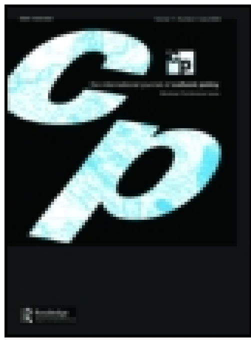

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THE TRADITION OF ALL THE DEAD GENERATIONS
Music and cultural policy

Alan Stanbridge

The notion of tradition is a somewhat troublesome one, capable of both positive and negative interpretation: on the one hand, tradition can be understood optimistically, as historical inspiration, a celebration of lineage and continuity. On the other hand, tradition can connote prescriptive inertia, the axiomatic dogma of former eras. In this paper, I explore the impact that narrowly prescriptive interpretations of tradition have had on contemporary music, and its relationship with cultural policy. I examine the extremely circumscribed manner in which the apparently unproblematic and self-evident term "music" has been conceptualized within several highly influential cultural sectors: in the discipline of musicology; in the context of university music curricula; and in the publishing industry. In the second half of the paper, I go on to consider the ways in which this narrow understanding of "music" has impacted cultural policy, as reflected in representative patterns of arts funding, and in the typical musical repertoire of the contemporary symphony orchestra, which, in tandem with opera, represents the most heavily publicly-funded aspect of present-day musical activity. I argue that "the tradition of all the dead generations" continues to have a profound – and highly restrictive – impact on the funding and support of contemporary music, and I conclude by suggesting the need for a radical reappraisal of music funding priorities. In this way, I argue, the notion of tradition might function, not as a dead weight, but as a genuinely inspirational element in the future development of the contemporary music scene.

KEYWORDS music; cultural policy; arts funding; canons; tradition; Canada Council for the Arts; Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Introduction

In a celebrated passage from his essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852), Karl Marx observed: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (Marx 1963, p. 15). The fact that the political and intellectual movement to which Marx lent his name ultimately succumbed, in part, to the perils of tradition that Marx himself identified so trenchantly represents an irony that is far beyond the scope of this paper. But one hardly needs to be a card-carrying Marxist to acknowledge the broader rhetorical persuasiveness of Marx's observation.

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The notion of tradition is a somewhat troublesome one, capable of both positive and negative interpretation: on the one hand, tradition can be understood optimistically, as historical inspiration, a celebration of lineage and continuity. On the other hand, echoing the gloomy import of Marx's admonition, tradition can connote prescriptive inertia, the axiomatic dogma of former eras. This paper pursues issues raised in some of my previous work, in which I explored the problematic relationship between cultural theory and cultural policy, and the prevalence of discourses of art, context and populism in the contemporary gallery and museum (Stanbridge, 2002, 2005). In this paper, I explore the impact that narrowly prescriptive interpretations of tradition have had on contemporary music, and its relationship with cultural policy.

By way of an introduction, I examine the extremely circumscribed manner in which the apparently unproblematic and self-evident term "music" has been conceptualized within several highly influential cultural sectors: in the discipline of musicology; in the context of university music curricula; and in the publishing industry. Alongside the significant roles played by the mass media and the recording industry, I would argue that these cultural sectors have been the primary contributors to the processes of canon formation that ascribe value and status to particular musical forms over others. My key point here is that the conceptualization of "music" that is readily apparent in these sectors has had a profound influence on the ways in which various forms of music have been created, studied, critiqued, circulated, regulated and received. As John Guillory has argued in relation to the literary canon: "it is only by understanding the social function and institutional protocols of the school that we will understand how works are preserved, reproduced and disseminated over successive generations and centuries" (1993, p. vii). In the second half of the paper, I go on to consider the ways in which this narrow understanding of "music" has impacted cultural policy, as reflected in representative patterns of arts funding, and in the typical musical repertoire of the contemporary symphony orchestra, which, in tandem with opera,[1] represents the most heavily publicly-funded aspect of present-day musical activity.

"Music" and the Musical Canon

In contrast to the comprehensiveness implied by the nineteenth-century German term *Musikwissenschaft* ("music science" or "music knowledge"), the conventional scope of the discipline of musicology has been considerably more circumscribed. As Joseph Kerman has suggested: "It has come to mean the study of the history of Western music in the high-art tradition" (1985, p. 11). This emphasis has been evident not only within historical musicology, but also in the fields of music theory and analysis, in which the focus has tended to be on formalist analyses of the musical texts of this tradition. In the case of the sub-discipline of ethnomusicology, the customary scope has been similarly constricted, although here the emphasis has generally been on the study of the music of non-Western cultures.

Don Randel has noted the extent to which the traditional analytic tools of musicological scholarship "constrain not only how things can be studied but what can be studied at all… [giving] the impression that other things are not even worthy of study" (1992, p. 11). Randel identifies a number of constraining factors, citing the centrality of musical notation, with its concomitant emphasis on "privileged concepts such as 'the work itself' (immutable and editable) and the composer as creative genius" (p. 14). As a further analytic constraint, Randel cites the exclusionary as well as classificatory function of forms and genres, which, when coupled with the nature of the written discourse of musicology, not only creates a

canon of "suitable dissertation topics" but also ensures that when this canon expands it does so "not to include a greater diversity of works so much as to appropriate and dominate a greater number of works and make them behave in similar fashion" (p. 14). Suggesting that "there is no such thing as a work without a context", Randel concludes that traditional musicologists "*systematically* undervalue certain periods, composers and works and privilege others because of the very nature of the conceptual and narrative tools that [they] apply" (p. 20, emphasis in original).

In the course of the last two decades, the discipline of musicology has undergone something of a paradigm shift, and it has been significantly influenced by a wide range of contemporary developments in cultural theory, extending far beyond its traditional disciplinary boundaries. Contrary to the empirical positivist and liberal humanist agendas still dominant in traditional musicology, much recent work in the study of music has stressed the inherently social nature of all music, emphasizing the importance of cultural, historical and political factors in musical production and reception, and interrogating the traditional cultural hierarchies that inform the established musical canon. This burgeoning critical literature that has not only expanded the previously limited scope of musicological study – to include, for example, jazz and popular music – but has also offered a vigorous challenge to formalist notions of immanent musical meaning and idealist conceptions of autonomous musical value. Much of this work has therefore been valuable in terms of the further development of contemporary musicological thought, suggesting a series of new and revitalized agendas for the academic study of music.

This paradigm shift within musicology has not been entirely unproblematic, however. Although the radical insights of revisionist approaches may, indeed, have offered a significant challenge to dominant musicological discourses within the academy, there is a tendency in some of this work to substitute an equally disabling analytical reductionism for the narrow verities of traditional scholarship.[2] Moreover – and more significant in terms of my argument here – despite the stridency of much contemporary rhetoric, there is little evidence to date that revisionist approaches have been successful in displacing established musical or scholarly canons. As Perry Anderson has suggested – writing of the "pyrrhic" nature of much Marxist literary criticism – "railing at canons is not the same as replacing them, which they have resisted. Evacuation of the terrain of literary evaluation in the traditional sense necessarily leaves its conventional practitioners in place" (1992, p. 243).

The point is clearly evident in the curricula of university Music departments across North America and Europe, in which the Western art music tradition remains thoroughly dominant. While acknowledging the presence of many highly developed ethnomusicology programs, and notwithstanding a few token courses in popular music and jazz history, the course offerings in the vast majority of Music programs reveal a continuing preponderance of classes in history, theory, analysis, composition and instrumental instruction totally grounded in the canons of Western classical music.[3] Furthermore, it must be noted that many popular music and jazz history courses are offered as non-specialist, high-enrolment classes, which only serves to underline their perception as peripheral additions to the overriding focus of the typical Music department.

Surprising little has changed, it seems, since the first publication, almost 30 years ago, of Christopher Small's classic text *Music, Society, Education* (1996), in which he lamented the impoverished nature of Western music education, with its emphasis on the culture of "The Perfect Cadence and the Concert Hall", and advocated instead the incorporation of alternative, non-Western techniques in music training and instruction. In his foreword to the 1996

edition of Small's text, Robert Walser suggests that "By urging us to see music as something people do, rather than as a set of great works, [Small] forces a reevaluation of nearly every aspect of performing, listening, studying and teaching" (p. xi). Although I agree with Walser's sentiments, in light of the still typical structures of university Music department curricula, and notwithstanding some minor expansion in musical scope, it is clear – at least at the institutional level – that any such re-evaluation is still in its very early stages.

The processes of canon formation are complex and multi-layered, implicating the roles of the academy, the academic publishing industry, the mass media, the recording industry, artists and performers, the public, and the agencies and institutions of cultural policy. In her work on the musical canon, Marcia Citron suggests that canons "exert tremendous power. By setting standards they represent what is considered worthy of inclusion. Works that do not measure up are excluded, either in the sense of deliberately omitted or ignored and hence forgotten. Canons are therefore exclusive" (1993, p. 15). Citron argues that canons "simultaneously reflect, instigate, and perpetuate value systems" (p. 19), identifying three "myths" of canons, namely those of "universality, neutrality, and immutability" (p. 22). In light of these myths, Citron argues that "as the assumed repertoire, Western art music does not have to identify itself as such… the assumption of the dominant mode implies a false universality. This results in the marginalization of other musics and masks the particular social parameters of the Western tradition" (p. 26).

The false universality of the canon of Western art music is perhaps no better illustrated than in the customary content of the typical "music" encyclopaedia. Although the scope of coverage of "music" encyclopaedias has increased considerably in recent years, the inclusion of "other" musics – popular music, jazz, world music – still functions as little more than a footnote or addendum to the classical canon: the entry on "Popular Music" in the recently revised edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, for example, occupies no more than 39 pages of a 29-volume set, which runs to over 25,000 pages (Middleton & Manuel 2001, pp. 128–166). Even in those encyclopaedias and texts that restrict their focus to the twentieth century – a century in which the rise of popular music and jazz challenged the centrality of the Western art music canon – the discursive construction of "music" is often routinely presupposed. For example, although Glenn Watkins's 700-page *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (1988) represents a compelling chronicle of the contemporary canon of Western art music, it is not – despite the seeming comprehensiveness of its subtitle – a chronicle of contemporary "music" in any broader sense. In his preface, Watkins observes:

> Some readers will note the omission of a rigorous treatment of the vernacular or jazz traditions that in recent debates has increasingly vied for the attention of the musical historian. Partial redress is offered, however, in the repeated consideration of such popular repertoires for the composer of art music. From the world of the cabaret at the turn of the century to the "art of the everyday" defined by *Les Six* to the ragtime revival of the 1960s, its force is noted and its effect judged. (pp. xvii–xviii)

Given the extent of the impact – whether musical or social, artistic or political, cultural or economic – that the "vernacular or jazz traditions" had in the course of the twentieth century, a history of twentieth-century "music" can surely ill afford to ignore such "popular repertoires". Furthermore, it hardly needs to be argued – although, in the face of the canon's false universality, I will argue it nevertheless – that the various forms of popular music and jazz have their own histories and their own specificities: specificities the force and effect of

which cannot simply be noted and judged in terms of the manner in which they have been appropriated and transformed by Western art music. My point here is that such musics cannot simply be viewed as inspirational fodder for the composer of art music, somehow devoid of their own independent patterns of growth and development. In light of the examples cited above, and notwithstanding a steadily expanding critical literature in jazz and popular music studies, it is clear, as Citron suggests, that the process of canon formation is, indeed, "a political process with high stakes for shaping discourse and values" (1993, p. 22).

For some contemporary observers, the concept of postmodernism has offered a worrying challenge to the established canon of Western art music and to the sureties of tradition. In sharp contrast to the often lively debate between postmodernism and a wide range of other contemporary cultural forms – especially literature, architecture and the visual arts – the relationship between music and postmodern theory has been highly sporadic and seldom less than problematic. In its most unsophisticated theoretical incarnation, the concept simply serves as a periodizing synonym for contemporary culture, which is often characterized, following Jameson (1991), as commodified, depthless and trivial. For example, addressing the "hedonistic feel" of a "postmodern" musical minimalism, Alastair Williams suggests: "Indeed, minimalism does bear striking parallels with the image-dominated aspects of contemporary life: the ceaseless activity of self-referential ostinati suggests a surface with no depth, an endless circulation of signifiers (1997, p. 126).[4]

At the conservative end of this ideological spectrum stands the high-profile English philosopher Roger Scruton. In his book, *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997), Scruton advances a *reductio ad absurdum* thesis that represents an outstanding example of the false universality identified by Citron (1993). Despite the apparent inclusiveness of Scruton's title, the presence of Western art music as the "assumed repertoire" (Citron 1993, p. 26) is clearly evident in his treatment of "other" musics: in a text of over 500 pages, Indian, Arabian, Chinese, Balinese, Japanese and African musics are dispatched in no more than 10 pages, and then only in passing. And jazz fares no better: "many jazz improvisations", Scruton assures us, are characterized by "an undemanding vacuousness" (p. 184), although he fails to offer any examples. And when Scruton describes the harmonies of the pianist Art Tatum in terms of their "lazy consonance and delicious relaxation" (p. 67), and applauds Louis Armstrong for his "cheerful and life-enhancing sound" (p. 480) – two of only a handful of references to jazz in the text – all the laziness and cheerfulness imputed here carry the faint whiff of an ugly stereotype.

Having summarily dismissed the artistic potential of postmodernism – "the faint sarcastic smile of the postmodernist is… incompatible with greatness (Scruton 1997, pp. 492–493) – Scruton's text reveals an easy slippage between this understanding of postmodernism as an ironic artistic discourse and the strictly periodizing concept of the "postmodern world" (p. 505). This slippage allows Scruton, in turn, to dismiss wholesale the contemporary "consumer culture" (p. 496) which he so abhors. Not since Adorno, perhaps, has popular music – and its audience – been the target of such elitist resentment: "the music of mass culture is saturated with banality" (p. 480); "If the music sounds ugly, this is of no significance: it is not there to be listened to, but to take revenge on the world" (p. 500); "music is a character-forming force, and the decline of musical taste is a decline in morals. The *anomie* of Nirvana and REM is the *anomie* of its listeners" (p. 502); "Much modern pop is cheerless, and meant to be cheerless. But much of it is also a kind of *negation* of music, a dehumanizing of the spirit of song" (p. 504, emphasis in original). In common with Simon Frith, I too find myself "bristling at… Scruton's obvious ignorance of the music mentioned.

He presumes that a high theorist can talk about the meaning of low music without listening to it, without liking it, without needing to know anything about it at all" (1996, pp. 252–253).

It is not only popular music that bears the brunt of Scruton's scorn, however. For example, in sharp contrast to the "utter simplicity" (1997, p. 389) of Schubert's song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin* – Scruton assures us that "there is a rightness in this which opens the possibilities of feeling" (p. 390)[5] – the neo-tonal simplicity of Górecki's Third Symphony is chastised for its "thinness" and "morose spirituality" (p. 507). For Scruton, it seems, the manifest popularity of Górecki's Third Symphony has irredeemably tainted it with consumerism.[6] Scruton's sweeping, scattergun critique also embraces the "state-funded priesthood" of the modernist avant-garde (p. 506) and the "helpless nostalgia" of Vaughan Williams and Havergal Brian (pp. 492–493). Hence, in this arch-traditionalist jeremiad, Scruton sits Canute-like on the shores of contemporary culture, attempting not only to hold back the inexorable waves of "postmodern" popular music and "new tonality", but also to stem the ebb tides of avant-garde modernism and the English pastoralists, finally finding refuge in a tiny pool of hallowed classical composers – Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert among them. Ironically then, for all Scruton's lamentations of the cultural impoverishment of the "postmodern world", it soon becomes clear that it is his own world that is impoverished.

The examples cited above illustrate the extent to which the discipline of musicology, university music curricula and the publishing industry have served to perpetuate a conceptualization of "music" that is far from inclusive or comprehensive. On the contrary, these sectors continue to propagate forms of musical analysis, teaching and scholarship that are narrowly and predominantly focused on the canon of Western art music – a canon that they have played a formative role in building and sustaining. As indicated above, there have been some notable exceptions to this canonical emphasis: the discipline of musicology is undoubtedly in a process of transition, accommodating new perspectives and approaches; university music curricula are slowly expanding to encompass an alternative range of musics; and the publishing industry has found a new market in popular music and jazz studies. But the dominant emphasis of these sectors has been historically – and remains firmly – centred on the established musical canon: an emphasis that, since the earliest days of public funding for the arts, has proved enormously influential in the shaping of cultural policy initiatives.

Music and Cultural Policy: The Current Position

As I suggested in an earlier paper in this journal (Stanbridge 2002), the Western art music canon remains irrefutably at the core of the Music policies of the vast majority of arts funding agencies. By way of a brief case study, a consideration of the latest figures available for the Canada Council for the Arts, Canada's primary federal arts funding agency, will serve to illustrate the point in more detail.[7] In 2004–05, the Canada Council awarded Music grants totalling $26.8 million to 1054 organizations and individuals. Of this total figure, $16.2 million (61%) went to 79 organizations in the Professional Orchestra and Opera/Music Theatre Programmes. This percentage is certainly more favourable than the balance of funding in many agencies – in 1999–00 the Arts Council of England devoted 92% of its Music budget to Opera and Orchestras (Stanbridge 2002, p. 130) – and the Canada Council's commitment to the support of a range of musics beyond the Western art music tradition is reflected in a series of programmes encompassing aboriginal, folk, jazz, world and popular music.

However, the continuing dominance of Western art music as the "assumed repertoire" (Citron 1993, p. 26) is clearly evident in a closer examination of the patterns of funding for

TABLE 1
Canada Council 2004–05, top five funded music organizations.

Organization	2004–05 grant	Percentage of music budget
Canadian Opera Company	$1.72 million	6.4%
Toronto Symphony Orchestra	$1.67 million	6.2%
Orchestre symphonique de Montréal	$1.59 million	5.9%
Vancouver Symphony	$1.12 million	4.2%
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra	$0.77 million	2.9%
Total	**$6.87 million**	**25.6%**

these various programmes, which reveals that the bulk of financial support was committed to a relatively small number of organizations devoted to the Western art music canon. Only four organizations received grants in excess of $1 million: the Canadian Opera Company, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and the Vancouver Symphony. With the addition of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, these five organizations accounted for over a quarter of the total Music budget ($6.87 million) (see Table 1).

Moreover, the top 20 funded organizations (including the top five identified above) accounted for over a half of the total Music budget ($13.7 million). Of these 20 organizations, 18 were in the Professional Orchestra and Opera/Music Theatre Programmes,[8] including the Edmonton Symphony Society, L'Opéra de Montréal, Orchestre symphonique de Québec, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Symphony Nova Scotia, receiving grants ranging from $695,000 to $255,000. Below the top 20 funded organizations, the level of grant support drops to under $200,000, and a total of $13.1 million was distributed between 1034 organizations and individuals. Of these 1034 grants, fully 59% (i.e. 626 grants) were below $10,000 (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Canada Council 2004–05, music grants by grant range.

Funded organizations	Grant range	Percentage of total number of grants	2004–05 amount	Percentage of music budget
Top 20 funded organizations (18 in Orchestras/Opera)	$1.7 million to $255,000	2%	$13.7 million	51%
21 funded organizations (13 in Orchestras/Opera)	$190,000 to $100,000	2%	$2.8 million	10%
16 funded organizations (9 in Orchestras/Opera)	$98,000 to $50,000	2%	$1.1 million	4%
53 funded organizations (14 in Orchestras/Opera)	$49,800 to $25,000	5%	$1.8 million	7%
318 funded organizations and individuals (17 in Orchestras/Opera)	$24,700 to $10,000	30%	$4.6 million	17%
626 funded organizations and individuals (8 in Orchestras/Opera)	$9900 to $400	59%	$2.8 million	11%
Total (1054 grants)	**$1.7 million to $400**	**100%**	**$26.8 million**	**100%**

To summarize, in the Canada Council's support for music in 2004–05, one opera company and four symphony orchestras accounted for fully a quarter of the total music budget; only 20 organizations, all devoted to Western art music, accounted for fully half of the total music budget. In light of these statistics, it is clear that the Council's commitment to "other" musics will only be fully realized if it undertakes a thorough review of its funding priorities, establishing support networks that more accurately reflect the range and diversity of contemporary music-making in Canada, which extends far beyond the narrow confines of the classical canon.

It is clear from the figures above that the symphony orchestra remains one of the most heavily supported of present-day musical ensembles. Given this extremely high commitment of public support, it is interesting to consider the current repertoire of the typical symphony orchestra, and to assess its continuing relevance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The symphony orchestra has its roots in the seventeenth century, although it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the orchestra became established in the form that is familiar today, with the symphonies of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms remaining firmly at the heart of the classical canon. Peter Burkholder has likened the orchestra to a "museum for the display of great works of art from the past" (2000, p. 409), suggesting that in the "modern concert hall, the "classical" music we hear has been taken out of the context for which it was created, stripped of its original purposes, and fitted out with new ones" (p. 410). Given the continuing dominance of the classical canon, there is little room for the introduction of new artifacts into the orchestral museum, which must conform to the canonical demands that Burkholder identifies: "lasting value, links to tradition, individuality, and familiarity" (p. 418).

With these qualities in mind – and again, by way of a case study – it is interesting to turn to a more detailed examination of the orchestral repertoire. The current programming of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) – one of the largest and most well established of Canadian orchestras, and the one most heavily supported by the Canada Council for the Arts – not only offers a broadly representative indication of the typical repertoire of the present-day orchestra, but also illustrates the manner in which "the tradition of all the dead generations" weighs heavily and persistently on the orchestral museum, indicating a remarkable inertia and lack of imagination in the contemporary orchestral repertoire.

Over a two-year period, in the concert seasons 2005–06 and 2006–07, the TSO's programme included a total of 161 concerts, featuring 494 performances of individual pieces by 107 composers.[9] The repertorial emphasis on composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is highlighted by a consideration of the periods in which the 107 composers featured in these two concerts seasons were alive and active. A total of only 26 composers alive and active in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries account for 238 performances, or almost half of the total number of performances. The figure of 26 includes all composers who were alive and active in the eighteenth century (the earliest being Vivaldi: 1678–1741) through to those who died before 1900 (the latest being Brahms: 1833–1897). In addition, one composer alive and active in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Giovanni Gabrieli: 1557–1612) accounts for one performance.

A total of fully 80 composers alive and active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (i.e. including all those born in the nineteenth century who lived into the twentieth century) account for 255 performances, or just over half of the total number of performances. These figures indicate that, on average, composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

TABLE 3
Toronto Symphony Orchestra, concert seasons 2005–06 and 2006–07.

Composers, by period	Number of composers	Percentage of number of composers	Number of performances	Percentage of number of performances
Composers alive and active in the 16th and 17th centuries	1	1%	1	0.2%
Composers alive and active in the 18th and 19th centuries	26	24%	238	48%
Composers alive and active in the 19th and 20th centuries	80	75%	255	52%
Total	**107**	**100%**	**494**	**100%**

are performed three times as often as those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Table 3).

It is worthwhile underlining the fact that the figure of 80 composers alive and active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries includes all those who died in 1900 or after, stretching as far back as Verdi (1813–1901), and encompassing Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), Dvořák (1841–1904) and Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908). If the analysis is restricted to those composers actually born in the twentieth century, the number is reduced to 49 composers, accounting for 113 performances, or only 23% of the total. Of the 80 composers alive and active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 37 are still living, accounting for only 67 performances (i.e. 14% of the total). To put this in other words, the TSO's concerts seasons for 2005–06 and 2006–07 featured the works of 70 dead composers, accounting for 427 performances (i.e. 86% of the total number of performances). The tradition of all the dead generations, indeed (see Table 4).

Of the 494 performances of individual pieces, 58 are of works by Mozart, 39 are of works by Beethoven and 25 are of works by Brahms. These three composers account for 122 performances, or fully a quarter of the overall total. Only 11 composers have numbers of performances of individual pieces in double figures. These 11 composers account for 233 performances, or almost half of the total number of performances. In addition to Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms, these include Tchaikovsky, Shostakovitch, Stravinsky, Dvorak, Mahler, Handel, Rachmaninoff and Sibelius (see Table 5).

These figures have striking parallels with the findings of a study of classical music concert repertoires in Norway and the United States in the period 1988–1993 (Bakke 1996), which ranked the top five most frequently performed composers in the United States in the following order: Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Rachmaninoff. The year 2006 was the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, and it might be thought that the *Mozart@250*

TABLE 4
Toronto Symphony Orchestra, concert seasons 2005–06 and 2006–07.

Composers	Number of composers	Percentage of number of composers	Number of performances	Percentage of number of performances
Living composers	37	35%	67	14%
Dead composers	70	65%	427	86%
Total	**107**	**100%**	**494**	**100%**

TABLE 5
Toronto Symphony Orchestra, concert seasons 2005–06 and 2006–07.

Composer	Number of performances	Percentage of number of performances
Mozart	58	12%
Beethoven	39	8%
Brahms	25	5%
Tchaikovsky	21	4%
Shostakovitch	18	3%
Stravinsky	16	3%
Dvorak	13	3%
Mahler	13	3%
Handel	10	2%
Rachmaninoff	10	2%
Sibelius	10	2%
Total	**233**	**47%**

Festival in the 2005–06 season would account for the high overall number of Mozart performances. However, it should be noted that, in the 2006–07 season, seemingly not satisfied with a 250th anniversary celebration, the TSO elected to celebrate the 251st anniversary of Mozart's birth with its *Mozart@251 Festival*, and the number of Mozart performances in that season (30) actually exceeded that of the previous year (28). The year 2006 was also the 100th anniversary of the birth of Shostakovich, and the *Shostakovich Remembered Festival* in the 2005–06 season accounts for the majority of Shostakovich performances (14). Interestingly, and unlike its treatment of Mozart, the TSO apparently did not feel the need to celebrate the 101st anniversary of Shostakovich's birth – the 2006–07 season included only four performances of his work.

In these two concert seasons, the TSO featured the work of 107 composers from 20 countries. Of these 20 countries, 15 are in Europe, two in North America, one in South America (Argentina), one in the Middle East (Israel) and one in Asia (China). It is interesting to note that 76 composers from Europe (i.e. 71% of the total number of composers) account for 426 performances (i.e. 86% of all performances), and that 27 composers from Germany, Austria and Russia alone (i.e. 25% of the total number of composers) account for 278 performances (i.e. 56% of all performances). Hailing from the other side of the Atlantic, 27 composers from North America (i.e. 25% of the total number of composers) account for 63 performances (i.e. 13% of all performances), while 15 composers from Canada (i.e. 14% of the total number of composers) account for 31 performances (i.e. 6% of all performances) (see Table 6).

Only three of the 107 featured composers are members of visible minorities, accounting for seven performances (i.e. 1.4% of the total). These figures, and the statistics summarized in Table 6, simply confirm the overwhelmingly Eurocentric bias of the Western art music canon, and perhaps sit rather uncomfortably in the context of a major cultural organization based in Toronto, one of the most multicultural cities in Canada. The 2001 Canadian Census indicates that Toronto has a population of 4.6 million, of which 1.7 million (37%) are visible minorities.[10] A recent report by the Multiculturalism and Human Rights Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage has indicated that more than half the population of

TABLE 6
Toronto Symphony Orchestra, concert seasons 2005–06 and 2006–07.

Composers, by country	Number of composers	Number of performances	Percentage of number of performances
Germany	11	107	22%
Austria	6	86	17%
Russia	10	85	17%
France	11	43	9%
USA	12	32	7%
Canada	15	31	6%
Italy	10	27	5%
United Kingdom	13	23	5%
Czech Republic	2	15	3%
Hungary	5	15	3%
Rest of Europe	7	15	3%
Finland	1	10	2%
Rest of the world	4	5	1%
Total	**107**	**494**	**100%**

Toronto will belong to a visible minority group by 2017.[11] Given the emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in so many other sectors of Canadian cultural life, the fact that the symphony orchestra can remain so insulated from equity issues is a telling reminder of the power of the established musical canon. Cultural diversity and equity have been significant issues for a number of years now in the museum sector,[12] which has seen considerable change with regard to the exhibition and display of non-Western artifacts and work by aboriginal and First Nations artists. Perhaps it is time for the orchestral museum to address these issues in a similarly committed and conscientious fashion.

Given the male-dominated history of Western art music, it virtually goes without saying that the vast majority of the 107 composers are male: indeed, only 10 of the featured composers (i.e. 9%) are female, accounting for just 18 performances (i.e. 4% of the total). Of these 10 composers, two are from Europe (Russia and the former Yugoslavia), six from North America (three American and three Canadian), one from Israel and one from China. Two of these 10 composers are members of visible minorities. All 10 female composers were born in the twentieth century, the oldest in 1931 and the youngest in 1976, and all are still living. Notwithstanding their modest numbers, it is interesting to observe that the range of age and ethnicity of these female composers perhaps offers a somewhat more representative demographic for a contemporary Canadian-based symphony orchestra than that offered by their male colleagues.

As a brief aside, it must be noted at this stage that the prescriptive import of tradition is not restricted to the orchestral museum and the world of classical music, and is clearly evident, for example, in the involvement of Wynton Marsalis as Artistic Director of the heavily funded Jazz at Lincoln Center programme. In this case, a narrowly neo-conservative understanding of the "classical" jazz canon[13] has been mobilized in support of a high-profile, publicly-funded jazz series within a major American cultural institution. In October 2004, the Lincoln Center opened the US$131 million, 100,000-square-feet Frederick P. Rose Hall, known as the House of Swing. In an early press release, Marsalis was quoted as saying that "The whole space is dedicated to the feeling of swing,"[14] thereby firmly establishing a

stereotypical conceptualization of jazz performance that has been sadly evident in both his programming for Jazz at Lincoln Center and his input as Senior Creative Consultant to Ken Burns's PBS documentary *Jazz* (2001).[15] As Scott DeVeaux has observed of such narrow interpretations of the jazz tradition, "what distinguishes the neoclassicist attitude is… its heavy-handed attempt to regulate the music of the present through an idealized representation of the past" (1998, p. 504). In this sense, then, in both the classical and jazz worlds, "the tradition of all the dead generations" continues to have a profound – and highly restrictive – impact on the funding and support of contemporary music.

Music and Cultural Policy: Future Directions

The responses of critics to the arguments I have made above are fairly predictable: "But people *want* to hear Mozart. They *want* to hear Beethoven. They *hate* contemporary music." Such responses are simply facile self-fulfilling prophecies, however, and represent a head-in-the-sand reaction to the very real problems confronting orchestral music presenters at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One of the most fundamental issues here is the very nature of the symphony orchestra itself: for some, the symphony orchestra is a vital medium for the continuing presentation of a great classical tradition, and must be preserved at all costs; for others, it is an unwieldy and anachronistic institution, increasingly out of touch with contemporary cultural realities. On the basis that the symphony orchestra is likely to survive – and be funded – for a number of years to come, my own position falls somewhere between these two extremes, advocating greater diversity, flexibility and imagination in the programming of orchestral concerts and projects; acknowledging tradition, but also fostering and developing contemporary – and living – creativity. Although I recognize the TSO's commitment to contemporary music in its annual *New Creations Festival*, I would suggest that there is a need for significant development of this aspect of the TSO's programming. In the period under review, the two *New Creations Festivals* featured 24 performances by living composers (i.e. only 5% of the total), and included only two new pieces commissioned by the TSO.

In recent years, the TSO has had its share of woes, including an 11-week musicians' strike in 1999, and an accumulated deficit budget crisis in 2001. In common with many North American symphony orchestras, the TSO has had to confront an ageing and rapidly dwindling audience for classical music: as Tamara Bernstein has noted, the 1999 strike "forced the musicians to face a painful truth: the vast majority of Torontonians couldn't care less if they shut down" (2001). In 2001, the TSO embarked on its "Tsoundcheck" marketing campaign, offering discounted tickets to people under 30. The campaign was aimed aggressively – and often somewhat awkwardly – at this younger generation of potential concert-goers, with its self-consciously "youth-oriented" tag-line: "Get your culture fix." According to Mike Forrester, the TSO's vice-president of marketing and development, the campaign has been largely successful, attracting "10,000 ticket buyers under the age of 30" (quoted in Eatock 2003).

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the "Tsoundcheck" campaign is the extent to which it remains solely at the level of marketing, with little or no attempt being made by the TSO to appeal to this younger audience through changes in musical repertoire or through special events and projects. One of the most challenging issues confronting the contemporary symphony orchestra is that of attracting – and sustaining – this new, younger audience base. This is an audience that has grown up in a period in which, as I noted in a previous paper, "the vast expansion of leisure activities engendered by the digital revolution (CDs, DVDs,

digital cable, pay per view, MP3 technology, digital cameras, interactive software, the internet, etc.) has offered a significant challenge to the determinedly analogue 'arts.'" (Stanbridge 2005, p. 158). Given this context, simply marketing the same tired canonical repertoire to this younger audience is unlikely to offer a long-term, sustainable solution to the significant demographic problem offered by a rapidly aging audience. I am not suggesting here that the TSO should be presenting more popular music or world music or jazz: this would be akin to chastising an apple for not being an orange. I am suggesting, however, that there is an enormous opportunity – and an urgent need – for major orchestras such as the TSO to look beyond the core repertoire of the classical canon, which remains firmly rooted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

As a model for a more inclusive approach, it is interesting to turn briefly to Sir Simon Rattle's tenure as conductor and music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), in the period 1980–98.[16] Rattle has been a constant champion of contemporary music, and, alongside performances of many of the great works of the classical canon, his time with the CBSO was marked by an extensive series of residencies, special projects, commissions, recordings and concert performances featuring the work of contemporary, living composers, most notably Mark-Anthony Turnage, Judith Weir, John Adams, Aaron Jay Kernis, James Macmillan and Sofia Gubaidulina. Rattle's *Towards the Millennium* project, which ran from 1991 to 2000, remains one of the most ambitious and adventurous programmes ever mounted by a major symphony orchestra, focusing firmly on the orchestral music of the twentieth century, and successfully engaging a loyal audience – as Rattle observed of the project, quoting the famous line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, "Build it and they will come" (quoted in Kenyon 2001, p. 265).

The creation of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG) in 1987 as an offshoot of the CBSO opened up further possibilities for the commissioning, performance, and touring of contemporary music, and, in addition to the premiere and recording of new pieces by composers such as David Lang and Thomas Adès, has included collaborations with jazz composers Bill Frisell and Dave Douglas. As Nicholas Kenyon has observed: "The BCMG's success in taking contemporary music to new places and gaining good audiences for their programmes is now famous. They are as at home in a Shropshire village hall as they are in Vienna's Musikverein" (2001, p. 11). Through imaginative programming and marketing, both the CBSO and the BCMG have built a strong and committed audience base, and contemporary music is a vital part of the overall repertoire of both ensembles. Tellingly, however – and indicative of the balance of tradition and contemporaneity that I am advocating – Rattle celebrated the 75th anniversary of the CBSO with the complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies. In the *Sunday Times*, Hugh Canning summed up Rattle's time with the CBSO: "What this young conductor… has achieved in Birmingham should – but probably won't – serve as a model for running a symphony orchestra and galvanizing a musical public in favour of a wide-ranging and progressive repertory" (quoted in Kenyon 2001, p. 275).[17] Since taking up the position of Music Director with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2002, Rattle has continued to champion a wide range of orchestral music, featuring Turnage's *Blood on the Floor* in his first season, and introducing Rameau's *Les boréades* to the repertoire of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Further inspiration for alternative, imaginative orchestral programming can be found in a younger generation of contemporary composers, who have been influenced as much by popular music, jazz and world music as they have by the classical canon. In the liner notes to a recording of his pieces for electric chamber ensemble, the American composer and guitarist

Scott Johnson has confronted the tensions that exist between the "classical" world and that of contemporary popular music. Contrasting the stereotypically "sacred" nature of the "'classical' tradition" and the equally stereotypical "'profane' world of rock and its variants", Johnson suggests:

> It seems to me that this stylized encoding of the natural distinctions between the different uses of music has become arbitrary and exaggerated. Like many of my fellow composers, whose music bears the marks of our culture because its creators bear those marks, I look forward to a new century in which composer-based music doesn't need to purge itself of references to the world which surrounds it, and is free to describe our moment in history in its native tongue. (Johnson 1996)

In common with Johnson, contemporary composers such as Steven Mackey, Paul Dresher, Nick Didkovsky, Michael Torke, Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, Annie Gosfield, Michael Daugherty, Lois V. Vierk, Osvaldo Golijov, Graham Fitkin and Steve Martland draw freely on a wide range of musical influences in their work.[18] The work of composers such as these – much of it accessible and highly engaging – offers fascinating programming and commissioning opportunities for a contemporary symphony orchestra prepared to move beyond the classical canon, attracting a younger audience through bold and imaginative program initiatives. The work of more established composers such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich and John Adams – still too rarely heard in the orchestral concert hall – is similarly broad in its influences, and equally likely to intrigue and inspire a new audience. The increasingly eclectic field of contemporary jazz and new music offers further fascinating possibilities for commissions and special projects, with many present-day artists revealing an interest in compositional structures alongside their improvisatory practice, among them Anthony Braxton, John Zorn, Uri Caine, George Lewis, Carla Bley, Franz Koglmann, Barry Guy and Heiner Goebbels.[19]

The preponderance of white males in the preceding lists of contemporary composers suggests an irony that is not lost on me. The limited representation of women and visible minorities in the current music scene remains a systemic problem, and one that – in common with my reference above to issues of diversity and equity in the contemporary museum sector – indicates a significant historical and cultural imbalance. Although a considerable number of women are now well-established as composers – e.g. Kaija Saariajo, Linda Bouchard, Linda Catlin Smith, Alexina Louie, Pauline Oliveros – they continue to be outnumbered by men, and visible minorities remain woefully under-represented in the contemporary music scene. These issues are further complicated by some of the typical problems that attend any type of "affirmative action" approach: in her essay "Composing Identity: What is a woman composer?", Linda Catlin Smith states "I never really think of myself as a woman composer. It is something thrust upon me from outside" (2001, p. 30); and Alexina Louie has observed "I didn't set out to be a prominent Chinese Canadian; I set out to be a Canadian artist."[20] On the basis of these comments, it is clear that some contemporary female and minority composers prefer to be acknowledged simply as "composers," rather than being characterized primarily in terms of their gender or ethnicity.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the realization of innovative contemporary music projects such as those indicated above will necessitate a radical reappraisal of music funding, commissioning and programming priorities. This need not – and, indeed, should not – involve jettisoning the classical canon. But it will involve a comprehensive reassessment of the contemporary relevance and importance of this canon, moving towards a more equitable distribution of financial support, and moving away from the cyclical programming so

prevalent in contemporary symphony orchestras, in which the endless repetition of the canonical repertoire is based on an extremely limited coterie of dead composers – a point that I trust I have illustrated convincingly in this paper. Through such a process of reassessment, I argue, the notion of tradition might function, not as a dead weight, but as a genuinely inspirational element in the future development of the contemporary music scene.

NOTES

1. On the public funding and continuing resilience of opera, see Bereson (2002).
2. These are issues I have addressed in detail elsewhere, with specific reference to feminist approaches to musicology (Stanbridge 1998).
3. Virtually all North American and European universities now have full curriculum and course information available on their Web sites. A review of the typical course offerings in university Music departments, from large-scale institutions with international reputations to smaller-scale regional or state universities, simply confirms this point.
4. For a range of alternative perspectives on musical postmodernism, see Lochhead and Auner (2002).
5. Scruton also writes of the "exquisite simplicity" (1997, p. 184) of Schubert's piano waltzes. See Gramit (1998) for a critique of such problematic claims for Schubert's "unmediated communicative power" (p. 180).
6. On the Górecki phenomenon, see Howard (2002).
7. The financial information was taken from the Web site of the Canada Council for the Arts: www.canadacouncil.ca. All figures quoted are in Canadian dollars. The figures for 2004–05 offer a representative indication of the Canada Council's typical funding patterns.
8. The two other organizations were Jeunesses musicales du Canada, a youth organization devoted to the classical repertoire, and the Canadian Music Centre, representing a welcome gesture of support toward Canadian contemporary music, although still primarily within the Western art music tradition.
9. The information for the 2005–06 and 2006–07 concert seasons was taken from the Web site of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra: www.tso.ca. I have focused solely on concert performances by the TSO, visiting soloists, and occasional visiting orchestras. I have included repeated performances of individual pieces as part of the overall total. Programmes of opera and concert arias have been counted as one performance. In this two-year period, there are also 11 Pop Concerts, 10 Young People's Concerts, two Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra concerts, two Christmas concerts and a fundraising concert. In most cases, the repertoires of these concerts are not clearly specified, and I have disregarded them for the purposes of this analysis. The information for 2005–06 and 2006–07 offers a representative indication of the typical repertoire of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.
10. See: www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/demo53c.htm
11. See: www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050322/d050322b.htm
12. See, for example, the highly influential collections of essays in Karp and Lavine (1991) and Karp *et al.* (1992), and the recent essays in Karp *et al.* (2006). See also my own analysis of modes of display in the contemporary gallery and the "postmodern" museum (Stanbridge 2005).
13. See, for example, Sales (1984), Taylor (1986) and Marsalis (1988).
14. See the Jazz at Lincoln Center Backgrounder: www.jazzatlincolncenter.org/about/press/JALC_Backgrounder.pdf

15. These are issues I have dealt with at length elsewhere (Stanbridge 2004).

16. See Kenyon (2001) for a detailed history and analysis of Rattle's career, including full listings of CBSO concert programmes.

17. It is interesting to note that Ed Smith, the former manager of the CBSO during Rattle's tenure, took up the post of Executive Director with the Toronto Symphony in 2000, but resigned the following year, stating that "the internal culture of the [TSO] is probably beyond repair" (quoted in Bernstein 2001).

18. Hear, for example, Mackey's "Tuck and Roll", for electric guitar and orchestra, recorded by Mackey and Michael Tilson Thomas with the New World Symphony (2001, BMG 09026-63826-2); Dresher's "Concerto for Violin and Electro-Acoustic Band" (2004, New Albion NA125); Torke's "An Italian Straw Hat", commissioned by the National Ballet of Canada (2005, Ecstatic Records ECR 92207); Gosfield's "The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory" (2002, Cantaloupe Music CA21010); and Martland's "Horses of Instruction" (2001, Black Box BBM1033).

19. Hear, for example, Braxton's "Compositions 175 and 126" (2006, Leo Records LR 453/454); Zorn's "Aporias: Requia for Piano and Orchestra" (1998, Tzadik 7037); Koglmann's "Don't Play, Just Be" (2002, Between the Lines BTL 021); and Goebbels's "Surrogate Cities" (2000, ECM 1688). In particular, Goebbels's remarkable piece offers a striking vindication of the creative possibilities inherent in combining orchestral resources with improvisation and sampling techniques.

20. Quoted in an online biographical article: www.fccbc.ca/NewsletterArticles/AlexinaLouie.htm

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