



# UNA VOCE

**May 2002 Vol. 9 No. 3**

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## THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE ARTS

There has been much written in the past few years about the viability of the arts in an economic sense – that dollars invested in the arts will generate spinoffs for tourism, restaurants, etc. and more than compensate for the subsidies. It is refreshing to attend a conference that reminds us that culture isn't always about business and that there are people who resolutely defend and believe in music for music's sake; theatre for theatre's sake; even television fergawdsake.

In Toronto on November 29, 2001, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) held a one-day conference for the first time since 1994. The title was 'Crossroads 2001' and the main session titled "In Pursuit of a Vigorous and Distinctive Cultural Life in Canada: A Conversation Post-Kingston/Massey-Levesque". What has been accomplished? What has changed? How do we ensure a vibrant culture in the future?

Kingston was the first meeting of Canadian artists, in June 1941, and it was that conference that evolved into the CCA. Ten years later, the Massey-Levesque Commission was mandated to report on "the entire field of letters, the arts, and sciences within the jurisdiction of the federal state". The commission was named for Vincent Massey, a future Governor-General and Most Reverend Georges-Henri Levesque, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Laval University.

The slate of speakers at the CCA was certainly a quotable bunch - some have been working in and eloquently analyzing the arts for the 60 years since Kingston. Here's how I heard it:

**Mavor Moore** is a playwright, producer, actor, director, critic... and was the first artist to chair the Canada Council for the Arts. He kick-started the day with "No one

knows what the hell culture is supposed to include – it can be music or manure". But culture refers to the way things are being done. Culture is growth, creating, writing, nurturing. For example, if you believe that culture is just *there*, then you don't need to do anything about it. But if you believe that it is there to fulfil human potential, then it needs a lot of work to sustain it.

Mr Moore went on to explain about the Royal Commission that became the Massey Report. There were no representatives from labour, visible minorities, media, arts and letters, or sciences. The participants were those with connections. The report was not a template for all Canadians, but was nonetheless far-reaching and visionary. His passion for art and culture resulted in a delightful mis-speak when he quoted Robert Burton "Lunatics should be unshackled and treated with symphony".

**Pierre Juneau** is best known as Chair of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC, 1968-75) during the formative years of the Canadian Content in broadcasting policy, and as President of the CBC (1982-89). Broadcasting remains his specialty and Mr Juneau advocates that the CCA focus on audio/visual media. "Electronic media is a sector which can bring together all sectors in Canadian culture. They reflect the space in which we all live ... Electronic Media allow citizens as persons to develop an awareness of their environment; to make them more free to make important choices..." But, he stresses, it is important that those media remain under Canadian control.

The new Head of Music at the Canada Council, **Russell Kelley**, spoke on the importance of Arts Education – Learning *in* the arts, *about* the arts and *through* the arts. The danger, he says, is the talent-based education that foments elitist attitudes. There are too many people who were told as children that they were no good at art, music, poetry. How can we bring about societal change that promotes the arts when we've already lost a chunk of society early in the game? In education, we shouldn't be that concerned with *what* is being produced; just that it *is* being produced. Many people have no respect for the arts because of their bad experience at an early age.

Once the session was thrown open for the discussion of 'what has changed?' there were many views

expressed regarding quantity of art vs. quality of art. **Ana Serrano** (Great Canadian Story Engine Project on CBC) works in New Media at the Canadian Film Centre and believes that art needs to be more accessible to more people. The centralist policies of Massey-Levesque turned us into passive recipients of art and now individuals need to take the initiative in forming cultural policy. In New Media, anyone with a computer can be a publisher or curator. "Rhetoric is limited because access is a reality". She does not suggest that there is no place for the accomplished master artist, but that the community needs to be involved in creation. Mr Juneau commented that culture cannot be measured in density, and 'more is better' is not necessarily the case.

Mr Juneau sparked a lively chat regarding TV and mass culture. The bogeyman identified by most of the panellists was 'hype'. Some of the comments: Very few people anticipated the hype which has taken over art, scientific research etc.; The British influence in the Massey-Levesque Commission could not have foreseen the cultural diversity and the multi-media effect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where untalented people who have nothing to offer are taken up by the machine and churned into culture; Have we lost our capacity to produce the next generation of Canadian artists as a consequence of globalization and a lack of commitment to symphonies, dance and publishing?

The CCA invited **David Macfarlane** to be the conference rapporteur and to do a wrap-up of the day's proceedings. Mr Macfarlane is a novelist who writes the weekly 'cheapeats' column in the *Globe and Mail*. I clipped this from one of his columns a couple of years ago and saved it for, I didn't know what, but it seems appropriate to use now.

"When we have finally starved our public broadcaster to death; when we have finally choked our symphonies and underfunded our operas; when we have finally strangled our programs of arts education; when we have finally forced our theatres and our galleries and our museums and our artists into the shallow confines of commercial success, where on earth will we find shelter, or solace, or wisdom, when suddenly and unexpectedly, reality turns and stares us in the face?"  
David Macfarlane, *The Globe and Mail*, Monday 20 September 1999

The date is correct - the rumination of a thoughtful author. At this year's CCA Conference, he was struck with the question of the 'ghettoizing' of artists. How do we prevent that? Art and culture are not an adjunct to the life we live but if we are not preparing the public on an institutional level to appreciate the arts, then fifty years from now there will be no Giller Awards. 'Wellness', in the end, is what it's all about; not to feel superior because we

appreciate theatre, opera, symphony – but because we are denuded without it. The most important issue is arts education, which speaks directly to the question 'how does art become pivotal to the community?'

Mr Macfarlane sent us off with a combination of aviso and kudo. "Bad things can happen. September 11 taught us that. The Toronto Symphony can cease to be the Toronto Symphony. Bad stuff really, really can happen. I would like to think that what you people are doing is making sure that that won't happen, that the discussion happening here today will ensure that in fifty years our cultural institutions will thrive."

For more information on the Canadian Conference of the Arts, visit their website <[www.ccarts.ca](http://www.ccarts.ca)>.

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#### To the editor, Una Voce

In a rambling and generally disjointed message in the October edition of *Una Voce*, President Rob McCosh attempted to make certain points. He criticized Americans for being ignorant of Canadian matters and Canadians for asserting their independence. He somehow wrapped it up by proposing that a solution to his criticism would be the enlightening presence, at the AFM Convention, of legal counsel for Canada. Unfortunately for readers of *Una Voce*, his points were anything but coherent. Allow me to tell you what Mr. McCosh actually tried to say.

Mr. McCosh was upset that an AFM Convention resolution, involving contractors, was passed by the Convention delegates but Canadian Locals, as is often the case, requested that it not apply to Canada (the details of the resolution are not pertinent). He was upset that this happened despite his protests. He was upset that delegates from all over Canada chose a course of action with which he did not agree. He was generally very upset.

Mr. McCosh should remember who he is and who elected him. It is unacceptable that a representative from OCSM, representing some hundreds of symphonic musicians, indulges in embarrassing public fantasies at the AFM Convention, wherein he becomes some kind of *Überdelegate* who somehow knows more, cares more and speaks more than the entire Canadian Conference of Locals. The delegates representing Canada are elected by thousands of musicians from coast to coast, including symphonic players. Whether Mr. McCosh likes it or not,

they are empowered to make decisions that both include Canada and exclude Canada.

As President of Local 406, I would never dream of making a decision involving symphonic musicians without consulting them. Similarly, OCSM is the body whose input the AFM values when it comes to symphonic matters in Canada. Unfortunately, Mr. McCosh seems to have ambitions to speak for every musician in the entire country, on every matter. If that is his goal, there are democratic ways to accomplish it: for example, he could run for the position of Vice-President from Canada. While he is President of OCSM, however, he should have the good sense not to embarrass himself at conventions, in front of both American and Canadian delegates, with his misguided and misplaced Quixotic behaviour.

Emile Subirana  
President, Local 406

### The President Responds

First, let me congratulate Mr. Subirana on acquiring a new skill. Over the years I have observed Emile being capable of many things but mind-reading is a new one, as in his statement, "Allow me to tell you what Mr. McCosh actually tried to say."

Mr. Subirana would like to gloss over the resolution as "not pertinent" when that is the core issue. Prior to the 2001 Convention, AFM Bylaws Article 5, section 8(d) stated, "No Local Officer shall serve in the position of Personnel Manager for an employer of musicians in the Local's jurisdiction." This article is renumbered 7(d) in the 2001 bylaws with the following sentence added: "Beginning with a Local's next election on or after August 1, 2001, no Local Officer, except in Canada, shall serve in the position of a contractor of musicians in the musical theater field."

ICSOM submitted this resolution, which arose out of the Investigative Task Force efforts at the 1999 Convention. At that convention the Player Conferences (including OCSM/OMOSC) tried very hard to get a broader exclusion passed, that of disallowing *any* contractors on Local Boards. The political difficulty is that, sometimes in the smaller jurisdictions, the Local Officer is Mrs. or Mr. Music in that community. If contractors were excluded there could be no one to run the Local. That has been the subject of heated debate both in committee and on the convention floor over the years.

The new bylaw, which at least excludes contractors in large Locals from serving on boards, went into committee with no exclusion for Canada. During the submission hearing the Canadian members of the committee stated that there was not a problem with theater contractors in Canadian Locals. They therefore convinced

our American colleagues to create an exclusion for Canada. In return the Canadian delegates promised that, since it no longer had an effect on Canada, they would not vote yea or nay in the voice vote. However, when the resolution came to the floor they did vote. In fact the voice vote was too close to tell so a standing vote was taken (all the delegates stand in favour or opposition to a resolution and are physically counted). My rough estimate placed it at about a 50/50 split among the Canadian delegates. Let me applaud the Canadian officers who voted for the resolution.

Upset? Yes Emile I was "very upset." But embarrassed, no. What I felt was more akin to shame. Shame that a country such as Canada, which has a well-deserved reputation for honesty should put that reputation at risk in an international arena with Canadian delegates who try to pull the wool over the eyes of our American counterparts.

I have no problem remembering who I am or who elected me. The delegates elected me, just as the membership elected you to represent them in whatever forum we happen to be participating in. When I spoke at the convention, I may not have been speaking on behalf of all the musicians in Canada but I certainly was speaking for the symphonic component, in particular my colleagues in Nova Scotia who went through hell.

On one point we may agree: public fantasies. Perhaps it is a public and private fantasy of mine that one day the AFM Canada will actually become a union, like our American counterpart; that we will pass resolutions on issues that other unions have long ago realized were for the common good; that some of our officers will no longer behave as if this was a "good ol' boys club." Until then I will continue to ask embarrassing questions, whether you like it or not.

The one positive feeling I came away with at the conclusion of the 2001 Convention results from the anger expressed to me by a number of American delegates who had dealt with that resolution in committee. They were angry because they felt they had been lied to - that a deal had been struck and then ignored. Getting an exclusion for Canada the next time may prove a great deal more difficult, which is a shame because there probably are bylaws that should exclude the US, such as the ratification process for the CBC agreement.

In closing, I must thank Mr. Subirana for his flattering depiction of me as an Überdelegate. Sadly, I am Über nothing. But I would recommend him to read a little less Nietzsche and perhaps more John Ralston Saul. It would help with his understanding of democratic representation and appreciation for history.

Rob McCosh  
President, OCSM

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## UNITY CONFERENCE OTTAWA 2002

The Unity Conference will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Ottawa from 9AM on Wednesday, August 14th until approximately 1:00PM on Sunday, August 18th. The room rate is \$129 plus tax. The agenda is still to be confirmed, but as we go to press, it is expected that the Negotiating Orchestras Workshop will be held on the afternoon and evening of August 13th. This is primarily for delegates from orchestras that will be entering into negotiations during the 2002-2003 season, although other delegates are welcome to audit the sessions. We hope to spend two full days meeting in plenary sessions with ROPA (Regional Orchestras Players Association) and ICSOM (International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians), and during our time in Ottawa, we will be celebrating ICSOM's 40th anniversary.

Francine Schutzman, OCSM Secretary

### **EH? A reflection on hearing loss**

Encroaching deafness is possibly the most insidious of industrial illness. Musicians have the same level of stress that an airline pilot endures during landing and takeoff but have it for the duration of the concert (some would say that rehearsals where the conductor gets his are more stressful than the concert where the players get theirs). Only air traffic controllers have higher stress levels.

My brother Michael is a fine retired principal 'cellist of the Montreal Symphony. I am a fine retired principal bassoonist of the Toronto Symphony. My brother retired from the Montreal Symphony despite Charles Dutois' wish that he stay on. Indeed he did a little touring with them after his retirement. I left the TSO after urging Gunther Herbig that he had means under the contract whereby he could fire someone who could not play but that he had no means under the contract where he could remove someone who did not wish to play. Once management confirmed this, Herbig initiated the procedure by which I could be fired and thus able to receive the separation package. During the mandatory litany of three meetings where the music director outlines the shortcomings that will lead to dismissal there was only once that I looked at Gunther. That was when he said, "You play as though you are right". Why did I wish to leave?; because of pain. It hurt to sit in front of the trumpets.

I say insidious because deafness is not like the pain of bursitis or arthritis where the body is made aware that something is wrong. Industrial deafness is a gradual and unnoticed decrease in aural acuity. Ability to analyze the

sounds you do hear is not diminished. What happens is that eventually the direction from a principal during a tutti or the response of a section player goes misunderstood or even unheard in the cacophony. Speech is the most complex form of sound. When for the first time you notice the pencil dropped on the stand behind you going off like a pistol shot or turn your head unconsciously favouring your good ear to hear a colleague's comment this is what should alert you to industrial deafness. Even worse is when your Doctor informs you that you are lip reading.

Of course all prospective orchestral musicians should have a copy of an audiology test taken at a University Medical Centre or Hospital on file. That test should be upgraded annually but don't dispose of the first one, this is your benchmark. When you, the audiologist or your Doctor can see hearing loss on the chart it is not too late to take action. Simply assuring that a reasonable distance exists between the back of your head and the music stand of the offending instrument is sufficient in many cases. Not going onstage until the last moment obviates exposure to the high decibel levels experienced prior to rehearsals and concerts.

Another aspect of industrial deafness is the taboo on discussion. If you break an arm or leg or have some other obvious disability then absence from the orchestra while collecting salary is accepted, but how do you justify something as elusive as encroaching deafness. And of course absence does not repair the damage. Hearing loss is permanent - it does not get better, ever. The younger you are the more invincible, the more invulnerable and the less likely to have had a hearing test. Ideally that test would have occurred before rehearsing with any high school band but certainly before attendance at a University Music School.

Our father and uncle both wore hearing aids. I don't recall if Granny needed one but our other grandparents died before we were born and thus we can't know. Our father pounded the piano all his years as teacher, accompanist and vocal pedagogue. They say that proximity to well trained singers in full voice can be deafening. Two of his famous students were Lois Marshall and Victor Braun. Our Uncle Peter came to Toronto as a 'cellist to study with Leo Smith. He accepted during the advent of the "talkies" a position with my grandfather's stock brokerage firm. As he said in his memoirs "it was a near miss". He stayed in business and gave Mike his 'cello. Peter explained his deafness as the result of dreadful telephone audio in the '30s.

Mike's hearing is fine. But his eyes bother him. The year after I left the TS, the orchestra brought in disability insurance.

*Nicholas Kilburn served as President of OCSM and The National Youth Orchestra. As Chairman of the TSO Players' Committee he was the first player to be invited to the Board of Directors*