



Jean Coulthard: A Life in Music

William Bruneau, David Duke

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Jean Coulthard demonstrated that a Canadian woman could be a successful professional composer, whose music was, and still is, played extensively in concert halls across Canada and internationally. Through her seven-decade career she composed in every genre of traditional classical music: opera, symphonies, concerti, chamber music, keyboard, voice, and choir. Coulthard's story was more than that of artist and teacher. She made a place for herself in a male-dominated university and, as a westerner, she fought for the artists of her community. As a traditionalist she upheld aesthetic values she believed important for her and for her audience. This insightful biography shows that behind the productivity and the contented family life, there were intriguing personal and professional friendships, international travel, and cultural politics. She knew and learned from Bartók and Schoenberg, yet in the end, she went her own Canadian way. The Coulthard story is deeply interconnected with twentieth-century Canadian art, and with the rise of Vancouver from provincial outpost to Pacific Rim metropolis. The authors describe several compositions from each stage of Coulthard's life, giving context and assessments of harmonic idiom, form and overall style. "Jean Coulthard's harmonies touched me personally and warmed my soul. She has her own musical language, partly West Coast, mostly from another golden universe. She was comfortable with herself, yet kept searching for a different shade of colour to start another canvas. She is a Canadian treasure."—Peter Togni, Composer and CBC Radio Host

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