

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Paul R. Lehman

Contemporary Canadian Composers. Edited by Keith MacMillan and John Beckwith. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975; xxiv + 248 pp.; 8 plates, list of abbreviations; hard covers; \$14.95.

Canadian composers are justly proud of their Canadian Music Centre, an organization created largely for the promotion and publication of Canadian music. They should be further pleased by the recent efforts of John Beckwith and Keith MacMillan, respectively Chairman of the Publications Committee and Executive Secretary of the Centre, who, as editors of a dictionary of twentieth-century Canadian composers, have assembled a comprehensive and surprisingly lively account of contemporary music activities in that country.

If the intersupportive testimonials in this book are any indication, the composers of Canada must also be an unusually noncompetitive, even chummy group. Perhaps this apparent camaraderie has encouraged the editors' even-handed presentation.

One senses no ground axes—conservatives are treated as well as radicals, old composers as well as young, native-born non-residents alongside recent Canadian immigrants.

Although all entries incorporate biography, bibliography, and elaborate lists of works and performances, the most interesting aspect of the book is the essay-like treatment afforded thirty-three out of the total 144 personalities included. Often covering several pages, these narrative assessments of the composers' professional careers are, by virtue of their intimate style, more than straight biographies. Sometimes personal (one composer is described as "absent-minded, somewhat nervous"), now and then critical (a particular opera is described as "too oppressed by Celtic gloom"), but always highly readable, the items represent some of the best information in print on the diversity of experience in today's music.

As a Yank who is reasonably familiar with Canadian music, I could quibble with the amount of attention paid this or that composer. I

could also find fault with the inclusion of four "pictorial" score pages—a seemingly random collection that could have been replaced with more photos of composers, these being substantially more entertaining than the odds and ends displayed here. Fortunately these minor lapses do not prevent the book from being what the editors obviously intended: the standard reference work on contemporary Canadian music.—*William Albright, Associate Professor of Music (Composition), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

Music In Education: A Point of View.

By Arnold Bentley. Windsor, Berkshire: NFER Publishing Company Limited, 1975; Distributed in the United States by Humanities Press Incorporated, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey; 125 pp.; soft cover.

In the preface to this provocative and (to me) timely little volume, the author states, "It would be arrogant of me to presume to express more than a personal point of view, and this is all I offer." Arnold Bentley's book is an unblushingly personal statement of his convictions concerning the education of children in music and the developments which have taken place in music education within the last quarter-century. Although the author constantly recognizes and quotes from the writings of other prominent music educators (British, Canadian, and American), *Music In Education: A Point of View* is, indeed, his point of view.

The book might well be titled, *Music In Education: A Conservative Point of View*, for it is thus that it will strike many readers. Several of the more recent developments in music education—creativity in an unconventional musical style, integration of music with other aspects of the cur-

riculum, and the teaching of the recorder as a classroom music activity, to name but three—are held up for critical examination. While the book by no means suggests a retreat to the good old days of music education, several aspects of the curriculum possibly in greater vogue a generation ago are suggested as ways in which the total music program available to children might be made more substantive. Bentley makes a strong case for listening (and re-listening) to a carefully selected and varied body of music literature (both recorded and in live performance), for singing and voice training, and for learning to read music vocally. He makes an interesting and important distinction between *singing* musical notation and *manipulating* an instrument in response to a page of printed symbols. He refers often to the need for a wide base of musical activities in elementary schools where children can develop interests and skills in the subject. Those who experience success and satisfaction in the lower grades must be given opportunities for more specialized accomplishment as they grow older. There would be no compulsory music classes after the age of thirteen or fourteen. Choirs, bands, orchestras, and listening groups should function during the normal daily timetable of the secondary school.

The book makes a lot of sense. Music education has always been characterized by a spirit of reform. At times, changes have come about so rapidly and energetically that existing programs have been largely abandoned in favor of the new. It is possible that in our enthusiasm to be up-to-date we have slighted important aspects of music instruction in schools.

Arnold Bentley's point of view will be unacceptable to many teachers, but a thoughtful perusal of this book will bring to the reader considerable stability as he ponders the enigmatic course of music education.—*Charles W.*