# The sound of government realism:
# the politics and aesthetics of NFB film music, 1939-1964

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August 2023

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies

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# Abstract

Since its establishment in 1939, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) has produced a vast amount of original film music, most of which has been composed, performed, and recorded by Canadians. While music has been essential in producing meaning and generating the ideological messages embodied in NFB documentaries, it remains an undertheorized aspect of NFB film production, and has been almost entirely overlooked in histories of music in Canada. This study examines the production of original film music at the NFB during its first twenty-five years, a time when the institution maintained a roster of full-time staff composers and a dedicated music department. It was also a period during which the NFB underwent significant shifts in its mandate and vision, from producing wartime information, to championing postwar development, to reconsidering its role in relation to Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the broader sociopolitical upheaval of the 1960s. Music contributes significantly to the ideological function of these films by establishing the emotional tenor, choreographing audiences' attention, and suggesting preferred readings of the images. This study traces the development of different musical aesthetics and their transformation across various shifts within the institution as it responded to changes in state policies and broader sociopolitical developments. Focusing on one of Canada's most significant and productive cultural institutions at mid-century, I examine the many factors that mediate decisions about music at the NFB, the personnel involved at each stage of production, and the political dimensions inherent in the stylistic and music-aesthetic choices that were involved in the NFB's representations of Canadian topics, issues, and society.



# Résumé

Depuis sa création en 1939, l'Office national du film du Canada (ONF) a produit une quantité considérable de musique de film originale, dont la plupart ont été composées, interprétée et enregistrée par des Canadiens. Bien que la musique ait joué un rôle essentiel dans la production du sens et des messages idéologiques véhiculés par les documentaires de l'ONF, elle demeure un aspect sous-théorisé de la production cinématographique de l'ONF et a été presque entièrement négligée dans les histoires de la musique au Canada. Cette étude porte sur la production de musique de film originale à l'ONF au cours de ses vingt-cinq premières années d'existence, une période où l'institution disposait d'une équipe de compositeurs à temps plein et d'un service de musique spécialisé. Il s'agit également d'une période au cours de laquelle l'ONF a connu des changements importants dans son mandat et sa vision, passant de la production d'information en temps de guerre à la promotion du développement d'après-guerre, puis à la reconsidération de son rôle par rapport à la Révolution tranquille du Québec et aux bouleversements sociopolitiques plus généraux des années soixantes. La musique contribue de manière significative à la fonction idéologique de ces films en établissant la teneur émotionnelle, en chorégraphiant l'attention du public et en suggérant des lectures préférées des images. Cette étude retrace le développement de différentes esthétiques musicales et leur transformation au fil des changements au sein de l'institution, en réponse aux changements dans les politiques de l'État et aux développements sociopolitiques plus larges. En me concentrant sur l'une des institutions culturelles les plus importantes et les plus productives du Canada au milieu du siècle, j'examine les nombreux facteurs qui influencent les décisions relatives à la musique à l'ONF, le personnel impliqué à chaque étape de la production et les dimensions politiques inhérentes aux choix stylistiques et esthétiques de la musique dans les représentations par l'ONF de sujets, d'enjeux et de la société canadienne.

# Acknowledgements

It has been an incredibly enriching and rewarding experience to study alongside so many engaging and inspiring colleagues in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill. First and foremost, I thank my advisors, Professors Will Straw and Jonathan Sterne—a veritable dream team—for their generosity and patience throughout the process. I have benefitted enormously from their extraordinary expertise, incisive critiques, and professional example. I have also had the privilege of learning from other outstanding faculty members in AHCS, notably Professors Darin Barney and Carrie Rentschler. Crucially, I know of no other faculty that contains a gigging rock band.

I am especially grateful to past and present members of the CATDAWG working group for taking the time to read and offer thoughtful comments on very drafty drafts of articles and dissertation chapters. Throughout the writing phase—and particularly during the pandemic—Jennifer Messelink, Ky Brooks, Robin Desmeules, Kristi Kouchakji, and Kiersten Van Vliet helped me stay (somewhat) sane and (mostly) on-track through regular check-ins, online work dates, and shared projects. Special thanks to Jonathan and Carrie for hosting great potlucks, nachos, and going above and beyond for their students.

The NFB has been exceptionally supportive in facilitating this research. I am especially grateful to archivist André D'Ulisse for locating and digitizing a huge amount of material, for his enthusiasm and encouragement, and making my visits to the archives so productive and enjoyable. Many thanks to Katherine Kasirer for providing consistent access to the NFB's internal catalogue, and locating films that were difficult to find. In 2018, the NFB generously supported a recording project my colleague Adrian Matte and I proposed that reimagined jazz scores from the NFB's early animated shorts and resulted in a commercial album, *The Romance of Improvisation in Canada* (2018, Justin Time Records). Special thanks to Steve Hallé, Geoff Mitchell, and Mary Graziano for making this project happen, and to Adrian for his friendship, integrity, and support over the last decade.

NFB filmmakers Robert Verrall, Don McWilliams, and Louis Hone generously shared their memories of the NFB and provided valuable insider perspectives on the institution. The extensive interviews Louis Hone conducted with Eldon Rathburn were essential to this project; I am deeply grateful to Louis for making these tapes available, and for his friendship and encouragement. Professor Berkeley Fleming also shared materials from his personal collection related to his father's work at the NFB, and our correspondences have been instrumental in piecing together the role of NFB music personnel. Louise Cloutier provided crucial information on NFB music contracts and recording sessions, and I am very grateful for her willingness to share these remarkably detailed documents.

I would not have been able to complete this degree without financial support from several institutions. This research has been generously funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Media@McGill, and the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.

I am deeply thankful for my partner, James Wright. This project is a continuation of our work together on *They Shot, He Scored: The Life and Music of Eldon Rathburn* (2019). I have been

incredibly fortunate to have a partner who understands the highs and lows of doctoral work, as well as the enormous time commitment and peculiar challenges. He has read every draft, helped me to think and write more clearly, spent countless hours discussing the minutiae of NFB film music, and celebrated every small victory along the way. This dissertation is wholeheartedly dedicated to him.

Thanks to my parents, who strangely never questioned whether pursuing a humanities PhD was a good life choice (or were gracious enough not to tell me), and remain beacons of patience, kindness, and love.

## Archival Sources

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| BanQ | Bibliothèque et Archives Nationale du Québec |
| | Fonds famille Blackburn-Morisset-Rochon |
| CTA | Clara Thomas Archive, York University |
| | Louis Applebaum Fonds |
| LAC | Library and Archives Canada |
| | Robert Fleming Fonds |
| | Ernest MacMillan Fonds |
| | Sydney Newman Fonds |
| | Eldon Rathburn Fonds |
| NFBA | National Film Board of Canada Archives |
| NBPA | New Brunswick Provincial Archives |
| | Eldon Rathburn Fonds |
| UTA | University of Toronto Archives |
| | Ernest MacMillan Collection |

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# Introduction

Since its establishment in 1939, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) has produced a vast amount of original film music, most of which has been composed, performed, and recorded by Canadians. While music has been essential in producing the affective character and ideological messages embodied in NFB documentaries, it remains an undertheorized aspect of NFB film production, and has been almost entirely overlooked in histories of music in Canada. This study examines the production of original film music at the NFB during its first twenty-five years, a time when the institution maintained a roster of full-time staff composers and a dedicated music department. It was also a period during which the NFB underwent significant shifts in its mandate and vision, from producing wartime information, to championing postwar development, to reconsidering its role in relation to Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the broader sociopolitical upheaval of the 1960s. These changes are reflected in various shifts in documentary forms and practices at the NFB—from didactic direct address films to early experiments with *cinéma vérité*—that were likewise shaped by trends and innovations in documentary filmmaking in Europe and North America, as well as by developments in the social sciences and epistemology that underpin documentary film's claims of representing reality. Music contributes significantly to the ideological function of these films by establishing the emotional tenor, choreographing audiences' attention, and suggesting the preferred interpretation of the images. This study provides a detailed analysis of music produced for these films, tracing the development of different musical aesthetics and their transformation across various shifts within the institution as it responded to changes in state policies and broader sociopolitical developments. I examine the many factors that mediate decisions about music at the NFB, the personnel involved at each stage of production, and the

political dimensions inherent in the stylistic and music-aesthetic choices that were involved in the NFB's representations of Canadian topics, issues, and society.

As a government agency, the NFB has been tasked with representing Canada and Canadians on film in ways that align with the policies and perspectives of the Canadian government. The original National Film Act of 1939 stipulated that the NFB was intended to "make and distribute films designed to help Canadians in all parts of Canada to understand the ways of living and the problems of Canadians in other parts [of the country]."[1] The renewal of the Film Act in 1950 broadened its mandate to include the production and distribution of films "in the national interest … designed to interpret Canada to Canadians *and to other nations*."[2] Its more outward-looking stance reflected the commitment of the postwar Canadian government to liberal internationalism, and the desire for Canada to play a prominent role in the development of liberal political and economic systems worldwide, and within the leadership of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. The wording of the Film Act has been notoriously vague, leaving room for various interpretations of filmmaking "in the national interest," and allowing NFB filmmakers to carve space for more experimental and artistic work within these parameters. Soon after its establishment, the NFB became a hub of technical and artistic innovation, and was promptly recognized internationally as a premiere institute for documentary and animated film. The NFB offered an alternative to Hollywood and the commercial film industry, making it attractive to a variety of artists despite its connection to the government. Indeed, as Peter Morris has noted, the NFB became Canada's first "art cinema," and it has been winning prestigious awards since the

[1] Canada, "An Act to Create a National Film Board," *Statutes of Canada,* 1939, 101-5.
[2] Canada, "An Aspect Respecting the National Film Board, *Statutes of Canada,* 1950, I: 567-74. See also, "An Act Respecting the National Film Board," *Statutes of Canada,* 1985, vol. 4, c. N8, 1-7. Italics added by the author.

early 1940s.[3] Award-winning films such as *Neighbours* (1952), *Corral* (1954), *Blinkity Blank* (1955), *City of Gold* (1957), *Universe* (1960), and *Lonely Boy* (1962) have become part of the documentary canon, and were crucial in establishing the NFB's reputation internationally. However, as Zoë Druick reminds us, artistic excellence has never been a stated objective of the NFB.[4] Rather, the NFB's artistic contribution has been a by-product of a different mandate. The establishment and continuing existence of the NFB has rested on its usefulness to the government as a means of animating national issues, modeling idealized forms of citizenship, and projecting a sense of national unity and pride. When the viability of the NFB has been called into question, it is on these grounds that its survival has been secured, and not on its artistic merits.

While the NFB's experimental and award-winning films merit attention, repeated focus on these now-canonical films can detract from the primary aim and everyday work of the institution.[5] In addition to theatrical releases, the NFB developed an impressive non-theatrical distribution system, coordinating film screenings in rural, trade union, and industrial settings, stocking local film libraries, and providing copies to a wide range of educational institutions. The theatrical award-winners thus comprise only a small fraction of the NFB's output, which exceeds thirteen thousand films to date.[6]

Likewise, the music composed for award-winners is often singular, and neither indicative of the typical work of the NFB music department, nor the conventional style of NFB film music in a given period. For instance, animator Norman McLaren's hand-drawn sound for *Neighbours*

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[3] Peter Morris, "'Praxis into Process,': John Grierson and the National Film Board of Canada," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 9, No. 3 (1989): 269. The NFB's first Academy Award-winner was *Churchill's Island* (1941), which won the award for best documentary short.
[4] Zoë Druick, *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 17.
[5] Ibid., 16-17.
[6] "About Our Collection," National Film Board of Canada, https://collection.nfb.ca/about.

(1952) is exceptional, as is the experimental music for *Blinkity Blank* (1955), which combines McLaren's hand-drawn techniques with an aleatoric instrumental score by NFB staff composer Maurice Blackburn. These soundtracks are anomalies during the immediate postwar years, when most NFB films were underscored by a peculiar blend of classical music styles that became known as the "NFB sound," given its ubiquity in the films produced during this era. Similarly, the western-style guitar duet for *Corral* (1954), written by staff composer Eldon Rathburn, is unlike any other NFB score from this period in both its instrumentation and character. Undoubtedly, these exceptional musical scores contributed to the distinctiveness and success of these films. Without excluding them, this study focuses primarily on music for the NFB's more routine work, in order to understand how its mandate has been interpreted musically on an everyday basis and for a variety of audiences. Given the high volume of production and strict timelines, music personnel often developed a set of stylistic conventions that were applied across a wide range of topics.

Curiously, as Druick remarks, relatively few NFB documentaries can be understood as either high art or popular culture.[7] They seem to occupy a different space, and follow another logic. While NFB filmmakers have experimented with a variety of documentary forms, there is nonetheless an idiosyncratic style unique to the NFB that Druick has usefully described as "government realism." Druick describes government realism as essentially a statistical point of view insofar as the characters and narratives in these films are probabilistic representations of various subcategories of the population.[8] Like many mid-twentieth century liberal democratic governments internationally, the Canadian government adopted an array of social scientific techniques for conceptualizing and managing populations, such as the census, opinion polls, and other statistical and data-driven studies that produce social categories, norms, and generalized

[7] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 4.
[8] Ibid., 24-28.

knowledge about various subgroups of the population.[9] Druick contends that NFB documentaries illustrate this kind of statistical knowledge by presenting quasi-anonymous individuals who are "typical" of their subgroups, including various ethnic, occupational, and class identities. While these characters may present dissenting views or otherwise critique the government—albeit in ways that are deemed typical of their subgroup—differences are managed and competing interests are resolved in ways that ultimately endorse state policies and perspectives. Druick also notes that while realist filmmaking has often been connected to more revolutionary political agendas—Soviet Socialist Realism, Italian neo-realism, and Third Cinema, for example—realist filmmaking at the NFB has been tied instead to the historically moderate, middle-way politics of the Canadian government, and their modest, incremental approach to social reform.[10] Individuals in these films typically model idealized forms of citizenship, demonstrating rational and responsible behaviour, while government agents are shown to be competent and benevolent.

Druick argues that this ethos has remained constant across various changes in documentary form and style at the NFB. For example, while the observational turn at the NFB in the late-1950s eschewed authoritative "Voice-of-God" commentary, posed questions that were left unanswered, and generally took a more open-ended approach, the topics and themes in these films neither challenged the authority of the government nor the dominant ideology. As I argue in my analysis of the observational-style *Candid Eye* series in Chapter Four, these films remain expressions of government realism despite their more experimental forms and techniques.

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[9] See Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State, Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1849-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); David A. Worton, *The Dominion Bureau of Statistics: A History of Canada's Central Statistical Office and Its Antecedents, 1841-1972* (Montreal: McGill Queen's Press, 2014).
[10] Ibid., 27.

For audiences familiar with the cultural codes, music can immediately communicate complex sociopolitical messages, target defined audiences, and project specific emotional framing and values onto the image. For example, the primitivist musical tropes that were commonly used to represent Indigenous peoples in NFB films from the 1940s and 1950s instantaneously communicate and normalize the colonialist perspective of the state and prevailing Western ideologies of progress in terms of technological and industrial development within which Indigenous cultures are made to appear regressive and unsophisticated. Similarly, the way cool jazz is used to underscore a film on the Toronto police force immediately signals that the officers are the protagonists, and that they are benevolent, reasonable, and cool-headed in dealing with the public. Music provides an affective dimension that signals how audiences should feel about the characters and narratives presented in these films.

Although it is not typically recognized as part of the institutional ecology of classical music in Canada,[11] the NFB contributed significantly to the valorization of the Western canon, and reproduced the structures and values associated with it. NFB documentary film music during this period is primarily derived from Western classical music idioms, and employment in the music department was largely inaccessible to those without a formal classical training. Georgina Born helpfully articulates the many contradictions and crises occurring within the classical tradition at mid-century, when contemporary classical composers were increasingly occupying rarefied elite spaces that were disconnected from the general public, and disengaged from sociopolitical issues.[12] By the mid-twentieth century, even the more avant-garde branches of the classical tradition had

[11] Anna Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), xviii. I borrow this concept and turn of phrase from Bull's ethnographic study of classical music institutions in England.
[12] Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1-16.

become institutionalized in Canada and elsewhere, having failed to attract large audiences or broad support beyond elite circles. The surge of public funding for the arts in Canada and the US during the postwar years provided vital funding for classical music institutions, which remained powerful symbols of prestige, affluence, whiteness, and bourgeois culture.[13] In Canada, the NFB was one such institution.

While government realist films illustrate government policies and perspectives, the narratives are often depoliticized in the sense that diverse perspectives are flattened, important aspects of political decision-making are obfuscated, structural inequalities are left unexamined, and the legitimacy and benevolence of the state are assumed. Music contributes to the depoliticizing discourses in these films by helping to structure and animate the narratives in ways that naturalize the dominant ideology and supress disruptive elements and dissenting voices. Throughout classical music history, there has been a longstanding investment in conceptualizing music as self-referential, and having little to do with the social and political world.[14] For Western audiences, classical music aesthetics can therefore insinuate an allegedly objective and disinterested perspective, thereby masquerading as being devoid of political and ideological connotation.

A primary aim of this study is to bring into focus the ideological function of music in the NFB's government realist films. I argue that the musical underscoring during this period primarily

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[13] Ibid., 4-5; Richard Taruskin, "The Musical Mystique (2007)," in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 330-53. In Canada, The Massey Report (1951) urged the government to provide more resources and infrastructure to support the production of Western classical music (see pages 14-15 for a discussion of the music section of the Report), and recommended the creation of a national arts council, which was founded in 1957 as the Canada Council for the Arts.

[14] Carl Dalhaus, *Die Idee der absoluten Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978); Marcello Source-Keller, "Why is Music so Ideological, and Why do Totalitarian States Take it so Seriously? A Personal View from History and the Social Sciences," *Journal of Musicological Research* 26 (2007): 91-122; Taruskin, "The Musical Mystique."

serves to normalize and naturalize middle-class, white, Anglo-Protestant perspectives, values, and dispositions that the Canadian government promoted both explicitly and implicitly as the core national identity.[15] Music provides an affective dimension to the projection of a well-managed society organized around the values of the dominant, white, Anglophone culture, and it is used to persuade audiences to adopt this perspective and work towards realizing the ideal society presented in the films.

## Literature Review

Scholarly literature on NFB film music is limited, and there are no comprehensive analyses of the musical side of the institution neither in studies on the NFB nor in studies on music in Canada. This lacuna can be partially explained by the long-standing marginalization of film music in both musicology and film studies. Music scholars largely ignored film music for a significant part of the twentieth century. For most of its history, historical musicology has been characterized by positivist research methods that were squarely focused on the Western classical tradition, while ethnomusicology has been mainly focused on the sociocultural study of non-Western and folkloric music. Neither sub-discipline paid much attention to film music until the 1980s, when musicology underwent a cultural turn that broadened the field to include research on a variety of commercial, popular, and multimedia forms.[16] Similarly, film music had been a marginal subject in film studies until a wave of field-defining work was published in the late-1980s and early-1990s, including Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987), Caryl Flinn's *Strains of*

[15] Eva Mackey, *House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Routledge, 1999), 14-35.
[16] Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127-28; David Neumeyer, "Overview," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies,"* edited by David Neumeyer (Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-14.

*Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (1992), and Kathryn Kalinak's *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (1992).[17] While research on film music has proliferated since that time, documentary film music remains a niche area of study.

In broad histories of the NFB, music is typically only mentioned in passing. Gary Evans' *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989,* and D. B. Jones' *Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada*, are typical in this respect. Music does not receive an entry in the index for either book, and the NFB's four full-time staff composers—Eldon Rathburn, Maurice Blackburn, Robert Fleming, and Louis Applebaum—are mentioned only a handful of times, and never in substance. In Evans' historical account, Blackburn's music is briefly cited in relation to Norman McLaren, and Applebaum is discussed only occasionally, and even then, primarily in connection with his subsequent career as an arts administrator, and as co-author of the Applebaum-Hébert report issued by the federally appointed Cultural Policy Review Committee in 1982.[18] Despite his prolific compositional output, and his tenure as the NFB's music director from 1958 to 1970, Fleming is entirely absent in these histories. Evans identifies Rathburn as the composer for many films by Unit B (a production unit within the NFB whose work received considerable acclaim in the 1950s and 1960s), and as the composer for *Corral,* one of the first NFB films without commentary or sound effects, only music; however, the performance in *Corral* is mistakenly attributed to the renowned Cuban-American guitarist José Rey de la Torre, whereas it was actually written for two

[17] For a summary of the history of the visual bias in film studies, see Rick Altman, "Introduction," *Yale French Studies,* No. 60 "Cinema/Sound" (1980): 3-15. As Altman remarks, the terminology and concepts that were developed by early film theorists and critics were overwhelmingly image and camera-oriented. When cinema became the subject of scholarly study, film scholars largely inherited this vocabulary and perspective. Moreover, since film scholars typically lack the vocabulary and theoretical methods required to engage in music analysis, they often sidestep the subject altogether.

[18] Canada, *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee,* Ottawa, 1982.

guitars and performed by Canadian guitarists Al Harris and Stan Wilson.[19] Similarly, Jones mentions Rathburn in connection with *Corral* and Unit B films, however this is Jones' only reference to music.

There is no shortage of scholarly work on the NFB more generally. Various aspects of the institution and its processes have been theorized from a variety of perspectives, such as Pierre Véronneau's history of French production, *Résistance et affirmation: La production francophone à l'ONF, 1939-1964* (1987), Brian Low's *NFB Kids: Portrayals of Children by the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1989* (2002), Malek Khouri's *Filming Politics: Communism and the Portrayal of the Working Class at the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-46* (2007), and Zoë Druick's *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board of Canada* (2007), as well as an extensive collection of essays on activist documentary at the NFB, *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (2010), edited by Thomas Waugh, Ezra Winton and Michael Brendan Baker. There are also several monographs on NFB filmmakers, including *The Best Butler in the Business: Tom Daly of the National Film Board of Canada* (1996) by D. B. Jones, André Loiselle's *Le cinéma de Michel Brault: à l'image d'une nation* (2005), Sydney Newman's autobiography, *Head of Drama: The Memoir of Sydney Newman* (2017), and Graham McInnes' *One Man's Documentary: A Memoir*

[19] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, ca. 1991; James K Wright and Allyson Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored: The Life and Work of Eldon Rathburn* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 52-53. See Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (University of Toronto Press, 1991), 38. Rathburn initially wrote the music for *Corral* for Rey de la Torre, a virtuoso guitarist based in New York. However, Rathburn was surprised to learn that Rey de la Torre was not proficient at sight reading, and was therefore unable to learn the piece quickly enough to record it within the allotted timeframe. Therefore, Rathburn reworked the score and hired Al Harris and Stan Wilson to record it in Toronto. Rathburn considered it a learning experience, noting that virtuoso musicians were not necessarily competent studio musicians, and may not be ideal for film music sessions.

*of the Early Years of the National Film Board* (2004). There are also numerous books that assess the legacy and contribution of the NFB's founding commissioner, John Grierson.[20]

Prior to the 1980s, histories of music in Canada were overwhelmingly focused on the lives and works of composers in the Western classical tradition,[21] and followed the conventions of Anglo-American musicology in their positivist methodologies and conception of music as an autonomous object of study.[22] The two earliest surveys of contemporary music in Canada—Ernest MacMillan's *Music in Canada* (1955) and Arnold Walter's *Aspects of Music in Canada* (1969)—are perhaps the most wide-ranging in scope, with chapters on radio, film, sound recordings, and popular music.[23] Applebaum contributes a short chapter on film music to MacMillan's *Music in Canada*, which describes some of the activities of the NFB. Following these are a series of edited collections that are focused specifically on composers: John Beckwith and Udo Kassmets' *The Modern Composer and His World* (1961), Keith MacMillan and Beckwith's *Contemporary Canadian Composers* (1975), Keith MacMillan and Louise LaPlante's *Compositeurs Canadiens Contemporains* (1977), Ian Bradley's *Twentieth Century Canadian Composers* (1977), George Proctor's *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (1980), and Helmut Kallman's *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (1981). While Elaine Keillor explicitly attempts to capture a broader range of musical activity in Canada in her sweeping historical work, *Music in Canada: Capturing*

[20] For example, see Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Joyce Nelson's *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988); Zoë Druick and Deane Williams, *The Grierson Effect: Tracing Documentary's International Movement* (London: British Film Institute, 2014); and John Grierson Project, eds., *John Grierson and the NFB* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984).
[21] Maria Rika Maniates, "Musicology in Canada, 1963-1979," *Acta Musicologica* 53, Fasc. 1 (January-June 1981): 1-14.
[22] For a discussion of twentieth century Anglo-American, see Rose Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
[23] Two early histories of music in Canada were published during this period as well. See Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada, 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) and Willy Amtmann, *Music in Canada, 1600-1800* (Habitex Books, 1975).

*Landscape and Diversity* (2006), film music is still mentioned only very peripherally, as is the NFB and its full-time music staff. Alongside these broader histories are numerous monographs on specific Canadian composers, including John Beckwith, John Weinzweig, Harry Somers, Jean Coulthard, Harry Freedman, István Anhalt, Violet Archer, and several biographies of R. Murray Schafer, among others.[24] As contemporary composers moved into the academy in the postwar era, writing by composer-scholars increased, and a large portion of the literature on Canadian classical music, particularly from the 1960s and 1970s, is by the composers themselves.[25] While numerous other studies have since been published on a wide range of topics related to music-making in Canada,[26] film music and film composers generally have not been included in Western classical music histories and analyses more broadly, and the Canadian context is no different.

With hundreds of film scores to their credit in addition to their concert music works, the NFB staff composers are undoubtedly the most prolific and most recorded classical composers in Canadian history. If the criteria reflected the number of works written, recorded, performed, and

[24] John Beckwith and Timothy McGee, eds., *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Elaine Keillor, *John Weinzweig: The Radical Romantic of Canada* (Metichen: Scarecrow Press, 1994); John Beckwith and Brian Cherney, eds., *Weinzweig: Essays on His Life and Music* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011); Brian Cherney, *Harry Somers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Robin Elliott and Gordon E. Smith, *Istvan Anhalt: Pathways and Memory* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014); Alan Gilmour, *Eagle Minds: Selected Correspondence of Istvan Anhalt and George Rochberg* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007). William A. Bruneau and David Duke, *Jean Coulthard: A Life in Music* (Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2005); Linda Bishop Hartig, *Violet Archer: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); Gail Dixon, *The Music of Harry Freedman* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Stephen Adams, *R. Murray Schafer,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Brett Scott, *R. Murray Schafer: A Creative Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

[25] Helmut Kallmann, a professional librarian, was an exception to this rule.

[26] Ryan Edwardson, *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Beverly Diamond and Anna Hoefnagels, *Aboriginal Music in Contemporary Canada: Echoes and Exchanges* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012): Robin Elliott, *Counterpoint to a City: The First One Hundred Years of the Women's Musical Club of Toronto* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1997); Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); Beverly Diamond and Robert Witmer, eds., *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1994); Robin Elliott, ed., *Music Traditions: Cultures and Contexts* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2010);

distributed, they would have been viewed as major figures. However, given the privileging of autonomous "absolute" music in the classical world, their oeuvre has often been tacitly dismissed as second-rate, and few attempts have been made to understand or evaluate it.[27] When the NFB staff composers appear in surveys of Canadian music, they are allotted much less space, and the assessment of their work is uneven.[28] Short passages by Andrée Desautels and Keith MacMillan in *Aspects of Music in Canada* (1969) are typical. Although briefly, Desautels writes positively about the composers' film work and their broader contributions:

> Outstanding composers (Robert Fleming, Maurice Blackburn, Eldon Rathburn) wrote scores that were both effective and significant, relating images and sound in an artistically satisfying manner. They disproved the notion that film music plays only a subordinate role, that it necessarily restricts the freedom of the composer. […] Canadian films helped to bring a special brand of film music into being—concise, compact and smoothly integrated into the rhythmical flow of images.[29]

In contrast, Keith MacMillan is dismissive of film work, claiming that it is entirely separate from the concert hall (despite considerable evidence to the contrary):

> Although the National Film Board uses music extensively and maintains permanently a staff including several composers, it exercises comparatively little direct influence on the development of music in Canada, except in providing additional employment for Canadian composers and performers.[30]

Many film composers—including the NFB staff composers—also write concert music, and have arranged their film scores into stand-alone pieces for the concert hall. Film music has had a considerable impact on the Western classical tradition more generally, notwithstanding

[27] Similarly, although Weinzweig wrote music for more than a hundred film and radio dramas, Elaine Keillor's article on this aspect of his work is the only one (see Keillor, "Music for Radio and Film.")
[28] The exception to this rule is Applebaum, although he is more often discussed as an administrator—at the Stratford Music Festival, CAPAC, and Ontario Arts Council—than as a composer.
[29] Andrée Desautels, "The History of Canadian Composition, 1610-1967," in *Aspects of Music in Canada,* edited by Walter Arnold (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 139.
[30] Keith MacMillan, "National Organizations," in *Aspects of Music in Canada,* edited by Walter Arnold (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 294.

MacMillan's dismissal.[31] The NFB staff composers were all active participants in the contemporary classical music scene, and were early members of the Canadian League of Composers (founded in 1951).[32] Nonetheless, their concert music was rarely included on league-sponsored programs, which often favoured works by composers on faculty at the University of Toronto.[33] While Applebaum organized a few film screenings in the 1950s to showcase film music by league members, these were rare occurrences.

The 1951 *Royal Commission on National Development in Arts, Letters and Sciences*—the Massey Report—also emphasized the importance of the autonomous "composer-genius" in connection with the development of a national high culture.[34] Although the Commissioners solicited and received nearly thirty briefs from music organizations and individuals across Canada, the eight-page chapter on music in the Report is a lightly edited reduction of a longer essay that Vincent Massey personally commissioned in 1949 from Sir Ernest MacMillan,[35] then-conductor of the Toronto Symphony and Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto.[36] While the Commissioners deliberately solicited input from prominent figures in various artistic fields, in

[31] Arved Ashby, "Modernism Goes to the Movies," in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology,* edited by Arved Ashby (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 345-86.
[32] Benita Friedlund-Wolters, "A 'League Against Willan'?" The Early Years of the Canadian League of Composers, 1951–60, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5/4 (2011): 445–80. The League was founded in Toronto by Weinzweig and his students, Harry Somers and Samuel Dolin.
[33] Ibid., 463. Friedlund-Wolters provides a chart of the number of works by each member that were programmed on league-sponsored concerts between 1951–60. The most programmed composers were those on faculty at the University of Toronto: John Weinzweig, Harry Somers, and John Beckwith. John Weizweig's music was programmed on 27 concerts, Harry Somers on 22 concerts, John Beckwith on 15, whereas works by NFB composers were performed less than 7 times each (Rathburn, 2; Applebaum, 1; Fleming, 7; Blackburn, 6).
[34] Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences,* Chapter XV: "Music,"184-91.
[35] LAC, Ernest MacMillan fonds, Vincent Massey to Ernest MacMillan, 21 September 1949.
[36] LAC, Ernest MacMillan fonds, "Music in Canada: A brief survey prepared at the request of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences." MacMillan's contribution is acknowledged in the first footnote of the Report (p. 418): "Sir Ernest MacMillan, Special study, *Music in Canada*, page 2. Acknowledgement is made to this Study for much of the material in this Section."

the final Report, the task of broadly assessing musical life in Canada was surreptitiously handed to MacMillan.[37] Furthermore, MacMillan acknowledges in his survey that his account relies disproportionally on musical activities around Toronto—a crucial detail excluded from the Report—despite his regular travel and contact with colleagues across the country. He also states that his primary concern is with the development of "serious" (i.e., Western classical) music in Canada, and particularly the plight of contemporary Canadian composers, whose modernist works would allegedly form the basis of a national music aesthetic. In the Report, MacMillan (like Massey) tied the development of national culture to political and economic sovereignty:[38]

> Much more is needed if Canadian composers are to remain in Canada, and if there is to be a Canadian music […] This country needs perhaps to be reminded that most great music, from Pindar to Prokofieff, has been composed and presented largely through private or public munificence. […] A relatively small amount of money, wisely expended, could put Canadian music on a footing similar to that in other Western nations. It would be difficult to imagine a more profitable investment.[39]

While the Report allegedly provided a survey of the arts in Canada at mid-century, the music section explicitly articulates the perspectives and interests of Anglo-Canadian elites. Given the sense of aesthetic and sociological crises in modernist classical music during the postwar years—that is, both the inability of contemporary classical music to attract large audiences, and struggles over the establishment of a compositional language that would supersede the tonal system[40]—the notion that, with sufficient governmental support, Canadian modernist composers would produce a national musical aesthetic that would increase Canada's international reputation among their

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[37] The Commission received briefs from Canadian chapters of the American Federation of Musicians, women's music clubs, festivals, music teacher's associations, and symphony orchestras, among others.
[38] Karen Finlay, *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 3-11.
[39] Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences,* 186-91.
[40] Born, *Rationalizing Culture,* 1-16. In high modernist circles where serialism became entrenched, there was considerable antagonism between serialist composers and anyone working in tonal or quasi-tonal idioms.

Western allies seems hopelessly outmoded, and a throwback to nineteenth-century European ideas of musical nationalism.[41]

Moreover, by the time Canadian composers were working in avant-garde and modernist styles in the postwar years, the iconoclastic and subversive power of these movements was essentially gone.[42] Works that had provoked fervent public debate and increased the notoriety of composers when they were premiered forty years earlier—the atonal *Skandalkonzert* Schoenberg conducted in Vienna in 1913; performances by the Ballet Russes, including Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and Erik Satie's proto-Dadaist *Parade* (1917), for example—were being interpreted and canonized in academic music programs, entering an elite cultural sphere that the historic avant-garde had originally denounced. By the end of the Second World War, many Canadian composers who had studied abroad with modernist pedagogues had returned to Canada and taken up leadership positions at universities. Far from fending off the violent reactions of audiences and heated debates among critics that characterized early modernist performances, postwar modernists in Canada struggled to attract audiences and recognition outside niche musical scenes. At the First Symposium of Canadian Contemporary Music held in Vancouver in 1948, Weinzweig complained that "Canadians have the distinction of being the most unpublished, unheard, and unpaid musicians in the world."[43] A few years later, the founding of the Canadian

[41] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Music Renaissance, 1840-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), xiii-xxi.
[42] Elaine Keillor, "The Conservative Tradition in Canadian Music," in *Celebration: Essays on Aspects of Canadian Music Published in Honour of the 25th Anniversary of the Canadian Music Centre,* edited by Godfrey Ridout & Talivaldis Kenins (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 1984), 49-56. As Keillor remarks, modernist music was scarcely available in Canada prior to the Second World War, and Canadian classical music institutions were conservative, drawing primarily on English and France classical traditions.
[43] Helmut Kallman, "The Canadian League of Composers in the 1950s: 'The Heroic Years,'" in *Celebration: Essays on Aspects of Canadian Music Published in Honour of the 25th Anniversary of the Canadian Music Centre,* ed. Godfrey Ridout and Talivaldis Kenins (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre, 1984), 101.

League of Composers (CLC) by Weinzweig and his students was an attempt to collectively address a perceived lack of performance and recording opportunities for Canadian composers of modern classical music. Compared to their university colleagues and other members of the CLC, the NFB staff composers had far more opportunities to hear their compositions performed and recorded, and to learn from this process. While it lacked the cachet of the concert hall and prestige of absolute music, film music written by NFB composers was reliably recorded by top-tier musicians and consistently reached national and international audiences. The "NFB Sound," which I describe in Chapter Three, inadvertently became one of the most distinctly "Canadian" classical musical styles produced during this period, and had the most widespread and consistent circulation. Anecdotally, when I have played examples of the NFB sound for those who grew up in Canada during the postwar years, they typically recognize it immediately, and often associate it with the sound of their childhood given how ubiquitous NFB films were in school classrooms.

More recently, there have been a handful of studies on the NFB staff composers and music for NFB films. Walter Pitman's biography of Louis Applebaum, *Louis Applebaum: A Passion for Culture* (1999) provides considerable detail on Applebaum's early years at the NFB, and James K. Wright's *They Shot, He Scored: The Life and Work of Eldon Rathburn* (2019) offers insight into Rathburn's career as a full-time film composer, and provides musical analyses of his most successful film scores. Solenn Héllégouarch's recent publication, *Musique, Cinéma, Processus Créateur: Norman McLaren et Maurice Blackburn* (2020), examines Blackburn's film work in relation to his long-time creative partnership with McLaren.[44] Prior to Héllégouarch, Louise Cloutier might be considered Blackburn's primary biographer, and while her research remains

[44] This book is based on Héllégouarch's dissertation, "Une méthode dangereuse Comprendre le processus créateur en musique de film, le cas de Norman McLaren et Maurice Blackburn, David Cronenberg et Howard Shore" (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 2015).

largely unpublished, she has assembled an important collection of materials related to Blackburn's life and work.[45] There are also several studies on McLaren that examine his audiovisual and musical techniques, including Terrence Dobson's *The Film Work of Norman McLaren* (2006), and Nichola Dobson's *Norman McLaren: Between the Frames* (2018).

In addition to these biographies, Michael Brendan Baker has published two articles specifically on NFB film music. In his chapter in the edited collection *Challenge for Change* (2010), Baker identifies the use of Joni Mitchell's "Sistowbell Road" in *Wilf*: *A Study of Rural Relocation* (1968) as one of the first uses of popular music at the NFB.[46] Since the proper licensing rights were not obtained for the song, *Wilf* ultimately had to be removed from circulation, making it a prime example of the hazards of using commercial recordings in film—a practice the NFB music department vehemently discouraged during this period. Baker also contributes a chapter to the *Oxford Handbook for Canadian Cinema* (2019) on Canadian film music more broadly, which includes a brief survey of music for the NFB.[47] There are several inaccuracies in Baker's chapter that reflect the problem of drawing conclusions that are seemingly based exclusively on an assessment of the NFB's most avant-garde and ground-breaking films. Baker claims that Rathburn "pushed boundaries with his adoption of early synthesizers and electroacoustic compositional techniques explored alongside McLaren, ability vividly on display in his shape-shifting score for

[45] Louise Cloutier, "Maurice Blackburn et la 'filmusique'." *Cahiers de l'ARMuQ*, no. 10 (June 1998): 24-33. Cloutier has deposited some of these research materials at the BanQ, including a series of interviews she conducted with Blackburn in the early 1980s.
[46] Michael Brendan Baker, "The Curious Case of Wilf: Popular music in Canadian documentary," in *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada,* edited by Thomas Waugh, Ezra Winton and Michael Brendan Baker (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 210-17.
[47] Michael Brendan Baker, "The Musicality of Canadian Cinema." In *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Cinema,* edited by Janine Marchessault and Will Straw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 391-408.

*Canon* [1964]."[48] However, this was Rathburn's only collaboration with McLaren, and one of the very few times he used synthesized sound for an NFB score.[49] While Rathburn briefly experimented with electronic instruments and electroacoustic techniques in the 1960s, he promptly abandoned these in favour of more traditional film scoring for orchestras and chamber ensembles, which were his primary methods. Blackburn was McLaren's long-time collaborative partner, and the staff composer who consistently experimented with electroacoustic techniques and electronic instruments, which Baker describes at length. Once again, Fleming is unfortunately absent from this account. While the musical examples Baker surveys are undoubtedly some of the NFB's most ground-breaking work and part of the institution's enduring artistic legacy, Baker risks giving the impression that avant-garde musical styles were typical at the NFB during this period when they were largely exceptional cases. An aim of this study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the musical side of the institution, and the everyday work of the music department, which can serve as a basis for future research.

## Chapter Outline

Chapter One examines the history of Griersonian filmmaking as a set of ideas and practices that developed in the institutional spaces that John Grierson established for documentary filmmaking, first at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) and General Post Office (GPO) in England, and later in Canada at the NFB. Grierson's theories on documentary film, education, aesthetics and politics

[48] Ibid., 395.
[49] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991. Rathburn confirms in this interview that he rarely worked with McLaren, although McLaren sometime consulted with him on various projects. While Rathburn is credited on McLaren's film *Short and Suite* (1959), this was a remix that McLaren made of Rathburn's music for an earlier film, *The Structure of Unions* (1955), scored for a small jazz ensemble. Therefore, *Canon* is the only film where he worked directly with McLaren. Baker also erroneously claims that Rathburn shared the Academy Award with McLaren for *Neighbours* when he had no involvement with the film. Wright and Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored,* 56-59.

were foundational to the NFB, as they were at the GPO. Crucially, however, this approach to documentary would not have developed in this way had it not resonated with political and cultural authorities both in England and in Canada who shared Grierson's desire to mobilize film in the interests of the state. NFB filmmakers adopted and carried forward many of the techniques and sensibilities of the British documentarists who were invited by Grierson to train the NFB's first Canadian recruits. This chapter examines the music and sound produced for GPO films, which served as a template for the NFB's music department in terms of the kind of music professionals who were hired, the integration of composers into the production process, and the negotiation of musical aesthetics for government-sponsored films.

Chapter Two provides details on the organization of the NFB's early music and sound departments. Many of the production processes and norms that were established during this period lasted for decades. In addition to the contribution of the staff composers, I discuss the importance of the music editors in constructing the musical aesthetics for the Board's wartime films, which were often pieced together with materials from the stock music library. Hollywood film scores and the sound of American newsreels are notable influences during the war years, and this chapter outlines some of the direct connections between the NFB and Hollywood. While a large part of this chapter is devoted to explaining basic aspects of film music production at the NFB, it also analyses deviations from the conventional music aesthetics that had developed during this period. The use of modernist styles and experimental techniques could be justified in representations of otherness in NFB documentaries, including the portrayal of wartime enemies and Indigenous peoples, as well as scenarios depicting disability and disfigurement. I pick up this thread in Chapter Three to show that while experimental music was still limited to these conventional tropes throughout the 1950s, a shift occurred in the early 1960s when the staff composers began asserting

more influence over the production process, and insisted on using a broader range of musical styles and techniques to interpret the NFB's standard subject matter in more unconventional ways.

In Chapters Three and Four, I consider how the musical aesthetics of postwar NFB films relate to the concept of government realism. Chapter Three investigates the development of the idiosyncratic "NFB Sound" that emerged in the immediate postwar years. This term was coined within the institution, and refers to a peculiar blend of classical music styles that became the signature sound of NFB films from this era. Based on analyses of a broad range of films, I claim that that the NFB sound can be best described as a combination of French neoclassicism and English pastoralism, and I explain in detail the aesthetic, political, and pragmatic reasons behind the development of this distinctive house style.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of the music for the NFB's *Candid Eye* television series, an early experiment in observational filmmaking that aired on the CBC in 1958 and 1959. While the rejection of traditional musical underscoring and exclusive use of synchronized location sound became defining principles of observational filmmaking, I consider the remarkably central role music plays in this series. State-sanctioned violence and bleak realities are lurking just below the surface in films such as *Police* and *The Back-breaking Leaf,* among other episodes in the series, yet these aspects remain carefully contained. I show how music plays an important role in this containment by tempering images that might have otherwise appeared more violent and disruptive, and by steering attention away from contentious political issues. Despite its experimental ethos, I argue that *The Candid Eye* is an exemplary form of government realism in that it reproduces the nationalist mythologies of the Anglo-Canadian majority and models forms of citizenship that align with the objectives of the state.

# Chapter One – Prehistory: Music and Sound for the Griersonian Documentary

## Introduction

In June 1941, the Canadian government passed an order-in-council that officially granted the NFB authority over all government film operations, including production, distribution, and administration.[50] As the NFB's first film commissioner, and having been given the authority to bypass standard government hiring procedures, John Grierson took control of the process and immediately hired an assortment of Canadian writers, composers, musicians, visual artists, and animators, as well as a team of young university graduates who were keen on filmmaking, and who would shape the institution for decades. In many ways, the early NFB was a continuation and expansion of the ethos and practices that had been established in Grierson's film units at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) and later at the General Post Office (GPO) in the 1930s. With the advent of sound film and the added expense of the soundtrack, government sponsorship was one of only a handful of possibilities aside from private patronage for those interested in alternative and non-commercial filmmaking during the interwar years.[51] The GPO film unit was therefore attractive to independent filmmakers and artists as a funding base, and Grierson was keen on pressing artists into public service, as he was at the NFB. While many of the artists Grierson recruited were interested in producing socially-minded films, both artistic expression and social critique were necessarily constrained by the exigencies of government sponsorship. While the GPO and NFB may have provided a stable (albeit modest) funding base for artists and filmmakers, aesthetically-

[50] David Clandfield, *Canadian Film* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 17.
[51] Deke Dusinberre, "The Avant-Garde Attitude in the Thirties," in *The British Avant-garde Film, 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings,* edited by Michael O'Pray (Indiana University Press, 1996), 76. Advertising and industry were other potential funding bases for alternative filmmaking.

driven work had to be justified, and sociopolitical critique was moderated and subordinated to the government's policy priorities.

In this chapter, I examine the political, economic, and aesthetic factors that shaped the music and sound at the GPO film unit under Grierson's direction (1933-37), and consider how aspects of their work were adapted to the Canadian context not only through Grierson's influence, but also that of his protégés who Grierson invited to the NFB to train the first Canadian recruits. While the GPO's staff composers were not among those who came to Canada, the influence of the GPO is nonetheless evident in the establishment of the NFB's music department, including the types of music professionals who were engaged, styles of music that were considered appropriate, and the ways in which composers were integrated into the filmmaking process.

## Canadian Cultural Nationalism and Griersonian Filmmaking in the 1930s

By the end of the First World War, the British and Canadian governments were already involved in filmmaking, producing films that promoted industry, tourism, and trade.[52] In 1917, the Ontario Motion Pictures Bureau—the first public film production unit in North America—set up a permanent facility administered by the Department of Trade and Commerce, which was renamed the Canadian Government Motion Pictures Bureau (CGMPB) in 1923.[53] Its films primarily promoted the commodification of the Canadian landscape as a resource for international tourism and trade, carefully avoiding references to people and politics. One of Grierson's important contributions was to help sell the idea—first to the British government, and then to the Canadian

[52] Andrew Rodger, "Some Factors Contributing to the Formation of the National Film Board of Canada," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 9, no. 3 (1989): 259-68; Clandfield, *Canadian Film,* 7-10; Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: British Film Institute, 1995), 35-36.
[53] Zoë Druick, "Grierson in Canada," in *The Grierson Effect: Tracing Documentary's International Movement* (London: British Film Institute, 2014), 106.

government—not only that filmmaking was an essential tool for shaping public opinion and managing people, but that he was the ideal person to oversee this. In 1938, the Canadian government invited Grierson to prepare a report on filmmaking activities in Canada. His report harshly critiqued films produced by the CGMPB as dull, uncreative, and lacking in emotional persuasion and interest.[54] Grierson suggested that the government rethink their approach, and mobilize filmmaking towards social engineering, and the shaping of public opinion on a large scale to promote the political objectives of the state.

His vision was fundamentally incompatible with that of CGMPB, which had been producing films for over two decades and had its own production style and working culture. Within its limited scope, the CGMPB had been a relatively successful propaganda vehicle until it faced financial cutbacks in the 1930s that delayed its transition to sound film until 1934, which caused it to fall behind industry standards, and consequently fail to attract audiences.[55] Among other limitations Grierson identified, the CGMPB was hindered by its inability to attract top-level filmmakers since its scope was limited and it could only offer civil servant salaries. Without critiquing the CGMPB's personnel *per se*—the Bureau was staffed with competent and experienced film technicians—Grierson recommended that it be restructured in a way that would allow it to attract and foster creative talent from outside the civil service, and suggested that its

[54] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), John Grierson "Report on Canadian government film activities," June 1938. Grierson's 1938 report was primarily focused on the activities of the CGMPB, with which he was very familiar. As one of the CGMPB's largest distributors, the EMB had previously sent Grierson to survey their activities in 1931. Grierson also frequently used footage from the CGMPB in his own compilation films. See also, Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 127; Rodger, "Some Factors Contributing to the Formation of the National Film Board of Canada," 260.

[55] NFBA, *Annual Report 1944-45*, 4; Morris, "'Praxis into Process,'" 270-73; Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board*, 18-19.

programme shift towards socially-oriented topics that would showcase Canadians onscreen and build a sense of national unity and social cohesion across the country.[56]

While Grierson's vision for documentary filmmaking may have been incompatible with that of the CGMPB, it was wholly aligned with the values and aspirations of Canadian elites in the 1930s.[57] The insistence that the Canadian government update and renew its investment in filmmaking emerged from discourses on cultural nationalism taking place among the so-called "Laurentian Elite" [58]—Canada's ruling class, which historically has been comprised of upper class individuals (mostly British Protestants) residing in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and other cities along the St. Lawrence River and its watershed whose dominant roles in the political, academic, cultural, media and business spheres have determined the direction of the country since Confederation.[59] Having officially gained political independence from the UK in 1931 with the ratification of the Statute of Westminster, Laurentian elites were intent on constructing a distinctive national culture—one modeled on European high culture and reinforced by British middle-class values and traditions—as a means of shedding Canada's colonial image, and signalling its ability to play a major role in international affairs. The national high culture they envisioned would provide the population with an alternative to American forms of commercial entertainment, and encourage citizens to adopt British values and norms through exposure to

[56] Morris, *Embattled Shadows,* 127-74.
[57] Charles Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters: The Formation of Canadian Film Culture in the 1930s," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1994): 3-26; Morris, "Praxis into Process."
[58] Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), 27-51; Jody Berland, "Nationalism and the Modernist Legacy: Dialogues with Innis," in *Capital Culture: A Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art,* Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein, eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 14-38.
[59] John Ibbitson and Darrell Bricker, *The Big Shift: The Seismic Change in Canadian Politics, Business, and Culture and What it Means for our Future* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 2013); John Ibbitson, "The Collapse of the Laurentian Consensus," *Literary Review of Canada* (January-February 2012).

highbrow literature, poetry, music, and other cultural activities. To this end, the Governors-General also played a significant role in promoting British cultural traditions during this period by commissioning art works, sponsoring music competitions, and lending prestige to organizations and events that followed British models in terms of their attendance and patronage.[60]

Discussions on how to promote a certain kind of middle-class aesthetics, public and private morality, and a sense of social cohesion among Canadian citizens were taking place both within the government and in a variety of voluntary societies such as the National Film Society (NFS) and the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE), both established in 1935.[61] Membership in these circles overlapped, and was generally comprised of middle to upper class, white, Anglophone men; i.e., those more likely to have a university education, leisure time for these pursuits, as well as connections to powerful figures in government and industry. Members of these societies routinely traveled to England, and there was considerable dialogue between members of the Canadian societies and their British counterparts. Indeed, the NFS was modeled after the newly formed British Film Institute (founded in 1933), and followed its intent to provide a framework for coordinating and distributing educational films.[62] As Charles Acland emphasizes, these voluntary societies were not populist organizations, and the nationalist discourse that animated their activities should not be mistaken for a growing sense of national spirit among the Canadian population.[63] The Anglo-Canadian elite acted as though they represented the interests of

[60] Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 63-68.
[61] Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters," 7; Nelson, *The Colonized Eye,* 42.
[62] Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters," 9.
[63] Charles Acland, "Patterns of Cultural Authority: The National Film Society of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* (Spring 2001): 22.

Canadian society more generally, and their class interests were routinely conflated with the broader public interest.[64]

Indeed, it was the members of these voluntary societies who identified Grierson as the most qualified figure to assess filmmaking activities in Canada, and to provide recommendations on how they might harness film to further their political and economic aims. The suggestion to invite Grierson to Canada came from Ross McLean, a Canadian Rhodes Scholar, who in 1936 was appointed secretary to Vincent Massey, Canada's High Commissioner to the UK. As a film enthusiast, McLean was a founding member of the NFS in Canada, and he promptly joined the Film Society of London while he was stationed in England. Through these connections, McLean arranged to attend the final mix of *Night Mail* (1936) in the GPO studios, where he met Grierson and filmmakers Basil Wright and Paul Rotha.[65] He subsequently advised Massey that Grierson's expertise and vision for documentary filmmaking would be invaluable in Canada, and Massey formally extended an invitation for Grierson to assess the Canadian situation. In turn, McLean's knowledge and deep connections to the Canadian Liberal Party were enormously beneficial to Grierson as film commissioner.[66]

Canadian elites were keen on mobilizing film as a means of educating the masses, cultivating citizenship, creating a national consciousness, and disseminating nation-building content. Prior to Grierson's 1938 report, the NFS authored its own report in 1936 titled *Educational and Cultural Films in Canada* with funds from the Carnegie Corporation, written by Donald Buchanan (a founding member of the NFS and its first Secretary-Treasurer) with a preface by

[64] Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters," 8.
[65] Rodger, "Some Factors Contributing to the Formation of the National Film Board of Canada," 261.
[66] Jack C. Ellis, "John Grierson's First Years at the National Film Board," *Cinema Journal* 10, no. 1 (1970): 10.

Governor-General Baron Tweedsmuir (Honourary President of the NFS).[67] In a meeting of the NFS in the fall of 1939, executive members suggested that more needed to be done to "spread the gospel of the educational and documentary film," and urged the organizing secretary to solicit and draw further media attention to their work.[68] Film was thought to be a more universal and engaging form of modern communication—it had popular appeal and attracted vast audiences in the 1930s—and was therefore a powerful means for disseminating nationalist content. Prime Minister Mackenzie King was particularly receptive to the idea of "manufacturing consent" to ensure the orderly functioning of society and, a few years later, to unifying the country behind the war effort.[69] The emerging consensus among Anglo-Canadian elites was that film should be mobilized to promote Protestant Anglo-Canadian values and sensibilities, and reinforce this as the core Canadian identity. Contrary to historical accounts claiming that Grierson brought the concept of social documentary to Canada, Grierson's theories on documentary film and education strongly resonated and amplified discourse that was already taking place, although these discussions were nonetheless rooted in the imperial aims of the British government in promoting empire preference and allegiance throughout the Commonwealth.[70] Grierson unexpectedly became the NFB's first film commissioner when the front-runner—E. A. Corbett, president of the CAAE and an executive member of the NFS—declined the position, and when no other suitable Canadian candidates were

[67] Donald Buchanan, *Educational and Cultural Films in Canada* (Ottawa: National Film Society, 1936). For a discussion of this document and its relation to Grierson's report, see Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters," 10-15. Buchanan also played an important role in the early NFB as supervisor for the NFB's rural circuits (1941-44), supervisor of special projects (1945-47), and in the establishment of the Stills Division. See Gloria Lesser, "Biography and Bibliography of the Writings of Donald William Buchanan (1908-1966)," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 5, No. 2 (1981): 129-37.
[68] LAC, Visual and Sound Archives, "Minutes - CFC and NFS meeting," 4 October 1939; Acland, "Patterns of Cultural Authority," 16.
[69] Nelson, *The Colonized Eye,* 28.
[70] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 29-44; Rodger, "Some Factors Contributing to the Formation of the National Film Board of Canada, Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters"; Morris, "Praxis into Process."

allegedly available. While Grierson initially agreed to a six-month term, his tenure was eventually extended until 1945.

## Griersonian Personnel

The distinction between avant-garde and documentary film was still ambiguous in the 1930s. Russian revolutionary films, avant-garde "city symphonies,"[71] and films by the GPO were all forms of non-fiction that were of interest to cinephiles looking for alternatives to commercial cinema, particularly Hollywood productions.[72] While Grierson could not offer large salaries, many young artists and university graduates were willing to accept lower pay for the opportunity to do creative work at the GPO. Grierson primarily recruited young artists who had no prior experience in film—a strategy he also applied at the NFB.[73] The GPO became a nexus for the nascent British documentary movement and attracted a variety of emerging artists, many of whom went on to pursue significant careers. Similarly, the NFB became Canada's first "art cinema," and an important training ground for Canadian filmmakers.[74] As Bill Nichols remarks, Grierson's discourse throughout the interwar years repressed the connections between the 1920s continental avant-garde and emergent British documentary film movement, despite direct links through figures such as Alberto Cavalcanti, the Brazilian-born filmmaker and sound expert whom Grierson had recruited in 1934 to assist with the unit's transition to sound.[75] Cavalcanti was part of the Parisian

[71] Steven Jacobs, Eva Hielscher, and Anthony Kinik (eds.), *The City Symphony Phenomenon: Cinema, Art, and Urban Modernity Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 2018).
[72] Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement*, 17; Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 580-610; Dusinberre, "The Avant-Garde Attitude in the Thirties."
[73] Peter Morris, "Re-thinking Grierson: The Ideology of John Grierson," in *Canadian and Quebec Cinema,* edited by Pierre Véronneau, Michael Dorland, and Seth Feldman (Montreal: Mediatexte Publications Inc., 1993), 44; Gary Evans, *John Grierson: Trailblazer of Documentary Films* (Montreal: XYZ Pub, 2005), 79.
[74] Morris, "'Praxis into Process,'" 269.
[75] Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," 582.

avant-garde when he made his experimental film *Rien que les heures* (1926), a landmark experimental work that was screened by the London Film Society and much-admired by GPO filmmakers.[76] While Grierson outwardly expressed disdain for the concept of "art for art's sake," he nonetheless pointed to the modernist aesthetics that seeped into the GPO as elements that distinguished their work from newsreels and other actuality media, using the uniqueness of the GPO's approach to persuade government officials that his film unit was useful in promoting their agenda (while simultaneously attempting to limit the scope of artistic expression at the GPO).[77] This is characteristic of Grierson, whose public statements on aesthetics were often contradictory as he attempted to negotiate with the various stakeholders involved in his film units. He became adept at circumventing bureaucratic structures both at the GPO and NFB, carving space for his filmmakers to work with a certain degree of autonomy, yet insisting that they produce work that was in the public service.

Grierson considered documentary filmmaking the purview of the intellectual class who he believed had a moral duty to provide citizens with a coherent way of understanding the complexities of modern life, as well as a sense of optimism about the future. "There was a time when we used to say that you couldn't get into documentary unless you had a double first [first-class honours in two components of an Oxford undergraduate degree]," Grierson claimed, "and from Cambridge too, which was supposed to be great snobbery."[78] He boasted that most of the filmmakers he hired at the EMB and GPO had Oxbridge pedigrees. Among others, Basil Wright, Stuart Legg, Humphrey Jennings, and Arthur Elton were Cambridge graduates, Harry Watt was a

[76] Elizabeth Sussex, "Cavalcanti in England," *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1975): 207; Cunningham, "The Avant-Garde, the GPO Film Unit, and British Documentary in the 1930s," 157.
[77] Cunningham, "The Avant-Garde, the GPO Film Unit, and British Documentary in the 1930s," 153-54.
[78] Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 21.

dropout from the University of Edinburgh, and Paul Rotha studied graphics and design at the Slade School of Fine Art (University College London).[79] In an interview with Elizabeth Sussex, Basil Wright discloses that the filmmakers were never paid well; the typical pay of £4 per week put them at the bottom of the scale and they were not unionized.[80] "You accepted the pay for the privilege of working in documentary and getting creative freedom," Wright explained, noting that he also lived with his parents. He described the freedom as both political and artistic in nature. Unlike commercial filmmaking, there was a kind of freedom in not being driven entirely by profit motives. Curiously, this attitude was markedly different from that of Grierson, who considered himself part of the managerial class:

> I would never work for anything other than first-division wages … Whatever pay employed first-class traveling I would have; otherwise, I wouldn't have worked for any government … And anyways, my vanity—academic vanity—wouldn't have allowed me to take a second-division thing. This was very important for documentary, the vanity. The intellectual vanity, the people in documentary were first-class.[81]

At the NFB, Grierson similarly recruited young university graduates and artists, most of whom had no prior experience in filmmaking. To train them, and to keep up with the accelerating wartime production effort, he brought in his protégés from the GPO, including Stuart Legg, J. D. Davidson, Stanley Hawes, Raymond Spottiswoode, Norman McLaren, and the Canadian-born Evelyn Cherry.

Peter Morris strongly rejects the notion that suitable professionals were not available for Grierson's film units in either the UK or in Canada, and claims that Grierson intentionally recruited young artists with no experience in film yet who were enthusiastic to learn.[82] Arguably, it made

[79] Ibid. When Grierson failed to recruit Anthony Asquith from Oxford, he joked with his film crew that Oxford grads were henceforth banned and only Cambridge graduates would be accepted.
[80] Ibid., 22.
[81] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, 21.
[82] Morris, "Re-thinking Grierson," 44.

them more willing to take direction, and to accept Grierson's rhetoric about their roles and obligations as public servants. As Morris observes, "in all the dozens of later interviews with those film makers one constant image recurs: the image of a Messianic father figure gathering his children around him and teaching the laws of the land."[83] As a Calvinist who believed in the notion of a divinely-appointed elect, Grierson was motivated by a deep sense of religious duty and exceptionalism, which is manifest in the hubris of his quasi-religious leadership style and vision. In an interview given later in life, he made this connection explicit:

> If you think that I do not feel that I have been in the business of conditioning the imagination of mankind, you're crazy. But then, every goddamn rabbi, every Prophet, and every priest before me has been in the business of conditioning the imagination of mankind. I derive my authority from Moses.[84]

Like many artists who were hired at the NFB in the early 1940s, composer Louis Applebaum had just completed his formative studies—at the Julliard School of Music in New York, in Applebaum's case—when Grierson offered him a job. Applebaum's description of Grierson captures the sense of purpose that Grierson tried to instill in his staff, and shows the lasting impact it had on Applebaum:

> The National Film Board is vital to me because it created me. I came to the Film Board out of school, enamoured with film, and Grierson took me and shaped me entirely into what I am. I attributed my whole life to John Grierson. I started living in 1941. The Grierson faith in youth that you've heard about, Grierson's ability to take a bunch of untried, anxious, desperate, passionate youths, and convert them into something else, is what really mattered. That's what happened to me… He turned us into film-makers, and he turned us into public servants. The idea of contributing to society was something that he instilled in all of us.[85]

Despite Grierson's authoritarian tendencies and charismatic personality, many aspects of the production process escaped his control. This was not only due to the experimental inclinations of

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ronald Blumer, "John Grierson: I Derive My Authority from Moses," *Take One* 9 (1970): 17.
[85] Louis Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," in *John Grierson and the NFB* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984), 9. Paper presented at a conference held at McGill University, October 29-31, 1981.

his staff, but also to the limitations of Grierson's technical skills. Grierson only directed one film—*Drifters* (EMB, 1929), on fishermen working in the North Sea—and never seriously honed technical or artistic filmmaking skills. At the GPO, there were palpable tensions between Grierson and Cavalcanti. Cavalcanti was an experienced filmmaker with substantial technical knowledge who had worked both with the Parisian avant-garde and with Paramount Pictures. When filmmakers needed advice on their films, they went to Cavalcanti, not Grierson.

Cavalcanti's expertise and confidence ultimately threatened Grierson's authority. As director Harry Watt recalls, "it must have been very difficult for Grierson when we technicians more and more turned to Cavalcanti with our problems, but he [Grierson] was honest and shrewd enough to realize how much more polished and professional our films were becoming under Cav."[86] Notwithstanding Cavalcanti's substantial contribution to improvements in the quality of GPO films, he recalls Grierson routinely chastising him for his avant-garde approach on the grounds that artistic experimentation was neither something the government would sponsor, nor a worthwhile pursuit in itself. "He [Grierson] only came to the studios to upset my work," Cavalcanti claimed in an interview with Elizabeth Sussex.[87] Grierson equated aesthetics with individual expression and self-importance, all of which he attempted to supress in those working under him. Reacting to *Coal Face* (1935), Cavalcanti recalls Grierson reprimanding him for what had become "a too arty experiment," reminding him that "being 'aestheticky' means that you're in it for your own blue eyes. Enough aesthetics, dammit!"[88]

Ultimately, Grierson and Cavalcanti had fundamentally different ideas about documentary film. Cavalcanti was not inclined to make sharp distinctions between genres, and wanted to keep

[86] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, 186.
[87] Sussex, "Cavalcanti in England," 207.
[88] Evans, *John Grierson: Trailblazer of Documentary Films,* 40.

the boundaries between documentary, fiction, and experimental film fluid. "I maintained that 'documentary' was a silly denomination … I thought films are the same, either fictional or otherwise, and I thought that films ought to go in cinemas," Cavalcanti recalls, demonstrating his tendency toward more experimental, open-ended filmmaking processes.[89] Sussex suggests that Cavalcanti may not have understood how grave an offence he had committed, or how dismissive his comments were of Grierson's documentary project, although Cavalcanti remembers Grierson's biting retort. "You really are an innocent character," he snapped at Cavalcanti, "I have to deal with the government, and the word 'documentary' impresses them as something serious."[90] Despite their differences, Cavalcanti remained on staff and ultimately took over as director of the GPO Film Unit in 1937 when Grierson resigned. However, their contentiousness may have endured beyond these years. While one might have thought that GPO films would have been used as models at the NFB, there is some evidence to suggest that in fact the opposite may have been true. Cavalcanti reported hearing from Canadian filmmakers that Grierson had banned the screening of early GPO films at the NFB, many of which Cavalcanti had worked on.[91]

While Grierson wrote extensively on documentary film—in short essays, film reviews, speeches, and memoranda—his primary role was always that of a film executive, and as someone capable of cultivating and maintaining relationships with government and industry sponsors. Despite the seemingly anti-aesthetic stance he habitually adopted in debates with Cavalcanti and others, Watt recalls that Grierson was particularly skilled in spinning the GPO's experiments as worthy endeavours when it was to his advantage: "He had the ability to persuade people that our often pretty feeble efforts were works of art or moving towards a new art form."[92] When *Coal*

[89] Sussex, "Cavalcanti in England," 208.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 206.
[92] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, 76.

*Face* was screened for the sponsors, Watt recalls Grierson explaining that the barely visible shots filmed underground were deliberate, that the darkness underlined the impression of the difficulty and dangerousness of the work, when in fact the prints simply did not turn out well due to a lack of technical expertise and equipment.[93]

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Grierson outwardly maintained that the documentary film movement was primarily about public education, disavowing any connection between documentary and art. In 1937 he wrote, rather incredulously, "it is worth recalling that the British documentary group began not so much in affection for film *per se* as in affection for national education." [94] He reiterated this claim in 1941:

> The documentary idea was not basically a film idea at all, and the film treatment it inspired was only an incidental aspect of it. The medium happened to be the most convenient and most exciting available to us. The idea itself, on the other hand, was a new idea for public education.[95]

Dai Vaughan suggests that in deciphering Grierson one has to realize that his statements "were not meant to make sense," but rather "they were meant to make things happen."[96] That is, his writing and speeches were often strategically designed to persuade those in power, or those working under him.

Within the GPO and NFB, Grierson organized production in a relatively horizontal fashion, where small groups of filmmakers would collaborate on projects and report directly to him. At the wartime NFB, production teams would report either to Grierson or to his primary assistant, Stuart Legg, who together oversaw nearly every production. In this sense, the production process was

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[93] Ibid.
[94] John Grierson, "The Course of Realism," in *Grierson on Documentary,* edited by Forsyth Hardy (first edition 1947, reprinted Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 207.
[95] John Grierson, "The Documentary Idea: 1942," in *Grierson on Documentary,* 250.
[96] Dai Vaughan, *A Portrait of An Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister* (London: British Film Institute, 1983), 30.

more artisanal than industrial, in that it was not based on a mass-production model, and filmmakers oversaw the entire production from beginning to end. Their roles often shifted, and they sometimes worked outside their areas of expertise, learning on the job. Cavalcanti provided the following description of this sense of collaboration at the GPO:

> The working conditions were similar to medieval artisanship; the work was collective, the films of each were discussed, and all the suggestions were accepted. If a colleague needed help, he found it immediately; yet each unit retained its personality in a spirit of sporting competition.[97]

Remarkably, these exact words could be used to describe the filmmaking process that characterized the NFB's Unit B some twenty years later. Similarly, the NFB's staff composers oversaw almost every aspect of music production, often composing, orchestrating, conducting, and helping with the final mix of their film scores. At the GPO and early NFB, collaborative work was emphasized over individual effort to such an extent that films often lacked proper credits, and sometimes work was misattributed. "Everybody knows that the credits in the GPO film unit were full of fantasy, and of Grierson fantasy," Cavalcanti commented in an interview, noting that Grierson himself acknowledged the credits were often incorrect.[98] Not unsurprisingly, Grierson's philosophical rejection of individualism and emphasis on collective work did not apply to himself; he was properly credited as the producer of GPO films.[99]

## Government Realism: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Griersonian Documentary

[97] Cavalcanti quoted in Emir Rodriguez Monegal, "Alberto Cavalcanti," *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1955): 346.
[98] Sussex, "Cavalcanti in England," 139.
[99] While Grierson's name typically does not appear in the credits of NFB films, this is not indicative of a change in philosophy or leadership style. His authoritative approach as NFB film commissioner is consistent with his leadership style at the GPO.

Political theorist Tom Nairn describes the early twentieth-century British intelligentsia as playing an uncharacteristically political role in promoting the status quo and social integration in their advocacy for incremental reform and social cohesion through the inculcation of a commonly-held set of societal goals rather than revolution.[100] By positioning themselves as neither for nor opposed to the state, British intellectuals played a key role in promoting the idea of "middle way" politics and faith in civil institutions. Nairn writes, "the world-view of this social group is a conservative liberalism, and in terms of socio-political strategy this entailed the preservation of rule from above by constant adaptation and concession below."[101] Following Nairn, Brian Winston considers Grierson's career exemplary in this respect.[102] Although Grierson adopted quasi-socialist rhetoric in his writing and speeches, his actions never posed a serious challenge to the existing order, nor did they put forward incisive social critiques. Grierson understood the state as a necessary entity that was capable of expressing and securing the best interests of the people.[103] He could therefore rationalize state-sponsored filmmaking as a beneficial and effective means of public education. For Grierson, the state must step in to control information.[104] Indeed, a hallmark of Griersonian

[100] Tom Nairn, "The Twilight of the British State," *New Left Review* 101-102 (1977): 19-22.
[101] Ibid., 19.
[102] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 32.
[103] Ian Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement* (London: Routledge, 1990), 17-20. Aitken describes Grierson's philosophical world view primarily as a synthesis of neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian philosophy, which he came to through the British Idealists he had studied with in Glasgow. Grierson's perspective is summarized particularly well in a letter he wrote to the American philosopher and law professor Zechariah Chafee in 1947, specifying that his ideas stem from Hegel and not Marx: "My personal view is that such total planning by the state is an absolute good and not simply a relative good…I do not myself think of the attitude I take as deriving from Marx—though this will undoubtedly be suggested—but from Fichte and Hegel. My view of the State, as you know, is that it is only through the State that the person and the will of the person can be greatly expressed" (Grierson quoted in Morris, "'Praxis into Process,'" 274).
[104] While Walter Lippmann's work had a significant impact on Grierson, Lippmann's ideas about the necessity of "manufacturing consent" in modern liberal democracies, and the need for a class of experts to advise the political class and create propaganda for the masses were prefigured in the work of A. D. Lindsay and Graham Wallas, theorists with whom Grierson was already familiar from his studies in philosophy and literature at the University of Glasgow. As Peter Morris notes, Grierson's encounter with

films is their promotion of a middle-way politics designed to suit either liberal or conservative governments, and promote modest, incremental reforms. Griersonian films are unfailingly optimistic in demonstrating that conflicts can be resolved when individuals of all classes work together for the common good, particularly with the support of the state and civil institutions.[105] These are the politics underpinning Druick concept of "government realism," a term she uses to describe the idiosyncratic style of NFB documentaries, which I discuss in more depth in Chapters Three and Four. [106]

There is a marked sense of political disengagement in Griersonian documentaries at the GPO and NFB. Although Grierson and his GPO staff were inspired by the revolutionary Russian filmmakers of the 1920s, particularly their creative use of montage and depictions of the working class onscreen, the politics of Griersonian films are far from revolutionary, and deliberately obfuscate class conflicts. Winston's assessment of the politics of this style of filmmaking leads him to conclude that while the filmmakers may have been earnest in their intent to produce socially-minded cinema, "running away from social meaning is what the Griersonian documentary, and therefore the entire tradition, does best."[107] The discourse in these films is depoliticizing in that it obfuscates conflict, flattens meaningful differences, and assumes consensus on the fairness and efficacy of the state and capitalist system. While many GPO filmmakers considered themselves socialists and progressives, they positioned themselves as somewhat detached from the working classes in their films, adopting a quasi-anthropological approach and aestheticizing aspects of working-class life for cinematic effect.

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Lippmann's work mostly solidified ideas with which he was already familiar and sympathetic. See Morris, "Re-Thinking Grierson."
[105] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 23; Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board*, 12.
[106] Druick, *Projecting Canada*, 24-28.
[107] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 37.

Unlike the Soviets, Grierson denied that class divisions presented a fundamental problem for society, or that the State was implicated in them.[108] The working class was hardly a progressive force in Grierson's estimation since they had neither the education nor sufficient knowledge and understanding to shape society. In the Griersonian tradition, workers are presented as "heroic" only insofar as they are seen contributing to the orderly functioning of society, either by maintaining the status quo or working towards modest reforms. They are not agents of social change, and are presented as rather mechanistic. The depiction of workers in GPO and early NFB films tends to be highly aestheticized and superficial, avoiding any serious inquiry into contentious topics such as dangerous working conditions, mistreatment, strikes, wage inequities, or grievances with management. As Grierson writes in his "First Principles of Documentary" (1932-34):

> Realist documentary, with its streets and cities and slums and markets and exchanges and factories, has given itself the job of making poetry where no poet has gone before it, and where no ends sufficient for the purposes of art, are easily observed.[109]

Grierson was inspired by the poetic portrayal of everyday urban life in the "city symphony" genre of the 1920s, and its novel filmic techniques:

> [T]he city symphonists have found a way of building such matter of common reality into very pleasant sequences. By uses of tempo and rhythm, and by the large-scale integration of single effects, they capture the eye and impress the mind in the same was as a tattoo or a military parade might do.[110]

Nonetheless, he was dissatisfied with their social message, or lack thereof:

> The little daily doings, however finely symphonised, are not enough. One must pile up beyond doing or process to creation itself, before one hits the higher reaches of art. In this distinction, creation indicates not the making of things but the making of virtues."[111]

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[108] Jamie Sexton, "Grierson's Machines: Drifters, the Documentary Film Movement and the Negotiation of Modernity," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 50-54. See also Jacobs et al, *The City Symphony Phenomenon* (2018).
[109] John Grierson, "First Principles of Documentary" (1932-34), in *Grierson on Documentary,* 151.
[110] Ibid.
[111] John Grierson, "Documentary (2): 'Symphonics,'" *Cinema Quarterly* 1 (Spring 1933): 136.

At the GPO, the same general orientation was adopted in filming industrial labour. In *Coal Face* (1935), for example, the hazardous work of coal mining is presented in a highly stylized and modernist fashion. The experimental score by Benjamin Britten and montage-style editing effectively turns the harsh realities of coal mining into a modernist multimedia performance.

None of the GPO filmmakers came from working-class backgrounds, nor had they been significantly impacted by economic depression or other forms of political oppression.[112] While the political constraints of government sponsorship were significant, the failure of Grierson's film units to produce meaningful social commentary or political analysis stemmed in part from their lack of diversity and their remove from the widespread political and economic hardships of the 1930s. At the GPO, there was a notion that dramatizing workers' activities onscreen would provide them with a sense of pride in their contribution to a larger whole, which in turn would foster greater feelings of social cohesion, and increase their motivation to work.[113] However, there is little to suggest that GPO films actually had this effect. As Paul Swann notes, the politics underpinning these intentions betray the middle-class status of the filmmakers, and their patronizing attitude toward the working class.[114]

Throughout most of his life, Grierson expressed overt disdain for the aesthetic conception of "art for art's sake," which he viewed as self-indulgent, arrogant, decadent, and ultimately a useless point of departure.[115] Yet he was seemingly fascinated by artists of all kinds. Art critic

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[112] Aitken, *Film and Reform,* 60; Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 32-39; Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement,* 16.
[113] Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement,* 67-8.
[114] Ibid.
[115] John Grierson, "Education and the New Order (1941, published by the Canadian Association for Adult Education)" in *Grierson on Documentary,* 269. Undoubtedly, this perspective largely stemmed from his Calvinist beliefs in duty and discipline, which he expressed in this article: "Some of us came out of a highly disciplined religion and see no reason to fear discipline and self-denial. Some of us learned in a school of philosophy which taught that all was for the common good and nothing for oneself and have never, in any case, regarded the pursuit of happiness as anything other than an aberration of the human spirit."

Fritzi Weisenborn—Grierson's long-time friend, and the wife of American painter Rudolph Weisenborn—described Grierson as someone who was attracted to creative personalities, perhaps jealous of them, but keenly interested in understanding their motivations and processes.[116] Grierson surrounded himself with artists in his personal and professional life, including those with experimental and avant-garde sensibilities, and they played key roles in his film units.[117] And he was somewhat self-congratulatory when describing how he channeled their talent, and encouraged them to offer their work to the public service:

> What confuses the history is that we had always the good sense to use the aesthetes. We did so because we liked them and because we needed them. It was, paradoxically, with the first-rate aesthetic help of people like Flaherty and Cavalcanti—our 'fellow travellers' so to speak—that we mastered the techniques necessary for our quite unaesthetic purpose.[118]

Later in life, Grierson dropped some of his rhetoric about the social purposefulness of documentary and discussed it as an art form, going so far as to claim that it was only out of necessity that he downplayed the artistic element in negotiating with sponsors: "I was always scared I might be found out, so I was careful to say the Hell with Art. The more I pursued it, the more I was careful to denounce my own pursuit of it."[119] In an essay from 1970, two years before his death, Grierson revised the history of his documentary film philosophy, now claiming that it was the "magic of the movies" and not public education and influence that ultimately inspired him to pursue documentary film.[120] Throughout this late essay, he discusses documentary film in almost exclusively artistic terms:

> Most people, when they think of documentary film, think of public reports, and social problems and worthwhile education and all that sort of thing. For me it's something more magical. It is a visual art which can convey a sense of beauty about the ordinary world, the

[116] Jack C. Ellis, "The Young Grierson in America, 1924-27," *Cinema Journal* 8, No. 1 (1968): 16.
[117] Grierson, "The Documentary Idea: 1942," in *Grierson on Documentary,* 249.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Grierson quoted in Peter Morris, "Rethinking Grierson: The Ideology of John Grierson," unpaginated.
[120] John Grierson, "I Remember, I Remember" (1970), in *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology,* edited by Ian Aitken (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2020), 148.

> world on your doorstep …. the documentary film I gave a push to forty years ago was a richer form of art than I ever dreamt of, and a hundred other talents than mine have proved it so.[121]

Indeed, many artists and filmmakers who worked under Grierson at the GPO and the early NFB went on to significant artistic careers, including Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Humphrey Jennings, Benjamin Britten, W. H. Auden, Sydney Newman, Norman McLaren, and Louis Applebaum, to name only a few. It is in keeping with Grierson's persona that he would later take credit for nurturing and shepherding their artistic talent when in fact he had often been harshly critical of anyone who aspired to pursue individual artistic expression under his direction.

## Music and Sound at the GPO

In an essay written in 1930, written a year after *Drifters* (a silent film) was released, Grierson described the various musical accompaniments for his film as essentially unsatisfying:

> There have been slices of Stravinsky, of Wagner, of Mussorgsky, of Mendelssohn and a dozen others. There have been snatches of "Home Sweet Home" and "Caller Herring," and any number of swishes and tinkles from the starboard side of the orchestra pit. I shall not say how good or bad the different scores were, but this I can properly say, that not one of them gave me the film I cut.[122]

Ideally, Grierson wanted each film to have a tailor-made soundtrack. In his essay, he outlines the negative consequences that result when the music is not specifically written and conceived in lockstep with the dictates of the film:

> I have seen a sequence come alive with one score which was killed dead by another. I have seen sequences wriggling like worms cut in half because the music changed at the wrong time. I have seen a continuity lengthen and drag and flop because the music reached its natural peak some seconds before the cutting was ready for it. The music was releasing the audience from the attention just when the film was calling for it.[123]

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[121] Ibid., 151.
[122] Grierson, "On the Talkie Horizon," (*The Clarion,* January 1930), in *Grierson on the Movies,* edited by Forsyth Hardy (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 34. See also, John Izod, "Arthur Dulay and John Grierson: Fitting *Drifters* (1929)," *Visual Culture in Britain* 20, no. 3 (2019): 261-77.
[123] Grierson, "On the Talkie Horizon," 34.

Grierson noted that the films he admired by the Russians—Eisenstein and Alexandrov's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) with music by Edmund Meisel,[124] for example—benefited significantly from music written specifically for the film. He was nonetheless skeptical about the artifice of non-diegetic music, which threatened to detract from the stylized reality he aimed to construct:

> Cinema cannot refuse the help of music nor of choral singing, nor of any of the other mannered massings of sound, but I do think that the especial progress of cinema will lie in the pursuit of its own gifts … There must be a poetry of sound which none of us knows … masses choruses of sound in the factory and the street and among all men alive, ready to the hand of the builder, ebbing and flowing with life, rising and falling in a commentary and explanation of life.[125]

While his musings point to a kind of *musique concrète* as the ideal approach to documentary sound, he ultimately hired resident classically trained composers for his film units.

In keeping with his usual hiring practices, Grierson sought out young classically-trained composers from prestigious schools for the GPO. English composer Walter Leigh (1905-42) was a Cambridge graduate who had studied with Paul Hindemith at the Berlin Academy of Music from 1927 to 1929, prior to being recruited by Grierson. Leigh scored at least half a dozen films for the GPO between 1932 and 1939, including the acclaimed *The Song of Ceylon* (1934) and *Pett and Pott: A Fairy Story of the Suburbs* (1934). In addition to concert and film work, Leigh also wrote music for theatre, radio, revues, and light opera. His versatility as a composer is evident in his film work, and his scores often contain short pieces in a variety of styles. Leigh died tragically in combat in Tobruk, Libya, in 1942.

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[124] Although Meisel wrote the music for the original film, it is worth noting in this context that Eisenstein hoped the score would be re-written every twenty years, so that the film would have resonance for each new generation. In keeping with Eisenstein's wishes, more recent scores and soundtracks have been created by Nikolai Kryukov (1950 score), Dmitri Shostakovich (arr. By Frank Strobel, 1976), Chris Jarrett (soundtrack, 1985), Eric Allaman (soundtrack, 1986), Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe (2005 score), Michale Nyman (soundtrack 2011), and Edison Studios (soundtrack 2017).

[125] Grierson, "On the Talkie Horizon," 35-36.

The other resident composer at the GPO during this period was Benjamin Britten (1913-76) who Grierson recruited in April 1935, and who served as GPO music director from September 1935 to November 1936.[126] When Grierson recruited him, Britten had just graduated from the Royal College of Music, having studied with John Ireland and Arthur Benjamin, and also had some experience working in radio at the BBC. While Leigh and Britten were the GPO's two primary composers (Britten scored nearly twenty films for the GPO),[127] other well-known classical composers also contributed film scores, including Darius Milhaud and Maurice Jaubert.[128]

As a student of Hindemith—the most prominent German neoclassical composer during the interwar years—it is not surprising that many of Leigh's GPO film scores have neoclassical elements.[129] *Pett and Pott*—a satirical promotional film for the telephone—begins with a traditional march for the opening credits, and then segues into a lengthy neoclassical piece that is derived from, and directly quotes J. S. Bach's "Badinerie" (from the *Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor*, ca. 1739), a popular piece of baroque music. It is scored for a small chamber ensemble, and the woodwinds feature prominently. The ensemble often plays out of tune, suggesting that Leigh may have been writing for and working with amateur players.

Similarly, Britten's film scores often incorporate neoclassical elements. His first film, *The King's Stamp* (1935, directed by the British painter William Coldstream)—a film that dramatizes

[126] Donald Mitchell, *Britten and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 80; Philip Reed, "The Incidental Music of Benjamin Britten: A Study and Catalogue of His Music for Film, Theatre, and Radio," (PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1987), 30.
[127] Mervyn Cook, "Britten and Film," in *Britten in Context,* edited by Vicki P Stroeher and Justin Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 74.
[128] Paul Mazey, *British Film Music:' Musical Traditions in British Cinema, 1930s-1950s* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 24.
[129] Thomas Irvine, "Hindemith's Disciple in London: Walter Leigh on Modern Music, 1932-40," in *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1945,* edited by Matthew Riley (London: Aldershot, 2010), 197-220; Richard Taruskin, "Review: Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology," *Nineteenth Century Music* 16, no. 3 (1993): 286-302.

the making of a commemorative postage stamp for King George V's Silver Jubilee, and provides a short history on the origins of the postal service in England—is scored for a small ensemble of flute (doubling on piccolo), clarinet, two pianos, and percussion.[130] This instrumentation is typical of Britten's film scores for the GPO during the mid-1930s, many of which are written for winds, piano, and percussion.[131] Britten played the first piano part himself, and notes in his diary that the second piano part was played by Irish composer Howard Ferguson, who was frequently hired to record for the GPO.[132] The textures are consistently contrapuntal, the melodic lines are generally cheerful and light, and the overall quality is one of clarity and simplicity. In these and other respects, it is reminiscent of works by the Parisian composer collective known as "Les Six"—comprised of Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, Arthur Honegger, and Louis Durey—who were active during the interwar years. With the exception of Poulenc, all of the members of Les Six wrote music for film, a medium that was immensely popular in France with the advent of the talkies. Britten's score for Lotte Reiniger's silhouette film *The Tocher: A Film Ballet* (1935), a lighthearted folk narrative promoting the GPO Savings Bank, is entirely neoclassical. For *The Tocher,* Britten arranged an assortment of themes by the early nineteenth-century Italian composer Gioachino Rossini. While his approach is similar to that of Stravinsky in his neoclassical ballet *Pulcinella* (1920), based on the music of eighteenth-century Italian composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Britten's arrangements of Rossini are more conventional than Stravinsky's modernist treatment of Pergolesi. Britten simultaneously arranged

[130] Reed, "The Incidental Music of Benjamin Britten," 56. Britten indicates in his diary entry for 17 May 1935 that he is playing the first piano part and conducting the ensemble.
[131] In addition to *The King's Stamp,* Britten scored the following films for winds, piano, and percussion: *Story of the Central Telegraph Office* (1935), *The Tocher: A Film Ballet* (1935), *Conquering Space: The Story of Modern Communications* (1935), and *How the Dial Works* (1937). See Reed, "The Incidental Music of Benjamin Britten," 431-91.
[132] Ibid., 56.

these materials into a five-movement concert work, *Rossini Suite* (1935), which contain additional music not heard in the film. The third movement of the *Rossini Suite* ("Tirolese") was reused in at least two other GPO films, *Calendar of the Year* (1936) and *Men of the Alps* (1936).[133] While Stravinsky was a significant influence on Britten as a young composer, neoclassicism did not become a defining feature of Britten's oeuvre or compositional style, which could be described as eclectic and modernist, yet accessible.[134] Nonetheless, both Britten and Leigh determined that aspects of neoclassicism were appropriate and practical for many GPO films.

The adoption of a neoclassical style became ubiquitous in postwar NFB film music, and I discuss the reasons for this at length in Chapter Three. While the gravitation towards neoclassicism at the NFB arises from a particular set of circumstances, there are similarities between the use of this style at the NFB and GPO. As Jim Hillier and Alan Lowell note, Grierson vehemently rejected all forms of Romanticism.[135] He railed against the expression of personal feelings, indulgent behaviour, social irresponsibility, the blurring of public and private spheres, and the notion of "art for art's sake." Grierson therefore insisted on an aesthetic that was public-facing in that it responded to the needs of the state, as he conceived of them, rather than the personal experience and needs of the artist. His ideology resonates strongly with those underlying musical neoclassicism, which developed in reaction to the excesses of late-Romanticism (primarily German late-Romanticism, i.e., increased chromaticism, massive orchestras, extended works, expressive abandon, and wider dynamic and tonal range), and placed a renewed emphasis on

[133] In 1937, Britten rearranged his *Rossini Suite* as a five-movement orchestral suite titled *Soirées musicales,* Op. 9, a score that has been choreographed by George Balanchine and Anthony Tudor, among others.
[134] Philip Rupprecht, "The Avant-Garde," in *Britten in Context,* edited by Vicki P Stroeher and Justin Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 204.
[135] Jim Hillier and Alan Lowell, *Studies in Documentary* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), 29.

simplicity, rationality, balance, and emotional restraint.[136] Britten and Leigh both adopt a neoclassical style to underscore films related to mundane aspects of the Post Office, such as the use of stamps, the telephone, and the Savings Bank. Similarly, the NFB staff composers often use neoclassical aesthetics to underscore everyday activities, bureaucratic processes, and scenes in institutional settings. In both cases, the woodwinds feature prominently and the music is written in major tonalities, all of which suggests a cheerful and upbeat ambiance. As it does in NFB films, the light, optimistic character of neoclassical music in GPO films suggests that government services are well-functioning, democratic, and visionary in that they will improve the everyday lives of citizens.

An important component of the GPO's legacy, and one of its most forward-looking and creative contributions to filmic techniques was their experimental approach to sound, and their early foray into what became known in the postwar years as *musique concrète* (i.e., an early twentieth-century approach to composition that uses recorded sounds as raw materials).[137] These experiments were part of a broader interest in phonographic art and the exploration of noise among the early twentieth century avant-garde, stretching back to the Italian futurists.[138] As Douglas Kahn's remarks on cinema in the 1930s, "one could sit in a movie theater with eyes closed and hear something similar to *musique concrète.*"[139] The GPO's avant-garde soundscapes were crucial

[136] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1988), 10.
[137] Geoffrey Cox, "'There Must Be a Poetry of Sound That None of Us Knows…': Early British Documentary Film and the Prefiguring of Musique Concrète," *Organized Sound* 22, no. 2 (2017): 172-86; E. Anna Claydon, "National Identity, the GPO Film Unit, and their Music," in *The Projection of Britain: A History of the GPO Film Unit,* edited by Scott Anthony and James G. Mansell (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 179-87; Richard S. James, "Avant-Garde Sound-on-Film Techniques and Their Relationship to Electro-Acoustic Music," *The Music Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1986): 74-79.
[138] For a history of phonographic art in the early twentieth century, see Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat* (MIT Press, 1999), 123-57.
[139] Ibid., 139.

in establishing their artistic reputation, and their more ambitious experiments for *Song of Ceylon* (1934), *Coal Face* (1935), and *Night Mail* (1936) are among their most successful and enduring films.

While many GPO filmmakers expressed a general disdain for the conventions of synchronized speech and sound in commercial filmmaking, the poor quality of their equipment—an outdated Visatone-Marconi system—effectively prevented them from recording synchronized sound and meeting commercial industry standards for sound quality. Filmmaker Edgar Antsey describes the GPO's early approach to sound:

> We looked with contempt, really, on dialogue because of the kind of thing they had in Hollywood films … it might as well be a stage play … we were recording noises of the bits of equipment [at the Central Telegraph Office, for example] with the idea of using them as a kind of musical score. Our first approach to sound was to use it in a kind of abstract way, in a mechanistic way, if you like, and try to take sounds and orchestrate them.[140]

Perhaps mindful of appealing to his government sponsors, Grierson spun the GPO's do-it-yourself approach as ingenious compared to the expense of recording more conventional film scores and commentary: "Indeed it is remarkable that our experiments have all made for cheaper sound … The continuous undercurrent of music we have renounced. It was expensive, and none of us knew what it was there for anyways."[141] This claim that the GPO had renounced more traditional musical underscoring is wholly disingenuous given that Grierson explicitly hired Leigh, Britten, and others for this purpose, and many GPO films have relatively conventional musical scoring throughout. Just as he had spun technical errors as deliberate artistic effects in *Coal Face*, Grierson spun the sound recording techniques they adopted due to lack of funds as deliberate *choices* by GPO filmmakers who audaciously renounced industry standards and produced better films as a result.

[140] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary,* 46.
[141] John Grierson, "The GPO Gets Sound," *Cinema Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1934): 217.

The emphasis on the cost-effective benefits of their approach is typical Griersonian rhetoric, which is meant to promote his films and justify his methods to various stakeholders at different times.

In promoting his film units, Grierson tended to credit a considerable amount of his staff's artistic success to their freedom from commercial interests. "We are even free, as on one occasion recently, to make our own orchestra," Grierson writes, describing the unorthodox instrumentation for *6.30 Collection* (1934):

> One rewinder (Legg), one trumpet, two typewriters (office staff), one empty beer bottle (blown for a ship's siren), one projector (by the projectionist), some conversation, two pieces of sand paper (Elton), the studio silence bell (myself), cymbals and triangle (Wright). Walter Leigh arranged and conducted … It cost us the hire of the trumpet.[142]

He proudly claimed that such innovative techniques distinguished them from the BBC, for example. In another essay that same year, "The Creative Use of Sound" (1934), Grierson admonishes the BBC for allegedly wasting its vast resources—i.e., early access to microphones, high-quality equipment, and trained personnel—to merely reproduce speech and music.[143] Echoing many avant-garde filmmakers, the Russians in particular, Grierson was enthusiastic about the possibilities of sound, and argued for an asynchronous approach to the soundtrack:

> [The microphone] has the power to bring to the hands of the creative artists a thousand and one vernacular elements, and the million and one sounds which ordinarily attend the working of the world … The raw material, of course means nothing in itself. It is only as it is used that it becomes the material of art. The final question is how we are to use sound creatively rather than reproductively.[144]

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[142] Ibid., 216.
[143] John Grierson, "The Creative Use of Sound (1934)," in *Grierson on Documentary,* edited by Forsyth Hardy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 158. Grierson's essay is directly influenced by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov's manifesto, "A Statement on Sound" (1928). See Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigori Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound (1928)," reprinted in *The Eisenstein Reader,* edited by Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 80-81.
[144] Grierson, "The Creative Use of Sound" 158.

While Grierson outwardly championed avant-garde aesthetics when it suited him, and proclaimed that sound brings "so rich a contribution [to the film, that it] … becomes a new art altogether,"[145] within the GPO he chastised his filmmakers, particularly Cavalcanti, for their more experimental work that was becoming too "aestheticky" in Grierson's estimation.[146]

In 1934, Basil Wright and film critic B. Vivian Braun also published a manifesto on film sound in which they discuss the limitations of musical instruments, and the need for a broader sonic palette of recorded material to work with. "Orchestrated abstract sound is the true complement to film," they conclude.[147] Cavalcanti's arrival in 1934 fueled these experiments, since he brought both technical expertise and avant-garde sensibilities. Similar to the Italian futurists, Cavalcanti was interested in the creative possibilities and expressive potential of noise.[148] Leigh also concluded that the creative use of noise, its combination with music, and the creative use of sound recording technologies was the key to the future development of film as an art form:

> The most subtle use of noises for their own sake, to create certain atmosphere in the same way as music does has still to be developed, and it is undoubtedly in this field that the most creative advances and the richest discoveries will be made.[149]

Leigh cites Erik Satie's use of a typewriter in his surrealist ballet *Parade* (1917) as an influential antecedent in this respect, and mentions the possibility of using recorded train sounds as the basis for musical rhythms as an example of what could be done with "natural sounds" (perhaps with Les Six member Arthur Honegger's 1923 programmatic orchestral work *Pacific 231* in mind).[150]

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[145] Ibid., 162.
[146] James G. Mansell, "Rhythm, Modernity and the Politics of Sound," in *The Projection of Britain: A History of the GPO Film Unit,* edited by Scott Anthony and James G. Mansell (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 162.
[147] Basil Wright and B. Vivian Braun, "Manifesto: Dialogue on Sound (1934)," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice,* edited by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 97.
[148] Mansell, "Rhythm, Modernity and the Politics of Sound," 164.
[149] Walter Leigh, "The Musician and the Film," *Cinema Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1935): 73-4.
[150] Ibid., 73

In Leigh's writing on film music, he stresses that above all else, film scoring requires an economy of means:

> The composer approaching the film problem for the first time will be struck by one especially important fact, that in film-music more than any other kind of music the greatest virtue is economy … The same need for economy applies to the instrumentation; four instruments may well provide a better effect than forty [and] a piece that would sound painfully thin and ridiculous in the concert-hall will be perfectly satisfactory over the microphone.[151]

Like many of his GPO colleagues, Leigh quickly understood film music as a unique studio-based art form, and he was particularly enthusiastic about the creative possibilities of sound recording: "the film-composer has to recognize that the much-despised 'canned' quality of film-music is actually its most important characteristic and greatest virtue."[152] He therefore repeatedly insisted that large orchestras were neither necessary nor preferable for film (conveniently, this was never an option at the GPO). This was partly because he found the sound quality of large film-studio orchestras inadequate given the current recording technology, and also because he was adamant that film music was a new art form with unique possibilities that should be developed for their own sake and purposes, rather than trying to mimic concert hall works:

> Experience shows that a small orchestra, in which each individual instrument can be heard, is more effective for film-music than the large symphony orchestra which is still so often considered necessary for a really expensive production. A huge climax with drums rolling, brass blaring and fiddles whizzing about in mad excitement, so thrilling in the concert hall, will as likely as not only come through as a nasty rasping noise in the cinema. Probably a single drum and a trumpet would be adequate to produce the same effect, in combination with the picture … Simplicity, clarity and economy are virtues in all music, but doubly so in film-music. The worst thing a film-composer can do is to overload the microphone. The familiar type of hack orchestration, with its "doubling-up" and "filling-in," is useless for the film. Film-music must be written specifically for performance through the microphone, with full regard to its various needs and possibilities.[153]

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[151] Ibid., 72.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Walter Leigh, "Music and Microphones," *World Film News and Television Progress* 1, no. 5 (August 1936), 40.

The conclusions Leigh drew from his experience at the GPO are similar to those the NFB staff composers articulated a decade later, having made some of the same "mistakes" that Leigh identified. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Two, in an attempt to mimic the sound of large Hollywood-style orchestras, for example, the NFB composers adopted some of the "hack orchestration" techniques (namely, peculiar doubling of instruments) that Leigh cautioned against, an approach they later abandoned in favour of smaller, idiosyncratic ensembles (as Leigh had advised). As classically-trained composers who were plunged into film music production without much guidance or structure, the resident composers at the GPO and NFB all learned through trial and error. One could imagine a different trajectory for the NFB's early music department and their approach to film music had an experienced film composer such as Leigh been brought in alongside the other GPO filmmakers who Grierson invited to the NFB. Sadly, had this happened, it would not have been Leigh, as he was killed in combat.[154]

To a certain extent, Grierson supported an experimental approach to sound, but GPO filmmakers pushed these boundaries much further than he might have anticipated. Britten, Cavalvanti, Wright, and poet W. H. Auden were core members of the filmmaking teams that produced *Coal Face* and *Night Mail,* two of the GPO's most experimental films. The techniques they attempted in *Coal Face* were refined and extended in *Night Mail*, making *Coal Face* a kind of "test-tube," according to Wright.[155] *Coal Face* is an impressionist film on the British coal

[154] Perhaps Leigh might have been invited to the NFB had he not been enlisted in the war, or at least so we might speculate. To escape the Blitz, Grierson offered Leigh's wife Marion a job as a negative cutter at the NFB. Marion and their children moved to Ottawa in 1941, where his youngest son Andrew was born, and where the family lived for six years before moving back to the UK in 1947. Leigh's son Julian became a composer, and inquired about a staff position at the NFB in 1959. While then-music director Robert Fleming was interested in the possibility of hiring Leigh, especially given his family history, in a memo to producer Desmond Dew he indicates that there was simply no work to offer him at the time. Nonetheless, Leigh eventually moved to Ottawa and was active in the music and theatre scenes in the 1960s. See, LAC, Robert Fleming fonds, Fleming to Dew, 4 November 1959.

[155] Basil Wright, "Britten on Documentary," *The Musical Times* 104, no. 1449 (November 1963): 779.

mining industry. The images were edited together from existing stock footage (some of which was shot by Robert Flaherty), and the soundtrack is strikingly modernist with an unusual combination of musical instruments, choirs, percussion, and an array of household objects and mechanical devices. The choirs are treated in a variety of ways, alternating between chanting and singing, and the commentary is rhythmically incorporated into the broader musical ensemble. The sonorities are often dissonant, and the emphasis is on timbre rather than motivic devices. Britten's score is written for piano (recorded by Howard Ferguson), choir, percussion (triangle, bass drum, cymbals, gong, wood block), and a variety of objects (chains, coconut shells, sheet metal, sandpaper, whistles, coal carts, large drill, small drill, film rewinder, and buckets of water).[156] Remarkably, each sound is notated, including the voice-over, which demonstrates Britten's deep involvement in every aspect of the soundtrack.[157] Leigh experimented with a similar combination of musical instruments and household items in *6.30 Collection* (1934), a concept that Britten takes significantly further in *Coal Face.* Britten was involved from the beginning, and collaborated closely with the filmmaking team on researching, scripting, and planning each sequence. In scenes where miners and machines are working underground, the percussive approach to the score, including the rhythmic chanting of the chorus and metered delivery of the commentary, blurs the distinction between humans and machines, and the miners in the film remain anonymous. For scenes showing aspects of everyday life in the mining town, the choirs sing in a more lyrical and consonant manner, establishing a distinct musical difference between industrial production (involving human workers) and off-hours. Nonetheless, the film's social analysis does not go beyond highlighting the relentless and dangerous work of miners—the commentary provides a

[156] Reed, "The Incidental Music of Benjamin Britten," 98-99.
[157] Ibid.; Cox, "'There Must Be a Poetry of Sound That None of Us Knows…'" 178. Britten held one four-hour rehearsal with eighteen members of the Covent Garden chorus. The following day, they recorded the entire soundtrack in an eight-hour evening session, including the commentary.

statistic that five men are killed each day in the coal industry and hundreds are injured—whose lives are organized around the mining pit, and whose labour is essential to Britain's industrial economy.

For *Night Mail* (1936)—a film illustrating the overnight postal service from London to Glasgow—Britten had a much larger orchestra to work with, and he uses many of the same techniques he employed in *Coal Face. Night Mail* is scored for flute, oboe, bassoon, trumpet, harp, violin, viola, cello, double bass, as well as with an array of objects, including sandpaper (on slate), an air cannister, boom stands (clanked together), a small trolley on a piece of rail, hand-cranked camera, a siren, a bag of coal, and a hammer (played on a boom stand).[158] The rhythmic spoken-word delivery of Auden's poem (performed by Stuart Legg) is a more central aspect of the musical ensemble than the commentary in *Coal Face,* and the narration had to be recorded in several takes since its accelerating pace (mimicking the increasing speed of the train) was impossible to perform continuously. It should be noted that the monotone declamatory style of Legg's delivery was likely inspired, at least in part, by William Walton's *Façade* (1923), a ground-breaking work on poetic texts by Edith Sitwell.[159] In both *Night Mail* and *Coal Face* the aestheticization of the subject is primarily done through the soundtrack.

Even in their most avant-garde moments, GPO films still affirm the benevolence of the state and adequacy of the political and social status quo. Rotha summarizes the political stakes of *Night Mail* succinctly:

> It's a wonderful film. It's beautifully made ... but what does it do in the end? It merely tells you how the postal special gets from King's Cross to Edinburgh. It cannot possibly tell you about the conditions of postal workers or anything of that sort.[160]

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[158] Claydon, "National Identity, the GPO Film Unit, and their Music," 181.
[159] Rebecca Rice, "Walton's 'Façade' and its Descendants," *Journal of Singing – The Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 66, no. 4 (2010): 399-407.
[160] Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary,* 80.

This aestheticization and superficial representation of workers is a hallmark of the Griersonian tradition. The GPO's predominant approach to the soundtrack was much more traditional than more successful films such as *Night Mail* and *Coal Face*. Similarly, while the NFB produced experimental films with innovative soundtracks, these were exceptional projects, and not the mainstay of the Film Board's productions.

## Conclusion

The early NFB was predominantly an Anglophone institution with direct ties to the British documentary movement. The first Canadians recruited at the NFB apprenticed with veteran GPO filmmakers who had come over at Grierson's request, and they adopted many of the techniques and sensibilities of the British documentarists. Similar to the GPO, NFB filmmakers worked collectively in small teams, often switched roles, and oversaw their films from beginning to end. The British documentarists exerted more influence on the production process and aesthetics of early NFB films than Grierson, given their hands-on role. Grierson was less involved with the minutiae of filmmaking at the NFB than he was in cultivating strategic political connections, securing funds, and managing relationships with government sponsors. While Grierson's role should not be overstated, as the NFB's first film commissioner, he nonetheless exerted considerable influence by establishing the organizational structure, hiring key personnel (including veterans from the GPO), and setting the overall tone at the early NFB. His moralizing rhetoric on the necessity of the state, and the need to produce consent and cohesion among citizens in support of state objectives resonated with Canadian political and cultural elites, and he managed to secure considerable political and financial support from the government. Like the GPO, the filmmakers

Grierson recruited for the NFB were similarly middle-class, university-educated, white, and predominantly Anglophone, and while they may have been genuinely concerned about social inequalities, their patronizing representations of the working class and tacit affirmation of the status quo betrays their everyday detachment from these issues.

Given how integral composers like Leigh and Britten had been at the GPO, and how many international filmmakers came to the NFB on Grierson's invitation, it is surprising that no film music composers appear to have been invited. If any attempts were made, the war may have complicated matters. As I discuss in the following chapter, while the lack of experienced music personnel may have afforded the NFB staff composers more freedom to develop their own style, they also struggled with basic aspects of film scoring, which caused them considerable stress and might have been avoided had expert assistance been available. For the GPO and NFB, Grierson recruited young classical music composers with no experience in film, and they all similarly struggled to apply their training and techniques to a new medium. Although the wartime context resulted in a different approach to film scoring at the NFB, there are interesting similarities between Leigh and Britten's music for the GPO that emerged at the NFB following the war, a topic that I take up further in Chapter Three.

In 1969, near the end of his life, and prompted by an inquiry about his decision to hire staff composers at the NFB, Grierson wrote an extensive letter to Applebaum explaining in considerable detail his reasons for hiring composers at the NFB (and GPO):

> You said it was of special interest to composers that the Film Board should have had from the outset (is it 28 years ago?) appointed resident composers and for that matter retained composers in residence ever since. It was a more natural happening than you seem to think … there was a powerful tradition in the world of motion pictures to support me. […] When I set up the Film Board, I had already had long experience with composers in residence, composers integral to the creative process in film making, composers in as living a

> relationship to what I understand by filmmaking as cameramen, soundmen, directors, and editors … Now, dear Lou, you can take it on from here: and no one better.[161]

This excerpt captures some of the more charismatic aspects of Grierson's personality, which inspired Applebaum and others to follow his directives and remain loyal to Grierson throughout their lives. Grierson's response came at a time when the NFB was forced to make significant budgetary cuts, and within a decade, the staff composers had all retired and were not replaced.

[161] Clara Thomas Archives (CTA), Louis Applebaum Fonds, Grierson to Applebaum, 25 January 1969.

# Chapter Two: NFB Wartime Soundtracks and Original Film Scores

## Introduction

By 1941, the Canadian Government Motion Pictures Bureau had been absorbed into the NFB, Grierson had assumed control as Film Commissioner (in 1939), and the NFB largely became a wartime communications agency for the government. While the NFB had not been conceived for this purpose, it was rapidly enlisted to this end after Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939, one week after declarations of war were signed by the UK and France. As a result, NFB production accelerated rapidly, and the number of personnel increased exponentially. While Grierson brought over veteran filmmakers from the GPO Film Unit to assist with production, the wartime context required a significantly different approach. Nonetheless, the Griersonian emphasis on public service and social cohesiveness was ideally suited to producing propagandistic films designed to mobilize citizens behind the war effort.

While the NFB received consistent funding, budgets were still constrained during the war, and original scoring was generally reserved for prestige projects and theatrical releases. Producers and directors requested bold and bombastic music for wartime films to convey the proper sense of gravity, urgency, and magnitude required by the war effort. NFB composers looked to Hollywood and American newsreels for models, and the musical aesthetic of the wartime films follows many of the conventions from these genres.

## Staffing the Early NFB

Under Grierson's leadership, the NFB was anything but bureaucratic. Rather, it was a relatively chaotic and ad hoc operation with informal agreements about the staff's terms of employment,

poor financial records, significant turnover, and a revolving door of international filmmakers.[162] Virtually everyone was on a three-month contract (possibly renewable), and they all ultimately reported to Grierson. While Grierson often claimed that precarity motivated creativity, these conditions conveniently kept him fully in control of staffing and able to hire and fire as he saw fit. There was neither a personnel department nor a formal hiring process. Numerous staff members recall meeting with Grierson in person and being offered a job on the spot.[163] With no formal process or oversight, Grierson could just as easily lay-off personnel, or refuse to issue further contracts. Within a few years, he dramatically expanded the size of the agency. In 1941, there were approximately fifty employees working for the NFB; by the end of 1942, there were nearly three hundred; and by 1945, the number of employees had reached nearly eight hundred, making it one of the world's largest and busiest film production studios.[164] A more formalized organizational structure only began to emerge in 1944, toward the end of the war and shortly before Grierson left, when a personnel office was established, twelve separate production units were formed, and the first annual report was prepared.[165]

One of the most significant hires was the experimental animator Norman McLaren, who joined the NFB in the fall of 1941.[166] Grierson's relationship with McLaren dated back to the mid-

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[162] Ellis, "John Grierson's First Years at the NFB," 8; Gerald Graham, *Canadian Film Technology, 1898-1986* (Associated University Presses, 1989), 82.
[163] This was the case for both Sydney Newman and Louis Applebaum. See Sydney Newman, *Head of Drama: The Memoir of Sydney Newman* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2017), 106; Walter Pitman, *Louis Applebaum: A Passion for Culture* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1999), 42.
[164] Ellis, "John Grierson's First Years at the NFB," 6; Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board,* 56.
[165] LAC, Robert Fleming fonds, "NFB – Its Organization When the War Ended in 1945," September 1953, p. 15; Henry Mintzberg and Alexandra McHugh, "Strategy Formation in an Adhocracy," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1985): 19. See also NFBA, Council Meeting, 4 September 1945. The notes from this meeting indicate that the Chairman of NFB strongly advised Grierson that an annual report would be beneficial for discussions in Parliament, and this could be to Grierson's advantage. Unlike other government boards, the NFB was not obligated to prepare a report, however their first annual report was prepared for the 1944-45 fiscal year.
[166] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 104.

1930s, when Grierson adjudicated McLaren's submission to the Glasgow Amateur Film Festival, an anti-war and anti-capitalist film titled *Hell Unltd* (1936), made in collaboration with Helen Biggar when McLaren was a student at the Glasgow School of Art. Impressed by McLaren's skills and artistry, Grierson subsequently offered him a job at the GPO. After leaving the GPO, McLaren moved to New York to pursue an artistic career, however by 1941, struggling to find work, he inquired with Grierson about coming to the NFB. At the NFB, McLaren was effectively granted complete artistic freedom, although he was obliged to make a few propagandistic wartime shorts (e.g., *V for Victory* [1941], *Dollar Dance* [1943]) and was tasked with setting up an animation unit that would be of service to other filmmakers (e.g., creating maps, diagrams, etc.). McLaren's work soon began to garner international attention. About his abstract animated short *Hen Hop* (1942), Pablo Picasso proclaimed: "Here, finally, is something new in the art of drawing."[167]

Although Grierson may have set the tone, his British colleagues also supervised production, trained the novice Canadian filmmakers, and were responsible for hiring staff in specialized departments. During the 1940s, McLaren recruited visual artists Jean-Paul Ladouceur, Evelyn Lambart, James McKay, Réné Jodoin, George Dunning, Gerald Potterton, Robert Verrall, Wolf Koenig, and Colin Low, among others, many of whom would become the Board's leading filmmakers of the postwar era.

Another significant hire during this period was Sydney Newman, a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. Initially hired as an assistant, Newman was rapidly promoted to the role of producer. He later became Head of Drama at the BBC (where he was instrumental in creating the internationally successful original television series, *The Avengers* [1961-69] and *Doctor Who* [1963-89]), and eventually returned to Canada to serve as NFB film

[167] Charles Solomon, "The Animated World of McLaren," *Los Angeles Times* (February 8, 1987).

commissioner from 1970 to 1975. Newman played a key role in the recruitment of Louis Applebaum, the NFB's first staff composer, who was among the initial wave of hires in 1941. Newman and Applebaum were long-time friends, and it was Newman who encouraged Applebaum to contact Grierson about working for the NFB.

Grierson's patriarchal attitude was never hidden. While there were several women involved at the GPO, including Grierson's sisters Marion Grierson and Ruby Grierson, women were rarely promoted to leadership positions. Grierson made it known that he was openly hostile towards qualities he associated with femininity. In two articles from the late 1920s, he listed the traditionally masculine qualities he valued the most among his employees as "strength, simplicity, energy, directness, hardness, decency, courage, duty and upstanding power,"[168] and those he despised as "sophistication, sentimentality, lounge-lizards, excessive sexuality, homosexuality, nostalgia, bohemianism, status-seeking, and social-climbing."[169] Ironically, during the postwar years the NFB became embroiled in allegations that it was harbouring communists, partly because it had earned a reputation as an enclave of filmmakers with bohemian and "deviant" lifestyles (a matter I discuss at length in Chapter Three). As Canadian filmmaker Gudrun Parker recalls, "the general impression was that we were very wild, the women wore slacks, and our hours were questionable, until two in the morning."[170] Filmmakers in the GPO and NFB were predominantly university-educated, politically liberal, white, and Anglophone. But there was no open acknowledgement—at least, not by Grierson—that many of the filmmakers at the GPO and NFB

[168] John Grierson, *"*Better Popular Pictures," *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 11, No. 29 (August 1927): 234.
[169] John Grierson, *The B. B. Lollipop Company Incorporated* (Grierson Archive Papers 1918-1924), G1A.3.1.
[170] *Making Movie History: Wartime Women,* directed by Joanne Robertson (National Film Board of Canada, 2014), 3:48 to 4:01.

were gay men, and Grierson's homophobia did not prevent him from hiring McLaren's partner, Guy Glover, at the NFB, in large part to secure McLaren's loyalty.

There was a significant number of women on staff at the NFB, owing to the wartime shortage of workers, and to the widespread recruitment of women into previously male-dominated industries. Nonetheless, women were frequently tasked with detailed work that required fine motor skills such as negative cutting and editing, rather than creative work. Some managed to move into directorial roles, including Jane Marsh, Gudrun Parker, Evelyn Lambart, and Red Burns. In addition to their professional roles as filmmakers, editors, and technicians, women were also expected to perform the mundane housekeeping tasks that were vital in keeping everyday operations running smoothly, which compensated for Grierson's ad hoc managerial style.[171] Beth Bertram, who became head of the negative cutting room, recalls that when she was hired, Grierson could not easily describe the role of negative cutting, however she distinctly recalls him asking whether she was a good housekeeper.[172] He was also unwilling to promote women to executive roles, and the case of Jane Marsh, an Ottawa-based writer who Grierson hired in 1941, is a prime example. Marsh had written and produced many films for the NFB's flagship theatrical series, *Canada Carries On,* and she was an obvious choice to take over as executive producer; however, Grierson was adamant that a woman could not be given such an important position, and Sydney Newman was promoted instead.[173]

Grierson sought out music specialists for the NFB similar to those he had at the GPO, namely young, classically-trained composers. Five full-time staff composers were hired in the

[171] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 83.
[172] *Making Movie History: Wartime Women,* directed by Joanne Robertson, 1:10 to 1:29.
[173] Nelson, *The Colonized Eye,* 76; Barbara Halpern Martineau, "Before the Guerillieres: Women's Films at the NFB During World War II," in *The Canadian Film Reader,* edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 64; Ruth Roach Pierson, *Canadian Women and the Second World War* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1983), 19.

1940s: Louis Applebaum, Maurice Blackburn, Phyllis Gummer, Eldon Rathburn, and Robert Fleming, all of whom (apart from Gummer) had long careers with the NFB. Quite unlike the standard practice in Hollywood studios, the NFB staff composers were expected to orchestrate their own scores, find appropriate musicians, conduct their own recording sessions, and often help with music editing. It was an extremely demanding job, and one that required composers with considerable versatility and training.

Applebaum, Blackburn, Rathburn, and Fleming all had similar training in the Western classical tradition, and they all continued to write concert music throughout their lives in addition to the prolific compositional output they produced during their full-time work at the NFB. Applebaum, Rathburn and Fleming all spent some of their formative years at the Toronto Conservatory of Music where they studied with Healey Willan, Ernest MacMillan, Leo Smith, Reginald Godden, Eric Rollinson, and Charles Peaker, among others. Apart from MacMillan, these principal faculty members were all British-born, and their traditional British-style music and pedagogy dominated Toronto's musical life from the 1920s through to the 1950s.[174] As first prize winners of the Canadian Performing Rights Society's inaugural composition competition, Applebaum and Rathburn received scholarships to study at the Toronto Conservatory,[175] and they met for the first time at the awards ceremony held in 1938 at Rideau Hall, hosted by the Governor-General. Gummer won the same award in 1940, and Fleming won both the 1942 and 1943 competitions. [176]

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[174] Helmut Kallmann and Kenneth Winters. "English Music in Canada," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia,* 7 February 2006.

[175] The Canadian Performing Rights Society (CPRS) was established in 1925 as a subsidiary of Great Britain's Performing Rights Society. In 1950, it became the Composers, Authors, and Publishers Association of Canada (CAPAC), and in 1990 it merged with the Performing Rights Organization of Canada (PRO Canada) to form The Society for Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN).

[176] LAC, Robert Fleming fonds, Canadian Performing Rights Society competition results.

Applebaum (1918-2000) was born in Toronto, studied piano with Boris Berlin, and spent three years at the Toronto Conservatory of Music (University of Toronto) without completing a degree. He then pursued additional composition studies with Roy Harris and Bernard Wagenaar at the Julliard School of Music in New York. While in New York, Applebaum claims to have seen the documentary films *The River* and *The City* (scored by Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland, respectively) dozens of times at the World's Fair, and concluded that he wanted to be a film composer.[177] His mentor, Roy Harris, was also enthusiastic about writing for film, and Applebaum was aware that major British composers, Benjamin Britten, William Walton, and Ralph Vaughan Williams were scoring documentaries and wartime films. In spring 1941, when he returned to Toronto looking for permanent work, Sydney Newman and composer Godfrey Ridout suggested that Applebaum inquire at the NFB.[178] He served as the Film Board's Music Director from 1942 to 1948, stayed on as a consultant from 1949 to 1953, and continued to write and conduct scores for the NFB on a freelance basis well into the 1970s. Although Applebaum established an international reputation as a composer in the 1940s and 1950s, his compositional work has been largely eclipsed by his work as a high-level public administrator. After leaving the NFB, Applebaum served as music director for the Stratford Festival, chairman of CAPAC (Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada, the forerunner to SOCAN), executive director of the Ontario Arts Council, and chairman of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, among other advisory work for public cultural institutions.

Born near Québec City, Blackburn (1914-88) studied composition, organ, and piano at l'Université Laval from 1937 to 1939 with teachers including Jean-Marie Beaudet (composition),

[177] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 10.
[178] Ibid.; Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 39-42; Newman, *Head of Drama*, 107-110. Newman and Applebaum knew each other from the B'nai B'rith summer camps near Toronto where they taught art and music lessons in the 1930s.

Henri Gagnon (organ), and Joseph-Arthur Bernier (organ and piano). He pursued additional composition studies with Léo-Pol Morin and Claude Champagne in Montreal, and at the New England Conservatory in Boston. In 1939, he attended Stravinsky's master classes at Harvard, an encounter that left a lasting impression on him. In 1941, he returned to Canada and accepted a job at Radio-Canada. Through his work at Radio-Canada, Blackburn met anthropologist Marius Barbeau, whom he accompanied on a folk song collecting trip to the Ile d'Orléans, north of Quebec City. When Barbeau was hired to write a script for an NFB film on maple sugar (*Maple Sugar Time,* 1941), Blackburn submitted a score based on some of the Québécois folk songs they had collected.[179] He was offered a full-time position at the NFB the following year, and remained on staff until 1979. It is noteworthy that Blackburn took several sabbaticals from the NFB to pursue additional compositional studies, including a two-year residency (1946-48) in Paris to study with the renowned French composition pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, for which he received a government scholarship. Compared to the serialist and avant-garde movements of the mid-twentieth century, Boulanger's teaching was relatively conservative. She eschewed the methods and aesthetics of Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School, and was strongly associated with the growth and promotion of the French neoclassical style.[180] Blackburn returned from Paris in 1948 and resumed full-time work at the NFB. Beginning with *La Poulette Grise* (1947), he became a close collaborator with the NFB's avant-garde animator Norman McLaren, and developed an increasing interest in *musique concrète* and the work of its prime proponent, the French composer Pierre Schaeffer. In 1954, Blackburn received a grant from the Royal Society of Canada to work

[179] Solenn Hellégouarch, "Une méthode dangereuse Comprendre le processus créateur en musique de film, le cas de Norman McLaren et Maurice Blackburn, David Cronenberg et Howard Shore," (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 2015), 62-63.
[180] Jean Boivin, "Providing the Taste of Learning: Nadia Boulanger's Lasting Imprint on Canadian Music," *Intersections* 33, no. 2 (2013): 71-100.

with Schaeffer and his Group de Recherches de Musique Concrète (GRMC) at Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française (RTF) in Paris.

Robert Fleming (1921-76) was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and was recruited by Applebaum to the NFB in 1946, when he was still a student at the Toronto Conservatory.[181] Prior to studying in Toronto, Fleming spent a year in London (England) at the Royal College of Music, studying piano with Arthur Benjamin and composition with Herbert Howells. He became director of the NFB's music department from 1958 until his retirement in 1970, when he was appointed to a professorship at Carleton University, Ottawa. Fleming was an active church organist throughout his life, and he composed a large body of sacred music.

Born in in Queenstown, New Brunswick, Eldon Rathburn (1916-2008) completed a licentiate in music from McGill University and spent a year studying at the Toronto Conservatory in 1938. In 1944, his composition *Symphonette* won first prize in a competition sponsored by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and adjudicated by Arnold Schoenberg, Arthur Lange, and Alexander Tansman.[182] Although Rathburn contemplated further study in Los Angeles, he ultimately stayed in Saint John due to family obligations. In 1945, Applebaum invited Rathburn to score a film for the NFB in Ottawa, subsequent to which he was offered a full-time job, which he declined, returning to Saint John where he had full-time work as a church organist and pianist/arranger for radio orchestras. Prior to joining the NFB, Rathburn toured as a pianist with Canadian country folk musician Don Messer, and was a pianist and arranger for Bruce Holder's Radio Orchestra and dance band. In 1947, when he found himself abruptly short of work, he inquired with the NFB in

[181] Berkeley Fleming, personal communication, October 14, 2020. I am indebted to Berkeley Fleming for generously sharing his own research findings on his father's life and career in conversation by phone and email.
[182] Wright and Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored,* 22.

the hope that the job was still available. He was offered the job and remained on staff full-time until 1976.

Phyllis Gummer (1919-2005) was born in Kingston and studied at the Toronto Conservatory. She was hired as a staff composer in 1943, and is credited with a handful of film scores.[183] Her compositional output in the 1930s was prolific, and she was the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the Performing Rights Society award that Fleming, Rathburn, and Applebaum also received. Gummer was pursuing a career as a professional composer when she joined the NFB; however, her professional career ended suddenly around 1945, and there is very little known about her life after the war. The limited information available suggests she was institutionalized with a psychiatric disability and lived in Kingston, Ontario until her death in 2005. A few of her compositions dating from the 1950s and 1960s have surfaced, suggesting that she may have continued composing.[184]

## Wartime Production

Given the limited budgets, short timelines, and high-volume of production during the war, most of the NFB's wartime films were stitched together from stock footage of various kinds from international sources (i.e., newsreels, documentary films, archival footage, etc.),[185] as it was generally too expensive and time-consuming for them to shoot original material, especially with an accelerated pace of production. Once the image track was finalized, voice-over commentary,

[183] Robert Fleming, "The National Film Board Stresses Original Scores," *The Canadian Composer* (January 1966): 5. Gummer is credited as the composer for *Early Start* (1945) and *Soil for Tomorrow* (1945).
[184] The German musicologist Tobias Broeker has archived manuscripts of Gummer's scores and sketches online at online at https://www.tobias-broeker.de/newpagea31874ca. He has failed to find anyone who holds the copyright to Gummer's work.
[185] D. B. Jones, *The Best Butler in the Business: Tom Daly of the National Film Board of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 13.

sound effects, and music were recorded overtop. This became the standard formula for wartime films, which left few opportunities to experiment with novel techniques and processes. The soundtrack took on an increased importance since it was the NFB's unique contribution, and it helped establish coherence in films comprised of disparate materials and complex montage.

The disembodied and authoritative "Voice-of-God" narration is a hallmark of the NFB's wartime films. The prototype for this style of commentary is typically traced back to *The March of Time* (1935-51), a popular American newsreel series that was modeled on the vocal style of radio drama.[186] The direct-address style of commentary is characteristic of the Griersonian documentary tradition more broadly, and was normative at the GPO.[187] Wartime NFB commentaries were recorded by a shortlist of exclusively male actors and radio announcers. Some of the most frequently heard voices were those of Lorne Greene, John Drainie, and King Whyte. Greene's voice in particular became a signature sound of Canadian media during the war since he was both the CBC's main newscaster and the NFB's primary narrator.[188] Although the CBC nicknamed Greene the "Voice of Canada," his role in delivering information about the war led Canadian audiences to dub his resonant baritone voice the "Voice of Doom."[189] The commentary was placed at the forefront of NFB wartime soundtracks, and music was generally mixed

[186] Charles Wolfe, "Historicizing the 'Voice of God': The Place of Voice-Over Commentary in Classical Documentary," *Film History* 9, no. 2 (1997): 149. *The March of Time* was sponsored by Time Inc., and was produced by brothers Louis and Richard de Rochemont. The series was shown monthly in movie theaters from 1935 to 1951.

[187] For a discussion of the direct-address approach in documentary film, see Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1983): 17-30, and Tom Brown, *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Direct Address in Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

[188] Born in Ottawa, Lorne Greene (1915-1987) served briefly as an officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force before becoming the primary newsreader at the CBC. In the early 1950s, Greene moved to the US to pursue a career in acting. He had a successful career in film and television, playing leading roles in the television series *Bonanza* (1959-73) and *Battlestar Galactica* (1978-79).

[189] Brode Douglas, *Shooting Stars of the Small Screen: Encyclopedia of TV Western Actor, 1946-Present* (New York: University of Texas Press, 2009), 157; Linda Greene Bennett, *My Father's Voice: The Biography of Lorne Greene* (Bloomington: iUniverse Inc., 2004).

underneath at a lower volume so as not to interfere with the intelligibility of the voice. "Music was very much in the background, like sauce," Maurice Blackburn commented, adding that in his estimation, "places where you could actually hear the music," unfortunately, were "the most boring parts of the score."[190] Blackburn's comments notwithstanding, music is used extensively in the NFB's wartime films. Whether originally composed or selected from the stock music library, the music for these films is typically heroic, bold, and dramatic. It is intended to evoke powerful affective responses that would incite widespread support for the war effort and mobilize citizens into action. While music is sometimes relegated to the background, it is often foregrounded for dramatic effect, and in such instances its impact is clearly not intended to be subtle.

During Grierson's tenure, the music and sound departments were separate entities within the production division, each with its own director.[191] In 1941, Grierson recruited the sound department's first director, Burton Perry, from Hollywood,[192] about whom American composer John Cage wrote: "[Burton Perry is] outstanding among the sound engineers who understand, from an uncommercial point of view, the practical possibilities of the future [of sound film]."[193] That same year, Grierson also brought in Ralph Avseev, a New York sound and music editor, "to try to knock sense, and a sense of standards, into the chaotic pseudo-department where sound effects and

[190] Bibliothèque et archives nationale du Québec (BanQ), Collection d'archives Maurice Blackburn et Marthe Morisset, Maurice Blackburn interview by Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.
[191] NFBA, *Annual Report 1944-45*, 19-20.
[192] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology*, 84-93.
[193] John Cage, "Guggenheim Application and Bibliography," Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives, Northwestern University, John Cage Collection, Series V, "Ephemera," 1940, quoted in Richard H. Brown, *Through the Looking Glass: John Cage and Avant-Garde Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 40. To quote Cage in full: "Outstanding among the sound engineers who understand, from an uncommercial point of view, the practical possibilities of the future is Burton Perry, president of Recording Equipment, Inc., Hollywood. He has been connected with Edgard Varèse and I enjoy his close cooperation at present."

music were assembled, edited, and cut."[194] Applebaum briefly apprenticed with Avseev, and he took over as director of the music department when Avseev left in 1942.[195] The Ottawa facilities of the early NFB were substandard at best, the sound recording equipment was outdated, and it was difficult to find qualified technical personnel during the war. Perry managed to recruit students from the Ottawa Technical High School, and he trained them as sound engineers and maintenance technicians.[196] Gordon Fraser, a radio engineer from the CBC, joined the department in 1942 and took over as supervisor of the sound department when Perry left later that year,[197] to return to Hollywood to work for Westrex, the division of Western Electric that dominated the next thirty years of film sound in the commercial feature film industry.[198]

## Compilation Soundtracks

As an assistant editor to Stuart Legg, Tom Daly began building a stock library soon after he was hired in 1941; it included music and sound effects as well as images. The materials Daly collected came from a variety of sources, including foreign documentary films, newsreels, and archival footage.[199] According to Daly, his effects library was mostly comprised of sounds stolen from

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[194] Graham McInnes, *One Man's Documentary: A Memoir of the Early Years of the National Film Board* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004), 92-3.
[195] Louis Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," in *John Grierson and the NFB* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984), 11; Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 44; Note that Applebaum misspells Avseev as Apsey, and Pitman repeats this mistake.
[196] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 84-93.
[197] Ibid., 91.
[198] "SMPTE Sound Recording Classes Begin at NYY," *International Projectionist* 32/3 (March 1957), 34.
[199] Tom Daly, "From 'World in Action' to 'Man in His World,'" in *How to Make or Not Make a Canadian Film,* edited by André Pâquet (Montreal: Cinémathèque Canadienne, 1967). Daly provides the following description of the sources he drew on to build the NFB's stock library: "Material came from anything at hand … the whole gamut of British documentary films, captured German, Italian, and Japanese footage, New York newsreel libraries, 'Les Actualités Olympiques" (a Free-French newsreel allied with Paramount News), Russian films when obtainable, 'The March of Time' in the United States, all sorts of individual films, including Hollywood features wheedled by Grierson, and a modicum of original shooting, mostly in Canada, by Canadian crews."

German materials, since their sound quality was significantly higher than other sources, and they were conveniently isolated from the commentary track.[200] Prior to this, NFB scriptwriter Graham McInnes recalls that they often created low-budget effects by (for example):

> getting talented colleagues to imitate the call of the loon or the chipmunk's chatter; slowing a disc turntable almost to zero and amplifying the resultant sound beyond all reason to produce 'sinister' machinery; worst of all leaving whole stretches of film without effects or music because we couldn't afford or couldn't find an appropriate sound.[201]

Most wartime films were fitted with pre-existing music from the NFB's stock library given that commissioning original music was both time-consuming and expensive, and was therefore reserved for prestige projects with higher budgets. Daly's growing collection of stock music included clips of classical, folk, and sacred music in the public domain, clips from various newsreels and stock footage, and the master recordings of all original NFB film music.

Original music cues were frequently repurposed for other films. A cue from a battle scene in *Action Stations* (1943, music by Applebaum), for example, is used as the opening title music for *Universities at War* (1944). Later in the film, the entire two-minute opening title music for *Action Stations* is used to underscore a scene on current research in mining technologies. Furthermore, Applebaum's opening title music for *Trans-Canada Express* (1944) is also heard in *Universities at War* in a sequence depicting soldiers returning by train from the frontlines. The same battle music from *Action Stations* that served as the opening title music for *Universities at War* is repurposed again to underscore Allied forces landing on the beaches of Normandy in *Break-through* (1944). Cues from Applebaum's score for *Montreal by Night* (1947) can be heard in *Prairie Bonanza* (1959), and so on. This became standard practice at the NFB, and certain cues—

[200] Jones, *The Best Butler in the Business,* 21. According to D. B. Jones, most German newsreels were distributed without commentary, with the idea that it would be recorded locally, and tailored to each context. Unlike other newsreels, sound effects were therefore isolated and easy to work with.
[201] McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,* 92.

such as the aforementioned battle scene from *Action Stations*—are heard over and over again in NFB films.

Given that most wartime and postwar NFB films had compilation soundtracks, the NFB's sound and music editors played a crucial role in shaping the musical aesthetic of this period and beyond. Robert Verrall emphasizes how important music and sound editors were to the filmmaking process, especially during the war: "these people were very very important in organizing everything. They prepared materials for sound mixing, and the composers also relied on them to help put their music together."[202] The editors developed a comprehensive knowledge of the music library, which was increasingly comprised of original NFB film music, and while they had to interpret requests from the director and producers, the editors ultimately curated the soundtracks. Professional musicians were consistently hired as sound and music editors, and their range of musical skills meant they frequently took on multiple roles within the music department. Even Blackburn recalls having to quickly acquire sound editing skills, and was involved in this aspect of production in the early 1940s.[203] While the directors oversaw the editing process, they sometimes brought in the staff composers to provide another opinion.[204] Women were often employed in this role, especially during the war. Marguerite Payette, for example, worked for the NFB as a music editor from the 1940s through to the 1960s (she subsequently married NFB composer Eldon Rathburn), and Joan Edward and Nina Finn (also known as Emma Caslor, a professional Canadian singer) were also important members of the sound editing team during this

[202] Robert Verrall, phone interview with the author, July 27, 2020.
[203] BanQ, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980. Blackburn states that he immediately had to learn how to edit music and sound when he joined the NFB in 1942, and claims this was also the case for Rathburn and Fleming. One of Blackburn's first assignments at the Board was to edit the music for *La Cité de Notre-Dame* (1942), which he assembled from a variety of sacred and folk music sources.
[204] Robert Verrall, phone interview with the author, July 27, 2020.

period. Verrall notes that Edward eventually played a vital role in teaching music editing to others at the Board.[205] Those editors who had professional music credentials were sometimes recruited as players and conductors for recording sessions, and occasionally composed film scores. Eugene (Jack) Kash, then violinist for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, was hired as a music editor in 1942. Kash conducted, recruited musicians, and played on many NFB recording sessions, eventually taking over as music director when Applebaum left in 1946.[206] Don Wellington—a French horn player and graduate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music (where he first met Fleming)—and Clarke Daprato, a professional trumpet player, were both hired as sound editors and mixers in 1945, and both had long careers at the NFB. Music editor Normand Bigras was hired shortly afterwards, in the late 1940s, and composed several scores and pieces of stock music for the NFB later in his career. In short, the NFB's music editors routinely exceeded their designated title, and played significant roles in shaping the aesthetic of early NFB films, not only by curating soundtracks, but also as musicians, conductors, and composers.

As at the GPO, the emphasis was on collaborative work and the blurring of roles at the NFB—"the composers were involved with everybody and everything," Applebaum recalls—which often meant that their films lacked proper credits.[207] Details concerning individual contributions to early NFB films can therefore be difficult to establish, especially those from the early 1940s. However, by the mid-1940s, there was a trend toward providing more accurate and complete credits. Blackburn insists that it was the directors who lobbied forcefully for artistic

[205] Robert Verrall, phone interview with the author, July 27, 2020.
[206] As the new music director, and with Blackburn away on sabbatical, Kash took on many roles within the music department between 1946 and 1948. He conducted more than seven recording sessions, and produced a film for the NFB on the children's concert series he initiated as concertmaster for the Ottawa Philharmonic Orchestra (*Children's Concert* [1949]). He also managed the administrative side of the music department, which involved dealing with the musician's union, and managing personnel. In this capacity, he oversaw Rathburn's hiring in 1947.
[207] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 11.

recognition, while the composers were mainly "pacifists" and less interested or concerned given that they would not be paid additional royalties.[208] Since film music lacked prestige in classical music circles, and was assumed to be a kind of mundane work composers undertook out of necessity to support their other musical ambitions,[209] it is unsurprising that the staff composers may have been less concerned about proper attribution. Had royalties been involved, Blackburn speculates, the composers might have advocated more strongly. Blackburn tended to consider his compositions for short government-sponsored films as public service work, and saw little reason to put his name on them.[210] It was also difficult to properly assign music credits for certain films, since compilation soundtracks often contained short excerpts by several different composers (both those on staff and outside the NFB). On any given film, there may be cues from a handful of different composers, and their contributions are often uneven in terms of the length of music used. In these cases, it is often the music editor who is credited, and no composers are listed, especially during the 1940s and 1950s.[211]

Following the war, the NFB began recording their own in-house stock music to expand their library and engage the staff composers between film projects.[212] While most NFB stock music was written by the staff composers, they often solicited short pieces from their Canadian colleagues

[208] Bibliothèque et archives nationale du Québec (BanQ), Collection d'archives Maurice Blackburn et Marthe Morisset, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.
[209] Robert F. Faulkner provides an account of the relatively low prestige assigned to musicians who were engaged in Hollywood film work (both composers and studio musicians) in *Hollywood Studio Musicians: Their Work and Careers in the Recording Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
[210] Ibid.
[211] The absence of specific music credits in NFB films from the 1940s and 1950s usually indicates a compilation soundtrack.
[212] LAC, Robert Fleming fonds, MUS 95/D1 Film. A series of short stock pieces including "Astral pastoral," "Pity Ditty," "Schmaltz Waltz," "Wagon Train," indicates that by 1950 if not earlier, the staff composers were writing and recording original stock music.

(most of whom were members of the Canadian League of Composers).[213] The soundtrack for *An Enduring Tradition* (1960) is a typical compilation film that uses a combination of original NFB film and stock music cues. In this film, there are thirty-five cues listed in the "Music Cue Sheet," with contributions from thirteen different composers, including Applebaum, Fleming, and Rathburn.[214] There are excerpts from eight other NFB films,[215] and the remaining cues are pieces of stock music, including Fleming's "Black Mood," and "Graphic Fanfare," Rathburn's "Busy Workers," and pieces by other Canadian composers (including Kenneth Campbell's "Military End Title," "Maritime," "Outpost," and "Naval Introduction," and Phil Nimmons' "Dramatic Tension," and "Dramatic Varied"). For films that required stock music rather than original scores, the NFB music department has consistently encouraged the repurposing of original NFB film music, as well as other original stock music cues.[216] In a memo to the music department in 1959, Fleming writes, "the type of film music we make here does not lend itself too often to the style and character of commercially available stock libraries, and I would assume (and the record proves it) that a preference exists for NFB composed music not only among the music editors, but among the producer and directors."[217] In most cases, this was also the simplest and cheapest option available

[213] CTA, Louis Applebaum fonds, "Stock Music Session," 25 March 1954. This stock music session (conducted by Applebaum) includes pieces by the following Canadian composers: Harry Freedman, Morris Surdin, Harry Somers, Howard Cable, Phil Nimmons, Charles Camilleri, Kenneth Campbell, Ben McPeek, William McCauley, John Weinzweig, and Neil Chotem, in addition to contributions from Applebaum, Fleming, Rathburn, and Bigras.
[214] NFBA, "Music Cue Sheet for *RCN History,*" 1959. The NFB submits detailed information on all of the music contained in their films to SOCAN, previously the Composers, Authors, and Publishers Association of Canada (CAPAC).
[215] *Family Tree* (1951), *Struggle for Oil* (1951), *Women on the March* (1959), and *Men Against the Ice* (1959) are scored by Rathburn. *Royal Journey* (1951) and *Action Stations* (1943) are scored Applebaum. *Rescue Mission* (1951) and *The Face of the High Arctic* (1958) are scored by Fleming.
[216] NFBA, Robert Fleming, "Memorandum: Use of Commercial Discs," 18 May 1961; NFBA, Norman Bigras, "Memorandum: The Use of Commercial Records," 25 July 1973; NFBA, "Music Department and Presentation," 1 June 1983.
[217] NFBA, "Music Department Analysis of Music: Explanatory Memorandum," 9 December 1959. As music director, this memorandum was likely prepared by or in direct consultation with Fleming.

to the filmmakers, since the NFB owned the synchronization and re-use rights to all of their original music.

## Original Scores and Music Production

During the war, the commissioning of original scores was reserved for prestige projects and theatrical releases. Funds were consistently allocated for original music for the NFB's flagship monthly series *Canada Carries On* (1940-59) and *The World in Action* (1941-45), which were shown in theatres nationally and internationally, and generated modest but steady revenues for the NFB.[218] While these series were initially produced by veteran personnel from the GPO—namely Stuart Legg, Raymond Spottiswoode, Basil Wright, and Stanley Hawes—they served as a training ground for Canadian filmmakers who eventually took over the series after the war. Moreover, film projects that were initiated by visiting international filmmakers—such as Joris Ivens' *Action Stations* (1943) and Gordon Weisenborn's *When Asia Speaks* (1944)—were also prioritized, and received original scoring.

Prior to Applebaum's arrival in 1941, most of the NFB's original film music was written by Lucio Agostini (1913-1996), an Italian-born Canadian composer and multi-instrumentalist.[219] Although Agostini officially worked for Associated Screen News in Montreal—a private film and newsreel company financed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (the company's primary

[218] William Goetz, "The Canadian Wartime Documentary: 'Canada Carries On' and 'The World in Action,'" *Cinema Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 59-80. The NFB had a distribution contract with Columbia Pictures in Canada, and Paramount Pictures in the US. Something about non-profit economics of the NFB.

[219] Helen McNamara, "Lucio Agostini: Composing on Two Continents," *Canadian Composer* 92 (June 1974): 6; "Lucio Agostini," *Canadian Composer* 21 (September 1967): 4. Agostini joined the Montreal Philharmonic Orchestra when he was 16, and also played saxophone and bass clarinet in his father's various ensembles. His father, Giuseppe Agostini, was a bandleader at the Capital and Palace Theatres in Montreal, and a conductor for CBC radio orchestras.

shareholder) that produced industry-sponsored films—he scored nearly two dozen films for the NFB during the war, including the NFB's first Academy Award winner, *Churchill's Island* (1941).[220] Known as the "Canadian Max Steiner,"[221] Agostini was one of the few composers in Canada who specialized in film scoring in the 1930s.[222] In 1932, he began writing incidental music at Associated Screen News, where he worked alongside American-born composer Howard Fogg, who is credited with composing the first original score for a synchronized sound film in Canada, *Rhapsody in Two Languages* (1934), a "city symphony" showing aspects of daily life in Montreal.[223] Fogg also scored two films for the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau prior to the establishment of the NFB: *The Royal Visit* (1939), a feature-length documentary on the Royal Tour of Canada by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and *Heritage* (1939), a film on the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration plan.[224] In 1943, Agostini moved to Toronto where he spent several decades composing, arranging, and conducting music for CBC radio and television, and still occasionally scoring films for the NFB.[225]

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[220] Maria Corvin, Betty Nygaard and Helen McNamara, "Lucio Agostini," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2 June 2008.

[221] McInnes, *One Man's Documentary*, 170. Composer Max Steiner (1888-1971) was one of the foremost Hollywood film composers in the 1930s. He was prolific, scoring dozens of feature films each year, and his compositional approach in blockbuster films such as *King Kong* (1933) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) set the musical standard for Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s. See Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 113-134; Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), 70-98.

[222] McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,* 170.

[223] Morris, *Embattled Shadows,* 230.

[224] Blaine Allan, "A National 'As Distinct From Departmental' Film Board, and the Case of *Heritage,*" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 9, no. 1, Special Issue on Film History: Individuals and Institutions (Spring 2000): 30-54.

[225] In 1958, Agostini wrote to then-film commissioner Guy Roberge looking for work at the NFB however there was none available at the time. See LAC, Robert Fleming fonds, Agostini to Roberge, 31 March 1958. Numerous composers, songwriters, and musicians inquired at the NFB about potential staff positions or having their music placed in films, however this rarely materialized. The Robert Fleming fonds contain inquiries to Fleming as music director (1958-70) from Violet Archer, Julian Leigh, Hugh Davidson, Ray Jessel, Jimmy Namaro, Mac Beattie, Lorne Betts, and Paul McIntyre, among others.

Agostini's compositional style set a precedent for the NFB's early wartime films, and he had considerable influence on the musical aesthetics that developed during this period. As McInnes remarked in his memoire of this era: "For years the themes and colour-tones that he [Agostini] wove for NFB films were used and reused from the sound library in many contexts."[226] Agostini scored the early installments of *Canada Carries On* (CCO) and *The World in Action* (WIA), including *Atlantic Patrol* (1940), *Home Front* (1940), *Letter from Aldershot* (1940), *Churchill's Island* (1941), *Everywhere in the World* (1941), and *The War For Men's Minds* (1943), among many others. The series was designed to boost morale, provide key information about the war, celebrate Canada's achievements in a variety of fields, and reinforce the dangerousness and depravity of the enemy. Agostini adopted many of the increasingly standardized stylistic conventions of Hollywood film scoring during the period, and attempted to make the small orchestras available at the NFB sound as large and impressive as possible.[227] His scores are bold and dramatic, and replete with brass fanfares, imperial marches, and lush and sweeping Romantic themes. The music parallels the action in that it follows conventional cultural codes to evoke specific affective responses, and promote conventional readings of events onscreen. While a filmic adaptation of late-nineteenth century Romanticism was the prevailing musical language in Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s (the film scores of Max Steiner and Erich Korngold, for example), it was generally modeled on the brand of lyric musical Romanticism heard in the works of Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov, for example, rather than the chromatic density of expression heard in the works of Wagner, Strauss, Mahler, and Liszt. In keeping with the

[226] McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,*170.
[227] Louise Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63," unpublished. This spreadsheet contains the contract details for 447 NFB film music recording sessions, including the date, location, time, duration, AFM locale, number of musicians contracted, composer, and conductor. Many entries also list the rehearsal times. This information was compiled from documents in the NFB archives. The author wishes to thank Louise Cloutier for generously sharing this document.

Hollywood style, Agostini's music is therefore quite conventionally tonal, and accessible to general audiences. It does, however, attempt to capture the boldness, intensity, and grandeur of the late-Romantic style in an effort to convey the perils of war, and the urgency of the Allies' response. Agostini describes himself as following in the Romantic tradition, which is evident in his film scoring:

> I'd like very much to write in the modern jazz idiom but I can't. I'm a romantic. I come from a classical background and what I write is an expression of that background. My favourite composers have always been the three B's … Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. I like Tchaikovsky, too, in spite of people who say he's too sentimental. I also like Stravinsky. What I really don't care for is the ultra-modern music.[228]

Agostini was influential in the adoption of a romantic Hollywood-style aesthetic at the NFB in the early years of the war, and Applebaum largely continued in this style for the NFB's theatrical releases when he took over as music director. The sound of American newsreels was another influence during this period. Indeed, *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action* were initially modeled after *The March of Time,* given Grierson's enthusiasm for the popular American newsreel.[229] American newsreels commonly used a variety of band music (military, concert, and ceremonial), fanfares, and heroic orchestral music to punctuate the action and elicit a sense of national pride, and these styles permeate wartime NFB films as well.[230]

Unlike Associated Screen News, which had built a state-of-the-art sound stage in 1936 to produce feature-length dramatized documentaries,[231] the NFB operated out of an old sawmill on

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[228] McNamara, "Lucio Agostini: Composing on Two Continents," 8.
[229] John Grierson, "The Course of Realism (1937)," in *Grierson on Documentary,* edited by Forsyth Hardy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 201-202.
[230] James Deaville, "Sounding the World: The Role of Music and Sound in Early 'Talking' Newsreels," in *Music and Sound in Documentary Film,* edited by Holly Rogers, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 41-55.
[231] The new ASN sound studio was the first of its kind in Canada, and it was widely considered the most sophisticated sound studio in the world during the late-1930s. See Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 72-76.

John Street in Ottawa.[232] Their facilities were generally unsuitable for recording music, particularly larger ensembles. Applebaum provides the following description:

> The elegant screening room was a little barn, which served as a recording studio, music-recording room, and screening room. It was the only room of any size, and it was shared by National Health and Welfare with the mice and the guinea pigs and the dead rats we used to find in the cutting room.[233]

The staff composers recall having to use the piano at the French Embassy across the street to work on their sketches and discuss ideas with production personnel, since the piano at the Film Board was barely functional.[234] Therefore, recording sessions usually happened off-site in professional studios in Toronto (Pringle and Booth, Kingsway Studios, Queensway Studios, CBC), Montreal (RCA Victor, Renaissance Studios, Associated Screen News, Canadian Marconi Studios, CFCF), and New York (Reeves Sound Studios, Fine Studios), where quality equipment was available and there was a larger pool of professional musicians to draw from.[235] In Ottawa, they used film and radio studios (Crawley Film Studio, CBO), or recorded in suitable halls and churches (St. Barnabas, Orpheus Hall) using the NFB's portable recording equipment.[236] The composers were typically responsible for recruiting musicians for the session, conducting their own scores, and consulting on the final mix with the music editors. They effectively oversaw the entire music production process, which was a considerable responsibility and extremely time-consuming.

The unrelenting pace during the war meant that music rehearsals and recording sessions were scheduled around the clock, some of them beginning after midnight and ending early in the morning.[237] While musicians were typically contracted for a three-hour rehearsal and three-hour

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[232] Louis Applebaum, "Film Music," in *Music in Canada,* edited by Ernest MacMillan (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1955), 175; McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,*168-69; Morris, *Embattled Shadows,* 228.
[233] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 10.
[234] Ibid., 12; Wright and Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored*, 54.
[235] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."
[236] Applebaum, "Film Music," 170.
[237] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."

recording session, these sessions frequently went overtime.[238] From the beginning, the NFB had an exclusive agreement with Canadian chapters of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), which meant they typically hired members of unionized symphony orchestras and local dance bands. Members of the Toronto Symphony and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal are frequently heard on these films. Since Ottawa did not have a symphony orchestra in the early 1940s, and it was not always possible or practical to record in larger cities, Applebaum assembled a group of professional and amateur musicians—primarily recruited from military bands and scientists at the National Research Council—who rehearsed regularly and recorded for the NFB.[239] This ad hoc group became the core of the new Ottawa Philharmonic Orchestra, which was founded in 1944 by the Dutch-Canadian violist and conductor Allard de Ridder, and renamed the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra in 1952.[240] NFB music editor Eugene Kash was the first concertmaster for the Ottawa Philharmonic, and took over as conductor when de Ridder left in 1950.

Even films with original scores typically contained a certain amount of stock music. In scenes with diegetic sources of music, such as parades, marching bands, ceremonial events, or radio sets, it was both time-saving and economical to simply select an appropriate cue from the stock music library. This basic filmmaking strategy was seemingly not communicated to the staff composers, many of whom significantly overwrote their first film scores. Rathburn considered it a rookie mistake when he composed all of the music for his first film, *To the Ladies* (1946). He even wrote an original march for a ten-second parade scene, which significantly increased his workload, and could have easily been fitted with stock music.[241] Nonetheless, despite initial

[238] Ibid.
[239] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 44.
[240] Debra Ann Begg, "A History of Orchestras in Ottawa from 1894 to 1960" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1981), 103-4.
[241] Rathburn, interview with Hone, ca. 1991.

difficulties and missteps, Rathburn completed the film on schedule and was offered a full-time staff position. Applebaum made similar mistakes scoring his first film, *Call for Volunteers* (1941). McInnes recalls showing Applebaum's score to Agostini, who was impressed by its originality and precision, but noted that Applebaum had composed music for the entire film, and scored each scene right to the end, despite the norm of fading out endings.[242] To Agostini, these were hallmarks of an inexperienced yet promising film composer. Basic conventions such as these could have been conveyed to the new staff composers had film music specialists been brought in. While Agostini wrote many scores for the NFB during this era, he was neither a full-time staff member nor tasked with providing help to the new recruits.

The staff composers, all of whom were Canadian and none of whom had prior experience scoring films, learned on the job and from each other. Rathburn describes his first impressions of the NFB when he arrived in 1946:

> When I first came to the Board it was a hectic mess. I was completely confused. Everybody was yelling and I seemed to be in the midst of some sort of an argument about someone wanting a cutting copy. When we were recording, there were all sorts of noises. I had just come up from Saint John, New Brunswick, which was very peaceful, and I entered into the hornet's nest![243]

Being unfamiliar with the technology and finding the work environment at the John Street location chaotic, Rathburn struggled to write his first score and looked to Applebaum for guidance. Rathburn recalls, "I would get stuck and I would call Lou up and say I can't write this, and he told me to stick to it and eventually I got something."[244] Blackburn considered the lack of formal training liberating, in that it allowed the NFB composers considerable room to experiment:

> In a sense, we [the composers] benefitted from a general ignorance about music in the early days of the NFB. No one seemed to know how music was supposed to function in film. This gave me a lot of freedom to experiment, as long as the end result was acceptable. For

[242] McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,* 170.
[243] *The Magical Eye,* directed by Terrence Macartney-Filgate (National Film Board of Canada, 1989).
[244] Rathburn interview with Hone, 29 March 1991.

> me, it was helpful that there was no obvious tradition at the NFB. It allowed us to be creative.[245]

Like most commercial film productions, the composers were brought in during the final stages and expected to work quickly and efficiently, which often limited their ability to experiment, especially during the war. The size of the musical ensemble was determined in discussion with the director, and the decision was generally based on the budget and timeline. Whereas the lack of equipment and resources at the GPO lead to an experimental approach to music and sound in the 1930s, this was neither considered appropriate in the wartime context of the early 1940s, nor suitable for most wartime productions.

Hollywood influences can be heard in the Romantic themes, heroic style, and general accessibility of the music composed for *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action,* the NFB's two main theatrical series. Similar to classic Hollywood film scores, the closing-title music for NFB wartime films are bold and dramatic, typically concluding on perfect cadences, suggesting a victorious and triumphant resolution to the action onscreen, and ultimately to the war itself. Agostini and Applebaum were the primary composers for these flagship series, and they similarly looked to Hollywood for inspiration, among other models in the Western classical tradition.[246]

Applebaum was especially adept at writing heroic themes. A good example is the western-style theme for *Trans-Canada Express* (1944), a film that showcases the importance of the railway during the war, and connects it to the broader nationalist mythology of the railway in Canadian

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[245] Léo Bonneville, "Entretien avec Maurice Blackburn," in S*équences* No. 115 (janvier 1984): 10. Translation by the author. Original text: "Il faut dire qu'à cette époque, l'on a aussi profité de l'ignorance des gens. Personne ne savait trop ce que venait faire la musique dans un film. Alors j'étais libre de faire toutes sortes d'essais pourvu que cela convienne. Et ce qui m'a aidé, c'était qu'il y avait pas de tradition. Tout le monde créait."

[246] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 11.

history.[247] It was scored for a twenty-seven piece orchestra and recorded in Toronto.[248] The first statement of the main theme is played by the brass section and only heard once with the opening title. The melody is uncomplicated and the harmonic language is simple. The first few notes of the theme are each held for almost a full measure, evoking a sense of geographic space and expansiveness, while the ostinato underneath provides a sense of motion. These musically suggestive gestures augment the images onscreen, since the main theme is only used to accompany scenes where trains are at full speed, crossing a variety of majestic landscapes, including the Rocky Mountains, open prairies, and stretching shorelines, while also including a variety of imposing shots of city skyscrapers and industrial parks. The theme returns with slight variations and with different instrumentation. Lorne Greene breathlessly recites an ode to technological achievement, endless growth, and colonial expansion through a dizzying string of statements delivered over the first full statement of Applebaum's theme, rising in intensity with each phrase toward a melodramatic climax:

> As the railways grow, so does Canada. Great trains a mile long, tracks double, locomotives triple in size. Canadian Pacific, Grand Trunk Pacific, Canadian Northern, Intercolonial, Canadian National—names pioneering railroad history. Grain from the west, grain for the world; salmon from BC to Montreal in four days by CP express; Quebec asbestos and Ontario nickel by CN fast freight to Vancouver; immigrants from England and Russia, from Scotland and Poland and Hungary—a population more than doubled, cities reaching for the sky! Canada united by a bond of steel!

While the overall musical aesthetic is reminiscent of Hollywood westerns, Applebaum also cites the influence of contemporary concert works by American composers such as Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Roy Harris (Applebaum's mentor at Julliard), all of whom were looking to American folk tunes, hymns, and cowboy songs in search of new musical materials the 1930s and

[247] See for example, Maurice Charland, "Technological Nationalism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory,* no. 1-2 (1986): 196-220.
[248] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63." The recording took place between 11:00pm and 3:00am at Pringle and Booth studio.

1940s, and all of whom also wrote for film.[249] Applebaum incorporates folk materials into his score, and cleverly writes around stock footage containing folk songs. In an early scene depicting the construction of the railroad through the Rocky Mountains and the ceremonial last spike in Craigellachie, Applebaum incorporates a solo mandolin playing a folk tune with minimal orchestral accompaniment, and has the brass instruments imitate a train whistle. Near the end of the film, a group of soldiers are shown singing a rendition of "Home on the Range" as one of them plays an accordion and another a guitar, ostensibly to pass the time on the train. Notably, the exact clip appeared a year earlier in *Action Stations* in a scene depicting naval officers on shore waiting to be deployed overseas. In *Trans-Canada Express,* Applebaum arranges his score in a way that seamlessly leads in and out of this apparently popular piece of stock footage.

While it is unclear whether Grierson actively discouraged NFB filmmakers from using GPO films as models, Applebaum nonetheless pays homage to *Night Mail* (GPO, 1936) in the last sequences of *Trans-Canada Express*. A brief clip from *Night Mail*—an unmistakeable shot of a train wheelset in motion—is incorporated into the film, making the connection explicit. In these segments, which are more dissonant and freer in character than the rest of the score, Applebaum writes a relentless and steady ostinato pattern for the lower strings, similar to the orchestration and technique that Britten adopts in his score for *Night Mail,* where he strives to imitate the chugging and clacking sounds of the train. Likewise, Applebaum adds short sporadic motifs in the brass and woodwinds overtop, also following Britten's example. Perhaps the most obvious nod to *Night Mail,* however, is the short section with rhythmic spoken word narration. While the vocal chanting

[249] Kathryn Kalinak, *Music in the Western: Notes from the Frontier* (London: Routledge, 2012), 3; Neil Lerner, "Copland's Music of Wide Open Spaces: Surveying the Pastoral Trope in Hollywood," *The Musical Quarteryly* 85, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 477-515. See for example, Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* (1928), Harris's *Folksong Symphony* (1940), and Copland's western ballets *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942).

in *Trans-Canada Express* has neither the poetic nor narrative qualities of Auden's text, it is in keeping with the tone and style of the delivery. Aspects of Applebaum's main theme begin to emerge from this musical pastiche amidst a blustery fanfaric transition section. The film ends after a final restatement of the theme, and a tag (repeat) of the last few notes played *ritardando* for a quintessentially Hollywood-style ending.

Sydney Newman, Tom Daly and Nicholas Balla became the primary producers for the *Canada Carries On* series following the departure of the British documentarists, and they maintained similar expectations for the music. Namely, they wanted the grandiose sound of large Hollywood orchestras, which Agostini and Applebaum tried to emulate despite working with small chamber orchestras and limited resources. At the producers' request, NFB staff composers continued to devise techniques to give the illusion of the classic Hollywood sound. Rathburn recalls Newman constantly reiterating that the music needed to "build, build, and then build some more"[250] and that he insisted on fanfaric music for the opening titles, and "big endings à la Hollywood."[251] The composers consequently experimented with unusual doubling techniques, particularly with the woodwinds, in an attempt to create the illusion of a large orchestral sound.[252] For Rathburn, one of the most challenging aspects was balancing a modest-sized string section within a small orchestra.[253] A technique they frequently used to increase the apparent size and

[250] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, ca. 1993.
[251] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Film Notes: Producers and Directors," undated.
[252] A genre of classical chamber music is written for an ensemble called a wind quintet, which is comprised of the woodwinds and a French horn.
[253] Rathburn, interview with Hone, 29 March 1991. Rathburn made the following comment to Hone regarding the ideal number of strings for orchestral works: "If you are going to write a decent orchestra piece you need to make sure you have enough strings. The ideal would be eight first and second [violins], six violas, four cellos, and two basses." The ideal string section Rathburn describes is larger than most NFB orchestras, which may only have a dozen string players or less.

strength of the strings was to double the flute with the violins, and bassoon with the bass line. Rathburn provides the following description:

> The orchestras were small, and we were trying to give the illusion of a big orchestra by doubling [the woodwinds with the strings], which is the wrong way to do it. We overused some instruments—namely oboes and bassoons. In a symphony, you would not hear a bassoon the way you hear it in Film Board music. I doubled the bassoons with the basses because I thought it would help the bass line, however doing this creates an oppressive sound. We would double the flute and the woodwinds with the four violins, which accounts for that scrawny high sound. This was a typical Film Board sound. We would have been better off writing chamber music-type scores.[254]

Ironically, their attempt to imitate the prominent string and brass sections in classic Hollywood film scores ultimately produced an idiosyncratic woodwind-heavy sound that became a hallmark of NFB film music throughout the postwar years.

Rathburn ultimately came to many of the same conclusions that Walter Leigh articulated a decade earlier regarding the hazards of trying to mimic the sound of large orchestras. The doubling methods Rathburn describes are exactly the kind of "hack orchestration techniques" Leigh advised against.[255] However, Rathburn and his colleagues were relatively inexperienced film composers at the time, and they had little authority within the institution. They were obliged to follow directives from their superiors, even if they considered the results unsatisfactory from a musical perspective. "In those days we were so afraid to be called weak," Rathburn recalls, "we didn't realize that a solo horn carried as much or more impact as a bloated attempt to make our orchestras sound big."[256] The shift away from wartime subjects to peacetime issues in the postwar years lessened requests for bombastic music and the sound of large Hollywood orchestras, and the size of the

[254] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.
[255] Walter Leigh, "Music and Microphones," *World Film News and Television Progress* 1, no. 5 (August 1936), 40.
[256] New Brunswick archives, Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes on Film Scores," undated.

ensembles gradually decreased following the war. Nonetheless, the emphasis on the woodwinds remained, and became a feature of the NFB sound, a topic I discuss at length in Chapter Three.

## Action Stations, Antheil, and Applebaum in Hollywood

Two years after he joined the NFB, Applebaum began receiving offers to score feature films in Hollywood, and he scored more than twenty Hollywood features over the next decade. By 1944, he was splitting his time between the NFB and Hollywood, which informed his work at the NFB. Hollywood influences are evident in Applebaum's NFB scores, and these influences permeated the music department given Applebaum's role as music director and mentor to the other staff composers. Despite the variety of international filmmakers who were invited to the NFB during the war, there were seemingly few attempts to engage composers from Hollywood or elsewhere. An exception to this rule was the NFB's attempt to hire the American avant-garde composer George Antheil for Joris Ivens' *Action Stations* (1943), a story that is missing from analyses of this film.[257] When Antheil declined, Applebaum accepted the challenge, and it was through this project that Applebaum ultimately received his Hollywood break.

In 1941, Grierson invited Ivens, the renowned Dutch documentarist, to make a film for the NFB. Given Ivens' international reputation, and Grierson's admiration of his work, the NFB offered Ivens an unprecedented amount of financial support and flexibility. As with all visiting filmmakers, there was an implicit expectation from Grierson that Ivens would mentor the young Canadian filmmakers, which helped justify the significant expense to the government. In this case,

[257] Thomas Waugh, *The Conscience of Cinema: The Films of Joris Ivens, 1912-1989* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 308-23; McInnes, *One Man's Documentary,* 109-116; Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 55-56.

however, the educational component never materialized, since Ivens ultimately brought his own cinematographers and technical personnel.[258]

*Action Stations* showcases the expansion of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), and the crucial role the new anti-submarine corvettes (small warships) were playing in escorting Allied supply and troop ships across the Atlantic. The film highlights the victories of the RCN, and focuses on young officers training on board the new corvette *Port Arthur*. Since it was intended to boost morale and encourage recruitment, the camaraderie among the officers is emphasized alongside triumphant action scenes. Ivens and his crew spent four months filming on location, including six weeks on board the corvette off the coast of Nova Scotia where they shot *mise-en-scène* footage and recorded synchronous sound. The complexity of the location shooting made it one of the most expensive films the NFB produced during the war, and it was unprecedented for the Board to devote this many resources to a single production.[259] Despite shortening the initial script—written in collaboration with Canadian author Morley Callaghan—at forty-three minutes, the completed film was still more than double the stipulated length for distribution as part of the *Canada Carries On* series. A shorter version was therefore cut and released as *Corvette Port Arthur,* while the full-length version was titled *Action Stations.*

While it is unclear where the idea originated, George Antheil was selected as the ideal composer to provide an original score. Antheil had been an active member of the Parisian avant-garde in the interwar years, during which time he experimented with futurist-inspired techniques using musical, mechanical, and industrial sounds. His best-known piece from this era, the *Ballet Méchanique* (1923-24)—originally written to accompany Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's experimental film of the same name—is scored for multiple player pianos, assorted percussion,

[258] Waugh, *The Conscience of Cinema*, 311.
[259] Ibid., 315; NFBA, *Action Stations* production file.

and airplane propellers. In 1933, Antheil returned to the US, and began composing for film and television.[260] In 1936, he moved to Hollywood and established a successful career scoring films for major studios and prominent directors, including Paramount and Cecile B. DeMille. Ultimately, Antheil found scoring Hollywood films artistically unsatisfying, and by the mid-1940s he was searching for other projects.[261] In June of 1942, William Burnside (a British filmmaker working at the NFB) wrote to Antheil asking if he would be interested and available to score Ivens' film.[262] Knowing the NFB's financial compensation would be meager, Burnside highlighted the opportunity for Antheil to contribute to the war effort:

> Frankly, the money we could afford to offer you would do little more than cover your expenses whilst here (but in that case you would have the satisfaction of knowing that the same applies to all of us!). However, it is not quite a question of money so much as a question of how one feels about this whole situation … we could do with your services very badly and I therefore hope that you won't look upon this letter in the light of an essentially commercial proposition but rather as one which by the nature of the work entailed will help us all a little further along the road to our ultimate goal.[263]

Antheil replied within a few days confirming his enthusiasm for the project in principle. "You fire the 'artist in me,'" Antheil wrote, stating that contrary to his usual work in Hollywood, "what you are doing is not routine; it would give me a chance to show what I can REALLY do."[264] However, while Antheil expressed his tremendous admiration for both Grierson and Ivens, he made it clear that unless the NFB could provide sufficient renumeration to support his family in Hollywood as well as his expenses in Ottawa, he simply could not accept the offer. As a proposed cost-saving measure, Antheil added in the postscript of his letter that he could also do his own orchestration and conducting. While this may have reduced costs in Hollywood, at the NFB, composers were

[260] Linda Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 49-57.
[261] Ibid., 58.
[262] Ibid., Burnside to Antheil, 23 June 1942.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid., Antheil to Burnside, 26 June 1942.

generally expected to do both as a matter of routine. In fact, hiring an orchestrator and conductor for Antheil would have been an additional cost for the NFB. Furthermore, NFB staff composers were also responsible for hiring the musicians, overseeing the recording session, and consulting on the final mix. Thus, while Antheil expressed keen interest in the project, the attempt to engage him at the NFB seemingly failed due to insufficient funds.

The NFB's failure to hire Antheil turned into a career-defining opportunity for Applebaum, who was appointed to the project as the NFB's music director and most experienced in-house composer (Agostini was in Toronto working for the CBC, and Blackburn had only just been hired). Throughout the soundtrack for *Action Stations,* we hear relatively novel and expensive techniques involving location sound, which the film crew had recorded on the ship. And the narration is relatively sparse, all of which left significant room for music. Applebaum took advantage of this, and wrote a series of distinctive heroic, Hollywood-style themes scored for a thirty-five-piece orchestra, [265] one of the largest orchestras recorded for a wartime NFB film, undoubtedly due to its association with Ivens.[266]

The larger orchestra allowed Applebaum to write in a manner that more closely approximated classic Hollywood film music. He uses romantic and late-romantic idioms, similar to Korngold's score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), and Max Steiner's scores from the 1930s (e.g., *King Kong* [1933] and *Gone with the Wind* [1939], for example). *Action Stations* begins with a shot of the open sea from the deck of a warship as text scrolls across the screen dedicating the film to members of the Royal Canadian Navy. Curiously, Applebaum's first music cue, which underscores the scrolling text, bears an uncanny resemblance to the *allegro molto* section of the second movement of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite *Scheherazade*

[265] In 1962, Applebaum used his film score as the basis for an orchestral suite titled *Action Stations.*
[266] Louise Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."

(1888), "The Story of the Kalendar Prince." The up-tempo, rhythmic melody in compound triple meter played by the upper strings overtop a driving ostinato in the lower strings establishes a sense of movement that mimics the advancing ship and ensuing gunfire, while the minor tonality and harmonic stasis suggest danger and suspense. This section quickly builds to a triumphant major-key fanfare in duple meter. While Applebaum adopts various musical styles to establish a range of required moods throughout the film, all of them are relatively standard idioms that are routinely heard in Hollywood films. A stately (maestoso) march is heard several times in various battle scenes; lyrical melodies underscore scenes of officers relaxing between attacks, and bright, up-tempo music featuring the winds is used to depict training exercises on deck. He also cleverly incorporates elements of the RCN's unofficial theme song "Roll Along Wavy Navy" (written in 1936, and sung to the tune of "Roll Along Covered Wagon") in order to set up a recording of the song sung by a male chorus with piano accompaniment that underscores a scene where new officers are introduced to their crew on the ship. The song implies a sense of camaraderie, determination, and excitement among the crew, downplaying the horrors of war and the perilous conditions on the Atlantic in wartime. Following Applebaum's triumphant fanfaric ending, "Roll Along Wavy Navy" is reprised as the credits roll, encouraging audiences to remain optimistic about both the war and the fate of the young officers in the film, and in the RCN more broadly.

While the shortened version, *Corvette Port Arthur,* seemed to fade into obscurity, *Action Stations* was screened several times in Hollywood and it subsequently became a documentary classic.[267] Hollywood producer Lester Cowan attended one such screening and was particularly impressed by Applebaum's music.[268] Reportedly, Aaron Copland was also in attendance and

[267] Waugh, *The Conscience of Cinema*, 323.
[268] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 56.

commented positively on the music.[269] Cowan subsequently contacted Applebaum at the NFB to see if he would be available to score his next feature film, *Tomorrow, the World!* (1944). This was the first offer Applebaum received to score a Hollywood feature, and he took a short leave from the NFB from early August to mid-October 1944 to work with Cowan and his team.[270] Having never scored a feature film, Cowan arranged for Max Steiner to provide Applebaum with assistance, and to make sure that he was capable of handling the work. According to Applebaum, Steiner reviewed a few of his piano sketches and reassured Cowan that Applebaum was highly competent and would have no problem completing the assignment.[271] *Tomorrow, the World!* received a Hollywood Writer's Mobilization Award and was relatively successful. When Applebaum returned to the NFB, he regaled his colleagues with descriptions of the impressive technical equipment and resources that were available in Hollywood, but noted that their working hours were as grueling as at the NFB's, if not more so.[272]

A year later, Cowan invited Applebaum to score another film, *The Story of G. I. Joe* (1945). This time, Applebaum spent four months in Hollywood, from January to May 1945.[273] *The Story of G. I. Joe* was nominated for an Academy Award, which increased Applebaum's reputation and expanded his Hollywood network. Henceforth, he began dividing his time between Hollywood and the NFB. Following the war, cross-border travel was becoming increasingly difficult for Applebaum since the NFB had been declared a "vulnerable organization" during the intensifying Red Scare (the details of this period in the NFB's history are discussed at length in Chapter

[269] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 13.
[270] NFBA, Louis Applebaum personal notebook, "Film Scores."
[271] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 57; fn. 2.
[272] Ibid., 59.
[273] NFBA, Louis Applebaum notebooks, 1941-51. Applebaum's personal notebooks contain the recording dates for his film work, primarily at the NFB, but also Hollywood productions between 1941 and 1951.

Three).[274] After Grierson left, and with the uncertainty of the NFB's future, Applebaum officially left the NFB and moved his family to New Jersey in 1945 to facilitate his growing career in the US.[275]

## Modernism and Musical Representations of the Other

Throughout the twentieth century, dissonant, atonal, percussive, and electronic music has frequently been used in films to signify otherness, deviance, monstrosity, and terror.[276] Philip Brophy summarizes the standard formula for early horror films as "pastel smears of classical music for the correctly socialized human; dark sludges of avant-garde music for the deviant being."[277] There was a role for dissonant music and experimental soundscapes in NFB wartime films, however, in keeping with the conventional cultural codes and ideological exigencies of wartime propaganda, it was largely confined to scenarios depicting racialized enemies and disability who are dehumanized through vulgar distortions of non-Western music and racist musical tropes.

Applebaum's score for an anti-Japanese wartime propaganda film, *The Mask of Nippon* (1942) is one such example. As in many American anti-Japanese films of the period, grotesque caricatures of Japanese physical characteristics, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions are presented as evidence of their inherent inferiority.[278] *The Mask of Nippon* portrays the Japanese as

[274] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 64. The defection of Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet cipher clerk working for the Russian Embassy in Ottawa, arguably launched the Cold War in Canada, and the appearance of Grierson's name among Gouzenko's papers implicated the NFB in the affair.
[275] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 64.
[276] James K. Wright, "Twelve-tone Terror: Representing Horror and Monstrosity in Dodecaphonic Film Music." In eds. Alexis Luko and James Wright, *Monstrosity, Identity, and Music: Mediating Uncanny Creatures from Frankenstein to Videogames* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2022): 150-71.
[277] Phillip Brophy, "The Secret History of Film Music: Picturing Atonality, Part 1," *The Wire*, Vol. 168 (Feb. 1998), 30.
[278] W. Anthony Sheppard, "An Exotic Enemy: Anti-Japanese Musical Propaganda in World War II," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 306.

ruthless, emotionless, superstitious, and unconscious followers of the emperor in contrast to the alleged Western values of individual freedom and rationality. Applebaum's original music is less than five minutes in duration; the rest of the film is comprised of stock music. Scenes showing the modernization and industrialization of Japan are fitted with triumphant-sounding concert band music from the stock library as the narrator describes the "civilizing" effects that Western knowledge and technology have had on the lives and values of the Japanese. Military battles are similarly filled with the bombastic, brass-heavy martial music that was standard in wartime newsreels. However, a short sequence on the history and customs of the indigenous Yamato people receives special musical treatment. Applebaum's score involves only a handful of cues for a three-minute segment. Although Applebaum claims to have studied the intonation, scale-structure, and timbre of traditional Japanese music, the instrumentation and techniques he actually uses are far removed from anything remotely resembling traditional Japanese music. He provides the following description:

> Music was then scored to be played by one flute out of tune, one piano stripped of its action and played by strumming prescribed strings with a screw driver (a disconcerting experience for a dignified pianist with many years of Czerny and Hanon exercises behind him), and assorted percussion instruments … In addition, many incongruous noises were recorded; extra strums of the denuded piano and a few gong crashes, cymbal rolls, and flute twiddles.[279]

Applebaum's flute melodies have a pentatonic flavour with an emphasis on open fourth intervals, and his directions instruct the flautist to play "very freely – out of tune" (Figure 1). Applebaum also "scored" the microphone, waving it over the instruments, and playing certain tracks backwards in the final mix.[280] The final result is a piece of *musique concrète* with orientalist embellishments that is similar in some ways to Britten's approach to *Coal Face* and *Night Mail*.

[279] Louis Applebaum, "Documentary Music," in *Film Music: From Violins to Video,* edited and compiled by James L. Limbacher (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1974), 69.
[280] Ibid.

Applebaum's creative use of studio techniques also echoes Leigh's insistence that film music is a studio art, and that film composers should explore these possibilities rather than confine themselves to imitating concert hall works. Applebaum increasingly pursued this path in his film work after the war, experimenting with a variety of electro-acoustic techniques and electronic instruments.

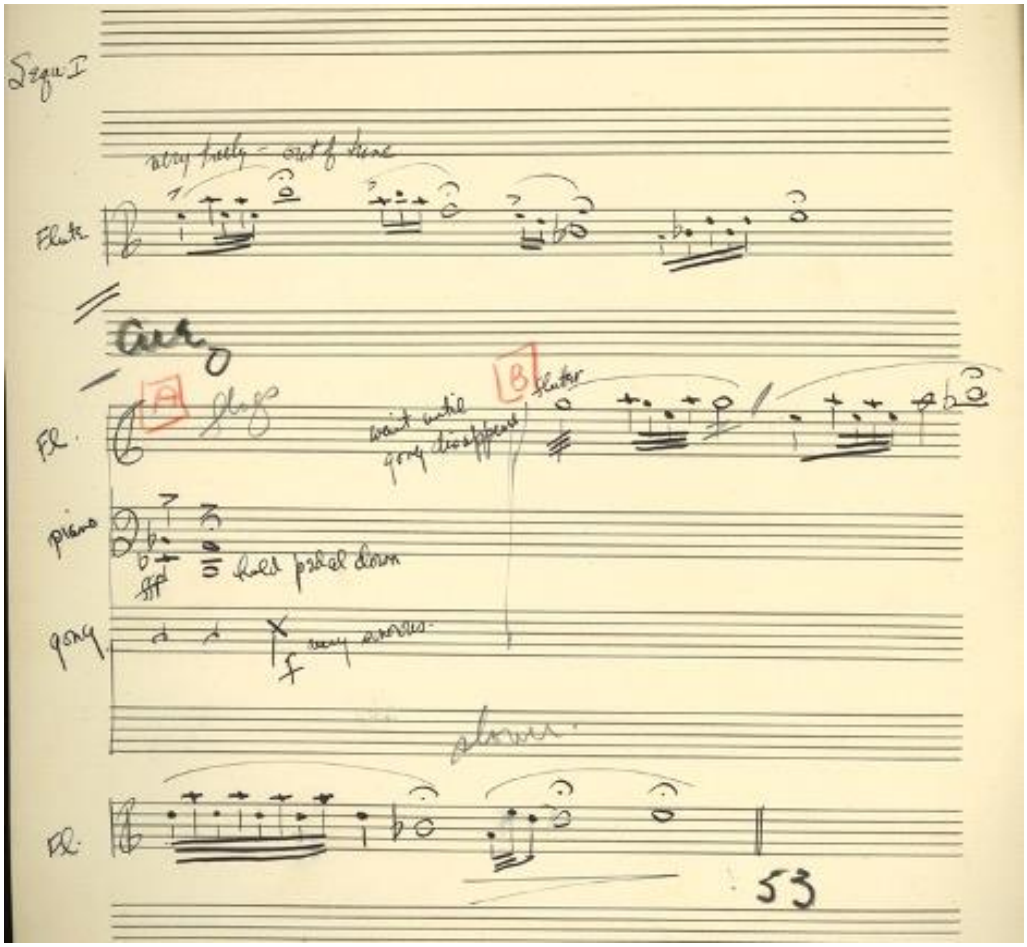


Figure 1 – *The Mask of Nippon,* sequence #1. Clara Thomas Archives, York University, Louis Applebaum Fonds, 1979-002/006 (64).

Applebaum's elitist and arrogant attitude toward folk music allows him to claim mastery over a variety of folk idioms seemingly without engaging with them, and neither demonstrating proficiency nor respect for these traditions. Referring to *The Mask of Nippon,* Applebaum explains

flippantly, "this film obviously called for Japanese something-or-other. So I did some research into Japanese music. I became an expert on folk music of all kinds. You name the country and I've written some folk tunes because of the National Film Board."[281] Despite his supposed expertise, the representation of the Yamato people in *The Mask of Nippon* amounts to pentatonic flute melodies, a haphazard suggestion of microtonality (the flute played "out of tune"), percussion, cymbal washes, and foreboding and ominous-sounding electroacoustic noise. Applebaum notes elsewhere, only half-apologetically, that the audience may find the sounds disconcerting, however he is satisfied it is "at least interesting, if not truly Japanese."[282]

When Indigenous peoples (in Canada or elsewhere) are represented in NFB films from this era, the stereotypical formula for the accompanying music often involves either grotesque connotations of the "savage" (e.g., pentatonic melodies, simple and repetitive rhythms, hand drums, and out of tune flutes), primitivist motifs, or contortions of non-Western music into classical frameworks and protocols. Throughout the twentieth-century, Canadian classical composers have routinely mined recordings and transcriptions of Indigenous music, treating musical materials as "natural resources" that can be assimilated into and enhance their work without considering Indigenous protocols or building reciprocal relationships.[283] In the latter half of the twentieth century, aspects of Indigenous culture have been frequently reconceptualized and remythologized as the foundation of a distinctly Canadian identity, advancing a revisionist nationalist narrative that reinforces what Dylan Robinson describes as the "multicultural extractivist complex at the heart of Canadian exceptionalism."[284]

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[281] Applebaum, "The NFB in the 1940s," 13-14.
[282] Ibid., 70.
[283] For a thorough critique of this issue, see Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).
[284] Ibid., 122.

A prime example of this phenomenon is *Northwest Frontier* (1941), one of a handful of early NFB film scores written by Canadian composer John Weinzweig on a freelance basis. *Northwest Frontier* shows the development of extractive industries and infrastructure in the North, emphasizing the importance of air transportation to connect the North to the economic centres of the South. Here, Inuit peoples are portrayed as "in transition" between their traditional culture and white settler society, as they so often are in NFB films from this era. The narrator describes this transition as being "forced by natural laws, on an ancient primitive people," placing the Inuit outside modern history, and declaring that colonization and industrialization are inevitable and "natural" processes. According to Elaine Keillor, Weinzweig had access to recordings of Dene music, and he transcribed the rhythms and melody of a Dene "Gambling Song," as well as a portion of a "Love Song," and "Cariboo Song," in preparation for his work on the score.[285] He also listened to a Dene "Drum Dance," but labeled it as "no good."[286] Keillor also notes that Weinzweig selected songs from a collection of "Eskimo Songs" that had been gathered by the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-18, and published by Helen Roberts and Diamond Jenness in 1925.[287] Using the first four pitches from song No. 61, he arranged a ten-note-row and sketched its inverted, retrograde, and inverted retrograde forms.[288] There is little evidence to suggest that any music from these collections was used in this final score, although Keillor notes that in the final score there

[285] Elaine Keillor, "Music for Radio and Film," in *John Weinzweig: Essays on His Life and Music,* edited by John Beckwith and Brian Cherney (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), 109.
[286] Ibid. See also, Erin Elizabeth Scheffer, "John Weinzweig and the Canadian Mediascape, 1941-1948," (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2019), 122-60.
[287] Helen Heffron Roberts and Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Songs: Songs of the Copper Eskimos* (Ottawa, FA Acland, 1925).
[288] Alan Gillmor, "In his Own Words," in *John Weinzweig: Essays on His Life and Music,* edited by John Beckwith and Brian Cherney (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), 271; Brian Cherney, "The Activist" in *John Weinzweig,* 53. The discovery of Viennese serialism (notably that of Alban Berg) and Stravinsky in the music library at the Eastman School of Music—where he studied from 1937 to 1938 in an attempt to escape the musical conservatism of the Toronto Conservatory of Music—was a pivotal and formative experience for Weinzweig.

are fragments of a melody from an Indigenous "dance tune" that Weinzweig had transcribed. Although he never used the ten-tone-row that he had sketched, the exercise shows precisely how elements of a song may be separated, distilled, and otherwise transformed for colonialist artistic purposes and aesthetics.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Weinzweig's score is the Stravinskian pastiche he composes to depict images of a round dance (Figure 2). Weinzweig's discovery of Stravinsky's

Figure 2 – Round Dance, *Northwest Frontier* (1941)

*The Rite of Spring* (1913) as a student at the Eastman School of Music was particularly revelatory for him, and had a significant impact on his compositional style.[289] Weinzweig's underscoring for the round dance is an uncanny pastiche of "Auguries of Spring: Dance of the Youth and Maidens" from *The Rite* (Figure 3).[290] He has the strings play a syncopated, dissonant, rhythm in unison in

[289] Gillmor, "In his Own Words," 271. Stravinsky's conception of a ritual sacrifice in pre-Christian pagan Russia offended, scandalized, and intrigued bourgeois Parisian audiences at its now-infamous premiere performance in 1913, and secured his reputation as a controversial and avant-garde figure in the European art world.

[290] This transcription of Weinzweig's score appears in Scheffer, "John Weinzweig and the Canadian Mediascape, 1941-1948," 148.

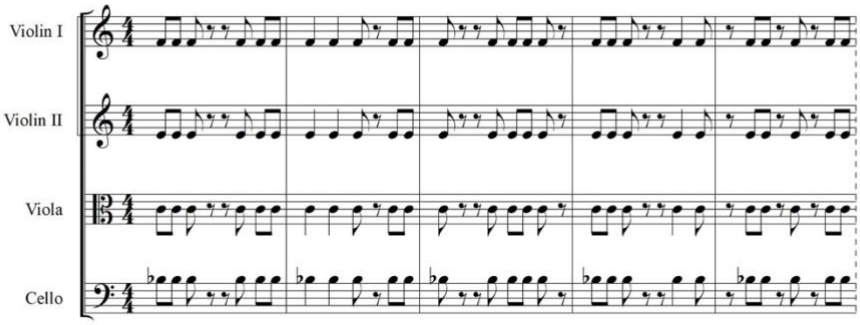
the lower registers that very closely imitates the rhythm, harmony, and instrumentation of this section of Stravinsky's ballet score. However, Weinzweig's textures are often simplified compared to those of *The Rite,* and he does not attempt to emulate Stravinsky's intricate woodwind passages that punctuate the relentless ostinato. Weinzweig's music is not precisely synchronized with the dancers onscreen: the Inuit appear to be drumming and dancing out of time with the music, and the apparent singing depicted onscreen is inaudible. Given Weinzweig's background, it is likely that the images immediately suggested *The Rite* to him, and it presented an opportunity to attempt a Stravinskian imitation.[291] This music cue is unlike anything else in the film, and it stands out as a primitivist spectacle. Weinzweig's music aligns with the message of the film, which maintains that the Canadian state's intervention in Inuit communities and development of extractive industries on their land is justified, given their apparently primitive lifestyle and beliefs. The government is portrayed as benevolently helping the Inuit retain some of their traditional customs

[291] Although Weinzweig scored numerous radio dramas and several NFB films in the 1940s, he subsequently disregarded his film and radio work when he was hired at the University of Toronto as a full-time professor of music in 1952. See Elaine Keillor, "Music for Radio and Film."

while simultaneously providing them with modern conveniences and attempting to assimilate them into the capitalist economic system and Western cosmology.

The representation of disability and disfigurement is another subject where experimental

Opening 5 measures from Weinzweig's music for the "Round Dance" cue (*Northwest Frontier*, 1941):




Opening 5 measures from Stravinsky's "Auguries of Spring: Dance of the Youths and Maidens" (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913):

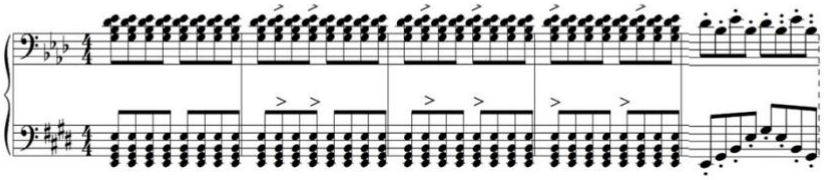


Figure 3 – Comparison of the opening measures in Weinzweig's "Round Dance" and Stravinsky's "Auguries of Spring."

music and modernist techniques appear. *New Faces Come Back* (1946) dramatizes the trauma and self-consciousness of disfigured soldiers who have returned from the war and are trying to reintegrate into their communities. It is another instance where Applebaum experiments with avant-garde techniques, including serialism. The narrative focuses on an Air Force pilot who was badly burned in a plane crash, and whose face was partially rebuilt through plastic surgery. There is continuous music throughout, and it is largely Applebaum's original score, which was written for a small orchestra of nineteen musicians and recorded in Toronto.[292] What is notable is that the unifying theme is built around a twelve-tone row, and it recurs in various permutations throughout

[292] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."

the film. Although serialism was the dominant postwar trend in the classical music world, there were few opportunities to write atonal music at the NFB since both wartime and postwar films were generally intended convey a sense of hope and optimism. Applebaum creates a range of different moods by writing variations on his basic twelve-tone theme. For example, the slow and lyrical "hospital" motif, which is typically introduced by a solo instrument, has a dreamy and wistful quality, which Applebaum describes as expressing "understanding and sympathy which accompanied his long and tortuous treatments."[293]

The twelve-tone hospital motif bookends the most striking and experimental part of the score. In this sequence, the solider is being prepared for his first operation and is wheeled into the operating theatre and sedated. The dramatic action is bizarrely akin to a horror film. It is shot from the point of view of the patient, who is wheeled down the hallway and then encounters a sinister-looking doctor, which Applebaum describes as "a Frankenstein, monster-like figure," wielding a large hypodermic needle.[294] The experimental soundscape for this scene, including the menacing sound of heavy breathing into a microphone, suggests fear and disorientation as the soldier is put under anaesthetic. It is another example of *musique concrète.* Applebaum provides a detailed description of the techniques he used (further examples of *musique concrète*):

> Several sharply attacked chords were recorded together with a heavy rippling strum of piano strings in the low register. Various harp glissandi were recorded. A man's breathing close to a microphone was recorded. Little snatches of the twelve-tone hospital theme and a few hymn-like figures were played by various orchestral groups. In all about forty separate sounds were recorded. These were prepared in the cutting room for recording into a continuous sound. Some passages … were cut in backwards, some at normal speed, others at increased or lowered speeds, thus altering their pitch and instrumental color. The sharp accents were synchronized to dramatic high points like the first glimpse of the lamp and the plunging of the hypodermic needle. Following the administering of the anaesthetic, the sound of the breathing and the heartbeat were made to rise in intensity, then gradually to fade as the film went out of focus.[295]

[293] Applebaum, "Documentary Music," 70.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 71.

Applebaum then proceeds to describe this as "not music in the accepted sense," in that it cannot be played in a traditional orchestra setting, yet he is extremely enthusiastic about the possibilities of the studio as compositional tool.[296] He speculates that one day composers will be able to write music by "the twisting of knobs on electronic gadgets."[297]

Although his affiliation with the NFB would continue for another two decades, Applebaum formally resigned from the NFB in 1946, partly to pursue a research project in New York with one of the NFB's technical researchers, Ken Kendall, who had developed a prototype of a graphic sound synthesizer he called the Composer-tron (yet another experiment with graphical sound at the NFB).[298] Applebaum writes the following in his resignation letter:

> I am resigning that I might, for a year or two, conduct an experimental project in New York City, concerned with the development of film music techniques in a direction indicated by my work at the Film Board … It is my intention to return to Canada to the NFB, in order that the practical results of my experimental work might be incorporated into film made by the organization that sponsored their creation. Hoping that I can at that time be accepted again into the NFB.[299]

Applebaum moved to New Jersey, near RCA laboratories, hoping they might be interested in developing the Composer-tron. However, RCA was not interested.[300] Undeterred, Applebaum attempted to find other funding sources in New York, but was ultimately unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Kendall had been transferred to the Canadian Defence Research Laboratory, which saw the potential application of his research for military communications. According to NFB Technical Director Gerald Graham, if aspects of Kendall's research were in fact ever integrated into military

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[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 152-3. By the late 1940s, Norman McLaren had been experimenting for over a decade with creating synthetic sounds by drawing directly on the optical soundtrack.
[299] CTA, Louis Applebaum fonds, Applebaum to McLean, 29 July 1946.
[300] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 52-53.

systems, it remains classified information.[301] Kendall and Applebaum pursued the development of the Composer-tron well into the 1950s. In 1955, *Maclean's* magazine published an article titled "Osmond Kendall's Marvelous Music Machine," praising their ingenuity and forward-thinking.[302] After failing to secure industry support, they finally abandoned the entire project in the late 1950s. Applebaum and his family returned to Canada permanently in 1949.[303] He continued to collaborate with the NFB as a consultant and an occasional composer and conductor from that point forward, writing scores for documentary films—including *Royal Journey* (1951), *The Stratford Adventure* 1954), and *Paddle to the Sea* (1966)—and collaborated with McLaren on two 3-D animated films for the Festival of Britain in 1951, *Now Is the Time* and *Around is Around.* Applebaum also wrote a series of remarkably avant-garde horror scores for Canadian commercial feature films such as *The Mask* (1961), *The Bloody Brood* (1959), and *The Pyx* (1973), in which he frequently uses twelve-tone techniques and constructs electro-acoustic soundscapes.[304] Despite considerable interest in electronic instruments and electroacoustic music among NFB filmmakers and staff composers in the 1940s, a dedicated electronic music studio did not materialize at the NFB until the early 1970s.

## Conclusion

While the war years were an exceptional time in the NFB's history, many of the production practices and processes established in the music department remained in place for decades. Given that original scoring was reserved for prestige productions, it became standard to repurpose these

[301] Graham, *Canadian Film Technology,* 153.
[302] Alan Phillips, "Osmond Kendall's Marvelous Music Machine," *Maclean's* 11 June 1955.
[303] CTA, Louis Applebaum fonds, NFB Newsletter, October 1944.
[304] Wright, "Twelve-tone Terror," 166-67.

original recordings for compilation soundtracks. Therefore, even films without original scoring are typically fitted with original NFB music. While the idea of customized original scores for each film may have been ideal, it was financially impractical. In curating compilation soundtracks, music editors have contributed significantly to the overall aesthetic of NFB films. Given that there were only a handful of staff composers at the NFB, all of whom had similar training in classical music, an institutional musical aesthetic began to emerge during this period, as the composers looked to each other for ideas and advice on their work. For wartime subjects, NFB producers insisted on heroic, bold, and dramatic music, and the sound of large Hollywood-style orchestras. While the staff composers adopted the Romantic language of Hollywood cinema for many of these films, emulating the sound of large orchestras was much more difficult. The peculiar doubling techniques they used to augment the apparent size of their smaller ensembles lead to an overuse of the woodwinds, which became a hallmark of the idiosyncratic "NFB Sound" that developed following the war. The predominance of the woodwinds in postwar NFB film music is therefore partly rooted in the earlier challenge of trying to imitate large orchestras, which I describe in detail in the following chapter.

In keeping with the significant influence of Hollywood during this period, stereotypical depictions of otherness became a site where the staff composers felt they could experiment with modernist and avant-garde techniques. The vulgar primitivist musical tropes used to represent Indigenous peoples and wartime enemies alike are essential in conveying the message that these people and their customs are inferior to settler society and Euro-American culture. Musical materials from non-Western cultures are likewise understood as resources that can be mined, distorted, and incorporated into the structures of the Western classical tradition without any

responsibility or engagement with these communities. Music in these films is used to dehumanize non-white communities, adding to the violence inflicted on them by the state.

# Chapter Three – The Postwar "NFB Sound"

## Introduction

The NFB was highly productive during the early postwar years despite facing considerable political challenges; it established a stable roster of full-time production staff, produced over one hundred films annually, and continued to build an international reputation for technical and artistic innovation.[305] While the more experimental and award-winning films from this era merit attention—films such as *Neighbours* (1952)*, The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1952), *Corral* (1954), *Blinkity Blank* (1955), *City of Gold* (1957), and *Universe* (1960)—these exceptional projects constitute a small fraction of the NFB's output and can obscure the primary focus of the NFB during this period, namely the production of an overwhelming number of non-theatrical documentaries. While many of these documentaries were functional and produced for targeted audiences, Druick points to them as an ideal site for examining how the Canadian government used film as a technology for promoting official policy, and for conceptualizing and managing the population.[306] Government realist films present "typical" everyday scenarios where citizens interface with the government or pursue initiatives in their communities, enacting an idealized model of liberal democratic society, and illustrating official government policy at work. Adding to the impact of voice-over narration, editing, and other filmic techniques, the original music

[305] National Film Board Archives (NFBA), *Annual Reports 1946-59*. These reports provide a detailed breakdown of annual film production, including the ratio of non-theatrical to theatrical productions, number of sponsored films versus original programming, average duration (i.e., number of reels), black and white versus color, etc. The rate of film production steadily increased over this period. By 1955, the NFB was producing over two hundred films per year. The report from 1949-50 is the first to include an awards and honours section, suggesting that NFB films were increasingly being recognized at various international film festivals.

[306] Druick, *Projecting Canada*, 24-28.

composed for these films plays a significant role in framing the narratives, and setting the emotional tenor.

The NFB encouraged the production of original film music in the postwar years, and with few exceptions, the music was written by Blackburn, Fleming, and Rathburn.[307] Despite their different musical interests and compositional practices, by the late 1940s, the composers had developed similar ways of navigating the constraints, aesthetic boundaries, and ideological strictures imposed by the institution. This gave rise to the idiosyncratic and pervasive "NFB Sound," an unofficial house style that characterizes the standard postwar documentaries, and became the signature sound of NFB films from this era.[308]

These conventions developed during a period when the NFB was under intense scrutiny, and its loyalty and usefulness to the government was called into question. The NFB was deeply entangled in the Second Red Scare that engulfed both Canada and the US.[309] This jeopardized its existence and gave rise to a more cautious and conservative approach to filmmaking motivated by a desire to restore the confidence of the government. It is within this context that the remarkably uniform and ubiquitous NFB sound developed, which reflects not only the more cautious approach taken during this period, but also the various tactics the composers used to navigate the institutional

[307] NFBA, *Annual Report 1950-51*, 5; Thompson Halliwell, "The NFB Stresses Original Scores," *The Canadian Composer* (January 1966): 18-22. Beginning in 1948, the NFB annual reports include a section on musical activities at the Board.

[308] NFBA, "Music Department and Presentation," 1 June 1983. The following description appears in an internal history of the music department: "If the budget was sufficient, the producing unit engaged a house composer who wrote, conducted and recorded the film's music, and catalogued the music in the NFB's Music Library. Thus there developed a descriptive style of documentary film music which was known as 'the NFB sound.'" See also, Léo Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," S*équences* 115 (janvier 1984): 8; Rathburn interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.

[309] Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); David Clark MacKenzie and Fabien Saint-Jacques, *Canada's Red Scare: 1945-1957* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2001); Barry Eidlin, "Repression and Rebirth: Red Scares and the New Left in the U.S. and Canada, 1946-1972," in *Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 191-220.

constraints with which they were confronted. Stylistically, I contend that the NFB sound can be best described as a combination of French neoclassicism and English pastoralism, two early twentieth century classical music idioms with which the staff composers were familiar, and aligned with Canada's officially recognized cultural heritage. In this chapter, I examine the political dimensions inherent in the aesthetics of neoclassicism and pastoralism, and the role the distinctive NFB sound plays in constructing the ideological messages embodied in these films.

## The Emerging Cold War

As the primary producer of Canada's wartime propaganda films, the NFB's mandate and role were abundantly clear during the war years; however, its relevance and loyalty to the government were called into question immediately afterwards when it became a target for anti-Communist hysteria, which the NFB's various opponents exploited.[310] In 1945, the cryptic message "Freda to the professor through Grierson" was found among the papers of Soviet defector Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, who provided evidence to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) of a Soviet spy network in Canada.[311] Suspected of being a communist and of promoting communist values within the NFB, Grierson was obliged to testify before the

[310] Following the war, the NFB was quick to emphasize that it was not a wartime creation, and claim that its mandate was even more relevant in peacetime. Among other documents, the NFB's annual reports stress this point. The annual report for the 1946-47 fiscal year—its first full year in peacetime—begins with the following statement on the Board's purpose: "The National Film Board was established early in 1939 as an agency to correlate all Canadian Government film activities. Its purpose was to provide films interpreting Canada on much broader terms than the travel and industrial productions which then made up the bulk of the Government program. The Film Board was not, therefore, a wartime creation. Its present work remains the work for which it was originally designed, but on a far broader scale."

[311] For a comprehensive study on the intersection of the NFB and state security during the Cold War, see Mark Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture and State Security in Canada, 1940-60* (Oxford University Press, 2003). Freda refers to Freda Linton who had been Grierson's secretary for a period, and the Professor is Raymond Boyer at the National Research Council. Linton had disappeared by this point, and never testified before the espionage commission.

commissioners of the Kellock-Taschereau Royal Commission on Espionage.[312] Grierson ultimately resigned, and the NFB—which had a questionable reputation within Ottawa's conservative civil service to begin with, and had been flagged as suspicious by US government officials[313]—came under harsh scrutiny from the government for allegedly harbouring communists, progressives, anarchists, and other so-called social "deviants."[314] For the next five years, the NFB was the focus of an intense anti-communist campaign, and it was subjected to extensive investigations and surveillance. To gather information, the RCMP screened hundreds of NFB employees, examined films for leftist content, infiltrated the Board's various social circles, and monitored employee activities outside of work. The Department of National Defence (DND) refused to engage the NFB's services, which benefitted private film companies—namely Crawley Films (Ottawa-Gatineau) and Associated Screen News (Montreal)—who were awarded film contracts that would otherwise have been handled by the NFB.[315] There was a notable double-standard whereby filmmakers working for private companies were only required to pass security clearance if they were directly involved with classified information, whereas the NFB was given a blanket identification as a "vulnerable agency" and all of its employees had to be screened before the institution could resume working with DND.[316] In addition to Grierson's resignation, many

[312] Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 235-39.
[313] Ibid., 233. The FBI opened a file on Grierson in 1942, and US diplomats in Canada kept a close watch on Grierson and the NFB. There were also tensions between the NFB's Washington office and the US Department of Defense over the distribution of certain military training films.
[314] The category of "social deviant" included homosexuals, and under Grierson the NFB tended to have a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. See for example Daniel J. Robinson and David Kimmel. "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold war Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1994): 319-45; Gary Kinsman, "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of The Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service." *Labour/Le Travailleur* 35 (1995): 133-62.
[315] Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom,* 64-65; Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 227-58; MacKenzie and Saint-Jacques, *Canada's Red Scare*, 12-15.
[316] Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada,* 250.

visiting foreign filmmakers (mostly British and American) also left, which added to the sense of fear and uncertainty within the institution. The Conservative opposition in Parliament was also quick to accuse the NFB of financial mismanagement and excessive spending.[317] Between the political and financial allegations, it was unclear whether the NFB would survive.

To regain the confidence of the government, the NFB was forced to reorganize its administrative structure and reduce personnel. Between 1945 and 1950, following Grierson's departure, the staff was reduced by roughly one third, and the agency's day to day operations became much more cautious and bureaucratic.[318] Since most employees were on three-month contracts (a norm that Grierson had established), for example, the administration could simply refuse to renew the contract of anyone flagged as suspicious rather than having to formally dismiss them, which facilitated rapid downsizing. Some employees left voluntarily, assuming they would eventually be terminated. Then-film commissioner Ross McLean (Grierson's successor) was considered a security risk due to his close relationship with Grierson, and his refusal to formally dismiss employees was flagged as suspicious by the RCMP.[319] Therefore, when McLean's contract ended in 1950, it was not renewed, and he was replaced by Arthur Irwin, a former editor of *Maclean's* magazine, and long-time acquaintance of both the External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson and the Minister of National Defence Brooke Claxton. Irwin was directed to "clean up" the NFB—i.e., to purge any remaining leftist sympathizers and activity—and promised an

[317] Ira Wagman, "The Woods Gordon Report, Accountability, and the Postwar Reconstruction of the National Film Board of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, No. 1 (Winter 2008): 83-104.
[318] Evans, *In the National Interest*, 6; NFBA, *Annual Reports, 1946-51*. In 1947, the NFB's staff had been reduced from 747 to 654 employees; by 1949, it was down to 577, and by 1951, to 533.
[319] Mark Kristmanson and Norman McLaren, "Love Your Neighbour: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the National Film Board, 1948-53," *Film History* 10, No. 3 (1998): 260. When Grierson became film commissioner, he selected McLean as deputy commissioner and they maintained a close working relationship throughout this period. McLean was well-connected in the Liberal Party and helped Grierson negotiate with the government. When Grierson resigned in 1945, McLean assumed Grierson's duties until he officially became the film commissioner from 1947-50.

ambassadorship once this had been accomplished.[320] While thirty-some NFB employees were labelled a security risk, only three were officially dismissed for their alleged association with what Irwin referred to as the "communist apparatus."[321] None of them had committed crimes or been involved in "subversive activities," and there was no appeal process.[322] Shortly after their departure, the NFB resumed its work with DND.

In 1950, the Board underwent a management review. The consulting firm Woods Gordon was tasked with providing recommendations for restructuring the NFB's administration, which provided another opportunity to let go of politically problematic employees under the guise of administrative necessity. The subtle and secretive purge of suspected leftists at the NFB exemplifies how the Red Scare was handled in Canada more broadly. As Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse contend, contrary to the widely publicized McCarthy trials in the US, the Canadian government attempted to retain the veneer of liberal moderation and fairness during the early Cold War by concealing how severe and far-reaching the purges actually were in Canada, and how determined the state was to eradicate as much leftist activity as possible without appearing too heavy-handed.[323] Norman McLaren was an exception. McLaren—who had been a member of the Communist party in the 1930s and was a gay man living in Ottawa with his partner, Guy Glover, who also worked at the NFB—was shielded from this process, and remained untouchable throughout his long career at the NFB ostensibly due to the prestige his artistic reputation brought

[320] Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom,* 81. After leaving the NFB, Irwin served as High Commissioner to Australia, and Ambassador to Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala before retiring in 1964.
[321] MacKenzie and Saint-Jacques, *Canada's Red Scare,* 15; Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom,* 81. The three employees were Allan Ackman, Nathan Clavier, and David A. Smith.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada,* 252-56. It bears noting that Canada was the only allied country where the Communist Party was declared illegal during the war under the Defense of Canada Regulations of the War Measures Act (1940), and the Canadian government readily vilified communists long before fascists.

to the institution.[324] It was in collaboration with McLaren that Blackburn was able to experiment with electro-acoustic music and aleatoric techniques at the NFB during this period, which otherwise may not have been possible.[325] It is impossible to determine with certainty how many NFB employees were dismissed for political reasons given that their significant downsizing could be attributed to factors such as administrative restructuring, financial necessity, voluntary resignation, and expired contracts. The scapegoating of three employees obfuscated the actual number of staff who had been targeted for political reasons and removed from the organization. The government thus gave itself plausible deniability concerning whether or not a purge had indeed ever happened at the NFB.

The restructuring of the NFB also coincided with the Massey Commission—a broad investigation of the state of arts and culture in Canada.[326] The Massey Report (1951) championed the NFB as a vital institution for promoting national culture, and suggested the government increase its policy and budgetary support. With a new film commissioner, a new National Film Act (1950), and endorsements from both the Massey Report and Woods Gordon, the NFB's relationship with the government was largely restored by the early 1950s. However, the atmosphere within the institution had changed significantly from the war years, and a more cautious attitude prevailed during the early years of the Cold War.

Given the heightened surveillance, rapid downsizing, and sense of uncertainty, most NFB filmmakers kept their heads down immediately following the war. NFB director Bernard Devlin claimed there was a climate of self-censorship during this period, and that "good people were

[324] Nichola Dobson, *Norman McLaren: Between the Frames* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Terrence Dobson, *The Film Work of Norman McLaren* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
[325] Solenn Héllégouarch, *Musique, Cinéma, Processus Créateur : Norman McLaren et Maurice Blackburn* (Paris: Vrin, 2020).
[326] Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Ottawa, 1951).

refused posts, and there was an influx of mediocre 'reliables.'"[327] Pointing to the bland quality of so many postwar NFB documentaries, Mark Kristmanson remarks, "the internalization of censorship through the 'red scare' made the Film Board a *less* effective propaganda agency for a time because its filmmakers became too self-conscious."[328] Filmmakers tended to take a routine approach to production, avoiding controversial subjects and aiming to produce reliable, quality films that responded to the needs of government.[329] This extended to the staff composers, who developed a rather conservative, yet remarkably distinct house style. Approximately three-quarters of the NFB's annual output in the immediate postwar years was produced for non-theatrical audiences.[330] The Board had expanded its non-theatrical circuits during the war, organizing film screenings in factories, trade union halls, church basements, and rural areas in addition to its educational outreach in schools and through adult education programs. Many of these films were therefore made for targeted audiences, and never aspired to commercial success or longevity.

## Postwar Government Realism

In describing the average postwar NFB documentary, Peter Morris writes, "consensus was the trademark: opposition tended to be viewed as radicalism and radicalism as one domestic manifestation of the communist conspiracy."[331] This resonates with Druick's assessment of the NFB's idiosyncratic style, and the way these documentaries illustrate the Canadian government's middle-way politics, and modest, incremental approach to social reform.[332] Morris summarizes the basic ideology succinctly:

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[327] LAC, Bernard Devlin, interviewed by Kirwan Cox, n.d. (ca. 1975).
[328] Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom,* 84.
[329] D. B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda* (Canadian Film Institute, 1981), 61.
[330] NFBA, *Annual Reports 1946-51*.
[331] Morris, "After Grierson," 4.
[332] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 27.

> Social change is possible and desirable but should be gradual. Everyone has a place in Canadian society and everyone should be in his/her place. Canada is a well-managed society and problems arise only when people do not trust the managers to manipulate the levers of the system on their behalf.[333]

Any potentially radical elements of documentary filmmaking are thus channeled into a more modest liberal citizenship-building project.

Like many other mid-twentieth century liberal democratic governments, the Canadian government adopted an array of social scientific techniques for conceptualizing and managing populations, such as the census, opinion polls, and other statistical and data-driven studies, which produced social categories, norms, and generalized knowledge about various subgroups of the population.[334] The NFB was enlisted to illustrate this type of information, and to promote the government's policy initiatives. Therefore, common topics during the postwar period were labour-management cooperation, mental health and social hygiene (fitness, nutrition, housing, etc.), national security (a primary concern in the Cold War context), natural resource development, and education (many films depict citizens in institutional educational settings).[335]

NFB documentaries from this era typically illustrate a preconceived narrative (e.g., the need to provide structured recreational opportunities for youth in Canadian communities, for example),[336] which may originate from within the government (in this case, the Department of Health and Welfare) or the mandate-driven NFB, with the ultimately goal of reflecting and reinforcing the government's policy objectives. The ideas are worked out beforehand, and material is then collected to illustrate community solutions in partnership with various branches of

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[333] Morris, "After Grierson," 9.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 26.
[336] This is the premise for *When all the People Play* (1948, sponsored by the Physical Fitness Division of the Department of National Health and Welfare), which illustrates the efforts of community members in Annapolis Royal to establish a recreation center that offers organized sports and library services for young people.

government. The characters and narratives onscreen are portrayed as "typical" of the groups they represent; the specificity of the characters is thus flattened, and they appear quasi-anonymous.[337] As Druick writes,

> In government realist style, by and large, typical individuals representing a range of population subcategories from different regions and cultures are depicted as members of class and occupation identities. At times they even provide feedback or criticism of government programs deemed representative of "typical" of their group.[338]

In doing so, these films reinforce the status quo both visually and aurally. They also inevitably create stereotypes and caricatures that disproportionately target marginalized groups. Many of the racist musical tropes heard in wartime films continued into this period. A typical example is *Peoples of the Skeena* (1949, music by Fleming), which opens with a simple modal theme played by an English horn accompanied by a primitivist-sounding ostinato in the lower strings and tympanies. Similarly, in *Family Tree* (1950, music by Rathburn)—an animated short about colonial settlement in Canada—the brief mention of Indigenous peoples in the opening sequence is underscored by a solo flute playing a simple modal melody with sparse tympani outlining open fourth and fifth intervals.[339]

The NFB's government realist films could also be understood as illustrating the ideology of "peace, order and good government" (POGG), a phrase that has had continuing resonance in Canadian public discourse and governance since it first appeared in the preamble to section 91 of the 1867 British North America Act (BNA).[340] Its origins are derived from the conservative principles underpinning English constitutional law and British imperialism, especially the

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[337] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 26; Peter Morris, "After Grierson: The National Film Board 1945-53," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16, no.1 (Spring 1981): 8.
[338] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 23.
[339] Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[340] Hakeem O. Yusuf, *Colonial and Postcolonial Constitutionalism in the Commonwealth: Peace, Order and Good Government* (London: Routledge, 2013).

emphasis on a colonial conception of order.[341] In Canada, the values of moderation, caution, and benevolence outlined in POGG have been championed by political and cultural authorities, and promoted as defining features of Canadian identity. These core values are often used to distinguish a Canadian approach to governance, particularly in comparison with the US. As such, POGG underpins nationalist mythologies of the Canadian state and its institutions as benevolent, just, and peaceful.[342] In the following analysis of the postwar NFB sound, I suggest that the conservative ideology of government realist films—largely an expression of POGG—is realized to a significant extent through the combination of neoclassical and pastoral musical styles, both of which carried conservative connotations in the postwar era. While pastoralism had never been an avant-garde aesthetic, neoclassicism had modernist connotations during the interwar years, particularly music by the Parisian composer collective Les Six, which had an irreverence and lightness that captured the cultural dynamism of the 1920s. However, by the end of the Second World War, neoclassicism had been wholly integrated into the academy and any novel connotations previously associated with it were gone.

The NFB's postwar documentaries are in many ways a continuation of the Griersonian tradition in that social analyses remain superficial, controversial topics are avoided, the perspective is middle-class, and the politics are generally liberal reformist in nature.[343] As with Grierson's film units in England, NFB filmmakers were mostly middle-class intellectuals, and government realist films typically revolve around middle-class professionals and/or lower middle-class workers: teachers, small business owners, industrial workers, farmers, fishermen, soldiers, administrators,

[341] Adam Chapnick, "Peace, Order, and Good Government: The 'Conservative' Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 60, no. 3 (2005): 637-38. The notion of POGG is paradoxical in that it was intended to both further British imperialism—indeed, it was used to uphold apartheid in South Africa—yet also to grant powers of self-governance to various British colonies.
[342] Yusuf, *Colonial and Postcolonial Constitutionalism in the Commonwealth,* 37-38.
[343] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 37; Nelson, *The Colonized Eye*.

scientists, nurses, and the like.[344] The depiction of workers in postwar NFB films tends to be detached and aestheticized, avoiding any substantial inquiry into hazardous working environments, discrimination, harassment, wage theft, or other alienating conditions.

Government realist films rarely present systemic and structural forms of dispossession and disenfranchisement, or grapple with the complexities of socio-economic issues. When the chronically homeless, unemployed, racialized, disabled, incarcerated, and otherwise marginalized citizens appear onscreen, they are typically cast in narratives of overcoming that promote the bourgeois values of personal responsibility, self-improvement, future investment, and hard work. When they succeed, their success is often connected to support from various government programs; however, the discriminatory policies that produce and sustain these conditions are never interrogated. For example, in *No Longer Vanishing* (1955), poverty on Indigenous reserves is ultimately attributed to the personal shortcomings of Indigenous peoples.[345] According to the film, despite the ostensibly benevolent help of well-intentioned settler governments that admirably set up reserves "to shelter the Indians while he learned the white man's ways," the narrator vaguely explains that "something happened to the Indians, they came to feel at home only on the reserve, where many of them lost initiative and independence." Therefore, the narrator concludes that "good intentions aren't always enough," regarding the reserve system. The history of colonial violence, land dispossession, residential schools, permit systems, and other legacies of the Indian Act do not figure into these discussions, and the paternalism of the state is presented as benign and necessary under the present circumstances. Like so many government realist films, the problems

[344] Morris, "After Grierson," 9.
[345] Karen Froman, "The White Man's Camera: The National Film Board of Canada and Representations of Indigenous Peoples in Post-War Canada" (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2021), 57-83. Froman devotes a chapter to *No Longer Vanishing,* and provides a detailed critique of the film from an Indigenous perspective.

presented onscreen are necessarily ill-defined and decontextualized so as not to negatively implicate the government or settler society.

*No Longer Vanishing,* produced for the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, illustrates the postwar government's policies of integration (i.e., assimilation), and showcases Indigenous people who have left the reserves to pursue professional careers as doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, and scientists. They are upheld as exemplary models of integration for Indigenous communities, demonstrating the alleged benefits of Indian Affairs programs to both Indigenous and settler audiences. In dialogue with others, and as narrators of their own experience, the Indigenous professionals in the film emphasize that education is the key to solving problems on the reserves, thus proposing a bureaucratic solution—namely more government-regulated education and professionalization programs—to complex political and economic problems. It is also insinuated several times throughout the film that more education, and the integration of Indigenous children into public schools will be the ultimate solution to racism in Canada. Amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 allowed for Indigenous children to be integrated into the public school system, and the residential school were to be closed.[346] This shift in policy is clearly reflected in the film. The narrator concludes that the Indigenous population will grow and thrive, yet only insofar as they are willing to assimilate into white settler society, as the successful professionals profiled in the film have done.

Fleming's original underscoring is largely written in a pastoral style with neoclassical elements, and he avoids primitivist musical tropes. While the film opens with a romantic Hollywood-style theme, the music quickly transitions to a pastoral style that underscores shots of an open prairie and Indigenous people approaching on horseback who eventually arrive at an

[346] John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 189-211.

encampment of tipis. At the encampment, Indigenous people are shown wrapped in colourful blankets sitting around a fire sharing a pipe, which continues to reinforce Indigenous culture as pre-modern and unsophisticated. Despite these ongoing stereotypes, the classical music already suggests that Indigenous peoples are now part of the target audience, and are shown to be capable of succeeding in an industrial capitalist society if they adopt Western liberal values. This is a marked shift from earlier films where Indigenous people are portrayed as either unwilling or unable to adapt to settler society, and their seemingly pre-modern existence is signalled by vulgar primitivist musical tropes. Indeed, Indigenous peoples' unique capabilities, intelligence, and industriousness are conspicuously overstated in *No Longer Vanishing*, evoking racist notions of the "noble savage" and suggesting they are uniquely suited to manual labour. The narrator (John Drainie) explains the following about Indigenous workers in the logging industry:

> Because they are good at most outdoor jobs calling for physical endurance and better than average reflexes, Indians are among the top workers in the land of the big trees. Here, where stiff tests of survival can be met only by courage and skill, the Indian can compete with other loggers on equal terms.

Throughout the film, Indigenous workers are shown in the agriculture, fishing, and forestry industries. These outdoor scenes are underscored by pastoral music, and folk-like melodies. The neoclassical music that accompanies a schoolyard scene is lifted directly from an earlier film scored by Fleming, *Canada's Awakening North* (1951), where it is similarly used to underscore a classroom scene at a northern residential school.

The overarching message is that any failure to thrive is due to lack of individual motivation and unwillingness to assimilate, relieving both the government and settler society of any responsibility or wrongdoing, both past and present. The narrator concludes triumphantly that "the future is already shaping up towards a time when Canadians of Indian birth will stand with their fellow Canadians on terms of equal opportunity. Old prejudices are disappearing wherever the

sons and daughters of old Canadians, new Canadians, and original Canadians are able to study together, and with these new attitudes…all of Canada will gain from the heritage of a people who are no longer vanishing." The unhurried pastoral music gradually builds in intensity to a heroic major chord with tympani rolls and harp glissandos, sonically confirming the triumphant achievement proposed in the commentary. According to the film, settler-Indigenous relations have been largely reconciled, structural racism is no longer an issue, and the government's educational and professionalization programs are effective in providing equal opportunities to all Canadians. Holding the government to account and examining who its policies serve is not part of the government realist agenda.

Canada's upper classes are largely absent from the NFB's government realist films, which is indicative of their relative inaccessibility, and helps shield them from scrutiny. When industrialists, bankers, prime ministers, royalty, and celebrities make appearances, they are presented only briefly, and as spectacular and praiseworthy pillars of society. For example, in *Montreal by Night* (1947)—a film that showcases the city and stresses the ostensibly harmonious relationships between French and English Montrealers—the brief appearance of mayor Camillien Houde stepping out of a limousine at an official event (underscored by ceremonial music written by Applebaum), and a group of industrial moguls gathered at an exclusive upscale club are framed as exhilarating glimpses into the lives of the affluent and powerful. Films dedicated to British royalty (e.g., *Royal Journey* [1951] and *The Sceptre and the Mace* [1957]) were prestige projects that were allocated significantly higher budgets, and were therefore handled differently from the average documentary. Applebaum—who by this time had relocated to the US and scored many Hollywood films—was invited back to the NFB to compose music for *Royal Journey*, and wrote original fanfares, marches, and other ceremonial music that was synched to footage of Princess

Elizabeth and Prince Philip's 1951 visit to Canada only a few months prior to the death of King George VI and her ascension to the throne. While similar music could have been easily located in the NFB's stock library, original scoring was a marker of prestige, and it signalled reverence for the subject matter. At nearly an hour long, the film was the longest NFB production to date, and Applebaum enlisted Canadian composers Howard Cable and Morris Surdin to help with the score.[347] It was not only the NFB's first film shot on the new Eastman colour film stock (Eastmancolor), it was *the* first commercial film released using this technology. The high production value was also an attempt to renew the government's confidence in the institution by showcasing the NFB's expertise and indispensable role in filming national events.

The NFB's postwar documentaries typically focus on scenarios featuring "ordinary Canadians" with whom audiences were supposed to identify and use as models for their own lives.[348] The characters are conspicuously rational, self-regulated, law-abiding citizens who resolve their differences peacefully, and the outcomes are unfailingly positive, leading to more harmonious social relations, improved working conditions, better health, and a greater sense of belonging to a broader national community. The narratives emphasize typical middle-class values of self-discipline, civility, social harmony, and respect for institutions and the law.

A striking feature of these films is the surprisingly uniform musical aesthetic notwithstanding the wide range of topics addressed, and despite being scored by different composers. According to Blackburn, this aesthetic developed "through a sort of osmosis."[349] Scoring government films poses unique challenges, and the staff composers seemingly gravitated towards a similar aesthetic approach because it was an efficient way to navigate the financial,

[347] Pitman, *Louis Applebaum,* 81.
[348] Morris, "After Grierson," 8.
[349] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 8.

procedural, and political constraints within which they worked. The composers adapted their classical training to film scoring largely through trial and error, and by learning from each other, using styles and techniques with which they were familiar. The three primary hallmarks of the NFB sound are the use of smaller ensembles, the predominance of the woodwind instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon), and the influence of French neoclassicism and English pastoralism. As I explain below, for a variety of reasons these musical styles would have been considered appropriate for government realist films in the mid-twentieth century Canadian context, and the politics inherent in the neoclassicism and pastoralism are consistent with the ideological messages these films were intended to convey.

## Music Production in the Early Postwar Years

NFB production staff were working under considerable financial constraints, and among other things, this limited the size of the musical ensembles and instrumentation that were possible. As Blackburn recalls, "the first thing they told us was to work quickly and cheaply."[350] NFB budgets were modest compared to those that were normative in the commercial film industry. A typical budget for a postwar NFB documentary was between five and fifteen thousand dollars, only a small fraction of which was allocated to music. Since the composer was usually brought in during the final stages of production—once the images, commentary, and sound effects were more or less in place—unforeseen production costs and overages may have reduced the music budgets even further.[351] Therefore, Blackburn emphasized the need to approach financial restrictions as a creative challenge: "With eight hundred dollars, for example, I could hire five musicians for three

[350] Ibid. Translation by the author. « La première chose qu'on nous disait : vite et pas cher. »
[351] Bibliothèque et archives nationale du Québec (BanQ), Collection d'archives Maurice Blackburn et Marthe Morisset, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.

hours. That's it. It's better to become interested in the possibilities" (i.e., in what can be done within the constraints of such limited budgets).[352] The then-standard formula for calculating the cost of an original score was to allocate one seven-hour working day for every minute of orchestrated music produced.[353] Throughout the 1950s, the average cost per day for NFB film scoring was calculated at thirty-five dollars, and this gradually increased to over forty dollars a day by the early 1960s. The cost of hiring an outside composer was significantly higher, typically around fifty dollars per minute of scoring, compared to thirty-five for a staff composer, which encouraged in-house music production.

There were also stringent time constraints placed on the composers who were typically expected to produce a score for a standard ten-minute film in approximately two weeks (between ten and twelve working days), and these timelines became normative. The wartime context notwithstanding—when everyone was under significant pressure to work quickly—these strict time constraints were generally not placed on directors and producers in the postwar context. To this point, NFB producer and animator Robert Verrall recalls Rathburn expressing his exasperation with the unevenness of the production process: "This is always happening. You guys work on a film for years and then you want us to do the music in a few weeks!"[354]

The music editors had similar complaints, and were frustrated by the speed at which they were expected to locate and assemble compilation soundtracks from library materials. Furthermore, they were expected to correctly interpret musical suggestions from the directors and

[352] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 8.
[353] These figures are captured in the standard budget sheets for each film, which can be found in the production files in the NFB archives. This formula—which remained stable for decades—was primarily used for internal purposes to calculate the cost of an original score and provide a timeline for its completion. The staff composers were salaried, and their income was not based on the number of films scored per year.
[354] Robert Verrall, interview with the author, 27 July 2020.

producers, whose instructions could be vague, and who were not necessarily familiar with the library holdings, or aware of the complexities of their requests. Don Douglas humorously summarizes this situation from his perspective as a music editor, providing valuable insight into the production process:

> As a general rule, when a producer requests a stock score on a film, he not only requests, but dictates just what will make up the score. Generally, the requirement ends up sounding something like this: "I think for the opening and closing sequences we need a big, dynamic piece of music along the lines of that Beethoven thing. You know, the da-da-da-daaaa, 'V for Victory' piece. And for the light comedy sequence in the middle, maybe something like 'Peter and the Wolf,' and possibly something Ravelish or Debussyee for the pastorale sequence. There are only the four sections of music required, so I've booked the Final Mix for one week tomorrow. O.K.?
>
> Now we start the editing process. Review the film and find that each musical sequence is 675 feet in length, so we have one half-hour of music to find and cut in one week's time. The descriptions offered by the producer suggest a large orchestra throughout, and flawless composition. So, off to the library in search of the Holy Wail; and we find that a) the only music that comes close to the descriptions has been washed out for reasons of quality. b) the closest alternative has been used to death over the past fifteen years. c) we find a score that will provide the necessary length, unfortunately it was recorded with a five-piece jazz combo featuring Latin rhythms. This certainly will not suffice for a film dealing with sheep grazing on the Plains of Abraham. Particularly the bombing sequence.[355]

Unrealistic expectations and flippant attitudes towards music were a consistent source of frustration for the music personnel. Blackburn noted that "directors were kind of scared of music—they didn't know what to do with it, and often didn't know what they wanted."[356]

The composers continued to be involved in almost every stage of music production, from the recording session to the final mix. In a letter to his mother, Fleming describes his work at the NFB in 1947 as follows:

> You couldn't possibly imagine the pains that have to be taken to produce even a short film. The composer has to keep such a watchful eye on every last detail of his score. First of all, there is the intricate preparation of all the timings. Then comes the long labour of putting these timings into logical musical shape. Then come the gruelling recording hours when not only the orchestral balance has to be watched, but he has to listen to the recordings that

[355] NFBA, Douglas to Barnhill, "Memorandum: Stock Music Situation," 27 December 1964.
[356] BanQ, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.

> he made at the same time as the sound track and give the recording engineer detailed directions as to how to mix the music with his long row of dials and knobs, and put in a word here and there as to microphone placement and the like. Once the recording has been made then comes the final cutting, where the music has to be made to fit the film to the split second. This entails cutting out pieces of track, splicing extra sections in, and all the time keeping a close ear to continuous harmonical logic. Once this is done, then come the "Interlock" sessions, when music and film are screened together for the first time. These sessions lead to more detailed editing, and then at last comes the rerecording, where all the tracks are mixed together. This is the most gruelling session of all, as no mistakes can be made, and the composer has to be very alert to ensure a faithful reproduction of the music, with due consideration given to voice, and added sound effects. Friday will see the end of my work on these two scores, then no doubt there'll be something else to start in on.[357]

After working for several days straight to meet a deadline, which was not uncommon, Fleming collapsed from exhaustion and was forced to take time off in the early 1950s, only a few years after joining the Board.[358]

That no music specialists were brought in despite the fact that numerous international experts were invited to train other recruits on staff also suggests that music was considered less important—or at least less concerning—than other aspects of production. Blackburn felt that music was often treated as either an afterthought or as a form of damage control ("pour sauver les meubles")—as something either superfluous or extraordinary.[359] Similarly, Rathburn felt that directors erroneously looked to him to salvage a film that was not working, something he generally felt he could not do:

> If there are too many edits and changes going on, there is something wrong with the film, and the music isn't going to help it … I often feel that films get what they deserve. If a film was good, then as a composer you work up to that level. With bad films, you realize it's hopeless. You should almost write bad music for a bad film![360]

[357] Robert Fleming to Gina Fleming, 10 February 1947. The author wishes to thank Berkeley Fleming for permission to use this excerpt from a personal family letter.
[358] Berkeley Fleming, personal communication, 31 March 2022.
[359] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 7.
[360] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, ca. 1993.

Fleming was more inclined to try and rescue a problematic film. He insisted that among other responsibilities, the film composer "must be prepared to support weaknesses in the visual structure."[361]

Although NFB directors may have often wanted and requested a large Hollywood-style orchestra for their films, it remained financially unfeasible for the NFB to hire large orchestras, and it was equally cost-prohibitive to use commercial recordings of orchestral works in their films. Between 1945 and 1955, most original scores were written for ensembles of sixteen musicians or less, and by 1960 most scores were written for ensembles of ten musicians or less.[362] The NFB discouraged the use of commercial recordings because the process of obtaining copyright permissions was usually drawn-out and costly.[363] "At one time we even tried to keep them [commercial recordings] out of the building," NFB music editor Norm Bigras writes, "but to no avail."[364] Furthermore, as per their agreement with the musicians' union, if the NFB used a commercial recording, they were required to pay the union the equivalent of the number of musicians on the recording.[365] According to Blackburn, directors repeatedly disregarded this problem and attempted to use commercial recordings in various ways, which created ongoing problems for the music department.[366] Blackburn recalls a case where a piece by Vivaldi was recorded in-house to satisfy the union, and the director proceeded to use the commercial recording anyways, hoping the switch would go unnoticed.[367] As music director, Fleming issued yet another

[361] Robert Fleming, "Music for Films," *J. M. C. Musical Chronicle* 7 (January 1961): 3.
[362] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63." These figures are based on an analysis of this spreadsheet, which contains information on 448 recording sessions, including the number of musicians contracted for each session. For comparison, a typical symphony orchestra will have between eighty and one hundred musicians.
[363] NFBA, Robert Fleming, "Memorandum: Use of Commercial Discs," 18 May 1961.
[364] NFBA, Norman Bigras, "Memorandum: The Use of Commercial Records," 25 July 1973.
[365] BanQ, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.

memorandum in 1961 to all production staff concerning the issues with commercial recordings, commenting to his music colleagues that "the memorandum does not state that 'no commercial disc may be used,' but I hope it paints a dark enough picture to discourage what seems to be a growing tendency to try to use such discs."[368]

In this memorandum, Fleming may have been responding directly to difficulties with the soundtrack for *Vote for Michalski* (1961), which had been compiled by the director from commercial music recordings for which the rights had not been cleared. Rathburn was called in to fix the issue by writing original music that approximated the existing soundtrack. This was a rare occurrence—NFB filmmakers generally did not use temporary ("temp") tracks—and, Rathburn grumbled, "to make matters worse, the film is cut closely to the existing music," which he felt put him "in a kind of straight jacket."[369] Given the costs and complexities of using commercial recordings, the use and re-use of original NFB scores remained the most financially viable option throughout the postwar years.

All of the Board's staff composers were trained in Western classical idioms, and this was generally the style of music that they were expected to produce for the NFB. Limited budgets and short timelines required the availability of studio musicians who were classically-trained with a high level of technical proficiency and the ability to sight read quickly and accurately.[370] The NFB's exclusive agreement with the musicians' union remained in place throughout the postwar years, and the NFB composers continued to hire members of local symphony orchestras whenever possible. As per union regulations, a typical film score recording session was three hours, and scores were expected to be recorded within one or two sessions. "Most sessions were one read

[368] NFBA, Robert Fleming, "Memorandum: Use of Commercial Discs," 18 May 1961.
[369] New Brunswick Provincial Archives (NBPA), Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Notes on Film Scores: Vote for Michalski," undated.
[370] Halliwell, "The NFB Stresses Original Scores."

[rehearsal], one record," according to NFB sound engineer Louis Hone, "there may be a couple of takes if something goes wrong, but it could be polished off in two takes."[371] The necessity of hiring classically trained musicians was reiterated within the music department on several occasions. A memo from the music department in 1959 discusses the need to secure contracts with members of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, who were already heavily committed to CBC radio and television:

> Of particular importance is the matter of availability of orchestral players in Montreal, most of whom are heavily committed to C. B. C. radio and TV as well as to the Montreal Symphony. They are available to us only on certain days because of this […] With a more or less firm guarantee of 2 or 3 recordings a week for the NFB, it is quite conceivable that the local musicians would readjust their personal commitments in our favour. It is essential, however, that we hire only the best players, as 2nd and 3rd class performers simply cannot produce the standard or work required at film music recordings.[372]

Among other challenges the composers faced was a lack of investment from symphony orchestra musicians who often treated film music as second-rate work. "Dealing with the orchestra is important, and some musicians don't like film music," Rathburn commented, adding that he found percussionists and jazz musicians to be the most cooperative and adventuresome, and string players less so.[373]

Given the limited resources of the NFB, the staff composers were expected to develop multiple skill sets beyond their compositional work, including conducting their own scores, hiring musicians, and managing the recording sessions. While the staff composers all had some formal training in conducting, film music sessions were considerably different than the concert hall. As Rathburn remarks, "there is so much on your mind—despite having a click, you're very concerned about timing, your attention to the performance is not always great, and there is also a certain

[371] Louis Hone, interview with the author, April 23, 2015; Louise Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."
[372] NFBA, "Music Department Analysis of Music," 9 December 1959.
[373] Rathburn interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.

uneasiness about whether the musicians are liking the music."[374] He notes how difficult it could be to earn the respect of orchestra players, given that many of them seemed to lack interest in the music, and considered film work mundane. "We had problems with discipline in the orchestra, with people making noise and wisecracks," Rathburn commented in an interview with Hone.[375] In response, Rathburn tried to establish a professional environment by meticulously checking individual parts ("it's demoralizing when orchestra musicians question the notes because of a misprint"), taking firm control over the recording session, and demanding high quality performances from the players.[376] NFB filmmaker Don McWilliams, who frequently collaborated with Rathburn, remarks that while Rathburn was adept at creating a friendly atmosphere with the musicians, he would not tolerate misconduct: "He could suddenly come out with some quite acid comment about somebody, or somebody's work and you realized that underneath this congenial exterior, he was quite tough. You have to realize that it is not easy getting the respect of musicians."[377] Although Rathburn himself cautioned against any displays of anger during these sessions, he recalls sternly telling a loquacious violinist, "Sir, we've already recorded the commentary for the film."[378]

While the NFB's staff composers had similar backgrounds and training, they had different areas of expertise and interest, which the directors took into account when engaging them for a project. For example, only Rathburn wrote in jazz and popular idioms (which was rare in NFB films prior to 1960); Fleming did not experiment with electronic music, whereas Blackburn experimented extensively with *musique concrète* and electronic sounds; and Fleming more than

[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Don McWilliams, interview with the author, 14 April 2015.
[378] Rathburn interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.

anyone else was renowned for his pastoral music. Rathburn was interested in serialism and the music of the Second Viennese School, whereas Fleming had no interest whatsoever in this branch of musical modernism. On occasion, directors hired freelancers from outside the NFB. "If a film really demanded something outside of the staff's expertise, they would be allowed to find somebody," animator Robert Verrall recalls.[379]

Canadian composers outside the NFB were often hired to write pieces of stock music. John Beckwith recalls that Applebaum would often call towards the end of the NFB's budget year and commission a few pieces if there were funds leftover.[380] For example, more than a dozen Canadian composers contributed concert band pieces to a stock music session for the NFB in March 1954, including Harry Freedman, Morris Surdin, Harry Somers, Howard Cable, Phil Nimmons, Charles Camilleri, Kenneth Campbell, Ben McPeek, William McCauley, John Weinzweig, and Neil Chotem, in addition to contributions from Applebaum, Fleming, Rathburn, and Norman Bigras, one of the NFB's music editors.[381] Applebaum conducted this session, and likely provided direction to the composers regarding the style of music appropriate for the NFB. In a note to Applebaum regarding a subsequent stock music session, Kenneth Campbell writes, "although they seem to suggest at the Board a need for lots of this 'pastorale' or 'scenery' (what have you) composition, I have some of the happy, crisp type of things included, as you mentioned."[382] Campbell readily identifies pastoralism as a style that was useful to the NFB, and the latter description is indicative of the upbeat, bright, neoclassical style that was common during this period.

[379] Robert Verrall, interview with the author, 27 July 2020.
[380] John Beckwith, personal communication, 24 June 2020.
[381] CTA, Louis Applebaum fonds, "Stock Music Session," 25 March 1954.
[382] CTA, Louis Applebaum fonds, "Stock Music Session," 22 February 1965.

## The Predominance of Woodwind Instruments

The unusual technique of doubling the woodwinds with the strings—the flute with the violins and bassoon with the bass line, for example—to increase the apparent size and strength of the string sections (described in the previous chapter), is partly responsible for the idiosyncratic woodwind-heavy sound that was unique to the NFB. While the size of the typical ensemble continued to decrease during the postwar period, the predominance of the woodwinds remained.[383] By 1965, the woodwinds had become so dominant that in a memorandum regarding the type of stock music required to replenish the NFB's music library, Bigras explicitly asked the composers to "stay away from high flute or piccolo and also the opposite (i.e., bassoony etc.)."[384]

The woodwinds have particular cultural connotations in the Western classical tradition, associations that the staff composers frequently relied on to create certain moods, convey emotional states, and animate the personalities of the characters onscreen. According to Western musical conventions, woodwind instruments connote a kind of liveliness due to their attachment to the breath, and they suggest light activity and busyness, which complements the often mundane activities depicted in these films. The woodwinds also connote speech, singing, and the voice, including animal calls, and they are often used to represent the personalities of sentient beings.[385] For example, the use of woodwinds to represent birdsong is archetypal in Western classical music. In Beethoven's *Pastorale Symphony,* the nightingale, quail, and cuckoo are represented or imitated by the flute, oboe, and clarinet. In the twentieth-century repertoire, French composer Olivier Messaiaen (1908-92) is particularly renowned for his music incorporating birdsongs, which are

[383] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63."; NFBA, Norman Bigras, "Memorandum: Stock Music, Problem of Character," 6 January, 1965.
[384] NFBA, Norman Bigras, "Memorandum: Stock Music, Problem of Character," 6 January, 1965.
[385] Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006).

typically represented by the flute, oboe, or clarinet (in Messaiaen's *l'Abîme d'oiseaux, le Merle noir, Réveil des oiseaux,* for example, among other works).[386] Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936) is a canonical example of the representation of animals by wind instruments: the bird is represented by the flute, the duck by the oboe, the cat by the clarinet, and the wolf by a trio of French horns. Prokofiev uses the bassoon, a lower register instrument, to represent the grandfather in the narrative. In each case, the timbre of the instruments is ostensibly analogous to that of the voice. In the *Unanswered Question* (1908), by American composer Charles Ives, the trumpet poses an existential question, to which the woodwind quartet within the orchestra—representing the "fighting answerers"—responds, against a constant background of strings sustaining low-register triads that are meant to represent a primordial Druidic landscape.[387] The tenth variation of Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations* (1899), "Dorabella," is dedicated to Elgar's friend Dora Penny, and he uses the woodwinds to imitate her stutter. Woodwinds are often described as being "colouristic" and having "character" due to these longstanding cultural musical codes. They are a direct way of communicating certain ideas and images associated with humans and other living and breathing beings.

The NFB staff composers therefore often used the winds to parody human voices and to insinuate the personalities of characters onscreen. In a barber shop scene in *Home Town Paper* (1948), Rathburn represents an everyday discussion between the barber and his clients entirely through the use of the woodwinds, without any voice-over narration. The oboe and clarinet

[386] See, for example, Elisa Moles, "Flute as Bird: Birdsong and Metaphor in the Selected Works of Charles Rochester Young, Olivier Messaiaen and Stefans Grové," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne, 2017). In the twentieth-century repertoire, French composer Olivier Messaiaen (1908-92) is particularly renowned for incorporating birdsongs in his music, which are typically represented by the flute, oboe, or clarinet (in Messaiaen's *L'abîme d'oiseaux, Le Merle noir, Réveil des oiseaux,* for example, among other works).

[387] Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (W. W. Norton and Company, 1996). The "fighting answerers" is the term Ives used to describe the woodwind quartet within the orchestra.

represent two of the customers, and the barber's voice is played by the bassoon—each ostensibly offering a different opinion on the newspaper story in question. The instruments play solo lines to establish the connection to their respective characters and then they overlap and play in counterpoint with one another to imitate an animated discussion. The inability of the instruments to match the voices is part of the humour, which effectively establishes the light character of the scene. The winds are also used in a similar way in *V for Volunteers* (1951), a film that describes the role of the Central Volunteer Bureau in placing volunteers in the community. In a scene where the Bureau's placement supervisor is in dialogue with a disgruntled volunteer, Fleming represents the volunteer's complaints with a shrill oboe. The oboe's harsh, repetitive, strident, and forceful melody line is accompanied by a woodwind trio and strings playing pizzicato.[388] Following this sequence, the narrator explains that this particular volunteer, dressed in a fur coat and conspicuously expensive clothing, is difficult to please because she feels entitled to more profuse expressions of gratitude for her volunteer work. The intended message for prospective volunteers is clear: volunteering should be motivated by a desire to help others, not the pursuit of praise and recognition. The shrill sound of the oboe and its harsh melody is a caricature of the demanding and unreasonable volunteer, who is sonically marked as irritating and undesirable. Although the volunteer is an unsympathetic character, it is implicit that the Central Volunteer Bureau is fair and competent in its operations, in keeping with the core themes and principles underlying government realist filmmaking.

The NFB's staff composers became particularly attuned to the acoustic and connotative characteristics of the instruments in relation to other elements in the sound track—particularly the voice-over commentary—and to the subject matter of the film. In many cases, the woodwinds were

[388] *Pizzicato* is marking for string instruments, indicating that notes are to be plucked, not bowed.

a practical choice. Since the intelligibility of the commentary took priority—and postwar documentaries tend to be commentary-heavy—the composers needed to be mindful of the ways in which their music was interwoven with the narration. It was a perennial challenge for the staff composers to write music that did not interfere with or detract from the voice. A technique they often adopted was to write pointillistic and contrapuntal textures underneath the commentary, which seemed to keep the music sufficiently separated from the voice yet still audible and effective in setting the tone. For Blackburn, a contrapuntal texture was key because solo instruments could easily compete with the voice: "fugal writing works because it sits underneath [the commentary], and this kind of counterpoint can be less distracting than harmony."[389] The woodwinds are idiomatically suited to contrapuntal textures since they are able to produce short, dry sounds without much sustain. With a similar idea in mind, the strings often play *pizzicato* in these sequences, in keeping with the overall texture, or remain tacet (silent). Even a solo piano was problematic, Blackburn explains, "because it is an instrument that is very much like one person talking…all instruments are hard to work with solo because they can easily interfere [with the speaking voice]." Therefore, contrapuntal writing for a small wind ensemble was ideal. Fleming's score for *Grain Handling in Canada* (1953) is a good example of this use of the woodwinds in counterpoint. While the film is scored for small orchestra, there are several extended passages where the woodwinds are given sectional solos and play articulated contrapuntal lines at a medium tempo underneath the commentary. This texture accompanies a sequence where a farmer is negotiating with an agent at a wheat pool. Similarly, in Fleming's score for *V for Volunteers,* as the Central Volunteer Bureau's supervisor describes various types of volunteer work available—including looking after children, mending clothes, and delivering food to welfare recipients—these

[389] BanQ, Maurice Blackburn interview with Louise Cloutier, 8 December 1980.

scenes are underscored by light, major-key, mid-tempo contrapuntal music played by the woodwinds. The major key and medium tempo suggest that the activities are enjoyable and not too difficult, and that the characters are happy and willing to volunteer. In both cases, the narrator's voice is heard clearly, yet the music is also strongly present and sets the affective tone.

## The Idiosyncratic "NFB Sound"

A challenge the staff composers faced was finding appropriate musical styles for the variety of disparate topics covered by NFB films. Tonal music—the systematic and hierarchical organization of pitches around a referential centre (tonic), upon which Western common-practice harmony has been based for the past four hundred years[390]—was implicitly considered more suitable for government realist films, particularly music in major keys. In this musical system, the major mode has been normative and unmarked since the late Middle Ages, and strongly associated with Western Enlightenment notions of human progress through exploration, industriousness, science, heroism, and optimism.[391] The minor mode (literally a depression of the third, sixth, and seventh notes of the major scale) is associated with that which allegedly impedes this type of progress, implying feelings of depression, sadness, existential contemplation, despair, and hopelessness. These generalized meanings have been remarkably stable. They were anthologized in collections of music cues for silent film accompaniment such as Erno Rapée's *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* (1924),[392] and became conventional in the classic Hollywood cinema of

[390] Brian Hyer, "Tonality," *Oxford Music Online,* 20 January 2001.
[391] Theo Van Leeuwen, "Music and Ideology: Notes Toward a Sociosemiotics of Mass Media Music," *Popular Music and Society* 22, no. 4 (1998): 28-29.
[392] Erno Rapée, *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists: A Rapid Reference Collection of Selected Pieces* (New York: G. Schirmer Inc., 1924).

the 1930s and 1940s.[393] Relative to more avant-garde techniques, the defined structures and hierarchies of tonality were generally more familiar to Western audiences, and reinforced by the commercial film industry.

NFB films were expected to suggest a sense of social cohesion among citizens, and confidence in government institutions and structures. Given these parameters, the staff composers often gravitated towards French neoclassicism and English pastoralism—twentieth-century styles that were largely tonally-based and relatively conventional in terms of their harmonic and melodic content. Woodwind instruments also prominently feature in both styles. Not coincidentally, these nationalist styles also corresponded with Canada's officially recognized European cultural heritage and wartime allies. Alongside avant-garde movements, neoclassicism and pastoralism were dominant trends in Western art music during the interwar years, when all three staff composers began their formal training. By the end of the Second World War, these styles had become institutionalized and incorporated into the Western canon.

While most postwar NFB documentaries contain a combination of musical styles, neoclassicism and pastoralism are the most prevalent, and were routinely used to underscore certain topics and activities. Neoclassicism is frequently used in scenes depicting industriousness, mundane workplace activities (including domestic work), and bureaucratic processes, such as meetings and consultations with governmental and institutional officials. In these contexts, the dispassionate and undramatic quality of the music reinforces the idea that government and public institutions are rational, organized, and efficient, and that people can work together for the common good if they choose to engage in their communities as self-disciplined, industrious, and law-abiding citizens. Since these scenes are often commentary-heavy, the frequent contrapuntal

[393] Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-14.

textures of neoclassicism work well. Pastoral music often underscores rural scenes, natural landscapes, agricultural activities, artisanal work, and traditional customs, typically those imported from Europe and England. It follows the conventional cultural coding of nineteenth and twentieth century pastoral music in the Western tradition in that it romanticizes rural life and the natural world, and is used to evoke feelings of nostalgia for a simpler, pre-industrial way of life.

In the following sections, I discuss how and why the staff composers gravitated toward these two styles, and how they function ideologically in these films. While neoclassicism and pastoralism are distinct from one another, they nonetheless share a few common traits. Both are tonal idioms that typically avoid harsh and prolonged dissonance. Both emphasize simplicity, and are designed to be accessible to general audiences. Both look to the past, whether for stylistic and formal inspiration (neoclassicism), or nostalgically to a real or imagined time when everyday life was supposedly less complicated and more serene (pastoralism). In this sense, I argue that these styles are particularly well-suited to the NFB's government realist films, in which the complexities of Canadian society are simplified, and any problems that arise are shown to be effectively managed through state policies with the cooperation of law-abiding, cheerful, and hard-working citizens.

## French Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism emerged in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a response to the perceived excesses of late Romanticism and German expressionism exemplified in the large-scale works of Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss. The dominance of German music in Paris and throughout Europe in the nineteenth century—Wagner's prominence in particular—inspired cultural nationalists to cultivate a renaissance of distinctly French music,

which could be connected to a longer national historical tradition. While French neoclassicism was often a revival of forms, tonalities, and styles dating from the eighteenth century, it equally drew inspiration from earlier compositions in the Western canon more generally.[394] While critics initially used the term neoclassicism pejoratively to indicate a dull imitation of classical works,[395] by the early 1920s, the term was applied positively to Igor Stravinsky's latest works,[396] and to those of the modernist Parisian composer-collective known as "Les Six," comprised of Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, Germaine Tailleferre, Francis Poulenc, and Georges Auric, a group that cited the important impact of the artistic philosophies of their mentors Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau. Neoclassical compositions typically use older musical forms (such as sonata, toccata, fugues, and chorales), and emphasize clarity of line, simplicity of texture, restraint, and balance (so-called "Apollonian" aesthetics, according to Nietzsche).[397] This is expressed through an economy of means, such as clear and simple melodic lines, smaller ensembles, and relatively short pieces. During and after the First World War, it generally became financially impractical to mount large orchestra performances, such as Mahler's symphonies (written for massive orchestras of up to two hundred instrumentalists), which was also a factor in the decreasing size of ensembles. Since many neoclassical works are written for small ensembles, wind instruments feature prominently in this repertoire. The character is one of emotional restraint, it is explicitly anti-romantic, and eschews the bombastic, dramatic effects associated with German romanticism and expressionism. In France, composers and critics dubiously equated the musical

[394] Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music,* xiv.
[395] Ibid., 13.
[396] Stravinsky's neoclassical period extends from approximately 1919 to 1950. Some notable works from this period include, *Pulcinella* (1919), *Octet for Wind Instruments* (1923), *Oedipus Rex* (1927), *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), and *The Rake's Progress* (1951).
[397] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy: From the Spirit of Music* (1872), translated by Douglas Smith (Oxford University Press, 2008).

qualities of clarity, rationality, harmony, and balance with characteristics inherent in the French people, in contrast to the Germans who were ostensibly irrational, emotional, decadent, and violent, as was supposedly evident in their music.[398] Although some proponents positioned neoclassicism as an "international style," it had deeply nationalistic associations within the French context following the First World War, and was vehemently anti-German. Cocteau's *Le coq et l'arlequin* (1918), a document that essentially became a manifesto for the members of Les Six, states these aesthetic goals explicitly.[399]

In the context of the interwar period, the rejection of the Germanic tradition in France, and the revaluing of simplicity, order, mundanity, and emotional restraint was, in a sense, radical and modernist in its embrace of the everyday. Members of Les Six in particular showed a disdain for traditional high culture and hierarchies, and sought inspiration for their work in the mundane aspects of everyday life, often incorporating elements of popular music and jazz.[400] While Stravinsky's attitude was more aristocratic, together with Les Six he defended the bohemian value of "art for art's sake." As the pre-fix "neo" suggests, compositions in this style do not exactly reproduce older forms, but rather parody or distort them to a certain degree by employing modernist techniques such as extended tonality, polytonality, neo-tonalities, and the inclusion of popular music elements. As Richard Taruskin emphasizes, the revival and interest in older forms (classicism) in the early twentieth century was already a modernist construction, and "a tendentious journey back to where we had never been."[401]

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[398] Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music,* 7.
[399] Jean Cocteau, *Le coq et l'arlequin : Notes de la musique* (Paris : Éditions de la Sirène, 1918).
[400] Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford University Press, 1991); Gayle Murchison, *The American Stravinsky: The Style and Aesthetics of Copland's New American Music, the Early Works, 1921-1938* (University of Michigan Press, 2018).
[401] Richard Taruskin, "Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology," *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 287.

While neoclassicism may have been conceived as a radical departure during the interwar years, by the end of the Second World War it had been thoroughly absorbed into the classical music canon, institutionalized in university music programs, and widely considered elitist, academic, and politically disengaged.[402] Despite certain modernist sensibilities, neoclassicism was in many ways reactionary rather than progressive in its rejection of the iconoclastic, experimental, and rebellious inclinations that propelled many of the more avant-garde early twentieth-century European modernist movements.[403] One of the harshest and most influential postwar critiques of neoclassicism was put forward by Theodor Adorno in *Philosophy of New Music* (1949).[404] Adorno provides a dialectical reading of what he considered to be the opposing poles of modernist music, embodied in Stravinsky's neoclassicism and Schoenberg's serialism. For Adorno, neoclassicism is a regression into myth and archaism, an affirmation of the dominant order, suppression of subjectivity, and abdication of the responsibility to grapple with the complexities and challenges of modernity.[405] It is therefore inauthentic, reactionary, conformist, and a form of false consciousness, whereas serialism is more progressive in that it offers a radically new approach to composition rather than looking to the past for models, or attempting to restore an ostensibly universal musical tradition. While Adorno's claims have been exhaustively debated in musicological circles—and often rejected, particularly his assessment of Stravinsky's work—NFB

[402] Ibid., 231; Alan Gillmor, *Eagle Minds: Selected Correspondence of Istvan Anhalt and George Rochberg, 1961-2005* (Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), xx-xxi.
[403] Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233.
[404] Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949; reprinted by University of Minnesota Press, 2020). While this was not the first critique Adorno made of Stravinsky and neoclassicism, it was the most polemical.
[405] Max Paddison, "Stravinsky as Devil: Adorno's Three Critiques," in *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky,* edited by Jonathan Cross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 198.

staff composers use neoclassicism in a way that ultimately exemplifies Adorno's critique.[406] In NFB films, neoclassical music is typically used to underscore bureaucratic processes, institutional work, and busyness, thus reinforcing its association with order, rationality, emotional restraint, and faith in traditional institutions.

## Neoclassicism in NFB Film Scores

The NFB staff composers all identify French neoclassicism as having exerted an important influence on their film work. Reflecting on some of his earlier scores, Rathburn commented, "I've been listening to woodwind music by French composers, like Poulenc, and there's a similar sound to some of our music, to the French light music."[407] Similarly, Blackburn cites the influence of Stravinsky and members of Les Six: "Stravinsky's short repetitive phrases, his rhythmic sense, and economy of means, all work very well in film. I have been equally influenced by Ravel, Poulenc, and Milhaud."[408] The lighter textures, concise writing, and inclusion of popular styles that characterize the music of Les Six are useful techniques for film, and excepting Poulenc, all of them wrote a significant amount of film music.

The NFB's staff composers all had significant connections with the neoclassical tradition and lineage. Emphasis on the neoclassical style and aesthetic constituted a significant component of Blackburn's training. Between 1946 and 1948, Blackburn took a leave of absence from the NFB

[406] There is considerable literature on the so-called Stravinsky-Schoenberg polemic, and differing interpretations of Adorno's critique. See, for example, James L. Marsh, "Adorno's Critique of Stravinsky," *New German Critique* 28 (Winter 1983): 147-169: Livine Van Eecke, "Adorno's Listening to Stravinsky: Towards a Deconstruction of Objectivism," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 45, no. 2 (December 2014): 243-260; Peter C. van den Toorn, "Stravinsky, Adorno, and the Art of Displacement," *The Musical Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 468-509; Alan Lessem, "Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism: The Issues Re-examined," *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (October 1982): 527-542.
[407] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.
[408] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 11.

to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, one of the foremost French pedagogues and proponents of neoclassicism.[409] Applebaum studied with Roy Harris, a student of Boulanger's, before accepting a position at the Board. Another prominent Boulanger student was Aaron Copland, who Rathburn described as having had an important impact on his own film music. Commenting on the NFB's postwar film music, and some of his own formative influences, Rathburn writes, "sustained sounds were not in fashion during this period. The 'busyness' reflects the neoclassical style being used—Stravinsky's work, Copland, etc."[410]

The neoclassical aesthetic of the NFB sound is used to project the idea of a well-ordered, rational, and civil society, that is likewise repressive in its calls for emotional restraint, conformity, and acceptance of existing hierarchical structures. The characters in government realist films tend to have a stilted manner; they remain superficially "typical," lacking in complexity and genuine emotion despite attempts to showcase "real" Canadians onscreen. The broad application of a neoclassic aesthetic to a range of activities seems to suggest that any situation can be managed through governmental processes and procedures as long as citizens are willing have faith in these structures. It also suggests that citizens should approach all manner of civic issues with an attitude of emotional restraint, rationality, and respect for authority.

The prominence of the woodwinds, use of small ensembles, contrapuntal writing, and general economy of means are all hallmarks of the NFB sound that draw on neoclassical models. The clarity of the instruments, melodic lines, and texture suggests a kind of balance, order, and logic, and projects a detached emotional quality. What is striking in these films is the uniform application of this style to a range of disparate film topics, typically related to busywork and

[409] Jean Boivin, "Providing the Taste of Learning: Nadia Boulanger's Lasting Imprint on Canadian Music," *Intersections* 33, no. 2 (2013): 71-100. Boivin notes that Boulanger trained more Canadian composers than any other foreign pedagogue (71).
[410] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Notes on Film Scores: Stock Music No. 4," undated.

bureaucratic processes. Neoclassical music accompanies friendly discussions among neighbours (*Breakdown,* 1951), classroom teaching in a Northern residential school (*Canada's Awakening North,* 1951), labour negotiations (*Strike in Town,* 1955), meetings between farmers and wheat pool agents (*Grain Handling in Canada,* 1953), and Canada's role in NATO (*Introducing Canada,* 1961), among countless other examples. When it is heard in these various scenes, neoclassicism conveys the idea that relationships between citizens are—or should be—civil and harmonious, and that government agents are benevolent, rational, and fair. The light, bouncy, coloristic character is generally associated with optimism and ease, and the restrained, undramatic tone of this style suggests a kind of dispassionate orientation towards civic issues. These pieces are typically written in major keys and mid-tempos, which have strong associations with dynamic, goal-oriented activity, and are used to model idealized forms of citizenship in these situations.

The NFB's staff composers also tended to resort to neoclassicism when directors either struggled to explain the kind of music they wanted, or asked for something "neutral." Blackburn describes a hypothetical scenario where a character onscreen is consulting a catalogue, or engaged in some form of mundane activity, and the director wants music to carry the scene, yet cannot easily describe what kind. "The composer asks for guidance," Blackburn explains, "and since the director is already frustrated by the question, he replies that he's looking for 'neutral' music, which means absolutely nothing musically."[411] Rathburn also mentions the concept of "neutral" music, especially in relation to scoring routine activities. He describes it as qualitatively "not romantic," "stark and cool," and "non-committal"—all of which point to musical neoclassicism as the style of choice for this purpose.[412] Rathburn remarks on several occasions that "romantic" music was

[411] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 7.
[412] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Notes on Film Scores" undated; Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.

generally not suitable for NFB films. Similarly, as a music editor, Bigras describes the most useful pieces for the NFB's stock music library as "pleasant, major key, medium active with lyric (not romantic) touches," which has "a pleasant warmth without being sympathetic."[413] Recall Applebaum's suggestion to Kenneth Campbell that his stock music for the NFB should be "happy and crisp." Bigras insinuates that its usefulness is related to the possibility of applying it to a variety of situations, whether it is potato picking, commercial fishing, or assembly lines.[414] Directors requested so-called neutral music when they wanted to avoid establishing an obvious mood (i.e., joyful, sombre, foreboding, sad, fearful, etc.). While the idea of so-called neutral music may have frustrated the staff composers, neoclassical aesthetics became a kind of default style that satisfied the directors, and appeared to set an appropriate tone.

In his own contribution to the Stravinsky-Schoenberg polemic, Hanns Eisler—a composer and theorist of film and concert music—describes neoclassicism as a musical idiom that expresses the aims and interests of the middle class, and as wholly incapable of grappling with the gravity of the political and economic struggles of the average person:

> Neo-classicism is a phenomenon of the big bourgeoisie … It is arrogant and cold to the man on the street; it is the musical style of "good society" … in its manner of expression neo-classicism deports itself like a member of good society, not too loud, not too soft, in a noncommittal way, trying to copy the inscrutable mask of the big banker, who in turn apes the actor trying to play the part of the financier … It is obvious that the art of "not expressing oneself" in neo-classicism is merely one particular form of expressing oneself, for even in the coldest music, the coldness is a form of expression.[415]

As Eisler remarks, neoclassicism is hardly a neutral form of expression. In the context of NFB films, neoclassical aesthetics became associated with idealized forms of citizenship, and the way Canadians were supposed to approach their everyday lives; that is, with emotional restraint,

[413] NFBA, Norm Bigras, "Memorandum: Stock Music, Problem of Character," 6 January, 1965.
[414] Ibid.
[415] Hanns Eisler, "Basic Social Questions of Modern Music (1948)," in *Hanns Eisler: A Rebel in Music,* edited by Manfred Grabs, translated by Marjorie Meyer (London: Kahn and Averill, 1978), 165.

moderation, orderliness, respect for authority, and faith in government institutions and law enforcement.

## English Pastoralism

Among calls for the development of a "national music" in England and in response to increasing industrialization, urbanization, technological change, and military conflict in Europe, Pastoralism emerged in the late nineteenth century as a musical topic and set of stylistic conventions.[416] Composers associated with the English pastoral school include Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells, Gerald Finzi, John Ireland, Cecil Sharp, Frederick Delius, and George Butterworth. Broadly speaking, pastoral music is characterized by diatonic and consonant (generally tertian, i.e., based on stacking consonant intervallic thirds) harmonies, use of modal scales (including pentatonicism and pandiatonicism), pedal points and drones, compound meters, slow to moderate tempos, lyrical and rhapsodic melodies, gentle dynamic levels, and relatively simple textures. The texts and titles of English pastoral scores typically suggest natural landscapes, elegiac moods, nostalgia, introspection, and contemplation (religious and otherwise), and stringed instruments feature prominently as do the upper woodwinds. In an orchestral context, the predominant solo instruments are the violins, violas, and woodwinds. British pastoral music is often thought to evoke the Victorian concept of "Merrie England"—a utopian conception of English culture and society as rural, simple, peaceful, and devoid of the conflicts and complexities of modernity. Poverty, alienation, exploitative working conditions, and class struggles are notably absent in this imaginary

[416] Eric Saylor, *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900-1955* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Monelle, *The Musical Topic*.

past in which an idealized rural life prevailed. The overarching emotional quality is generally one of restraint, calm, peacefulness, simplicity, and understatement.

As Eric Saylor notes, pastoral music was often coded as "feminine" through its association with nature, introspection, tranquility, nostalgia, and other characteristics stereotypically associated with Victorian femininity.[417] Therefore, pastoral music and its composers were frequently derided as effeminate, particularly in comparison with the ostensibly more cerebral technical complexity and grandiosity of the Germanic and Central European musical tradition. Consequently, there was considerable anxiety about English music being perceived as "weak," and Saylor attributes the often hypermasculine and misogynist behaviours of these composers to overcompensation.[418] Women composers were largely excluded from the male-dominated musical establishment, and none are readily associated with English pastoralism.[419]

Like neoclassicism in France, English pastoralism was in many ways a reaction to the perceived excesses of German late Romanticism (i.e., ultra-chromaticism, dense textures, massive ensembles, loud dynamics, clear cadences, bold melodies, and systemic motivic development) and is associated with a return to simplicity and tradition (real or imagined). Pastoral music frequently draws on forms and styles from the past—Tudor-era church music, madrigals, and English folk song, for example—and recasts them using modern techniques and sensibilities (though not those of the continental avant-garde). The English pastoral movement thus reflected and coincided with a broader revival of interest in English folk song, Tudor music, and song collecting in the early twentieth century, and many pastoral composers were affiliated with organisations such as the English Folk Dance Society and the English Folk Song Society. As Alain Frogley notes, during

[417] Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2012).
[418] Saylor, *English Pastoral Music,* 22.
[419] See, for example, Laura Seddon, *British Women Composers and Instrumental Chamber Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013).

this period "Englishness" had to be defined not only in contrast with continental Europe, but also with the Celtic cultures of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.[420] With a few notable exceptions, twentieth-century pastoral works do not typically quote folk songs; instead, composers writing in this style often integrated elements from these traditions, and invented their own folk-like melodies.[421]

English pastoralism was arguably the most significant and widespread expression of British musical modernism prior to the Second World War, and its stylistic and affective conventions were in many ways antithetical to modernist trends in continental Europe. [422] Unlike modernists who imitated and celebrated machine-driven industry and new technologies, blurring the distinction between music and noise in their work, pastoral composers eschewed sounds suggestive of modern technology, industry, and urbanity and sought to evoke bucolic, mythical, pre-modern landscapes, and an idealized English past. Prominent critics of the pastoral movement—including George Bernard Shaw, Martin Cooper, Constant Lambert, and Elisabeth Lutyens—derided it as reactionary, escapist, naïve, provincial, and essentially anti-modern, and therefore resented it being used to evoke a feeling of national identity. In a lecture given at the Dartington summer school in the 1950s, Lutyens famously dismissed the "folky-wolky melodies" of the pastoral music associated with Williams, Ireland, et al. as "the cowpat school."[423] Unlike the experimental and

[420] Alain Frogley, "Constructing Englishness in Music: National Character and the Reception of Vaughan Williams," in *Vaughan Williams Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.
[421] Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Greensleeves* (1934), for example.
[422] Ibid., 5; Annika Forkert, "Musical Modernism in the 'Land Without Music': The Limits in Elgar and Holst," in *Jahrbuch für Europäische Ethnologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Wissenschaft, 2012), 123-144. With a few exceptions, twentieth-century English composers were generally more traditional in their methods compared to their contemporaries in continental Europe and the US. Therefore, the lasting British influence in Canada also helps explain a generally conservative attitude towards modernist compositional practices.
[423] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music 5th Edition,* "Cowpat music," (Oxford University press, 2007).

revolutionary drive of the avant-garde and high modernists, pastoral composers were generally not seeking radically new expressive modes or techniques. This attitude is captured in a passage from Vaughan Williams' essay, "A Musical Autobiography" (1950):

> Why should music be 'original'? … The duty of the composer is to find the *mot juste.* It does not matter if this word has been said a thousand times before as long as it is the right thing to say at that moment … Music which is unoriginal is so, not simply because it has been said before, but because the composer has not taken the trouble to make sure that this was the right thing to say at the right moment.[424]

This outlook is indicative of the pervading ethic of moderation and restraint, both socially and politically, in early twentieth century British culture. Compared to the musical language and aims of the continental avant-garde, pastoral music was a more conservative mode of expression and proponents believed it could play a role both in edifying and entertaining the masses and in articulating a distinctive national music.[425] Pastoral music was fiercely critiqued after the Second World War as outmoded, irrelevant, and a "refuge for dead-enders and also-rans," particularly by those who championed the high-modernist idioms (e.g., serialism, multi-serialism, and post-tonality) that dominated postwar discourse among the classical music intelligentsia.[426]

## Pastoralism in NFB Film Scores

Although unfashionable among mid-century modernists and the avant-garde, pastoralism still held a degree of prestige within more conservative classical music circles, and was considered educational, edifying, and accessible for general audiences, all of which made it desirable for the NFB's government realist films. While both Blackburn and Rathburn use pastoral conventions in

[424] Vaughan Williams, "A Musical Autobiography," in *National Music and Other Essays* 2nd edition, edited by Michael Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 189-90.
[425] Saylor, *English Pastoral Music,* 4.
[426] Eric Saylor, "'It's Not Lambkins Frisking at All': Pastoral Music and the Great War," *The Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 1/2 British Modernism (Spring-Summer 2008): 48-50.

their film work, it is Fleming who most consistently worked in this idiom, and who had a direct connection to the English pastoral school. Between 1937 and 1939, Fleming studied composition at the Royal College of Music in London with Herbert Howells and Arthur Benjamin, both of whom were associated with English pastoralism.

Fleming uses pastoral conventions in most of his films from this era. In one of his earliest scores, *Wings of Mercy* (1947) for example, Fleming's expressive lyrical melodies played by the upper strings or woodwinds with orchestral accompaniment underscore the film's many aerial shots of rural Saskatchewan. Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Provincial Department of Public Health, *Wings of Mercy* promotes Saskatchewan's air ambulance service by dramatizing how it saves the lives of people who need of emergency medical attention in remote areas. Such topics related to rural life and agriculture were common in the NFB's early postwar films, and Fleming scored many of them, including *Farm Homes Beautiful* (1947), *Prairie Homes* (1947), *Farmer's Union* (1949), and *Harvests on the March* (1949).

*Harvests on the March* is a documentary that follows a crew of Alberta farmers traveling south with their combines to harvest wheat in areas of the US where there are shortages of farm equipment. Fleming's score is primarily pastoral with some country and western flavours. The gentle, unhurried, melodic music is used conventionally to signal idealized notions of small-scale, tight-knit rural communities, picturesque landscapes, and the ostensibly wholesome, community-minded values of the farmers. The profit motive and competitiveness between farmers vying to monetize their expensive equipment are downplayed throughout the film, and they are variously described as generously helping the Americans, and engaging in mutual aid. The farmers are said to be realizing a longstanding dream, and the narrator promptly explains, "making money isn't their only object in this venture. By supplying much needed machinery at harvest time, they'll play

a real part in helping to feed a hungry world." Virtually no historical, political, or economic context is given for this scenario other than Americans need help harvesting their crops, Canadians are willing to help their neighbours, and together they will provide much-needed grain for the world. While technological developments and intensification of agricultural production play an important role in the narrative, the film primarily emphasizes the strong moral character and work ethic of the farmers, the cross-border cooperation efforts, and the noble objective of "feeding the world." The pastoral music strongly suggests that any changes to the scaling-up of agricultural production will only benefit Canada, Canadian farmers, and the world, and that the ostensibly wholesome and community-minded values associated with rural life will remain intact.

The influence of Vaughan Williams and Elgar on Rathburn's music is evident in many of his early postwar scores, and he cites them as important influences. A prime example is his music for *Family Tree* (1951), an animated film on colonial settlement in Canada that Rathburn scores with music similar to Vaughan Williams' concert band works, particularly his well-known *Folk Song Suite* (1923). Like Vaughan Williams' original suite, *Family Tree* is scored for military band (winds, brass, and percussion), although Rathburn's ensemble is much smaller, and the music is written in a typical ceremonial and marching band style. Ceremonial music accompanies ships arriving from France and England, and march music underscores the depiction of colonial wars leading up to Canadian confederation. The upbeat contrapuntal opening title music has a neoclassical quality, which transitions into a gentle pastoral melody played by the English horn as the animated images show forests and wild animals. A solo flute takes over, playing a slow modal melody as the narrator proclaims that "thousands of years ago, there were no people in Canada, there were only forests and plains, rocks and rivers, and wild animals." The solo flute continues with light tympani accompaniment as the narrator describes Indigenous peoples as essentially part

of the natural landscape. Like so many NFB films from this era, the colonial perspective is overdetermined by vulgar musical stereotypes: ceremonial march music announces the arrival of the French and British, which is contrasted with simple modal flute melodies designed to signal the supposed primitivism of Indigenous peoples. These stock caricatures were a kind of musical shorthand that could be quickly produced by the composers, and were readily approved by their superiors as appropriate for the subject matter.

## Neoclassicism and Pastoralism Combined

A hallmark of the NFB sound is the combination of neoclassicism and pastoralism within a single score, and vacillation between the two styles. Postwar government realist films often begin by visualizing the general context (e.g., shots of natural landscapes or cityscapes), followed by detailed illustrations of the main issues (e.g., meetings between government officials, institutional work, community gatherings, etc.), and then conclude with generalized statements and take-aways that are often visually reinforced by the camera panning out, as if to provide an overview of the situation. Therefore, it is common for NFB composers to underscore opening long shots (often of natural landscapes) with pastoral music, which may quickly shift to scenes depicting everyday work or activities in institutional settings that are scored in a neoclassical style. While closing scenes may be scored in a pastoral style, they often build to a more triumphant, fanfaric ending that reinforces the satisfying resolution of the issue at hand.

For example, *Red Runs the Fraser* (1946, released in 1949) opens with images of the Pacific Ocean shot from a boat undulating on the waves, a scene underscored by a sweeping pastoral theme in the strings with harp glissandos underneath (a standard musical convention connoting water). Several minutes later, a lively folk-like melody is introduced in a scene where

women are shown working in a fish cannery, and the theme is repeated with minor variations. The same melody is heard again in a sequence where members of an international commission are shown studying the problem of getting the salmon through Hell's Gate, an area where the Fraser River abruptly narrows. This time, however, the motif leads into an extended up-tempo contrapuntal passage played by the winds that is more neoclassical in character, and underscores members of the commission working at a university. Similarly, in *Canada's Awakening North,* aerial shots of the Mackenzie River and other northern landscapes are underscored with flowing, unhurried, gentle pastoral melodies. The main theme is occasionally played by a solo horn, a standard pastoral reference to the hunting horn, which conventionally signifies vast open spaces and wilderness.[427] In contrast, sequences depicting Indigenous students in residential school classrooms have woodwind-heavy, up-tempo, contrapuntal music that implies industriousness and institutional settings.

*Harvest in the Valley* (1955), a film on New Brunswick potato farming scored by Fleming, is another clear example. Opening shots of rural landscapes and farmers working in the fields are underscored by cheerful pastoral folk melodies, whereas the more animated music for a sequence at an industrial sorting and packing facility is distinctly neoclassical. In this scene, the busyness and contrapuntal texture of the winds and *pizzicato* strings emphasize the fast-paced and relentless labour required to deal with the constant stream of potatoes on the conveyor belts. While factory workers are present on the assembly lines, they are peripheral to the industrial machinery, which is the primary focus and shot from a variety of different angles. The tempo and texture of the neoclassical style highlight the speed and efficiency of the machines, while the bright, jaunty

[427] Monelle, *The Musical Topic,* 3.

character of the winds suggests that assembly line work is pleasant, workers are happy, and the whole operation is productive and successful.

These and other conventions of the NFB sound quickly became entrenched and predictable, and the staff composers rarely seem to view them in positive terms. While they often defaulted to the woodwind-heavy neoclassical and pastoral styles, Rathburn describes this as a kind of rut or set of bad habits.[428] For his part, Blackburn simply considered it unfortunate.[429] This style was generic enough to be used for almost any NFB topic, and was useful in completing films quickly and cheaply. One of the most extreme examples of this phenomenon is the repurposing of Fleming's music for *Red Runs the Fraser* (1947, released in 1949) for *Primitive Painters of Charlevoix* (1947). This is an unusual case where the underscoring for *Primitive Painters of Charlevoix*—a film on amateur self-taught painters in rural Quebec—is entirely comprised of Fleming's music for *Red Runs the Fraser* (discussed briefly above). While compilation soundtracks were common at the NFB, it is unusual for an entire soundtrack to be remixed for another film. In this case, there were no funds left for original music after the other elements of the film had been completed.[430] In lieu, the recording of *Red Runs the Fraser* was edited to fit *Primitive Painters of Charlevoix.* Thus, the folk-like melody that serves as the opening title music for *Primitive Painters of Charlevoix* is the same music that accompanies workers in a fish cannery in *Red Runs the Fraser*. A Stravinsky-inspired passage that underscores salmon spawning in *Red Runs the Fraser* is used to show Marie Anne Simard painting a family homestead scene in

[428] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991; NBPA, Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Notes on Film Scores," undated.
[429] Bonneville, "Entretien Avec Maurice Blackburn," 8.
[430] Berkeley Fleming, personal communication with the author, 20 June 2023. Fleming indicated in a letter to his parents on October 12, 1951 that the planned recording session for *Primitive Painters of Charlevoix* had been canceled due to lack of funds, and music from *Red Runs the Fraser* would be used instead.

*Primitive Painters of Charlevoix*. The contrapuntal music that underscores the engineers studying the problem of the Hell's Gate in *Red Runs the Fraser* is reused to underscore painter Cécile Bouchard working on a canvas outdoors. And this music is yet again used to illustrate salmon swimming upstream in *Peoples of the Skeena* (1949), another film scored by Fleming.

## Dissonance and Atonality in Postwar NFB Scores

Although atonality and serialism (a compositional technique and structural principle for writing systematically atonal music) were dominant postwar trends in the classical music world, there were limited opportunities to write atonal music at the NFB since the standard documentary was intended to convey a sense of hope, optimism, and faith in the Canadian government and civil society. Atonality and the intense levels of dissonance that accompanied it, came to signify the antithesis of hope and optimism. Of the three NFB staff composers, Rathburn had the most direct connection to and interest in the music of the Second Viennese School—Arnold Schoenberg and his students Anton Webern and Alban Berg who pioneered and explored atonality and serialism in the early twentieth century—and he eagerly experimented with serialist and atonal techniques when it could be justified by the subject matter of the film. For a stock music session in 1958, Rathburn wrote a short twelve-tone piece titled "Test Tube" (possibly code for "Twelve Tone") and claimed he never told anyone it was serialist music because they would have rejected it on this basis.[431] There was a role for dissonant music in early postwar NFB films, however, in keeping with the conventional cultural codes, it was confined to scenarios depicting fear, anxiety, conflict, otherworldliness, and distressing emotional states.[432]

[431] Wright and Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored,* 211; Rathburn, interview with Hone, ca. 1991.
[432] James K. Wright, "Twelve-tone Terror: Representing Horror and Monstrosity in Dodecaphonic Film Music," in *Monstrosity, Identity, and Music: Mediating Uncanny Creatures from Frankenstein to*

A prime example of this is heard in Rathburn's score for *Inside the Atom* (1948), a documentary about the risks and possibilities of atomic energy, and the development of Canada's Chalk River nuclear research facility, a film that illustrates both the anxiety and enthusiasm of the emerging nuclear age. The dissonant, austere opening music could have served as the soundtrack for any number of mid-twentieth century horror and science fiction films. The strings play a chromatically descending line *sul ponticello* in the upper registers while the low brass add ominous fanfaric motifs underneath, using semitones and tritones in a way that is reminiscent of "Mars: The Bringer of War" from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*.[433] In the next scene, which depicts the manual extraction of energy resources (coal mining, dam building, etc.), Rathburn writes menacing march-like music as the narrator announces, "even highly industrialized countries would find their best fuels obsolete, for a power supply two million times more effective than coal lies within the atoms of Uranium-235." An animated sequence illustrating the scientific process of splitting atoms is also given dissonant and atonal treatment. The strings play dissonant clusters *sul ponticello* in the upper registers overtop even more dissonant harmonies in the low brass, and the woodwinds repeat ascending and descending arpeggiated patterns. Strikingly, this abruptly shifts to a sweeping pastoral melody in the next sequence as the camera pans across arctic landscapes around Great Bear Lake, the site of Canada's first uranium mine, and the Chalk River nuclear facility on the banks of the Ottawa River. Throughout the film, the music alternates between dissonant, post-tonal sonorities that are used to illustrate the dangers of nuclear technologies, and harmonious tonal passages that suggest that they might be applied in beneficial ways.

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*Videogames,* edited by Alexis Luko and James Wright (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2022), 150-71.

[433] A decade later, Rathburn explicitly drew inspiration from Holst's *Planets* in his score for *Universe* (1960), and elements from *Inside the Atom* can be heard in *Universe,* namely similar experiments with the brass motifs from "Mars," and the prominent use of the bass clarinet.

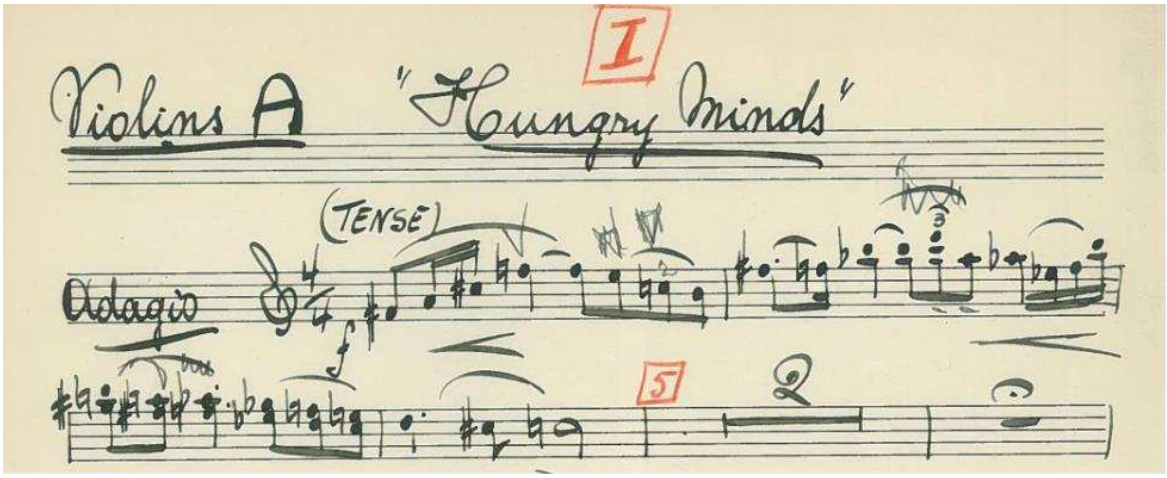

Figure 4 – *Hungry Minds* (1948), cue 1, opening measures for violin. NFB institutional archives.

A notable example of quasi-serialist music from this period is the short documentary *Hungry Minds* (1948) produced by the NFB in connection with the Canadian Council for Reconstruction through UNESCO and scored by Rathburn. The film illustrates the devastating effects of the war on children in war-torn European countries, highlighting the need for basic necessities such as food and medicine that will ultimately provide a foundation for the reestablishment of the education system. Rathburn's opening theme, played by the violins, is quasi-serial in its use of symmetrical hexachords that alternate between semitones and tritones in a roughly palindromic manner (Figure 4).[434] The expression marking is "tense," and the passage is to be played *forte*. The first motif in this phrase dramatically outlines a minor-major seventh chord, and the rest is chromatically meandering free atonality. Visually, it is paired with the somber *Self Portrait* (1934) by German expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz, whose drawings are interspersed with documentary footage throughout the film (Figure 5).[435] The expressionist visual and musical gestures connect it with horror films and film noir. Dissonance is used conventionally to underscore distressing scenes, such as people scavenging through garbage heaps, and children

[434] Wright and Rogers, *They Shot, He Scored,* 212 (figure 8.5).
[435] Kollwitz's renowned lithograph *Germany's Children Are Starving* (1924) is featured in the film. The

eating from garbage cans; however, in more optimistic scenes where children are shown receiving food, medical attention, and toys, Rathburn returns to neoclassical and pastoral styles with the typical emphasis on the woodwinds. In 1950, Rathburn adapted music from *Hungry Minds* into a symphonic tone poem for full orchestra titled *Images of Childhood,* a work that was premiered by Sir Ernest MacMillan and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra later that year. The quasi-serial leitmotif from the film is given a prominent place in the tone poem as the "Song of Hunger."


Figure 5 – Works by Käthe Kollwitz featured in *Hungry Minds.* Top left: *Self-portrait* (1934); top right: *Germany's Children Are Starving* (1924); bottom left: *Call of Death* (1934-35); bottom right: *Death Seizing a Woman* (1934).

While Rathburn used opportunities of this kind to break away from the standard NFB sound, his most dissonant and atonal modernist film scores were written a decade later, in the early 1960s, when the NFB was undergoing another significant shift in its mandate and production process. By the early 1960s, NFB staff composers had acquired significantly more experience, status, and stability within the institution, which emboldened them to branch out stylistically, and

push back when they felt strongly about their ideas. Compared to the judicious use of dissonance and atonality in early postwar films, Rathburn began exerting more creative control in the filmmaking process by deliberately thwarting conventional musical codes, and taking a new approach to standard subject matter. *Sky* (1963) is one of the most remarkable examples.

*Sky* is an experimental nature film directed by John Feeney that uses varying lenses, camera speeds, and time-lapse photography to capture atmospheric changes across a full day (from sunrise to sunset) in the Canadian Rocky Mountains and foothills. The soundtrack is exclusively original music—no location sound, commentary, or other sound effects are incorporated. Rathburn stresses that this grants the composer considerable control, and warns that "the director should be careful,"

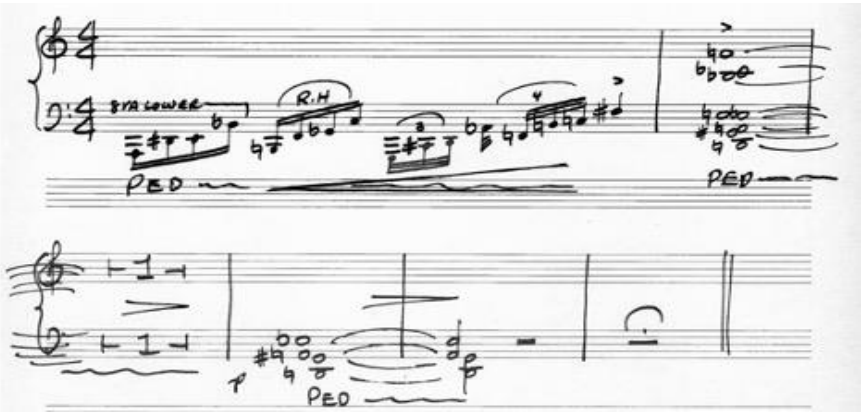


Figure 6 – *Sky* (1963), piano cue 1. NFB institutional archives

given the power of music to affect the tone and meaning of a film.[436] *Sky* is scored for an eighteen-piece chamber ensemble, including harp, piano, and percussion.[437] The film opens with solo piano playing a dissonant ascending line in the lower registers based on two eight-note rows, which is then verticalized in an octachord (based on the pitch-class set of the second eight-note row), followed by a tetrachord, which repeats the lowest four notes of the octachord (Figure 6). Overtop, a solo horn plays a slow ascending line alternating between semitones and tritones. The music

[436] Rathburn, interview by Louis Hone, 3 March 1991. See also, *Eldon Rathburn: They Shoot, He Scores* (directed by Louis Hone, NFB, 1995).
[437] NFBA, *Sky* production file, budget estimate, "scoring musicians."

immediately establishes an ominous tone. Visually, the opening sequence is a time-lapsed sunrise, in which the sun appears as a giant orange sphere rising from the horizon against banks of dark red clouds, rendering it somewhat otherworldly (Figure 7). The same effect is used in the closing sequence, in which the giant orange sphere descends beneath the horizon into darkness.

Figure 7 – Opening sunrise, *Sky* (1963).

While the use of time-lapse photography and various lens filters provide different perspectives on the landscape—including the accelerated movement of clouds and shadows, and magnified dew drops on evergreen trees—the music drastically defamiliarizes the landscape, evoking a sense of strangeness and hostility. There are no signs of sentient life in the film, and the intensely dissonant music even suggests the landscapes could be extra-terrestrial, especially the time-lapsed shots of mountaintops, glaciers, and other rock formations with dynamic atmospheric movements swirling around them.[438] Unlike earlier NFB documentaries where dissonance is used judiciously to signal human distress and fear, *Sky* uses dissonance to defamiliarize the natural environment, and the entire score is atonal. Although the score is generally written in freely atonal style, Rathburn provides coherence and structural unity through

[438] Techniques that Rathburn uses in *Sky* can be heard in his earlier score for *Universe* (1960), an animated science film that visualizes current knowledge of astronomical objects. In this case, Rathburn was able to justify writing in a modernist style given the otherworldliness of the subject matter. Rathburn's musical language for *Universe* serves as a kind of prototype, and can be heard in many of his subsequent films in the early 1960s.

the repeated use of the ascending semitone-tritone motif, and by incorporating aspects of twelve-tone technique. There are no traces of the upbeat neoclassical or idyllic pastoral NFB sound in *Sky*.

Although Feeney's approach was somewhat experimental, nature documentaries were common at the NFB, and what differentiates *Sky* from the typical NFB nature film is the music. Rathburn very intentionally rejects normative pastoral conventions here. "Rather than approach the image of the sun as a beautiful sunset," Rathburn explained, referring to the opening and closing sequences, "I approached it as a big ball of fire that might destroy the earth."[439] He adopted this mindset throughout the film, writing harsh clusters in the upper registers of the strings (which often play *sul ponticello*) and booming ominous chords in the lower registers. The music has a wide dynamic range, and emphasizes the extreme high and low frequency ranges, all of which make it forceful and imposing. Rathburn's NFB colleagues were baffled by what they heard, given that it sounded like music for a horror film rather than a nature documentary. "They wanted something melodic and romantic, but I did not see it that way," Rathburn recalls, explaining his alternate interpretation that "the sun is nice to look at, but it is dangerous."[440] As executive producer, Tom Daly asked if Rathburn wanted to rewrite the score, to which Rathburn replied defiantly, "Tom, if I did it again, I would do the same thing, only more."[441]

This is a noteworthy shift in Rathburn's attitude, and in the production process. While Rathburn was usually open and willing to rework material if his colleagues were dissatisfied, in this case, he was uncharacteristically insistent on keeping the score as-written, and imposing his interpretation of the images. Although Feeney liked the initial piano sketches, which sounded much less dissonant than the orchestrated version, Rathburn suspected that he may have ultimately

[439] *Eldon Rathburn: They Shoot, He Scores,* directed by Louis Hone, NFB, 1995.
[440] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, ca. 1993.
[441] Ibid.

preferred "a romantic score for his gorgeous sunsets."[442] Nonetheless, Feeney engaged Rathburn on several subsequent films. Despite considerable reluctance within the NFB, the original score remained, which is indicative of the increasing artistic leeway and control the staff composers were able to exert within the institution by the early 1960s. This would have been almost unheard-of a decade earlier.

Not only did Rathburn succeed in keeping the original score for *Sky,* the following year he wrote a similar score for *The Enduring Wilderness* (1964), a sponsored film for the National Parks branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources. The National Parks Branch requested a film that would encourage tourism in the parks and highlight the importance of the department's ongoing conservation efforts.[443] The film juxtaposes grandiose natural landscapes and wild animals with urban and industrial landscapes that intentionally appear standardized, constrictive, and hostile (e.g., rows of uniform housing, highways crowded with cars, smoke stacks spewing pollution, etc.). Although the film uses narration and location sound, these elements are sparse, and Rathburn's music dominates the soundtrack. The atonal sonorities and orchestral palette are remarkably similar to those heard in *Sky*, including the ascending semitone-tritone motif, and sustained dissonant clusters in the upper registers of the strings. He also experiments with bitonality in several places (i.e., writing in two keys simultaneously). As in *Sky,* the tone is consistently ominous and foreboding. Again*,* Rathburn rejects bucolic notions of rurality and wilderness, and instead highlights the otherness and sublime qualities of the natural world. Christopher Chapman, the film's cinematographer, noted in the margins of the script, "we should feel that taming the wilderness is an impossible task," and emphasized the need to communicate

[442] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes on Film Scores: Sky," undated.
[443] NFBA, *The Enduring Wilderness* production file, Sid Roberts (National Parks Branch) to Graham Crabtree (NFB liaison officer), 15 May 1962.

its grandeur and majesty.[444] To a certain extent, the music matches these intentions by evoking a sense of danger, unpredictability, otherness, and power of the natural environment. However, the general reception of the score was similar to that of *Sky.* Rathburn reports that Chapman, "didn't care for the score, which happens to be quite good in my humble opinion."[445] Nonetheless, the music remained as Rathburn wrote it.

What is more surprising is that the National Parks Branch accepted the final version as-is, given that the ominous and foreboding tone was not a conventional way of encouraging widespread tourism in the parks. Rathburn's music introduces considerable ambiguity to otherwise picturesque albeit highly stylized images of the natural environment. For anyone considering a visit to the National Parks, it is not clear what kind of experience it will be based on this film. The atonal score suggests it may be terrifyingly sublime, otherworldly, or perhaps just dangerous. It is not suggestive of a relaxing or pleasant getaway, which would have had more conventional appeal. The score is a creative rejection of the NFB's mandate, and moves away from typical expressions of government realism. It is one of many examples of how, by the early 1960s, both NFB filmmakers and composers were increasingly able to carve space for more experimental work within government-sponsored projects. It is also indicative of a broader shift within the institution.

There is a sense in which Rathburn's increasing stubbornness reveals his exasperation with the NFB's institutional processes, routine subject matter, and diffident approach. While he was working on *Sky,* Rathburn wrote a short tirade in his personal notes on the inability of directors to communicate productively with composers:

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[444] NFBA, *The Enduring Wilderness* production file, Christopher Chapman, "The Meaning of Wilderness," 12 June 1962; Michael D. Clemens, *Screening Nature and Nation: The Environmental Documentaries of the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1974* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2022), 122-23.
[445] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes on Film Scores: The Enduring Wilderness," undated.

> We are not mind readers, we have our own feelings about things. If the filmmaker feels very strong about his own viewpoint, he [sic] should write his own score, or at least add dialogue in the form of a poem, anything to show what he feels, unless of course he just shot a film without any thought of what he had to say other than showing pretty pictures.[446]

A year later, after his music for a car chase scene had been rejected because it was "too dramatic," he commented in his notebook, "what is annoying is when we straddle the fence, and the result is something quite anemic. The NFB is so polite, always afraid of offending people!"[447] That same year, Rathburn was asked to score two films featuring Indigenous artists—*Eskimo Artist: Kenojuak* (1964) and *Haida Carver* (1964)—and he complained about having to score two films on Indigenous topics in sequence, referring to it as "one of the penalties of being a Canadian."[448] While a standard practice had been to represent Indigenous peoples with percussion and flutes played in a primitivist manner, Rathburn's score for *Kenojuak* mostly uses pitched percussion (marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone) and his language is consistently modernist and experimental. By this point, Rathburn appears determined to compose music that he finds interesting and challenging rather than considering past practices and expectations within the Board. Ironically, in doing so, he avoids some of the more cringeworthy musical tropes associated with Indigenous peoples in other NFB films. Rathburn's mounting frustrations during this period are also symptomatic of broader tensions within the institution, which ultimately led to the collapse of the unit system and the restructuring of the production division in 1964.

## Conclusion

While Blackburn and Rathburn may have preferred to experiment with more avant-garde and experimental techniques (less so Fleming), the use of neoclassical and pastoral styles satisfied

[446] Ibid., "Notes on Film Scores: Sky," undated.
[447] Ibid., "Notes on Film Scores: Nobody Waved Goodbye," undated.
[448] Ibid., "Notes on Film Scores: Haida Carver," undated.

multiple demands within the NFB at this time, including the steady need for stylistically light, optimistic, and accessible music that could accompany a wide range of topics. These were idioms with which the staff composers were highly familiar, and could produce quickly and economically. This peculiar, woodwind-heavy aesthetic inadvertently became a house style, and is one of the most recognizable characteristics of NFB films from this era.

By the late-1950s, the NFB was undergoing another shift in vision and mandate, and the staff composers were increasingly able to negotiate more creative leeway in their work. Even as early as 1952, Rathburn claims he began to "shuck off some of the influences of the NFB sound," by experimenting with different styles (e.g., serialism, jazz, popular music idioms, etc.) and unorthodox instrumentation (i.e., using instruments outside the traditional orchestra, and often in unusual combinations).[449] While Rathburn's atonal approach to nature documentaries challenged the musical conventions of the genre, it was nonetheless retained despite considerable opposition from within the institution. Druick notes that innovative work at the NFB has often come from the creative rejection of its official mandate, and this is one such example.[450]

In 1954, Blackburn took another leave of absence from the NFB, this time to study with Pierre Schaeffer and the Group de Recherches Musicales at Radio-diffusion Télévision France.[451] Upon returning, Blackburn became more focused on electro-acoustic music and instruments, and together with McLaren they attempted to establish an electronic music studio at the NFB, however their request was denied by the NFB administration. Blackburn finally succeeded in opening an electroacoustic studio—the Atelier Sonore—in 1971. Had the Atelier Sonore been established in the early 1950s, as Blackburn and McLaren had hoped, it would have been the first of its kind in

[449] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991.
[450] Druick *Projecting Canada,* 183.
[451] Martial Robert, *Pierre Schaeffer: des transmission à Orphée : Communication et musique en France entre 1936 et 1986* (Paris : Harmattan, 1999).

Canada (the University of Toronto's electroacoustic studio was considered the first when it opened in 1959). However, by 1971, the NFB was behind the trend, and the Atelier Sonore was dismantled in 1979, following Blackburn's retirement. Nonetheless, in the difficult political context of the early postwar years, the NFB's government realist films provided not only an effective justification for the Board's continuing existence, but also a shield for an increasing amount of experimental activity that was being fostered within the institution.

# Chapter Four: The Music and Politics of *The Candid Eye*

## Introduction

In the late-1950s, a turn to vérité-style filmmaking at the NFB inspired a different and more eclectic approach to the soundtrack, which unsettled the pervasive "NFB Sound," and broadened the range of musical styles and creative use of sound in NFB films. One of the earliest and most notable experiments in observational filmmaking at the NFB was *The Candid Eye* series, an emergent form of direct cinema that aired on CBC television on Sundays at 5:30 pm in the fall of 1958 and 1959.[452] *The Candid Eye* is a series of fourteen half-hour observational-style documentaries produced by the NFB's celebrated Unit B, a small team of filmmakers whose collaborative work throughout the 1950s and 1960s won them numerous international awards and accolades. While the *Candid Eye* series is situated within a broader turn to observational filmmaking in postwar Europe and North America, it preceded the *cinéma vérité* movement of the 1960s by several years, and NFB filmmakers point to the British Free Cinema, Italian neorealism, and notably the photojournalism of Henri Cartier-Bresson—specifically, his philosophical reflections and collection of photographs published as *The Decisive Moment* (1952)—as inspiration for the series.[453]

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[452] The first season aired weekly in the following order: *Blood and Fire* (October 26), *A Foreign Language* (November 2), *Country Threshing* (November 9), *Pilgrimage* (November 16), *Memory of Summer* (November 23), *Police* (November 30), and *The Days Before Christmas* (December 7). The second season aired in the same time slot in the fall of 1959, although the episodes were broadcast more sporadically: *The End of the Line* (November 1), *Glenn Gould Off the Record* (November 22), *Glenn Gould On the Record* (November 29), *Emergency Ward* (December 6), *The Back-breaking Leaf* (December 13). Two more episodes that were ostensibly intended for the second season aired later: *The Cars in Your Life* (February 14, 1960) and *Festival in Puerto Rico,* which aired sometime in early 1961.

[453] R. Bruce Elder, *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1989), 103-4; Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 147-48; Stephen Mamber, *Cinema Vérité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974). A non-interventionist approach to observational filmmaking became known as 'direct cinema' in the 1960s, and was primarily associated with American filmmakers such as Robert Drew, D. A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, and Fred Wiseman, whereas French documentarians—notably Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin—

At the NFB, *The Candid Eye* was a catalyst for subsequent experiments in vérité, notably by filmmakers in the newly-formed French-language unit, which became an important foundation for the emergence of Québécois cinema in the 1960s.[454] While access to portable, lightweight television cameras were fundamental to the *Candid Eye* project, high-quality synchronous sound was still difficult to achieve, and the *Candid Eye* team made no firm commitment to using location sound exclusively. The soundtracks use a variety of diegetic and non-diegetic music, voice-over narration, extensive interviews, and creative sound design.

A striking feature of the series is the centrality of music. In many cases, the subject matter for the films seems to have been either deliberately chosen for its musical interest, or music was brought to the forefront during the production process. Music therefore plays an important role in framing the narratives, providing audiences with a preferred and at times overdetermined reading of the images, the interpretation of which might otherwise be left more ambiguous. While the approach to the *Candid Eye* series was a departure from earlier documentary techniques at the NFB*,* the subject matter and perspective remain consistent with government realism. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the soundtrack establishes the emotional tenor and preferred reading of the images, often foreclosing perspectives other than those of the dominant cultural narrative.

## The Observational Turn at the NFB

developed a different strategy by intervening in their films as agents provocateurs*,* a style that became known as *cinéma vérité.* While *Candid Eye* films are often positioned as somewhere in between direct cinema and *cinéma vérité,* they anticipated these developments in the US and France by several years, and are distinct from both.

[454] André Loiselle, *Le cinéma de Michel Brault : à l'image d'une nation* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2005).

The 1950s and 1960s are often referred to as the "Golden Years" of the NFB, during which the institution enjoyed a period of relative political and financial stability.[455] After facing an onslaught of allegations following the war—from harbouring communists to financial mismanagement—the NFB's continuing existence was secured in the early 1950s, the institution having received a strong endorsement from the Massey Commission, a positive review from Woods Gordon management consultants, and a renewed mandate from the government with the passing of a new Film Act in 1950.[456] With stable political and financial support, and in an atmosphere of postwar optimism, the NFB increased production, hired more personnel, and augmented its technical research programme. Plans were drawn up for a state-of-the-art facility in Montreal, which became the new NFB headquarters in 1956, and brought the entire operation under one roof.

This so-called Golden Age of the NFB coincided with the launch of Canadian television networks—the first domestic telecast was in April of 1952—which were initially controlled and regulated by the federally-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).[457] In anticipation of their expansion in this area, the NFB carried out considerable research on television production methods, purchased 16mm television cameras, and established a dedicated television production unit.[458] By the mid-1950s, half of all NFB productions were destined for television, their existing

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[455] Evans, *In the National Interest,* 49-90.

[456] Ira Wagman, "The Woods Gordon Report, Accountability, and the Postwar Reconstruction of the National Film Board of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2008); Canada, "An Act Respecting the National Film Board," *Statutes of Canada,* 1950.

[457] Coordinating with the CBC proved difficult for the NFB. CBC executives were preoccupied with lobbying the government for exclusive control over the national broadcasting system against the incursion of private broadcasters, and their relationship with the NFB was viewed as a low priority. CBC executives ultimately had limited enthusiasm for NFB films, citing their high cost, direct connection with the government, and concern that their corporate sponsors might object to the NFB's moralizing and "high-minded" social documentaries. See Marc Raboy, *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 95-108; David Hogarth, *Documentary Television in Canada: From National Public Service to Global Marketplace* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 24-5; Evans, *In the National Interest,* 26.

[458] Evans, *In the National Interest,* 70-73. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Sydney Newman fonds, Ross McLean to Newman, 13 May 1949; Newman to Ross, 14 May 1949. In May 1949, the NFB sent

film catalogue was being adapted for the small screen, and the challenge of producing content quickly and economically for television became an inspiration for technical and artistic innovation.[459] "Television was the excuse and also the opportunity," NFB executive producer Tom Daly claimed, describing how the new medium encouraged many NFB filmmakers to experiment with different techniques and formats.[460]

The core directorial team for *The Candid Eye* included Wolf Koenig, Roman Kroitor, Stanley Jackson, and Terrence Macartney-Filgate, with significant input and oversight from the unit's executive producer, Tom Daly. Inspired by the British Free Cinema Movement and the photojournalism of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Koenig and Kroitor proposed an experimental television series that would ostensibly capture everyday Canadian subjects *in situ,* unscripted, and with minimal interference.[461] *Candid Eye* films were an obvious break with the scripted, pedantic, commentary-driven documentaries that had become standard fare at the NFB and during the war and immediate afterwards. However, as Seth Feldman remarks, rather than drawing a sharp line between the didacticism of the earlier Griersonian style and the pretense of impartiality associated with the observational mode, the variety of documentary techniques used in *The Candid Eye* is

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Sydney Newman—executive producer of its flagship theatrical series *Canada Carries On*—to NBC studios in New York on a year-long paid leave to learn various aspects of television production hands-on. The NFB also sent director Grant McLean on a similar (though shorter) assignment to study television production methods in the UK Prior to his year-long sabbatical, Newman also spent a week in New York in September 1948 touring various television studios and produced several reports for the NFB. See LAC, Sydney Newman Fonds, Newman, "A Day at a Television Studio," 27 September 1948; Newman, "Standards for Films Designed for Television," 28 September 1948.

[459] Evans, *In the National Interest*, 40.

[460] Peter Harcourt, "The Innocent Eye: An Aspect of the Work of the National Film Board of Canada," *Sight and Sound* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1964-65): 21.

[461] Sarah Jennings, "An Interview with Terence Macartney-Filgate," in *The Canadian Film Reader,* edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: P. Martin Associates, 1977), 78; Tammy Stone, "Candid Eye, Lonely Boy & Unit B: Take One's Interview with Wolf Koenig," *Take One* 37 (May/June 2022). Macartney-Filgate recalls that a screening of the Free Cinema film *Momma Don't Allow* (Karl Reisz, 1956) at the NFB in 1956 was revelatory for him and other Unit B filmmakers, and was an inspiration for *The Candid Eye*. Around the same time, Koenig brought Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* to the attention of his colleagues in Unit B, and insisted they attempt a similar idea with film.

more akin to the eclecticism of late twentieth-century documentary style than to the purist vérité rhetoric that developed in the 1960s.[462]

A striking feature of *The Candid Eye* series is the centrality of music. In many cases, the subject matter for the films seems to have been either deliberately chosen for its musical interest, or music was brought to the forefront during the production process. Whereas the rejection of traditional musical underscoring and exclusive use of synchronized location sound became defining principles of direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* on the grounds that these elements were thought to unfairly manipulate the audience and interfere with the direct representation of events, the *Candid Eye* team made no firm commitment to using synchronous location sound exclusively. In some cases, *Candid Eye* crews staged scenes—even shot an entire film (*A Foreign Language,* 1958)—in the NFB's studios to increase sound intelligibility, thus sacrificing the principles of vérité filmmaking in favour of Hollywood-style realism. For two films where the subject matter was not inherently musical (*Police* and *The Back-Breaking Leaf*), the team brought in Rathburn to provide more traditional underscoring. Compared to earlier NFB documentaries, there is a greater emphasis on source music in *Candid Eye* films, particularly live performances. Amateur and professional musical performances are foregrounded throughout the series, as are scenes of communal singing and music-making. Furthermore, the series also includes three early music documentaries, a genre that became a major strand of documentary filmmaking in the 1960s.[463] For these films, the team deviated from their usual subject matter by profiling two Canadian classical musicians whose international careers were launched in the mid-1950s. There are two

[462] Seth Feldman, "*The Days Before Christmas* and the Days Before That," in *Candid Eyes: Essays on Canadian Documentaries,* edited by Jim Leach and Jeanette Sloniowski (University of Toronto Press, 2003), 45.
[463] Michael Chanan, "Music, Documentary, Music Documentary," *The Documentary Film Book,* edited by Brian Winston (London: British Film Institute, 2013), 337-44; Baker, "The Curious Case of *Wilf:* Popular Music in Canadian Documentary," 210-17.

films on the virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould. *Glenn Gould On the Record* captures a session at Columbia Recording Studios in New York, and *Glenn Gould Off the Record* follows Gould around his cottage on Lake Simcoe where he practices, decompresses from his demanding professional schedule, and is interviewed on-camera about various aspects of his life. The series finale, *Festival in Puerto Rico,* follows classical contralto Maureen Forrester as she prepares to perform at Festival Casals in Puerto Rico. It is a music travelogue, a subgenre of the music documentary where the structuring principle is the tour. Although it was not officially part of the series, *Lonely Boy* (1962)—a profile of Canadian-born singer-songwriter Paul Anka—was considered a capstone for the *Candid Eye* project, and a culmination of the techniques the team had developed. *Lonely Boy* is recognized as a canonical documentary, whereas other *Candid Eye* films have fallen into relative obscurity.

## Government Realism, Unit B, and the Perspective of *The Candid Eye*

In his frequently cited article, "The Innocent Eye," Peter Harcourt describes Unit B's work, including *The Candid Eye* series, as having "a quality of suspended judgment, of something left open at the end, of something undecided."[464] Harcourt finds something "Canadian" about a perspective that is "rather detached from the immediate pressures of existence." Similarly, R. Bruce Elder describes the perspective of *The Candid Eye* as issuing "from a form of consciousness that is so alienated from the world that its sole activity is passive observation."[465] While Elder uses the term naïve realism to characterize the *Candid Eye* perspective, I maintain that Druick's concept of government realism more effectively captures the institutional context that informs and

[464] Harcourt, "The Innocent Eye," 21.
[465] Elder, *Image and Identity,* 115.

encourages the NFB's idiosyncratic portrayal of Canadian society.[466] Similar to earlier NFB documentaries, *Candid Eye* films deliberately seek out the mundane and unexceptional, and tend to generalize from particulars rather than investigating the specificity of any particular incident. Contrary to the "crisis-structure" adopted by American pioneers of direct cinema, whose films are typically organized around a significant event or climactic moment, *Candid Eye* documentaries are relatively uneventful and impressionistic, prioritizing the conveyance of mood and atmosphere over the systematic development and resolution of thematic material.[467] The detached, unhurried, and impersonal quality of *Candid Eye* films that Harcourt conflates with a generalized Canadian perspective, can be more readily attributed to its institutional origins, and the middle-class Anglo-Canadian perspective of Unit B.

While the observational approach was a departure from standard documentary techniques, the subject matter for the *Candid Eye* continued to reflect the postwar preoccupations of the Canadian government, such as citizenship, immigration, education, infrastructure, social welfare, and labour-management relations. Of the fourteen episodes in the series, three explicitly survey the routine functioning of public institutions: *Police* (1958) depicts the quotidian work of the Toronto Metropolitan Police; *Emergency Ward* (1959) captures a typical overnight shift in the emergency department at the Montreal General Hospital; and immigrant children are filmed learning English at school in *A Foreign Language* (1958). Three films have overtly religious themes: *Blood and Fire* (1958) describes the work of the Salvation Army in downtown Montreal; *Pilgrimage* (1958) tells the story of Brother André and the pilgrims who visit St. Joseph's Oratory on Mont-Royal; and *The Days Before Christmas* (1958) captures various aspects of the Christmas

[466] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 24-8.
[467] Winston, *Claiming the Real*, 153; Stephen Mamber, *Cinema Vérité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974).

season in Montreal. Another two films are specifically on agricultural work: *The Back-breaking Leaf* (1959) provides a snapshot of migrant workers harvesting tobacco in southern Ontario; and *Country Threshing* (1958) shows the daily routine of a farming family in Québec. Transportation technologies and infrastructure are also prominent themes, reflecting a perennial concern of the Canadian government, and enduring mythology that a unified national culture could be produced through large-scale infrastructure projects.[468] *The End of the Line* (1959) is a nostalgic film about the decline of the steam engine and a subculture of railway enthusiasts, while *The Cars in Your Life* (1960) adopts an irreverent attitude towards intensifying car culture in North America. *Memory of Summer* (1958) is a personal film essay written and narrated by Stanley Jackson, who investigates the experience of childhood by filming children taking part in various summer activities.

In keeping with the principles of government realism, *Candid Eye* narratives depict Canadian society as well-managed, peaceful, prosperous, and equitable: public institutions are functional and impartial (e.g., *Police, Emergency Ward, A Foreign Language*); workers might endure grueling conditions but are fairly compensated (e.g., *The Back-breaking Leaf, Country Threshing*); and Christian religious institutions provide comfort and care to the community (e.g., *Pilgrimage, Blood and Fire*). Despite the pretense of capturing unfiltered reality onscreen, from the choice of subject matter to the meticulous editing, the films studiously avoid unsympathetic characters, harsh realities, and political controversy. The series similarly embodies the ethos of "peace, order, and good government."

Inspired by the prospect of capturing Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" on film, and their dissatisfaction with the NFB's current television programs, Koenig and Kroitor proposed a

[468] Maurice Charland, "Technological Nationalism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 10, no. 1-2 (1986): 196-220.

project that would, in Koenig's words, "put the real world on film—sound and image—in order to help people become more aware of their community and the world they lived in."[469] Compared to the NFB's scripted television docudramas and on-the-spot reports, theirs would be a more engaging and artfully produced series that would "make the audience laugh and cry…and change the world by making people realize that life is real, beautiful, and meaningful."[470] Daly shrewdly translated their enthusiasm to the NFB's upper management as a series "devoted to Canadian character in its various moods and aspects."[471] To obtain permission and funding, Daly presented the Program Committee with a long list of thirty-two possible subjects, asking them to prioritize fifteen, from which the team would choose seven for the first season.[472] Therefore, while the filmmakers may have set out with neither a script nor a detailed shooting plan, the subjects had been vetted in advance and approved by management.

By the late 1950s, Unit B had produced a series of critically acclaimed films that were featured at high-profile film festivals.[473] Their success afforded them more creative leeway and discretionary funding within the institution, which management could justify on the basis that their work was bringing prestige to the NFB, and to Canada. Unlike the NFB's other television crews (and unlike conventional television production), Unit B was routinely given lenient deadlines and extra funding to finish projects according to their standards. In most cases, *Candid Eye* films took months to complete, and consistently exceeded their budgets.[474] For example, the crew spent a

[469] Stone, "Candid Eye, Lonely Boy & Unit B," 36.
[470] Wolf Koenig, "A Note on 'Candid Eye,'" In *How Not to Make a Canadian Film,* edited by André Pâquet (Montreal: Cinémathèque Québécoise, 1967), unpaginated.
[471] NFBA, "Daly to Roberge: Notes on Material to Christmas Comes to Montreal." 18 March 1958.
[472] Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*, 68.
[473] Unit B's award-winning films include *Neighbours* (1952), *The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1952), *Corral* (1954), and *City of Gold* (1957).
[474] NFBA, *The Cars in Your Life* production file, Kroitor to Mulholland, 24 July 1959.

month shooting footage at the Montreal General Hospital for *Emergency Ward*,[475] six weeks editing the *Glenn Gould* films,[476] and after spending most of their budget for *The Cars in Your Life* by mid-summer 1959—at which point Kroitor estimated that they had only half of the necessary material—they were still scheduling interviews and asking for additional funds three months later.[477] *The Cars in Your Life* was ostensibly shot for the second season, which aired weekly from late-October to December 1959, however it was not broadcast until February 14, 1960. As long as their films were well-received and management was satisfied, Unit B was allowed to work relatively autonomously and with generous financial support. Consequently, filmmakers in other units complained that there were seemingly no rewards for respecting budgets and delivering films on-time.[478] There were also complaints that Unit B was able to avoid sponsored work, which then fell to other units. These tensions contributed to the demise of the NFB's unit system in 1964, and the reorganization of English production in a way that gave directors the freedom to form their own filmmaking teams and pursue personal projects without being confined within the rigid structure of the earlier film units.[479]

Although Macartney-Filgate and Koenig were inspired by early observational films in Britain, such as Lindsay Anderson's *Thursday's Children* (1954) and Karl Reisz's *Momma Don't Allow* (1956), the auteur-driven ethos of the British Free Cinema Movement was markedly

[475] Scott MacDonald and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission* (Columbia University Press, 2021), 44.
[476]NFBA, *Glenn Gould* production file, Koenig to Burton, 2 December 1960; "Completion Schedule," 5 June 1959.
[477] NFBA, *The Cars in Your Life* production file, Kroitor to Donald Mulholland, 24 July 59; Kroitor to Grant McLean, 12 November 1959.
[478] Jones, *Movies and Memoranda,* 78-9. Jones quotes several anonymous sources to this effect.
[479] Evans, *In the National Interest,* 92; 354 fn 6; Jones, *Movies and Memoranda,* 111-15; 124-38. While the new organizational structure (the "pool system") was supposedly more democratic and afforded directors more authority and creative leeway, it was in many ways more complicated, bureaucratic, and problematic than the unit system and only lasted seven years.

different from the highly collaborative approach of Unit B (although Unit B developed a distinctive collective aesthetic). Members of Unit B frequently switched roles, deliberated together throughout the process, and had uncompromising technical and artistic standards, all of which translated into long working hours within a largely male space. In this sense, Unit B's approach and ethos were very similar to those of the GPO Film Unit in the 1930s. *Candid Eye* films are overwhelmingly centered around the opinions, interests, and concerns of white Anglo-Canadian men, and shot from this perspective. Although the series was primarily filmed in Montreal, Québécois culture is marginalized, non-white ethnicities are excluded or portrayed stereotypically, and women are peripheral with limited agency and depicted in traditional gender roles. The normative Canadian identity is presented as white, heteronormative, male, Anglophone, and Christian, and this perspective is universalized throughout the series.

## Technical Production, Personnel, and Sync Sound

The observational turn coincided with (and in some cases accelerated) the development of portable cameras and synchronized sound recorders, making it possible to film on location more discreetly and with greater mobility. While the exclusive use of portable cameras and synchronous location sound became a principle of vérité filmmaking in the 1960s, access to portable, lightweight cameras was more significant to *The Candid Eye* project than sync sound. The NFB purchased portable 16mm cameras in the early 1950s—notably the Auricon 1200 and Arriflex S—for early reportage-style television programs for the CBC such as *On the Spot* (1953-55) and *Perspective* (1955-58).[480] Although they were cheaper than the standard 35mm film stock, NFB personnel routinely complained about wasted time and money primarily due to poor sound quality and an

[480] Evans, *In the National Interest,* 71.

increasing amount of unusable footage.[481] This prompted the NFB's technical division to build a higher quality portable sync sound recorder, the Sprocketape,[482] which the NFB's television units were using as early as January 1956, several years before similar equipment was available commercially.[483] However, according to Koenig and Macartney-Filgate, despite the new in-house sound recorders, *Candid Eye* crews did not in fact use sync sound as extensively as it may have appeared. Even during the second season, Macartney-Filgate remarks that the sound equipment was barely portable, and it was difficult to capture adequate quality sound on location.[484] Instead, *Candid Eye* crews relied primarily on the Arriflex, a noisy but lightweight handheld camera that afforded considerable mobility, and the Auricon, a television camera with low-quality sync sound that was much heavier and less portable.[485] Initially, they used the non-sync, heavy, suitcase-sized Maihak sound recorder alongside 16mm cameras to capture ambient "wild" sounds, which could be synched with the images later.[486] As Koenig explained in an interview with *Take One* magazine, "the sound recordist picked up a lot of ambient sound and, with careful picture and sound-editing, we got it to look as if the material was in sync."[487] The Sprocketape recorders and other portable commercial sound recording equipment such as the Nagra III were only used in the second season,

[481] NFBA, "Sprocketape" by Gerald Graham, 20 September 1955. This document summarizes problems with the Auricon, which were primarily related to sound, and explains how the newly designed Sprocketape recorder solves these issues and is more cost-effective.
[482] NFBA, "Magnetic Recording of Audio Frequencies – The Sprocketape Recording System," by Chester Beachell, undated. As the main engineer and manager for the project, Chester Beachell was awarded $1,000 by the Canadian government in 1956 for the invention of the Sprocketape recorder.
[483] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 146-7. In the 1960s, the industry standard in vérité filmmaking became the Kudelski Nagra III sound recorder attached to the Éclair NPR. While prototypes of the Éclair and Nagra were released in the late-1950s, they did not become widely available until the early 1960s.
[484] Jennings, "An Interview with Terence Macartney-Filgate, 80-81.
[485] Jones, *The Best Butler in the Business,* 83. A significant drawback to the Auricon was that it reportedly recorded sound twenty-six frames ahead of the image, which limited detailed editing work, and was therefore not ideal for the series.
[486] Ibid.; Evans, *In the National Interest,* 71.
[487] Stone, "Candid Eye, Lonely Boy & Unit B," 37.

and not consistently.[488] Therefore, technical innovations in portable sync sound at the NFB were largely made in response to budgetary issues related to their early television series rather than the aesthetic demands of the *Candid Eye* team.[489]

Although the idea of presenting a spontaneous, unembellished version of reality remained the guiding rhetoric, *Candid Eye* films were largely constructed in the editing process, which was extensive and time-consuming given the high shooting ratios.[490] Daly's expertise is particularly notable here. Having trained during the war with Stuart Legg, Daly was adept at piecing together compilation films from large quantities of international newsreel footage, and finding disparate sounds to match the images to create plausible narrative sequences. The approach to *The Candid Eye* is reminiscent of these earlier techniques in that it involved sifting through large quantities of footage and cleverly matching sound and images together to produce the illusion that an unmanipulated and unbroken continuous reality had been captured. Koenig describes some of the routine tricks they used: "you know, the guy talking on the phone, shot so that you couldn't see his mouth move and editing his voice over the picture…the editor uses the ideal shot rather than the exact, matching moment."[491] It was common enough for voices and images to be mismatched, conversations truncated or rearranged, and shots spliced together from takes that were filmed on different days. "Every cut is a lie," Koenig noted, "one has to lie to tell the truth, otherwise the

[488] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico, Glenn Gould* production files. The sound equipment lists for these films include Sprocketape recorders and Nagras, as well as the much heavier Westrex multitrack recorder that was stationed in the concert hall to capture Forrester's performance. See also Stone, "Candid Eye, Lonely Boy & Unit B," 36.
[489] Feldman, *The Days Before Christmas and the Days Before That,* 36-7. On this point, Feldman cites an unpublished essay by Peter Morris, "The Origins of Direct Cinema: Technology, Economics, Aesthetics," who draws the same conclusion.
[490] NFBA, *Glenn Gould* production file, Koenig to Burton, 2 December 1960. In a letter to the BBC's Humphrey Burton explaining the team's technical equipment and approach, Koenig estimated that the shooting ratio for the series was between 15:1 and 20:1.
[491] Stone, "Candid Eye, Lonely Boy & Unit B," 37.

audience would die of boredom or the truth would be smothered under a mountain of chaff."[492] While shaky camera shots and low-quality audio came to signify authenticity in subsequent forms of vérité filmmaking, this was not the approach to *Candid Eye* films, which were meticulously edited and had a highly polished look.

Within the NFB's organizational structure, the sound and camera departments came under the technical operations division, which managed the assignment of technical personnel. While it was not common practice, in a memorandum to management in the spring of 1958, Koenig insisted that specific camera operators be permanently assigned to *The Candid Eye* since the team wanted not only consistency but also personnel who were interested in filming on location without a shooting schedule or script.[493] In other words, the directorial team wanted personnel who shared their artistic vision, working methods, and were inclined to experiment. Koenig's request was basically met: a regular team of technical personnel worked on *The Candid Eye,* and were integral to the process, making significant creative contributions that shaped the meaning of the films. Ron Alexander was a senior recording and mixing engineer for the series, and almost certainly the first full-time professional Black employee hired at the NFB. Alexander joined the NFB in 1948, and remained on staff throughout the 1960s until he was offered a professorship at Stanford University in 1970. Kathleen Shannon, who later founded the feminist Studio D, was one of the main sound editors for *The Candid Eye*. Celebrated Québécois filmmakers Michel Brault and Georges Dufaux began their careers as cinematographers for *The Candid Eye,* and promptly developed their own style of vérité filmmaking within the French side of the institution. While there was considerably more diversity among the technical personnel than on the directorial team, this did not translate into a diversity of perspectives onscreen.

[492] Ibid.
[493] Jones, *The Best Butler in the Business,* 85.

## Support from the Music Department

While it is perhaps counterintuitive that the music department should play an important role in the turn to observational cinema at the NFB, the *Candid Eye* crews worked closely with music personnel throughout the process. The music department was involved in securing copyright permissions, handling union issues, music editing, as well as providing original scores and coordinating recording sessions. At the end of the first season, Kroitor expressed his gratitude on behalf of the *Candid Eye* team in a memo to Fleming, who had recently taken over the music directorship:

> Through all the Candid Eye series the work the Music Department did for us was terrific, and we want to express our thanks for it. As you very well know, it sometimes involved rather unorthodox methods, and incredibly short notice, but in our opinion the results were first-rate. It is very pleasing to feel supported in such a fashion.[494]

As music director, Fleming was responsible for obtaining copyright permissions, and making sure there were no conflicts with the musicians' union for performances captured on film. For example, in *Glenn Gould – Off the Record,* Gould plays a short excerpt from Anton Webern's Variations for Piano, Opus 27 to illustrate a claim he makes about Webern's personality. However, Webern's work was not in the public domain, therefore the NFB had to pay a licensing fee for the twenty-five second excerpt, which Fleming coordinated.[495] Similarly, the NFB had to license two carols, "Golden Sheaves" and "Thanksgiving Carol," that were recorded by the George Little Singers for the NFB and used as non-diegetic music in *Country Threshing.*[496] Two films—*Police* and *The Back-breaking Leaf*—have original scores composed by Rathburn. For *The End of the Line,* Pete

[494] NFBA, *Police* production file, Kroitor to Fleming, 1 December 1958.
[495] NFBA, *Glenn Gould* production file, Fox to Fleming, 13 August 1959.
[496] NFBA, *Country Threshing* production file, "Purchase Order: Sound Film Music Bureau, Ltd.," 26 February 1959.

Seeger and Sonny Terry were invited to the NFB to record songs specifically for the film while they were passing through Montreal on tour.[497]

Other films in the series use commercial recordings and copyrighted music, for which permissions for television broadcast were required. In some cases, ethnic folk and popular music was recorded on location and seemingly used without consent or acknowledgement.[498] In contrast, whenever union musicians were involved, the music department made sure to obtain permissions. In a letter to American Federation of Musicians' executive Walter Murdoch regarding the possibility of recording the Salvation Army brass band, director of production Donald Mulholland asks for permission to record the band free of charge given that the musicians would not be required to do anything beyond their regular activities, and because the NFB was not a commercial agency seeking to profit from the recording.[499] Mulholland concludes by mentioning that there will be "certain incidental bits of music in the film and these will be scored in the usual way by professional musicians." While Mulholland may simply have been emphasizing the NFB's support for the union, it also establishes that the filmmakers were not strictly committed to location sound.[500]

## Music as Structuring Principle

[497] NFBA, *Lines Horizontal* production file, "Notes on the Music of the film Lines Horizontal composed and played by Pete Seeger, folk musician," September 1960. Norman McLaren invited Pete Seeger to view his latest animated film, *Lines Vertical,* when Seeger was at the NFB recording music for *The End of the Line.* Seeger subsequently agreed to write and record music for McLaren's next project, *Lines Horizontal,* which was recorded for in Seeger's home studio in Beacon, New York with equipment and personnel provided by the NFB.
[498] Ostensibly, these performances were not protected by copyright laws, therefore the NFB did not pursue the issue.
[499] NFBA, *Blood and Fire* production file, Mulholland to Murdoch, 28 May 1958.
[500] Ibid.

Unlike many American-style verité works that are structured around a crisis or competition, *Candid Eye* films tend to be impressionistic and there is often no obvious dramatic narrative. In the absence of a conventional organizing principle, musical performances often become focal points, providing not only visual interest but also temporal structures for sequences of disparate images. Music from performances onscreen is often used trans-diegetically (i.e., diegetic source music that becomes either extra-diegetic or non-diegetic, and vice versa).[501] In these cases, the images are edited to fit the musical structures. Therefore, music not only establishes continuity between scenes, it is also used as an organizing principle. This technique is especially notable in the first two productions, *The Days Before Christmas* and *Blood and Fire*.[502]

*The Days Before Christmas* begins with an Anglican men and boys choir singing "O Come All Ye Faithful" as the camera pans across a church ceiling and Jackson briefly describes the topic of the film: "A North American metropolis, speaking two languages, prepares for its most festive season—Montreal in the days before Christmas." The camera stops on the stained-glass windows as the title appears, and then cuts to the choir rehearsing. The choir finishes the piece, and the director coaches them before moving on to the next carol, "Ding Dong Merrily on High." He stops them again, providing further instructions, and when they resume singing, the visual track shifts to shots of crowds and heavy traffic in downtown Montreal. The choir is mixed with light traffic sounds, and the camera quickly focuses on a woman on the sidewalk ringing a handbell, soliciting

[501] Henry M. Taylor, "Discourses on *Diegesis*: The Success Story of a Misnomer," *Offscreen* 11, no. 8/9 (August/September 2007); Aaron Hunter, "When is the Now in the Here and There: Trans-diegetic Music in Hal Ashby's Coming Home," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 3 (Summer 2012). Taylor defines trans-diegetic as "sound's propensities to cross the border of the diegetic to the non-diegetic and remaining unspecific."

[502] Although they were not aired in this order, these were the first two films produced in the series, which may account for the similar filming and editing style. *The Days Before Christmas* was shot in December 1957 and aired a year later on December 7, 1958. *Blood and Fire* was shot in the spring of 1958 and aired on October 26, 1958.

charitable donations. Although not entirely consonant with the opening scene involving the choir, the sound of the woman's handbell and the choir's carol "Ding Dong Merrily on High" connects the two scenes musically. The images shift to scenes of a busy shopping mall, which are underscored by the choir until the piece comes to an end.

Precisely the same structure is repeated half-way through the film. However, this time it is a French-language choir rehearsing the "Gloria" from the Catholic mass. Again, their rehearsal functions trans-diegetically before and after they appear onscreen. In this case, however, the choir is pictured rehearsing for three full minutes before the images shift again to wintery urban street scenes until the piece comes to an end. The final minutes of the film are also underscored by a choir singing an Anglican carol, however this time the music is entirely non-diegetic, with no choir onscreen. Over the choir, Jackson recites a stanza from the Elizabethan carol "The Praise of Christmas," which emphasizes peace and forgiveness, and is presented as the final message of the film. Altogether, church choirs underscore approximately one third of the film, and are used to structure these scenes. Music is not edited to fit the images, rather the images are edited such that they fit within the structure of the music.

The opening sequence of *Blood and Fire* is nearly identical in structure to *The Days Before Christmas.* The film opens with a busy urban street scene as Jackson briefly introduces the topic in his characteristically understated manner: "In this city marches an army whose motto is blood and fire." This is underscored by a mid-tempo march, which in the next scene is revealed as the Salvation Army brass band in rehearsal. The conductor stops the band, coaches them, and they resume. They move on to another piece, the Christian evangelical hymn "Blessed Assurance," and the music continues while the images change from an indoor rehearsal to the band performing in a downtown parking lot, where a crowd has gathered around them. When the music ends, a

preacher takes over the microphone, followed by a woman reading from scripture, and then a public invitation for everyone to attend the Salvation Army service. The brass band is filmed again at an Army service, performing the British-style march, "To Regents Fair," by the British-born Canadian Bandmaster Norman Bearcroft. The scene quickly cuts to an outdoor shot where the camera follows two Army officers walking down the street. Initially, we only see a close-up of their shoes as they walk in perfect time with the march tempo (i.e., mickey-mousing). When their steps begin to fall out of sync, the camera pans upward, filming them from the waist up with copies of *The War Cry* (the Army's official news publication) under their arms. The camera cuts to another pair of officers crossing the street in the distance, similarly walking in time with the music. They enter a tavern and begin to circulate around collecting donations from the bar's patrons in exchange for a newspaper, all underscored by the march. Jackson interjects with an explanation about the history and content of the newspaper, and the camera cuts to another officer walking in time with the music, this time marching up a set of stairs to a prison. As he walks through the cell block, the march transitions to the softer, more lyrical Trio section, and it is timed such that he arrives at the cell of the inmate he is visiting at the end of the eight-bar Trio. "To Regent's Fair" is reprised in the closing scene where the Army band is filmed parading in downtown Montreal. The camera follows the band down the street, and then gradually pans out as the credits roll and the music fades. In both films, the music connects the Christian churches and Salvation Army with the broader community, implying the wide reach of these institutions. It establishes the soundscape of Montreal as decidedly white and Christian, implying that this is not only the normative identity of the city, but also of the nation.

### Racial Politics: *Police* and *The Back-breaking Leaf*

In a memo to Fleming, Kroitor singled out Rathburn's music for *Police* as "perhaps the most spectacular case" of assistance from the music department, and the filmmaking team was "astounded and delighted by the results."[503] The decision to add music came at the last-minute, and Rathburn was only given twenty-four hours to write and record a score. Daly praised Rathburn's "capacity to come through marvellously in a pinch," suggesting that the film was unsatisfactory in its present state, and the team was hoping music might help solve the problem.[504] Daly brought Rathburn's music for *Police* to the attention of the Film Commissioner in a substantial memo:

> Before this year's Candid Eye series gets too far into the vague past, I want to put on record what we consider to be a triumph of musical taste and ingenuity, namely, Eldon Rathburn's performance on the music for the Police film. On a Wednesday afternoon he sat down with the boys to see the film and discuss the music. The music had to be recorded on Thursday evening the day following. In that very short time Eldon had composed a theme representing the police element, and a 10-section score of ten variations on this theme, ready for recording by a group of musicians who could improvise. Eldon had worked each part of the score in seconds, marking everything that had to be accented, breaking it down into so many bars at such and such a tempo, and marking the chord harmony for each bar. There was no time to write the melody for each part. The orchestra simply had to improvise from this structure under Eldon's direction. The result was excellent in every way. It fitted beautifully, was very apt for the picture it went with, and is one of the noticeable positive contributions to the film. Besides which, the players had a wonderful time.[505]

Notably, Daly describes Rathburn's score as "a triumph of musical taste and ingenuity," that was "very apt for the picture it went with, and is one of the noticeable positive contributions to the film." Evidently, Rathburn's score exceeded the team's expectations in establishing the appropriate tone and atmosphere. By the late-1950s, Rathburn had become Unit B's go-to composer, having scored many of their most successful films, including *The Romance of*

[503] NFBA, *Police* production file. "Daly to Guy Roberge, Donald Mulholland, and Robert Fleming, Re: Candid Eye – Police." 11 December 1958.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.

*Transportation in Canada, Corral, City of Gold,* and *It's a Crime.* [506] Rathburn was the only staff composer who had experience playing and arranging popular music, which he occasionally incorporated into his film work, and often for Unit B's films.[507]

Given the time constraints, Rathburn's solution for *Police* was to compose a theme and variations for jazz ensemble. This was a departure from his usual working methods, which were based in classical idioms and fully notated. The theme and variations for *Police* are written in a cool jazz style and scored for clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, electric guitar, piano, vibraphone, and classical percussion.[508] Cool jazz—a genre that emerged in the late-1940s and became an important branch of modern jazz in the 1950s—is characterized by laidback tempos, subtle dynamics, softer timbres, lyricism, economy of means in soloing, and a revival of

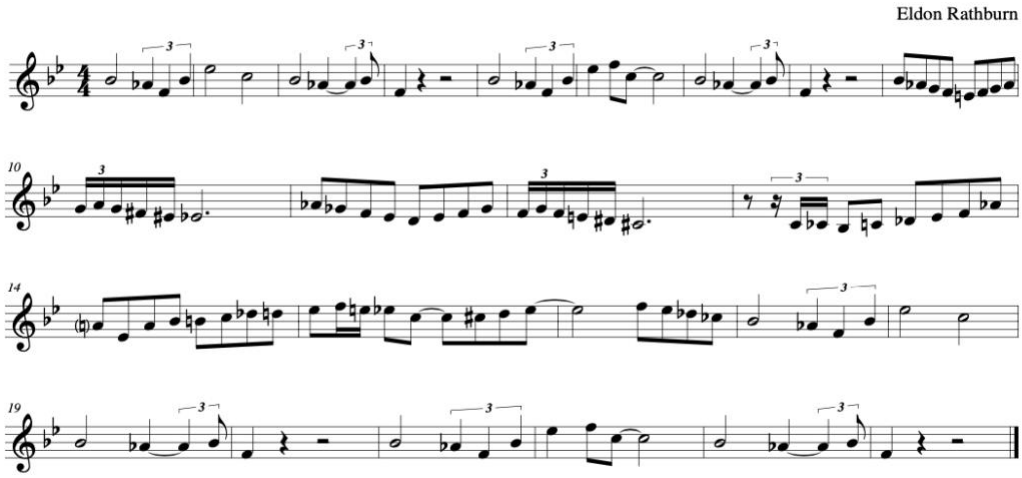


Figure 8 – Main Theme, *Police.* Transcribed by the author.

[506] New Brunswick Public Archives (NBPA), Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes on NFB Personnel," undated. Since Unit B notoriously deliberated as a group, Rathburn referred to them as "The Committee." While he found that their collective process generally produced good results, in his personal notes, Rathburn expressed frustration that when The Committee was dissatisfied with his scoring, it was typically because they had failed to provide him with clear directions.

[507] Prior to joining the NFB, Rathburn toured as a pianist with Canadian country folk musician Don Messer, and was a pianist and arranger for Bruce Holder's Radio Orchestra and dance band in Saint John, New Brunswick.

[508] NFBA, *Police* production file. "Transportation of Instruments for Recording Session." 6 November, 1958.

counterpoint and collective improvisation. There is often crossover with neoclassical idioms, such as the use of orchestral instruments, classical forms, and contrapuntal textures. The theme for *Police* is quintessentially "cool" in its relaxed tempo, behind-the-beat feel, and stepwise lyrical melody (Figure 8). While the concept of theme and variations is more conventional in Western classical music than in jazz, the main theme's twenty-four bar ternary (ABA) form is a fairly typical structure for improvisation in a jazz context. The judicious soloing, classical percussion and relatively minimal use of drums softens the overall timbre. Vibraphone is another hallmark of the cool jazz sound, and Rathburn specifically cites the influence of pianist George Shearing, whose ensembles prominently featured vibraphone during this era.[509] The theme music for the second season of *The Candid Eye* (retitled *Documentary 60*) is also a short piece of cool jazz composed by Rathburn. The vibraphone is featured prominently, making it a kind of signature sound for the series.

By the late-1950s, cool jazz had become part of American popular culture and was generally coded as white by the mainstream industry, especially in comparison with other styles associated with Black aesthetics, such as hard bop and soul jazz.[510] Although cool jazz was neither regionally specific nor exclusively white, the mainstream industry and critics eagerly promoted white jazz musicians working in this style, many of whom were based in California—notably Gerry Mulligan, Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond, Chet Baker, George Shearing, Shelly Manne, and Jimmy Giuffre. Cool jazz therefore became associated with the West Coast, and widely-held

[509] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991. The pioneering Modern Jazz Quartet (formed in 1952) featured Milt Jackson on vibraphone. George Shearing's original quintet (formed in 1949) featured Marjorie Hyams on vibraphone. Vibraphonist Cal Tjader frequently played in Shearing and Dave Brubeck's ensembles.

[510] Kelsey A. Klotz, *Dave Brubeck and the Performance of Whiteness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Mark C. Gridley, "Clarifying Labels: Cool Jazz, West Coast and Hard Bop," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 2, No. 2 (1990): 8-16.

notions of its laidback lifestyle, although many musicians contested this connection. While jazz was still a predominantly Black field, Dave Brubeck was famously featured on the cover of *Time Magazine* in 1954 and described as "the most exciting new jazz artist" and a forerunner of a "new jazz age." The *Time* article emphasizes Brubeck's straight-edge lifestyle, Christianity, commitment to his family, and wholesome rural upbringing as indicative of this new era of jazz, one that was antithetical to the enduring racial stereotypes of Black jazz musicians as promiscuous, hedonistic, immoral, urban-dwelling, aggressive, and drug-addicted. While jazz was being recast by the mainstream industry as intellectual, respectable, and appropriate for white audiences, the industry still maintained segregationist policies throughout the 1950s, denying Black musicians access to white union-controlled venues, including film and television work.[511]

It is difficult to identify the musicians who recorded *Police* with certainty, however the NFB exclusively hired union musicians, and primarily members of the Toronto and Montreal symphony orchestras. For his previous jazz-inspired scores—*The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1952) and *Fish Spoilage Control* (1956)—Rathburn hired members of the CBC's radio variety show "The Happy Gang," including Bert Niosi, a bandleader and multi-instrumentalist known as Canada's then "King of Swing."[512] Niosi, along with his brothers Joe Niosi (bass) and Johnny Niosi (drums), can be heard on *Police* and the aforementioned films, as well as Ellis McLintock (principal trumpet for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra), Teddy Roderman

[511] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 73; Klotz, *Dave Brubeck and the Performance of Whiteness*, 17; Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 242.
[512] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 29 March 1991; NBPA, Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes of Film Scores," undated. The Happy Gang variety show aired on CBC radio from 1937 to 1959. Rathburn mentions several times hiring the musicians from this show.

(trombone), and Jimmy Namaro (vibraphone).[513] The other musicians were most likely drawn from the symphony and local dance bands, and would have been almost certainly white.[514]

Rathburn's stylistic choices clearly reflect popular trends in American film and television music. Jazz was already associated with film noir, and became the signature sound for police and detective series in the 1950s.[515] The most direct influence on Rathburn may have been Henry Mancini's music for the detective series *Peter Gunn,* which premiered on NBC in September 1958, only a few months before *Police*. Rathburn and Mancini were both driven by financial and time constraints. For *Peter Gunn,* Mancini put together a jazz band of approximately a dozen players, which was considerably cheaper than the typical film studio orchestra.[516] Mancini's instrumentation was unusual, often featuring bass and alto flutes, and the rhythm section included a vibraphone. *Peter Gunn* fuses pop music and cool jazz, and Mancini routinely hired notable West Coast jazz musicians, including Shelly Manne (drums), Robert Lang (saxophone), Pete Candoli (trumpet), and Milt Bernhardt (trombone).[517]

As it does in *Peter Gunn* and other popular detective series*,* the cool jazz score in *Police* connotes modern urban life and the suaveness of the police officers, who are the protagonists in the film.[518] Over Rathburn's opening theme, Stanley Jackson's calm, matter-of-fact commentary summarizes the film's general perspective on policing:

> Every five seconds, somewhere in metropolitan Toronto, a call for the police. An accident, a child hurt, help needed. The great bulk of police work is undramatic, routine: somebody

[513] Rathburn, interview with Louis Hone, 5 February 1993.
[514] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn fonds, "Notes on film scores," undated.
[515] Jans B. Wager, *Jazz and Cocktails: Rethinking Race and the Sound of Film Noir* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021); David Butler, *Jazz Noir: Listening to Music from Phantom Lady to the Last Seduction* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); Ron Rodman, *Tuning In: American Narrative Television Music* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 225-56.
[516] Butler, *Jazz Noir*, 147-51; John Caps, *Henry Mancini: Reinventing Film Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 48.
[517] Caps, *Henry Mancini*, 45.
[518] Ron Rodman, *American Narrative Television Music,* 225-56.

> has forgotten a door key and needs to be let into her house; the neighbours' children ran over my lawn too. When more than a million human beings live together in the same place, they require protection. In the complex life of a modern city, the main job of the police is simply ensuring that order prevails.

In his initial inquiry to the Chairman of the Board of Police Commissioners, Daly indicates that their intention is to avoid the overdramatization of police work, alluding to the proliferation of American television series (e.g., *Dragnet* [1951-59], *Perry Mason* [1957-66], and *Peter Gunn* [1958-1961]). Instead, *The Candid Eye* would provide a more realistic representation of the mundane aspects of police work in a Canadian metropolis:

> One aspect, for example in which we are interested straight away would be the high or low points in the day of a traffic policeman, a patrol car, and so forth. We would hope that it might have its amusing side, as well as its informative side of police work as it actually is carried out. We are not out to make an artificially dramatic story. We believe there are too many such films already giving a wrong impression.[519]

While Daly may have deliberately crafted his letter to secure the approval of the Chairman, the tone and perspective of *Police* ultimately align with the ideas he puts forward. Therefore, even in the earliest stages of planning, the intention was to find relatively benign aspects of policing. While Daly equates focusing on the mundane with realism, it is more indicative of a typically white middle-class belief that police officers are non-threatening, reasonable, and admirable.

The film is unequivocally shot from the perspective of the police officers, who are the primary focus in each scene, and whose opinions are captured in lengthy interviews on camera. Several scenes take place at police headquarters where staff answer phone calls, and officers prepare for their shifts. There is a long interview with a criminal investigator who describes the scientific methods he uses to solve crimes, and another interview with a beat cop who reveals his fear of street fights, and recounts the time he almost delivered a baby on shift. The interviews

[519] NFBA, *Police* production file. "Daly to Magistrate C. O. Bick." 11 September 1958.

provide officers with the opportunity to explain their personal challenges, enthusiasm, and concerns about their work. This humanizes them, makes them more relatable to audiences, and situates them as the protagonists in the narrative. Those being surveilled, detained, or assaulted are given no such opportunity to explain themselves or their situation, nor are bystanders asked about

Figure 9 – Sequence from *Police* (1958)

the incidents they are witnessing. The all-white police department does not reflect the more diverse and multicultural citizens who appear onscreen as suspects and bystanders. Citizens are potentially bad actors, whereas representatives of public institutions are portrayed as invariably responsible, ethical, and competent. The role of the police is described as simply to ensure the safety of citizens and the peaceful functioning of society. This is characteristic of government realism. To this end, the cool jazz soundtrack gives the officers an air of calmness and composure as they respond to various situations in downtown Toronto. The mainstream association of cool jazz with whiteness helps connect it musically with the police force, and conversely, the use of cool jazz to bolster the image of the police contributes to the whitening of the genre.

While much of the action depicted is fairly routine, there are a few scenes where officers make forcible arrests. In this case, the cool jazz underscoring seems to mitigate the violence taking place onscreen, as if to suggest that the officers' behaviour is as benign as in previous scenes where they are shown assisting elderly people and children. Musically, there is nothing to suggest that audiences should be concerned about the actions of the police, nor empathize with the suspects. This detached perspective is reinforced by the commentary. As six officers force a man who appears to be Indigenous into a police cruiser (see Figure 9, the camera does not provide a clear close-up of the suspect), Jackson calmly explains, "in the complex life of a modern city, the main job of the police is simply ensuring that order prevails." The camera cuts to another darker-skinned man being arrested and put in a police car. While ambient traffic sounds are audible (e.g., car horns, tire screeches, etc.), the jazz underscoring dominates, rendering reactions from bystanders, sounds of distress from those being arrested, or other verbal exchanges inaudible. A more purist observational approach using only sync sound may have provided more information about the situation from multiple perspectives, even if inadvertently. Therefore, the style of music and its prominence together with the commentary helps to foreclose perspectives other than the dominant narrative. The sequence is meant to illustrate the diligence and fairness of the police, and reassure audiences that Canadian law enforcement is there to protect them from harm. Once the six officers succeed in forcing the man into the car, Jackson remarks dispassionately, "if men were always virtuous, there would be no need of law, or of the force that maintains the law," denying the possibility that Canadian laws and their enforcement may be unjust and designed to protect certain categories of people while inflicting violence on others.

A more dramatic scene unfolds when the police are called to investigate a homicide following a house party in a lower income neighbourhood. When they arrive on the scene, the

street is crowded, and the officers enter the house to search the premises. This scene is underscored by low-tuned toms and tympanies playing a sparse, repetitive, dirge-like rhythm, creating a suitably dark and sullen atmosphere. The guitar and vibraphone join in with a plaintive minor-key motif as the officers bring out a covered body and place it in the back of the police vehicle. As soon as the vehicle leaves the scene, a version of the main theme is reprised. This time, the melody is played by a solo clarinet against a pedal point with a heavy back beat. As officers enter the house and begin collecting evidence, the upbeat reprise of the theme suggests a sense of optimism in the competency of the police to solve the crime. Jackson provides the following conclusion before the credits roll: "the police do their work to ensure that as far as possible men live according to the law, a law which holds for everyone, a law which seeks to guarantee that people may live with some measure of security and peace." The film ends with an up-tempo version of the theme in a Latin-jazz style, another genre of jazz that drew on Afro-Caribbean idioms and was commercialized in the 1960s.

*Police* is exemplary of what Eva Mackey calls the "Benevolent Mountie Myth."[520] The Mountie myth is part of a widespread nationalist narrative that the Canadian judicial system and law enforcement have been historically benevolent and just, especially compared to the violent treatment of Black and Indigenous communities in the US.[521] The purported benevolence of the Canadian state is attributed to the superiority of the British justice system upon which the Canadian system is founded. The Mountie myth stretches back to the colonial expansion westward in the late nineteenth-century when the government instituted policies to forcibly assimilate and remove Indigenous peoples from their lands. According to nationalist mythology, the enforcement of these policies by the Northwest Mounted Police (i.e., Mounties, and later the Royal Canadian Mounted

[520] Eva Mackey, *House of Difference,* 14-15.
[521] Ibid.

Police) was relatively diplomatic and peaceful compared to the brutal treatment of Indigenous peoples in similar campaigns south of the border. This has been visualized in historic portraits and postcards of Mounties and Indigenous leaders shaking hands or otherwise posing in ways that suggest a peaceful agreement between equals despite the obvious inequity between them, and the full force of the settler colonial state embodied in the Mountie.[522] Far from benevolent, the violence perpetrated by the state against Indigenous peoples is well-documented, ongoing, and amounts to genocide.[523] Throughout Canadian history, those racialized as non-white have been disproportionally surveilled, incarcerated, dehumanized, and subjected to state-sanctioned violence.[524] Historical examples include the 1876 Indian Act, which orchestrated the forced assimilation and elimination of Indigenous peoples; the 1910 Immigration Act, which prohibited the entry of "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada"; and the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, which severely restricted Chinese immigration for decades. The Mountie myth denies the violence of the settler colonial state, and constructs a mythology whereby respect, tolerance, and equitable treatment of all people is a fundamental part of Canadian history and national identity. Although Canadian political and cultural authorities have used the metaphor of a cultural "mosaic" to describe their vision of a pluralist society, this

[522] Ibid., 14.
[523] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409; J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Indian Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Tobias, "Protection, Assimilation, Civilization," in *Sweet Promises: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada,* edited by J. R. Miller, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 127-44.
[524] Robin Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017); Wendy Chan and Dorothy E. Chunn, *Racialization, Crime and Criminal Justice in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003).

vision has been limited to cultures thought to be compatible with the dominant Anglo-Canadian core.[525]

With the help of Rathburn's underscoring, *Police* perpetuates the Mountie myth, obscuring the structural racism and inequities of the Canadian justice system and law enforcement. By evoking the sound of popular American police and detective series, the cool jazz score for *Police* lends Toronto and its police force an air of sophistication, modernity, and importance associated with American cities and culture industries. Rathburn's last-minute score clearly gave the film a more exciting and contemporary feel, which is undoubtedly what provoked such an enthusiastic response from NFB personnel. Furthermore, the music was composed and recorded entirely by (white) Canadians, which would have been a point of pride since the level of musicianship was very high, and comparable to that of American jazz artists. However, while the music is suggestive of popular entertainment, it is only the veneer for a pedestrian Anglo-Canadian narrative in a government realist style.

A year after *Police* premiered on CBC television, Rathburn was called in again to score *The Back-breaking Leaf,* a documentary on the tobacco harvest in Southern Ontario. The directors undoubtedly hoped Rathburn's music would function as it did in *Police* by setting the appropriate tone, providing continuity, and enlivening the images. Indeed, Rathburn adopted a similar approach with *The Back-breaking Leaf* by sketching a loose structure that left room for improvisation. It is scored for accordion, electric guitar, bass, and percussion (tympani, snare, toms), and features virtuoso Canadian jazz accordionist Gordie Fleming.[526] Stylistically, Rathburn combines elements of zydeco and rhythm and blues in his score. The piano accordion is the

[525] Daniel R. Meister, *The Racial Mosaic: A Pre-history of Canadian Multiculturalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 5-6.
[526] NBPA, Eldon Rathburn Fonds, "Notes on film scores," undated.

featured instrument, as it is in contemporary zydeco. In the opening commentary, Jackson explains that a significant number of migrant workers come to Ontario from the southeastern United States for the harvest; it is therefore clear that, among other rationale for his choices, Rathburn wanted to evoke musical associations with the American South.

Musical underscoring is used exclusively in scenes where workers are in the fields priming tobacco (i.e., picking ripe leaves one at a time rather than cutting down the whole plant), an extremely physically-demanding job. In the first work scene, the electric guitar begins with a standard rhythm and blues pattern that outlines dominant seventh chords while cycling through a twelve-bar blues form. The snare provides a backbeat, and the steady rhythm is visually synched with the repetitive movements of the workers who are filmed at close range, picking leaves as they move through the rows. The accordion enters overtop of the groove, giving it the distinct flavour of zydeco, a dance music that emerged in rural southwest Louisiana and became commercialized and more widely popular in the mid-1950s.[527] Zydeco combines elements of rhythm and blues, country, Afro-Caribbean, and Cajun styles. While Cajun and zydeco music developed in the same region and have many stylistic similarities, zydeco is associated with Black Creole culture, whereas Cajun is associated with the white French-speaking Acadians.[528] The blues progression, R&B style groove, and piano accordion heard in *The Back-breaking Leaf* are all hallmarks of popular mid-twentieth century zydeco rather than Cajun music. Similar to *Police,* the upbeat music tempers the harshness of the images and suggests a particular interpretation of the narrative. While zydeco is exuberant, up-tempo music for dancing and socializing, in this context it underscores migrant workers hunched over in the fields, some of them severely sun-burned, with blisters on

[527] Kulken, Robert and Rocky Sexton, "The Geography of Zydeco Music," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 12, no. 1 (1991): 27-38.
[528] Mark Mattern, "Let the Good Times Unroll: Music and Race Relations in Southwest Louisiana," *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (1997): 159-168.

their backs and hands, perhaps suffering from a skin condition caused by tobacco poisoning. In his laidback manner, Jackson describes the relentless pace and physical hazards of manual labour, adding to the incongruency between the soundtrack and images. "They say the trick is once you bend over and get going, stay that way, don't keep straightening up, because that's what gets you in the back," Jackson explains, "the first few days are the worst…fingers get blistered and raw, wrists swell up and have to be bandaged." The music switches to a double-time feel as women are shown tying leaves to wooden slats that will be hung in the kiln, a job as demanding as priming, and gendered exclusively female at the time. The double-time feel emphasizes the accelerated pace and mounting physical exhaustion of the workers. Jackson describes the stifling heat in the fields as "murderous," often leading to dehydration and collapse. A man is shown writhing on the ground, ostensibly experiencing cramps from drinking water too quickly. "They don't blame a man who collapses, of course, but it means they've only got five men instead of six to fill the kiln for the day," Jackson comments, implying that the work environment is relatively accommodating and supportive. While the zydeco music effectively connotes the American South, it also suggests that the atmosphere and working conditions are collegial, energizing, and unproblematic despite the grueling labour and exhaustion depicted onscreen.

Like other episodes of *The Candid Eye, The Back-breaking Leaf* aims to foster a sense of "being there" in the tobacco fields, and aestheticizes the work. The film crew conducts short interviews with migrant labourers and farm owners, all of whom display positive attitudes towards the industry and their work. Although the owners describe the challenges of inclement weather, lost crops, and labour shortages, and workers complain about bad meals, for the most part everyone interviewed considers the overall situation satisfying and rewarding. There appears to be a lot of camaraderie among the workers who are shown enjoying their time-off relaxing together outside

in the fields or in the barn in the evening, which serves as their sleeping quarters. In one such scene, a worker sits on a bed playing a rendition of the traditional Black spiritual "When the Saints Go Marching In" on guitar and harmonica while others listen.

Nonetheless, there is a sequence where a labour dispute threatens to erupt when a group of workers crowd into an employment office, claiming they have been manipulated and denied fair compensation at a nearby farm. The office manager listens, yet largely dismisses their concerns. Before the situation is fully explained or escalates into a heated confrontation, Jackson jumps in to comment that whereas tobacco growing used to attract petty criminals who took advantage of others, the current migrant labourers take great pride in their work and do not cause trouble for management or local townspeople. Jackson's commentary drowns out the visibly aggrieved workers who continue to express their frustration, yet ends in time for the audience to hear the manager conclude that both sides—the farm owners and wage labourers—have legitimate concerns. Compared to other agricultural sectors, tobacco workers in Ontario were successful in organizing collectively for better conditions, both because there was a high concentration of farm labourers within a small region, and because there were pockets of labour activist and organizers.[529] In the late-1930s, Hungarian Communists living in the region were particularly active in publishing leftist newspapers, establishing collective organizing spaces, and encouraging other forms of labour activism. While Hungarian Canadians and other ethnocultural communities were already being closely surveilled by the RCMP, this fuelled increasing scrutiny.[530] In keeping with the tenets of government realism, the narrative implies that the system is just, and that workers

[529] Edward Dunsworth, "Green Gold, Red Threats: Organization and Resistance in Depression-Era Ontario Tobacco," *Labour/Le Travail* 79 (Spring 2017): 105-142; Mark Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture and State Security in Canada, 1940-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[530] Ibid., 118.

and managers simply need to cooperate for the greater good of society. There is no need for labour activism, and this history is not part of the story. Management is never portrayed negatively in the film, whereas migrant workers are considered potentially disruptive to the local community, possibly criminals, and overly demanding.

In addition to sidestepping labour grievances, there is another conspicuous blind-spot, namely the glaring absence of racialized minorities. Given the history it obscures, this is significant, and exemplary of the *Candid Eye* perspective. Between the 1920s and 1960s, the tobacco harvest became one of the most lucrative crops in Canada and was referred to as the "green gold rush."[531] Despite the short harvest season, migrant tobacco workers were among the highest paid agricultural labourers in Canada, even during the Great Depression, making it desirable work that provided significant economic opportunities.[532] The unusually high wages made social mobility possible at every echelon, and even wage labourers could earn enough to eventually buy a small farm and become growers.[533] Although there were chronic labour shortages—a concern that is repeatedly emphasized in *The Back-breaking Leaf*—Black migrant workers were systematically banned from the industry despite having extensive experience in the US tobacco belt, and notwithstanding the fact that thousands of white Americans were granted entry into Ontario for the harvest each year.[534] Edward Dunsworth traces the development of a whites-only network of migrant tobacco workers through kinship and professional ties in the early twentieth century, which were later upheld by federal policies and border officials. White tobacco growers in Ontario—many with deep connections to the southern US—refused to hire Black workers of

[531] Edward Dunsworth, *Harvesting Labour: Tobacco and the Global Making of Canada's Agricultural Workforce* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).
[532] Ibid., 8.
[533] Dunsworth, "Green Gold, Red Threats," 111.
[534] Vic Satzewich, "The Canadian State and the Racialization of Caribbean Migrant Farm Labour, 1947-1966" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, no. 3 (1988): 288.

any kind, and the culture of white supremacy in tobacco farming was enforced by border officials who were empowered to deny entry to anyone deemed "unsuitable" for the Canadian context. Black immigrants were typically denied entry based on racist notions that they were unsuited to the cold climate, unlikely to succeed economically in a capitalist system, and inherently disruptive to the social order.[535] Nonetheless, they were still recruited for low-paying physically-demanding jobs in Canada, notably as miners and sleeping car railway porters, where there was no possibility of advancement or pathway to citizenship.[536] The exclusion of Black workers in the tobacco industry is one of many examples where Blacks were barred from economic activities that could have facilitated social mobility and integration. It was not until 1966—and only under pressure from American officials fearful of violating the US 1964 Civil Rights Act—that the Canadian government began addressing agricultural labour shortages by allowing African American and Afro-Caribbean farmworkers entry under the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program.[537] Even over the protest of tobacco growers who wanted access to Caribbean labour, Canadian immigration officials still attempted to ban Afro-Caribbeans from working in tobacco, claiming that it would be dangerous to mix the so-called "racially sensitive West Indians" with white workers from the Southern US. [538] Ultimately, the provision to prevent Afro-Caribbeans from working in tobacco was never implemented.

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[535] Ibid., 298-99.
[536] Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel-Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Black from the Caribbean, 1900-1932," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, No. 4 (Winter 1993-1994): 131-148.
[537] Edward Dunsworth, "Race, Exclusion, and Archival Silences in the Seasonal Migration of Tobacco Workers From the Southern United States to Ontario," *The Canadian Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (2018): 563-93.; Satzewich, "The Canadian State and the Racialization of Caribbean Migrant Farm Labour."
[538] Vic Satzewich, *Racism and the Incorporation of Foreign Labour: Farm Labour Migration to Canada Since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 178.

From a musical perspective, it is significant that while racialized minorities are either excluded or represented as undesirable, both films use original underscoring that is specifically indebted to Black popular music styles. It perpetuates the historical objectification of Black people as natural entertainers and sources of entertainment for white audiences, and is part of a long history of the white-controlled industry profiting from the appropriation of Black music while upholding policies of segregation and disenfranchisement.[539] A similar phenomenon occurs in another film in the series. In *The Days Before Christmas* (the finale to the first season), there is a club scene where a trio of Black musicians are playing instrumental jump blues. Crucially, it is the only time non-white characters appear in the film, and they are stereotypically cast as hard-working entertainers sweating on the bandstand, playing to an all-white crowd. While previous scenes depict various aspects of the holiday season in Montreal, nothing in this scene suggests Christmas, and its inclusion must have been intended to reveal another side of the season and another facet of the city, namely Montreal's renowned nightclubs. Although the trio's performance provides the most visually dynamic musical scene in the entire film, there are very few shots of the band apart from a brief close-up of the drummer looking exhausted, with sweat running down his face (Figure 10). Instead, the camera focuses on members of the white audience socializing, dancing, laughing, and enjoying themselves. While the music is vital to the scene, and establishes an exuberant and relaxed atmosphere, the Black musicians themselves are peripheral. The music cue sheet for the film names the two pieces as "Rhythm Band" and "Improvised Rock and Roll," and indicates that both are in the public domain (i.e., the NFB had no legal duty to secure rights or properly credit the musicians since copyright did not extend to performances or improvisation).[540] The club scene

[539] Amiri Baraka, "Jazz and the White Critic (1963)," in *Black Music* (New York: Morrow, 1968), 9-18; Monson, *Freedom Sounds*; Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color* Line; Wager, *Jazz and Cocktails,* 12.
[540] NFBA, *The Days Before Christmas* production file. "Music Cue Sheet." November 1958.

provides a glimpse of the racial segregation in the city, and perpetuates the association of the Black community with nightlife, hedonism, and vice.[541] It also affirms racialized musical divisions, and perpetuates the notion that Black musicians are incapable of playing anything other than historically Black musical genres.[542] While a large portion of the film showcases Christmas activities in Anglican and Catholic churches, Black citizens are not portrayed as church-goers, despite the presence of historic Black Christian churches in Montreal, nor are they seen in downtown shopping malls and food markets. By confining Black citizens to stereotypical roles, or excluding them entirely, these films both document and perpetuate structural racism in Canada.

Figure 10 – Club scene from *The Days Before Christmas.* R&B trio (bottom left), close-up of the drummer (top right), audience members (top left, bottom right).

A notable exception in the series is *Emergency Ward,* directed by William Greaves, one of the series' main editors, and the NFB's first Black director. Greaves was an actor from New York

[541] Nancy Marrelli, *Burgundy Jazz: Little Burgundy and the Story of Montreal Jazz* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2013).
[542] Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 241-43.

who came to the NFB as an apprentice in 1952, hoping to escape the racism and discrimination of the American film industry, and to develop his skills as a filmmaker. Greaves came to the NFB through his connection with Louis Applebaum, who he met on the set of *Lost Boundaries* (1949) in New York, and who recommended him to NFB management.[543] It is not coincidental that *Emergency Ward* is the only *Candid Eye* film where Black people are portrayed in respected professional roles as doctors, interns, and orderlies in the unit.

Although it was filmed over a month at the Montreal General Hospital, the film is presented as a single-night narrative that chronicles the variety of patients who are treated in the emergency ward on an overnight weekend shift.[544] It is the only film in the series with no music whatsoever. The soundtrack is predominantly location sound, although Jackson's voiceover commentary is extensive. No portable cameras were used. Greaves set up three stationary cameras and lighting to shoot the film. Like other *Candid Eye* films, sound recorded on location is not necessarily faithfully matched to the images, rather it is carefully edited to produce the illusion of reality.

In many ways, *Emergency Ward* is a foil for *Police*. While both films depict the routine work of institutions that deal with life-and-death situations, the tone and perspective are radically different, and the soundtrack is key in this discrepancy. The cool jazz underscoring in *Police* lessens the impact of dramatic events onscreen, and suggests a more detached perspective, whereas the location sound in *Emergency Ward* heightens the gravity of the situation, drawing audiences into the narrative. Similar to *Police,* institutional personnel are the protagonists in *Emergency Ward*, and only medical staff are interviewed. However, patients' experiences are also given relevance, and are captured sympathetically, unlike the suspects in *Police* who are assumed to be

[543] MacDonald and Stewart, *William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission,* 42. While the NFB offered Greaves a position directing science films, he returned to New York in the early 1960s to pursue more politically-engaged filmmaking, especially as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum.
[544] MacDonald and Stewart, *William Greaves: Filmmaking as Mission,* 44

bad actors. Patients in *Emergency Ward* are overheard explaining their concerns to doctors and nurses, some are in distress and screaming in pain, and others are heard experiencing psychological trauma. The medical staff are shown attempting to de-escalate tense situations. In contrast to the piercing volume of patients in distress, there are also moments of relative silence, where staff are shown taking breaks, sipping coffee, and talking quietly. Thus, the soundtrack has a wide dynamic range, which creates tension and resolution. The film crew also ask questions intended to provoke introspection, and to reach beyond the minutiae of everyday routines. One doctor is asked how he feels about making mistakes that involve patients' lives. There is a long pause and silence as he looks awkwardly at the camera, visibly moved, and answers that he ultimately does not know, and that doctors do their best not to make mistakes. It is the kind of decisive moment and honest expression the directorial team claimed to be seeking in the series, yet would have been nearly impossible to articulate through a strictly observational approach.

Compared to *Police,* the reliance on location sound, and absence of musical underscoring in *Emergency Ward* leaves more room for ambiguity and different interpretations of the images, as proponents of vérité had claimed. However, it does not validate exaggerated claims that vérité filmmaking is capable of producing more objective and truthful representations of real-world events than other documentary forms. Commenting on the limitations of the observational approach in *Primary* (Robert Drew, 1960), Brian Winston writes, "so fresh and new did all this *look,* few seemed to notice that the film really marked the continuation of the well-established Griersonian failure to analyse and inform."[545] While the *Candid Eye* team set out with the intention to provide a more authentic, truthful, and engaging representation of Canadian public institutions, *Police* and *Emergency Ward* still remain relatively superficial accounts of these institutions. While

[545] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 152.

both films provide a behind-the-scenes look at institutional services and personnel, even with Jackson's extensive narration, they fail to provide any meaningful historical or political context for events onscreen. In this respect, observational filmmaking is remarkably compatible with government realism. It is an engaging style of filmmaking that provides audiences with a sense of "being there" and having behind-the-scenes access to spaces that are often closed to the public, while easily sidestepping violent histories and contentious political issues that are difficult to capture in front of the camera or explain without recourse to other documentary techniques.

## Music Documentaries and Cultural Diplomacy During the Cold War: Glenn Gould and Maureen Forrester

The Massey Report encouraged the development of a national high culture, and urged the government to increase its funding and promotion of cultural activities in this area.[546] In the postwar climate, the development of a distinguished and unified national culture was seen as a means of increasing Canada's prestige on the international stage, shedding its colonial image, and signaling Canada's capacity to play a major role in international affairs.[547] The last chapter of the Report called for increased support in promoting Canadian arts and culture internationally, lamenting that "ignorance of Canada in other countries is very widespread."[548] Cultural diplomacy was viewed as a way of shaping public opinion about Canada that would encourage trade, tourism, and desirable immigration.[549] Within Canada, state support for high culture, and its remediation

[546] Canada, "Chapter I: The Nature of the Task," in *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences,* 7.
[547] Jody Berland, "Nationalism and the Modernist Legacy: Dialogues with Innis," in *Capital Culture: A Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art,* Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein, eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 14-38.
[548] Canada, "Chapter XVII: The Projections of Canada Abroad," in *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences,* 253-54
[549] Ibid., 254; Graham Carr, "'No Political Significance of Any Kind': Glenn Gould's Tour of the Soviet Union and the Culture of the Cold War," *The Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (March 2014): 1-29.

through state-funded media channels, was also viewed as a way of counteracting both the ostensibly corrupting influence of American mass media, and the infiltration of leftist and communist ideas through popular and "ethnic" culture.[550] Concerning music, the Report emphasizes the importance of government support for classical musicians and institutions.[551] While the NFB and CBC are praised for their efforts, the Report concludes that more needs to be done to cultivate world-class musicians in Canada, and increase the visibility of Canadian musicians at home and abroad.

After the war, the proliferation of international classical music competitions in Europe and North America became another arena where cultural competition between nations played out, and in the geopolitical climate of the Cold War, they were also thinly-veiled ideological battles between the West and the Soviet Union.[552] The awarding of first prize to American pianist Van Cliburn at the inaugural International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958 was hailed as a triumph of Western liberal capitalism. Van Cliburn was given a ticker-tape parade in New York, and featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. The cultural authority invested in classical music during the early years of the Cold War, and rhetorical claims that it transcended politics and

[550] Zoe Druick, "Remedy and Remediation: The Cultural Theory of the Massey Commission," *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 29, No. 2-3 (2001): 161; Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom,* 87-88. As Druick remarks, in recommending the institutionalization of mass communication technologies and a remediation of high culture through channels such as the CBC and NFB, the report expresses the kind of contradictory logic that Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin articulate as the modern desire to simultaneously erase the traces of mediation through the proliferation of media. See Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

[551] Canada, "Music," in *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters, and Sciences,* 184-191.

[552] Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition During the Early Cold War, 1945-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

ideology (despite obvious displays of power and competitiveness), made it ideal for advancing the Canadian government's foreign policy at home and abroad.[553]

As emerging celebrities in the elite world of classical music performers, pianist Glenn Gould and contralto Maureen Forrester were the kind of Canadian artists the government was eager to promote, and by featuring them, the NFB signalled its alignment with the government, and the cultural ideals of the Report. Indeed, in both films, Gould and Forrester are shown to be cultural envoys abroad. Forrester travels to Puerto Rico and Gould to New York where they meet foreign dignitaries, celebrities, industry executives, political figures, and media personalities. Forrester is filmed talking with then-Governor of Puerto Rico Muños Marín, meeting renowned cellist Pablo Casals, and working with the internationally celebrated conductor Alexander Schneider. Gould is given preferential treatment by executives at New York's Steinway and Sons and Columbia Recording Studios, and is filmed in conversation with the Austrian-Canadian CBC radio producer, Franz Kraemer, a former student of Webern. The films emphasize that Gould and Forrester received their entire musical training at Canadian institutions, and have chosen to pursue their international careers while remaining based in Canada. Both are presented as the kind of elite artist that the Canadian public and government should support, and as ideal cultural ambassadors for the country. The soundtracks for these films follow a more purist vérité aesthetic and only use music and sound recorded on location. The staff composers do not appear to have been involved in any capacity.

When the *Candid Eye* team began filming Gould in the spring of 1959, he had recently returned from an historic tour of the Soviet Union in 1957 as the first Western artist to perform behind the Iron Curtain. Gould's virtuosity and enthusiastic presentation of both the classical

[553] Carr, "Glenn Gould's Tour of the Soviet Union and the Culture of the Cold War."

repertoire and avant-garde works of the Second Viennese School signalled cultural prestige as well as artistic freedom,[554] which was hailed by the Canadian press as a triumph of Western liberal and capitalist values. As Graham Carr reveals, Gould's manager, Walter Homburger, was in direct contact with External Affairs and Canadian intelligence officers in advance of the tour, which served as a reconnaissance mission for gathering information and connecting with Soviet cultural and political elites who could be useful to the Canadian government.[555] Gould was not briefed on the details of this aspect of the tour; however, his outspoken rhetoric about upsetting the Soviet establishment by performing modernist works while simultaneously lessening Cold War tensions through cultural exchange was particularly useful propaganda for the Canadian government, as were Gould's stereotypical assessments of the Soviet Union. Gould's Soviet tour was hailed by the *Globe and Mail* as pivotal in overcoming Canada's alleged political and cultural "inferiority complex."[556] Gould famously welcomed media attention and carefully crafted his public persona in ways that were more akin to the media treatment of a pop star than classical music performer. His eccentricities, rebelliousness, and physicality were overemphasized as an indication of his genius and singular talent.[557] The sheer volume of media attention and proliferation of images was unprecedented for a Canadian classical musician at the time, and the NFB paid for the privilege of capturing a behind-the-scenes look at Gould's everyday life.[558]

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[554] James K. Wright, "Glenn Gould, Arnold Schoenberg and the Soviet Reception of the Second Vienna School," in *Schoenberg's Chamber Music, Schoenberg's World,* edited by James K. Wright and Alan M. Gillmor (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2009), 237-58.
[555] Carr, "Glenn Gould's Tour of the Soviet Union and the Culture of the Cold War," 11-12.
[556] Editorial, "Inferiority Complex," *Globe and Mail,* 13 May 1957.
[557] Graham Carr, "Visualizing 'The Sound of Genius': Glenn Gould and The Culture of Celebrity in the 1950s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 5-41.
[558] LAC, Glenn Gould Archive, Roberge to Homburger, 22 October 1959. Gould was paid $2,500 to make the NFB documentaries. The contract stipulated that Gould was entitled to royalties for any subsequent presentation of the films beyond the original broadcast on CBC, and he would also retain control over all unused footage.

Gould is primarily filmed at Columbia Recording Studios in New York, recording Bach's *Italian Concerto*.[559] *Glenn Gould—On the Record* celebrates and reinforces the connection between masculinity, technology, virtuosity, industry, and classical music. The camera shifts between shots of Gould at the piano, the production team in the control booth, and technical personnel attending to the equipment. There are many aestheticized close-up shots of microphones hanging, tape recorders spinning, mixing knobs, patch bays, and other studio equipment. These are all-male spaces, and the characters in both films are exclusively male. There are obvious parallels with Unit B's working environment. Through the figure of Gould, the film connects classical music and musicians directly to industrial cultural production. Gould famously retired from concertizing in 1964 to concentrate exclusively on recording, which the film seems to foreshadow by showcasing his status as a recording artist in 1959.

The importance of Gould's corporate relationships with Columbia Records and Steinway and Sons is emphasized throughout both films. In *Glenn Gould – Off the Record,* Gould spends a considerable amount of time choosing a piano from the Steinway gallery in New York for his recording at Columbia. While Steinway personnel are shown to be attentive and deferential toward Gould, they are simultaneously considering how to capitalize on his celebrity. One of Gould's eccentricities was his extremely low chair that had been modified by his father, which he used obsessively throughout his concert and recording career. The Steinway staff flatter Gould by remarking that the virtuoso European pianists Ignacy Paderewski and Josef Hoffman also had custom chairs that Steinway have in their possession. When Gould asks how much Steinway would bid for his chair, the staff confess they were thinking that Gould might donate his chair to the

[559] While the *Candid Eye* team set out to make a half-hour documentary, they filmed enough usable material for a full hour. However, the CBC insisted it be broadcast in the usual time slot and asked for two separate films.

company, and humorously discuss a promotional photograph titled, "The Seats of the Immortals." Gould is off-camera, and peripheral to this scene as the corporate staff discuss how his memorabilia could benefit the company. The episode at Steinway did not go unnoticed by the president of Heintzman & Company, the Toronto-based piano manufacturer, who wrote an angry letter to the NFB complaining that an American piano manufacturer was featured rather than a Canadian one (namely Heintzman).[560] In his reply, the Film Commissioner, Guy Roberge, conveniently attributes the situation to the *Candid Eye* approach of presenting "real people in real situations... [that] requires adhering to the facts as we find them on location."[561] Therefore, Roberge explains, the choice of Steinway over Heintzman was Gould's, not the NFB's. Roberge also notes that the scene at Steinway was important because Gould was compared to Hoffman and Paderewski, "a rarity for a Canadian artist which we would find hard to delete from a film dedicated to a Canadian musician." Far from transcending politics and ideology, the *Glenn Gould* films and *Festival in Puerto Rico* demonstrate the variety of powerful political and economic stakeholders (both national and international) involved in the promotion of classical music and musicians, the details of which are often outside the purview of the artists.

*Festival in Puerto Rico* was filmed over several weeks in late June 1960, and aired in February 1961 as the final installment in the series. NFB filmmakers had a personal connection to Forrester through her husband, violinist Eugene Kash—a former NFB music editor and director of the music department—which made Forrester an obvious and more accessible subject for a film project. Forrester, Kash, and their children all appear in the film. The narrative is structured around Forrester's premiere performance at Festival Casals, a prestigious annual festival founded and directed by Catalan cellist Pablo Casals. The audience is given a behind-the-scenes look at

[560] NFBA, Glenn Gould production file, Roberge to Baker, 9 December 1959.
[561] Ibid.

Forrester's everyday life, and the process of preparing for an important concert in an exotic locale. Unlike earlier films in the series, the directors sketched a detailed outline of each sequence before traveling to Puerto Rico, and the finished film largely adheres to this preconceived structure.[562] Notes in the margins indicate that the team was still unsure about the style, perspective and overarching theme of the film. Once they returned from filming, however, Kroitor indicated in a memo that he wanted the film to interrogate "the relation between such an occasion as the Casals festival and the broader social aspects of the country in which it takes place."[563] While it is unclear exactly what Kroitor had in mind, the film fails to address these issues. Rather, it reproduces the Festival's neocolonialist aims, and reinforces the cultural hegemony of European classical music and its connection to global capital.

There are two distinct musical worlds in the film. In scenes related to the Festival, which take place inside the university theatre, Forrester rehearses and performs Domenico Scarlatti's setting of the *Salve Regina* with the festival orchestra conducted by Schneider. Scenes outside the festival and around the island are underscored by music played on the Puerto Rican cuatro, a small five- or ten-stringed violin-shaped guitar indigenous to the island, and primarily associated with *música jibara,* the island's traditional folk music.[564] Kroitor notes in a memo that the crew recorded a lot of "wild" cuatro music on location, remarking that "some of it is charming."[565] In fact, they recorded Tomás "Maso" Rivera (1927-2001),[566] an internationally recognized master *cuatrista*,

[562] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico* production file, "Outline – Maureen Forrester," 27 May 1960.
[563] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico* production file, Kroitor to Spotton, "Structure of the Maureen Forrester Film," 5 July 1960.
[564] Malena Kuss, *Music in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Encyclopedic History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 151-88.
[565] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico* production file, Kroitor to Spotton, "Structure of the Maureen Forrester Film," 5 July 1960.
[566] Cloutier, "Contrats ONF, 1942-63." A contract was issued for a solo recording of Maso Rivera on 23 June 1960 in Puerto Rico, which falls within the timeframe of the shooting schedule on the island.

and one of the most prolific composers for the instrument.[567] The cuatro music heard in the film is of professional quality, both the performance and the recording, which was evidently not haphazardly picked up as location sound as Kroitor seems to suggest. While Rivera spent four years in the US Army between 1950 and 1954, he was playing professionally by the early-1960s when NFB personnel recorded him, and his discography is extensive. He remains uncredited in the film, despite the extensive use of his music, and despite performing surreptitiously on camera. Cuatro music is treated as incidental and part of the landscape and soundscape, as is Rivera. When Rivera appears on-camera, he is filmed seated at a bar informally playing the cuatro anonymously, while Forrester's performance is legitimized and promoted through official state channels (Figure 11).

The first shots of Puerto Rico—the shoreline, palm trees, and Forrester's family on the beach—are underscored by solo cuatro, immediately suggesting that Puerto Rican culture is distinctive and non-European. In Kroitor's words, this scene "is meant to simply establish that we are in a special place with dark-skinned people, Spanish-style architecture, tropical vegetation."[568] Another lengthy scene with cuatro accompaniment is a sight-seeing interlude, filmed from the passenger seat of a car driving through the countryside and down local streets where Puerto Ricans are engaged in everyday activities. No source for the cuatro music is visible onscreen, and it functions as background music, connoting the purportedly folkloric culture of the island. Towards the end of the film, Rivera is shown seated with a few friends at a restaurant bar, playing the cuatro

[567] Kuss, *Music in Latin America and the Caribbean,* 158. In 2002, the US National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades co-sponsored a series of recordings dedicated to master *cuatristas* titled *Homenaje a los maestros del cuatro* (produced by Edmin Colòn Zayas and Zuleica Sella Juarbe. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2002). The first volume is dedicated to Maso Rivera (*Homenaje a Mas Rivera*), and contains forty pieces that showcase the role of the cuatro in a range of Latin American music.

[568] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico* production file, Kroitor to Spotton, "Structure of the Maureen Forrester Film," 5 July 1960.

informally as they have a drink and play dice games (Figure 11). Forrester, Kash, Schneider, and other festival participants are seated at a nearby table in formal dress, having a drink after their rehearsal. The cuatro music is muted while Schneider tells a humorous story about Casals that confirms the consensus among festival participants that Casals' presence in Puerto Rico has been unequivocally positive for the island. The narrator (Jackson) notes that this is a rare opportunity "to hear stories of the maestro from someone who has known him intimately for years," emphasizing the aura around Casals. The cuatro music resumes on cue as everyone laughs at Schneider's punchline. The camera cuts back to Rivera, still seated at the bar, and then to the festival musicians who notice him and take a moment to listen. The camera pauses on Schneider's expression as he nods slowly in a somewhat condescending manner, suggesting he is surprisingly charmed by Rivera's skill. Rivera's music is used as an exotic back-drop for Forrester and her entourage, which perfectly encapsulates the colonialist relationship between the Festival and the island. Rivera remains uncredited and subordinate, and his international renown as a virtuosic performer and composer is entirely dismissed as quaint compared to the classical music heard at the Festival and reverence for Casals.

Figure 11 – Maso Rivera (top left, bottom left); Maureen Forrester (top right), Alexander Schneider (bottom right, seated on the left next to an unidentified festival participant).

During the postwar years, the Puerto Rican government invested heavily in the cultivation and promotion of European classical music.[569] The instigation of a "cultural renaissance" was part of a broader development plan to industrialize and liberalize the country's economy and attract foreign investment (known as "Operation Bootstrap"). When Casals relocated to Puerto Rico in the mid-1950s, Governor Muñoz Marín approached him about helping to develop classical music institutions as a way of strengthening the economy and "uplifting" the population. Festival Casals Inc. was established in 1956 as a subsidiary of the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company, and was part of a broader cultural development plan known as "Operation Serenity." In addition

[569] Silvia Lazo, "'Music for Progress': A Study of Pau Casal's Music Institutions in Puerto Rico as an Extension of US Neocolonialism," *Latin American Music Review* 38, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2017): 185-211; Licia Fiol-Matta, *The Great Woman Singer: Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 1-15.

to the annual festival, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra and Puerto Rico Conservatory were also branches of the corporation. The Board of Governors was comprised of foreign political and cultural elites, and was administered in the US.[570] As the festival's music director, Casals invited high-profile European and American artists to perform as guest soloists and instrumentalists with the Festival Orchestra.[571] Despite the presence of professional Puerto Rican and Latin American classical musicians, few were selected to participate. The enormous expense of flying in a foreign orchestra and celebrity guest artists for a two-week festival was justified on the grounds that prestigious events were necessary for cultivating elite tourism and drawing potential investors to the island, thus satisfying the broader aims of the corporation. Incidentally, the NFB film deliberately lingers on the names and logos of two luxury brands, Hilton and Pan American Airlines.

Under Casals' influence, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra and Conservatory similarly hired foreign artists from Europe and North America rather than Latin Americans, which distanced it further from the local community. Music critics Donald Thompson and Francis Schwartz contend that "no study was ever made of how the general citizenry might be brought to an interest in concert music, and no attempt was made to cultivate future generations of music lovers through well-organized school and educational concerts."[572] Festival performances were broadcast on local television networks, and the NFB film captures a small group of Puerto Ricans standing around a television screen set up in the streets of San Juan. While the narrator boasts that the Festival has provided an opportunity for Puerto Ricans to hear world-class musicians, close-ups of faces in the crowd are difficult to interpret. Their expressions are seemingly unemotional, which could be

[570] Lazo, "Music for Progress," 190-91.
[571] Donald Thompson and Francis Schwartz, *Concert Life in Puerto Rico, 1957-1992: Views and Reviews* (San Juan: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1998).
[572] Thompson and Schwartz, *Concert Life in Puerto Rico,* 274.

construed as reverence given the social conventions of listening quietly to classical music, or perhaps indifference. Similar to the bystanders in *Police,* NFB filmmakers do not solicit input from Puerto Rican audiences, nor are their perspectives represented in the film. Under the artistic direction of Casals, and with the support of the Puerto Rican government, Festival Casals Inc. and its subsidiaries primarily seem to be serving the interests of international elites rather than the local community.

In the postwar period, the Canadian and Puerto Rican governments similarly sought to improve their international visibility and reputation by investing in the national development of Western classical music. While Kroitor's memo suggests that he was aware of the disconnection between the Festival and local community, *Festival in Puerto Rico* ultimately leaves this issue aside. A critical inquiry into the broader aims of Festival Casals Inc. would have risked conflict not only with Forrester and the Canadian government, but also the Puerto Rican government and US officials. The film celebrates Forrester as a Canadian success story, bestowing a sense of national cultural prestige, and projects an image of Puerto Rico as a civilized and stable country for foreign investment, which is signalled through its connection to the elite classical music world and its affluent patrons.

Still, the Puerto Rican government was not entirely pleased with the film. Prior to sending copies to Puerto Rico, the NFB held a screening for representatives of the Puerto Rican government in New York in April 1961.[573] NFB personnel had hoped the representatives might provide advice on the proper way to present complimentary copies to Muñoz Marín and Casals. Instead, while they generally expressed their approval of the film, they objected to the portrayal of Puerto Rico in several scenes. In the opening scene, the narrator's first description of Puerto Rico is not

[573] NFBA, *Festival in Puerto Rico* production file, Johnson to Daly, 27 April 1961.

particularly complimentary in the way that it alerts musicians to a potential problem: "By late June the evenings are sweltering. Even with air-conditioning at full capacity the heat is uncomfortable. The humidity concerns the musicians more seriously: it affects their instruments." The representatives were concerned that this might be a source of embarrassment if it were shown at an official occasion. Another scene briefly shows a cock fight, and they pointed out that Muñoz Marín had been trying to end this practice in Puerto Rico, and that the scene would therefore be another source of embarrassment for him if shown publicly. Daly dismissed these critiques, and the film was never revised. Given the situation, the representatives suggested that the NFB quietly send copies to Muñoz Marín and Casals without any publicity, and Daly and Kroitor agreed that a gift and personal letter from the Film Commissioner would suffice.

## Conclusion

Whether in the UK, Canada, or elsewhere, Griersonian film units were beholden to governments and private industry for financial support.[574] While this kind of support offered many advantages, it also placed political constraints on filmmakers. Winston has been harshly critical of the Griersonian documentary tradition, in which *The Candid Eye* can be included, and describes the trade-off in the following way: "I believe that running away from social meaning is what the Griersonian documentary, and therefore the entire tradition, does best … [it is] the real price paid by the film-maker's political pusillanimity."[575] In the 1930s, Grierson urged filmmakers to seek the poetic in the everyday, even in the least aesthetic subjects.[576] Members of Unit B are the direct inheritors of this tradition, namely through Daly as executive producer, whose style and approach

[574] Nelson, *The Colonized Eye.*
[575] Winston, *Claiming the Real,* 37.
[576] John Grierson, "First Principles of Documentary (1932)," in *Grierson on Documentary,* edited by Forsyth Hardy (first edition 1947, reprinted Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

was profoundly shaped by Legg and Grierson in the early 1940s. Despite the pretense of impartiality, *The Candid Eye* is a continuation of this particular aestheticization of the everyday, which is underpinned by state policies and perspectives. Through picturesque camera work, meticulous editing, and musical underscoring, subjects that risk betraying the harsher facets of Canadian society—violence, racism, poverty, injustice, sickness, and alienation—are either excluded, aestheticized, or folded into optimistic narratives in *Candid Eye* films, as they are in other documentary filmmaking styles at the NFB. Although state-sanctioned violence and bleak realities are lurking just below the surface in films such as *Police* and *The Back-breaking Leaf,* they nonetheless remain carefully contained.

Music plays an important role in this containment by tempering images that might have otherwise appeared more violent, provoking negative reactions. Music therefore helps steer the narrative away from contentious political issues, and discourages more probing questions about the subject matter being presented. Music is also used to mask location sounds and verbal exchanges, which limits contextual information and alternative perspectives, and further restricts the interpretation of events onscreen. The soundtrack is therefore crucial in constructing the ideological messages embodied in these documentaries, and foreclosing perspectives other than the dominant narrative. While the directorial team may have aspired to capture aspects of everyday Canadian life impartially and with minimal intervention, the series is mediated not only through the filmmakers' *habitus* but also through the institutional processes and protocols of the NFB, and the broader political aims of the Canadian government. There are significant discrepancies between the reality presented in *The Candid Eye* and the lived experience of Canadians, particularly racialized minorities, and anyone on the margins of the dominant Anglo-Canadian core. Despite its experimental ethos, *The Candid Eye* reproduces the nationalist mythologies of

the dominant class and models governmental notions of ideal citizenship, making it an exemplary form of government realism.

In its time, *The Candid Eye* was recognized in the broader film world for its technical and artistic innovation. The series was an obvious break with the scripted, pedantic, commentary-driven documentaries that had become standard fare at the NFB and elsewhere during the war and immediately afterwards. Members of the *Candid Eye* production team were subsequently recruited internationally by documentarians interested in the observational techniques they had developed at the NFB. Macartney-Filgate left the NFB to work with Robert Drew and Associates in New York on *Primary* (1960), a landmark film in direct cinema, and the *Candid Eye*'s main cinematographer, Michel Brault, took leave from the NFB to work with Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in Paris on *Chronique d'un été* (1961), a pioneering work in *cinéma vérité*.[577] Among other things, *The Candid Eye* was a catalyst for vérité filmmaking in the newly-formed French-language unit within the NFB, which became a foundation for Québécois cinema more generally in the 1960s. Musically, the series was a definitive break from the classically-based, fully-notated scores that characterize earlier NFB documentaries, and it inspired a different and more eclectic approach to the soundtrack. *The Candid Eye* was produced at a pivotal moment in NFB history when the institution was undergoing another shift in mandate. The political upheaval of the 1960s eventually lead to more activist filmmaking at the NFB (e.g., the *Challenge for Change* project that ran from 1967-80), and the founding of the feminist Studio D within the institution in 1974. With this shift came an increasing interest in using popular music, folk, and jazz to underscore politically engaged films.

[577] Loiselle, *Le cinéma de Michel Brault*, 12.

# Conclusion

In this study, I have attempted to provide a broad analysis of NFB film music during the wartime and postwar years, and theorize the ways in which the complexities of the institution and its government mandate are manifested in the soundtrack. During the period covered in this study, the NFB's music department was largely staffed with permanent, full-time personnel who enjoyed long careers at the NFB. On one hand, this afforded music personnel the opportunity to develop significant expertise in various aspects of film music production, and provided a stable environment within which they could experiment with a variety of approaches to the creation of film music. On the other hand, the high volume of production during these years meant that music personnel were under considerable pressure to produce music quickly and economically, which often hindered more artistic and experimental work. While substantial critical attention has been paid to the NFB's avant-garde films and music from this era, the everyday work of the music department was to compose original music and compile soundtracks that illustrated the underlying policy objectives of the government.

Barring the brief presence of a few American sound and music editors in the early 1940s, none of the music department's early recruits had experience working with film when they joined the NFB. The staff composers learned through trial and error, and from each other. Due to a combination of their inexperience and the extraordinary workload during the wartime and immediate postwar years, the staff composers generally relied on styles and techniques with which they were familiar, and which they knew would meet with the approval of the NFB's directors and producers. As I have shown, these circumstances were conducive to the establishment of conventions within the music department, and norms that resulted in the relatively uniform musical aesthetic character of a large number of films.

During the war, the NFB staff composers drew significantly on Hollywood models given the overwhelming impact and influence of Hollywood cinema, and demands from NFB directors and producers to animate wartime subjects with the impressive Hollywood sound of large orchestras. Applebaum's work in Hollywood, and his role as the NFB's first music director also encouraged this approach. Ironically, the peculiar doubling techniques the staff composers devised to imitate the prominent string and brass sections in classic Hollywood film scores produced an idiosyncratic woodwind-heavy sound that became characteristic of NFB film music throughout the postwar years. Following the war, the implication of the NFB in the Red Scare, and uncertainty of its survival, led to a generally conservative approach within the institution. It was under these circumstances that the staff composers began gravitating towards a peculiar blend of neoclassical and pastoral styles that appeared to work quite effectively with a wide range of topics. Although the NFB sound is not often thought of favourably, given its overuse and conventional character, it is arguably one of the most distinctive and recognizable institutional styles produced by the NFB.

## The Sound of Government Realism

Druick describes government realism as essentially a statistical point of view insofar as the characters and narratives in this style are presented as quasi-probabilistic representations of various subcategories of the population based on statistical information gathered by the government.[578] This particular perspective has remained constant at the NFB, Druick argues, despite shifts in its institutional mandate, and throughout experiments with different documentary forms and techniques. I have attempted to show the ways in which music has helped to produce this perspective during the period covered in this study. Given the pressure on the staff composers to

[578] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 24-28.

produce music quickly and cheaply, they often relied on conventional Western musical codes and stereotypes as a convenient shorthand for signalling various subgroups and identities. The musical underscoring thus tends to reproduce the cultural stereotypes inherent in these conventions, many of which are vulgar, racist, and dehumanizing to those outside the dominant culture. These musical choices were readily and uncritically accepted by NFB producers and sponsoring departments. Rather, controversies involving music tended to arise over film scores that deviated from the conventional codes. For example, Rathburn's dissonant underscoring for a series of nature documentaries called into question the conventional peaceful, bucolic, idealized concept of the natural environment that the National Parks department relied on to promote tourism. Similarly, questions were raised about whether Rathburn's jazz scores for the animated shorts *The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1952) and *Fish Spoilage Control* (1956) were suitable for their intended audiences—children and fishermen, respectively—the latter described patronizingly by Director of English production Don Mulholland as, "comparatively simple fellows with an ear more attuned to a Western hit parade than progressive jazz."[579]

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Canadian government's nation-building agenda was focused on promoting the values underpinning a modern, industrialized, liberal society, and assimilating various ethnicities and identities into the dominant, white, Anglo-Canadian culture.[580] The predominance of classical music aesthetics—particularly the more conservative character of the NFB sound—carried connotations of order, self-discipline, and bourgeois respectability that the government aimed to promote among its citizens. The primitivist musical tropes that signalled the ostensibly backwards-looking and pre-modern cultures of Indigenous people readily aligned

[579] NFBA, *Fish Spoilage Control* production file, "Re: Fish Spoilage Control," Mulholland to Daly, 16 October 1956.
[580] Druick, *Projecting Canada,* 126-27.

with policies of assimilation. While the characters and narratives in these films may be presented as statistically "typical," the musical underscoring makes it clear that these are not impartial or objective representations. The music for these films contributes significantly to the normalization and naturalization of the values and perspectives of the dominant culture, and attempts to persuade audiences to accept them as such.

## New Approaches to the Soundtrack: The 1960s and Beyond

In 1956, the relocation of NFB headquarters from Ottawa to a state-of-the art facility in suburban Montreal provided filmmakers with a larger pool of professional musicians who could be hired on a freelance basis. The move to Montreal also significantly expanded the NFB's technical research division. For the first time in its history, the NFB now had professional in-house recording studios and custom equipment, which made it more efficient and economically feasible to record music on-location and in their studios. The move to Montreal bolstered the French-language side of the institution, and the NFB paradoxically became an important expressive space for Quebec nationalists during the Quiet Revolution.

The NFB's mandate was shifting again in the early 1960s with the increasing importance of broadcast television, emergence of Quebec nationalism, and widespread sociopolitical upheavals. The political demands of Quebecois, women, Indigenous peoples, new immigrants, and students were all putting pressure on the federal government, which pivoted in its management of the turmoil by implementing new social policies that emphasized cultural diversity.[581] Likewise, the NFB refocused its work around these new objectives. NFB filmmakers were similarly demanding freedom to pursue their own projects (to produce feature films, and experimental

[581] Ibid.

projects, for example), and they increasingly rejected sponsored work. Demands from the NFB's Québécois filmmakers began to unsettle the status quo, and they were gradually granted more authority and funding within the institution.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the turn toward verité-style filmmaking in the late-1950s, and demands from NFB creative personnel for more artistic freedom opened up new possibilities for music and sound. The rejection of detailed production plans, and the adoption of a more improvisatory approach to filmmaking extended to the soundtrack. Beginning in the early 1960s, a wider variety of musical styles were being used to underscore NFB films, including jazz, popular music, folk, electroacoustic music, and other non-Western idioms. While many NFB films from the 1960s and 1970s are underscored with classical music, this was no longer the predominant approach to the soundtrack as it had been in the 1940s and 1950s.

One of the first major shifts in musical aesthetics happened in the NFB's newly-formed French-language production unit in the early 1960s. While Rathburn, Fleming, and Blackburn continued to score films on a regular basis for the English-language production units, the French-language unit largely broke with traditional film scoring norms, and turned instead to jazz and experimental music. Many Québécois filmmakers eschewed notated scores entirely, and began inviting musicians to improvise film scores, and experiment with electronic instruments and electroacoustic techniques. Blackburn recalls that his role changed from composer to consultant for the French unit during this period, since filmmakers often felt they lacked the musical terminology to communicate their vision to the improvising musicians they had hired, and therefore asked Blackburn to intervene on their behalf.[582]

[582] BanQ, Cloutier interview with Blackburn, 1980.

Jazz and improvisation were also inextricably linked to Black nationalism and anticolonial movements in the 1960s—particularly free jazz—and a significant number of Québécois separatists adapted the political and musical expression of Black liberation movements for their own purposes. This is reflected in some of the music for NFB films from this era. A cursory survey shows that by the mid-1960s it had become commonplace to hear jazz and experimental music accompanying a variety of topics illustrative of contemporary Quebec society such as sporting events (e.g., *La patinoire* [1963]*, Natation* [1963]*, Appuis et suspensions* [1964]), seasonal activities (*Le jeu de l'hiver,* 1961), travel (*Voir Miami,* 1962), urban life (*Vivre sa ville,* 1967), artistic practices (*À la recherche de l'innocence,* 1964), and rebellious youth (*Rouli-roulant,* 1966). Jazz was also prominent in the French unit's early feature films such as *Le chat dans le sac* (1964, music by John Coltrane) and *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z* (1965, music by Paul de Margerie). While NFB filmmakers succeeded in recording a few major African-American figures such as John Coltrane (*Le chat dans le sac,* 1964) and Ornette Coleman (*Population Explosion,* 1968), their go-to musicians were typically local members of the Montreal scene, including Tony Romandini, Yvan Landry, and Donald Habib.[583] This was a radical change from the music aesthetics that had been previously established at the NFB.

By the late-1960s, the concept of full-time permanent artistic staff at the NFB was eroding, partially due to increasing austerity measures implemented by the federal government that significantly impacted the NFB.[584] As the staff composers retired—Fleming in 1970, Rathburn in 1976, and Blackburn in 1979—they were not replaced, and it became normative for directors to hire freelance composers and musicians to produce their soundtracks. Given that the downsizing

[583] Previously unreleased versions of Coltrane's well-known compositions from *Le chat dans le sac* (1964) have been recently released as *Blue World* (2019, Impulse Records), and similar archival recordings may exist of Coleman's trio.
[584] Evans, *In the National Interest,* 135-50.

of the institution has been ongoing since that time, it is unlikely that the NFB will ever again have a large staff of permanent full-time artistic personnel. The period covered in this study is therefore a unique moment in Canadian history when the government invested significantly in large cultural institutions such as the NFB, which afforded many Canadian artists the opportunity to work in stable, full-time positions in their chosen field. The NFB has provided work for thousands of Canadian music professionals, produced an extraordinary volume of original film music, and its films and archives are an astonishingly rich documentation of music-making in Canada.

# NFB Filmography

*Action Stations* (1943, Joris Ivens)
*A Foreign Language* (1958, Stanley Jackson)
*An Enduring Tradition* (1960, Kirk Jones)
*Atlantic Patrol* (1940, Stuart Legg)
*The Back-breaking Leaf* (1959, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Blinkity Blank* (1955, Norman McLaren)
*Blood and Fire* (1958, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Breakdown* (1951, Robert Anderson)
*Break-through* (1944, James Beveridge)
*Call for Volunteers* (1941, Radford Crawley)
*Canada's Awakening North* (1951, Ronald Dick)
*Canon* (1964, Norman McLaren)
*The Cars in Your Life* (1959, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Churchill's Island* (1941, Stuart Legg)
*City of Gold* (1957, Colin Low and Roman Kroitor)
*Corral* (1954, Colin Low)
*Country Threshing* (1958, Wolf Koenig)
*The Days Before Christmas* (1958, Terrence Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson, and Wolf Koenig)
*Dollar Dance* (1943, Norman McLaren)
*Emergency Ward* (1959, William Greaves)
*The End of the Line* (1959, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*The Enduring Wilderness* (1964, Ernest Reid)
*Eskimo Artist: Kenojuak* (1964, John Feeney)
*Everywhere in the World* (1941, Stuart Legg)
*The Face of the High Arctic* (1958, Dalton Muir)
*Family Tree* (1951, George Dunning and Evelyn Lambart)
*Farm Homes Beautiful* (1947, Raymond Garceau)
*Farmer's Union* (1949, Raymond Garceau)
*Festival in Puerto Rico* (1961, Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig)
*Fish Spoilage Control* (1956, David Bairstow)
*Fortress Japan* (1944, Stuart Legg)
*Glenn Gould Off the Record* (1959, Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig)
*Glenn Gould On the Record* (1959, Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig)
*Grain Handling in Canada* (1953, Guy L. Coté)
*Haida Carver* (1964, Richard Gilbert)
*Harvest in the Valley* (1955, Larry Gosnell)
*Harvests on the March* (1949, Roger Morin)
*Hen Hop* (1942, Norman McLaren)
*Home Front* (1940, Stanley Hawes)
*Hungry Minds* (1948, Tom Daly)
*Introducing Canada* (1961, Tom Daly)
*Inside the Atom* (1948, Jack Olsen)
*La cité de Notre-Dame* (1942, Vincent Paquette)

*La Poulette Grise* (1947, Norman McLaren)
*Letter from Aldershot* (1940, John Taylor)
*Lines Horizontal* (1962, Norman McLaren and Evelyn Lambart)
*Lonely Boy* (1962, Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor)
*The Magical Eye* (1989, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Making Movie History: Wartime Women* (2014, Joanne Robertson)
*Maple Sugar Time* (1941, Stanley Hawes)
*The Mask of Nippon* (1942, Margaret Palmer)
*Memory of Summer* (1958, Stanley Jackson)
*Men Against the Ice* (1960, David Bairstow)
*Montreal by Night* (1947, Jean Palardy and Arthur Burrows)
*Neighbours* (1952, Norman McLaren)
*New Faces Come Back* (1946, Richard Jarvis)
*Nobody Waved Goodbye* (1964, Don Owen)
*No Longer Vanishing* (1955, Grant McLean)
*Northwest Frontier* (1941, James Beveridge)
*Peoples of the Skeena* (1949, James Beveridge)
*Pilgrimage* (1958, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Police* (1958, Terrence Macartney-Filgate)
*Prairie Bonanza* (1959, Julian Biggs)
*Prairie Homes* (1947, Jacques Bordelay)
*Primitive Painters of Charlevoix* (1947, Jean Palardy)
*Les raquetteurs* (1958, Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx)
*Red Runs the Fraser* (1949, E. Taylor)
*Rescue Mission* (1951, Ronald Weyman)
*The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1951, Colin Low and Roman Kroitor)
*Royal Journey* (1951, David Bairstow, Gudrun Parker, Roger Blais)
*The Sceptre and the Mace* (1957, John Howe)
*Short and Suite* (1959, Norman McLaren)
*Sky* (1963, John Feeney)
*Struggle for Oil* (1951, Ronald Dick)
*To the Ladies* (1946, Nicholas Balla)
*Trans-Canada Express* (1944, Stanley Hawes)
*Universe* (1960, Roman Kroitor and Colin Low)
*Universities at War* (1944)
*V for Victory* (1941, Norman McLaren)
*V for Volunteers* (1951, Leslie McFarlane)
*The War for Men's Minds* (1943, Stuart Legg)
*When All the People Play* (1948, Evelyn Cherry)
*When Asia Speaks* (1944, Gordon Weisenborn)
*Wings of Mercy* (1947, Evelyn Cherry and Lawrence Cherry)
*Women on the March* (1958, Douglas Tunstell)

**The Candid Eye Television Series**

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *Blood and Fire.* Aired October 26, 1958.

Jackson, Stanley, director. *A Foreign Language.* Aired November 2, 1958.

Koenig, Wolf, director. *Country Threshing.* November 9, 1958.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *Pilgrimage.* Aired November 16, 1958.

Jackson, Stanley, director. *Memory of Summer.* November 23, 1958.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *Police.* Aired November 30, 1958.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, Stanley Jackson, and Wolf Koenig, directors. *The Days Before Christmas* Aired December 7, 1958.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *The End of the Line.* Aired November 1, 1959.

Kroitor, Roman and Wolf Koenig, directors. *Glenn Gould Off the Record.* Aired November 22, 1959.

Kroitor, Roman and Wolf Koenig, directors. *Glenn Gould On the Record.* Aired November 29, 1959,

William Greaves, director. *Emergency Ward.* Aired December 6, 1959.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *The Back-breaking Leaf*. Aired December 13, 1959.

Macartney-Filgate, Terrence, director. *The Cars in Your Life.* Aired February 14, 1960.

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