

Ovation, Volume 2. Toronto, Ont.: CBC Records, 2002. PSCD 2027-5. \$35.00. Various performers and ensembles. Five compact discs (263:59). Contents: CD 1: Music of / Musique de Violet Archer (72:11); CD 2: Music of / Musique d'Oskar Morawetz (60:44); CD 3: Music of / Musique de Jean Papineau-Couture (60:44). CD 3: Music of / Musique de Malcolm Forsyth (65:44). CD 5: Music of / Musique de Murray Schafer (65:31).

I must admit I was puzzled at first by the decision to group these five stylistically distinct composers within the same boxed set. (Just what does the music of R Murray Schafer and Violet Archer share in common that would warrant packaging them together?) In the end, I came to realize the idea is to celebrate the diversity of geographical locations of musical activity in Canada—Montreal, Toronto and the west, to cite the three from the present compilation—using these composers as exemplars, rather than attempting to generate stylistic relationships between them. (For instance, while Archer, Morawetz and Papineau-Couture were all born within a few years of each other, which suggests a possible association; Forsyth and Schafer were both born approximately twenty years following the other three.)

Essentially, the selections for the present set (each composer has one CD of compositions) either duplicate works found in the respective “blue box” volumes of the *Anthology of Canadian Music* series or from other CBC recordings issued during the past fifteen or so years. The choice of repertoire is excellent, and constitutes a type of “greatest hits” for each composer. Not only is there a wide variety of genres, but in each case the works represent all portions of a composer’s career. In

addition, every work is complete, except for the solo Cello Sonata by Violet Archer (only the final movement of this 1981 composition was chosen). The downside is that no compositions beyond twenty minutes in duration appear, thus precluding one from hearing how any of these composers would approach a more expansive musical canvas. These are tradeoffs and decisions that must be made for any such collection and I am glad that the masterminds behind this offering went the way that they did.

Given the wide variety of solo performers, duos, small chamber groups and orchestral ensembles, as well as recording dates and venues (more about this below), it is perhaps not surprising that, at times, the sound quality varies and there are uneven performances. However, such gripes are minimal, as the vast majority of these pieces, and especially the works for solo and small chamber ensemble, are played with such extraordinary conviction and commitment that one would have to assume the five composers would have strongly endorsed these recordings when they first came out.

The program notes are well-written and quite informative; they are translated in full into French. Frustratingly, however, no texts for any

booklet. Track numbers and timings are given in their entirety, but unfortunately the recording dates and venues are omitted. The absence of such vital information is puzzling to say the least, especially in a tribute to five of Canada's premiere composers that was obviously put together not just for the general public but for music libraries and archives.

Nevertheless, this excellent survey of Canadian art music from the second half of the twentieth century is an indispensable addition to any personal or institutional library. At a price of only \$35 for the five-disc set, it is inexcusable not to purchase it.

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