

Social Efficacies of Art Music in Canada: Exploring Collaborative Processes

In the current environment where the arts are increasingly subjected to scrutiny for their economic viability, and sometimes disparaged by politicians and journalists for their perceived lack of social value, it is timely to re-consider both the potential and limits of art music's precarious relationships with partnership and community connections in Canada. This roundtable will reflect upon a three-year project whose aim was to examine the various ways in which art music organizations engage in socially relevant, community-oriented ventures focused specifically around representations of place and Indigenous history.

To begin, Robin Elliott and Jeremy Strachan will discuss the ballet *Going Home Star* and its representation of residential school history. With music by Christos Hatzis, story by Joseph Boyden, and choreography by Mark Godden, the full-length ballet deals with the legacy of the Indian Residential School system, and was created with the support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Elliott and Strachan will discuss the creation of the ballet in the context of the work of the TRC, the expectations and experiences of the creative team that brought it into being, and the reception that greeted it on the occasion of the first performances in October 2014 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Mary Ingraham and Brianna Wells will follow this with a presentation on *The Lake | N-ha-a-itk* that explores the role of counter-discourses in collaborative creation. Using an embedded methodology including partner interviews and participation in performance, this collaborative production between the Turning Point Ensemble and the Westbank First Nation community created a new performance context for Barbara Pentland and Dorothy Livesay's 1952 opera *The Lake*. *The Lake | N-ha-a-itk* is the result of a significant interchange between these communities that has produced a newly-staged opera with the addition of newly-composed creative materials. The shared performance context of syilxw artists, their history and their spirituality, within the predominantly settler narrative and traditional European art form reveals the tensions of shared place and discourse while encouraging new dialogues for contemporary intercultural exchange.

To conclude the roundtable, Dylan Robinson and Patrick Nickleson will discuss the role of distributed authorship in three Canadian “place-pieces” that aimed to avoid modes of direct mimetic representation, aesthetically, of that place’s soundscape. These works include Brent Lee and Rod Strickland’s *Drive-Thru Symphony* performed in and inspired by Windsor, Ontario; Tod Machover’s *A Toronto Symphony*; and *Singing the Earth* created by Anna Höstman (composer) Dylan Robinson, and Patrick Nickleson about Bella Coola, British Columbia. In seeking to avoid a singular representation of the politics and citizens of these places, the composers/collaborators approached the creative process through different frameworks for ethnographic research and citizen contribution. The presentation examines the political-aesthetic challenges posed by such new models for citizen-audience contribution and the ways by which these pieces place-focused works navigated the aesthetics, politics, and ethics collective authorship.