.*

**Example 9.19** Autumn Symphony II [measures 60-69]

At the conclusion of the second theme group, an  $A\flat^{+7}$  chord is reached at measure 70, after which the rhythmically distinctive closing theme (Example 9.20, following page), another through-composed phrase marked *poco meno mosso*, is presented.

Violin I *Poco meno mosso*

*mf* *sf*

Example 9.20 Autumn Symphony II [measures 71-73]

This phrase gradually ebbs into a quiet conclusion to the exposition and the establishment of a delicately sparse  $C^{\circ}$  sonority (Example 9.21).

Violin I, II Viola Strings

*ff*

Example 9.21 Autumn Symphony II [measures 77-78]

On the surface, the formal plan of the exposition is clear, even stereotypical; in reality the tendency of the first and second "themes" to become interrelated binary or ternary theme groups is intriguing, as is the prominence of tertian chord relations:  $E C\# E$  in the first theme group,  $C-A\flat$  in the second, and the

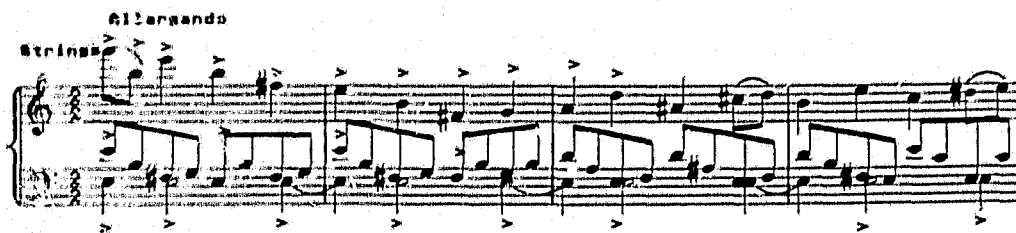
overall E-C direction of the exposition as a whole. Only small scale progressions tend to be based on the cycle of fifths.

A single measure, for solo quartet, acts as a link<sup>13</sup> to the development, which begins with the return of the first theme, initially in an F tonality. At measure 94 an augmented variant of the theme (appropriating dotted rhythms) is presented over E and A pedals. At measure 102 the first theme group C materials (which occurred in the second theme B area) are developed for five measures until at measure 107 the second theme returns in a dramatic augmented version in a C tonality; at measure 114 the augmented second theme is repeated in the cello and bass in D. At measure 120 a concluding section of the development presents a nine-bar passage based on the B material. The formal order of the development is first theme A; first theme C; second theme augmented; first theme C, with the tonal plan F E A C D B. By the end of the development the dominant B is suggested, but section is interrupted by a dramatic breath pause, prior to an *attacca drammatico e molto crescendo* dominant preparation as a link to the recapitulation. The effect is striking, a freezing of the on-going musical flow and a subverting of the orderly progress of the development. The subsequent headlong rush into the recapitulation emphasizes the relative brevity of the development while highlighting the transformation of materials that is to take place.

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<sup>13</sup>A vestigial re-transition in function.

The recapitulation<sup>14</sup> begins in an E tonality with the first theme in augmentation in the upper strings and suggested at the original speed (see *Example 9.10* above) by the violas (*Example 9.22*).



*Example 9.22 Autumn Symphony II [measures 130-133]*

Only the first theme *B* materials are retained from the exposition's first-theme complex, and at measure 149 the second theme returns, also in the tonic. Both the *A* and *B* components are presented, though significantly truncated. The end is once again marked by a *tremolo* pause sonority, here a  $C^{+7}$  chord. The closing theme is presented virtually intact, culminating in an  $F^{11}$  chord and an almost complete measure of silence. A coda, marked *poco meno mosso* (*Example 9.23*), provides an increasingly tranquil and *legato* return of the initial theme and a peaceful, innately satisfying return of the E tonality.<sup>15</sup>



*Example 9.23 Autumn Symphony II [measures 169-171]*

<sup>14</sup>Marked on the score "reprise;" Coulthard has marked the major form components of the moment in the score.

<sup>15</sup>Very reminiscent of a passage in the second *Night Song, Tarantella*, measures 28-29.

The complex and dramatic third movement begins, up a semitone, in F, with an edgy *spiccato* theme of considerable rhythmic complexity (Example 9.24).

Violin  
p spicc.  
Cello  
arco spicc.

Example 9.24 Autumn Symphony iii [measures 4-6]

A second texture featuring a pulsing, second-based accompaniment and an energetic theme irregularly doubled in seven-measures is introduced at measure 37 (Example 9.25).

Example 9.25 Autumn Symphony iii [measures 37-39]

At measure 61 the original material returns until a complex two-bar link heralds the central *fugato* (Example 9.26):

Violin

*sf* *p* *mf*

Example 9.26 Autumn Symphony III [measures 189-90]

The core of the movement is a chromatic fugato in a *moderato* 12/8; entries on F#, C#, and G# are followed by a *codetta*, then by a final entry on B. Plotted graphically, the entries reveal a wedge of entries reminiscent of the famous opening fugue of Bartók's *Music For Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.<sup>16</sup>

The *fugato* is then interrupted by the return of the two-bar link passage and then of the scherzo. In lieu of a coda, the link passage dramatically pulses *fortissimo ben marcato sonore* on a complex C-based sonority (Example 9.27) to a long sustained *decrescendo*.

Strings

*ff*

Example 9.27 Autumn Symphony III [measures 189-90]

<sup>16</sup>A model used with great effect in Coulthard's *Octet*.

The epilogue, subtitled *Prophetic*, returns to the mood of the opening *Prelude*, transformed (in the manner of the *Second String Quartet* or the *Octet*) by the developmental movements that precede it. The epilogue proper is in three sections: first a multi-strand opening section (*Example 9.28*, following page) which alternates phrases built on slowly accruing sonorities with solo passages:



Example 9.28 Autumn Symphony iv (measures 5-7)

then a section of *stretti* based on interlocking fourths (*Example 9.29*):

A musical score for Violin II and Viola, measures 23-25 of Autumn Symphony iv. The score is written on four staves: Violin II (treble clef), Viola (alto clef), and two Bass staves (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score shows a section of *stretti* based on interlocking fourths. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The music features complex rhythmic patterns and interlocking intervals between the staves.

Example 9.29 Autumn Symphony iv (measures 23-25)

This phase of the movement concludes with an ecstatic but quiet passage which begins with a lyric theme in artificial harmonics floating over a web of triplet figuration, a sustained upper mid-register counter-melody, and a composite bass in violas and divided cello and bass (*Example 9.30*):

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Bass

Example 9.30 Autumn Symphony IV [measures 34-36]

The final coda is in two sections. First, an *adagio molto espressivo*, starting simply, builds to a searingly intense E<sup>+7</sup> chord in 2nd inversion (Example 9.31):



Example 9.31 Autumn Symphony iv [measures 64-65]

The concluding *adagio pensivo* returns to the descent motive of the *Prelude*,<sup>17</sup> which is followed by an arch of whole tone motion centring on E (with added F#) (Example 9.32):

Example 9.32 Autumn Symphony iv [measures 74-77]

Together, the epilogue and coda represent the most remarkable solution to the *finale* "problem" in all Coulthard's orchestral music. The solution is as radical as it is personal: Coulthard has developed a type of cyclic, process-based *finale* where the appearance of earlier materials in a transformed state returns,

<sup>17</sup>Here establishing an irregular scale pattern of BG#GF#D#DC — or BA#GF#E#bDC — a synthetic scale with two augmented interval steps.

implicitly, to the cryptic, seminal forces that generate the composition — music where "conclusion" is never confused with "goal", "climax" or, inevitably, "resolution".

Coulthard has accepted the view that her expansive catalogue divides not so much on stylistic or historical lines, but into works pragmatically designed for the general audience and a smaller number of more difficult works written for more personal satisfaction. In the *Autumn Symphony* such a dichotomy is meaningless: it represents the composer's very best work and is a highlight of her orchestral repertoire.

## Chapter 10: Conclusions

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### *Influences on Coulthard's Music*

Coulthard's central influence has been Debussy, especially in four areas: her fundamental concept of tonality, her colouristic harmonic resources, her rhythmic vocabulary, and her approach to orchestral colour. Several important aspects of the Debussy idiom, however, have had little effect, including the more radical aspects of his approach to form, his relative lack of interest in standard instrumental ensembles, and his avoidance of traditional genres, particularly the symphony and the concerto. In these matters, Coulthard demonstrates an affinity for the more classical idiom of Ravel, though this is mitigated by a certain more direct natural robustness in place of the veiled sophistication of the French master.

The influence of the early 20th-century English composers has been entirely overstated in existing criticism of Coulthard's work; except for a few relatively minor harmonic elements in her earlier works, the supposed legacy of Vaughan Williams can be virtually denied. More subtle influences do appear to suggest Holst, certainly Delius, and possibly Walton, but these, too, are of minor importance compared to the abiding importance of Debussy and Ravel.

As Coulthard herself has implied,<sup>1</sup> there was little direct impact from Schoenberg on her work, though all 20th-century composers have been, as a matter of course, deeply aware of Schoenberg's contribution to 20th-century

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Coulthard, "Proceedings," *Canadian Music in the 1930s and 1940s* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1986), 44.

musical language. Certainly the central European expressionist idiom had no appeal for Coulthard, and it is difficult to see anything but the most superficial relationship between her music and that of Schoenberg or his pupils. Nor is there any significant influence from Stravinsky except, perhaps, from his early orchestrational style. Neither Stravinsky's rhythmic vocabulary, the "neo-baroque" idioms of his neoclassical writing, nor his sharp, even freakish, orchestral colourisation were of any effect on Coulthard's work.

The influence of Hindemith is considerably more potent than it might at first appear. While only the *First Symphony* is directly influenced by Hindemith, other legacies of Hindemith's musical thought do linger: Coulthard's emphasis on clear formal designs constructed along traditional lines owes as much to Hindemith as it does to Ravel; her on-going interest in counterpoint (which seems to intensify as her career goes on) is also an interest very much congruent with Hindemith's contrapuntal focus; finally, and most significant, is the issue of *Gebrauchsmusik*. Here Coulthard is entirely in agreement with Hindemith's philosophy of "music for use" and has written with unselfconscious fecundity for many media, including works for the orchestra, not to mention her project to compose sonatas for all orchestral instruments, and her many volumes of music for students. The work of Bartók is also of profound significance, especially from the 1960s on. Coulthard found that Bartók's rigorous approach to traditional forms (like that of Ravel or Hindemith) was congruent with her own mature view. Some Bartókian rhythm may be found

in later Coulthard works. Similarly, aspects of Bartók's approach to tonal planning are noticed.

More ephemeral influences include those of Benjamin, Milhaud, and Copland. By the end of the 1960s Coulthard had assimilated various techniques from then new-music, including clusters, keyboard *pizzicato*, *glissando* effects and extended string techniques, devices explored by the work of Xenakis, Penderecki, and Crumb.

### ***Form in Coulthard's work***

#### USE OF TRADITIONAL FORMAL DESIGNS

Before Coulthard's studies with Bernard Wagenaar, her approach to the formal organization of her music was fundamentally ill-defined. Though she had considerable success with small-scale works, her tendency was to use either simple juxtapositional forms, or, in the case of the two more extended works dating from before 1944, a loose, almost narrative sequence of events. Study with Wagenaar changed this; with *Music on a Quiet Song*, Coulthard began the exploration of more complex traditional forms, including variations, sonata designs, and even cyclic multi-movement structures. In the immediate post-war years she did not, however, completely abandon juxtapositional formats, especially in single movement works (such as *A Prayer for Elizabeth*, *The Bird of Dawning*, and the *Fantasy*). But by the mid-1950s, Coulthard was definitely leaning to a strong neo-classical perspective on form, a commitment to the

continuation of traditional structures that were then infused with new tonal and harmonic language. Sonata form structures are of extreme and abiding importance in her work, though it is the thematic content and organization of sonata form, not traditional tonal relationships, that appear to be her greatest area of interest.

#### TONAL PLANNING

All Coulthard's work is tonal. However, despite her firm commitment to traditional formal organization, her large-scale tonal plans often avoid earlier tonal relationships. Key relationships at the tritone and the third are especially common. In a certain number of works, tonal organization is a manifestation of a triadic approach to tonal organization.

Keys areas appear to have been chosen for their colouristic value; tonal change frequently entails swift modulation from flat keys to sharp keys to achieve striking colouristic variety. In orchestral works, this deeply personal interest in key colour can produce sections unsuited to certain orchestral instruments; Coulthard almost never uses enharmonic notations to simplify performance. As has already been mentioned, a Bartókian influence in tonal planning is especially apparent in the organization of her fugal writing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>In the *Autumn Symphony*, though first explored in the *Octet*.

### ***Coulthard's musical style***

#### **RHYTHM**

Much of Coulthard's rhythmic vocabulary (and certainly her approach to rhythmic notation) is derived from Debussy. Specific elements of her impressionist-oriented rhythm include the extensive use of interchangeable triple and duple subdivisions, as well as quintuplet and sextuplet figures. Other rhythmic idioms include the ubiquitous use of triplet figuration (often used with measures of five, six, or nine beats), small-scale polyrhythms, and rhythmically augmented measures at the conclusion of phrases. There is a decided influence of Bartók in Coulthard's later works through the use of regular asymmetrical rhythms. Personal idioms include the frequent use of toccata-like rhythms, the double anacrusis, and Scotch-snap rhythms.

#### **HARMONIC VOCABULARY**

Coulthard has always viewed herself as a harmonist. In her early music certain influences from early 20th-century English music are present (though it can be easily argued that these idioms, including modal chords, parallel harmony and extended triads, are just as common in the harmonic vocabulary of the French impressionists as in the early 20th-century English school). In the late 1940s Coulthard began to experiment with what she then called polytonality, most usually through bonded triad forms. Thereafter, her harmonic vocabulary remains rich, including the previously mentioned idioms with an

increased use of symmetrical fourth (and sometimes fifth) chords, added note chords, and, after the mid-60s, cluster sonorities.

### **MELODY**

Though firmly tonal, Coulthard's melodic style is often enriched through extensive chromatic inflections and non-traditional scale forms. The use of melodic augmented seconds is a particular characteristic, often a manifestation of the composer's avowed interest in the mystic or descriptive. Other melodies are characterised by melodic cell figures.

### ***Coulthard's Orchestral Idiom***

Coulthard's approach to the orchestra shows a slow continuous process of growth and development. At the start of her career, her ability to create effective orchestrational figuration was limited; while excellent for keyboards and harp, it was less effective for strings, winds, and brass. Nonetheless, her first extant orchestral works demonstrate a command of conventional orchestrational idioms equal to or surpassing those of other Canadian figures writing orchestral music in the 1950s and 1940s.

Following her studies with Bernard Wagenaar, the scope of Coulthard's writing dramatically increased, and her growing interest in developing a personal orchestrational palette became apparent. Several works composed between

1946 and 1966 are especially notable: *A Prayer for Elizabeth*, for its approach to the string orchestra; the *Violin Concerto*, which demonstrates an expansive, even epic orchestral scale; and the *Fantasy* for violin piano and chamber orchestra, which explores the brilliant virtuoso manner. Problems in this transitional phase of Coulthard's orchestrational development relate to overall orchestral balance (especially in the full *tutti*), a tendency to overscore bass lines<sup>3</sup> (especially through her frequent use of *divisi celli*), occasional over-use of trills and *tremolo* textures,<sup>4</sup> and the employment of ineffective figural patterns, particularly for strings.

Following her lessons with Gordon Jacob in the mid-1960s, Coulthard's mature orchestral idiom emerged: minor elements of orchestral technique were cleaned up, greater clarity of sound was produced, and an increasingly sensitive approach to the colouristic potential of the orchestra was explored, particularly in such neo-impressionist works as *Endymion* and *Kalamalka*. From the mid-1960s on her approach to strings became extraordinarily detailed and effective, especially in the *Autumn Symphony* and the *Symphonic Image "Of the North"*. It is fair to say that winds and brass have never held the same interest for Coulthard as have strings.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>It is evident that she particularly values a rich, even lush bass voice in her work and the tendency to overscore may be, in part, a response to the orchestral sound of the ensembles with which she was familiar.

<sup>4</sup>Rather than more detailed figuration or passage work.

<sup>5</sup>With the exception of duo sonatas and suites, she has written for wind and brass ensembles very rarely: the *Divertimento* and the *Pastorale Cantata* are her only works featuring ensembles of winds or brass.

Interest in percussion, on the other hand, increased significantly after the mid-60s; while earlier scores tended to use stereotypical effects, later works (especially *Canada Mosaic*<sup>6</sup>) explored percussion effects more boldly.

A number of orchestral effects are especially typical: these include a pronounced fondness for lyric solo horn passages; harp and celeste pairings in delicate toccata-like filigree patterns; prominence of the cor anglais; and frequent use of solo violin, viola and cello.

### ***Coulthard and Feminism***

It is difficult conclusively to assess the extent to which Coulthard's career was affected by her gender. In a very real sense Coulthard was privileged: throughout her life she received unconditional support from her family — the early role model of her mother's fully professional career in music, the committed support of her musically gifted husband Don Adams, and the continual encouragement of her sister Babs.

Coulthard's long marriage to Adams provided both emotional and economic support for her pursuit of a career as a composer. Her decision to pursue a parallel career as a university teacher, however, significantly cut into time that could have been devoted exclusively to composition. Similarly, her family

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<sup>6</sup>Not to mention the *Hymn to Creation* and the *Five Lyrics from the Chinese*.

responsibilities unquestionably affected her ability to produce,<sup>7</sup> significantly slowing her development in the 1930s and 1940s.

With very considerable resolve, Coulthard simply made time to compose (in the early years by writing late at night) and used her income as a university teacher to help with household needs (including nannies and housekeepers).<sup>8</sup> It is evident that composition, though always undertaken in a thoroughly professional manner, was never designed as a money-making activity. Indeed, other activities were undertaken to provide the necessary subsidy for composition and music-related travel.

As noted in Chapter 2, it seems apparent that Coulthard's gender did indeed adversely affect her development as an orchestral composer. As Roseanne Kydd has suggested in her reevaluation of Coulthard's work, the rejection of Coulthard that took place in the '50s and '60s amounted to a male refusal to take seriously the work of a gifted and productive female. As Kydd has noted, Coulthard herself has made ambiguous statements about the "problem" of being a "woman composer;" she has recognized that certain financial and academic discrimination took place during her career at the University of British Columbia, but has personally been reluctant to attribute other professional disappointments and frustrations to her status as a woman.

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<sup>7</sup>Most notably following her mother's sudden death in the 1930s, and again in the early years of her daughter Jane's upbringing — the same years Coulthard was beginning to teach at the University of British Columbia and her husband was establishing his own business.

<sup>8</sup>See Jean Coulthard, "Biographical Sketches," II (unpublished; collection: Jean Coulthard).

### ***Coulthard's creative personality***

In her introductory statement to the RCA *Anthology of Canadian Music* recordings, Coulthard avoids chronological discussion of her works and implies that periods are less important than classifications, a theme she was to continue in the address "The Eclectic Composer of Today." This approach (despite an element of truth) is perhaps slightly disingenuous.

Certainly in her orchestral repertoire there are four distinct phases: the juvenilia (now lost or withdrawn) of the 1930s; the works of 1939-1946, associated with Arthur Benjamin; her early mature works composed from 1947-1966; and her late, mature works dating from 1966 on. The four works from the Benjamin period are tonal, traditionally orchestrated works in predominantly juxtapositional forms. Works from 1946 until 1966 explore a more complex world of greater formal variety and sophistication, advanced harmonic resources, and developing idiomatic orchestration. Works composed after 1966 show an increased interest in counterpoint, orchestral colour, and complex formal structures.

Coulthard's creative process is contradictory. On the one hand, she has been one of Canada's most prolific composers, staunchly valuing the importance of spontaneous inspiration in her personal aesthetic. On the other hand, her frequent revision of such works as *Music to St. Cecilia* or the *Concerto* for piano and orchestra belies a self-critical awareness of her work and its ultimate value.

A further paradox is her relative lack of interest in the (for lack of a better term) marketing of her work. She is seemingly unperturbed by the neglect of

certain major compositions and rather surprised by the latter-day popularity of others. This tendency to distance herself from her work may be both a weakness and a strength. To an outside observer, it may seem that Coulthard's enthusiasm for her work vanishes with the completion of the compositional process. Certainly her orchestral scores suffer from occasional notational imprecisions, insufficient editing, copying that ranges from the adequate to the poor, and badly proofread conductor's scores and parts. While it is all too tempting to wish that she had established more "definitive" versions of her scores, the lavishing of time and attention on the correction of minor flaws and the preparation of polished presentation scores would be entirely foreign to her creative personality. Coulthard's demonstrated interest in the next rather than the last composition undoubtedly sustained her remarkable perseverance during the protracted period of her neglect in the '50s and '60s.

### ***Coulthard's role in Canadian music***

Before addressing Coulthard's role in Canadian music, it is important to place her career in the context of her international contemporaries. Born in 1908, she is the exact contemporary of Elliott Carter and Olivier Messiaen and part of a generation of composers born in the first years of this century, writers as stylistically diverse as Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), Kurt Weill (1900-50), Aaron Copland (1900-91), William Walton (1902-83), Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-75), Samuel Barber (1910-81), Gian-Carlo Menotti (1911- ), Benjamin

Britten (1913-76), and Witold Lutoslawski (1913- ). This eclectic assortment of figures worked to establish their musical identities in the wake of the celebrated modern composers born in the 1880s and early 1890s (Webern, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Berg) and just before the post-WWI generation (Xenakis (1922- ), Boulez (1925- ), Berio (1925- ), and Stockhausen (1928- )), who were to come to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s.

As has already been discussed, Coulthard was late to develop as a composer and, it must be admitted, her creative vision is entirely consistent with directions explored by many of her contemporaries during the 1930s and 1940s. By the time Coulthard was in her prime as a composer, following the mid-1960s, her stylistic frame of reference was unquestionably dated. It remained, however, a valid and expressive vocabulary, one richly mined by such parallel figures as Menotti, Barber, Shostakovich, and Britten.

If one accepts Elaine Keillor's premise about the conservative tradition in Canadian music, that "good music does not depend on the technique used or the roots of the style but on quality,"<sup>9</sup> the application of the aesthetic standards of later varieties of 20th-century musical expression to Coulthard's work is, quite simply, to miss the point. Though Coulthard could respect and admire the accomplishments of others using radically different compositional techniques, she has been consistent in holding to her own sense of values, making no concessions to influences and standards she personally finds unproductive. This creative vision sets her outside of the various perceived mainstreams of musical

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<sup>9</sup>Keillor, "Conservative Tradition," *Celebration*, 56.

development in Canada. Only recently have scholars begun to set aside the issue of the style of Coulthard's work and begun to assess its inherent quality.

In determining Coulthard's place in music of the 20th century, it is of primary importance to realise her essential goal. Coulthard has never been interested in the creation of new musical languages or systems; she happily accepted the language and structures of the early 20th-century French modernists whose work she first came to love as a young girl. Working within this tradition, she sought to create a uniquely personal dialect, to create work that was of use to her musical constituency, and to write music which was of a consistently high standard.

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## Index

---

- Adams, Captain Kenneth F. (brother-in-law) 32, 101
- Adams, Don (husband) 24, 25, 27, 32, 35, 41, 42, 60, 198  
as pianist 24  
work featured in *Western Homes and Living* 40  
death of 60
- Adams, Jane (daughter) viii, 32, 35, 42, 45, 57, 62, 199
- Adaskin, Harry 37, 38
- Adaskin, John  
director of "Opportunity Knocks" 105
- Adaskin, Murray 53, 71, 74, 75, 77, 81
- Aitken, Robert 81
- Akiyama, Kazuyoshi 73, 98
- Ančerl, Karl 71
- André, Françoise 41
- Andrew, Geoffrey 38
- Applebaum, Louis 70, 74
- Archer, Violet viii, 4, 56, 58, 67, 74, 75, 79
- Arteaga, Edward 54
- Aspell, Peter 41
- Atlantic Symphony Orchestra 102, 110, 115
- Auden, W.H. 135
- Avison, John 47  
conducts *Convoy* 102
- B.C. Electric Summer Symphony 89
- Bach, Johann Sebastian 132  
WORKS: *Concerto for Four Keyboards* 20; *Concerto for Three Keyboards* 20
- Bachauer, Gina 46
- Backus, Dr. Joan viii
- Bailey, Terrence 37
- Baker, Michael Conway 54  
WORKS: *Struggle for Dominion, A* 73; *Symphony* 73
- Baldwin, Janet 74
- Balkind, Alvin 49
- Bancroft, Hugh 69

- Banff Centre Composer's Workshop 54
- Barber, Samuel 201, 202  
WORKS: *Commando March* 104; *A Stopwatch and an Ordinance Map* 104
- Barclay, Robert 30-31, 69, 86
- Baril, Marc viii
- Bartók, Bela 86, 202  
approach to tonal planning 193  
influence on Coulthard 192-195  
rigorous approach to traditional forms 192
- Basham, Leonard  
see Robert Barclay
- Beaudet, Jean-Marie 89, 131
- Becker, John 74  
*Discord: The Story of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra* 9, 19, 47
- Beckwith, John 68, 72, 77  
The Culture of Contemporary Canada 12
- Beecroft, Norma 81
- Beethoven, Ludwig von 153  
WORKS: *Piano Concerto #4* 19
- Bell, Alan 55
- Bell, Alistair 41
- Benjamin, Arthur 119, 200  
conductor of Vancouver Proms 69, 85-86  
re-naming *Convoy* 101  
conducts *Convoy* 102  
WORKS: *Oboe Concerto* 86
- Berg, Alban 202
- Berio, Luciano 202
- Berlioz, Hector  
WORKS: *Symphonie Fantastique* 96
- Bernardi, Mario 47, 77, 99  
broadcast performance of *Autumn: Symphony* 173  
conducts *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 122  
conducts *A Prayer for Elizabeth* 125  
records *Music to Saint Cecilia* 135  
records *The Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long* 133
- Betts, Lorne 74
- Binkert, June 49
- Binning, B.C. 25, 35, 40, 41, 49, 50
- Binning, Jessie (Wyllie) viii, 25
- Binny, Bert

- on *Fantasy* 146
- Birney, Earle 36
  - TEXTS SET: *Quebec May* 36; *Vancouver Lights* 36
- Bisell, Keith 82
- Blackburn, Maurice 70, 82
- Bligh, Stanley
  - on *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 121
  - on *A Prayer for Elizabeth* 125
  - on *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 152
- Bliss, Arthur 50, 51
  - as champion of Coulthard's work 50
  - WORKS: *Morning Heroes* 50
- Bliss, Lady (Trudy) viii, 50, 51
- Bobak, Bruno 41
- Bobak, Molly Lamb 25, 41
- Bodier-Little, Madeleine 79
- Boulanger, Lilli 44
- Boulanger, Nadia 44
- Boulez, Pierre 50, 202
- Bouliane, Denys 75
- Brott, Alexander 67, 70, 74, 77, 82
  - WORKS: *Profundum praedictum* 82; *Spheres in Orbit* 70; *Three Astral Visions* 82
- Bradley, George 9
- Brahms, Johannes
  - WORKS: *Serenades* 86
- Branscome, Gena 12
- Breeze, Claude 50
- Bridge, Sir Frederick 11
- British Columbia Music Teachers' Federation 11
- Britten, Benjamin 51, 202
- Brock, Babs (Margaret Isobel Coulthard, sister) viii, 8-10, 24, 60, 198
- Brock, David (brother-in-law) 25
  - scenario for *Excursion* 90
- Bruce, Margaret (Phillips) 45
  - performs *Burlesca* 135
  - and première of *Autumn Symphony* 174
- Bruce, Peter 45
- Bruckner, Anton
  - WORKS: *Symphony "0"* 86
- Burn, Andrew 50

- Burndorfer, Hans *viii*
- Burritt, Lloyd 54, 73
- Butler, Janice 8, 9
- Cable, Howard 75
- Cage, John 24, 50
- Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra 108  
    premières organ version of *Music to Saint Cecilia* 135
- Canada Council 74, 83
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 76, 83
- Canadian League of Composers 1, 3, 40, 43
- Canadian Music Centre 1
- CAPAC 70
- Carr, Emily 11, 19, 25  
    WRITINGS: *Growing Pains* 11; *Hundreds and Thousands* 11
- Carter, Elliott 201
- Cavanagh, Beverly Diamond 2, 3, 5
- CBC 28
- CBC Montréal Orchestra 89
- CBC Québec Chamber Orchestra 79
- CBC Strings of Halifax  
    performs *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* 127
- CBC Symphony Orchestra 76, 78, 80  
    performs the *First Symphony* 170
- CBC Vancouver Orchestra 65, 76-77, 80, 99, 122  
    broadcast performance of *Autumn Symphony* 173  
    broadcast première of *Symphonic Ode for viola and orchestra* 141  
    première of *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* 126  
    recording of the *Concerto for piano and orchestra* 156  
    records *The Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long* 133
- CBC Winnipeg Orchestra 76, 78
- Cerovsek, Corey 147
- Cerovsek, Katja 147
- Chaminade, Cécile 12
- Champagne, Claude 70, 77, 79, 82  
    *Suite canadienne* 67
- Chan Ka-Nin (Francis Chan) 54
- Cherniavsky, Jan 9  
    and cancellation of Coulthard's *Violin Concerto* 151
- Chotem, Neil 75

- Chubb, Dr. Frederick 9
- Clarke, Douglas 67
- Clarke, James P. 68
- Cluderay, Laurence 69  
review of *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 152
- Clyne, J.V. 9
- Colton, Glenn 5
- Commissiona, Sergiu 99  
conducts *Serenade "Meditation and Three Dances"* 127
- Concerts Symphonique de Montréal 131
- Concordia University 57
- Cooper, Dorith 72
- Copland, Aaron 24, 201  
accessible orchestral style 154  
exploration of symphonic structures 164  
influence on Coulthard 193  
WORKS: *Fanfare for the Common Man* 104; *Letter from Home* 104;  
*Piano Variations* 27
- Coulthard, Dr. Walter (father) 8  
death of 24
- Coulthard, Howard (uncle) 13, 17, 18
- Coulthard, Jean (Blake) (Mrs. Walter Coulthard, mother) 8, 10-13, 18, 20, 198-99  
and British Columbia Music Teachers' Federation 11  
and Vancouver Woman's Musical Club 11  
exponent of impressionist music 11  
as primary role model for Coulthard 12  
death of 23, 199
- Coulthard, Jean  
anglophilia 13  
as conductor 23, 48  
as pianist 20  
as political federalist 57  
début recital 20  
diaries 15, 16, 26  
feminist evaluation of 47  
feminist interpretation of 12  
first British review of (as conductor) 17  
first compositions 8  
love of travel 10  
marriage 24, 27  
marriage, degree of independence in 42  
meets Emily Carr 25  
social position of 9, 25

- studies with Bernard Wagenaar 34
- studies with Vaughan Williams 26

**Coulthard, Jean: AS COMPOSER**

- appreciation by young performers 52
- approach to orchestral colour 191
- approach to strings 197
- Bartók, influence of 17
- beginning of professional career 27
- Benjamin, Arthur, inspiration by 31
- Canadian League of Composers 40
- characteristic themes 119
- colouristic harmonic resources 191
- contact with British women composers 42
- contradictory creative process 200
- Copland, inspiration of 27
- Copland, lack of stylistic influence 27
- critical self-awareness 200, 201
- dated stylistic frame of reference 202
- Debussy, early influence of 11
- decision to become professional composer 12
- Delius, influence of 191
- distinction between private and artistic personalities *vii*
- early post-war years 39
- early recordings of works 52
- early view of herself 18
- early works, withdrawal of 26
- eclecticism 55, 59
- educational works 52
- emergence of mature orchestral idiom 197
- emphasis on clear formal designs 192
- epigonal style, early rejection of 11
- first compositions 8
- formal organization of materials 34
- four distinct phases of orchestral repertoire 200
- frequent revision of works 200
- frustration during the '30s 26
- gender issues 198-99
- harmonic language 34, 194-95
- Hindemith, influence of 17
- Holst, influence of 191
- international recognition 43, 45
- isolation from centres of new music 26
- lack of favour with Canadian musical establishment 43
- lack of opportunity in Vancouver 23
- large-scale tonal plans 194
- late development 202
- "Les six", influence of 17

- liturgical works, relative absence of 12
  - maturation of idiom 39
  - melodic style 196
  - Milhaud, influence of 193
  - Montréal musical community, association with 56, 57
  - natural robustness of 191
  - neglect during the '60s 51
  - neo-classical perspective on form 193
  - on-going interest in counterpoint 192
  - orchestral idiom 196
  - organ works, relative absence of 12
  - paraodic and satiric elements 92
  - piano technique 27
  - polytonality 195
  - post-modernism 59
  - problems with orchestral balance 197
  - Ravel, influence of 11, 113, 191-92
  - re-evaluation in the '70s 58
  - recordings, later 58
  - rejection of "conservative" label 12
  - rhythmic notation 195
  - rhythmic vocabulary 191, 195
  - role in Canadian music 201
  - Satie, early influence of 11
  - Schoenberg, influence of 17
  - serial music, attitude towards 58, 59
  - slow mastery of the orchestral medium 47
  - sonata form structures 194
  - Stravinsky, influence of 17
  - symphony, as a genre 164
  - tonal language 194
  - tonality, fundamental concept of 191
  - tonality, importance of 58
  - triadic approach to tonal organization 194
  - triadic harmonic style 97
  - twelve-tone, use of 34
  - typical orchestral effects 198
  - use of avant garde pianistic idioms 137
  - use of folk-song materials 86, 87, 89, 95, 96
  - use of percussion 198
  - use of winds and brass 197
  - Vaughan Williams, lack of direct early influence 16
  - Vaughan Williams, lack of practical advice from 26
  - Wagenaar, Bernard, influence of 34
  - works catalogued by Odean Long vii
- Coulthard, Jean: AWARDS AND DEGREES  
Alfred J. Clement Memorial Prize 43

American Learned Societies grant 43  
Australian Broadcasting Commission prize 43  
CAPAC Prize 43  
*City of Vancouver, Freeman of* 58, 62  
Concordia University, honorary doctorate 57  
Helsinki Olympiad (1952) 43  
honorary doctorate from Concordia University 37  
honorary doctorate from UBC 37  
*London Olympiad (1948)* 43  
McGill Chamber Music Award 43  
Order of Canada, Officer of 58  
Royal Society Fellowship 44  
Toronto Conservatory diploma 9  
University of British Columbia, honorary doctorate 61  
Vancouver Woman's Musical Club scholarship 13

Coulthard, Jean: EDUCATION

Bartók, Bela, studies with 32  
Boulanger, Nadia, studies with 44  
Cherniavsky, Jan, piano studies with 9  
Chubb, Frederick, studies with 9, 20  
conducting 16, 18  
Copland, Aaron, studies with 27  
Dart, Thurston, lectures of 49  
decision to leave Vancouver 12  
early inspiration by Impressionists 11  
early studies with mother 8  
Ireland, John, studies with 14  
Jacob, Gordon, studies with 2, 49, 197  
Long, Kathleen, studies with 16  
Milhaud, Darius, studies with 31  
Morris, R.O., studies with 2, 16  
musical home environment 9, 10  
percussion performance 16  
Royal College of Music 13, 14, 16-18  
Schoenberg, Arnold, studies with 31  
Toronto Conservatory diploma 9  
University of British Columbia, early studies at 12  
Vaughan Williams, studies with 2, 14-16, 26  
Wagenaar, Bernard, studies with 33, 34, 44, 59, 193, 196

Coulthard, Jean: TEACHING CAREER

academic discrimination at UBC 199  
appointment to Music Department of UBC 37  
Banff Centre Composer's Workshop 54, 55  
dismissal from UBC 38  
dissatisfaction with UBC 38  
early private teaching 23

effect of her creative work 37, 198-99  
emphasis on European culture 18  
Okanagan Music Festival for Composers, involvement in 56  
private instruction 35  
private students 54  
Queen's Hall School for Girls 23  
research in medieval and Renaissance polyphony 37  
retirement 37, 53, 54  
Shawnigan Lake Summer School of the Arts 54, 55  
St. Anthony's School for Girls 23  
20th century theory classes vi  
Victoria Conservatory of Music, master classes at 54  
Wagenaar, Bernard, influence of 37

Coulthard, Jean: WORKS

*Aegean Sketches* 46  
*Auguries of Innocence* 122  
*Autumn Symphony [Symphony No. 4]* vii, 62, 127-129, 164, 173-190, 194, 197  
*Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 31, 52, 119-122, 128  
*Ballade "Of the West"* 7, 62, 130, 132, 139, 146-47  
*Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long, The* 6, 46, 87, 125, 130, 133-34, 140, 193  
*Birds of Landsdowne, The* 147  
*Burlesca* 6, 59-60, 109, 130, 135-137, 139, 140  
*Canada Mosaic* 60, 62, 73, 85, 88, 94-100, 127, 132, 140, 198  
*Canadian Fantasy* 31, 57, 85, 87-89, 97, 101, 104, 132  
*Cello Sonata* 138  
*Chansons du coeur, Les* 57  
*Choral Symphony "This Land" [Symphony #2]* 47, 51, 73, 122, 144, 164, 170-71  
*Concerto for piano and orchestra* 46, 114, 125, 143-46, 153-162, 200  
*Concerto for violin and orchestra* 44, 46, 73, 130-32, 148-53, 159-60, 162, 171, 197  
*Convoy* 31, 101-105, 118  
*Cradle Song* vi  
*Duo Sonata [Sonata #1]* 34, 39, 46, 106  
*Endymion* 49, 51, 101, 110-115, 118, 139, 197  
*Etude* 34  
*Études* 34  
*Excursion* 10, 31, 85, 89-94, 96, 98, 101, 104, 169  
*Fanfare Overture* 122, 144  
*Fantasy* 7, 46, 114, 125, 130, 144-46, 147, 154, 193, 197  
*First String Quartet* 43  
*First Symphony* 39, 43, 107, 111, 123, 131-32, 148-49, 151, 164-170, 192  
*Five Lyrics from the Chinese* 140, 198  
*Five Part Songs* 52  
*Four Variations on "Good King Wenceslaus"* 132  
*Hymn to Creation* 140, 198  
*Image Astrale* 59, 87, 109, 127, 136  
*Introduction and Three Folk Songs [from Canada Mosaic]* 62, 94, 99-100  
*Kalamalka "Lake of Many Colours"* 60, 101, 114-118, 140, 147, 197

- Lyric Sonatina for flute and piano* 136  
*Lyric Sonatina for bassoon and piano* 171, 173  
*Lyric Symphony for bassoon and chamber orchestra [Symphony #3]* 6, 60, 130, 164, 171-173  
*More Lovely Grows the Earth* 45  
*Music of Our Time* 147  
*Music on a Scottish Folk Song* 132  
*Music on a Quiet Song* 6, 34, 52, 122, 130-32, 150, 193  
*Music to Saint Cecilia* 6, 39, 51, 87, 101, 107-110, 114, 118, 127, 130, 133, 135, 139-40, 171, 200  
*Night Songs* 146  
*Night Wind* 130, 144  
*Octet "Twelve Essays on a Cantabile Theme"* vii, 60, 92, 127-129, 132, 154, 187, 194  
*Pas de Deux: Sonatina for flute and bassoon* 93  
*Pastorale Cantata* 135  
*Piano Études* 43  
*Piano Sonata* 43, 168  
*Pines of Emily Carr, The* 147  
*Portrait* 26-27, 86, 101  
*Prayer for Elizabeth, A* 39, 122-24, 162, 169, 193, 197  
*Québec May* 36, 57, 96, 144  
*Requiem Piece* 87, 132, 138  
*Return of the Native, The* 14, 44, 62, 94, 99, 120, 127  
*Rider on the Sands* 98, 101, 105-108, 118  
*Seagulls, The* 107  
*Second String Quartet ["Threnody"]* vii, 59-60, 122, 127, 154, 168, 187  
*Serenade "Mediation and Three Dances"* 46, 62, 125-27, 129, 137, 154, 171  
*Shelley Portrait, A* 57  
*Sketches from the Western Woods* 147  
*Sonata for cello and piano* 106, 131  
*Sonata for oboe and piano* 34, 39, 106  
*Sonata for two pianos "Of the Universe"* 87, 109, 136, 154  
*Sonata Rhapsody for viola and piano* 53  
*Songs from the Distaff Muse* 96  
*Spring Rhapsody* 124, 144  
*Symphonic Image "Of the North"* 62, 127-128, 197  
*Symphonic Ode #2*  
*Symphonic Ode for viola and orchestra* 60, 130, 136, 139, 140-43, 147  
*Symphonic Ode for cello and orchestra* 51, 130, 138-40, 143, 171  
*Third String Quartet* 127  
*Three Love Songs* 130, 132  
*Three Vancouver Scenes [from Canada Mosaic]* 94, 100  
*Two French Songs* 57  
*Two Night Songs* 145  
*Two Poems* 101  
*Two Songs of the Haida Indians* 2, 144  
*Vancouver Lights (A Soliloquy)* 36, 62, 122, 144  
*Variations on BACH* 27, 39, 132, 154  
*Where Tempests Rise [choral suite from The Return of the Native]* 62, 99

- Couture, Guillaume 66
- Cowell, Henry 24
- Crocker, Richard L.  
    *A History of Musical Style* 51
- Crofton House School for Girls 35
- Crumb, George vi, 50, 59, 193
- Daily Express* (London) 17-18
- Dannatt, George  
    as admirer of Coulthard's work 51
- Darmstadt group 155
- Davies, Meredith 47, 73
- de Ridder, Allard 20, 69, 70, 72, 89  
    works: *Intermezzo* 69; *Overture* 69; *Violin Concerto* 69
- de Ridder, Else 20
- de Vaux, Agathe 67
- Debussy, Claude 155  
    as central influence on Coulthard 11, 27, 191, 195  
    influence on *The Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long* 134  
    influence on *Endymion* 113  
    WORKS: *Violin Sonata* 121
- Dela, Maurice 70
- Delius, Frederick 191
- Descarries, August 67
- Dilworth, Dr. Ira 77
- Dion, Denis 75
- Docherty, Ian viii
- Domer, Jerry viii
- Don Adams Interiors 41-42
- Drefus, Mme. 20
- Duke, David Gordon 54, 90, 119, 131, 138  
    as copyist for Coulthard vii  
    early appreciation of Coulthard's music vi  
    private composition lessons with Coulthard vii  
    reorchestration of *Canada Mosaic* 99  
    undergraduate studies in composition and musicology vi
- Dvořák, Antonin 126
- Dyne, Michael 23
- Eastman, Sheila 43
- Eckhardt-Gramatté, Sophie-Carmen 75, 81

- "Eclectic Composer of Today, The" (address at Banff Centre Composer's Workshop) 55, 200
- Edmonton Symphony Orchestra 74, 108  
performs *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 153  
Young Conductors Competition 108
- Elgar, Edward 126, 149  
WORKS: *Introduction and Allegro* 120
- Elloway, Kenneth  
conducts *Convoy* 102
- Elvin, Florrie 75
- Emery, Tony 49
- Erickson, Arthur 40
- Esprit Orchestra (Toronto) 65
- Ethridge, Jean 54
- Evening Concert (CBC) 125
- Farnon, Robert 70
- Farrell-Ward, Lorna 28
- 1st Symposium of Canadian Music 42, 72
- Fisher, Brian 49
- Fleming, Robert 4, 30, 70-71, 75, 86, 155
- Ford, Clifford 2, 30, 81
- Forrester, Maurcen 57
- Forster, E.M. 42
- Forsyth, Malcolm 74, 81
- Franck, César  
Coulthard's early enthusiasm for 164  
WORKS: *Variations symphoniques* 20
- Fraser Valley Symphony 76
- Freedman, Harry 71, 75, 77, 81, 82  
WORKS: *Images* 82
- Friedlander, Ernst 138  
WORKS: *Concerto* 73
- Friedlander, Marie 138
- Gagné, Marc 75
- Gagnon, André 75
- Garant, Serge 75, 81  
WORKS: *Phrases II* 70
- Garbovitsky, Gregor 121
- Gardiner, John Elliott 77
- Gellhorn, Peter

- conducts *Autumn Symphony* 174
- Gellman, Steven 74
- gender issues 198-99
- George, Graham 67
- Georgia Auditorium 85
- Gibson, Edward 19
- Gilbert, Jeffrey
  - performs *Music on a Quiet Song* 131
- Glick, Srul Irving 74, 82
- Godowsky, Leopold 11
- Gooch, Bryan N.S. viii, 11, 30, 69, 72, 78, 86, 171
- Grenier, Monique 57
- Gratton, Hector 67
- Grégoire-Reid, Claire 75
- Gruber, Hans 146
- Guildhall Ensemble 62
  - premières *Symphonic Image "Of the North"* 127
- Halifax Mail-Star* 110
- Hall, Frederick A. 76
- Halpern, Dr. George viii
- Halpern, Ida 30, 37
  - on *A Prayer for Elizabeth* 125
- Hamilton Philharmonic 74
- Hampton, Ian viii
- Hansen, Joan 54
- Harris, Brian 46
- Harris, Lawren 29
- Harris, Roy 24
- Harriss, C.A.E.
  - WORKS: *Daniel Before the King* 66
- Hart House Orchestra (Toronto) 65, 82, 84
- Haskett-Smith, Captain Ernest (honourary uncle) 13, 17, 18
- Headington, Christopher 14
- Hepner, Lee
  - conducts *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 153
- Herrick, Robert
  - "Threnody", Coulthard's setting of 168
- Hétu, Jacques 4, 75

- WORKS: *Passacaille* 70
- Hindemith, Paul 132, 165  
influence on Coulthard's *First Symphony* 165, 192  
philosophy of *Gebrauchsmusik* 192  
WORKS: *Cardillac* 17; *Matthias the Painter* 165
- Hines, Robert Steven 120
- Hoffman, Irwin 72, 121, 152
- Hofmann, Josef 11
- Holst, Gustav  
influence on Coulthard 191  
WORKS: *St. Paul's Suite* 87, 120
- Homburger, Walter 71, 72
- Huang, Paul 49
- Ireland, John 14
- Jackson, Brian  
conducts *Convoy* 102
- Jacob, Gordon 2, 26, 49, 139-40, 197  
and *Endymion* 110  
*Modern Orchestral Technique* 124
- Jamieson, Rhynd ["R.J."]  
on *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 121
- Janáček, Leos 174
- Jarvis, Don 41
- Joachim, Otto  
WORKS: *Concertante No. 2* 82; *Contrastes* 71
- Johnson, Bliss 127
- Jones, Kelsey 4
- Joo, Arpaad  
conducts *Music to Saint Cecilia* 108  
premières organ version of *Music to Saint Cecilia* 135
- Judge, Robert W. 68
- Juilliard School of Music (New York) 33
- Kallmann, Helmut 43, 66, 72, 122
- Kamloops Orchestra 76
- Kasemets, Udo 75
- Keillor, Elaine 4-5, 53, 63, 202
- Kellogg, Patricia 76, 79
- Kenins, Talivaldis 75
- Kinderman, Dr. William *viii*
- Knox, Roger 54

- Koerner, Thea 30  
Koerner, Walter 30  
Korner, John 41  
Krebs, Dr. Harald *viii*  
Kubalek, Antonin 58  
Kydd, Roseanne 4-5, 52, 56, 59, 156, 199  
Lamb, Mortimer 19, 25  
    and Emily Carr 25  
Lauber, Anne 75  
Laverock, George 98  
Lazarevich, Gordana *viii*, 28, 75  
    *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin 29*  
Leduc, Roland 79  
Lee, Barbara 5  
Lee-Nova, Gary 49  
Leeper, Muriel 75  
Lehmann, Liza 11  
Little Symphony of Montréal 70  
Long, Kathleen 16  
Long, Odean *viii*, 6  
Lowndes, Joan 49  
Lumley Saville, Henry Peregrine 45  
Lutoslawski, Witold 202  
Lutyens, Elizabeth 42  
Macdonald, Jock 19  
MacKenzie, Norman 38  
MacLean, Hugh 30  
*Maclean's Magazine* 8  
MacMillan, Ernest (Sir) 69-71, 82, 87  
    conducts *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 119  
    WORKS: *Concert Overture in A* 68  
MacMillan, Keith 2  
Mahler, Gustav *vi*  
Mahon, Lilette 42  
Malkin, Mayor W.H. 19  
Malkin, Ursula 19  
Markevitch, Igor 70

- Marquis, G. Welton 38
- Matton, Roger 4, 71, 75  
WORKS: *Mouvement symphonique I* 70
- Maves, Dale 5
- Mazzoleni, Dr. Ettore 47, 111  
conducts the *First Symphony* 170
- McCauley, William 74
- McCoppin, Peter 99
- McGee, Timothy J. 2, 5, 43
- McGill Chamber Orchestra (Montréal) 65, 82, 84
- McGreggor, Nancy 78
- McKay, Louis A. 132
- McLean, Eric 67
- McLean, Hugh  
"Evening Concert" 125  
conducts *Serenade "Mediation and Three Dances"* 126
- McMullin, Robert 71
- McNairn, Ian 41
- Melnyk, Lubomyr 4
- Melvin, Grace 19
- Menotti, Gian-Carlo 201, 202
- Mercure, Pierre 71, 77, 81, 82  
WORKS: *Divertissement* 82; *Lignes et points* 70
- Messiaen, Olivier 201
- Meyer, Uri  
conducts *Music to Saint Cecilia* 108
- Milhaud, Darius  
influence on Coulthard 193
- Miller, Elma 74
- Miller, Gregory 30
- Miller, Horace Alden 24
- Miro, Henri 67
- Mizerit, Klaro  
conducts *Endymion* 110  
conducts *Kalamalka* 115
- Moisewtich, Bennito 11
- Monod, Alys 56
- Montréal Philharmonic Society 66
- Montréal Symphonic Ensembles 66

- Montréal Women's Orchestra 48
- Morawetz, Oscar 4, 56, 71, 77, 82, 155  
WORKS: *Piano Concerto* 70; *Sinfonietta* 70
- Morel, Francois 70-71, 74, 77, 79, 81  
WORKS: *Boréal* 70
- Morris, Michael 49
- Morris, R.O. x, 16
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 79  
WORKS: *E<sup>b</sup> Major Piano Concerto* 18
- Music of Our Time* (instructional series) 147
- Nanaimo Orchestra 76
- Napier, Ron viii
- National Arts Centre Orchestra 64, 80, 84
- National Film Board of Canada 56
- National Youth Orchestra 64, 80, 81, 84
- Naylor, Bernard 67, 70
- Neel, Boyd 82
- Neumann, Mark 5
- New England Conservatory (Boston) 8, 13
- New Music* (magazine) 24
- New Westminster Orchestra 76
- Ogden, John 46
- Okanagan Music Festival for Composers 56
- Okanagan Orchestra 76
- Oliver, John 53
- Onley, Toni 41
- Onufrijchuck, Irena 19
- "Opportunity Knocks" 105, 107
- Orchestra London 74
- Orchestre symphonique de Montréal 2, 67, 69, 87, 84, 140  
premières *Symphonic Ode for viola and orchestra* 143
- Orchestre de Québec  
performs *Fantasy* 146
- Ottawa Civic Symphony Orchestra  
premières *Concerto for piano and orchestra* 156
- Ozawa, Seiji 71
- Papineau-Couture, Jean 75, 77  
WORKS: *Pièce Concertane #3* 70; *Suite Lapitsky* 82

- Parlow, Kathleen 11
- Pascoe, Ruth 17
- Pauk, Alex 75
- Pelletier, Wilfred 67
- Penderecki, Krzysztof vi, 50, 59, 193
- Pentland, Barbara 28, 38, 43, 53, 77, 78
- Pépin, Clermont 70-71, 79, 82  
WORKS: *3rd Symphony* 70; *Monade I* 82; *Prismes et cristaux* 70; *Quasars* 70
- Petites Symphonies, Les (Montréal) 79
- Pierce, Gretchen 110
- Plaskett, Joe 41
- Poston, Elizabeth 42-45
- Potvin, Gilles 57, 82, 143
- Poulenc, Francis 201
- Poulet, Gaston  
Paris première of *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 121
- Poulsson, Alexa (granddaughter) 57, 62
- Poulsson, Andreas (son-in-law) 56, 62
- Poussart, Annick 75
- Pratt, Ned 42
- Pratt, Ross 57
- Prévost, André 74-75  
WORKS: *Fantasmes* 70
- Prévost, Pierre 81
- Price, Percival 68
- Primrose, William 143
- Prince George Orchestra 76
- Prix Jean-Lallemand 67, 69, 84
- Proctor, George A. 2, 5
- Promenade Symphony Concerts 68
- Purcell String Quartet  
performs *Burlesca* 135
- Québec Symphony Orchestra 75
- Queen's Hall School for Girls 23, 35
- Quenneville, Pierre 66
- Rathburn, Eidon 71, 74, 75
- Ravel, Maurice  
early influence on Coulthard 11

- Coulthard's affinity for 191  
influence on Coulthard 192  
influence on *Endymion* 113
- Reading (Pennsylvania) Orchestra 26
- Reed, Nancy 20
- Reid, Dennis 29
- Residential Orchestra at the Hague 89
- Rickard, Sylvia *viii*, 54
- Ridout, Godfrey 4, 70, 71, 82
- Robinson, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Millen (grandparents) 10, 27, 32
- Rogers, Mrs. B.T. 9
- Rolston, Isobel (Moore) 46, 54, 57, 133, 144, 146, 148
- Rolston, Shauna 149
- Rolston, Thomas *viii*, 46, 54, 57, 133, 144, 146, 148, 151  
première of *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 151
- Rosen, Robert 55
- Rostropovich, Mstislav 51
- Rowley, Vivienne 5
- Royal College of Music (London) 13, 14, 16, 17, 45, 92
- Sackville-West, Vita 42
- Saint-Marcourx, Micheline Coulombe  
WORKS: *Hétéromorphie* 70
- Saint-Saens, Camille  
WORKS: *Carnival of the Animals* 20
- Samson, Marc 75
- Samuel, Harold 11
- Samuel Lapinsky Foundation 84  
commissions 82
- Sappho  
text for *Songs from the Distaff Muse* 96
- Satie, Erik  
early influence on Coulthard 11
- Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra 75, 84
- Sasonkin, Manus 74
- Saunders, Stanley 74
- Schafer, R. Murray 5, 73, 81  
*On Canadian Music* 2  
WORKS: *No Longer than Ten (10) Minutes* 148; *Son of Heldenleben* 70
- Schipizky, Frederick (student) 54

- orchestration of *Québec May* 144
- Schneider, Ernst (student) 54
- Schoenberg, Arnold 31, 51, 78, 165
  - lack of influence on Coulthard 191
- Schuldt, Phyllis 30, 147
- Schumann, Robert 153
  - WORKS: *Concerto for piano and orchestra Op. 54* 19
- Schwandt, Dr. Erich viii
- Scott, Charles H. 19
- Shadbolt, Jack 40, 41, 50
  - A Personal Recollection* 28
  - WORKS: *Souvenir of the King's Visit and Luncheon on May 29th 1938* 25
- Shakespeare, William
  - Hamlet* (text for *The Bird of Dawning Singeth All Night Long*) 133
- Shand, Patricia 81
- Shaw, Charles 40
- Short History of the CBC Vancouver Chamber Orchestra, A* 77
- Shostakovich, Dmitry 201-202
  - accessible orchestral style of 154
- Silverman, Robert
  - recording of *Concerto for piano and orchestra* 156
- Singer, Jacques 72
- Smith, Gordon 40, 41, 50
- Smith, Leo 70
- Smythe, Dame Ethyl 12
- Société des concerts symphonique de Montréal 67
- Somers, Harry 71, 74, 77, 81, 83
  - WORKS: *Fantasia* 70
- Spier, Susan 81
- Stegeman, Charles 41
- Stewart, Reginald 68
- Stockhausen, Karl-Heinz 202
- Strauss, Richard 174
- Stravinsky, Igor 78, 155, 165, 202
  - lack of influence on Coulthard 192
  - WORKS: *Firebird* 118; *Petruschka* 91
- Streatfeild, Simon
  - conducts *Autumn Symphony* 174
  - conducts *Fantasy* 146
- Suk, Joseph 126

- Surdin, Morris 82  
Susskind, Walter 71  
Swartz, Ira 30  
Symonds, Norman 74, 81, 82  
Symphony Nova Scotia 90  
Tafelmusik Baroque Ensemble 65  
Tanabe, Takao 41  
Taylor, Tom 78  
Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich 126  
Tintner, George 90  
Tippett, Michael  
    WORKS: *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* 120  
Tobey, Mark 41  
Toronto Conservatory 9  
Toronto Symphony Orchestra  
Toronto Symphony Orchestra 66, 68, 70, 72  
    records *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 119  
    performs *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 121  
    performs *Serenade "Mediation and Three Dances"* 127  
Tremblay, Gilles 56  
    WORKS: *Fleuves* 70  
Tripp, J.D.A. 12  
Tumasonis, Dr. Elizabeth viii  
Tupper, Reginald 67  
Turbide, Nadia 70  
Turner, Robert 4, 77, 78  
    WORKS: *Capriccio Concertante* 73; *Lyric Interlude* 73  
University of British Columbia Department of Music 12, 36-38, 199  
Vallerand, Jean 70, 71, 82  
    WORKS: *Cordes en mouvement* 82  
*Vancouver Art and Artists: 1931-1983* 28, 49  
Vancouver Art Gallery 19  
Vancouver Community College viii  
Vancouver Little Theatre 23, 86  
Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra 76  
Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art 19, 35  
*Vancouver Sun* 85, 98  
Vancouver Symphony Orchestra 19-20, 30, 42, 47, 65, 66, 69, 72, 99, 121

- and Vancouver Proms 85
- commission of *Canada Mosaic* 94
- performs *Ballade* 121
- première of *Concerto for violin and orchestra* 151
- performs *A Prayer for Elizabeth* 125
- Vancouver Woman's Musical Club 11, 13, 57
- Vancouver Youth Orchestra 76
- Vanderpant, John 19, 25
  - photographs Coulthard 25
- Varro, Marie-Aimée
  - premières *Concerto for piano and orchestra* 156
- Vaughan Williams, Ralph 2, 87, 174
  - as teacher 14
  - exploration of symphonic structures 164
  - lack of influence on Coulthard 191
  - WORKS: *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* 14, 120; *Job* 14; *Lark Ascending, The* 14, 124; *London Symphony* 15; *Sancta Civitas* 14
- Verebes, Robert 53, 57, 127, 140
- Vickers, Jon 58
- Victoria Conservatory of Music 54
- Victoria Symphony 146
- Vishnevskaya, Galina 51
- von Kunitz, Luigi
  - WORKS: *Violin Concerto* 68
- Waddington, Geoffrey 78
  - conducts *A Prayer for Elizabeth* 124
- Wagenaar, Bernard 33, 196
- Walter, Arnold 70
- Walton, William 91, 201
  - probable influence on Coulthard 191
- Warlock, Peter
  - WORKS: *Capricol Suite* 120
- Waterlow, D. Barry 9
- Watson, Scott 41
- Webern, Anton 51, 202
- Wedd, Patrick 135
  - organ version of *Music to Saint Cecilia* 135
- Weill, Kurt 201
- Weinzweig, John 70, 71, 75, 77, 81
- Weisgarber, Elliot 53

*Western Homes and Living* (magazine) 40

Weston, W.P. 19

Willan, Healey 67, 70, 71, 82

WORKS: *Coronation Te Deum* 68; *March solonelle* 68; *Symphony #1* 63;  
*Symphony in D minor* 68

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra 102

Winters, Kenneth 71, 81

Wodell, Russell viii

Wodson, Edward

on *Ballade "A Winter's Tale"* 121

Woodcock, George viii, 40

Woodcock, Ingeborg viii, 40

Wyman, Max 78, 98, 171

Xenakis, Iannis vi, 50, 193, 202

Yocom, John 132

Zuckerman, George

*Lyric Symphony* composed for 171

performs *Lyric Sonatina for bassoon and piano* 171