



## Tribute

THE LEVELS OF leadership that marked the careers of Aaron Copland (1900–1990) in the United States and of Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) in Mexico have also distinguished the roles of John Beckwith (*b* Victoria, British Columbia, March 9, 1927) in Canada. An educator who counts among his students the prominent seven listed at page 98a in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, 2d ed. (University of Toronto Press, 1992), an administrator who while dean of the Faculty of Music of the University of Toronto 1970–1977 served with “characteristic patience, fairness and wisdom” (University of Toronto Faculty of Music *News*, Spring–Summer, 1977), a composer who from his earliest profiling in an international forum, *Composers of the Americas/Compositores de América* Vol. 8 (Washington: Organization of American States, 1962), pages 25–28, has occupied a high seat among the 39 Canadians signaled in volumes 5, 6, 8, 10–13, 17, and 18 of the *Composers of the Americas* series, 1958–1972, Beckwith outdoes all competitor composers as editor (area editor for Canada, *The New Grove Dictionary*, 1972–1980; general editor of the Canadian Composers/Compositeurs Canadiens series, 1975– ) and as co-editor (*The Modern Composer and His World* [with Udo Kasemets, Toronto, 1961]), *Contemporary Canadian Composers* (with Keith MacMillan, Toronto, 1975). *Hello Out There: Canada’s New Music in the World, 1950–85* (with Dorith Cooper, Toronto, 1988), *Musical Canada: Words and Music Honouring Helmut Kallmann* (with Frederick Hall, Toronto, 1988), and *The Fifth Stream* (with Peter Hatch, Toronto, 1991). As music reviewer he served the *Toronto Star* 1952–1962 and 1963–1965, and was program annotator for the Toronto Symphony, English-speaking Canada’s chief large symphony orchestra, 1966–1970.

Much above both Copland and Chávez, Beckwith shines as a musicologist and as an instigator. As a researcher, his attention to nineteenth-century Canadian hymnody, resulting in his edition of *Sing Out the Glad News: Hymn Tunes in Canada* (Toronto, 1987), followed by his profound “Tunebooks and hymnals in Canada, 1801–1939,” *American Music*, vol. 6/2 (Summer, 1988), 193–234, are triumphs that only a lifetime worker in a similar vineyard can adequately appreciate and praise. As an instigator, the nonpareil two editions of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* that far transcends any other Western Hemisphere national music lexicons, came to birth largely as a reaction to Beckwith’s “About Canadian Music: the PR failure,” *Musicanada* (Toronto: Canadian Music Centre/Centre musical canadien, 21, July–August, 1969). When brought to the discerning eye of magnate Floyd S(herman) Chalmers, he decided that the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation, of which he was president 1963–1979 should undergird an encyclopedia project. Chalmers’s wife (*née* Jean A. Boxall, *b* Toronto August 28, 1899; *d* there October 8, 1990) established in 1965 the Jean A. Chalmers Award for opera, and it was in her name that a million-dollar bequest served to fund the Jean A. Chalmers Chair of Canadian Music in the University of Toronto, which in the same year, 1984, coincided with establishment of the Institute for Canadian Music at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. Beckwith, first occupant of the Chair to 1990, also headed the Institute during the same years.

Her interest in opera accorded with Beckwith’s paramount composing interest. His four operas, *Night Blooming Cereus* (radio premiere, Toronto, March 4, 1959; staged at Toronto April 5, 1960), *The Shivaree* (Toronto, April 3, 1982), *Crazy to Kill*



(Ross Hall, Guelph, May 11, 1989), and *Tuptoo!* (composed 1993–1994), deserve separate study. In 1992 Les Éditions Doberman-Yepan (Quebec City) published both piano-vocal and vocal-orchestral (flute, two oboes, bassoon, two horns, and strings) scores of Beckwith's realization of Joseph Quesnel's *Lucas et Cécile, comédie mêlée d'ariettes*. The production promised in 1808 having faltered (Quesnel died at Montreal July 3, 1809) the first performance awaited early 1994 during "a concert given by Tafelmusik" at Toronto. Joan Backus rightly averred

It is difficult to imagine anyone better suited to the task of restoration than John Beckwith. As composer, performer, and music historian, he has devoted tremendous energy to preserving and promoting the music of Canada's past. [And with incomparable success.] (*Notes of the Music Library Association*, 53/1 [September 1996], 280)

As November 1–5, 2000, approaches and the elite of the musical world assemble at Toronto, Beckwith's glory should be saluted in gold letters. None other deserves his accolades for the totality of his achievements.