

An Alternate History of Canadian Electronic Music (1956–1981)

Curated by Keith Fullerton Whitman (US/AU)
Presented by *send + receive: a festival of sound v20*

Poolside Gallery | Video Pool Media Arts Centre

221-100 Arthur Street, 2nd Floor | Wednesday–Saturday
12:00–5:00 PM

Broadcasts on **CKUW** 95.9 FM, Sundays at 5:00 PM
beginning October 14.

During the course of this three-hour program, the listener will be drawn into the deepest recesses of early electronic music in Canada. The focus of this program is on obscure and transgressive pieces found outside of the usual academic lanes, all from the nascent days where psychedelia, sound poetry, experimental film and emerging audio and video technologies were all being explored with equal aplomb. The work of composers and musicians such as **Wayne Carr, Robert Bauer, Lloyd Burritt, and Marcelle Deschênes** will be explored, along with seldom-heard pieces by storied figures such as **Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux, Rudolf Komorous, Ann**

Robin MacKenzie, “A Sound Work To Accompany” (1972, 23'51”)

As a final offering, here is the first half of a private issue LP covering, as it says on the tin, “A Sound Work To Accompany” a visual art show at Carmen Lamanna Gallery in Toronto in the early 1970s by artist Robin MacKenzie. As something, perhaps, of an antidote to the virtuoso tape music stylings above, this seemingly naive set of late-night roadside pause-button antics hits a sweet spot between conceptualism and effectiveness.

send + receive (1998 – present) is an international festival that investigates the disciplines of experimental music and sound art, and is one of the longest standing media arts festivals in North America focusing exclusively on sound-based work. It presents an invaluable opportunity for showcasing the innovative work of Manitoban, Canadian and international artists. send + receive addresses the need for a critical and intimate platform for audio based art locally, nationally & internationally.

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October 4 – November 3, 2018

Twenty-two Selections from an Alternate Chronology of Canadian Electronic Music

Norman McLaren, “Rhythmetic” (1956, 7’49”)

As great a place to start as any would be this fantastically minimal early piece by the film and sound designer Normal McLaren. Composed entirely by scratching onto the optical audio strip of 35mm film in a “Direct Film” style, McLaren essentially applied the Pythagorean time-pitch map to come up with a wildly adventurous rhythmic exercise that predates the micro-edits of the microprocessor age by a good forty years.

Norma Beecroft, “Two Went To Sleep” (1967, 2’54”)

Beecroft has been a tireless exponent of Canadian music, witnessed by the thirteen-LP strong “Music In Canada” series she helmed and hosted. Very little of her own electronic music has been issued along the way, making the short excerpts on her CAPAC single all the more tantalizing; across “Two Went To Sleep,” Leonard Cohen’s lyrics are mapped to a taut ensemble framework, incorporating electronic timbres and transformations of Mary Morrison’s reading of “Parasites of Heaven,” recalling Ruth White’s handling of Baudelaire’s “Fleurs de Mal.”

Wayne Carr, “Timbral Changes” (1968, 4’51”)

Jim Brown, Wayne Carr “There Was So Much” (1968, 5’35”)

A close collaborator of See/Hear svengali Jim Brown’s, Wayne Carr was, along with Phillip Werren, one of the first in Canada

Lloyd Burritt “The Hollow Men” (1968, 2’00”) Roy Cooper, “Prelude to 1984” (1970, 7’00”)

Two pieces by two composers aligned with the See/Hear axis in Vancouver, both of whom appear on the label’s debut offering and nowhere else, are fascinating glimpses of the Canadian West Coast of the just-post psychedelic era. Buchla resonances abound across both pieces, with Burritt’s short-sharp-shock clearing into the feedback oasis of Cooper’s Orwellian absolutions.

Michel Longtin, “La Mort Du Pierrot” (1972, 5’32”)

Publicly aired in 1972 via an internal Radio Canada collection, this early piece by the McGill-aligned Composer and Professor Michel Longtin shows an early fascination with the complex, frequency modulation matrices and drones that he would explore a decade later across his classic “Trilogie De La Montagne.” Longtin’s early studies with Paul Pedersen, Bengt Hambraeus and Alcides Lanza at McGill set up his technical acuity and allowed his voice as a composer to flourish.

Bengt Hambraeus, “Tides” (1974, 14’48”)

Speaking of Hambraeus, “Tides” is a ferocious, extended piece for synthesizer composed at McGill University’s Electronic Music Studio in the early 1970s that is rife with spring-tank eruptions and creaking, figurative, minimal figures that evoke an oceanic expanse. Hambraeus’s arrival in Canada in 1972 after serving as a music director of Sveriges Radio in Stockholm marked the beginning of a golden age of electronic music in academia in Canada. He remained a

Professor of composition at McGill until his death in 2000.

Rudolf Komorous, “Part Of A Canon From Anatomy Of Melancholy” (1974, 5’06”)

One of the more neglected Canadian-transplant composers, Komorous is now seeing a renewed interest in his work. He arrived in Canada in 1969 and landed a job at the School of Music at the University of Victoria before serving as Director of the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University. Komorous composed this subtly entrancing piece of in-situ process music in the early 1970s at the University of Victoria EMS.

Victor Grauer, “Inferno” (1967, 6’28”)

A fascinating, one-off piece composed at the University of Toronto in 1967 by the Cantometrics co-inventor (which he devised along noted cultural anthropologist Alan Lomax) presaging the embrace of gain-staging and noise-floor inversions by a good decade. Other than a production credit on the 1966 “Music Of The Jos Plateau And Other Regions Of Nigeria” LP on Folkways (and, of course, “The Cantometrics Training Tapes” 7-cassette box) this is Grauer’s only appearance on record.

Southam, Alain Clavier, Michel Longtin, and Norman McLaren.

This project was curated and coordinated by American artist and enthusiastic music researcher **Keith Fullerton Whitman**. From 2003 to 2015, he helmed the highly specialized experimental music distributor *Mimaroglu Music* and since 2016 has run online distribution *Broken-Music*.

This playlist will also be presented as a Sunday series on **CKUW 95.9 FM** through October and November beginning on **October 14**.

*This exhibition is presented in partnership with **Video Pool Media Art Centre** and **CKUW**.*

*Special thanks to Nils Vik and **EQ3** for the generous donation of furnishings for this special listening lounge space.*

Ted Dawson, “Concerto Grosso I (for Tape)” (1973, 13’30”)

Dawson began his studies at the University of Victoria in 1968 and quickly subsumed into the West Coast scene and social experimentation that characterized the late 60's after having discovered the nascent happening scene along with John Cage and Fluxus. Composed just after relocating to Toronto in 1973, Dawson's lone electronic piece, “Concerto Grosso I (for Tape) ” puts the then state-of-the-art University of Toronto Electronic Music Studio through its paces. Dawson wasn't the most prolific of the CAPAC-aligned composers — only the demonstration single and this lone piece on a McGill compilation are available — but he's seemingly used the entirety of his ideas of electronic music in this one piece.

Ann Southam & sean o'huigin; “Sky-Sails (Part Two)” (1973, 15’12”)

Ann's later works for dance are gorgeous, carefully considered pieces full of held tones. But this, from her first-issued recording, is a collaboration with sound-poet sean o'huigin that shows her embrace of reckless abandon, utilizing the University of Toronto's Moog Modular system to extend, augment and demolish o'huigin's voice beyond recognition, context, and repair. Forty-five years later, this remains a prescient high water mark in Canadian electronic music, despite its relative obscurity within both sound and poetry circles.

to utilize the Buchla Electric Music Box, which he does so dazzlingly across “The First See/Hear” Compilation and Brown's own “o see can u say.” Here we get a short piece of multi-tracked synthesizer studies, followed by a real-time performance wrapping Brown's explosive poetry and noise-guitar styles around Carr's deft Buchla improvisations.

**Robert Bauer “Extensions II (Guitar)” (1975, 8’23”)
Robert Daigneault “Guitar Collage” (1975, 7’24”)**

Speaking of guitar and tape music, let's skip forward a bit to the fascinating 1975 “Guitar Extensions” set, featuring a trilogy of fine, virtuosic styles on the A-side performed admirably by instrumentalists Bauer and Daigneault that in no way prepares you for the entirety of the B-side, which is comprised of two coruscating tape collage pieces that presage so much of the coming industrial movements while keeping one toe in instrumental performance. These are direct precursors of the noise-guitar spec, pre-dated perhaps only by Michel Dintrich's performance of Philippe Dogoz's “Aggressions” in 1970 and Fabrice Baty's amazing “Guitares” from the following year.

**Marcelle Deschênes, “L'Amer • Tube” (1972-73, Score to the Jean-Pierre Boyer film, 11’24”)
Marcelle Deschênes, “Extraits De MOLL, Opéra Lilliput Pour Six Roches Molles” (1976, 8’03”)**

Deschênes is a well-versed Quebecois composer; she was the teacher of electro-acoustic music at Laval during the greater part of the 1970s and her vast oeuvre of pieces for modular

instrumental ensembles has its roots in the nascent happenings of the time and Fluxus scenes. Yet it's her work in electronic media scoring experimental films within and outside of the O.N.F. community that makes the strongest impression. Cut rather coarsely with excerpts from Pierre Henry's proto-everything brainwave epic "Mise en Musique Corticalart du Roger La Fosse," Deschênes' piercing oscillator aggregates in "L'Amer • Tube" go tête-à-tête, eclipsing even Henry's wooliest channelings. The later "MOLL" shows a group-sound and improvisational dynamic cut with *musique concrète* techniques, yielding an essential merge of post-psychadelic styles that's equal parts *Theatre du Chene Noir* and airtight *concrète*.

Philippe Ménard, "Femme-en-Songe" (1981, 3'49")

Ménard's 1983 suite "Contes Électroniques (En Couleurs)" with French composer Serge Rustin remains an unheralded classic along the avant-electro axis (a la Bernard Bonnier's incontestably great solo outing). But this short tape piece, composed at the GMEM in France, shows his more academic side, with its invocation of a chirping frog pond lined with decisive atonal bombast.

Alain Clavier, "Metadata" (1971, Score to the Peter Foldès film, 8'36")

Alain Clavier; "Ceci est un message enregistré" (1973, Score to the Jean-Thomas Bédard film, 10'16")

death narrative not too dissimilar from Harry Smith's formative film-work) works as a standalone due its adoption of apropos *musique concrète* techniques to yield an effective, yet wholly

conceptual, representation of the life cycle. Working with Peter Foldès a few years prior, Clavier's "Metadata" focuses largely on electronic sound sources, showing his allegiances were in both the WDR and GRM camps.

Gilles Tremblay, "Dimensions Soleils" (1970, Score to the film by Raymond Brousseau, 4'17")

The late Gilles Tremblay's score to Brousseau's second O.N.F. film is a master class in tape assemblage, revelling in its embrace of discrete, pointillist solo sounds sliding into a symphony of backwards bells, tape-echo feedback and slowed-down minimal percussion filigree that increases in pace and intensity through its final moments. While widely renowned for his chamber and orchestral works, his forays into tape music are fully formed and among the best in the first wave.

Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux, "Zones" (1972, 9'12")

An extended *concrète* stunner scored for sliding-scale pipe organ, prepared piano and swarms of atemporal, iterative electronic sound, "Zones" was realized from December 1971 to January 1972 in the Sonic Research Studio of Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, BC) and premiered on March 25th, 1972, during the Festival International d'Art contemporain (Royan, France). A Canadian composer that began working at the storied GRM studios in Paris in 1970, Saint-Marcoux composed a half-dozen electro-acoustic works alongside a litany of solo and chamber pieces, and she brings this innate sense for orchestration to her tape work.