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City University of New York PH.D. 1985

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COLIN McPHEE (1900-1964): A COMPOSER IN TWO WORLDS

by

CAROL J. OJA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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FOREWORD

Today we are surrounded by composers who draw inspiration from other cultures. Lou Harrison writes for gamelan, John Cage uses the Chinese I Ching in his chance compositions, Steve Reich has studied African drumming and Indonesian gamelan, and Philip Glass's opera Satyagraha is written in Sanskrit. The roots of this expansion outside of the West reach back to Debussy and beyond, but a critical stage of growth came between the two world wars when a few American composers made a pioneering journey across Western boundaries and into "the whole world of music" (as Henry Cowell once put it). Prominent among them were Cowell, Henry Eichheim, Colin McPhee, Harry Partch, and Dane Rudhyar. McPhee was the only one of this group to live in a distant culture for an extended period of time and to become intimately acquainted with its music. His work provided a vital link between Debussy's first encounter with an Indonesian gamelan in Paris in 1889 and the East-West interchanges so prevalent now.

McPhee's career unfolded against changing landscapes. After boyhood in Canada, he studied at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and, like many artists of his generation, was apprenticed in Paris. In the late

1920s, he moved to New York and quickly became known as a promising young composer. In 1931 he began an eight-year odyssey when he set sail for the island of Bali. There he explored a sophisticated musical culture and basked in a comfortable existence, removed from the cares and pressures of Western society. When he returned to New York in 1939, his circumstances changed dramatically. He went from rising fame as a composer to near obscurity, from an island home with twelve servants to a cheap Chelsea roominghouse. In the last few years of his life, he taught ethnomusicology and composition at UCLA. As time passed he was increasingly plagued by many problems, but ultimately he produced many works. Through it all, he never let go of his cherished memories of Bali.

McPhee's most important musical composition was Tabuh-Tabuhan, a pathbreaking orchestral work of 1936 in which he pushed beyond exotic surface effects to achieve an aesthetic union of his Western heritage with that of Bali. His other important works include the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet (1928), Symphony No. 2 (1957), Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra (1958), and a number of imaginative transcriptions of gamelan music for two pianos. As a writer he produced a host of articles and two major publications: A House in Bali (1946), an evocative tale about his years on the island, and Music in Bali (published posthumously in 1966), which remains the principal treatise on Balinese instrumental music.

McPhee's life and work are filled with paradoxes. He was a gifted composer, yet he repeatedly lost faith in his abilities. He desired fame and recognition--more than that, he required them in order to continue producing--yet he was unwilling or perhaps unable to take the practical steps necessary for their achievement. He was a dedicated artist, driven by the need to express himself both in music and prose, yet there were periods when he would suddenly disdain his creativity (even calling it a "burden") to indulge in a hedonistic whim or simply to succumb to lethargy. In exploring biography as a means of illuminating a composer's output, the British cultural historian Stephen Spackman has mused: "To speak of a composer's style is to speak at least of his musical identity, and I am led to wonder about the connection between the achievement of a composer's personal voice and his achievement of a secure, even if provisional, personal identity."[1] Colin McPhee's search for an identity was arduous, and his conflicts on the road to achieving it are central to understanding his development as a composer. Those conflicts even determine what materials remain for reconstructing his life story.

The music manuscripts, letters, concert programs,

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[1]"The Life or the Work," in Wallingford Riegger: Two Essays in Musical Biography, I.S.A.M. Monographs, No. 17 (Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1982), 15.

and newspaper clippings that contain the record of Colin McPhee's life are now housed in the Ethnomusicology Archive at the University of California in Los Angeles. They are scanty for the early years--the happy and successful ones--and plentiful for the later, darker period. The explanation for this imbalance is simple. In times of tribulation, McPhee deliberately destroyed memories of happier days. Of the more than twenty-five compositions written by him before the age of twenty-five, only two survive. They, as well as McPhee's next extant opus, the Invention for Piano of 1926, exist because they were published. The same is true for much of the rest of his output; the extant works are by and large the published ones--those preserved literally in spite of him.

Several of McPhee's friends and colleagues, who witnessed the wildly swinging moods and acute bouts of depression that affected him from the 1940s on, feel that he destroyed his music in fits that were rooted in a drive toward self-destruction. Oliver Daniel, who first met McPhee in the mid-1940s, has said so. Peggy Glanville-Hicks, whose friendship with McPhee dates from the same period, has suggested, "Colin was what I believe the psychiatrists call a 'manic depressive,' and I always feared that at the bottom of one of his depressions, he might destroy himself. . . . But instead of his person, he

destroyed work after work."[2]

Together with his music manuscripts, McPhee also got rid of many personal documents, especially letters. Writing to his good friend Sidney Robertson Cowell in 1945, McPhee himself acknowledged the drive to obliterate his life story. His letter was inspired by Mrs. Cowell's suggestion that he submit biographical information to David Ewen for American Composers Today:

> The other day, . . . I tore up old programs . . . and reviews afterwards [he goes on to cite a Toronto recital from the 1920s]. . . . All this, of course, I bury. And I simply can't be bothered with old Ewen. It is nobody's business, anyway, what I've chosen to make of my life, even if, as you hint, there is a legend. . . .[3]

McPhee stood in illustrious company as he destroyed his personal papers. Many literary figures have done the same--W. H. Auden, Willa Cather, Henry James--out of a desire for personal privacy. But often that privacy had a special purpose: to cover up homosexuality. McPhee's connection to such a motive can only be guessed at. All of his romantic relationships--with the exception of his marriage from 1930 to 1938 to Jane Belo--seem to have been with men. Although he was discreet about his sexual

---

[2]Interview with Oliver Daniel, Ardsley, New York, 3 October 1981. Letter, Peggy Glanville-Hicks to author, 9 November 1981.

[3]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 25 August [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. Ewen's American Composers Today does not include an entry for McPhee (NY: H. W. Wilson Company, 1949).

liasons, he never seemed uncomfortable or apologetic when he occasionally did mention them in letters. Yet being homosexual in his day meant keeping an important part of one's self hidden from public view. Extreme privacy became a way of life.

Despite McPhee's destructive tendencies, some papers do exist. The collection at UCLA contains nearly all of his extant compositions, as well as correspondence (mostly from the late 1950s and 1960s), concert programs and newspaper clippings (some of which reach back to his childhood in Toronto), and field notes, transcriptions, and photographs (both movies and still shots) from Bali. No matter how low his mood, McPhee never destroyed any of his material from Bali.

I have supplemented the collection at UCLA by reaching out to McPhee's friends and colleagues both for correspondence and for personal memories. Although McPhee did not preserve letters, many of his friends carefully saved the ones he wrote to them. The papers of the following persons have been especially rich in information: Jane Belo and Margaret Mead (both in the Mead Collection at the Library of Congress); Carlos Chávez (at the Archivo General de la Nacion in Mexico City), Henry Cowell and Sidney Cowell (New York Public Library), Aaron Copland, Oliver Daniel, Marian Eames (all three in their own possession), Minna Lederman (in the Archives of Modern Music at the Library of Congress), Elizabeth and

William Mayer (in the possession of their daughter, Beata Sauerlander), Virgil Thomson, and Carl Van Vechten (both at Yale University). Most of those letters date from the 1940s on; material for the early years is slight indeed. Although McPhee severed contact with his family in Canada after his last visit there in 1935, I was able to interview his sister-in-law, Janet McPhee, in Toronto. She, in turn, led me to one of McPhee's childhood friends, Stuart Lawson. Each succeeding period of McPhee's life has been illuminated by other contemporaries. Ann Hull and Sylvan Levin were both classmates of McPhee at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore (1918-1921); Eric Friedheim knew McPhee in Toronto between 1921 and 1924, when McPhee was a student of Eric's father, Arthur Friedheim; Aaron Copland, Otto Luening, Hugh Ross, and Louise Varèse remember him from New York in the late 1920s; I Madé Lebah and Anak Agung Gedé Mandera both worked with him in Bali during the 1930s; and Sidney Cowell, Oliver Daniel, Minna Lederman, and Virgil Thomson came into his life after he returned from Bali in 1939. Mantle Hood and Shirley Hawkins helped him a great deal at UCLA in the early 1960s.

Before proceeding, a few details require clarification. Fixing dates in McPhee's life is often difficult, not only because the documentation is so sparse for certain periods but because he seemed totally oblivious to dating. Often his letters simply say

"Monday" or "Thursday," and his field notes frequently give a day and month but no year. To confuse matters further, he made many errors about dates in writing autobiographical statements. He loved to be mysterious and, whether intentionally or not, was skilled at obscuring the chronology of his life.

Discrepancies will be noted between my spelling of Indonesian terms and that used by McPhee. During the 1930s, when he was in Bali, a Dutch system of spelling was used; it has since been replaced by a modern Indonesian method. All Dutch spellings in quotations from McPhee have been kept intact. As much as possible, however, I have used modern spellings within my own text. In Indonesia today, u is used instead of oe, y replaces j, j replaces dj, and ch replaces tj.

Acknowledgments

Many friends and colleagues, both of Colin McPhee and myself, have helped in the preparation of this study. Shirley Hawkins, executrix of the McPhee estate, has not only granted access to all the McPhee papers, but she and her husband Richard Hawkins have generously given me a place to stay while I worked with those papers at UCLA. Sidney Robertson Cowell, Oliver Daniel, Minna Lederman, and Janet McPhee--each with a close connection to Colin McPhee--have also freely shared memories and materials. Ann Briegleb (Ethnomusicology Archivist) and Stephen Fry

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CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD IN TORONTO (1900-1918)

The family into which Colin Carhart McPhee was born in Montreal on 15 March 1900 was of Scottish ancestry, but its Canadian roots were strong and deep.[1] The McPhees were from Islay in the Inner Hebrides, a barren island wide open for sheep grazing. In the early 1830s, as potato farming increased and Islayan lands were divided up by a surge of newly arrived mainland Scots, many of the island's residents emigrated to Canada and Australia. Among them was Colin McPhee's paternal great-grandfather John Campbell (1784-1854), who settled about twenty miles southwest of Toronto in an area now called Campbellville. There he built a small, stucco-covered log house across from a pond; later he opened a sawmill. He and other

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[1]"Extract of Birth of Colin Carhart McPhee," issued by the Superior Court of Montreal and drawn from the register of Bethlehem Congregational Church in Montreal on 18 July 1935. McPhee was born at 524 St. Hubert Street in Montreal, the residence of his parents. For some unknown reason, he often gave 1901 as his birthdate. He did so as early as January of 1924, when his Second Piano Concerto was premiered by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra ([Program:] "New Symphony Orchestra/Eighth Twilight Concert," 15 January 1924. UCLA.)

members of the growing community founded St. David's Church, a simple structure of now-mellowed red brick, on the outskirts of town.[2]

For Colin McPhee, born over sixty years after his great-grandfather first came to Canada, Campbellville was the family seat. As a boy he spent many summer vacations there, and after his parents moved to Toronto, he and his younger brother Douglas often bicycled out to Campbellville. Colin's grandmother, a rough-hewn, no-nonsense frontier woman, whom Colin remembered wearing boots and smoking a pipe, lived in Campbellville until her death in her nineties.[3] For many years her daughter Flora--Colin's aunt--lived there, too. The Campbellville house stayed in the McPhee family up through the 1930s; it was there that Colin took his wife Jane Belo in 1935 on the only visit the two of them made to Canada.

---

[2]Interview with Janet McPhee, Glendon College, Toronto, 1 May 1983. Janet McPhee was married to Colin's only brother, Douglas. She met Colin twice: around 1924 and in 1935. Mrs. McPhee was most kind in supplying much of the information that follows about her husband's family. Some details came from: Nassagaweya: A History of Campbellville and Surrounding People (Campbellville, Canada: Campbellville Historical Society, [1967]). Both the Campbell/McPhee house (37 Campbell Avenue West) and St. David's Church are still standing.

[3]Letter from CM to Carl Van Vechten, written on the "Java-China-Japan Lijn" and postmarked 17 May 1933, Hong Kong. Beinecke Library/Yale. McPhee was responding warmly to the description Van Vechten gave of his own grandmother in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in Sacred and Profane Memories (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932).

Years later, Colin recalled images of Campbellville and his Canadian church experience when he reviewed Charles Ives's Fourth Violin Sonata. His unsentimental memories must have been of St. David's:

> [Ives's Fourth Sonata] has all the nostalgia for Sunday, Moody-and-Sankey, pre-radio peace. Perhaps because of my Presbyterian childhood I remain untouched even by the famous foot-notes. I too have sweltered on a hot Sunday afternoon, singing hymns in a red brick church, and I have never cherished the memory, but then, that was in Canada, among log cabins, without the glamor of Alcott.[4]

In this churchyard all the Canadian Campbells and McPhees, except Colin, are buried.

Campbellville was where Colin McPhee's father Alexander was born around 1865. A "rangy, craggy Scot" with "a delightful sense of humor,"[5] Alexander was over six-feet tall, blue-eyed, with red hair and a "dignified" look.[6] He worked in advertising for various newspapers and for the Bell Telephone Company, where, according to Janet McPhee, he and his brother Colin conceived of the "Yellow Pages." Later Alexander devised another phone index, dubbed "Who Called Me Up," a directory arranged numerically so that users could trace the source of phone messages. The idea

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[4]Colin McPhee, "Scores and Records," Modern Music, XIX/4 (May-June 1942), 271.

[5]Telephone interview with Donald White, Red Bank, New Jersey, 8 November 1982. White is a distant relative of Colin McPhee's mother.

[6]Interview with Janet McPhee.

never caught on.[7]

Colin, at a stocky five-feet-seven inches, did not resemble his father much in stature, yet according to Janet McPhee, the two shared personality traits, especially a facile intelligence. Alexander started out with a smashing success in his Yellow Pages' scheme: "But later on--well, he made out, but when he retired he was nothing. He had a good mind but without the discipline. It's 'discipline' that's the whole word. Dougie, too: brilliant but not disciplined." Janet McPhee sees Alexander as someone who possessed "a brilliance not realized, not put to its best use."[8]

It was Colin's mother, Lavinia Carhart, whom he seems to have resembled most closely. Born around 1875 in Red

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[7]Ibid. According to Mrs. McPhee, Alexander Charles McPhee had two brothers, Jack and Colin, and two sisters, Flora and Alexandra. Alexander McPhee's employment history is a bit unclear. The "Yellow Pages" came to Canada in 1909/1910, but the archives of Bell Canada do not credit Alexander McPhee with the innovation. (Letter to author from Catherine Lowe, for Miss E.M.L. Geraghty, Historian, Bell Canada, 10 September 1983.) According to the City of Toronto Directories, Alexander had a Toronto address as early as 1905. Through the years he is listed as advertising agent for different papers. (The directories were searched for me by James A. Fraser of the Records and Archives Division of the Toronto Department of the City Clerk; Letter to author, 5 March 1982). The Toronto Globe and Mail has no employment records before 1936, when The Globe merged with The Mail and Empire, and hence cannot clarify Alexander McPhee's employment. (Letter to author from Orval R. M. McGuire, Director of Personnel, The Globe and Mail, 22 July 1983).

[8]Interview with Janet McPhee.

Bank, New Jersey, of German people, she was "small and round,"[9] "bright and clever," and she, too, had red-gold hair.[10] Around 1900 she married Alexander and settled with him in Montreal. Temperamentally Colin also took after his mother. While Alexander McPhee was perpetually buoyant--"anything but a moody man"--Lavinia was prone to being "petulant and demanding, . . . expecting everything to come to her,"[11] traits not unknown to her eldest son.

In Montreal with "a female teacher" Colin started music lessons at age six or so. Recognition of the boy's talent came early on. His piano teacher immediately pronounced him "gifted," and his mother "adored him. [She had] 110 percent belief in him. . . . the whole family did." With such encouragement, Colin was "a healthy, vigorous, laughing, hard-to-control kid."[12]

Around 1913 the McPhees moved to Toronto, first to a house at 16 Glendale Avenue, then three years later to 122

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[9]Ibid.

[10]Interview with Donald White.

[11]Interview with Janet McPhee.

[12]Ibid.

Pacific Avenue, and finally to 36 Pacific Avenue.[13] The second Pacific Avenue house--a three-story, turn of the century vertical structure with a city compactness of height over width--still stands one-half block from High Park in southwestern Toronto. It is a comfortably sized building in what appears to be--and must have been early in the century--a middle-class neighborhood.

Toronto at the time was largely an Anglo-Saxon community, provincial in many respects, yet growing rapidly. The city had a population of 208,000 in 1901, which increased over one-and-a-half times by 1911 and multiplied at an even greater rate to reach 522,000 by 1921.[14] Founded in 1793, the city maintained its original boundaries through the first three quarters of the nineteenth century; from the 1880s to 1900 it doubled in land size by annexing adjoining towns. The same process doubled it yet again by 1920. Thus, the period of McPhee's adolescence in Toronto was one

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[13]The City of Toronto Directories, already cited, list Alexander McPhee at 16 Glendale Avenue in 1915, at 122 Pacific Avenue in 1916, and at 36 Pacific Avenue from 1917-1924 (the last year in which Mr. Fraser searched the directories). Colin was a student at Fern Avenue Junior and Senior High School beginning 10 February 1913; he graduated in June 1914. The school has no record of which high school he attended. (Letter to author, Paul P. Pavlovich, Vice Principal, Fern School, 22 March 1984.)

[14]Thomas Howarth, "Toronto," The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 30 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1979), Vol. 18, pp. 520-23, and George Parkin de Twenebroker Glazebrook, The Story of Toronto (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 196.

of marked growth.

Surrounding Toronto were rich farm lands, a thriving timber industry, and, with the advent of World War I, active munition plants. Cultural growth kept apace, making Toronto one of the musical centers of Canada. Several large concert halls had busy performing schedules, especially St. Lawrence Hall, seating 500, which had opened in the 1850s, and Massey Hall, seating 4000, which opened in 1894.[15] Traveling virtuosos stopped off in Toronto, both in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. In McPhee's day, Torontonians could hear big-name performers (such as Jascha Heifetz and Amelita Galli-Curci) and contemporary composers from the United States (such as Leo Ornstein and Mrs. H. H. A. Beach).[16] Toronto's first orchestra was founded in 1906; it disbanded in 1918 and regrouped in 1923. There were also several schools of music. An article forecasting conservatory activity for the year 1914-1915

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[15]Carl Morey, "Toronto," The New Grove Dictionary of Music (London: Macmillan, 1981); and two articles from Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, edited by Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, and Kenneth Winters (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981): George Kidd and Patricia Wardrop, "Massey Hall," 604-605; Helmut Kallmann and Carl Morey, "Toronto," 917-920.

[16]Both The Canadian Journal of Music (hereafter CJM), published in Toronto from 1914 to 1919, and Musical Canada (MC), also published in Toronto but with a longer life span (1906-1933), regularly featured reviews of visiting artists. For example, CJM included notices of concert appearances by Mrs. H. H. A. Beach [III/9 (January 1917), 361], Leo Ornstein [III/1 (November 1916), 333], and Amelita Galli-Curci [V/6 (November 1918), 94].

lists five large music schools and many private studios.[17] Most important were the Toronto Conservatory of Music (founded in 1886 and later renamed the Royal Conservatory of Music), the Canadian Academy of Music, and the Hambourg Conservatory (both founded in 1911).[18]

Around the time that the McPhee family moved to Toronto, another boy Colin's age arrived there--Stuart Lawson, who lives today on Lawrence Avenue in northeast Toronto.[19] Both began studying at the Hambourg Conservatory soon after they came to town--for Lawson it was violin, for McPhee piano and composition. Often McPhee spent weekends at the Lawson's home at Leaside, north of Toronto, where he was more interested in practicing on the Lawson's Mason and Hamlin grand than in socializing with friends at the swimming pool or tennis courts. Although McPhee and Lawson played music together, McPhee's younger brother Douglas, a clarinetist, was the one who vigorously took up music-making with Lawson. In their late teens, the two formed a dance

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[17]"Canadian Conservatories Plan for a Successful Year," CJM I/4 (September 1914), 85.

[18]The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada has articles on several Toronto institutions: Helmut Kallman and Patricia Wardrop, "Canadian Academy of Music," 140; Lorna Hassell, "Hambourg Conservatory," 408; John Beckwith, "Toronto Symphony Orchestra," 924-27.

[19]All the information in this paragraph and the following one is taken from my interview with Stuart Lawson, Toronto, Canada, 1 May 1983.

band, the Melody Ramblers, that stayed together for about five years.

Lawson remembers McPhee as "a person unto himself, . . . a nice lad [who was] very much of a prima donna." Colin and Douglas "were very different." Colin was much more "withdrawn" and did not keep in touch with his friends after he left Toronto. His hands were "beautiful, [he] could stretch tenths so easily; [his were] great, big, capable hands. . . . His piano playing was superb."

The Hambourg Conservatory, where McPhee and Lawson both studied, had been started in 1911 by several members of a Russian family that had arrived in Toronto a year earlier. Jan Hambourg (1882-1947), Lawson's violin teacher, was one of the founders, together with his father Michael (1855-1916) and brother Boris (1885-1954). In 1913 the Conservatory moved to a new location at the corner of Wellesley Street East and Sherbourne Street, a large building that Lawson remembers as a center of musical and cultural activity. The Toronto Symphony practiced there, as did the conservatory's own Hambourg Trio. Many visual artists and writers (such as the painters Arthur Lismer and John Russell and the poets E. J. Pratt, Charles G. D. Roberts, and Arthur Stringer) often met there as well. In 1914 the Conservatory's music faculty was large, including 30 teachers of piano, 11 of voice, 8 of violin, 4 of theory, 2 each of cello, organ, flute, mandolin/banjo, and composition, and 1 each of drama, French, German, and

dancing.[20]

A prominent member of the Hambourg Conservatory's faculty was Ernest Farmer (1883-1975), who, as McPhee's piano and composition teacher, was significant to the young musician's development. An Ontario native, Farmer had a solid musical background, including study at the Toronto Conservatory of Music and the Royal Conservatory in Leipzig (1905-1908) with Max Reger and others. Farmer worked mostly with children and had developed carefully reasoned methods for teaching both composition and piano performance. The person who most influenced his theories was his mother and first music teacher, Cara Farmer, who specialized in teaching children to compose, believing that most children possessed the talent to do so.[21]

Farmer was well-enough known in Toronto to be featured in the February 1916 issue of The Canadian Journal of Music. His picture was on the cover, and inside

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[20]Lorna Hassell, "Hambourg Conservatory."

[21]A brief article of 1916 described Cara Farmer's work: "Her pupils acquire the attitude of the creative musician to such an extent that many of them give the impression of being phenomenally gifted. Mrs. Farmer believes that nine children out of ten can be taught to compose attractive little pieces by the time they are eight or nine years old." ["Child Prodigies," CJM, III/2 (June 1916), 260.] See also: Margaret Holden, "Ernest Farmer, Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 316.

there was a profile of his work and an article by him.[22] Farmer believed that composing was essential to the education of all musicians:

> The ability to compose even quite commonplace little pieces, so long as they are correct and pleasing and with a touch of brilliancy or ideal beauty, brings with it so much intimate insight into the nature of music, . . . that no musical education should be considered quite successful without it.[23]

In his teaching, Farmer began first with rhythm and then introduced composition in stages (much like those of species counterpoint), progressing from simple to complex musical forms. Farmer bemoaned teaching conditions in Toronto: students lacked "suitable" textbooks and suffered under "the delusion that no Canadian, unless he has been to Germany, can possibly compose real music." But he singled out one student, Colin McPhee, whose talent justified "ten times the extra trouble" and set him apart as "the best of four or five decidedly brilliant young composers."[24]

McPhee must have started studying with Farmer right

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[22]Luigi von Kunits, "Ernest J. Farmer," II/10 (February 1916), 173, and Ernest Farmer, "Evolution and the Teaching of Composition," II/10 (February 1916), 183.

[23]Farmer, Ibid. Farmer was a piano teacher and head of the theory department at the Hambourg Conservatory. Farmer wrote other articles detailing his scientific pedagogical theories: "On Chord Playing," CJM II/12 (April 1916), 224, and "Evolution and Piano Technic," CJM III/2 (June 1916), 262.

[24]Ibid.

after his family moved to Toronto.[25] With these lessons began a busy musical schedule.

McPhee's first concert review appeared in 1914, when he took part in a recital by pupils of Ernest Farmer and his brother Broadus, a violin teacher. Although the review was not long, McPhee and another young fellow were singled out for praise: "The programme included compositions by four pupils of Ernest Farmer--Douglas Crowe, Sam Sadowski, Gerald Moore, and Colin McPhee. The two latter, boys of twelve or fourteen, show a constructive skill and poetic feeling which suggest great possibilities."[26]

One year later, a Toronto paper published a longer, more detailed account of McPhee's achievements, which was followed by a number of others. Perhaps most striking about these articles is their respectful tone, the sort one might expect to find for music composed by someone older and better established. Although local Toronto music journals (The Canadian Journal of Music and Musical Canada) and newspapers (The Globe, The Mail and Empire, Saturday Night) dutifully reported recitals by many young people, they were

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[25]In Farmer's "Evolution and the Teaching of Composition," published in February 1916, he says that McPhee "began at the beginning less than two years ago," which must mean that he started working with Farmer sometime after February 1914.

[26]"A Novelty Recital," no author or source given, [ca. 1914]. UCLA. This Gerald Moore is the famous accompanist, whose family emigrated to Canada (Toronto) in 1913.

enthusiastic about McPhee, describing him as a "rising star"[27] or a "specially talented youth."[28] Typical is the following:

> The writer recently had the privilege of hearing the compositions of an unusually gifted young Toronto boy, Colin McFee [sic] who has just passed his fifteenth birthday. . . . Young McFee played a Polonaise. . . . The composition was so mature in style that most of the audience assumed that the name of the performer attached to it on the programme was a printer's error. Nevertheless it was an original work by the lad himself, and a very virile and promising work at that. . . . He has a fine feeling for rhythm and an instinct for harmony, with a melodic inspiration surprising for a lad still in knicker-bockers.[29]

McPhee must have been a prolific young composer. Recital programs attest to this, as do his own off-hand

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[27]"Re-Opening of the Hambourg Conservatory of Music," MC XII/5 (September 1917), 80.

[28]"Juvenile Canadian Composers," MC X/12 (April 1916), 257-58. McPhee's name appears in several other reviews published in MC and CJM:
"Hambourg Conservatory Annual," MC X/3 (July 1915), 67.
"Young Native Composers," MC X/4 (August 1915), 81.
"Footlights Continued [`Pupils of Ernest J. Farmer . . .']," CJM II/10 (February 1916), 185.
[Untitled review of a recital by Farmer pupils], CJM II/12 (April 1916), 223.
"The Hambourg Conservatory," MC XI/10 (February 1917), 166.

[29]Untitled newspaper clipping, without source, [1915]. UCLA. This review covered the annual concert of the Hambourg Conservatory of Music, held on 27 May 1915 in Massey Hall--the largest Toronto concert facility. Twenty-three-hundred people attended, and twenty pupils performed. ("Hambourg Conservatory Annual.")

comments to friends in letters written later in life.[30] The reviewer quoted above goes on, after describing McPhee's Polonaise, to mention other works by the boy: "several 'Album Leaves,'" "Caprices," and "several songs, one of which, a setting of Pauline Johnson's lyric 'The Robin' is particularly delightful."[31] "The Robin" was recalled years later by another Toronto music critic, Hector Charlesworth (1872-1945), when he looked back over McPhee's career:

> It does not seem so long ago--though two world cataclysms have happened since--that Ernest Farmer, a Toronto piano teacher, brought to me a little pupil of his, who was not only skilful (for his years) on the piano, but possessed of original gifts as a composer. He was a bright-eyed, fair-haired youngster, and the little pieces he played (one I think had been inspired by the song of a robin) had fresh, ingenuous qualities. The little boy was Colin McPhee . . . In his teens he showed unusual virtuosic ability . . .[32]

McPhee later told Carlos Chávez his "Opus One" had been

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[30]See the appended catalogue of McPhee's works for a list of his juvenilia.

[31]Untitled newspaper clipping, without source, [1915]. UCLA.

[32]Hector Charlesworth, "Colin McPhee's Career," Toronto Globe and Mail (21 June 1941). Another reviewer referred to "The Robin" in a 1924 article about the premiere of McPhee's Second Piano Concerto: "Mr. McPhee, now in his twenty-fourth year, has been composing since childhood. My first knowledge of his talent was obtained years ago, when he played his own settings of some little nature songs, phenomenal in inspiration for a youngster." (Untitled newspaper clipping, without source, [1924]. UCLA.)

"composed at age eight"[33] and, to another friend, recalled writing at twelve "a piece for children's percussion band with a few strings, etc."[34] In his article on teaching composition (published in 1916, when McPhee was 16), Ernest Farmer claimed that his young pupil had written fifty pages of "good" music;[35] McPhee himself, around 1925, said he had written four works when he was fifteen.[36]

The only surviving music from McPhee's youth was published: Four Piano Sketches, Op. 1 (1916) and Arm Canadians!/March to Glory! (1917).[37] The Four Piano Sketches (Op. 1) are simple pieces, well-structured, fresh, youthful. With titles like album leaves, each captures a single mood or image: (No. 1) "April," (No. 2) "Prelude," (No. 3)

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[33]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 21 March 1955. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[34]Letter, CM to Dr. William Mayer, written from Woodstock, New York, Monday, postmarked 2 September 1942. Collection of Mrs. Beata Sauerlander. A review of one of McPhee's Toronto performances in 1915 says: "[He] has been making essays at composition ever since he was a little boy. About a year ago, he had acquired, under Mr. Farmer, sufficient knowledge of the principles of the art to essay the creation of serious works." (Untitled newspaper clipping, 1915).

[35]Farmer, "Evolution and the Teaching of Composition."

[36]Letter, CM to Irving Schwerké, written from 19 rue Visconti in Paris, Wednesday, [ca. 1925]. Music Division, Library of Congress.

[37]Four Piano Sketches, Op. 1 (Toronto: Empire Music and Travel Club, [1916]). Arm Canadians!/March to Glory! (Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1917).

"Water Nymph," (No. 4) "Silhouette." Such pianistic impressions were the stuff of the day, judging from the MacDowellesque titles listed in the regular "New Music" column of The Canadian Journal of Music.[38] They were written under Farmer's tutelage, and "Water Nymph" was singled out by him as a successful product of his pedagogical method.[39]

The forms of the Piano Sketches are typical of late nineteenth-century piano miniatures: "April" has a three-part structure, and the last three are all binary (the "Prelude" is AAB and the third and fourth have returns to the opening material). Perhaps the most engaging of the group is "Water Nymph" (See full score in Example 1). Its undulating sixteenth-note accompaniment evokes the play of water suggested by the title, and its melody has regular four-bar phrases, expanded only at the beginning with a one-bar introduction and at the end with a two-bar cadence extension.
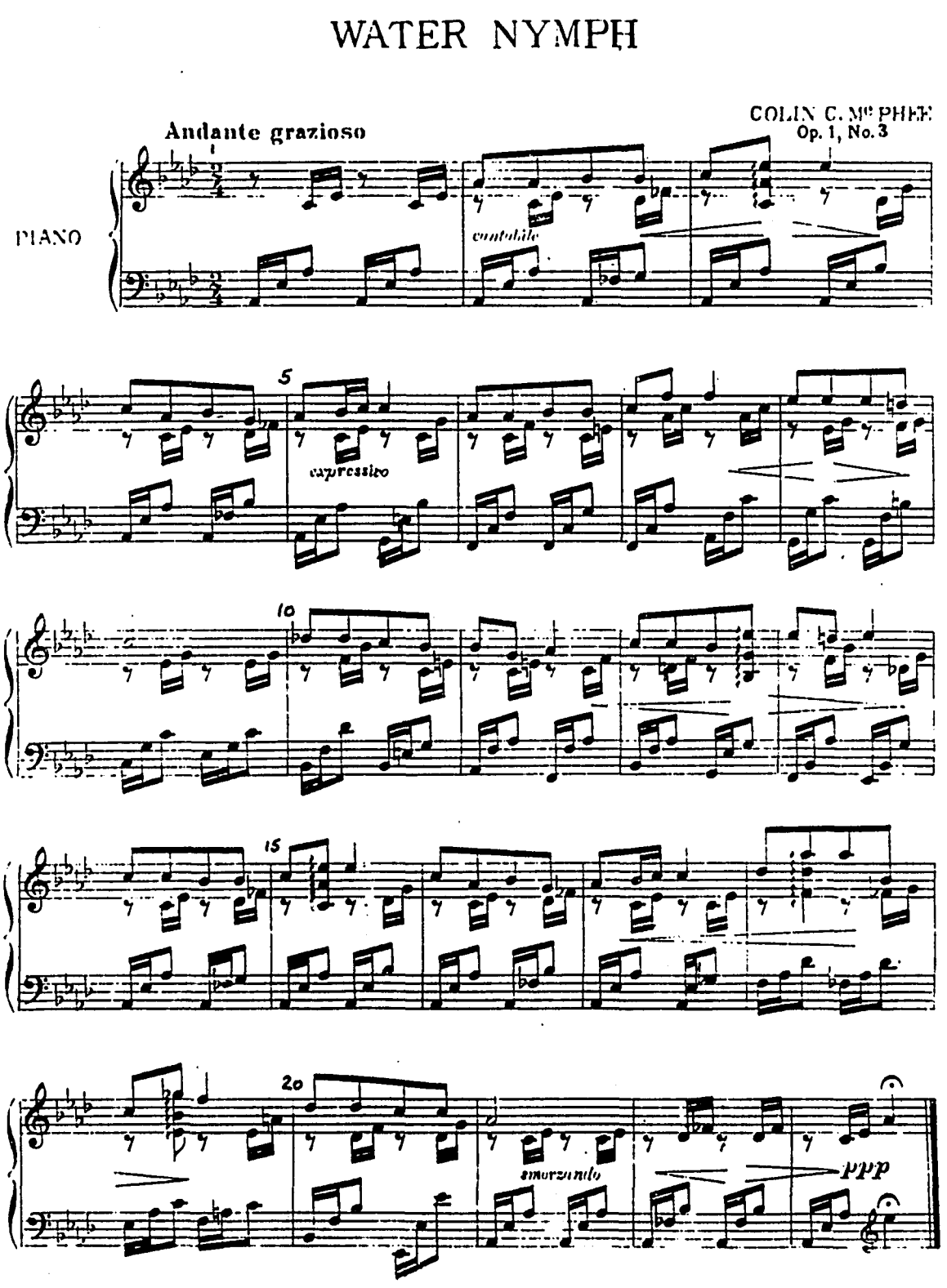
Although the phrase structure and handling of harmonic material have a textbook correctness, there are some modest touches that produce an effect of forward motion

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[38]See, for example, the column in CJM I/8 (March-April 1915), 158. Among the works by local composers listed are A Little Road Home by Herbert Brewer; Values by Josephine McGill; Two Violets by Alicia Scott; Wings of Morning by Haydn Wood.

[39]Farmer, "Evolution and the Teaching of Composition."
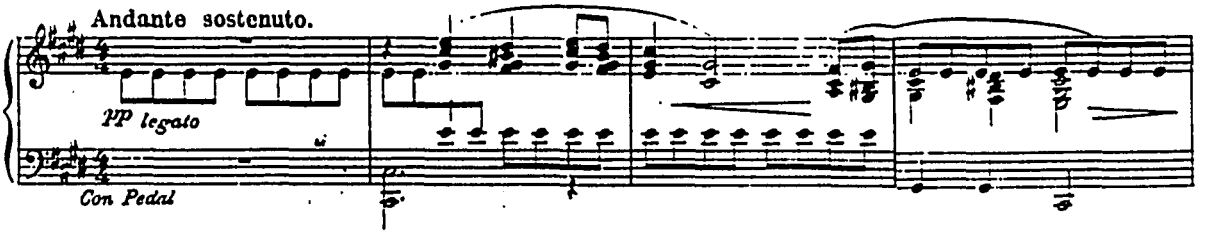
Example 1. McPhee, "Water Nymph," from Four Piano Sketches.



and gentle flux. The first phrase, for example, does not end squarely in m. 5 but propels forward, sliding past its tonic goal to a passing flirtation with the mediant.[40] Likewise, an inversion of the opening melody in the brief middle section (mm. 10-11) effectively moves the work back to the main key and melody in m. 14.

The other three are similar. The repeated E in "April"--reminiscent of Chopin's "Raindrop" Prelude--gives opportunity for some harmonic shifting around the key center of C-sharp minor. The harmonic and melodic structure is unified by opening right-hand material that moves much of the time in parallel sixths and a melody that outlines the same interval in the first half of the first phrase (mm. 2 and 3).

Example 2. McPhee, "April," from Four Piano Sketches, measures 1-4.
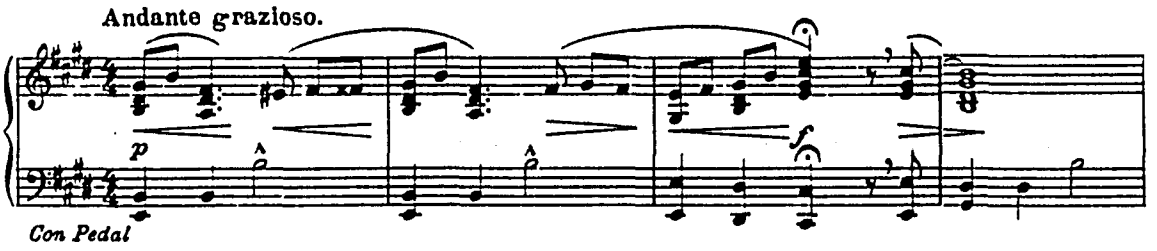


Each of the Sketches shows McPhee to be a pianist sensitive to expression. There is much swelling into and out of phrases (see the second and third measures of

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[40]Scholars in the twenty-first century might find this a striking precursor of Gershwin's "Oh, I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'."

"Water Nymph"). In the first four measures of "Prelude," dynamic markings are used to enhance the initial gasp and off-center quality of the principal musical idea.

Example 3. McPhee, "Prelude," from Four Piano Sketches, measures 1-4.



McPhee's Sketches attracted considerable attention in Toronto. Ernest Farmer not only referred to them in his article but taught the pieces to his piano pupils and performed them at one of the Hambourg Conservatory's regular Saturday recitals.[41] Yet another honor was bestowed on one of the Sketches--"Water Nymph"--which was published separately in The Canadian Journal of Music in February 1916 as part of a series begun the previous fall.[42] In October McPhee's publisher, the Empire Music and Travel Club Limited, had entered into an agreement

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[41]In 1917 Farmer began performing frequently studied pieces at the end of each program so that students could hear the works interpreted "with high artistic finish." On one recital his group of such works included "the recently published sketches of Colin McPhee." ["The Hambourg Conservatory," MC XI/10 (February 1917), 166.]

[42]"Special Announcement," CJM II/6 (October 1915), 82.

with the journal through which subscribers received club membership.[43] Soon thereafter each issue began to feature an Empire publication.

The Empire Music and Travel Club, founded in late 1914, was affiliated with the Toronto College of Music and had club rooms at 26 College Street. It conducted European tours to sample musical delights, operated a concert management bureau, and published music.[44] An announcement of the Club's earliest music publications--two pieces by the Toronto composer W. O. Forsyth (1859-1937)--suggests the kind of music that appealed to its members: "'A Song of Summer,' abounds in expressive melody and poetic tone-coloring . . . 'On the River,' a barcarole of languid abandon, is another excellent and thoroughly pianistic sketch."[45]

The second of McPhee's two early publications is a

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[43]II/10 (February 1916), 177.

[44]The founding of the Empire Music and Travel Club was announced in "Footlights," CJM I/8 (March-April 1915), 158. In September 1914, CJM described the club as a "feature" of the Toronto College of Music: "[It] offers personally conducted European tours in charge of competent musicians." ("Canadian Conservatories Plan for a Successful Year," CJM I/4 (September 1914), 85.
Beginning in the March-April 1915 issue of CJM (I/8, 172), the club placed a full-page ad calling for manuscripts to publish. In October 1914, they advertised in the same journal as concert managers (I/5, 116) promoting their retinue of concert artists.

[45]"Notes of New Music," CJM I/8 (March-April 1915), 158.

"Canadian War Song" (so the subtitle reads), Arm Canadians! March to Glory!, "Dedicated to Canada's Heroic Army."[46] It bore a weighty endorsement: "Highly commended by Gen. Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France." Patriotic fever--rampant in Canada during World War I--must have hit McPhee as hard as it did many of his countrymen; his song was one of over three hundred such pieces published in Canada between 1914 and 1918.[47] Many, such as "Peace to the Souls of the Heroes" by one F. Shuttleworth, were quietly reverent, honoring the memory of dead soldiers.[48] Arm, Canadians! (Example 4), on the other hand, is a rousing call to battle. The text by Victor Wyldes has bold sounds and melodramatic images:

> [Verse 1:]
> Sons of Heroes! Heirs of Empire!
> Bred to dare and fear no fate,
> Set ablaze our freedom's watchfire:
> Arm to war on Hosts of Hate.
> Loud the foe's defiant fanfare
> Sounds across the ocean deep:
> On the lurid fields of warfare
> Ghouls of Death their harvest reap.

McPhee's verse-chorus setting is for solo voice with a vigorous chordal accompaniment, filled with left-hand

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[46](Toronto: Whaley, Royce & Co., 1917).

[47]See two articles by Helmut Kallmann in Encyclopedia of Music in Canada: "Patriotic Songs," 729-30, and "Wars, Rebellions, and Uprisings," 986-87.

[48]F. Shuttleworth's song was published in CJM II/8 (December 1915), 131.

HIGHLY COMMENDED BY GEN. SIR DOUGLAS HAIG
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN FRANCE

CANADIAN WAR SONG

ARM CANADIANS!
MARCH TO GLORY!
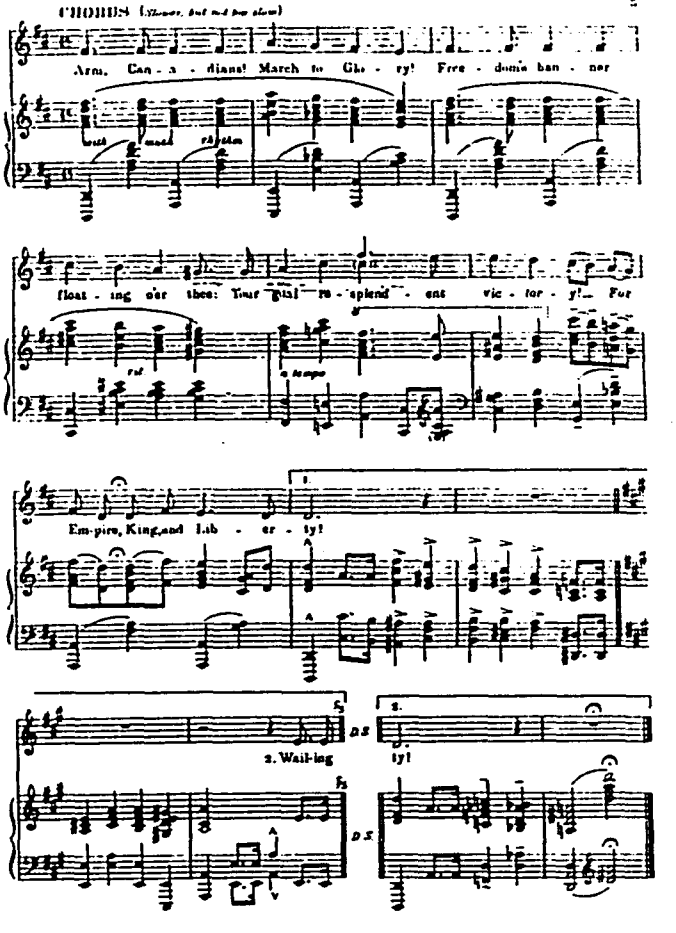
WORDS BY VICTOR WYLDES

MUSIC BY COLIN C. McPHEE

DEDICATED TO
CANADA'S HEROIC ARMY

⑤

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY
WHALEY, ROYCE & Co
WINNIPEG LIMITED TORONTO



Example 4. McPhee, Arm Canadians! March to Glory!, cover and chorus.

octaves. It could have been inspired by many spirited hymns of praise, such as Handel's "Thine Is the Glory" (from Judas Maccabaeus) or Oliver Holden's "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

Whaley, Royce, & Co., the Toronto publishers who printed this work "for the author," were an old firm, founded in 1888; from 1890 to 1920 they published more music than any other Canadian house.[49] Even their imprint, though, must not have been enough to make the work a success among the sea of other patriotic ditties. Janet McPhee remembers there were "stacks" of Arm, Canadians! stored in the basement of the McPhees' Pacific-Avenue house.[50]

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[49]Helmut Kellmann, "Whaley, Royce & Co. Ltd.," Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 994.

[50]Interview with Janet McPhee. The only extant copy that I know of is in the National Library of Canada.

CHAPTER II

A MUSICAL EDUCATION: FROM PEABODY TO PARIS (1918-1926)

Colin McPhee left Canada in the fall of 1918 to further his musical education. He did not go first to Europe, which would have been the usual course for an ambitious young Canadian, but to the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, America's oldest such institution. These were the waning days of World War I--no time to consider sailing off to study in France or Germany. For McPhee, that experience would come later.

McPhee made a strong impression at Peabody immediately. He won the three-year O. R. Boise Memorial Harmony Scholarship,[1] and his considerable musical abilities quickly set him apart from his contemporaries--or so two of them remember. Ann Hull, a student slightly older than McPhee, says he "became quite famous among all of us because

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[1]"Mr. McPhee . . . came to Baltimore with the express purpose of studying at the conservatory, and, after competition examination, he was awarded the O. R. Boise scholarship in composition." ("Winners of Peabody Diplomas," Baltimore Sun, 15 May 1921.) McPhee's scholarship was also announced in Peabody Conservatory of Music of Baltimore [Yearbook], Fifty-third Year, 1920-21 (n.p., n.d.), 22.

he was so gifted." Sylvan Levin, another fellow Peabody student, concurs.[2]

Why McPhee chose Peabody is not clear. His principal teachers there--Harold Randolph in piano and Gustav Strube in composition--were not world-famous figures. Strube's work may have been known by Ernest Farmer, McPhee's Toronto teacher, since they shared a Leipzig Conservatory connection.[3] Another link might have been Ernest Hutcheson, a pianist and member of the Peabody faculty, who gave concerts around the United States and in Toronto; perhaps McPhee heard him there.[4] Yet another possibility is that someone from McPhee's mother's family in Red Bank, New Jersey suggested Peabody. One member of that family, Donald White, remembers visiting with Colin during the Peabody days.[5]

At Peabody, McPhee concentrated equally on piano and

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[2]Interview with Ann Hull, Westport, Connecticut, 5 December 1981. Interview with Sylvan Levin, New York, 25 September 1981.

[3]The two might have known one another by reputation: Farmer studied at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1905 to 1908; Strube was there fifteen years earlier.

[4]An announcement of five Toronto concerts to be given by Hutcheson in 1922 states he had performed there some years earlier. (E. R. Parkhurst, "Personalia," [Toronto] Globe, 18 November 1922.)

[5]McPhee and White never saw each other after the early twenties. White calls himself a "distant cousin" of McPhee. (Telephone interview with Donald White, Red Bank, New Jersey, 8 November 1982.)

composition. In 1919 he received a teacher's certificate in piano and in 1921 a diploma in harmony and composition; he attempted a diploma in piano but failed.[6] The teacher's certificate, which prepared the student for public-school instruction, was earned by a large number of Peabody students as an intermediate-level achievement. Like most conservatories, Peabody awarded diplomas only to its more gifted pupils.[7] According to a slightly later Peabody Conservatory Yearbook (1926-27), the requirements for the harmony and composition diploma were as follows:

> The candidate is required to read at sight from an orchestral score; and to submit an original fugue in three or four voices, a complete composition in larger form of at least three movements for one or more instruments, a group of songs for one or more voices, and an overture, a symphonic poem, or other composition, in one or more movements for full orchestra.[8]

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[6]McPhee was among sixteen students receiving piano certificates in 1919; a total of twenty-four students were granted diplomas or certificates. ("[Program] Fifth Exhibition Concert," Peabody Conservatory of Music, 30 May 1919.) On 27 May 1921, five students received diplomas and thirteen were awarded certificates. ("[Program] Peabody Conservatory of Music.") Sylvan Levin kindly gave me a photograph of Peabody's 1921 class; McPhee stands in the front row. McPhee's failure to achieve a piano diploma is noted in, "Peabody Conservatory of Music/Pupil's Record . . ./Pupil: Colin McPhee/ . . . Teacher: Mr. Randolph." 1920-21. (Registrar's Office, Peabody Conservatory of Music.)

[7]Ray Edwin Robinson, A History of the Peabody Conservatory of Music (D.M.E. dissertation, Indiana University, 1969), 297-98.

[8]As quoted in Robinson, pp. 298-99.

During his Peabody years, McPhee wrote works in each of the genres stipulated, as well as others beyond diploma requirements. His "complete composition in larger form" could have been one of two piano sonatas, the first of which was performed by McPhee twice in May 1919 (first movement only) and the second on his diploma recital on 20 May 1921. Likewise, his "group of songs" was performed on the same 1921 recital; included were At Night Thy Voice Is Like the Nightingale, La Silence de Mnasidika, and Music, When Soft Voices Die. His work "for full orchestra" was a piano concerto, Le [sic] Mort d'Arthur, premiered with the Peabody Student Orchestra on 26 May 1920.[9]

McPhee performed on twenty-two recitals in his three years at Peabody, six of which featured works of his own. As a pianist, his repertory drew upon standard literature, from Bach to Debussy. Among the highlights of these programs were performances of three piano concertos (Beethoven's Fourth, Saint-Saëns's Fourth, and McPhee's own First--the last two with the Peabody Orchestra), a solo piano recital, and a shared recital of his own compositions.[10] Baltimore newspapers seldom reviewed student

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[9]Appendix A lists the contents of McPhee's recital programs at Peabody. Most of the programs came from the Library of the Peabody Conservatory, courtesy of Librarian Edwin Quist; the others came from Sylvan Levin.

[10]See programs for 12 April 1920, 26 May 1921, 26 May 1920, 3 November 1920, and 20 May 1921.

recitals; neither did The Peabody Bulletin.[11] So we are left only with a stack of programs telling the works performed.

Ann Hull remembers, "He could do anything at the piano. He could play two tunes at once--things like that."[12] And Wallingford Riegger claimed McPhee had told him that "his teachers wondered at his gift for improvising."[13] Two Baltimore reviews of McPhee's performance of the Saint-Saëns piano concerto in May of 1921--his last concert at Peabody--give brief (albeit cliché-ridden) characterizations of his keyboard persona:

> Colin McPhee, playing in a somewhat more spiritual vein, gave with great sympathy and technical felicity the beautiful old-fashioned Saint-Saëns piano concert in C minor . . . His performance was marked by no little poetic insight and understanding and he . . . was enthusiastically received.[14]
>
> . . . McPhee [is] a young pianist endowed with considerable musical feeling and the happy faculty

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[11]Occasionally Peabody recitals were announced in either The Sun or The News; all such known references are listed in Appendix A.

[12]Interview with Ann Hull.

[13]Wallingford Riegger, "Adolph Weiss and Colin McPhee," American Composers on American Music: A Symposium, ed. Henry Cowell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1933; reprint, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962), 37.

[14]J.O.L., "Peabody: Students' Orchestra," unidentified Baltimore newspaper, [May 1921]. Collection of Sylvan Levin.

of adjusting his tone values. Possession also of a free and facile artistic interpretation [sic].[15]

Harold Randolph, with whom McPhee studied piano, concurred in part with the Baltimore critics and with McPhee's fellow students when he wrote yearly evaluations of his pupil's progress. He saw McPhee as "an extraordinarily promising pupil"--"a talent of very nearly the first order"--and pronounced his piano hands "magnificent."[16] Yet his evaluations, which show careful consideration of McPhee's aptitude and achievement, pinpoint a significant shortcoming from the outset: although McPhee was "very industrious," he was "lacking in method."[17] In 1918-19 Randolph observed, "Very marked piano talent, but thro' either nervousness or lack of proper preparation always disappoints in performance." The next year, Randolph made a related judgment, "[McPhee] loves to be always exploring new fields instead of completing any undertaking. . . . [There is] still much to desire considering his immense

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[15]W.G.O., "Brilliant Spots in Students' Concert: Peabody Players Show Talent in Exhibition," unidentified Baltimore newspaper, [May 1921]. Collection of Sylvan Levin.

[16]"Peabody Conservatory of Music/Pupil's Record . . . /Pupil: Colin McPhee/ . . . Teacher: Mr. Randolph." The first quotation in this sentence comes from Randolph's evaluation for 1918-19; the second and third from that for 1919-20. (Registrar's Office, Peabody Conservatory of Music)

[17]Ibid, 1918-19. The following quotations are culled from the same evaluation forms and were written in the years cited.

possibilities." Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Randolph's last evaluation (1920-21) begins with the words "Failed for Piano Diploma" and goes on to explain why:

> . . . altho' his Examination Recital was about the best concert playing he ever did here. Can't be certain whether his shortcomings are due to lack of real piano talent or inability to do the necessary intensive, thoughtful study. Certain it is that he has never played anything to my entire satisfaction. Makes excellent beginnings, but easy things get no further than the most difficult--in fact not so far.

That year, like the previous one, Randolph put a question mark under "diligence."

Gustav Strube filled out the same forms for McPhee in 1919-20 and 1920-21 but with no detailed reviews of his pupil's development. In the first year, he wrote "10" under "progress" and "diligence," together with a "general mark" of "A" and the word "Yes" sprawled across the questions "Is the pupil gifted musically? . . . industrious? . . . intelligent?" In McPhee's last year at Peabody, Strube gave him "8's" coupled with an "A."[18]

Both Randolph and Strube were powerful presences at Peabody. An article about Randolph for The Musical Quarterly in 1944 by Denoe Leedy, conveys reverential respect for the man; Leedy appears to have been a Randolph pupil. Randolph was educated in the United States (at

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[18]"Peabody Conservatory of Music/Pupil's Record . . ./Pupil: McPhee, Colin C./ . . .Teacher: Mr. Strube," 1919-20 and 1920-21. On the forms, the "scale of marks" was given as "10 Excellent; 0 Bad."

Peabody) and directed the Conservatory from 1898 until his death in 1927. With Randolph, McPhee first touched the Liszt lineage, for Randolph's Peabody piano teacher had been Carl Faelten, a Liszt pupil. Randolph attained modest stature as a virtuoso, performing with Theodore Thomas in the late 1880s and with the Boston Symphony Orchestra beginning in 1897; he also gave recitals with Fritz Kreisler and Maud Powell. According to Leedy's description, Randolph emanated virtue--"a veritable symbol of musical and personal distinction."

> The sum total of his qualities as a man and artist . . . had its ethical value. It taught one to cultivate self-discipline, to appraise all experience in terms of the highest standards, and to be both courageous and fastidious in shaping one's way of life.[19]

McPhee's shortcomings were just the ones that might have troubled a man with such a strong moral core.

Gustav Strube also seems to have been someone to reckon with--a solid musician with an uncompromising professional manner. As conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, he was described as "a hard taskmaster" whose

> language [could] be direct and sharp . . . He frightened nearly everybody except those who refused to run up the white flag at his first gruff bark; if they stood their ground, the Old Man was ready to meet them on it.[20]

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[19]Denoe Leedy, "Harold Randolph: The Man and Musician," The Musical Quarterly XXX/2 (April 1944), 198.

[20]Gustav Klemm, "Gustav Strube: The Man and the Musician," The Musical Quarterly XXVIII/3 (July 1942), 291-92.

His praise to students was "charily given."[21] Strube came to Peabody in 1913 after playing first violin with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for twenty-three years. He had also conducted the Boston Pops from 1898 to 1912 and was associate conductor of the Worcester [Massachusetts] Festivals from 1909 to 1916. Strube circulated among Baltimore's intelligentsia, especially in his affiliation with the Saturday Night Club, a group of literary figures and musicians that included H. L. Mencken. He was an active composer, whose newest works were occasionally featured in Musical America in the early years of the century. Despite a German heritage (perhaps because of it), Strube was something of a musical Francophile; as a Musical America reporter put it in 1911, Strube was "trying to beat the modern French man at his own game."[22] He admired the music of Debussy, "Never an ugliness, never a forced effect foreign to the nature of the instrument. Only beautiful sounds." And he found d'Indy to have "a great intellect and tremendous technic."[23]

A glimpse at Randolph and Strube, coupled with their

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[21] Ibid.

[22] "A New Rhapsody by Gustav Strube," Musical America XIV/2 (20 May 1911), 17. The French qualities in Strube's work were noted repeatedly. See, for example: Klemm; also O.D., "Gustav Strube," Musical America XI/13 (5 February 1910), 35.

[23] "A New Rhapsody."

evaluations of McPhee, tells something about McPhee's life at Peabody. More insight into that experience could be had through studying his musical scores; however, not a note survives from the sixteen original pieces that McPhee performed on Peabody concerts.[24] None were reviewed, and McPhee himself was mostly silent about them in later years. But he was proud of a few, especially Le Mort d'Arthur, his first piano concerto of 1920. On later work lists, he also occasionally included "two piano sonatas," both of which were probably composed at Peabody.[25]

McPhee's most off-beat performance in Baltimore was not at Peabody but at the Lyric Theatre, the city's main concert hall, designed after the Leipzig Neue Gewandhaus.

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[24]Edwin A. Quist, Librarian at Peabody, says: "Regrettably we have no manuscripts of his, either musical or otherwise. (Not any that have come to light at any rate.)" (Letter to author, 2 September 1981.) None of these manuscripts is at UCLA or the National Library of Canada.

[25]For example, while in Paris, McPhee wrote to Irving Schwerké, then Paris music correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and Musical Courier, to introduce himself. McPhee gave a list of his works, which included, among other things, the Baltimore piano concerto, as well as two piano sonatas. (Letter from CM to Irving Schwerké, from 19 rue Visconti, Paris, "Wednesday" [20 May 1925].) Also, Wallingford Riegger, who appears to have gotten his information directly from McPhee, wrote about the first piano concerto:

> His [McPhee's] "Mort d'Arthur," which he played in Baltimore (1920) with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra [sic], was a decided success, from which we infer that it in no way challenged the audience in their comfortable rut of musical thinking. (American Composers on American Music, p. 37.)

On 9 April 1921, he teamed up with a dancer named "Henri" to present a "Recital Intime" of "ultra modern compositions." The program included:

> 'The Saint' and 'The Bird,' danced to works by Debussy, 'Three-Four,' to a number by Grieg; 'The Juggler,' to a number by Moszkowski; 'Legend,' to something of Scriabine; 'An Eastern Actor,' the music of which is by Yamada; 'Narcissus' and 'Minstrels,' both of which will be given to works by Debussy, and an interpretation of Cyril Scott's 'Danse Nègre.'
>
> Mr. McPhee will play for the first time in Baltimore an 'Etude' by Cyril Scott; his own 'Two Hymns for a Sunset' and 'El Albaicîn' of Albéniz, and in the second half of the program, he will also give the Valse Impromptu of Liszt; the Chopin-Liszt 'Meine Freuden,' and Chopin's 'Winter Wind' Etude.[26]

Despite Henri's name, he was not French at all but the son of Rev. Dr. Julius Hofmann of Baltimore. He made "several successful tours of the country in dances arranged by himself" and worked as an actor as well.[27] Henri's program with McPhee received considerable advance promotion, including two notices with pictures in The Baltimore News and a write-up in The Sun.[28]

McPhee was a fun-loving fellow. According to reports in the Peabody Bulletin, he was a cut-up in crazy skits at

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[26]Unidentified newspaper clipping [Baltimore, April 1921]. UCLA.

[27]"Henri to Dance at Little Lyric," Baltimore Sun (3 April 1921).

[28]"To Give Recital Here [with photos of Henri and Colin McPhee]," The Baltimore News (3 April 1921), 3; "To Give Recital [with photo of McPhee]," The Baltimore News," (7 April 1921), 10; and "Henri to Dance."

annual alumni dinners and plunged right into the whirl of student antics. A mixed spoof of a piano recital was presented at a banquet in December 1919; one of the actors was "See See McPhee," cast in the role of "A Critic." C. C. presented a "delicate portrayal of the Critic's profound and interested attitude."[29] He appeared in another such diversion that spring[30] and was also said to have "put some professionals to blush"--performing an unspecified antic--in a cabaret entertainment at the 1921 alumni dinner.[31]

Ann Hull fondly remembers McPhee's Peabody pranks, calling him "extremely personable" and "a lot of fun to be with."[32] Once he gave a luncheon for Harold Randolph, evidently drawing upon the culinary skills that were to bloom later in life. The luncheon was held in McPhee's apartment.

> [It] consisted of one room where he had a gas stove, and he cooked the meal on that. It was a complete luncheon featuring a chicken dish. . . . At the end Mr. Randolph said, 'What are you going to do with the bones, Colin?' And Colin said, 'Let me show you; it's very easy because this is a convenient apartment.' And with that he moved the

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[29]"The Artist," Peabody Bulletin XVI/2 (February 1920), 3.

[30][no title], Peabody Bulletin XVI/3 (Spring 1920), 5-6.

[31]"The Alumni Cabaret," Peabody Bulletin XVII/2 (Spring 1921), 7.

[32]Interview with Ann Hull.

> stove over to the side, and there was a hole in the floor to the cellar. Colin simply threw the bones down the hole.

McPhee's final Peabody performance was not in the kitchen or concert hall but in the back pages of the Peabody Bulletin, where four of his caricatures were published (Figure 1).[33] With that, he graduated and returned to Toronto, not just to be with family but to launch on another critical leg in his musical journey.

Toronto Again

> He seems to have hands that can do anything on the keyboard and a brain that never forgets. And over both there is a temperament that literally burns . . . a genius.[34]

Extravagant words, but not uncommon ones in descriptions of Colin McPhee's pianistic panache after his return to Toronto in 1921. McPhee had left Canada in 1918 a promising talent. When he came back even the most idealistic expectations seemed to be fulfilled. His concerts were well-publicized and their reviews stunning.[35]

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[33]Peabody Bulletin XVII/2 (Spring 1921), 8-9.

[34]Yenmita [pseudonym for Edward W. Wodson]. "Music Notes . . . Splendid Afternoon Concert--Colin McPhee's Third Piano Recital at Hart House," unidentified clipping, [9 March 1923]. UCLA.

[35]McPhee's failure to win a diploma in piano at Peabody was either unknown or irrelevant to the people of Toronto. They consistently saw him as an exceptionally gifted young virtuoso and composer.

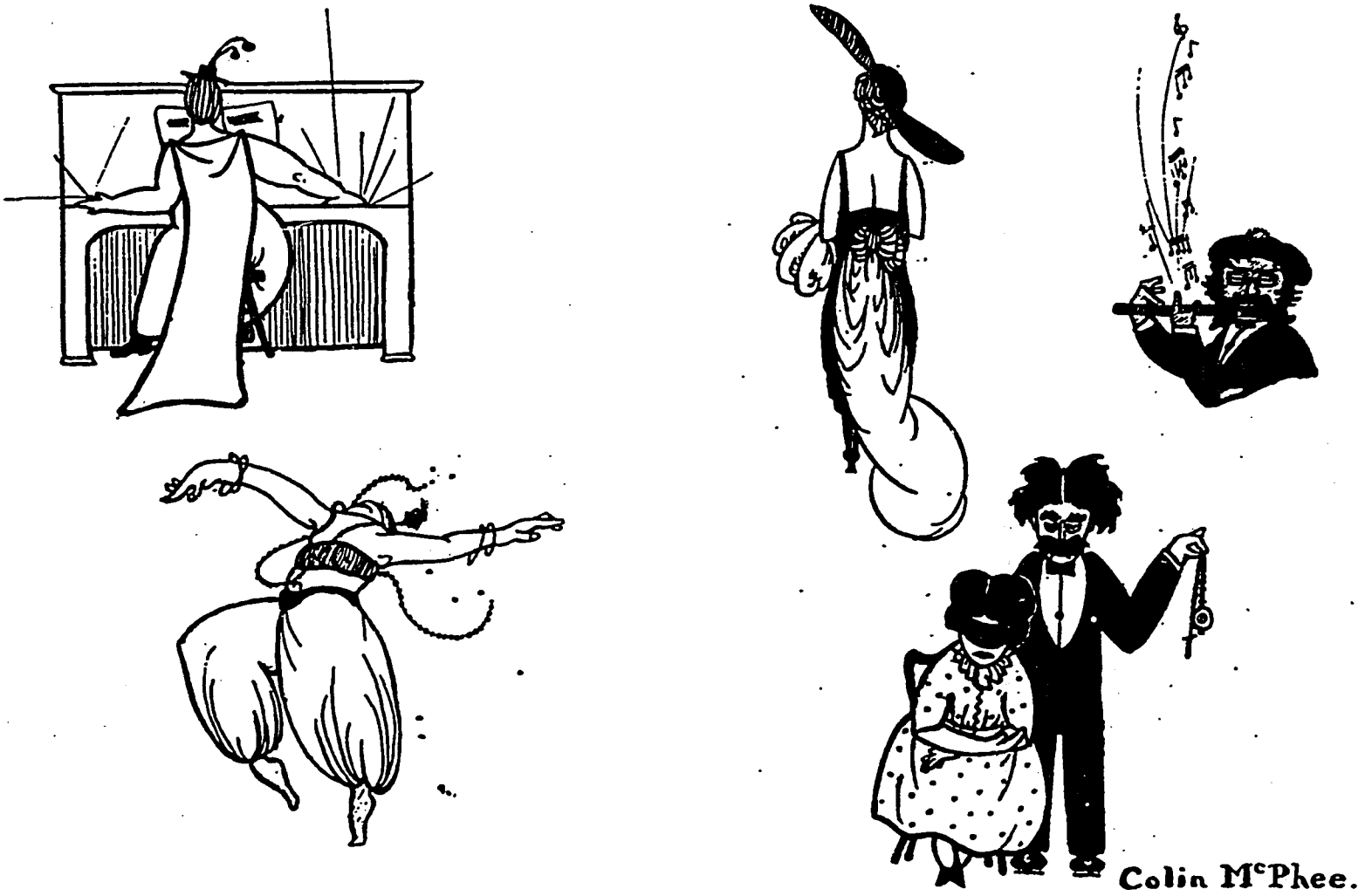


Figure 1. McPhee, Caricatures from the Peabody Bulletin (Spring 1921).

McPhee's move back to Toronto coincided with the beginning of Arthur Friedheim's tenure at the Canadian Academy of Music; Friedheim became McPhee's teacher. For Torontonians, Friedheim (1859-1932) was a returning celebrity. In 1894, while touring the United States to champion the music of Franz Liszt, he had been the featured soloist at the opening of Toronto's largest concert facility, Massey Hall. In fact, Friedheim was something of a celebrity in Canada as a whole, where "reviewers and audiences reacted with . . . unusual warmth in a country which was notoriously critical and unenthusiastic."[36] In 1914, he began a tour of 100 Canadian cities, sponsored by the piano firm of Heintzman, which was to include "towns where no great performer had ever been heard." The tour had to be canceled soon after it was begun, however, because of the hostility that Friedheim's German name aroused as World War I got underway.

Friedheim's decision to begin teaching at the Canadian Academy in 1921 was a major event in Toronto, announced with a feature article in the July issue of Musical Canada and his picture on the magazine's September cover. Friedheim was hailed as "one of the greatest living

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[36]Theodore L. Bullock, Introduction to Life and Liszt: Recollections of a Concert Pianist by Arthur Friedheim (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1961), 18.

exponents of Liszt."[37] He had studied first with Anton Rubinstein, then with Liszt during the last eight years of the composer's life. He had also been Liszt's secretary for a time in Rome and Weimar. The title of Friedheim's memoirs--Life and Liszt--suggests how much his self-image revolved around the old Abbé. Toronto was captivated with Friedheim's keyboard personality, calling him a "classic presence [with] nobility of style." His phrasing was "satisfying and impressive," his tone "large," though he was "inclined to austerity rather than tenderness."[38]

With Friedheim as his teacher, it is not surprising that Colin McPhee focused on piano performance during his next three years in Toronto. He composed but not as prolifically as he had at Peabody, and he also taught--beginning at least in 1922--at the Canadian Academy of

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[37]"Arthur Friedheim Among Us," Musical Canada II/7-8 (July-August 1921), 24-25. Friedheim's picture was on the cover of Musical Canada in September 1921 (II/9).

[38]There were many reviews of Friedheim's performances in the Toronto papers. The one quoted here covers a performance at Massey Hall on 16 January 1923: [Review of Friedheim Recital], Saturday Night (27 January 1923). Clipping File, Toronto Public Library. Although this review is not signed--like many of those from Saturday Night that follow--it is most likely by Hector Charlesworth (1872-1945), who wrote music criticism for that paper from 1891 until his death. Charlesworth was managing editor of Saturday Night from 1910 to 1926 and editor from 1926 to 1932. (Maud McLean, "Hector Charlesworth," Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 183.) Saturday Night was a Toronto weekly, published beginning in 1887.

Music.[39] But he seemed to be more occupied, especially during his first few years in Toronto, with building a strong keyboard technique and a personal interpretative voice. Friedheim and the music of Liszt guided his way.

McPhee developed a good relationship with his teacher, one that endured beyond the Toronto years. Friedheim's son Eric recalls that, "Colin was very close to the Friedheim family in Toronto between 1921 and 1923, frequently dining with us at our resident hotel," and goes on to say, "My father considered [Colin] among his outstanding pupils."[40] In a short chapter of Life and Liszt titled "I Am Content," Arthur Friedheim himself spoke of McPhee with admiration and affection. Friedheim was writing in 1931 or early 1932 and began his chapter by expressing sadness at hearing of the death of another former pupil. He continued:

> And the day has dealt kindly with me, too, for I have received from far-off Java a letter from a former Toronto pupil, Colin McPhee, perhaps the most gifted

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[39]The City of Toronto Directories list McPhee in 1923 as a music teacher at the Canadian Academy of Music; he was living then at 56 [sic; most likely means "36"] Pacific Avenue. In 1924 his occupation was the same, but his residence changed to 679 Spadina Avenue, where he must have rented a room from Mrs. Louise Emerson (principal resident of that address). (Letter to author from James A. Fraser, Toronto City Archives, 5 March 1982.)

[40]Letter from Eric Friedheim to author, 25 January 1984. Eric Friedheim goes on to say that Colin visited with the Friedheim family after they moved to New York in 1924. No letters from McPhee to Arthur Friedheim are known to remain.

> pupil I ever had. His innate musical sense, his sturdy application and a striking personality marked him out for a brilliant career on the concert platform. I felt a sense of personal loss when, after I left Canada, he gave up the piano altogether and applied himself entirely to composition.[41]

A penchant for Liszt, as transmitted through Friedheim, is evident in the program of McPhee's first solo recital under Friedheim's tutelage, held on 16 February 1922 at the Canadian Academy of Music. Two Liszt works, Harmonies du soir and Waldesrauschen, were included.[42] In May, McPhee played the Liszt Second Piano Concerto at a recital of Friedheim's post-graduate students, with Friedheim at the second piano. The strength and vitality of McPhee's performance captured one critic's attention:

> His ability to evoke great masses of unforced tone was particularly impressive. His touch was virile and musical in the large dynamic effects, and

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[41]Life and Liszt, 256. Arthur Friedheim died in October 1932.

[42]An engraved invitation and program for this concert are in the McPhee Collection at UCLA. Both are dated "February 16" with no year, but a Canadian Academy of Music ad in The Mail and Empire clarifies that the year was 1922. (11 February 1922, p. 14.) Every Saturday, The Mail and Empire included ads for the Academy's upcoming concerts. This one listed McPhee's solo recital in big, bold letters; beneath it was the announcement of a lecture by Dr. Ernest MacMillan on Brahms's Symphony No. 3, during which "an arrangement [of the symphony] for piano duet will be played by Dr. MacMillan and Colin McPhee."

As far as I know, this is the first solo concert given by McPhee after his return to Toronto in 1921. See Appendix B for the contents of all McPhee's Toronto recital programs.

> caressing, sure and brilliant in the lighter passages.[43]

By December of 1922, when McPhee made his official Toronto debut outside the sponsorship of any teacher or institution, a substantial Liszt group became a hallmark of his concerts, and his own transcription of the Rákoczy March a staple. His December program included four works performed the previous February at the Canadian Academy--Beethoven's Sonata Op. 27 No. 1, Ravel's Jeux d'Eau, Albéniz's El Albaicín, and Liszt's Waldesrauschen--as well as ten Chopin Etudes, the Rachmaninov Prelude Op. 32 and Barcarolle, and Liszt's Sursum Corda, Valse Impromptu, Consolation, and Rákoczy March.[44]

One reviewer was impressed by the young pianist's technical prowess:

> His feats in glisando [sic], arpeggio, trilling and staccato passages were captivating. . . . He has an execution which dazzles by its masterful insouciance, backed by a youthful energy that is almost rampant.[45]

Another critic, Augustus Bridle, who was in his first year with the Toronto Daily Star, saw McPhee's performing personality as rather raw and his stage manner lacking in confidence. With this review, Bridle began a series of well-

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[43]Unsigned review in Saturday Night (27 May 1922). Clipping File, Toronto Public Library.

[44][Program:] Colin McPhee, First Piano Recital, Hart House Theatre, Dec. 4 [1922]. UCLA.

[45]Hector Charlesworth, [Review of McPhee's concert on 4 December 1922], Saturday Night (9 December 1922). UCLA and Clipping Files, Toronto Public Library.

informed pieces about McPhee that tell a great deal about the young man's keyboard style, as well as his music.[46]

> With a mixture of nervous anxiety and studied nonchalance this youth who always leaves the stage with his left hand in his trousers pocket, flung out furies of triumphant sound that made the little theatre pulsate with unaccustomed energy.[47]

But beneath this burst of brilliance, Bridle looked for more sensitivity, more softness and lyrical relief:

> Sustained gusto, often rising to a brilliant bravour [sic], was the keynote. Only two or three times did he play cantabile with perfect ease; and even then he seemed impatient to begin some more dynamics. . . . His Beethoven Sonata was crisply and cleverly played. The player seemed to feel the tones and the rhythms rather than the piece.

Bridle found McPhee's performance of the Chopin Etudes to be mixed, too: "Three of them were beautiful. The Revolution [sic] Etude was a little master piece [sic]. A few of them seemed to labor under slow tempi . . . [and yet they were] splendid in their astonishing facility of technique." But for Bridle and others, it was with Liszt that McPhee soared: "McPhee seemed to enjoy [the Liszt

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[46]Many reviews by Bridle were to follow. In addition, in 1929 he wrote about McPhee in two separate essays describing new music in Canada (by then McPhee was living in New York): "Who Writes Our Music? A Survey of Canadian Composers," Maclean's (15 December 1929), 32; and "Composers Among Us," in Yearbook of the Arts in Canada (1928-1929), ed. Bertram Booker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), 140.

[47]Augustus Bridle, "Colin M'Phee Makes His Pianistic Debut," Toronto Daily Star (5 December 1922). UCLA and Clipping File, Toronto Public Library. Bridle's comments as given below are quoted from this same review.

group] more than most, no doubt because most of them are wild, big and daring and suitable to the prodigious ecstacy of youth." Bridle was enthusiastic about McPhee's rendition of the Rákoczy March, "which he has made one of his recent hobbies." Another critic concurred:

> The real triumph of the evening was the Rákoczy March. Taken at a breathless pace [McPhee] fairly staggered one by his altogether scintillating chords. His fingers descended like trip hammers and he worked up a climax of tone, speed and rhythm that literally carried the audience off its feet.[48]

This recital was the first of three by McPhee at the Hart House Theatre during the 1922-23 season. A subscription to the series cost $2.50 and promised patrons much music "new to Toronto audiences."[49] The series was highly publicized in Toronto and was even included in The Globe's weekly list of important concerts for the entire 1922-23 season. McPhee was cited--together with the likes of Paderewski, Hofmann, Galli-Curci--as "the brilliant Toronto pianist."[50]

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[48]"Mr. Colin McPhee," unidentified newspaper clipping [December 1922]. UCLA.

[49]A subscription form for this series began: "Announcement, Three Piano Recitals by COLIN McPHEE, the young Canadian pianist . . ." UCLA.

[50]The Globe's concert listing--citing important musical events for the entire season--was included every Saturday under the headline "Some Dates Ahead" in E. R. Parkhurst's regular column, "Music in the Home, Concerts, and the Drama." One such listing for the 1922-23 season can be found on 4 November 1922, p. 23.

The Hart House was a recent Toronto addition, having opened in November 1919 on the University of Toronto's St. George Campus. Membership was limited to male students, graduates, and faculty members. A series of recitals and concerts--which eventually became a long-standing Hart House tradition--was begun on 12 November 1922 in a concert featuring the pianists Reginald Stewart and Colin McPhee, a thirty-voice choir, and a six-piece instrumental group conducted by J. Campbell McInnes.[51]

The opening of Hart House had an effect on the development of other young intellectuals in Toronto, such as Morley Callaghan (b. 1901), a Toronto native who was to go on to a successful career as a fiction writer. In his memoir, That Summer in Paris, Callaghan recalls that the Hart House Library was where he discovered contemporary authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald.[52] Callaghan also gives some sense of what it was like to be an aspiring artist in

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[51] [Program:] "Hart House Sunday Evening Concert/Sunday, November 12th, 1922." McPhee performed in a four-hand piano accompaniment to the Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes. (Collection of Hart House, University of Toronto.) Nancy McGregor, in "Hart House," (Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 418) claims this to have been the inaugural Hart House concert. McPhee also performed the Liebeslieder Waltzes with Reginald Stewart at a recital by Mr. J. Campbell-McInness given at the Jenkins Galleries in Toronto on 12 December 1922. (Clipping Files, Toronto Public Library.)

[52] That Summer in Paris: Memories of Tangled Friendships with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Some Others (New York: Coward-McCann, 1963), 31.

Toronto during the 1920s. He describes a mixture of family contentment and artistic restlessness that must have also been present in McPhee (although probably with a larger proportion of restlessness).

> In my city were many poets, a group of painters called the Group of Seven, and no doubt many great readers and scholars. But in those days it was a very British city. I was intensely North American. It never occurred to me that the local poets had anything to do with me. Physically, and with some other part of me, the ball-playing, political, debating, lovemaking, family part of me, I was wonderfully at home in my native city, and yet intellectually, spiritually, the part that had to do with my wanting to be a writer was utterly, but splendidly and happily, alien.[53]

Callaghan went on to talk about his association with Hemingway during the writer's brief tenure on the Toronto Star in the early twenties and expanded on the problems of being tucked away in a town in the middle of the North American continent:

> I think I saw . . . why Hemingway wanted to get out of Toronto like a bat out of hell. He had a kind of frantic pride, and though he had good friends among his colleagues in Toronto, they couldn't imagine they were in the presence of a man who was writing the best prose that had been written in the last forty years. Was that why he said to me so firmly, 'Whatever you do, don't let anyone here tell you anything'?[54]

While Callaghan was talking with Hemingway and absorbing contemporary literature in the Hart House library,

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[53] Ibid, 22.

[54] Ibid, 30.

McPhee continued to give recitals in its concert hall. His second solo recital took place there on 4 January 1923; it included more Liszt as well as Debussy and Schumann. But it was a group of Chopin works that caught one reviewer's ear. Either McPhee's rambunctious verve, criticized in December by Bridle, had been brought under control, or the reviewer simply perceived McPhee's keyboard style in a very different way:

> His playing of Chopin is a delight; his uncommon technical facility and command of delicacies of nuance combine exquisitely with a restraint all too rare in youth. There are more famous players who reduce the cloying sweetness of Chopin to a mass of tattered passions and raw flesh; Mr. McPhee avoided extremes.[55]

McPhee's final Hart House recital on 8 March 1923 included, among other pieces, the Liszt B-Minor Sonata, some Scriabin, and Albéniz's Malaguena.[56] One reviewer offered a careful critique that is particularly revealing about McPhee's keyboard manner. His estimate corroborates Bridle's--that McPhee had not yet achieved insightful subtlety:

> He has enormous strength of imagination and expression, but it is the strength of achievement rather than of endurance. His intellect is quick,

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[55] [Program:] "Colin McPhee, Second Piano Recital, Hart House Theatre, Jan. 4 [1923]. UCLA. The quote above is taken from "Colin MacPhee [sic]," unidentified newspaper clipping [January 1923]. UCLA.

[56] [Program:] "Colin McPhee, Third Piano Recital, Hart House Theatre, March 8 [1923]. UCLA.

clear and vigorous, but not yet reflective. He has a passionate love for the beautiful, but at present the beautiful to him is the strong.[57]

McPhee was also composing in Toronto, although he included his own music on only a few recitals.[58] On 16 February 1922, at the Canadian Academy of Music, he performed his "Elegy," and on the second Hart House program his "Improvisation" and "Sea Legend."[59] Both works are lost, and no reviewers commented on them.

Already McPhee was establishing patterns as a composer that were to last a lifetime. His arrangement of Liszt's Rákoczy March (the work already mentioned as a

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[57]Yenmita, "Music Notes . . . Splendid Afternoon Concert--Colin McPhee's Third Piano Recital at Hart House," unidentified clipping, [9 March 1923]. UCLA.

[58]In addition to the recitals discussed above, I know of four others during the Toronto period:

(1) A program given for the Toronto Centre of the Canadian College of Organists on 18 April 1922: "Mr. McPhee played a group of Chopin and Liszt, ending with a brilliant rendering of Chopin's A-flat Polonaise." ("Toronto Centre," Musical Canada III/5 (May 1922), 19.)

(2) A program presented by the Owen Sound Women's Music Club in Knox Church Auditorium, which is interesting because it shows that McPhee traveled outside of Toronto to give recitals. ("Artistic Program at Owen Sound W.M.C. Recital," Musical Canada IV/1 (January 1923), 14.

(3) A solo recital at Hart House. [Program:] "Hart House/Fourth Sunday Evening Concert," 4 February 1923. Collection of Hart House, University of Toronto.

(4) An undated performance by the Philharmonic String Quartet at the Canadian Academy of Music in which McPhee played the piano part to the Schumann Piano Quartet. ("Chamber Music Concert/Philharmonic String Quartet Make a Favorable Impression," unidentified newspaper clipping. UCLA.)

[59]See Appendix B for a full list of programs.

popular showpiece on his Toronto recitals) was the first of a long line of such compositions.[60] Later he was to make two-piano arrangements of works by Buxtehude and Britten, as well as many of the music of Bali.

Another central trait of McPhee's compositional output, one that became more and more apparent during his final Toronto years, was a preference for large works conceived in broad, sweeping gestures. As time passed, he turned away from small (solo or chamber) pieces to ones that made a resounding dramatic impact, either through massive orchestral forces or connection with the dance or theater. "Only music done in the grand manner, which I do extremely well, appeals to me; no songs or violin sonatas for me, thank you," was what McPhee confided to Sidney Robertson Cowell in 1947. "The Balinese have a special word for what I mean--ramé--festive noise. Only a symphony or a piano

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[60]Liszt himself had prepared two separate piano versions of this orchestral march; whether or not they were available to McPhee is not known. On his programs, McPhee identified the version of the Rákoczy March that he was playing as "Liszt-McPhee," and in a letter to Irving Schwerké, listing the works he had composed, McPhee cited an "arrangement of Rackoczy march of despot [sic]." (CM to Irving Schwerké from 19 rue Visconti, Paris, "Wednesday" [1924 or 1925]. Library of Congress.] An unidentified clipping from a Toronto newspaper mentions a performance of the Rákoczy March with piano and orchestra: "Colin McPhee presents a musical divertissement called 'A Liszt Transcription of the Famous Rakoczy March'; it will be accompanied by the Hippodrome orchestra." (Undated clipping, UCLA.) McPhee also arranged Chopin's A-flat Polonaise for piano and orchestra.

concerto!"[61] And, indeed, "festive noise"--an explosive celebration of dramatic possibilities and timbral effects--became the energizing force in his work.

As part of his move away from writing solo works, McPhee composed music for two stage presentations. Neither score is extant. The first was incidental music for a production of Hippolytus's Euripides presented at Hart House. A newspaper description of McPhee, more romanticized than usual, called him "a young, blond-haired Greek of 1922"--but then the piece was composed using the Greek modes.[62] The music was scored for soprano solo, women's chorus, string trio, oboe, flute, and harp. It may have been difficult: "Rehearsals for this [production] have been going on for some time; [they have been] not less strenuous because the incidental music is one of the features of the presentation."[63] McPhee's second dramatic work was music for a melodrama on Matthew Arnold's The

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[61]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 17 November [1947]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[62]"Euripides Modernized," unidentified clipping at UCLA. The clipping must date from October or November, 1922, because a brief notice in The Globe on 25 November 1922 says: "The music for the play 'Hyppolytus' [sic] at its production last week at the Hart House Theatre was especially written for the occasion by Colin McPhee of the Canadian Academy of Music." [E. R. Parkhurst, "Personalia," The Globe (25 November 1922), 25.] The fact that the piece was modal is revealed in an untitled review [November 1922]. UCLA.

[63]"Euripides Modernized."

Forsaken Merman, given by Bertram Forsyth at Hart House Theatre in the early twenties.[64]

Perhaps the single most important event in Colin McPhee's final Toronto years was the premiere of his Second Piano Concerto by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra on 15 January 1924 (this score, too, no longer extant).[65] Luigi von Kunits conducted, and McPhee was the soloist.[66] The work had three movements: (1) Allegro moderato 4-4, (2) Scherzo

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[64] [Announcement Flyer:] "Hart House Theatre/ February the Tenth at 8-30 p.m. sharp/In Response to Numerous Requests/Bertram Forsyth/Director Hart House Theatre/will give another/Recital/of Prose and Poetry/assisted by/Colin McPhee." UCLA. No year is given on the flyer, and I have been unsuccessful at pinpointing any more precise date than 1923 or 1924 (the Hart House did not open until November of 1922).

[65] There is no score at UCLA, the National Library of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum Library, the University of Toronto Library, the Toronto Public Library, or the library of the Toronto Symphony. In 1963, Oliver Daniel wrote to McPhee and asked him directly about the work; McPhee replied:

> Whatever made you think about the 'Toronto Concerto'? I'm afraid there is no copy in existence. I took the score to Paris when I went there to study in 1924, but got sick of toting it around after a couple of years, and threw it out with the garbage, if I remember." (Letter from CM to Oliver Daniel, 18 January 1963. Collection of Oliver Daniel.)

Prophetically, Augustus Bridle, in a piece previewing the concerto's premiere, wrote: "[McPhee] confesses that he is making a glorious experiment and does not pretend to finality or omniscience in that form or work; expects to discard most of it." ([Toronto Daily Star, January 1924] UCLA.)

[66] [Program:] "Eighth Twilight Concert, New Symphony Orchestra, Luigi Von Kunits, Conductor, Colin McPhee, Pianist . . . Massey Hall, January 15, 1924." UCLA.

Vivace 3-8, (3) Finale 2-2.[67] According to the program notes, "[The concerto] is written somewhat in the style of a Symphony, the orchestra playing an equally important part with the piano." Evidently the piano "played constantly . . . McPhee's [concerto] gave nobody rest."[68] McPhee began composing the work in June 1923 and finished it by November. His recital appearances dwindled and then stopped entirely as he worked on the piece.[69] Bridle billed the work as "the first time on record that a Canadian concerto has been played by a Canadian artist

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[67] Ibid.

[68] [Augustus Bridle], "Beethoven, M'Phee and Salvi Combine . . . McPhee's Concerto as a Contrast to Beethoven Is the Last Word in Being 'Different.'" [Toronto Daily Star, 16 January 1924]. UCLA.

[69] I have only a few notices of performances by McPhee during this period:

(1) A program at Oakwood Collegiate in Toronto, most likely in the fall of 1923. ("Daily Star Series Free Good Music," unidentified newspaper clipping, [fall 1923]. UCLA)

(2) A performance of the Toronto Festival Choir at Massey Hall in October 1923 at which McPhee played two Chopin Etudes, Cyril Scott's Danse Nègre, and three Liszt works ("Festival Choir Ready for Contest/Gave Concert at Massey Hall Which Deserved Support," unidentified newspaper clipping, 4 October 1923, UCLA, and "Music Notes: Beautiful Singing by the Toronto Festival Choir" Evening Telegram [October 1924]

(3) A recital at the home of Mrs. Ralph Connable on 19 November [1923], which included a "Polka" by McPhee. ([Program:] "American Women's Club of Toronto/Piano Recital/given by/Colin McPhee/at the home of Mrs. Ralph Connable/Monday afternoon, November 19th. UCLA.)

(4) A recital at Hart House on 14 December 1923. (Listed in "Annual Report of the Music Committee, 1923-1924, Hart House." No program is available. Collection of Hart House, University of Toronto.)

with a Canadian orchestra," and went on to boast that McPhee "copied out all the orchestral parts himself. The thing is entirely his own creation."[70]

Post-premiere reviews depict the work as adventuresome, even boisterous. Listeners were bewildered:

> The audience was large and very keen, but it is safe to say that a great many people left the hall more than a little puzzled, and others slightly amazed.[71]

> From the first twisted and tousled chord to the last thump of whatever was left to hit or to blow or to scrape, this concerto is a confession that youth has to have its day. It is a very musicianly work which none but a musician can begin to understand. The common ear fails to get it. There are no tunes. The themes are brief strings of intervals.[72]

The absence of a recurring, lyrical melody jarred the audience, and several critics, such as the one above, dubbed McPhee an experimenter.[73] The style of the piece was new to Toronto.

In a pre-performance write-up, Augustus Bridle grasped a characteristic that was to become predominant in McPhee's later work: exploitation of timbre. Bridle suspected that the work's thematic fragmentation might be

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[70][Augustus Bridle], "Beethoven, M'Phee and Salvi Combine.

[71]"Colin McPhee's Concerto," Mail and Empire, Toronto (16 January 1924). UCLA.

[72][Augustus Bridle], "Beethoven, M'Phee and Salvi Combine."

[73]In American Composers on American Music, Wallingford Riegger writes that McPhee's Toronto concerto was "shocking" to the audience (p. 37).

problematic for the audience but seemed to perceive McPhee's goal:

> When you hear it you will feel instinctively for some rope of melody; but it is not there. Themes instead; just a few notes in a line on which the composer hangs a whole lot of dazzling orchestration and brilliant pianism.[74]

After the premiere, Bridle had even more to say about the orchestration:

> The composer filled up the gaps with color and storm and dissonance. He combined instruments defiantly. He created new alignments of polyphonic noise. Once for example the tambourine shook, the brasses blared, the tympani shot off a salvo and the double basses carried on after the echo with some tempestuous jigsawings in decrescendo--and suddenly the piano crept in and took up all that looked like a plain theme, crushed one pack of semitones against another and led off into another heyday of pandemoniums. . . . There were many episodes like this.[75]

In keeping with all the attention McPhee received in Toronto, his last recital there on 29 March 1924 at Foresters' Hall, was presented with considerable fanfare. A large, handsome photo of him announced the event in Saturday Night[76] and the recital itself--billed a "Farewell Recital"--

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[74]Augustus Bridle, "Concerto by Colin McPhee Accentuates Sheer Impulse to Create," [Toronto Daily Star; pre-performance write-up].

[75][Augustus Bridle], "Beethoven, M'Phee and Salvi Combine."

[76][Photo Caption:] "Colin McPhee/The brilliant young Canadian pianist and composer who will give a recital at Foresters Hall on March 29th," Saturday Night (22 March 1924). Clipping File, Toronto Public Library.

had some grandiose touches. The stage at Foresters' Hall was fitted with a small Japanese screen against a "great dark green [back] drop"; "twelve thick red candles [stood] on an arboreal standard." The setting was "posteresque," and in the audience were "a great many local music lovers who with warrant believe that a distinguished career awaits [McPhee]"[77] It was a splendid send-off.

McPhee's program was again substantial, opening with the "Moonlight Sonata" and closing with his motto piece, the Rákoczy March.[78] There was also a set of works by McPhee with titles reminiscent of his published Opus 1 group: Three Moods: (1) Prelude, (2) Spring Afternoon, (3) Death Music. Since these scores are also lost, we must again rely on the critics' descriptions. Of the first and third, little was said--the Prelude was "thoughtful"; Death Music "seemed more of a thematic exercise than an expression of profound emotion."[79] But Spring Afternoon had more appeal,

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[77]These descriptions are culled from three reviews: "Colin M'Phee's Recital/Proves Marked Success/Gifted Young Pianist Charms Audience Throughout Entire Evening--Representative People Present," Unidentified newspaper clipping [March or April 1924] (UCLA); Augustus Bridle, "Colin M'Phee Plays Farewell Recital," The Toronto Daily Star (31 March, 1924), (UCLA); and "Colin McPhee's Recital," Saturday Night (5 April 1924) (UCLA and Clipping File, Toronto Public Library. An abridged version of this review was published in Musical Canada V/5 (May 1924), 22.)

[78][Program:] "Colin McPhee/Farewell Recital/Foresters' Hall/Sat. Mar. 29th, 8:30 P.M." UCLA.

[79]"Colin McPhee's Recital," Saturday Night.

possibly because McPhee supplied a prose description filled with romantic imagery:

> A forest awakens to the call of spring, and echoing are voices of birds--the chattering and rustling of forest life and babble of a brook released from the thraldom of winter. The music ceases abruptly--then echoing faintly is heard the elusive music of a grind organ man which 'haunts the poet as he wanders through the misty park listening to the first bird of Spring.'[80]

With cries of his brilliance ringing in the air, Colin McPhee left Toronto for study in Paris sometime in mid-1924. He was to return to Toronto only twice. Arthur Friedheim, the Canadian Academy of Music, Massey Hall, his family--all were left far behind.

The Paris Years

McPhee's time in Paris (1924-26) is lean in documentation. Few letters survive, and press coverage was scanty.[81] As a Toronto hometown star, McPhee's every

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[80]Quoted in, "Colin M'Phee's Recital/Proves Marked Success." UCLA.

[81]All of the collections of McPhee's letters that I have been able to locate have been owned by friends he made in New York and later. Hence, none of them contains any material related to the Paris time, which came before he met such people as Virgil Thomson, Aaron Copland, Carlos Chávez. I have attempted to locate his correspondence among the papers of his Toronto teachers and associates, but so far have been unsuccessful. The McPhee family has no such materials; neither do the papers of persons like Luigi von Kunits and Ernest Farmer.

musical move had been followed with devoted regularity. He was a treasured part of a bustling musical community, but it was ultimately a small one. In Paris there were many young artists like himself.

The staunch support given McPhee in Toronto was what brought him to Paris. Augustus Bridle, the Toronto critic who so closely followed and encouraged McPhee's career, contemplated why some young musicians, like McPhee, felt the need to leave Canada and enter a greater musical world:

> Many young artists yearn to be gone tomorrow; not all of them, not many of them, go. . . . To migrate to Europe for post-graduate instruction means money; more than is usually available. As a rule musical talent does not thrive in homes where bridge parties abound.[82]

Colin McPhee was among the lucky ones. His "Farewell Recital," designed to raise funds for the trip, must have brought him some cash. There seems to have been money from other quarters, too. The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire had hoped to give him a scholarship, but in

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[82][Augustus Bridle], "Colin McPhee," The Toronto Daily Star (?15 March 1924). UCLA.

February 1924 that plan fell through.[83] However, McPhee was given substantial support by Sir Albert Gooderham, president of Gooderham and Worts, a Toronto liquor company. Gooderham's patronage of McPhee would have been logical; he was founder and president of the Canadian Academy of Music, where McPhee taught and studied with Arthur Friedheim, and he was president (1923-1931) of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra when it premiered McPhee's concerto.[84]

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[83]Janet McPhee recalls that the I.O.D.E. gave Colin money. (Interview, 1 May 1983). But according to the I.O.D.E.'s Education Secretary, Mrs. H. A. Palmer, the money never came through:

> In Feb. of 1924, at a municipal meeting, it was decided to create a travelling scholarship of $2000.00 for Mr. McPhee for one year. However later on mention is made that there had been some discrepancy in the way the motion had been handled and it was rescinded. Later that month it was recorded that Mr. McPhee had withdrawn his request for a travelling scholarship. (Letter to author, 27 September 1983.)

[84]In a 1941 article about McPhee, Hector Charlesworth charted the composer's history and said: "In his European studies young McPhee was assisted by the late Sir Albert Gooderham, the extent of whose private benefactions to music and musicians in Toronto is unknown to most of those who were his fellow-citizens." (Globe and Mail, 21 June 1941. Clipping File, Toronto Public Library.) However, Charlesworth makes several mistakes in this article; for example he says that McPhee returned to perform in Toronto after he studied in Paris and that his Second Piano Concerto was premiered after the Paris years.

Gooderham's obituary tells something of his patronage of the arts: "Sir Albert Gooderham Dies Suddenly," Globe (26 April 1935). I have tried to track down his papers, without success. A. J. Milne, Public Relations Manager of Hiram Walker and Sons, which now owns the firm of Gooderham and Worts, does not know what happened to his papers; neither does the City Archives of Toronto. (A.J. Milne to author, 1 March 1983; Telephone call from author to Mr. R. Scott James, Director of Records and City Archives, Toronto, 24 April 1983. No Gooderham papers are contained in the Ontario Archives, either.)

When McPhee settled in Paris, probably sometime in the summer or fall of 1924, he took lodgings on the rue Visconti, located on the edge of the artistic community of the Quartier Latin, not far from Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[85] While there, he studied piano with Isidor Philipp (1863-1958) and composition with Paul Le Flem (b. 1881).[86] Philipp was a renowned pedagogue. He gave lessons at the Conservatoire and was a demanding teacher of keyboard technique (his edition of Pischna's excercises has been called "knuckle-breaking").[87] His two-piano arrangements of Bach, Mendelssohn, and others might have had some influence on a young composer like McPhee, who later was to write so many two-piano scores.

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[85]Most of the reviews of McPhee's Toronto "Farewell Recital" said that he was going to Paris and London to study. [See for example: [Augustus Bridle], "Colin McPhee," The Toronto Daily Star (?15 March 1924).] As far as I know, McPhee went only to Paris.

Although No. 19 rue Visconti is not listed in Paris travel guides, either from the late twenties or today, the street had an illustrious history. Balzac set up his printing business in No. 17 in 1825; Delacroix had a studio in the same building from 1838 to 1843, and George Sand and Chopin posed for him there. See The Blue Guide from McPhee's day: Findlay Muirhead and Marcel Monmarché, Paris and its Environs, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1927), 137. Also: Jean-Paul Clébert, Les rues de Paris, 2 vols. (Paris: Club des Libraires de France, 1958), I, no page.

[86]There is no record of how long McPhee studied with each of them.

[87]Henry Bellamann, "Isidor Philipp," The Musical Quarterly XXIX/4 (October 1943), 423.

Paul Le Flem, McPhee's composition teacher, was himself a student of Albert Roussel and Vincent D'Indy, and in 1921 succeeded Roussel as professor of counterpoint at the Schola Cantorum.[88] He was also a choral conductor and music critic. Le Flem's own works were much influenced by the neoclassical concision of Roussel. Why McPhee studied with Le Flem and not Nadia Boulanger--who was attracting so many of his North American contemporaries--is unknown.

McPhee first received public notice in Paris the spring of 1925, when his Sarabande was given its premiere by Clara Rabinowitch at the Salle Erard.[89] Rabinowitch may have known McPhee as a fellow student of Philipp, because her program included a work by the teacher, as well as by McPhee and the expatriate American composer Blair Fairchild.[90] The Sarabande won McPhee a big write-up in the Paris Edition of the Chicago Tribune as part of a regular column by Paul Shinkman titled "Latin Quarter Notes."

> Should you be strolling along the serene rue Visconte [sic] on the left Bank one of these afternoons, and hear a mighty crash of chords overhead--you will know that Colin McPhee, the young Canadian composer, is at his Steinway, perhaps tossing off a concerto or two. . . . There

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[88]Perhaps the best article about Le Flem is in Encyclopédie de la Musique, ed. Francois Michel, et. al. (Paris: Fasquelle, 1958), Vol. III, p. 47.

[89][Program:] "Récital de piano/Clara Rabinowitch/Salle Erard/20 Avril 1925." UCLA.

[90]The Philipp work was Feux follets and the one by Fairchild was Près d'un lac dans le Wisconsin.

> is a strange harmonic glow about the McPhee compositions . . . particularly his recently completed Sarabande. . . .[91]

McPhee made his own Paris debut at the Salle Malakoff on 26 May 1925, in a concert that included his Sarabande as well as his Toronto composition, Spring Afternoon.[92] Although there seems to have been no Paris reviews of the event and the music is lost, Augustus Bridle of the Toronto Daily Star again produced what has turned out to be the only remaining description of the recital:

> Colin McPhee made his Paris debut as pianist in a spangling recital at the Salle Malakoff, playing Chopin Etudes . . . [et al] and his own Sarabande and Spring Afternoon that he played here. A number of distinguished people, Canadians and others, were present. Hon. Philippe Roy and Prince Oblensky, as well as musicians, authors, painters, clergy and

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[91] The Chicago Tribune, Paris (16 April 1925).

[92] [Program:] "Colin McPhee/Salle Malakoff/May Twenty Sixth . . . Concert Under Direction of Lysbeth Sewell Foster/Paris--New York/The Piano is an ERARD." The program, which was printed in English, included:

Chopin.	2 Etudes
	My Joys (Liszt)
	Scherzo No. 1
Schumann.	Fantasie
McPhee.	Sarabande
	Spring Afternoon
Debussy.	Little Shepherd
	Dr. Gradus ad parnassum
Liszt.	Etude--Valse oubliée
	Consolation
	Mephisto Valse

The Sarabande, when listed on a program McPhee performed himself in New York on 13 March 1927, is dated 1923.

mesdames of the opera. The affair was a brilliant success; though McPhee has sent nothing about it.[93]

One week before the concert, McPhee wrote Irving Schwerké, an American music critic living in Paris, inviting him to attend: "I know it's the night of Heifetz and I don't suppose you could come. Do you think for even twenty minutes--anyway here are two tickets."[94] He included a list of his compositions and ended exuberantly:

> I intend to remain in Paris more or less next year studying with Philipp, but hope to get a few engagements here and there. In the meantime I am looking for money, and hope to make my debut in New York in a year's time, playing a new piano concerto of my own. Dreams, but all mine seem to realize lately!

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[93]Augustus Bridle, "All Ye Who Chorally Sing/What News for Next Season?" Toronto Daily Star (13 June 1925). Clipping File, Toronto Public Library.

[94]Letter, CM to Irving Schwerké, "Wednesday" [20 May 1925]. Library of Congress. McPhee gives a list of his works:

> I don't know what to say about compositions--none are published (except 4 written at 15--which don't count) but here is something
> (1) 2 piano concertos--both performed
> (2) music to Hippolytus of Euripides for women's chorus and octette of wood and strings--performed one week in Toronto
> (3) 2 piano sonatas
> (4) shorter piano pieeces
> (5) arrangement of Rákoczy mark of Liszt and also Chopin A-flat Polonaise for piano with orchestral accompt, both performed in Toronto 'with great success.'
> (6) odds and ends!

Schwerké was critic for the Paris edition of the Chicago Tribune from 1921 to 1934. A collection of his criticism was printed privately as Kings: Jazz and David, preface by Léon Vallas (Paris: printed privately, 1927).

During the 1925-26 season, McPhee gave two recitals in Paris, both at the Salle des Agriculteurs. The first was on 9 November 1925; the second on 10 February. His repertoire was broadening. Works by nineteenth-century romantics--especially Liszt--were ever-present. Yet there were important additions: the third Prokofiev piano sonata (performed in February) and especially two Scarlatti sonatas (performed in November). McPhee's curiosity was beginning to reach back in time.[95]

The audience at McPhee's November performance was

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[95] [Program:] "Concert/donné par M./Colin McPhee/Salle des Agriculteurs/Lundi 9 Novembre 1925, à 9 heures du soir/Administration de Concerts A. Dandelot & Fils." UCLA. The program included:

Scarlatti	Deux Sonates
Beethoven	Sonate Op. 27 No. 1
Chopin	Barcarolle
	Deux Etudes
	Polonaise, Op. 53
McPhee	Sarabande
	Spring Afternoon
Liszt	Consolation
Liszt-Schumann	Fruhlingsnacht
Schumann	Etudes Symphoniques

For the 10 February concert, no program remains, only advance notice in the 9 November program: "M. Colin McPhee donnera un deuxième Récital de Mercredi 10 Février en soirée, à la Salle des Agriculteurs. Il interprétera:

Beethoven	Sonate Op. 28
Schumann	Fantaisie
Prokofieff	Troisième Sonate
Liszt	Après une lecture du Dante

large and enthusiastic,[96] and press coverage was substantial. Le Ménestrel, Le Figaro, and Paris-Soir described the event with varying returns. The critic for Le Ménestrel acknowledged McPhee's sincerity and expert technique but questioned the depth of his interpretations, a complaint similar to that voiced by Toronto critics:

> Comment se fait-il des lors que pas un instant l'interpretation n'ait semble avoir été précédée d'une reelle perception des oeuvres? Ces deux Sonates de Scarlatti,--cette Sonate de Beethoven (op. 27, no. 1),--cette Barcarolle, ces deux Etudes, cette Polonaise de Chopin,--finalement, et surtout peut-être, ces Etudes Symphoniques de Schumann, et cet Impromptu de Schubert,--apparaissaient séparés d'eux-mêmes, en une litteralité décevante.[97]

Other reviewers were more impressed:

> M. Mac Phee [sic] se recommande par de remarquable qualités de pianiste. . . . il montre qu'il possède une technique soignée, affirme des dons de musicien intelligent, un instinct de la sonorité qui lui permettent de savoureuses interprétations.[98]

> Il a de la simplicité et de l'émotion et son talent est sympathique.[99]

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[96]One reviewer observed: "La salle des Agriculteurs, ce soir-là, est presque pleine; et les assistants,--presque tous Américains eux aussi,--font à leur compatriote un accueil chaleureux et admiratif." [J. B. "Récital Colin Mac Phee [sic] (9 Novembre)," Le Ménestrel 87/47 (20 November 1925), 475.]

[97]Ibid. The Schubert must have been an encore.

[98]Paul Le Flem, "La Musique," unidentified newspaper clipping [probably Comoedia], November 1925. UCLA.

[99][Review of McPhee Recital], Paris-Soir (23 November 1925). UCLA.

The second of these reviews was written by McPhee's composition teacher Paul Le Flem.

Little else is known about McPhee's work in Paris. Years later, he wrote that some of his songs had been performed there in 1926 by Jane Bathori, with himself at the piano.[100] He seems to have done other accompanying, too; one review--in German--upbraids him for functioning more as a soloist than an accompanist.[101]

McPhee was living near the Latin Quarter in its heyday. Literary figures like Stein and Hemingway and Joyce, as well as Hart Crane, e. e. cummings, George Davis, and Glenway Wescott, were all around him. Stravinsky, the Ballets Russes, Erik Satie were names of the day. And young Americans--like Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Walter Piston, and Virgil Thomson--were arriving at Nadia Boulanger's studio. The intellectual and musical stimulation must have been intoxicating. His reaction to it, however, remains unknown.

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[100]Listed in McPhee's application to the American Composers Alliance, [1955 or '56]. Files of the American Composers Alliance. McPhee calls her "Jeanne" Bathori.

[101]Unidentified newspaper clipping. No date. UCLA.

CHAPTER III

A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL IN NEW YORK (1926-1931)

New York in the 1920s was awakening to new music. Societies like the International Composers Guild and the League of Composers were being formed to promote performances of new works, and enterprises like Henry Cowell's New Music and the Cos Cob Press made publication of this music ever more possible. The musical environment was vigorous and charged, offering much potential to a young composer.

When McPhee arrived in New York in 1926, he leapt head-on into this new-music activity.[1] He played piano for the Copland-Sessions Concerts. His works were performed on the same concert series as well as by the International Composers Guild and Howard Hanson's "American Composers" series at Eastman. And his compositions were published in New Music. He was also a board member of the New Music Society and the Pan American Association. McPhee's years in Paris gave him a similar background to many of his

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[1]McPhee must have been in New York by the summer of 1926, since his Invention is dated "New York/Aug. 12, 1926" in the publication by New Music III/4 (July 1930).

contemporaries, and the friendships he formed abroad probably helped ease his entry into the United States.

McPhee's official New York debut took place on 28 November 1926, with the performance of his Pastorale and Rondino at a concert of the International Composers Guild at Aeolian Hall.[2] The work was subtitled "Sonatina for two flutes, clarinet, trumpet and piano" and at least part of it--the "Pastorale"--had been composed in Paris and performed by a chamber ensemble there.[3] Again the score is lost. But this time at least McPhee wrote his own detailed program notes for the performance. The notes show what one might expect from a composer newly arrived from Paris in the mid-twenties--a concern with neoclassicism. The Pastorale was written in sonata-allegro form. It made prominent use of counterpoint and included ground basses. Other characteristics cited by McPhee were "vigorous" rhythmic changes, tonal "planes," and "harmonic

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[2][Program:] "The International Composers' Guild, Inc. . . . Sixth Season . .. . First Concert/Aeolian Hall, November 28, 1926." UCLA. This concert--the first of the Guild's last season--also included Three Pagan Hymns by Eugene Goossens, Darker America by William Grant Still, Trio in A for Piano and Strings by Ildebrando Pizzetti, H.P. by Carlos Chávez, and Five Sacred Songs by Anton Webern.

[3]In his "Confidential Report for ACA [American Composers Alliance] Negotiating Committee," McPhee listed a "Pastorale for 3 w.w. & pianos" performed by a "chamber ensemble" in "Paris, 1925." McPhee gave a separate entry for "Sonatina for 2 Fl. Cl. Trumpet. Piano." (No year is given on the report; it cites compositions up through 1955. Files of the American Composers Alliance.)

combinations . . . [used] for their sonorous values only."

Here is the statement in full.

> Pastorale, Allegretto 12/8; 1st subject--flute answered by clarinet; episode for the five instruments leading twice to 1st subject slightly developed. Middle Section 3/4 piu tranquilo, built on ground bass with rhythmic changes of more vigorous character. Restatement: commences with clarinet in low register; 2nd subject for two flutes and clarinet in three part harmony against pedal bass in piano; coda built up of fragments of preceding material.
>
> Rondino. 1st subject 4/4; transition; 2nd subject a fox trot, heard as one sees objects through a prism; development of 1st subject; 2nd subject inverted; coda made of a fugetta in 1st subject ending in a fortissimo statment of 1st and 2nd subjects for all instruments in their high registers.
>
> Although the second piece is contrapuntal and one may distinguish definite tonalities in many places, I consider both pieces as atonal music having used harmonic combinations for their sonorous values only. One finds at times several tonalities combined in different planes. The two pieces are in direct opposition to each other, the first being built up in rhythms of 12/8, 3/4 and their variants, the form free and the mood perhaps one of slight nostalgia, while the second is all angles and shrill sounds, the rhythms being based on 4/4, 2/4, 5/4 etc. One might say of the two pieces, Paths and Pavements.

In reading the first part of this description, there is little hint of the young McPhee who delighted in poetic images--the McPhee of the Four Piano Sketches or Spring Afternoon. Here instead is a man steeped in the technical intricacies of counterpoint; his account is analytical, almost scientific. No extra-musical evocations appear until the final paragraph, and there they are restrained: "[The first piece has a] mood of slight nostalgia, . . . the second . . . all angles and shrill sounds." A title is

suggested--Paths and Pavements--that goes beyond the abstract terms of "Pastorale," "Rondino," or "Sonatina." Perhaps the two movements embodied the contrasts of these words: the first easy-going and bucolic, the second hard and urban.

According to a biographical sketch in the program notes for the concert, written by Louise Varèse, McPhee was then studying with her husband. Mrs. Varèse remembers that Edgard was "interested in Colin," although perhaps not enough so to have followed his career closely in later years.[4] In the first volume of her biography of her husband, she describes McPhee as "Varèse's talented pupil," who was taken on at a time when Varèse was trying to establish himself as a teacher:

> In spite of the militant concern of Varèse's friends, there was not sufficient response to form the classes Varèse had envisioned. He had two or three new pupils that winter [1926-27], but I do not know if they came to him from the institutions Simone [Ziegler] wrote to or from other sources. Besides Colin McPhee, there were three or four of Salzedo's young harp pupils.[5]

Most likely, McPhee's Paris composition teacher, Paul

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[4]Interview with Louise Varèse, New York City, 18 November 1981.

[5]Louise Varèse, Varèse: A Looking-Glass Diary, Vol. I: 1883-1928 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 251, 276. Curiously, McPhee's own copy of the Guild program has the words "He is now working with Edgar Varèse" blackened out in pencil. The same is true of a copy of the program that McPhee sent to Nicolas Slonimsky, prior to his Boston performance of the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet on 11 March 1929 (at Library of Congress).

Le Flem, had sent him to Varèse. Le Flem and Varèse had studied together at the Schola Cantorum under Albert Roussel, and later (during the late twenties) Le Flem wrote favorable criticism of Varèse's concerts in Paris.[6]

McPhee's language in describing Pastorale and Rondino bears the mark of discussions with Varèse. McPhee says the Rondino should be "heard as one sees objects through a prism." In 1922 Varèse had written a work titled Hyperprism, but more importantly he often evoked a related image--that of a crystal--in talking of his own music.

> There is an idea, the basis of an internal structure, expanded or split into different shapes or groups of sound, constantly changing in shape, direction, and speed, attracted and repulsed by various forces. The form of the work is the consequence of this interaction. Possible musical forms are as limitless as the exterior forms of crystals.[7]

Varèse also may have inspired McPhee to talk of "planes." For Varèse, planes were part of a complex vision:

> When new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it . . . the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived. When these sound-masses collide the phenomena of penetration or repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will

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[6]One example is Le Flem's review of the performance of Intégrales in April 1929, in Comoedia (30 April 1929).

[7]Lecture given at Princeton University in 1959. Quoted in Chou Wen-Chung, "Varèse: A Sketch of the Man and his Music," The Musical Quarterly LII/2 (April 1966), p. 157.

seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles.[8]

McPhee incorporated Varèse's words but not his ideas. He used "prism" in discussing the traditional procedure of fracturing a subject contrapuntally and "planes" in describing the combination of several tonalities (probably meaning polytonality).

McPhee's Pastorale and Rondino received only brief notice from the New York critics, who were less supportive of new music than their Toronto counterparts and certainly had less personal stake in McPhee's career. W. J. Henderson gave a misguided pronouncement, calling McPhee a "young American futurist [with] a talent not yet ripe but promising" (McPhee was anything but a futurist).[9] Olin Downes of The New York Times was vague: "'Pastorale and Rondino' impressed as a mixture of musical conventionalities, oddly harmonized and instrumentated [sic], and a bit of jazz, which came in handily for a change, but did not raise the piece from the ground."[10] Another critic

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[8]Lecture given at Mary Austin House, Santa Fe, 1936. Quoted in Chou Wen-Chung, p. 157.

[9]W. J. Henderson, "Modern Works Given in Concert," The New York Sun (29 November 1926).

[10]Olin Downes, "Music: More of the Ultra-Moderns," New York Times (29 November 1926).

dismissed the piece as "pleasant but inconsequential."[11]

After this debut, McPhee worked both as a performer and composer. But by 1931, when he prepared to leave New York for some time, he was viewed primarily as a composer, both by himself and his contemporaries.

An Aspiring Concert Artist

As a pianist, McPhee gave at least one New York solo recital, toured as both soloist and accompanist, and performed for various groups.[12] During his first New York season, he appeared in recital at the Greenwich Village Theatre (perhaps it was the debut forecast in his Paris letter to Irving Schwerké).[13] The program was strikingly different from those he had given in Toronto and Paris: no Liszt or Beethoven, and less nineteenth-century repertoire in general. Most interesting, in light of the attention to contrapuntal forms revealed in his description of Pastorale and Rondino, is the inclusion of two baroque works ("Aria" by Vivaldi and an unidentified Scarlatti Sonata) and a

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[11]"New Music Given by Composers' Guild at Aeolian Hall," New York Herald Tribune (29 November 1926). McPhee retained some status in Paris, for his ICG performance was reviewed briefly in the Paris Times (12 December 1926).

[12]In one of many undated resumes prepared on McPhee's typewriter (presumably by himself), it states: "Concertized Paris, New York, Rochester, Boston, etc. 1926-31." (Events up through 1948 are listed. UCLA.)

[13][Program:] "Greenwich Village Theatre/Sunday Evening, March 13th, 1927, at 9 o'clock/Piano Recital/by Colin McPhee." UCLA.

modern reworking of another early piece ("Gagliarda" by Galilei-Respighi). McPhee included only one group of nineteenth-century works (two Brahms Intermezzos and a Chopin Barcarolle) and played what for him was a large group of twentieth-century French pieces (the Ravel Sonatina, and three Debussy works). Also on the program were three of his own compositions: Sarabande of 1923, a Nocturne, and an arrangement of Gershwin's "The Man I Love."[14] The concert must not have been well publicized, because no listings or reviews appeared in the major New York papers.

This seems to have been McPhee's first and last solo recital in New York. He participated in many new-music concerts, such as the infamous New York premiere of George

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[14]The three Debussy works that McPhee performed were "Dr. Graduas ad Parnassum," "The Little Shepherd," and "L'Isle Joyeuse;" the remainder of the program is detailed above. Most likely the Sarabande performed on this program is the same one played by Clara Rabinowitch in April 1925. The Nocturne appears to have been a new work. In arranging "The Man I Love," McPhee may simply have been working with a new popular song that caught his ear ("The Man I Love" was copyrighted in 1924). Yet it is possible that personal connections led him to the piece. McPhee was a friend of Carl Van Vechten (as will be discussed in detail later), who in turn was close to Gershwin. In 1923, Van Vechten had suggested to Eva Gauthier, whom McPhee was later to accompany, that in one of her concerts she include a group of popular American songs and have Gershwin accompany her. During 1924 and 1925, Gershwin provided music at many Van Vechten parties. See: Bruce Kellner, Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968, 192).

Antheil's Ballet Mécanique on 10 April 1927.[15] He also performed in two Copland-Sessions concerts, one on 30 December 1928, the other on 9 February 1930. The reviews--as was typical for these concerts--were negative. McPhee performed a Sonatina by the Russian emigre Nicolai Lopatnikoff in 1928. The piece was panned, but McPhee was credited with a good performance: "[The work was] played with both intelligence and skill (two things that are not so often found together as might be supposed)."[16] Another reviewer complimented him on a "fine treatment" of the work after having "but a week to study it."[17] McPhee's other Copland-Sessions performance was of the North Country Suite for Piano by Jeffrey Mark.[18] Reviews of the concert said little about McPhee's playing.

McPhee also spent some time touring during the late

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[15]Discussed in, Linda Whitesitt, The Life and Music of George Antheil (1900-1959) (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 31.

[16]"First Heard Here," unidentified clipping. UCLA. Press coverage of the Copland-Sessions Concerts is evaluated in my own article, "The Copland-Sessions Concerts and their Reception in the Contemporary Press," The Musical Quarterly LXV/2 (April 1979), 212-29.

[17]"Walt's Music Corrupted," unidentified clipping. UCLA. McPhee also received a favorable review from Arthur Mendel, who said: "Colin McPhee gave an excellent performance of a Sonata by Lopatnikoff, severe, logical, and vigorous." (Modern Music VI/2 (Jan-Feb 1929), 31.

[18]The program for this concert is listed in an unsigned review: "Give First Hearings of Chamber Music," New York Times (10 February 1930).

twenties, both as soloist and accompanist. A notice from an Allentown, Pennsylvania, newspaper of late 1927 publicized his forthcoming visit with some heavy hype: "Allentown music lovers will shortly have an opportunity of hearing the brilliant young composer-pianist who has won much acclaim in Europe and in Canada and is now being presented in his first all-American tour."[19] The article mentioned a few of McPhee's compositions and cited raves from Le Figaro, the New York Herald Tribune, and the Chicago Tribune. McPhee may have given other such recitals, but no trace of them remains.

In January 1928, McPhee went on tour with Eva Gauthier, a fellow Canadian who was to remain a close friend.[20] Gauthier had lived in Java from around 1910 to 1915, and after she returned to New York made a specialty of performing Javanese folksongs. Her tour with McPhee lasted about a month and stretched as far as California, where they performed in Santa Barbara (9 January at the Lobero Theatre) and Los Angeles (10 January at Philharmonic Auditorium). There were also concerts way up in Piedmont, California (17

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[19]"Colin M'Phee to Give Recital in Americus Hotel: Composer-Pianist Wrote Symphonic Poem at Age of 19. Coming Here Dec. 7," [unidentified Allentown, Pennsylvania newspaper, late November or early December 1927]. UCLA.

[20]In the resume cited above, McPhee stated that he "toured in concert with Eva Gauthier, 1930." I have found no reviews or programs from that year, however; only from 1928. Nadia Turbide of Montreal, who is writing a biography of Gauthier, has also found evidence only for a McPhee/Gauthier collaboration in 1928.

January at the high school), and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (26 January at Fahnestock Hall); presumably other stops were made as well.[21] Three of the existing programs are the same, including four groups of songs and one group of solo piano selections. In each, Gauthier sang four "New American Songs," including the setting of a Chinese poem by Henry Eichheim (whose "Korean Sketch" from Oriental Impressions Gauthier had premiered at Aeolian Hall in 1921) and two Langston Hughes settings by John Alden Carpenter. Besides these works by fairly well-known Americans, there were others by Theodore Stearns (1880-1935) and James H.

[21]All four concerts were under the management of Arthur Judson. The programs are at NYPL.

Rogers.[22] The Los Angeles program was different. McPhee again had a solo piano group but with some new pieces. In addition to Debussy's Reflets dans l'eau, he performed his own Sarabande and arrangement of "The Man I Love."[23]

McPhee also accompanied the Viennese soprano Rena Pfiffer at least once--in her 1927 New York debut at Aeolian Hall. The recital program ranged from Mozart to Hugo Wolf. One critic wrote that the singer received "excellent support

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[22]The Gauthier/McPhee programs in Santa Barbara, Piedmont, and Harrisburg included the following works:

	Kaddisch (Chant Hebraïque)	Maurice Ravel
	La Cimaroncita	Edouard Moullée
	The Nightingale	Howard Brockway
	Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?	Arnold Bax
	Twas Within a Mile of Edinburgh Town	Ottorino Respighi
II.	Four Spanish Airs, transcribed by Joaquin Nin (1926)	
III.	Piano Solos:	
	Bruyères	Claude Debussy
	L'Isle Heureuse	Claude Debussy
IV.	New American Songs	
	The Poet's Vision (1925)	Henry Eichheim
	Berceuse Amoureuse (1926)	Theodore Stearns
	A Soliloquy (1927)	James H. Rogers
	Two Negro Songs (1926)	John Alden Carpenter
V.	L'Isle Heureuse	Emmanuel Chabrier
	La Chevelure	Claude Debussy
	Chanson pour le petit cheval	Deodat de Severac
	Seguedille	Manuel de Falla

[23]Musical America covered the Los Angeles Concert, calling Gauthier "the veritable high priestess of the modern cult of song"; McPhee's accompanying was perfunctorily described as "able." See: Marjory M. Fisher, "Coast Forces Exchange," Musical America 47/15 (28 January 1928), 24.

from Colin McPhee at the piano."[24]

One of McPhee's more intriguing accompanying dates--in light of his growing fascination with black-American culture during this period--was with the soprano and actress Abbie Mitchell at Engineering Auditorium in New York on 15 April 1928.[25] Although C. Beatrice Lewis accompanied for most of the recital, McPhee took over for a group of his own songs: Petit chaperone rouge, Theris, Cradle Song, and C'est la bergère Nanette.[26] With so many French titles, the songs may have been composed in Paris; perhaps Jane Bathori performed some of them in 1926. Again the scores are lost. An unidentified critic in the Musical Courier blandly characterized them:

> The Pièce de Resistance was a group of songs by Colin McPhee, who proved to be an ultra modern but knows

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[24]"Debut by Mme. Pfiffer: Soprano of the Vienna Opera Gives a Successful Recital," New York Times (5 April 1927).

[25]See Chapter 4 for more about McPhee's interest in black-American culture during this period.

[26][Program:] "Song Recital by Abbie Mitchell Soprano," Engineering Auditorium, 27 West 39th Street, Sunday evening, April 15th, 1928, at 8:30 P.M. [I am grateful to Abbie Mitchell's son, Mercer Cook, of Silver Springs, Maryland for giving me this program.] The recital was listed in "Programs of the Week," New York Herald-Tribune (15 April 1928). Two of the songs--Cradle Song and C'est la Bergère Nanette--were performed one month later by either Marjorie Nash or Janet Creighton in a concert by the Women's University Glee Club. McPhee accompanied at the piano. [Program:] "Women's University Glee Club," 1 May 1928, UCLA. Also, "Concert of New Music: Women's University Glee Club Gives an Interesting Program," New York Times (2 May 1928), 19.

> how to write effectively for the voice; the composer played the accompaniments to his songs, thus adding greatly to their effectiveness. Miss Mitchell sang them with intensity of feeling, overcoming all the difficulties with a charming ease that must have pleased the composer. They gave an encore to this group, also from the pen of Mr. McPhee.[27]

After these songs, McPhee never again turned to solo vocal literature, although he did write for chorus several times.

Sometime in the late twenties--most likely by mid-1928--McPhee was hired as a full-time accompanist for the New York amateur chorus, the Schola Cantorum, conducted by Hugh Ross.[28] Ross had himself joined the Schola in 1927 and remembers meeting McPhee in 1928; he was immediately taken with McPhee's exceptional gifts at the keyboard.[29] McPhee's employment by the Schola may have had Canadian roots. Ross, an Englishman, had become conductor of the Winnipeg Male Voice Choir in 1921 and had taken the group on tour in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Toronto in 1923, when McPhee was at the peak of his Toronto period. One year earlier,

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[27]"Abbie Mitchell," Musical Courier (19 April 1928), 28.

[28]The Schola Cantorum was founded by Kurt Schindler as a choir of forty women's voices. In 1910 it was incorporated as the Macdowell Chorus and included 200 mixed voices. In 1912 it was renamed the Schola Cantorum. (Winifred Douglas, "Twenty Years of the Schola Cantorum," pamphlet, [1929]. NYPL.)

[29]Ross discussed McPhee's appointment as the Schola's accompanist in an interview in New York City, 4 October 1982. Ross's appointment was announced in two separate articles in the New York Times: "Ross to Direct Schola Cantorum," (14 May 1927), and "New Schola Conductor" (22 May 1927).

when the Schola was conducted by Ross's predecessor Kurt Schindler, it had engaged J. Campbell-McInness as a guest soloist; McPhee was then Campbell-McInness's accompanist.[30]

Ross remembers McPhee as an extraordinary pianist. "Immediately when I found someone of Colin's capacity, he became our official accompanist. . . . I was interested in what [music] he was writing [and] in the fact that he could play anything at sight."[31] The Schola job was a time-consuming one, with two to three rehearsals a week and frequent performances; Ross recalls that McPhee earned approximately $2,500 a year. The group was made up of two hundred singers, and there were two or three "subscription" concerts at Carnegie Hall each year, in addition to lecture-musicales in private homes and a series of concerts together with the New York Philharmonic.[32] For McPhee, there were at least two outstanding moments in his tenure with the Schola: the premiere of his Sea Shanty Suite (1929) and his

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[30]Announced by E. R. Parkhurst in, "Personalia," The Globe [Toronto], (11 February 1922).

[31]Interview with Hugh Ross.

[32]Information about the Schola's activities is contained in several New York Times reviews: "Colorful Concert by Schola Cantorum: Mixed Chorus of 200 Gains in Tonal Balance," (14 March 1929); "[Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra and Schola Cantorum] To Cooperate in Programs" (24 May 1929); "Schola Cantorum Musicales," (27 October 1929).

appearance as soloist in Constant Lambert's The Rio Grande (1931).[33]

Composing Continues

McPhee was a productive composer in the late twenties. It is the first period from which any works following the Toronto publications of 1916 and 1917 survive, yet some compositions are still missing: Pastorale and Rondino, the arrangement of "The Man I Love," the songs performed by Abbie Mitchell, and H_2O and Mechanical Principles, scores to two Ralph Steiner films performed at a Copland-Sessions concert in 1931. And there are works for which no evidence exists beyond a passing mention. Two otherwise unknown orchestral works are listed in Claire Reis's American Composers of 1930 (both in "manuscript" at the time): Sarabande, a seven-minute piece dated 1927, and Symphony in One Movement, a 20-minute work dated 1930.[34] A string quartet, a work for chorus and orchestra, and a ballet are mentioned

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[33]The Sea Shanty Suite is discussed later. The program for McPhee's performance of The Rio Grande in Carnegie Hall on 29 January 1931 is at UCLA.

[34](2nd edition, New York: The United States Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, 1932), 86. Both are still listed in the 1947 edition and also in the "Biographical Notes" at the end of Henry Cowell's American Composers on American Music (p. 209). Sarabande for full orchestra" is included in a biography of McPhee published with Kinesis and Invention in New Music (1930).

elsewhere.[35]

Despite these losses, several important compositions from the late twenties have been preserved because they were published. Invention is the earliest of the group, dated "Aug. 12, 1926." Then follows the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, composed in Woodstock, New York during the summer of 1928; the Sea Shanty Suite, first performed by the Schola Cantorum in March 1929; and Kinesis for solo piano, dated 9 May 1930. Kinesis and Invention were published together in Henry Cowell's New Music in 1930, and the Sea Shanty Suite was released by Kalmus in the same year. In 1931, New Music followed with the Concerto for Piano Wind Octet.[36]

By the late twenties, McPhee was an accepted member of the young composers' community in New York. He figured prominently in three of the principal summaries of the decade's activities: Henry Cowell's American Composers on American Music and Aaron Copland's Modern Music article,

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[35]The string quartet is mentioned in Louise Varèse's program notes to the performance of Pastorale and Rondino in 1926. The work for chorus and orchestra is listed in an unidentified promotional piece for a performance of the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet in 1930: "He [McPhee] states that he now [1930] is writing a work for Chorus and Orchestra." And in a letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, McPhee states "At present I am at work on a big work for chorus and full orchestra." (January or February 1929. LC).

The ballet is cited in program notes for the Women's University Glee Club performance of two McPhee songs in 1928 (Town Hall, 1 May 1928).

[36]New Music III/4 (July 1930) and IV/2 (January 1931).

"The Composer in America, 1923-1933" (both published in 1933), as well as Claire Reis's American Composers: A Catalogue (first edition, 1930).[37]

Cowell placed McPhee in the first of the eight groups into which he divided composers of the time: "Americans who have developed indigenous materials or are specially interested in expressing some phase of the American spirit in their works." Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Charles Seeger, Roy Harris, Henry Brant, and Ruth Crawford were also included in this group.

> I (Henry Cowell) belong to this group also, as I have initiated independently various new sorts of harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, and other musical mediums. Colin McPhee, Canadian, follows to some extent the modern French style of clever music but treats it in a personal manner. His music forms a sort of bridge between the more characteristic Americans and those who are somewhat Europeanized.[38]

Copland, in an article assessing musical achievements of the twenties, similarly treated men who formed "an entirely new generation" of "the American

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[37]Henry Cowell, American Composers on American Music: A Symposium (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1933; reprint, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962). Aaron Copland, "The Composer in America, 1923-1933," Modern Music X/2 (January-February 1933), 87-92. Claire Reis, American Composers of Today (New York: The United States Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, 1930).

[38]Cowell, 3-4.

school of composers of our own day." McPhee was among them.[39]

Invention for Piano

Colin McPhee's first surviving work after nearly a ten-year period of schooling in Toronto, Baltimore, and Paris is an Invention for piano. Although dated "New York/12 August 1926" in the New Music edition (III/4 of July 1930), it must be seen as a product--at least philosophically--of McPhee's Paris years. It is a typical work to have emerged from that city in the mid-twenties, one born of neoclassical inspiration (here, more precisely neo-baroque). Lean and sprightly, with a buoyant rhythmic gait, it is tightly constructed in two-voice counterpoint and has a subject reminiscent of the G-major Fugue in Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavier. Indeed, Bach and Stravinsky--the latter an unavoidable musical presence in Paris of the early 1920s--are obvious models. McPhee left no statement about this Invention, yet his description of the Pastorale and Rondino, performed by the International Composers Guild just a few months after the Invention was completed, tells a

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[39]The other composers listed by Copland were George Antheil, Marc Blitzstein, Nicolai Berezowsky, Carlos Chávez, Henry Cowell, Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Dane Rudhyar, Roger Sessions, Leo Sowerby, William Grant Still, Virgil Thomson, Randall Thompson, Bernard Wagenaar, and Copland himself. ("The Composer in America," 90).

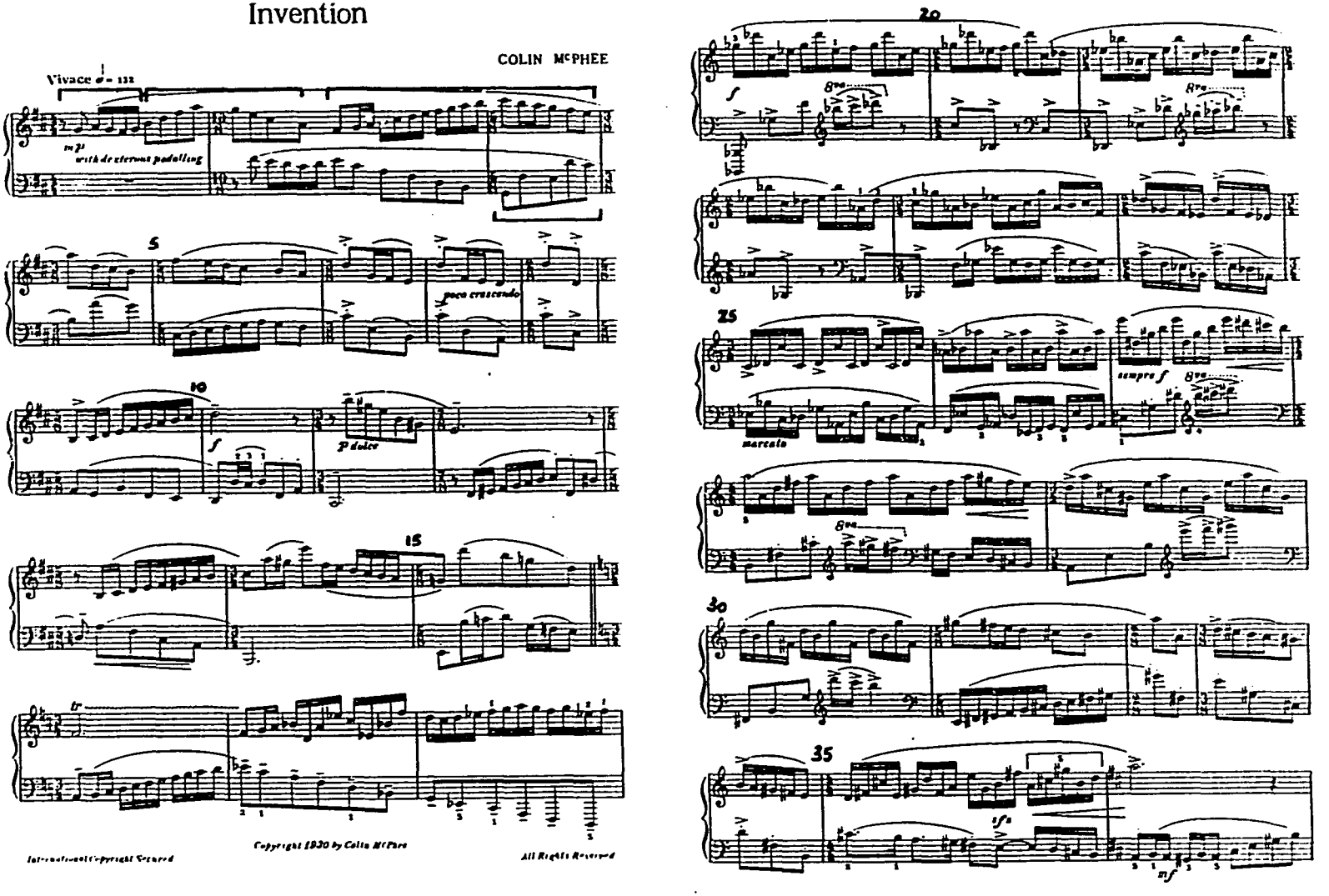
great deal about his compositional concerns at the time.[40]

In Pastorale and Rondino, McPhee was preoccupied with counterpoint. He spoke of "fragments" of themes, of hearing the second subject of the rondino "as one sees objects through a prism." Fragmentation is a typical contrapuntal technique, but by conjuring up the prism image McPhee not only showed the influence of discussions with Varèse (whether or not he fully understood his teacher's meaning) but also evoked certain artistic movements then current, like cubism, in which an image is reduced to its most basic geometric components and the parts disjunctly re-ordered. McPhee also spoke of toying with registers, of "vigorous" rhythmic changes, and of using dissonance to color sonority. All these characteristics can be found in the Invention.
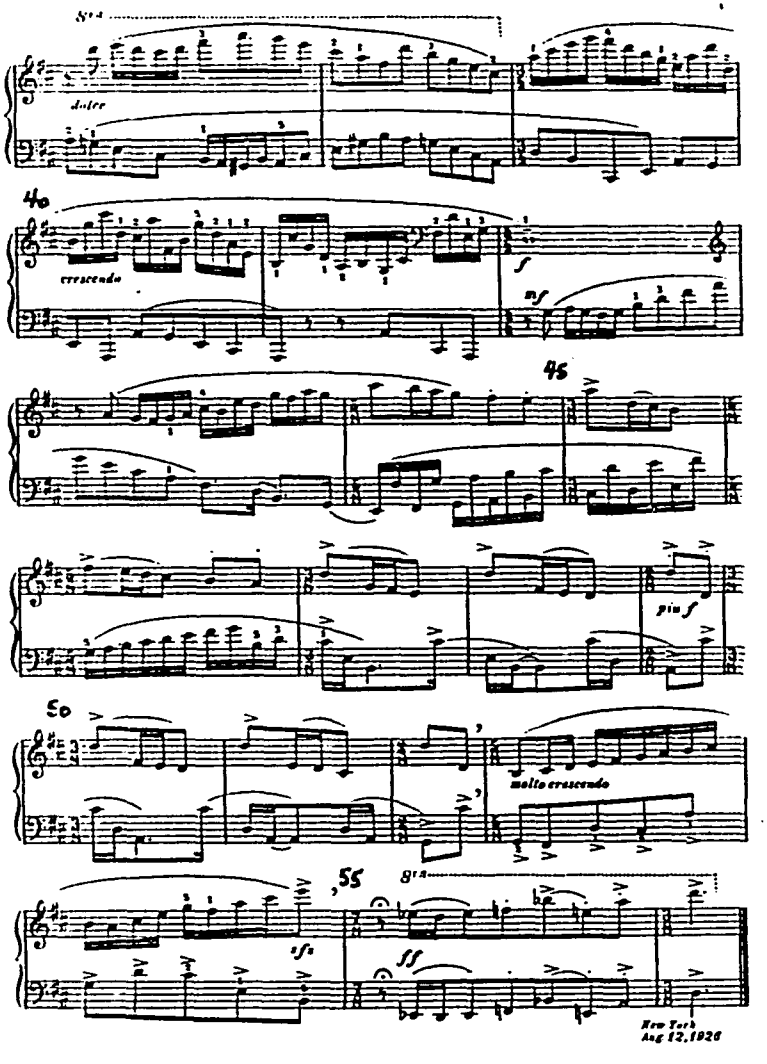
The influence of Bach (especially the Bach of the inventions) is basic to McPhee's writing in this piece. He uses counterpoint as a controlling force throughout and casts the work in three sections (See full score in Example 5: mm. 1-18; 19-41; 42-56). The construction is compact, drawing mostly upon four key motives in the first three measures (see brackets in Example 5). Yet McPhee does not merely pay homage to eighteenth-century contrapuntal

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[40][Program:] International Composers' Guild, 28 November 1926.



Example 5. McPhee, Invention for Piano, measures 1-36.



Example 5 (page two). McPhee, Invention for Piano, measures 37-56.

practices but uses them as a springboard for injecting harmonic color and playing with register. For example, the thirds in mm. 1-2, with their linear spelling of two seventh chords one step apart, re-appear in several guises throughout the work. In the first phrase, they shape the downbeat descent from the right-hand C-sharp in m. 3 to the tonic in m. 6, even while the shifting meter (from 5/8 to 3/8) makes the downbeats irregular. Likewise, in the middle section the sequential movement from mm. 19-20 to 21-22 to 23 is all by descending thirds.
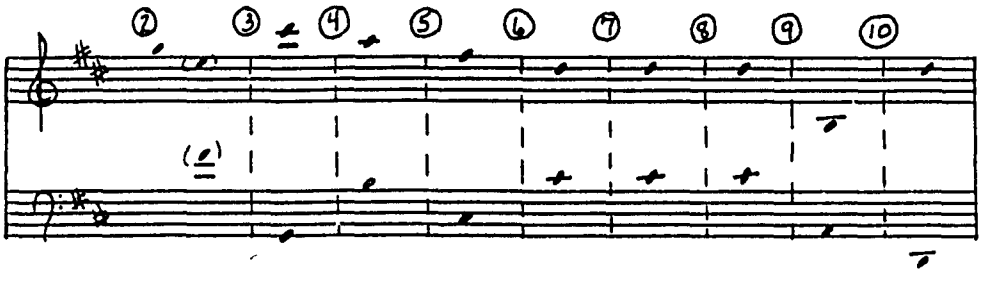
Another unifying motif is the rhythmic pattern  that opens the third measure. It recurs both in its original form and split apart as  or . Often it initiates registral expansion. In the middle section, for example, the second variant leaps high above the sixteenth notes of the right hand (see left hand in mm. 19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30). The same rhythmic pattern also heralds the two-measure cadence to the work (m. 55), where the distance between the two voices has been expanded to four octaves.

In writing of the Pastorale and Rondino, McPhee described "definite tonalites" being used "in many places" and went on to say, "I consider both pieces [i.e. the Pastorale and the Rondino] as atonal music having used harmonic combinations for their sonorous value only." He also spoke of juxtaposing tonalities in "different planes" (by which he seemed to imply bi- or poly-tonality). The Invention gives no hint of McPhee's approach to tonal

"planes"--that practice will be visible in later works--but it does give some sense of his brand of "atonality." Within this piece, he did not totally reject functional relationships or completely free his music of a tonic. For him, in 1926, "atonality" apparently meant a relaxation of traditional tonal functions within a framework girded by tonic goals. The materials of tonality were ever-present, but their uses were re-aligned. True to McPhee's claims, his dissonances often serve the purpose of heightening sonority.

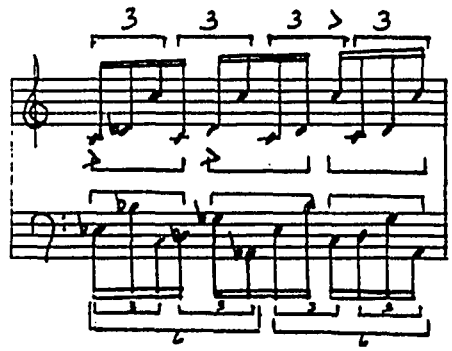
The opening statement of the subject (mm. 1-10) concisely shows McPhee's harmonic technique. All of the pitches fall within D major; by measure 6, D is clearly tonic, and D-major scales recur. But the initial statement of the subject broadens this D focus with an opening turn around G in m. 1 that gives a sense of G-major, not D. At the same time, vertical seconds, sevenths, ninths, and tritones occur on the downbeat of nearly every measure until the end of the first statement, establishing a dissonant norm:

Example 6. McPhee, Invention for Piano. Downbeat pitches for measures 1-10.



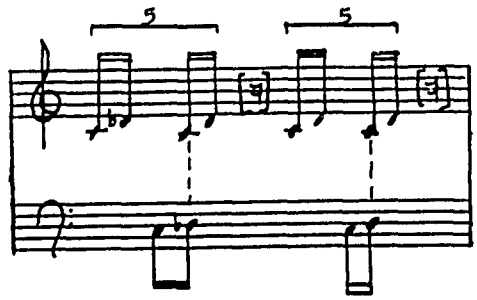
The most adventuresome section of the piece, in almost every dimension, is the middle one. It is highly asymmetric and constantly shifts weight through meter changes and irregular rearrangement of pitches within repeated patterns. Measure 25 is a good example. Each voice has an inner harmonic and rhythmic tension, and when the voices sound together the tension increases even more. The right hand melodic pattern includes three four-note groups that are beamed and, more importantly, accented as four groups of three. At the same time, the left hand has two six-note groups that are beamed in three groups of four:

Example 7. McPhee, Invention for Piano, measure 25.



To heighten these cross-rhythms, a semi-tone pattern of C/D-flat is bandied between the voices, interlocking irregularly:
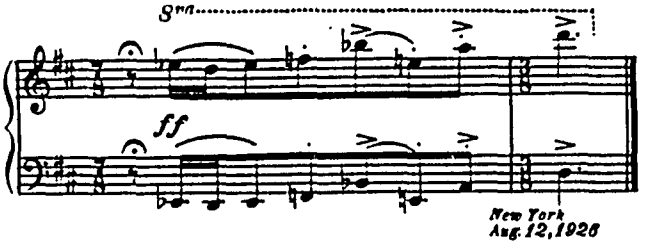
Example 8. McPhee, Invention for Piano, measure 25.



Tonally, the middle section, like the rest of the work, never exceeds the bounds of diatonically related pitch groups; what McPhee does it to shift the tonic centering of those groups.

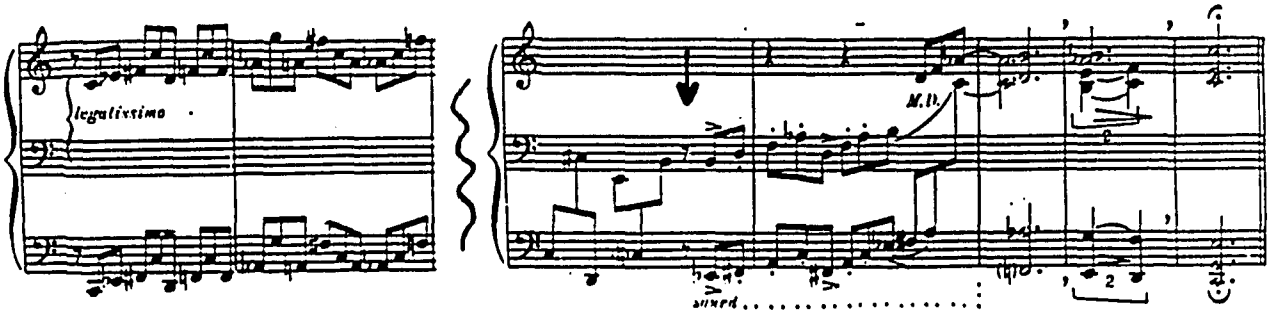
A youthful work like McPhee's Invention, written at twenty-six after a long period of education, shows the influence of various contemporary models. The pre-eminent musical presence in Paris during the 1920s was Igor Stravinsky, and McPhee, like so many of his peers, did not leave the city unaffected by the master's style. Just a few years before McPhee's Invention, Stravinsky had written a Piano Sonata (1924), to which McPhee's work bears some similarity. Both are suffused with two-part counterpoint, both play with widely spaced unison writing (compare Example 9-A to 9-B), and both herald their closing statements with a sudden break in the forward motion (compare 9-A to 9-C). Other similarities include frequent meter shifts (more present, however, in other works of the time by Stravinsky), suspension of traditional diatonic relationships, and frequent vertical dissonance.

Example 9-A. McPhee, Invention, measures 55-56.



Example 9-B/C. Stravinsky, Piano Sonata, first movement.

(9-B) mm. 149-50 (9-C) mm. 156-60



Stravinsky's was not the only kind of neoclassicism alive in Paris during the mid-twenties. McPhee's composition teacher Paul Le Flem, himself a student of Albert Roussel, was one of the stalwarts in the neoclassical movement. In 1924 Roussel wrote to Nadia Boulanger of a "return to clearer lines, more emphatic accents, more precise rhythm, a style more horizontal than vertical," with a "sympathetic glance toward the robust frankness of Bach or Handel."[41] In his music from the period, such as the orchestral Suite in F of 1926, these ideas are fully exhibited. Other composers working in Paris showed similar tendencies, among them Virgil Thomson

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[41]As quoted in: Marc Pincherle, Roussel (Geneva, 1957), 54.

in his Five Inventions (1926), Francis Poulenc in his Suite in C (1920), or Heitor Villa Lobos in his Cirandinhas (1925). All strove for linear clarity, often expressed in simple, two-voice writing.

Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet

With McPhee's next existing work, the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet of 1928, the same crisp concision is apparent. In fact, the work has many traits reminiscent of the Invention: standard forms, non-traditional uses of diatonic scale collections, supple meter shifts, and areas of intense, multi-layered rhythmic activity. In the Concerto these characteristics become more complex due to expanded instrumental forces and a richer harmonic vocabulary. Indeed, the large-scale, multi-movement form seems to have kindled McPhee's imagination. Like the Invention, the Concerto is a product of its time; it fits alongside other neoclassical chamber wind pieces, such as Stravinsky's Octet (1923) or Virgil Thomson's Sonata da Chiesa (1926). Although Thomson called his Sonata his "graduation piece in the dissonant style of the time,"[42] McPhee had not yet exhausted the style's possibilities; he had several more works to compose within its boundaries

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[42]Kathleen Hoover and John Cage, Virgil Thomson: His Life and Music (n.p.: Sagamore Press, 1959; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 134.

before beginning the search for a new direction.

The Concerto was written during the summer of 1928--between June and October, according to the New Music score--while McPhee was staying in Woodstock, New York.[43] Like Prokofiev, Bartók, Stravinsky, and even his contemporary Copland, McPhee wrote concertos for himself to play. His two largest works prior to this one had both been concertos--the Baltimore concerto of 1920 and the Toronto one of 1924--and he had been the soloist in both premieres. He was also at the keyboard for the first performance of the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, given in Rochester on 22 February 1929 under the direction of Howard Hanson. He played it three more times before leaving for Bali in 1931: in Boston under Nicolas Slonimsky on 11 March 1929; in New York with Georges Barrère's Little Symphony on 23 March 1930; and in New York, again under Slonimsky, on 11 April 1931.[44] Throughout McPhee's life, both the piano and the concerto principle

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[43]The score is signed, "WOODSTOCK, June-October 1928," New Music IV/2 (January 1931).

[44]Programs remain for three of the performances: "American Composers' Series/Twelfth Concert/The Rochester Little Symphony/Howard Hanson, Conducting/Colin McPhee, Pianist/ . . . February 22, 1929"; "The Chamber Orchestra of Boston," March 11, 1929 [both at UCLA]; "Chamber Orchestra of Boston/New School for Social Research," April 11, 1931 [NYPL]. And the Barrère performance was announced in: New York Times (23 March 1930). McPhee wrote to Slonimsky before the 1929 concert and enclosed handwritten program notes for the Concerto. (Letter, CM to Nicolas Slonimsky, "Sunday" [early 1929]. Slonimsky Collection--LC.)

remained central to his output.

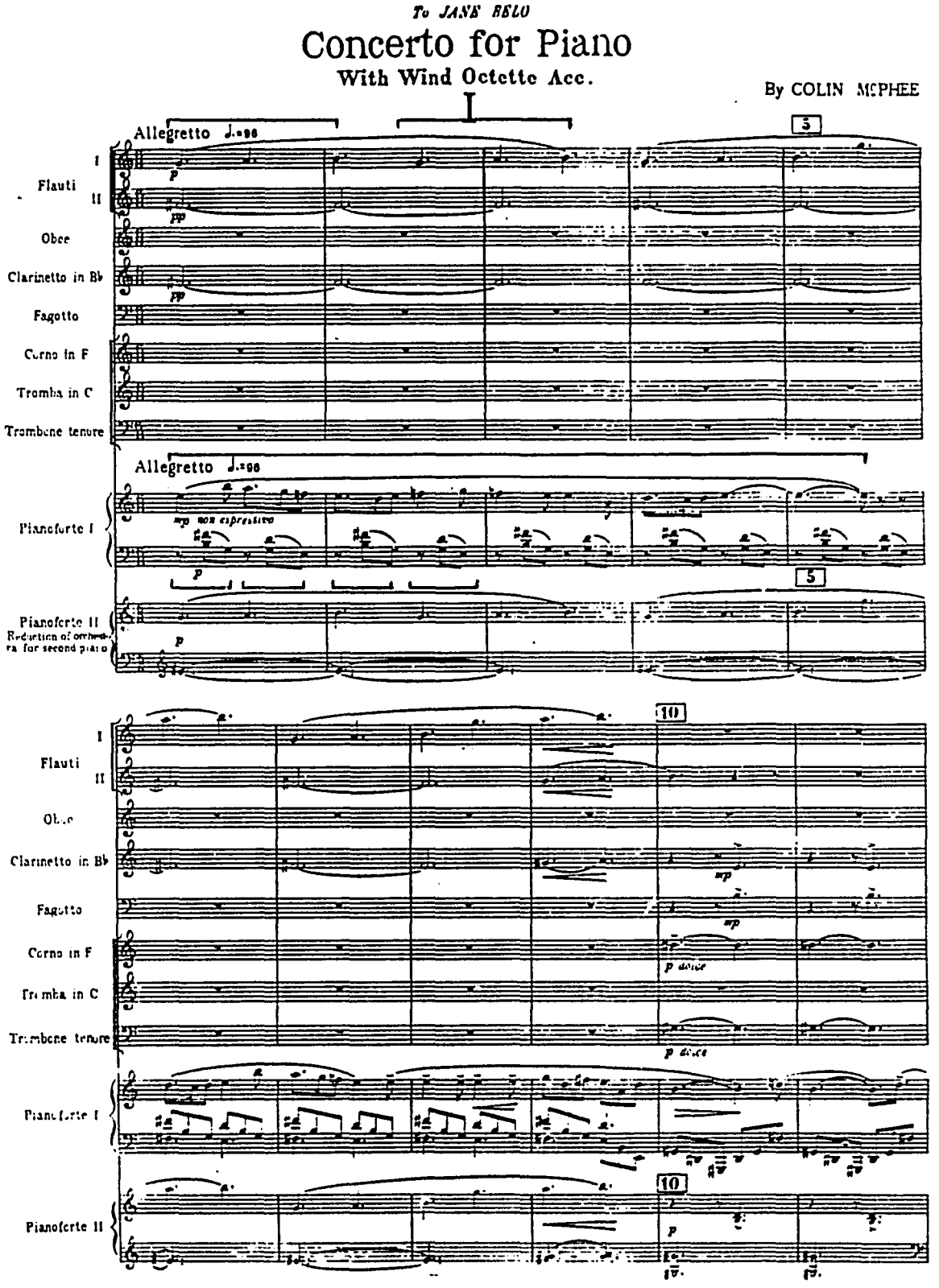
The Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet has three movements--Allegretto, Chorale, and Coda[45]--and is scored for two flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, and trombone. Its tight structure, like that of the Invention, is a model of neoclassicism. Its part-writing is lean, its textures clear and linear, and its forward rhythmic motion nearly perpetual. Yet amidst these cool, classical qualities are some warm touches: an opening modal melody, labeled "pastoral" by McPhee, that rolls out in a lyrical 6/8, and a middle movement of spacious breadth and hymn-like simplicity.

The work's economy is apparent from the opening measures of the first movement, where McPhee introduces most of the materials upon which the movement is built. The underlying triplet forms a rhythmic cell basic to the movement. Here it is presented over ostinatos that are cross-phrased simply, even amicably (see bracketed ostinatos in Example 10); later they will vie with one another more vigorously. Tonally, the opening is also a harbinger of what is to come. It is tonic-centered, yet, as in the

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[45]In McPhee's typescript notes to this piece, he renames the last movement "Finale." An abridged version of these notes was used with the recording of the work by Columbia (ML-5105) in 1956. (Typescript inserted into Concerto score at UCLA.) The recording, with Grant Johannesen as piano soloist, was re-released in 1972 on CRI-315.

Example 10. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 1-11.



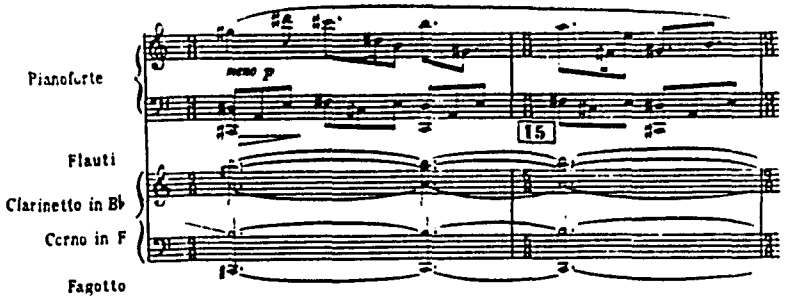
Invention, the tonic is often blurred and its role made ambiguous. McPhee immediately presents a modal duality. Although he describes the piece simply as opening in "E minor,"[46] in fact it is bi-modal from the outset, with the piano right-hand melody in E phrygian, the piano left hand in E minor (with an implication of its relative major, G), the clarinet and second flute together defining E minor, and the first-flute line ambiguously restating the third, fourth, and fifth degrees common to both modes. This bi-modality allows McPhee to play with the tension between the major and minor second degrees.

Another of McPhee's favorite harmonic devices is to draw chords from different parts of a thirteenth. By doing so he extracts two tonics from a shared pitch collection--a twist on his other favored trait of juxtaposing two modal inflections on a shared tonic. A good example is found at m. 14. Spelling up from C-sharp, minor and major thirds alternate to equal a thirteenth (with two minor thirds at the top); nearly all are heard squarely on the first beat of the measure (see outline of downbeat pitches in Example 11-B). The G-sharp phrygian of the melody (significantly, a major third above the opening key) is supported by a suggestion of either its own dominant or its related minor key of C-sharp:

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[46]Typescript notes by Colin McPhee.

Example 11-A. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 14-15. (Most of the examples that follow are reductions of the score)
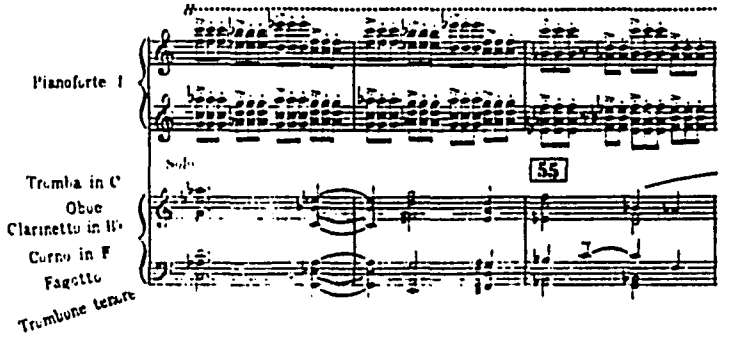


Example 11-B. McPhee, Concerto, first movement. Downbeat pitches for m. 14. Those pitches not sounded right on the downbeat are in parentheses.



Often, when drawing from a thirteenth, McPhee voices the pitches as fourths, fifths, sevenths, or ninths--a harbinger of the spacious second movement. This occurs at measure 53, not long before the development begins:
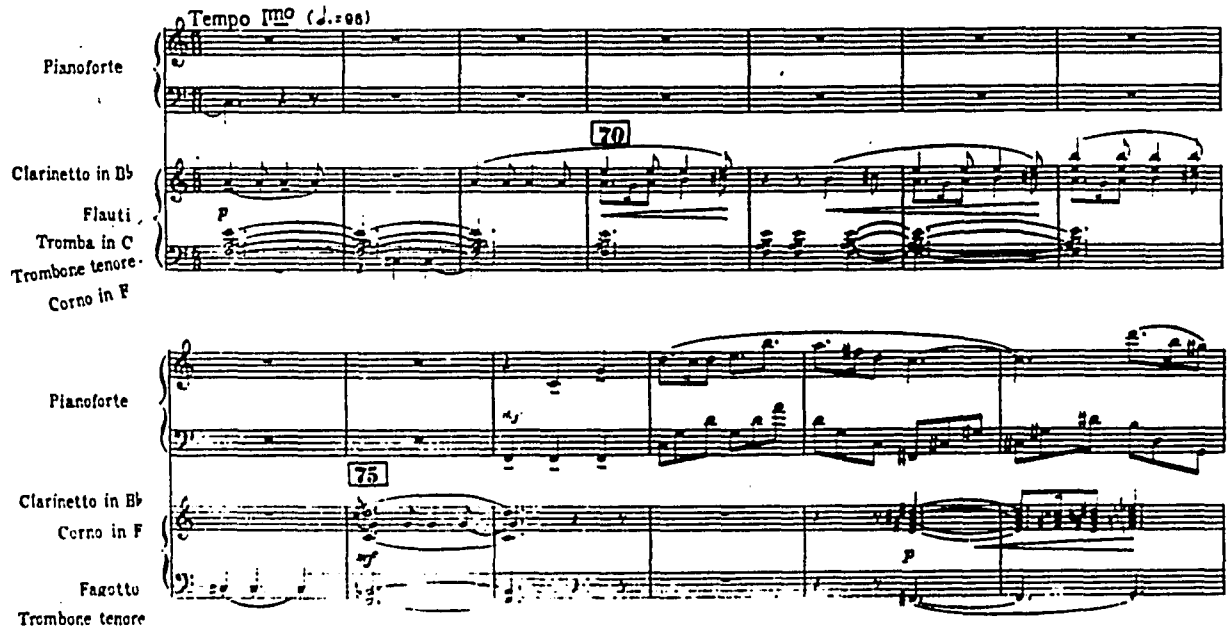
Example 12. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 53-55.



Other instances can be found at the opening of the development, where the winds build up by two

fifths and a tritone from A--although spelled in inversion (see m. 67)--and where a suggestion (and subsequent full statement) of the opening melody is approached in the woodwinds by fifths:

Example 13. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 67-79.

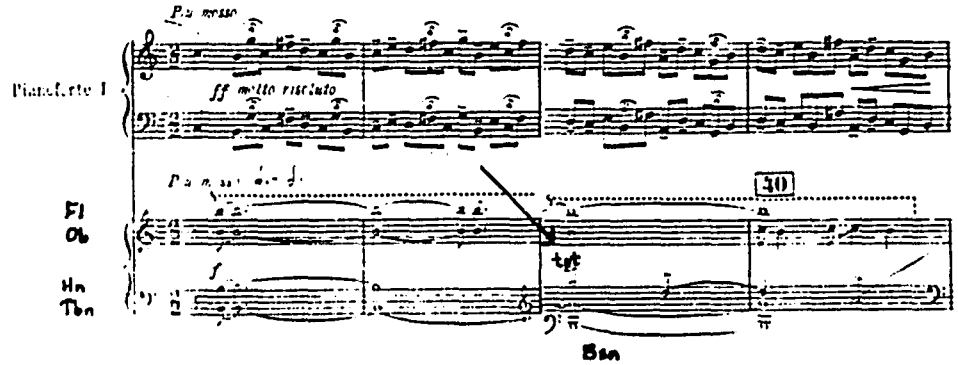


Ostinatos are central to the Concerto's construction. Despite a use of traditional, organic forms--in the first movement a "modified" sonata-allegro[47] and in the second and third tri-partite--the ostinatos give a block-like quality to the structure. They spin within concisely circumscribed areas, often out of sync with one another, then suddenly are propelled forward by modulation or sequence. In the first movement, for example, ostinatos sound at different levels, not just in the over-layering established at the beginning,

[47] Ibid.
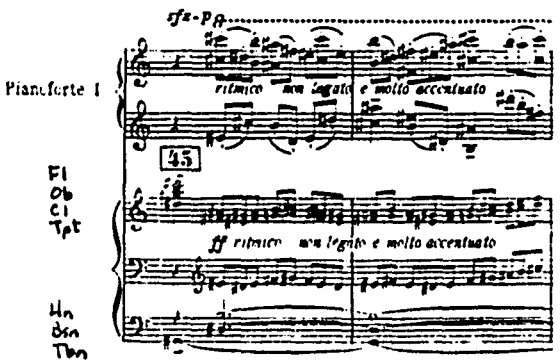
but also in the very essence of the two principal theme groups. The opening piano melody has an ostinato pattern in its accompaniment (see Example 10, mm. 1-9), and the second theme is itself an irregular ostinato (Example 14). Although initially presented as its own melody, after two measures it becomes the accompaniment of a trumpet solo.

Example 14. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 37-40.



The tug of 2 against 3, presaged in the piano as early as measure 11 (see Example 10), is basic to this second theme. At first this rhythmic tension is internal and linear. By measure 45 it becomes vertical within the piano:

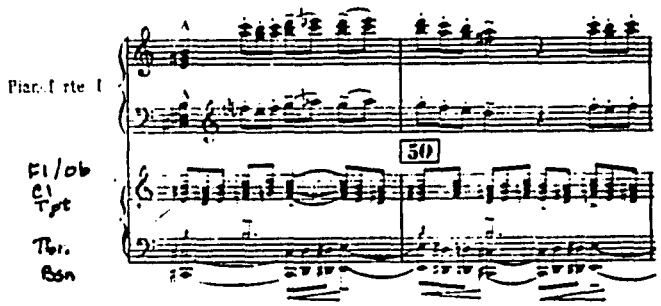
Example 15. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 45-46.



And by measure 49 the piano and winds present the second
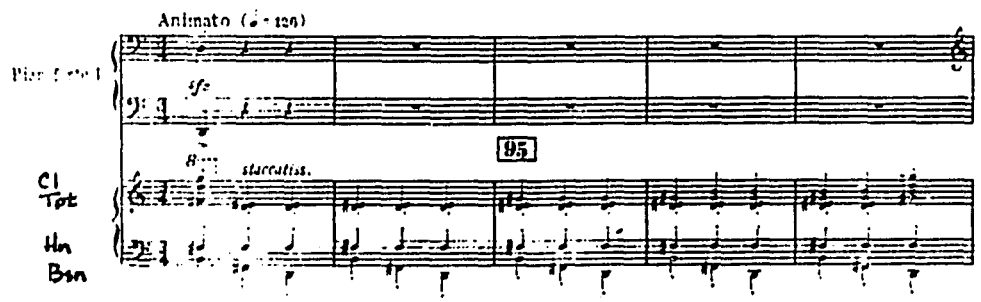
theme one beat apart, so that 2 pulls against 3 persistently:

Example 16. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 49-50.



The ostinatos most frequently are built of thirds, often stacked into the thirteenths already described. Occasionally the thirds are inverted into clusters, as in m. 93, midway through the development, where the ostinato draws from two contiguous triads:

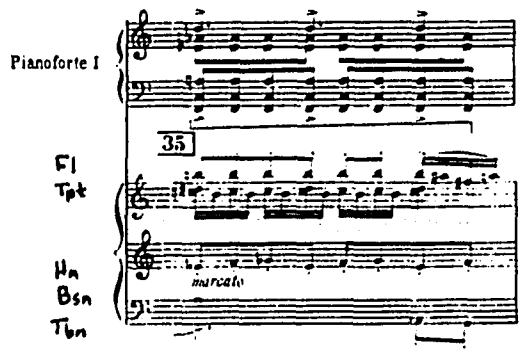
Example 17. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 93-97.



Rhythmically, the concerto is angular and often hard-hitting. In addition to the play of 2 against 3 discussed above, meter changes unexpectedly jar the downbeat. An intriguing rhythmic trait appears in the third movement with an asymmetrical subdivision of the beat into 3 + 3 + 2--a

characteristic McPhee was to find especially appealing in Balinese music.[48]

Example 18. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, third movement, measure 35.
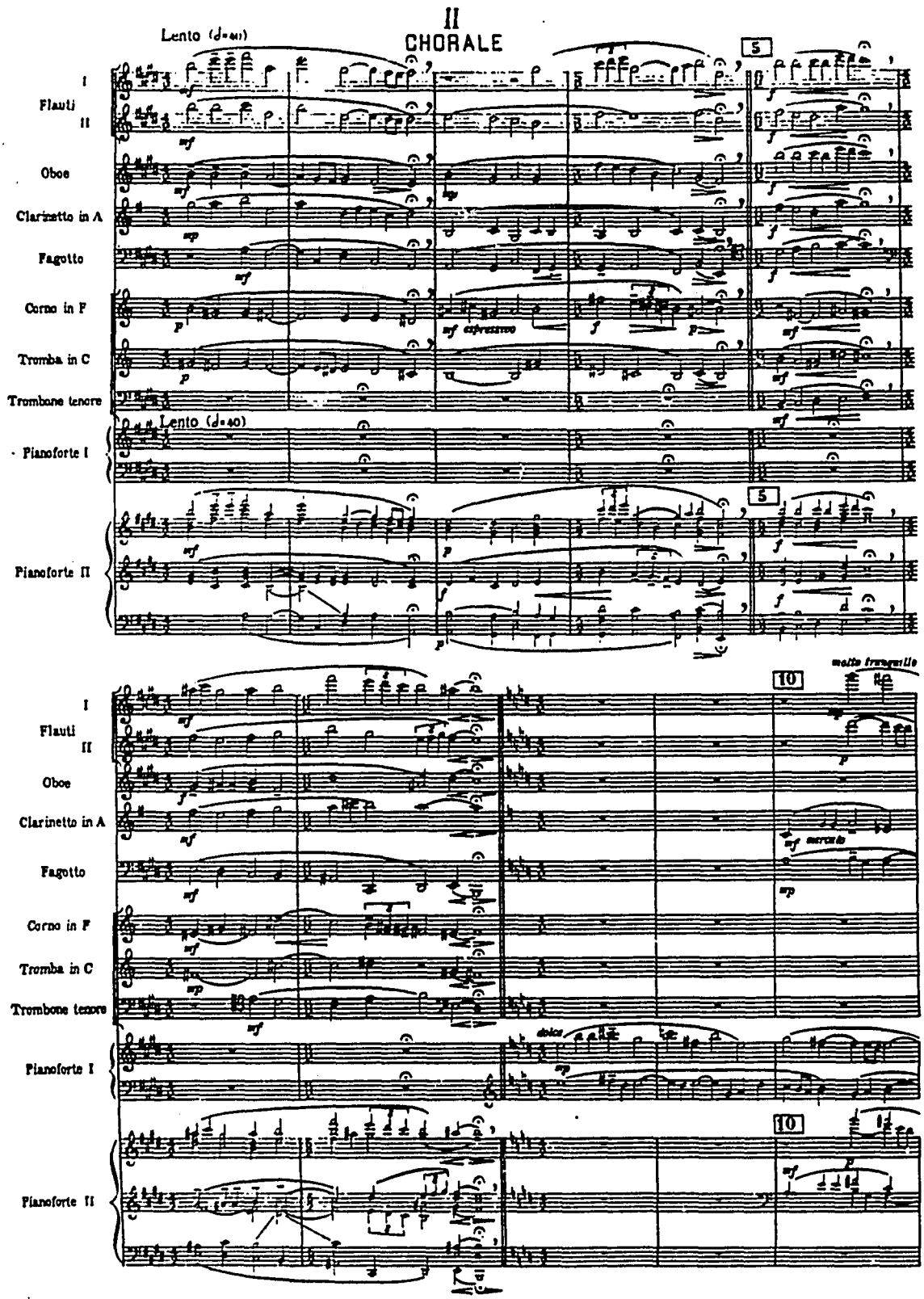


Throughout the Concerto, McPhee gives the piano varying roles. In the first movement its solos are prominently placed to introduce both the first and second themes as well as to inaugurate the development and the recapitulation. They are linear and lucid, most often pared down to two voices. When the piano becomes a supporting member of the ensemble, its role is often percussive, hammering out ostinatos beneath the winds (see Example 12).

The piano assumes a slightly different role in the second movement--less soloistic, less flashy, more consistently integrated into the ensemble. Unlike the first movement, the opening theme here is sounded by the winds in organ-like resonance (Example 19), and the piano does not enter until m. 8, where it offers a contrapuntal

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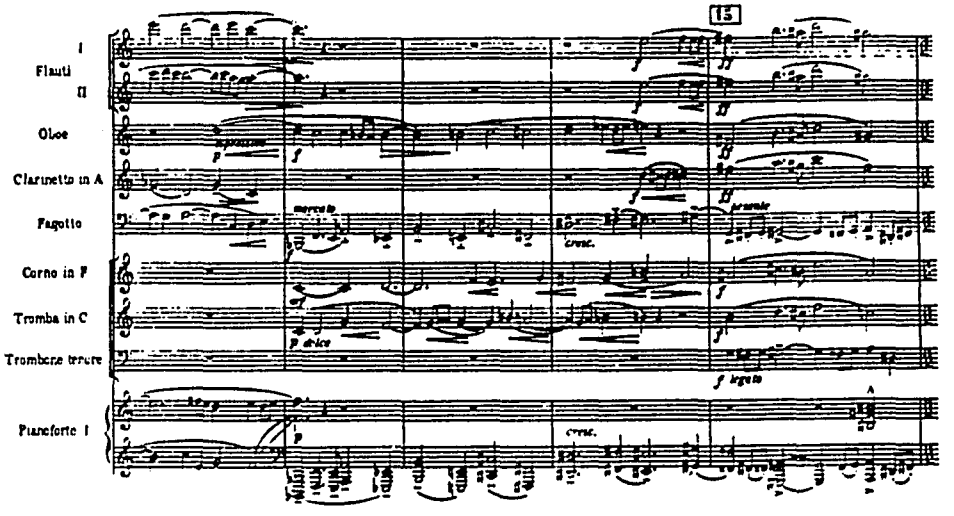
[48]McPhee later wrote an entire article about this rhythmic pattern, citing examples from jazz, African music, and Balinese gamelan: "Eight to the Bar," Modern Music XX/4 (May-June 1943), 235-42.

Example 19. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, second movement, measures 1-10



presentation of the theme. In this movement McPhee often doubles the piano bass with either trumpet, trombone, or bassoon, giving it a fuller sonority (as in Example 20).
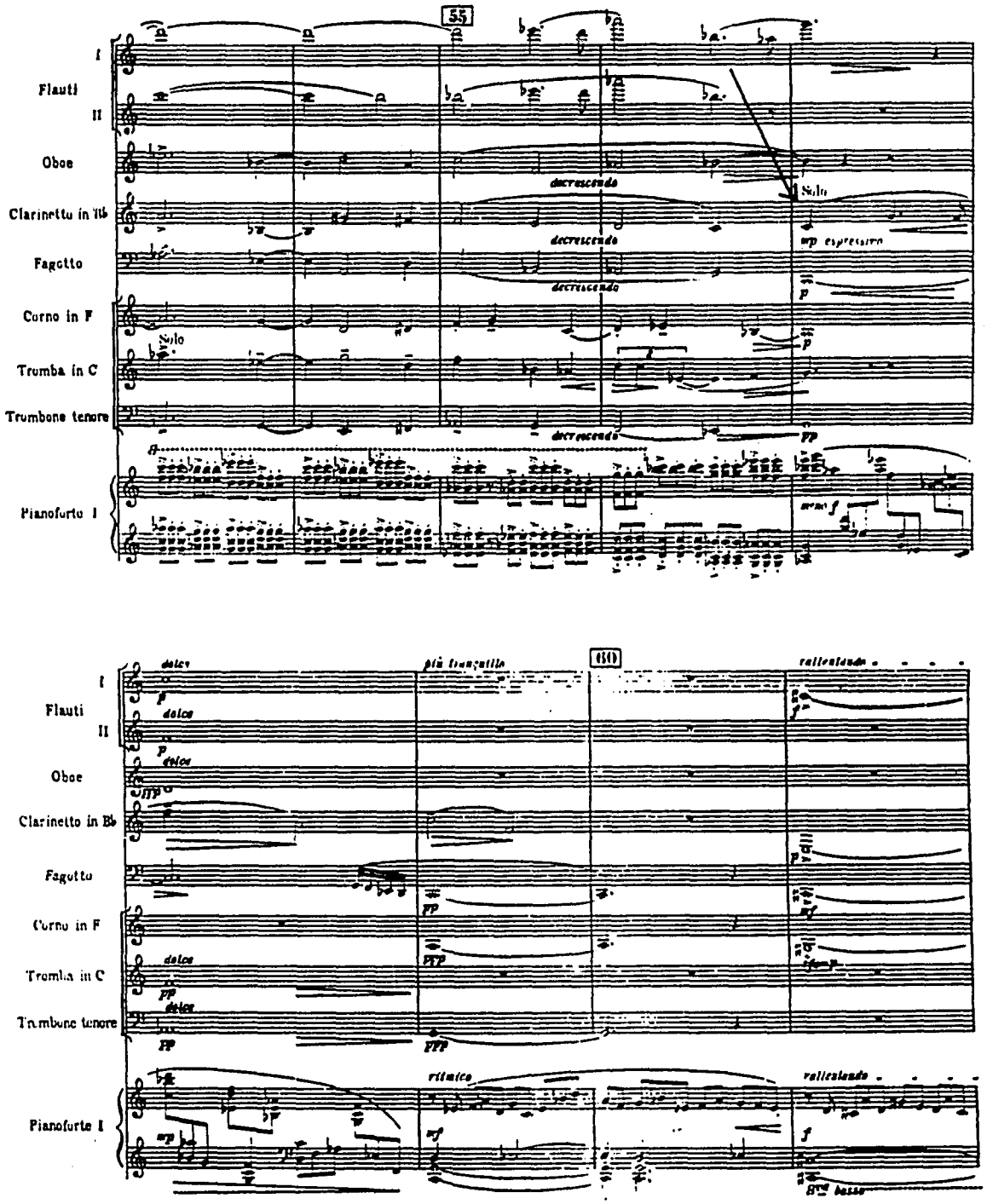
Example 20. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, second movement, measures 11-15.



With the third movement, the piano's role becomes persistently percussive, taking off with gusto at the start. The piano plays constantly, pausing only occasionally for dialogue with the winds.
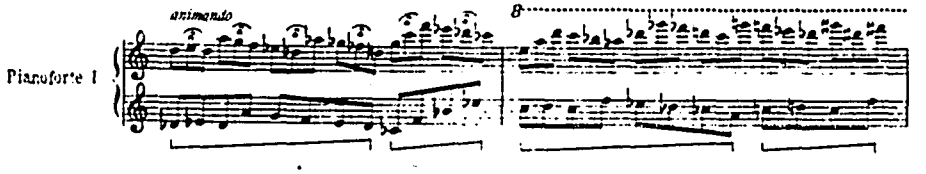
A prominent trait of this concerto--one that was to surface in many of McPhee's later works--is the use of thematic inter-connections between movements. Most likely this practice was inspired by his days of studying and performing the music of Liszt. The first hint of a relationship between movements comes toward the end of the first movement's exposition, where the Chorale's chordal texture is foretold by the winds (see Example 21). Soon after, the solo clarinet makes a modified reference to the

Example 21. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, first movement, measures 53-61.



Chorale's opening. When the second movement actually begins, it relates back to the first by sounding E major in all the parts (a counterpart to the first movement's E-phrygian/minor; compare Example 10 to Example 19), and its first melodic interval (B reaching up to E) inverts that of the first movement (E moving to B). The two movements also share rhythmic aspects, as in the frequent tug of two against three:

Example 22. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, second movement, measures 40-41, piano only.
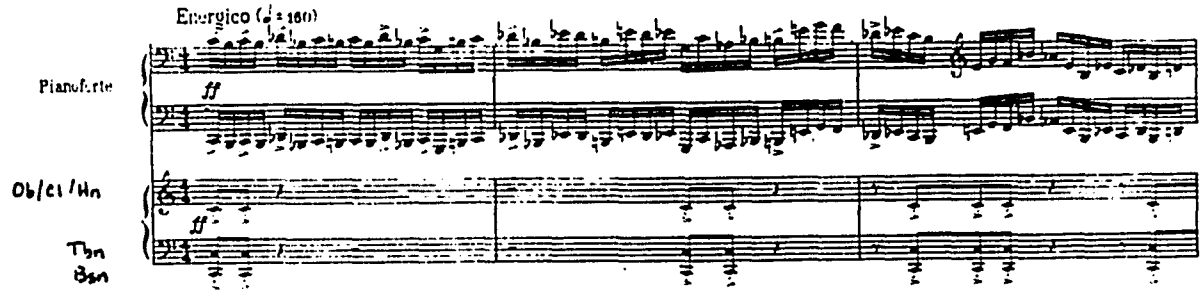


In several respects, the third movement is the culmination of what has come before.[49] Although ostinatos were prominent in the first movement, here they completely take over for a flashy, fast-paced conclusion. Tonally, the opening of the third movement sums up the modes used previously. The first movement had opened with a juxtaposition of minor and phrygian; the second started with major. In the third, McPhee gorges himself on all three, centering them on a common tonic--C. Unison C's are uttered irregularly in the winds, and

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[49]In the letter to Nicolas Slonimsky already cited, McPhee described the Concerto entirely in terms of its formal structure and called the final movement "a development of various elements in the preceding movements." (Letter, "Sunday". LC)
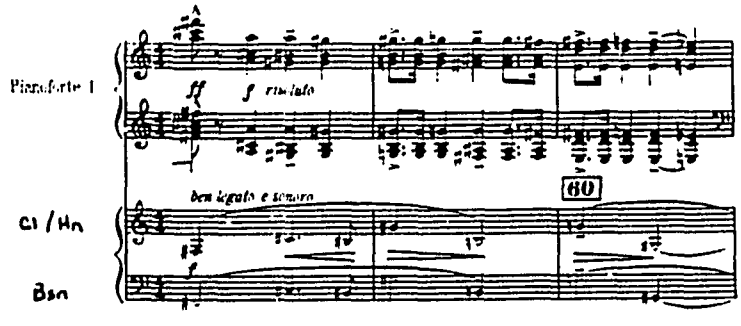
they are also the clear focus of the piano's sixteenth-note pattern.

Example 23. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, third movement, measures 1-3.



Another unifying link occurs in the middle section of this movement, which recalls the opening theme of the Chorale, and accompanies it with a chordal texture:

Example 24. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, third movement, measures 58-60.



The work ends in unison (two-voice) triplets, leaping triumphantly up the length of the keyboard.

Sea Shanty Suite

McPhee's next work was a set of sea shanties, arranged for baritone solo, male chorus, two pianos, and two sets of timpani. It was composed for the Schola Cantorum

and first performed in Carnegie Hall under Hugh Ross's direction on 13 March 1929.[50] There were seven shanties in all: "Lowlands Away," "Billy Boy," "Stormalong," "What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?," "Tom's Gone to Hilo," "Fire Down Below," and "Highland Laddie." Six of them (minus "Fire Down Below") were published by Edwin F. Kalmus in 1930 as the Sea Shanty Suite; they bore a dedication "To Hugh Ross in friendship."[51]

In the Sea Shanties, McPhee drew upon folk materials for the first time. Reworking the music of another was not unusual for him; previously he had arranged pieces by Liszt, Chopin, and Gershwin. But taking folksongs and adapting them for concert performance was a new step. How he chose this particular genre is unknown. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon sea tunes appealed to his sense of family heritage; the bawdy lyrics of the genre may have amused him too (although these shanties are pretty clean, with only a few doubles entendres). Most likely, however, he was attracted to their musical style; their modal ambiguities

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[50]Ross has stated that McPhee arranged the sea shanties "with the idea that we [i.e. the Schola Cantorum] would do it. We did not commission them." (Interview with Hugh Ross.)

[51]Colin McPhee, arranger, Sea Shanty Suite for Baritone Solo, Men's Chorus, 2 Pianos and 2 sets of Timpani, "The Melody [sic] collected and Edited by Sir Richard Terry" (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1930). "Fire Down Below" was not included in this publication and is lost.

and rhythmic shifts were in tune with his own sensibility at the time.[52]

For his first foray into ethnology McPhee made no excursion to the West Indies or the Scottish coast to gather melodies but chose tunes from a collection that was considered reliable in its day--Sir Richard Runcian Terry's The Shanty Book, published in 1921.[53] Melodies and texts from Terry's collection were used in four of the six shanties published by McPhee: "Lowlands," "Billy Boy," "What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor," and "Tom's Gone to Hilo".[54] Terry had strong opinions about the correct procedures for collecting folksongs and felt that their

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[52]He may also have been inspired by the Schola Cantorum's tradition of performing folk music. For example, they included Czechoslovakian and Hungarian folk music on a Carnegie-Hall concert given on 15 March 1928 ("Schola Cantorum Heard," New York Times 15 March 1928). Their performances of folksongs must have been initiated by the ethnomusicologist Kurt Schindler, who was the Schola's founding conductor.

[53]Part I (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1921). Part II was published in 1926. Evidently Terry's collection was popular in the twenties. Stan Hugill, who has produced the most recent scholarship on shanties, states: "Terry's . . . collection was accepted by schools and by baritone singers of the 1920s, the result being that his version of a certain shanty is the one generally found in circulation today." [Shanties and Sailors' Songs (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 112.]

[54] The melody for "Stormalong" may have been taken from a shanty collection by Captain W. B. Whall; the two are similar although not exactly the same: Ships, Sea Songs and Shanties (Glasgow: Brown, Son and Ferbuson Ltd., 1927), 87. On the first page of Sea Shanty Suite, the following credits are given: "The Melody collected and Edited by Sir Richard Terry//Arrangement by Colin McPhee."

accompaniments should preserve the purity of the melodies. He acknowledged there were many variants of each tune but gave unadorned readings because they were the ones sung by the most accomplished shantymen, those on deep-sea vessels.[55] McPhee did not change a note in Terry's clean, simple melodies.

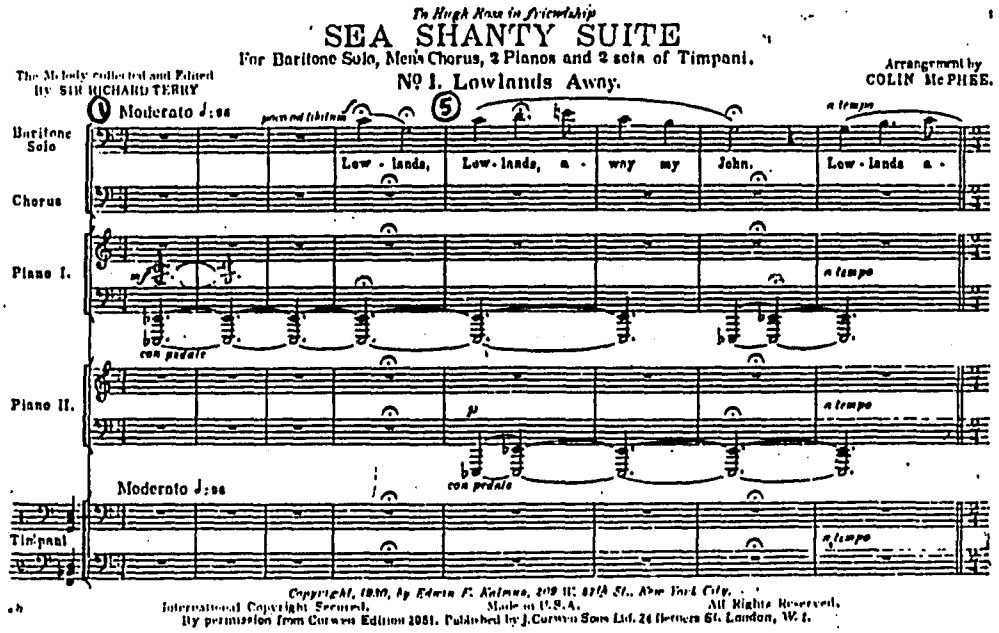
McPhee's arrangements for baritone soloist and male chorus present the shanties in the straightforward solo/chorus (i.e. shantyman/workgang) format basic to the genre. The understated accompaniments combine elements of his own musical style with a sympathy for each song. "Lowlands Away" is a good example (see full score in Example 25).[56] McPhee highlights the recitative quality of the melody by stretching it out over the accompaniment and playing upon its flexibility with rhythmic shifts. He uses the simple rhythmic figure of  (drawn from the opening two notes of the melody) to generate much of this rhythmic tension. Sometimes the pattern sounds on the beat, compatibly supporting the melody (see left hand in the second piano, mm. 16-17 and 21-24); elsewhere it heightens

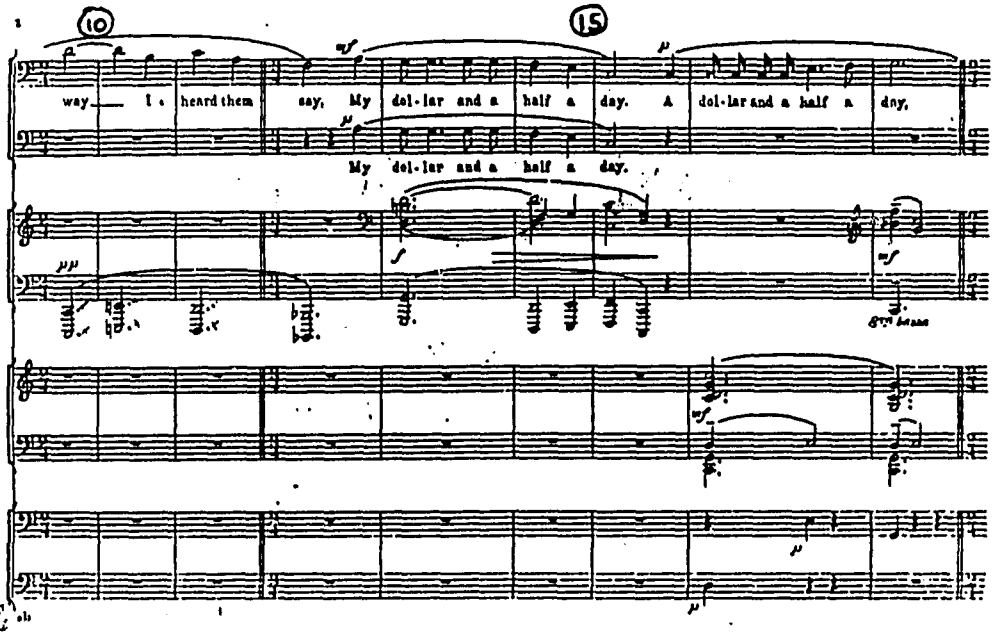
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[55]What Terry presented were composite melodies; he seems to have been so frustrated by the need to find the ultimate version of each that he combined the various ones that he heard. (Ibid, pp. ix-x.)
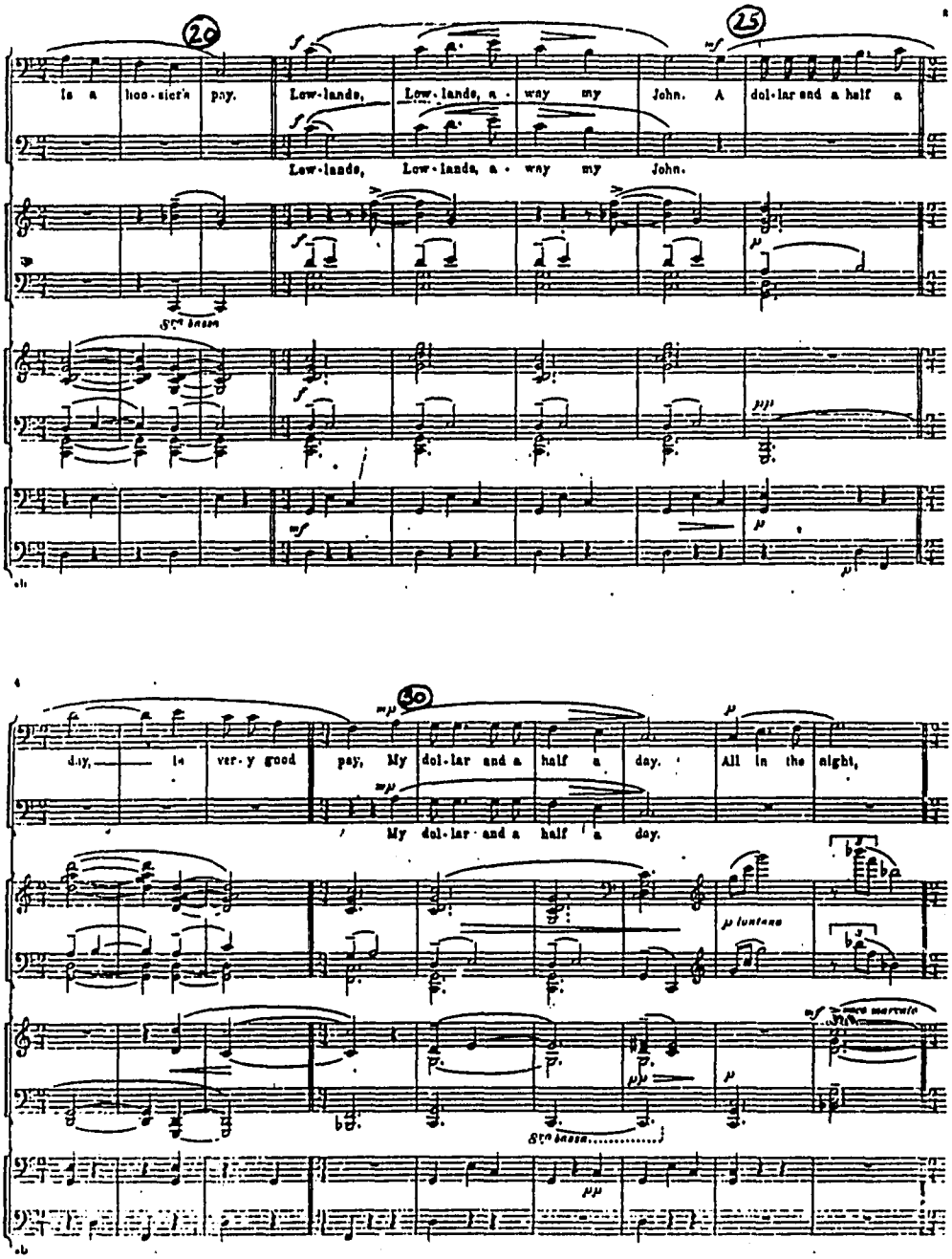
[56]Three full strains of "Lowlands" (each made up of four phrases) are set by McPhee. The way in which he presents the melody is asymmetrical, with an introduction and coda: C // A1 B A2 C // A1 B A2 C // A1 B A2 C // C A1 B.

Example 25. McPhee, "Lowlands Away," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 1-17.
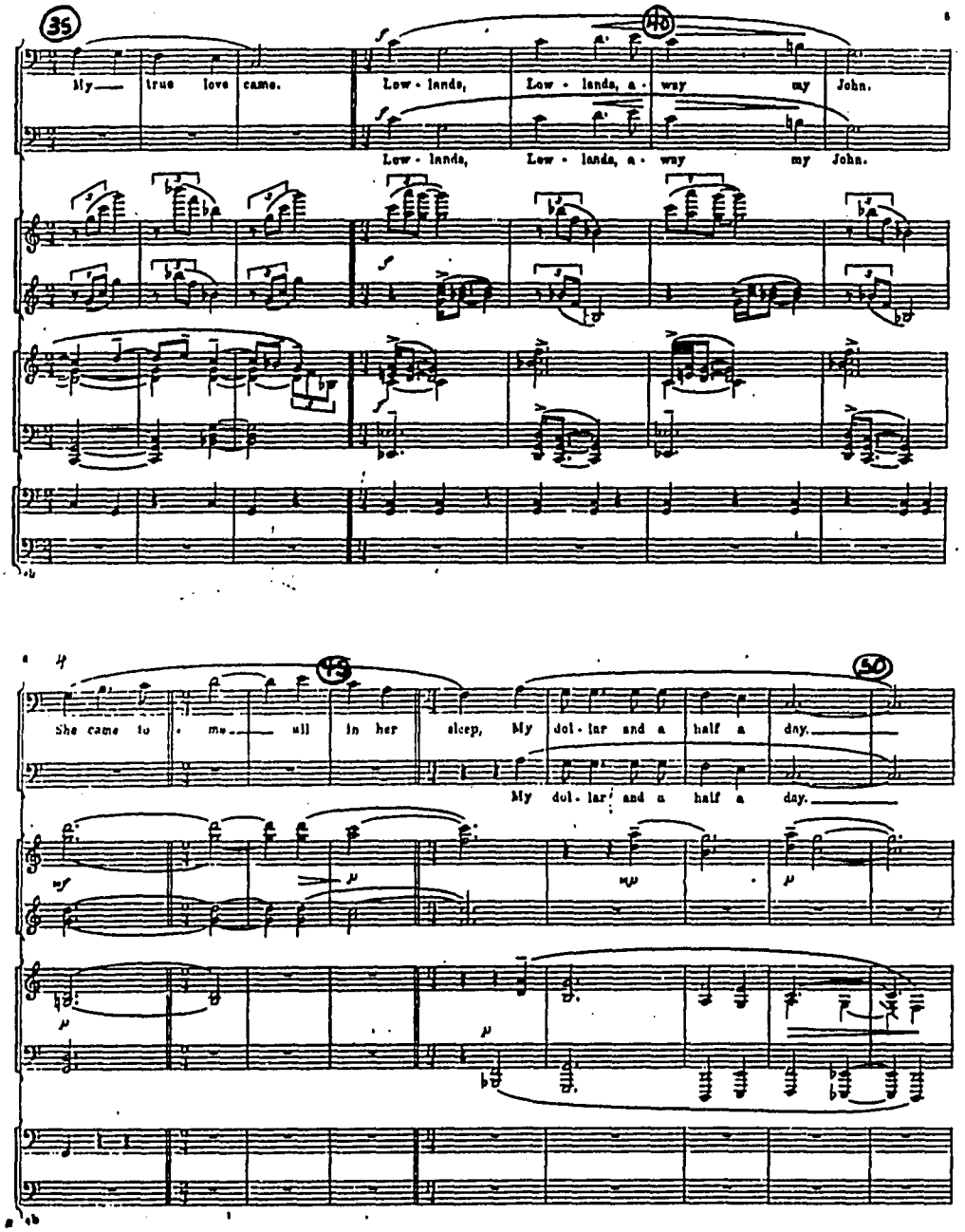




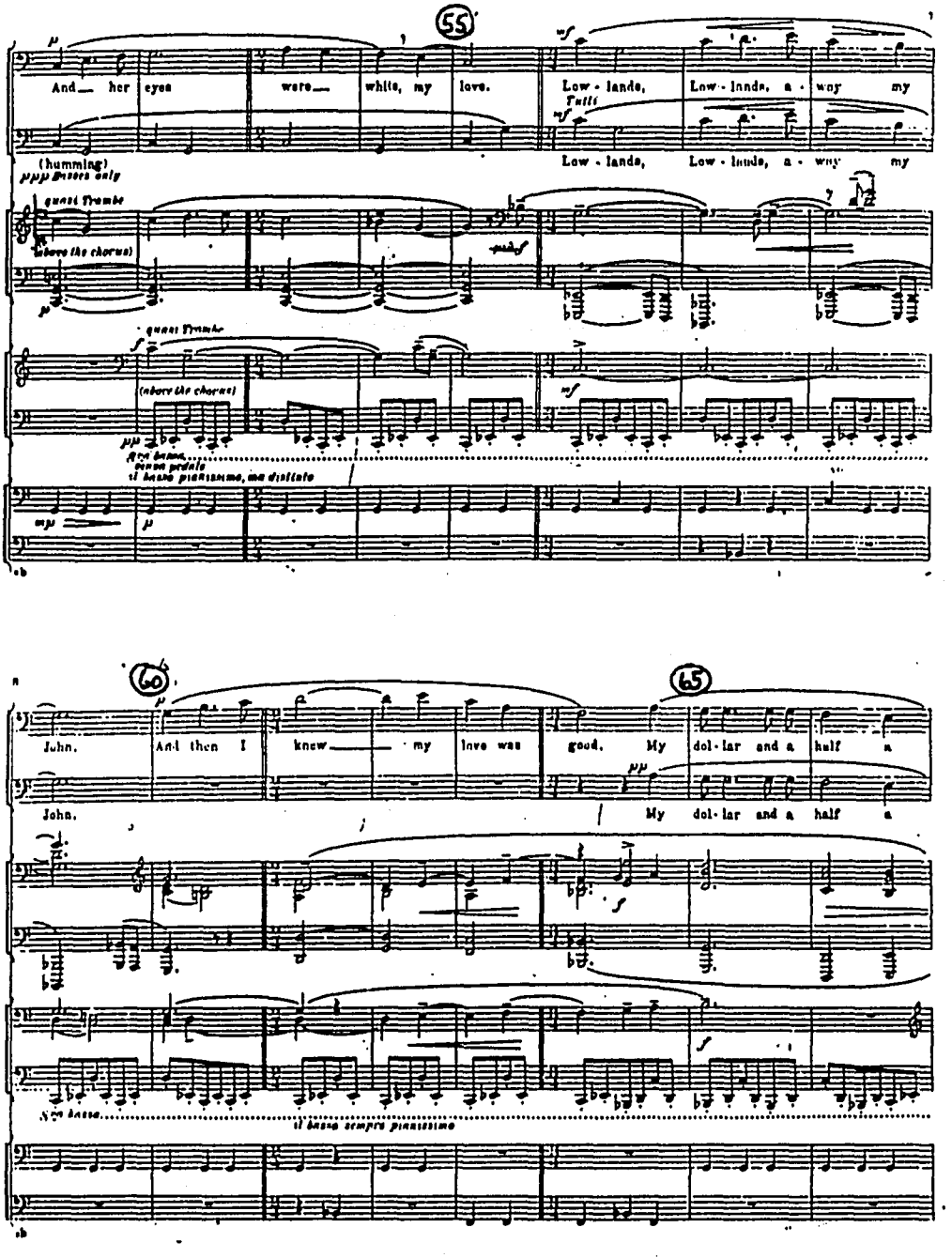
Example 25 (page two). McPhee, "Lowlands Away," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 18-34.
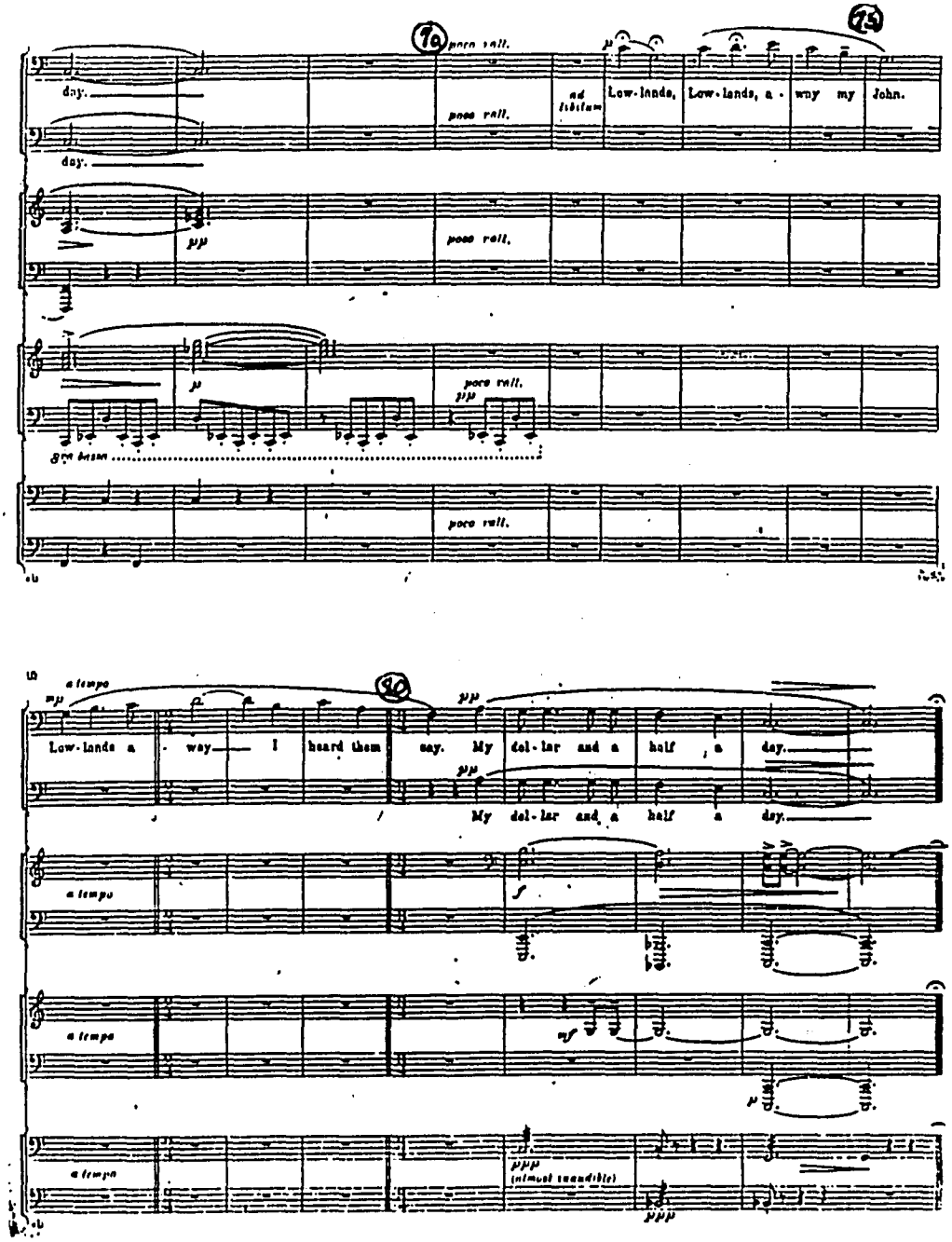


Example 25 (page three). McPhee, "Lowlands Away," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 35-50.



Example 25 (page four). McPhee, "Lowlands Away," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 51-66.



Example 25 (page five). McPhee, "Lowlands Away," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 67-84.



the elastic feeling of the melody by stubbornly clinging to a triple meter while the melody changes to duple (mm. 18-20).

The melody to "Lowlands Away" has circular phrases; one leads to another and none solidly signals a finish. McPhee enhances this indefinite feeling with an accompaniment that slips between major and minor and sometimes combines the two.[57] In the opening stanza, for example, E-natural in both the melody (m. 5, 14, 16) and accompaniment (m. 10) tugs against the sustained E-flat pedal in the piano bass (m. 1-8), creating a C major-minor ambiguity. Later on this implied major-minor contrast becomes direct. At m. 52, the first-piano bass sounds C major, voiced spaciously. Under it, the irregular ostinato--by now a hallmark of McPhee's style--defines C minor.
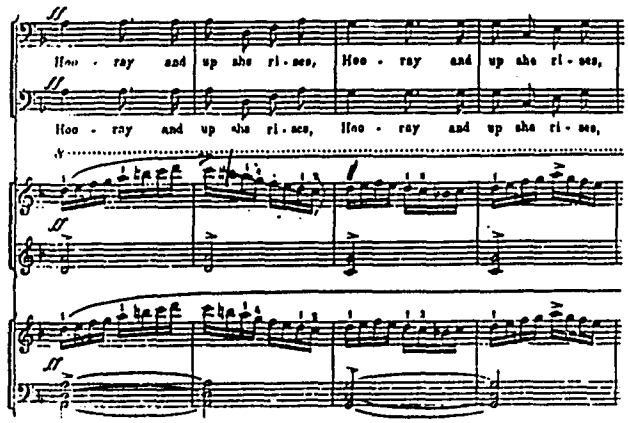
In "Lowlands," as in all his shanty settings, McPhee evokes British folk-instrumental styles, using drone-like techniques common to both bagpipe and folk-fiddle playing. Open fifths and fourths abound, either sustained or regularly repeated. Often two fifths (sometimes even three)

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[57]Terry describes modal shifts as basic to the performance style of sea shanties: "[There is a] tendency on the part of the modern sailor to turn his minor key into a major one." He cited "Drunken Sailor" as an example of a shanty that was heard in both modes. (Introduction, p. viii.)
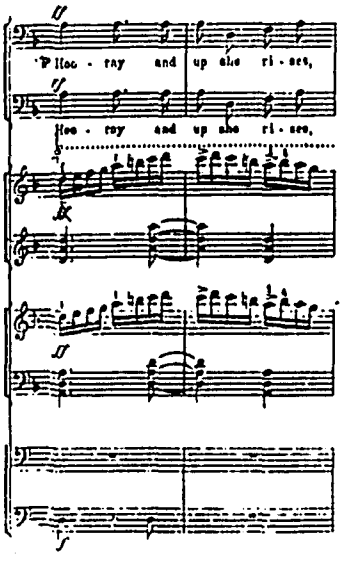
are stacked on top of one another; either they appear in root position (to span a ninth) or are inverted to place the top note a second above the root. In "Lowlands," the suggestion of a drone combines naturally with the falling fourth of the melody's first two notes. In the second-piano bass of mm. 16-20, two open fifths sound before the top pitch (D) pushes up to form a C-major triad; against this, the first piano resolves to the tonic by way of a different fifth (B-flat/F; m. 17). Another of the shanty settings--"Drunken Sailor"--is based almost entirely on quintal harmonies. The chorus first enters over a simple drone, on the beat, with a scalar sixteenth-note figuration above:

Example 26. McPhee, "Drunken Sailor," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 13-16.
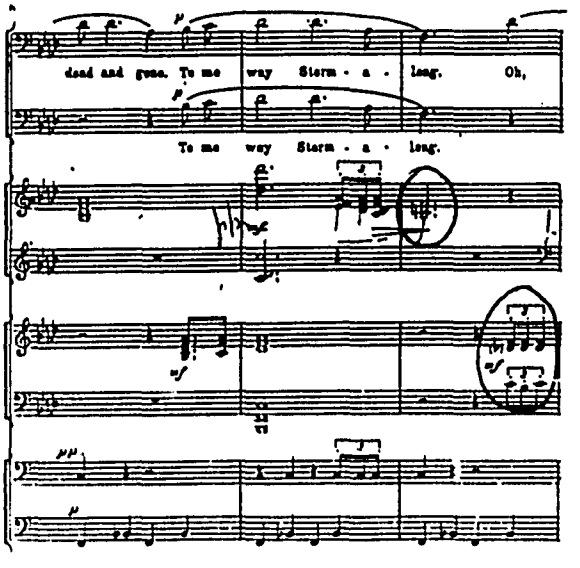


At its next entrance, however, the drone challenges the regular scales with repeated thrusts of a new angular rhythmic pattern:

Example 27. McPhee, "Drunken Sailor," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 29-30.



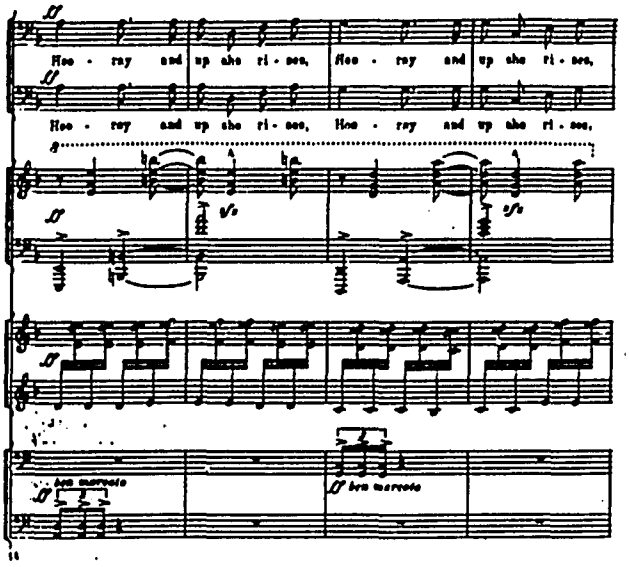
The shanties show careful craftsmanship in scoring as well as in the handling of harmonic and rhythmic materials. The distribution between the two pianos is even and well-balanced, never muddying the clean textures. Occasionally, the two pianos bandy modal inflections back and forth, as in "Storm Along":

Example 28. McPhee, "Stormalong," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 24-26.



Or each assumes material of a very different character, as in "Drunken Sailor":

Example 29. McPhee, "Drunken Sailor," from Sea Shanty Suite, measures 61-64.



What McPhee has done within the Sea Shanty Suite, then, is to derive the main elements of his accompaniment from the tunes themselves and from instrumental music of the British folk tradition. Twelve years later, in reviewing a recording of early American ballads collected and arranged by John Jacob Niles, he set forth his theory about writing accompaniments to folksongs. His attitude then was consistent with his practice earlier:

> The accompaniment is all that could be desired, for it never destroys the modal character of the melody by introducing inappropriate harmonies. It remains a discreet, purely sonorous background, serving to scan the stanzas more than anything else. This is not only the way it should be, but highly commendable; so many composers, including Brahms, have gone astray on that point, and have been tempted to sentimentalize

modal melody with romantic or impressionistic harmonization.[58]

The sea shanties were a big success at their first performance; in fact the Schola's audience "seemed to enjoy [them] immensely," so much so that "Billy Boy" had to be repeated.[59] All the reviews were complimentary, with perhaps the biggest boost coming from Samuel Chotzinoff, who called McPhee "one of the most talented members of New York's little group of serious composers."[60] The shanties were picked up by a number of college glee clubs during the late twenties and early thirties--most often with a favorable reception. Since then, the works have been performed only seldom.[61]

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[58]Colin McPhee, "Scores and Recordings," Modern Music XVII/2 (January-February 1940, 110.

[59]Pitts Sanborn, "Schola Cantorum Presents Its Miscellaneous Program," New York Times (14 March 1929).

[60]There were several other reviews of this concert: "Colorful Concert by Schola Cantorum: Mixed Chorus of 200 Gains in Tonal Balance--Novelties on Program," New York Times (14 March 1929); Samuel Chotzinoff, "Music," New York World (14 March 1929); Francis D. Perkins, "Schola Offers Final Carnegie Choral Concert," New York Herald Tribune (14 March 1929); and Oscar Thompson, "Program of Exceptional Interest Sung, and For the Most Part, Well Sung, by Schola Cantorum," New York Evening Post (14 March 1929).

[61]According to McPhee's application to the American Composers Alliance, the Sea Shanty Suite was performed by the Columbia University Glee Club and Yale Glee Club in 1929; the New York Downtown Glee Club, Harvard Glee Club, and Princeton Glee Club in 1930, and the New York University Glee Club in 1931. The Composers Forum also gave a performance of the work in 1954.

Kinesis

In the summer of 1929, after the premiere of his Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet and Sea Shanty Suite, McPhee sailed for France, where he spent several weeks on the Riviera and in Paris before going on to Berlin and then Munich. He was buoyed up by his recent accomplishments and wrote confidently to a friend in New York: "Though the critics did not like my concerto, I did. I do it in New York next season and I think it is to be played here also."[62] By fall he was back in New York, and during that winter he seems to have written only one piece, Kinesis for solo piano. The work is dated 9 May 1930 and was published in New Music (III/4 of July 1930) together with McPhee's Invention of 1926.[63]
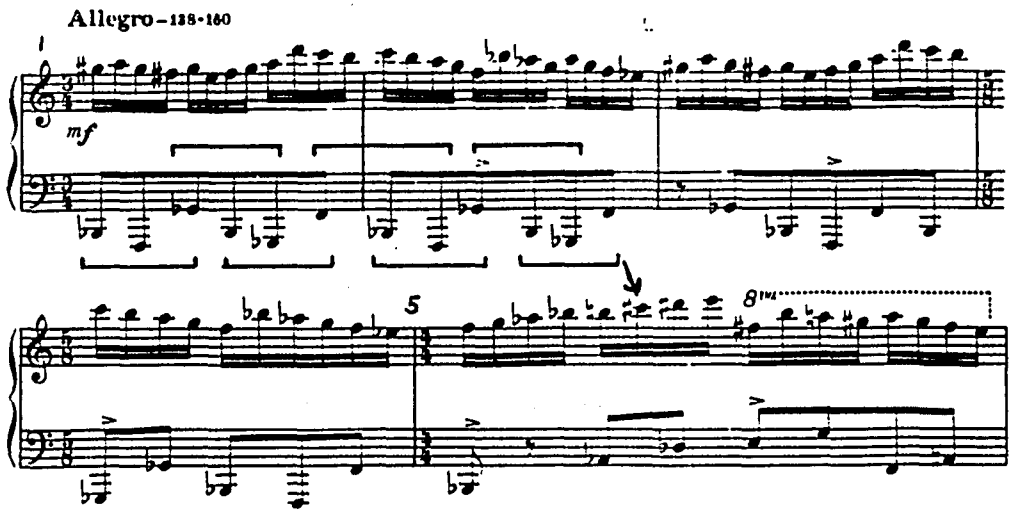
Although written four years after the Invention, Kinesis seems to have been conceived as a prelude to the earlier work's fugue. The opening themes of the two are related (compare Example 30-A to 30-B) and their styles follow Bach's model for such pairings. Kinesis is toccata-like and free in form, while the Invention is constructed of tight, imitative counterpoint. There are
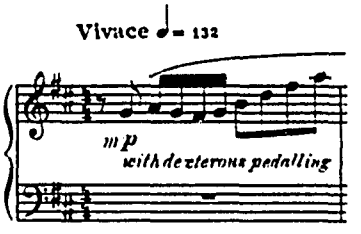
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[62]Letter, CM to Madeleine, written from Quai Voltaire, Paris [June or early July 1929]. Private collection, New York.

[63]McPhee left no written statement about Kinesis, and there is no record of its having been performed in the early thirties. Kinesis is 62 measures long.

Example 30-A. McPhee, Kinesis, measures 1-5.



Example 30-B. McPhee, Invention, measure 1.



several similarities between the two: two-voice writing, exploitation of registral extremes, and irregular rhythmic shifts. But McPhee was moving into a new compositional style with Kinesis--one of uncompromising dissonance. Perhaps his summer in Berlin had affected his musical thinking, for with Kinesis he stretched tonality farther than he would ever do again. In the early thirties, McPhee seems to have been challenging his compositional stance; the confidence he felt after completing the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet and Sea Shanty Suite had diminished. In American Composers on American Music, Wallingford Riegger quotes McPhee as saying, "My output has been small for the past few years, as I have found difficulty in finding myself and have mistrusted my natural facility."[64] Kinesis is a product of this transitional phase.

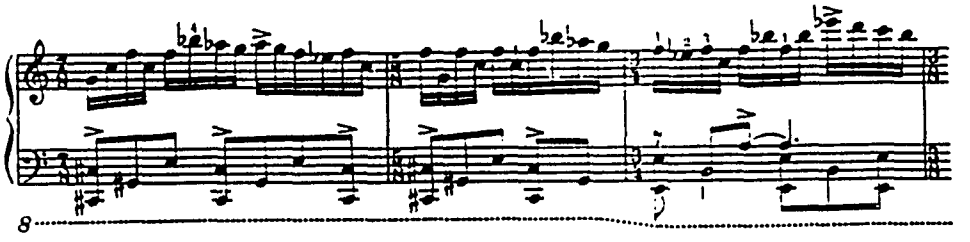
As its name indicates, Kinesis is about motion, here of a rapid-fire sort. The tempo marking is "Allegro--138-160," and the lightning-fast writing is akin to that in the last movement of McPhee's Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet. There is a strict stratification between the two parts. The right hand's stream of unbroken sixteenth notes speeds forward to the concluding chord, and the left hand moves independently in eighth notes which are interrupted by

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[64]"Adolph Weiss and Colin McPhee," p. 40.

occasional rests and, in the penultimate section, by the addition of octaves and a third voice.
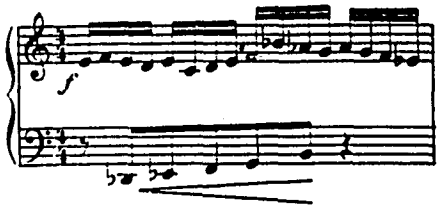
Example 31. McPhee, Kinesis, measures 29-31.



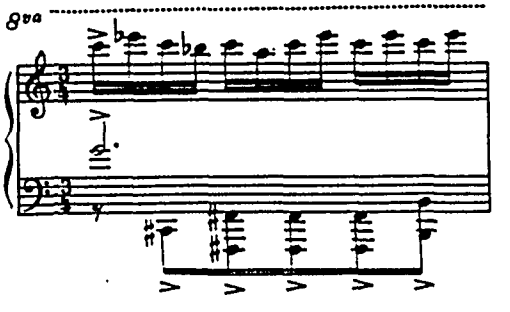
The piece is a fantasia with some contrapuntal fragmentation and development. The opening motive (see Example 30-A) returns in various guises: at different pitch levels (Example 32-A), with larger intervals in the same melodic shape (Example 32-B), and as a vehicle for sequential movement (Example 32-C).

Example 32. McPhee, Kinesis.
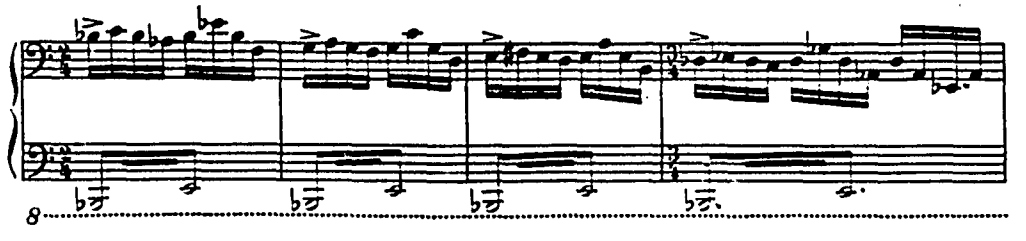
32-A (measure 10)



32-B (measure 38)



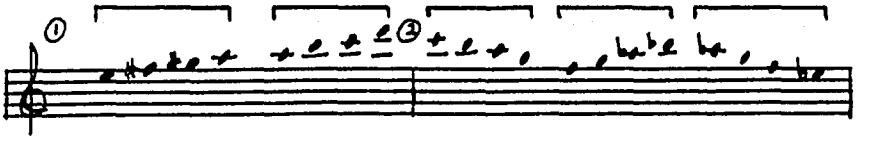
32-C (measures 50-53)



Its pitches are drawn from a series of fourths and are indicative of pitch structures throughout the work
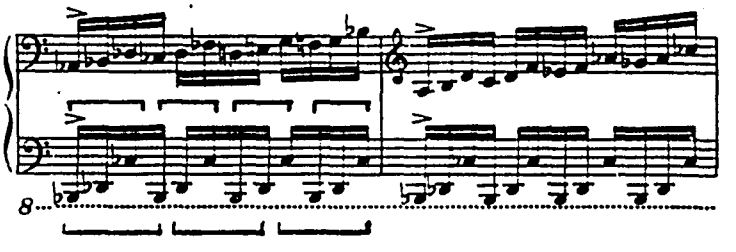
(compare the outline in Example 33 to Example 30-A). Before the opening two measures are repeated at m. 3 of the right hand, McPhee uses eleven pitches of the chromatic scale. The twelfth is introduced in m. 5, in the midst of scalar propulsion to a new pitch area.

Example 33. McPhee, Kinesis, outline of right-hand pitches in measures 1-2.



Meanwhile, the left hand independently sounds irregular ostinatos that alternate F and G-flat in octaves pivoting around B-flat (their internal cross-accents are bracketed in Example 30-A). These ostinatos--resembling those in McPhee's other works from the late twenties--turn up elsewhere in Kinesis, most notably near the close:

Example 34. McPhee, Kinesis, measures 55-56.



Besides its perpetual motion and harsh dissonance, a striking feature of Kinesis is its exploitation of register. The two voices always keep quite a distance from one another (between two and three octaves), but as the piece progresses they take turns pushing outward and in doing so delineate separate sections. First the right hand reaches up to G^3

(m. 10-22); then the left touches the lowest A on the keyboard (mm. 23-36); and then the right moves to A^3 (mm. 37-47). Finally, at the conclusion (m. 48 on), both stretch in opposite directions, gripping the outer reaches of the piano.

McPhee's dissonant style in Kinesis was a brief side-trip on the long road to redefining his musical style. One year later, he articulated his frustrations about the music around him; he still had not found a satisfactory solution:

> Music of today has become terribly erudite and more than ever difficult for the average ear to derive pleasure from. The Schoenbergian school delights in inverting, reversing, and augmenting its themes. Stravinsky now denies himself the luxury of sensuous sound or rhythmic excitement. Wherever we look we find composers imposing upon themselves restrictions interesting to musicians but completely unintelligible to the layman.[65]

H_2O and Mechanical Principles

With H_2O and Mechanical Principles of 1931, McPhee embarked on yet another phase in his search. This time he worked with a different medium, writing scores to films by Ralph Steiner, which were his last compositions before

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[65]Colin McPhee, "Music and Films," Musical Leader (12 March 1931); also quoted in Olin Downes, "Music and film," New York Times (8 March 1931).

leaving for Bali.[66] They were performed only once, at the final concert of the Copland-Sessions series on 15 March 1931, conducted by Hugh Ross.[67] The program was billed as "the first attempt by serious American composers and serious artists of the film to coordinate their efforts."[68] Through film, McPhee hoped "to give the music I have written a more direct and widespread appeal."[69] He clarified his newly evolving philosophy in a statement quoted in American Composers on American Music:

> The "Concerto" [for piano and wind octet] represents a time when I was chiefly interested in economy of means and formalism. "Mechanical Principles" shows my change to more elaborate material, form, rhythm, the use of polytonality, etc. From that work on I have been trying to express through music an emotion resulting from contact with daily life--its noise, rhythm, energy, and mechanical daring. Do not think I mean program music. I have no more definite concrete idea in mind than the construction of logical music whose rhythms derive from mechanics, whose tonal structure, while orderly

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[66]The scores are lost. Hugh Ross has said there is a possibility he might own copies, but when I interviewed him on 4 October 1982 he could not locate them. Ralph Steiner does not have copies either. (Letter to author, 30 January 1984)

[67]Other works on the program that evening were Actualités, a film by Kinogram with music by Darius Milhaud; La P'tite Lilie, a film by Cavalcanti, also with a Milhaud score; Surf and Seaweed, a film by Ralph Steiner with music by Marc Blitzstein; excerpts from Roger Sessions's Black Maskers, and Aaron Copland's Music for the Theatre.

[68]Olin Downes, "Concert of Music and Films," New York Times (16 March 1931).

[69]Colin McPhee, "Music and Films," Musical Leader (12 March 1931).

and complete, is as complex as the structure of a large bridge.[70]

McPhee and Steiner sought independence between the film and its score. As McPhee put it, "They are parallel creations in two different media.[71] Their subjects were mundane. Mechanical Principles, filmed in the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, captured the work-a-day spirit and rhythmic vitality of machines, "showing plungers and cogs and strange mechanisms . . . in action."[72] And H_2O was a celebration of water in its many incarnations. Steiner's films abstracted their subjects, juxtaposing individual shots to create a collage. Steiner was concerned with forward motion. As one critic observed: "He has an amazing eye and a wonderful sense of movement."[73] Olin Downes, in his review of the concert, concurred:

> . . . the pictures of Ralph Steiner, which are abstract designs, are themselves symphonic in the development of the ideas, the rhythms of line and mass and light, and the sense of cumulative development. . . . [They are] essentially music,

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[70]Wallingford Riegger, "Adolph Weiss and Colin McPhee," p. 40. Riegger does not say whether McPhee related the above in conversation or in writing.

[71]"Music and Films." Ralph Steiner has described their collaboration to me: "No cooperation--he saw film & composed." (Letter to author, 30 January 1984)

[72]Gilbert Seldes, "Films and Music: The Work of Ralph Steiner," New Haven Times (3 April 1931).

[73]Ibid.

intoxicating as tone itself to eye.[74]

It is not hard to imagine the composer of Kinesis, with his love for rhythmic vitality and rapid motion, working with enthusiasm on a Steiner film.

Downes called the Steiner-McPhee works "the climax of the evening . . . To [Mechanical Principles] . . . Mr. McPhee has written very carefully considered music, which often conveyed the sense of stark and irresistible power."[75] But he was troubled that the films and music were not well synchronized. Other critics focussed on the chaos at the performance when the film of Mechanical Principles broke repeatedly, making coordination with live orchestra impossible.[76]

Fifty years later, Steiner looked back on these two films with mixed emotions, proudly calling H2O "the second earliest American 'art' film--the first being Manhattan by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler" and dismissing Mechanical Principles as "from start to finish,

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[74]"Concert of Music and Films."

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ralph Steiner recalled this aspect of the performance with chagrin: "I knew almost nothing about splicing films, so they kept breaking during the performance. . . . When one film happened to end with the end of the music a loud cheer of relief went up from the audience. [Ralph Steiner, A Point of View (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 12-13]

in all departments, a plain mess."[77] McPhee, on the other hand, saw the works as a success--or at least he did a year after the concert when he said in a letter to Carl Van Vechten that "the music with cinema" had made a "good impression."[78]

With Mechanical Principles and H_2O McPhee seemed to have hit an impasse. Like so many young composers of his day, he had become impatient with the abstract, esoteric music of the late twenties and had tired of writing for small audiences. As they moved into the thirties, McPhee's contemporaries (such as Copland, Harris, and Thomson) would turn to American folk music for inspiration. McPhee was to go much further afield.

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[77]Steiner, p. 12. Steiner went on to say, "I knew nothing about film editing--few film makers outside of Hollywood did--but I induced Aaron Copland to help me edit."

[78]Letter postmarked Paris, 1932 (date is blurred). Beinecke Library/Yale.

CHAPTER IV

THE LURE OF BALI

At some point in the late 1920s--amidst a whirl of composing and performing--Colin McPhee heard newly released recordings of the Balinese gamelan. It was a decisive event, bringing him into contact for the first time with the music of this distant people. In the opening pages of A House in Bali, he recalled how spell-bound he had been:

> The clear, metallic sounds . . . were like the stirring of a thousand bells, delicate, confused, with a sensuous charm, a mystery that was quite overpowering. I begged to keep the records for a few days, and as I played them over and over I became more and more enchanted with the sound. Who were the musicians? I wondered. How had this music come about? Above all, how was it possible, in this late day, for such a music to have been able to survive?
>
> I returned the records, but I could not forget them. At the time I knew little about the music of the East. I still believed that an artist must keep his mind on his own immediate world. But the effect of the music was deeper than I suspected, for after I had read in the early books of Crawfurd and Raffles the quite fabulous accounts of these ancient and ceremonial orchestras, my imagination took fire, and the day came when I determined to make a trip to the East to see them for myself.[1]

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[1]Colin McPhee, A House in Bali (New York: The John Day Company, 1946; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1980), 2. The two books that he mentions are early histories of Java

McPhee said he heard these records "quite by accident." But as we follow his life during this period, the event begins to seem almost inevitable. His training and experience were thoroughly Western, yet his own sensibility, shaped by the temper of his time, prepared him to step outside of his own culture and explore another.

New York in the late 1920s, with its fast-paced social and artistic life, was riding the crest of economic prosperity. "The new--the thing of the latest moment--became almost violently desirable and important."[2] There was much that appealed to a talented young man like McPhee. He was part of the composers' community, smaller then than now, which had a distinctive vitality and feeling of cameraderie. But he was also a writer and visual artist who sought more varied alliances. It was the breadth of interests that brought him into a special group of friends in New York in the late twenties and gave him the opportunity to hear the recordings that would so affect his life. Carl Van Vechten,

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and Indonesia: John Crawfurd, History of the Indian Archipelago, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1820), and Thomas Stamford Raffles, The History of Java, 2 vols. (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817).

[2]Edward Leuders, Carl Van Vechten and the Twenties (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1955), 5.

Jane Belo, and Miguel Covarrubias were central to that group. All three were intrigued by the exotic--whether found in nearby Harlem nightclubs or far-off South Sea islands. To them, the peoples of such places were mysterious and alluring, suggestive of long-lost primitive roots.

Jane Belo provided McPhee a critical link to his social world in the late twenties. The two saw a great deal of one another during those years and were married in 1930. Their relationship had a profound effect on the direction of McPhee's career--especially on his interest in anthropology. The Bali venture was one that they embarked on together and that Jane Belo financed. Her background before meeting McPhee likely influenced their decision to do so.

Belo was the child of wealthy Texans.[3] Small (5' 3"), with blue eyes and blond hair, she is remembered by Otto Luening--who met her in February 1929 at the premiere of McPhee's Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet in Rochester--as "elegant, nervous, over-strained, sensitive." She "smoked a

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[3]Rhoda Métraux, "Jane Belo Tannenbaum" [Obituary], American Anthropologist LXX (1968), 1168-69. Other biographical information and physical characteristics are described in a one-page, undated sheet (which reads like a réaumé) and a New York driver's license issued on 21 May 1935. Both are housed in Belo's papers in the Margaret Mead Collection at the Library of Congress.

lot."[4] A student first at Bryn Mawr, later at Barnard (1923-24) and the Sorbonne (ca. 1925), her principal area of study was psychology. At Barnard, however, she became interested in anthropology through work with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict. Belo's captivation with non-Western cultures was stimulated further by post Bryn-Mawr travel to the Middle East[5] and by her first marriage in 1925 to the painter George Biddle, son of the Philadelphia Biddle family, who had lived in Tahiti from 1920 to 1922. Striking parallels exist between Biddle's Tahitian venture and the trip that McPhee and Belo made to Bali ten years later. Biddle built a house in Tahiti; he adopted a native boy (named Moerai), and in 1930 wrote a book about the house, the child, and the entire Tahitian experience.[6]

Biddle also traveled with Jane Belo after they were married--mostly in the Caribbean. Their journeys were not mere pleasure jaunts but opportunities to study other

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[4]Interview with Otto Luening, New York, 26 November 1982.

[5]The résumé mentioned above credits this journey with "arousing [her] interest in anthropology." (Mead Collection/LC)

[6]George Biddle, An American Artist's Story (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), 1939. For summaries of Biddle's life and work, see: Martha Pennigar, The Graphic Work of George Biddle with Catalogue Raisonné (Exhibition Catalogue, Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1979), 42-43; and Marcia M. Mathews, "George Biddle's Contribution to Federal Art," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 1973-74 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976), 493-520.

cultures. In 1926 they jointly published an article in Scribner's titled "Foot-Hills of Cuba: A Cross-Section of Spanish-American Civilization" with illustrations by Biddle.[7] The two did not tantalize the reader with tips on spots for succulent meals or breathtaking sunsets but recorded observations about the village's class distinctions and racial intermingling. At the close, they compared blacks in Cuba to those in Harlem, attempting to pinpoint common qualities. Their article was not based on rigorous research but was a genuinely serious, if amateur, anthropological study.

Jane probably met Colin in Paris. His friend Minna Lederman remembers him saying he first saw Jane there while he sat at a cafe table and watched her pass on the street.[8] By late spring and summer of 1928, their relationship was intensifying; Jane's letters to her husband during those months imply that Colin had been the couple's friend for some time.[9]

Early that summer, Jane was at the home she and Biddle owned in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, while Biddle was off painting in Mexico. Colin and Jane's mother were

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[7] Scribners LXXIX/10 (February 1926), 128-36.

[8] Interview with Minna Lederman, New York, 12 October 1981. (Both were in Paris in the mid-twenties.)

[9] Their correspondence from this summer is preserved in the Biddle Collection at the Library of Congress.

house guests during much of May, and Jane wrote to Biddle about meeting Carlos Chávez, "Colin's Mexican composer friend."[10] Colin was around to "play [piano] accompaniment to packing" before Jane closed the Croton house in late May and left for Rhode Island.[11] In June he followed her to Rhode Island for a short vacation and then in early July set off on his own for Woodstock. For Jane, this was a period of self-exploration: "I'm just drifting--having a beautiful time, and never think more than a week ahead. That's the essence of this scheme of mine for liberation."[12]

Jane was separated from George Biddle in the fall of 1928; she never joined him that summer in Taxco, Mexico, as had been the original plan. In a letter postmarked December 1928, Jane revealed to Biddle that she and Colin had been having an affair.[13] From the beginning she knew Colin was homosexual, yet she saw their relationship as a necessary stage in her own sexual development. Her lengthy self-analysis could only have been written by a former psychology student.

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[10]Letter from Jane Belo to George Biddle, postmarked 17[?] May 1928. Biddle Collection/LC.

[11]Letter from Jane Belo to George Biddle, postmarked 25 May 1928. Biddle Collection/LC.

[12]Letter from Jane Belo to George Biddle, postmarked 23 June 1928. Biddle Collection/LC.

[13]Letter from Jane Belo to George Biddle, postmarked December 1928 [no day given]. Biddle Collection/LC.

> My present stage of being in love with a feminine man has aspects of masculine protest and narcissm [sic] on my part. . . . [Colin and I are] two people of unlike sex and like temperament. The relationship between unlike or opposite temperament plus opposite sex is the mature one, theoretically. . . . Heaven knows what stages of change I still have to go through, and how long it will take before I can be the mature female.[14]

Colin and Jane shared many interests. Both were published poets, and both had done a good deal of painting and sketching.[15] In the summer of 1928 they spent much time drawing together.[16] Colin had been making sketches since adolescence; a group of his caricatures had been printed in The Peabody Bulletin in 1921, and he had made at least one stab at printmaking.[17] Ultimately, however, their most important link was a curiosity about the exotic, something they shared with many friends of the time.

The music critic and novelist Carl Van Vechten was chief among their social contacts. He was perhaps best

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[14]Ibid.

[15]At least one poem was published by McPhee in the twenties--"Orage," Canadian Magazine LXII (December 1923), 148--and two by Belo--"Assimilation," Forum LXXVI (July 1926), 98, and "Protest," Bookman LXIV (January 1927), 550.

[16]Jane discussed their drawings in a letter to Biddle, postmarked 1 July 1928. Biddle Collection/LC.

[17]McPhee's four caricatures from the Peabody Bulletin (XVII/2, Spring 1921) are reproduced here in Chapter 2. McPhee gave Sidney Cowell and Victor Carl a print he made in the 1920s that shows a cat peering coyly at a mouse.

known for his parties, which drew together some of the most challenging minds and eccentric personalities in New York. Almost any night of the week one could find a host of celebrities at Van Vechten's West 55th Street apartment--people like Witter Bynner, George Gershwin, Theodore Dreiser, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Somerset Maugham, Paul Robeson, Helena Rubinstein, Bessie Smith, or Ethel Waters. Most significant among those celebrities were the large numbers of blacks. Van Vechten was fascinated with Harlem and spent much time there, listening to jazz, absorbing the rhythms of the street, and cultivating friendships among black intellectuals. As a novelist, he wrote several books depicting his New York experience. Firecrackers of 1925 captures the explosive reaction of parties like his own, where personal and professional connections were made and broken in a flash.[18] And Nigger Heaven of the following year is a controversial story of the violent love affair between two Harlem blacks.[19]

Langston Hughes, in his memoir The Big Sea, recalled

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[18]Carl Van Vechten, Firecrackers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925). Background information about Van Vechten is found in Bruce Kellner, Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), and in "The Reminiscences of Carl Van Vechten" (Transcript, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1960).

[19]Carl Van Vechten, Nigger Heaven (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926).

seeing McPhee and Belo at Van Vechten's parties.[20] And several letters show that Van Vechten was interested in McPhee's music. He attended at least two performances: Abbie Mitchell's recital on 15 April 1928, with its group of McPhee songs, and the New York performance of McPhee's Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet by Georges Barrère's Little Symphony, with McPhee at the piano, on 23 March 1930.[21]

Another regular on the Van Vechten circuit was the writer Zora Neale Hurston, who had been friends with Jane since Barnard, when both were students of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict. In her autobiography Dust Tracks on a Road, Hurston recalled a dinner party that Van Vechten gave for her in the late twenties. Among the guests were Blanche Knopf, Sinclair Lewis, Ethel Waters, Anna May Wong, and "my old friend Jane Belo."[22] Hurston and Belo remained friends

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[20]Langston Hughes, The Big Sea (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940), 251-52. Hughes went on to recall a slate of memorable parties from the twenties, including "a dinner for Claire Spencer at Colin McPhee's and Jane Belo's in the village, where Claire Spencer told about a thrilling night flight over Manhattan Island in a monoplane." (p. 250). Colin and Jane were probably living in the Varèse apartment at 188 Sullivan Street in Greenwich Village. (Interview with Louise Varèse, 18 November 1981. Also, a receipt to Belo, dated 6 September 1930, from an antique firm in Liège gives 188 Sullivan Street as her address. Mead Collection/LC).

[21]Letter from Colin McPhee to Carl Van Vechten, postmarked 24 March 1930, New York. Beinecke Library/Yale.

[22]Zora Neale Hurston, Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1944), 89, 126.

at least through the early 1940s, when they recorded spirituals together in South Carolina.[23]

Jane and Colin were also in close contact with the artist Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957), who had come to New York in 1923 under a scholarship from the Mexican government and had been championed immediately by Van Vechten. Covarrubias's caricatures were published regularly in The New Yorker and Vanity Fair, and his work during the twenties showed a growing fascination with black Americans. Covarrubias designed the sets for Josephine Baker's 1925 Paris debut; he was illustrator for W. C. Handy's Blues: An Anthology (1926); and a selection of his sketches was issued by Van Vechten's publisher Alfred A. Knopf under the title Negro Drawings (1927).[24] In his introduction to the latter volume, Vanity Fair editor Frank Crowninshield credited Covarrubias with being, "the first important artist in America . . . to bestow upon our Negro anything like reverent attention."[25] But Covarrubias was not only intrigued by black culture.

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[23]The South Carolina project, which Belo financed, is described in, Robert E. Hemenway, Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 274.

[24]W. C. Handy, Blues: An Anthology, introduction by Abbé Niles (New York: A & C Boni, 1926); Miguel Covarrubias, Negro Drawings, preface by Ralph Barton, introduction by Frank Crowninshield (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

[25]Ibid, pp. 16-17.

He, too, went to Bali, one year before Colin and Jane, and he, too, wrote a book about the experience.

Covarrubias's Island of Bali from 1937 is essentially a travel narrative, yet it is filled with detailed observations about daily life and social patterns. In his introduction to the book, Covarrubias claimed, "When I sailed with [my wife] Rose [Rolanda] for the remote island, no one seemed even to have heard of the place; we had to point it out on the map, a tiny dot in the swarm of islands east of Java."[26] The Covarrubiases stayed just six months, and on the way back stopped in Paris, where Balinese dancers and musicians were "the sensation" of the Colonial Exposition.[27] There they happened across their old New York friends, Colin and Jane, who were about to embark on their first Balinese journey. As Jane remembered, "By great good luck we ran into Rose and Miguel Covarrubias on the Rue de la Paix--and they had just returned from their first six-months' stay in Bali and were bursting with enthusiasm."[28]

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Marriage to Jane Belo and friendships with Covarrubias, Van Vechten, and others reaching outside of

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[26](New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), xvii.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Jane Belo, Introduction to Traditional Balinese Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), xix.

Western traditions certainly influenced McPhee's decision to go to Bali. Yet there is an even broader context in which to view his course--that of prevailing attitudes among artists and writers of his generation. The 1920s was a restless decade for those born around 1900. Many--like McPhee--tasted their first independence in Paris, where young composers were flocking to Nadia Boulanger's studio at the same time as writers like Hemingway and Fitzgerald were making their careers.

In later years, McPhee called his trip to Bali "an escape from the vulgarity of America, . . . the sordid materialism, the competition, and all the modern virtues."[29] Writings by McPhee's contemporaries show that many others felt this restless dissatisfaction--a nostalgia for simpler days and a yen to escape the confusions of post-war, industrial life. Malcolm Cowley, in his book Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s, calls the decade "The Age of Islands."[30] He sees these islands as both real and metaphorical. To Cowley, as a member of this generation, "escape" was the byword of the period. He writes:

> [It was] an age when Americans by thousands and tens of thousands were scheming to take the next boat for the

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[29]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 25 August [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[30](New York: The Viking Press, 1934, 1951).

> South Seas or the West Indies. . . . Or without leaving home they could build themselves private islands of art or philosophy; . . . they could create social islands in the shadows of the skyscrapers, groups of close friends among whom they could live as unconstrainedly as in a Polynesian valley, live without moral scruples or modern conveniences, live in the pure moment, live gaily on gin and love and two lamb chops broiled over a coal fire in the grate.[31]

Years later, McPhee used strikingly similar language in describing his ideal existence. He spoke of the world "outside of the United States" as "a beautiful place, filled with mystery and unexpected loveliness." He went on: "I once said all I asked of life was . . . the sociability of the village, a hut, and some savory haunch broiling over the coals."[32]

Escape as a remedy for underlying dissatisfaction was a recurring theme in the 1920s, moving into the 1930s. The island metaphor appeared in numerous advertisements for a play titled Harlem of 1928, where a direct appeal was made to the escape urge. The means of escape did not involve purchase of an ocean-liner ticket but simply seeing the play, billed as: "Harlem! . . . The City that Never Sleeps! . . . A Strange Exotic Island in the Heart of New York!"[33]

Many sounded the same theme. Morley Callaghan, the

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[31]Ibid, 235.

[32]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "July 19" [1946/47]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[33]This playbill is in the Theatre Collection at NYPL.

novelist and Toronto contemporary of McPhee, whose memoir of his year in Paris (1929) has already been cited, recalled his motivation for traveling there:

> Could the dream I had had for years of being in Paris [have] been only a fantasy? A place to fly to, a place that could give me some satisfactory view of myself? . . . . And indeed it was my conviction now that for most men there had to be some kind of another more satisfactory world. . . . The saints, tormented by the anguish of the flesh, wanted to reject the human condition, the world they lived in. But whether saints or cafe friends there in Paris, weren't they all involved in a flight from the pain of life--a pain they would feel more acutely at home?[34]

Another writer, Nathanael West, centered his novel Miss Lonelyhearts (1933) around a downcast anti-hero who writes a personal help column for a New York newspaper. Overcome by the despair around him, Miss Lonelyhearts (who is a man) becomes ill and is counseled by his editor to "flee to the soil or Hedonism or art or suicide or drugs or . . . the South Seas."[35] And Waldo Frank, in his Rediscovery of America of 1929, also found faraway lands more appealing than home:

> There is more famine in the Sahara, but more comfort. There is more misery in Poland, in Egypt, and more comfort. All western Europe, despite primitive farms, decadent towns, and the growing gnaw of

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[34]That Summer in Paris: Memories of Tangled Friendships with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and some Others (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963), 229.

[35]In The Collected Works of Nathanael West (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 247.

dynastic discord, is vastly superior in common comfort to our comfort-worshipping Republic.[36]

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Within his musical work of the late twenties, McPhee also began taking steps toward Bali. In 1928, he turned to folk music for the first time when he wrote accompaniments to sea shanties. As has already been discussed, he took great care in preserving their integrity. Then in 1930 or '31 he became involved in a rather elusive organization called the "New York Polyhymnia" which had an exotic purpose: "to foster international exchange of unknown musical cultures and of unknown works, old and new."[37] The Polyhymnia presented concerts in Berlin, Vienna, and Milan before it gave its first--and probably only--New York program in April 1931. McPhee was on the "Technical and Advisory Board"; Ruth St. Denis, the dancer so steeped in re-interpreting the mysteries of Eastern cultures, was choreographer for the New York concert, and Lazare Saminsky was the "Founder and Executive Director."[38]

Little is known about the Polyhymnia's activities. For Saminsky, an ardent collector of Jewish folksong, it

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[36](New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), 110.

[37]"New York Polyhymnia Opening Program on April 12," Musical Courier (12 March 1931).

[38]Among the Saminsky letters at the Library of Congress is one written 19 November 1931 on Polyhymnia letterhead.

seemed to give a base of operation for a time. Saminsky was a proselytizer for a union of the musics of East and West, and in his book Music of Our Day of 1932, predicted "an all-embracing synthesis, aesthetic and racial" that would yield a "new tonal language."[39] His language was extravagant:

> Marvelous are those flare-ups of a renaissance appearing from an Eastern racial direction just in this era of marasmus and death, in an age of visible petrification in Western European music! . . . This new and triumphant cortège of the musical East, augurates a real return to our common racial spring, heralds a reunion of the musical creeds, a tonal merging of the Orient and the Occident.[40]

Another of McPhee's musical comrades was Henry Cowell, whose fascination with non-Western musics stretched back to childhood. Cowell claimed to have heard Japanese shaku hachi music before he knew Brahms and beginning in the late twenties taught a course at the New School for Social Research titled "Music of the World's Peoples." Both he and McPhee were active together in the Pan American Association, and Cowell's New Music published McPhee's Kinesis, Invention, and Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet.

In the midst of these activities and alliances, McPhee heard the Balinese gamelan recordings that were to

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[39]Lazare Saminsky, Music of our Day: Essentials and Prophecies (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1932), 81-83.

[40]Ibid.

have such a profound impact on his career. The records had been produced in 1928 when Odéon and Beka, two German sister companies, sent technicians to Bali to record 98 sides with the aid of Walter Spies, a German then living on the island. Five of those sides were made commercially available in the West in 1931, when Erich von Hornbostel issued them as part of an Odéon set called Musik des Orients.[41] However, the entire group of Balinese discs was pressed in 1928 for an Indonesian market. McPhee was lucky enough to hear some of the pre-Hornbostel releases because two of his friends, Claire Holt and Gela Archipenko, brought them to New York when they returned from a trip to Indonesia, probably in 1929.[42]

McPhee's musical sensibility of the late twenties was perfectly attuned to the gamelan. He loved overlayered textures, irregular ostinatos, and shifting rhythmic

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[41]The history of these recordings is given in Andrew Toth's Recordings of the Traditional Music of Bali and Lombok (n.p.: Society for Ethnomusicology, 1980), 16-17.

[42]Jane Belo, Introduction to Traditional Balinese Culture, p. xvii. Sidney Cowell remembers McPhee saying he heard the recordings through Eric Clarke. (Interview with Sidney Cowell, Shady, New York, 10 October 1981.) In the late twenties, while director of the Eastman Theater in Rochester, Clarke began assembling a collection of records that was later distributed in colleges by the Carnegie Foundation. (Interview with Otto Luening.) McPhee himself later recalled that he first heard of Indonesian music as a student in Toronto, when Leopold Godowsky (a friend of McPhee's teacher Arthur Friedheim) returned from Java. (Interview following a Composers' Forum concert in 1954 at Columbia University. Tape at Princeton Electronic Music Center Library.)

patterns--characteristics from which gamelan music derives its very essence. Years later he looked back over his musical progress and recalled his search, from childhood on, for a special kind of sound.[43] At 12 he had written a piece for children's percussion band with a few strings and other instruments in which two plates were dropped and smashed. He was unhappy with the result but says he was thinking of "frail china splintered on marble." Ten years later he composed a concerto for the Toronto Symphony and again sought this elusive timbre. In the Scherzo he directed one percussionist to shake Chinese glass wind-chimes--the kind one hangs on the veranda in the summer. But the conductor would not allow it. McPhee continued his pursuit, however: "I had in mind some idea of crystal sound, something aerial and purely sensuous. It is strange that another 10 years should find me in Java and Bali where music sounded exactly like that."

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[43]Letter, CM to Dr. William Mayer, [Summer 1942]. Collection of Mrs. Beata Sauerlander. The quotations in this paragraph are all drawn from this letter.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST TRIPS TO BALI (1931-1934)

The story of Colin McPhee's years in Bali begins with his marriage to Jane Belo on 6 June 1930.[1] He and Jane undertook the Bali venture together and stayed together during most of it. Immediately after their marriage, they took a honeymoon trip to Italy, traveling from Naples to Venice. From there they went to the south of France and rented "a charming little house" in Cassis sur Mer, between Toulon and Marseilles, on the Mediterranean coast.[2] Colin wrote ebulliently to Carl Van Vechten in late June, "With my usual luck I happened upon [the house], and we were installed with a piano and Citroën only eight hours after seeing the place." They were back in New York for the winter of 1930-31 and stayed at least through 11 April, when Colin performed his Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet

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[1]"Connecticut State Department of Health, Marriage License. Stamford. 6 May 1930. (Department of Vital Statistics, State of Connecticut.)

[2]While on his honeymoon, McPhee wrote to Carl Van Vechten: "Our second month of matrimony is going smoothly and charmingly." (30 June 1930. Beinecke Library/Yale.) The remaining quotations in this paragraph are culled from the same letter.

with Nicolas Slonimsky conducting.

In late spring or early summer of 1931 Colin and Jane sailed for Bali via Paris, where the Colonial Exposition was in full swing. Exact dates of the various stages in their travels to and from Bali are not always known. A few of McPhee's letters from the period remain, but they are most often undated. In McPhee's principal account of those years--A House in Bali--he wove his experiences into an exotic tale, shrouded in mystery and wonder.[3] Dates appear only occasionally, and there are never enough to weigh down the forward motion of the prose.

In Paris, Colin and Jane ran into friends newly returned from Bali--Rose and Miguel Covarrubias--and heard a first-hand account of life on the island. They also received from them letters of introduction to two Europeans living there: Walter Spies, a German painter and musician, and Bobby Bruyns, a Dutch travel agent.[4] Most likely Colin heard the Balinese gamelan that was performing in the Dutch pavilion at the Exposition; this was the first performance in the West by a Balinese group. At least two of McPhee's future Balinese musical friends were part of the ensemble:

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[3]Colin McPhee, A House in Bali (New York: The John Day Company, 1946; reprint, New York: AMS Press, [1980]). Hereinafter, this book will be referred to as "House."

[4]Jane Belo, Introduction to Traditional Balinese Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), xix. Hereinafter referred to as: "Belo, TBC."

I Madé Lebah and Anak Agung Gedé Mandera, both from the village of Peliatan.[5]

Colin and Jane continued their journey to Bali through Marseilles on one of the Dutch Rotterdam Lloyd Royal Mail Liners.[6] From Marseilles it was a twenty-day trip to the East Indies; ships usually sailed on Fridays around 1:00 p.m. The ship went along the western coast of Italy, through the Straits of Messina and then across to Crete. It sailed through the Suez Canal, across the Red Sea, and on to the Indian Ocean for "four or five real 'sea days' [with] nothing to be seen save the silent beauty of the sea and, at night, the beautiful tropical sky with the bright stars."[7] The ship stopped in Ceylon and Sumatra, and then went on to Batavia, Java (now Jakarta), billed by the company as

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[5]Belo recalls going to the Paris Exposition. Ibid. Both Mandera and Lebah talked about the Exposition in interviews with me. Mandera has a photograph of the Balinese who performed there, and Lebah recalls with horror a big explosion and fire in the Dutch pavilion. (Interview with Anak Agung Gedé Mandera, Peliatan, Bali, 11 April 1984; Interview with I Madé Lebah, Peliatan, Bali, 9 April 1984).

[6]A promotional pamplet, Rotterdam Lloyd Royal Mail Line, (Rotterdam: N.V. Rotterdamsche Lloyd, 1932), is included among McPhee's papers at UCLA. Much of the description of the trip given here is taken from that pamphlet. Colin and Jane also traveled with this company on their trip back to Bali in 1932; a letter from Colin to Carl Van Vechten was mailed from the "Rotterdamsche Lloyd" on 17 May 1932 (Beinecke Library/Yale). It seems that they did so in 1931, too, because Jane talks about taking a "Dutch liner." (Belo, TBC, p. xix.)

[7]Rotterdam Lloyd, p. 20.

"the starting point of [a] trip through earthly Paradise."[8]

Colin and Jane spent at least part of the trip learning Malay, then the lingua franca of the East Indies, while enjoying the comforts of the ship.[9] Margaret Mead, writing home to friends during her own voyage to Bali five years later, gave some sense of the accomodations:

> It is a trim, quiet little ship with a sort of furry, warm precision about it which is Dutch. There is discipline, but it is not too intense; there are very good meals and a French menu and a white steward who, himself as thin as a maypole, hovers solicitously in the background and tries to make the officers fat.[10]

The final leg of the journey was between Surabaya, Java, and Buleleng, the north port of Bali. The ship left Surabaya in late afternoon and arrived in Bali the next morning. Both Colin and Jane remembered those early morning approaches to the island as breathtaking: "We never found anything as lovely as our beautiful Bali, and,

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[8]Ibid, p. 26.

[9]House, p. 8. Malay has formed the basis for the language currently spoken throughout Indonesia--Bahasa Indonesia. The formal adoption of Bahasa Indonesia took place in 1928, but its process of evolution and adoption was slow. See Anthony H. Johns, "Genesis of a Modern Literature," in Indonesia, ed. Ruth T. McVey, rev. 2nd printing (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1967), 413-414.

[10]Margaret Mead, Letter written 2 February 1936, published in Letters from the Field: 1925-1975, Volume 52 of World Perspectives, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 156. Hereinafter, this book will be referred to as "Mead, Letters." In this volume, Mead does not tell whom the letters were addressed to.

as we returned, we always stood on the deck at sunrise, just as the ship which bore us was coming into port."[11]

The Bali where Colin and Jane arrived in 1931 was at a turning point in its history. A small island of some 2,900 square miles, it was densely populated with 600 people to the square mile (with a total population of approximately 1,000,000)[12] It had been independent and largely isolated until 1906, when the Dutch moved in. From then on, increasingly large numbers of Western tourists had arrived, and, like Tahiti, Bali had become a metaphor for "paradise"--a luscious, tropical retreat complete with bare-breasted women. Under the Dutch, the Balinese royalty was deposed, and a process of cultural jostling began. When McPhee arrived in 1931, vestiges of the old civilization remained.

> Bali was a medieval, agricultural society that had changed little in spite of closer contacts with the outer world. Houses were still built from surrounding trees and grass, land cultivated and law administered in ways that had long since proven sound and practical. The Dutch had made roads, schools and

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[11]Belo, TBC, p. xxi. Colin also wrote of this first glimpse of the island from the ship's deck: "As the sun rose the mountains grew streaked with descending ridges and shadows, and along the foothills the palms glistened in the early humid light. But with the day the mountains flattened once more into cones and within an hour, as we landed, the sun was throwing light and heat in all directions." (House, pp. 2-3). Miguel Covarrubias also wrote of "our first unforgettable glimpse of Bali at dawn." (Island of Bali (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), p. xviii.

[12]Much of this background is found in Belo, TBC, pp. xi-xii.

> hospitals, ruled firmly but discreetly, with a regard and even admiration for native law. A Balinese version of Hindu religion was still the force that held the people together and dominated every activity.[13]

As soon as Colin and Jane reached Bali in 1931, they headed for the city of Den Pasar, located on the south coast of the island, directly opposite the port of Buleleng. Although they stayed at the Bali Hotel, the usual haunt for Westerners, they kept a distance from the average tourists. The hotel offered daily itineraries for guests who wanted to cram visits to the sites of Bali into a few days. But Colin avoided such common junkets:

> I preferred to drive at random through the island, getting lost in the network of back roads that ran up into the hills where, as you looked down towards the sea, the flooded ricefields lay shining in the sunlight like a broken mirror.[14]

He was mesmerized by "the sound of music . . . forever in the air."[15] As the days passed, the seductive appeal of the music increased, and Colin gradually realized he could not leave.[16] He and Jane broke out of the hotel's stuffy European environment and rented a small house in the village of Kedaton, just north of Den Pasar. The house was immediately outfitted with servants, and the couple settled

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[13]Colin McPhee, "The Green Earth Scorched," Modern Music XIX/3 (March-April 1942), 163.

[14]House, p. 10.

[15]Ibid.

[16]House, p. 14ff.

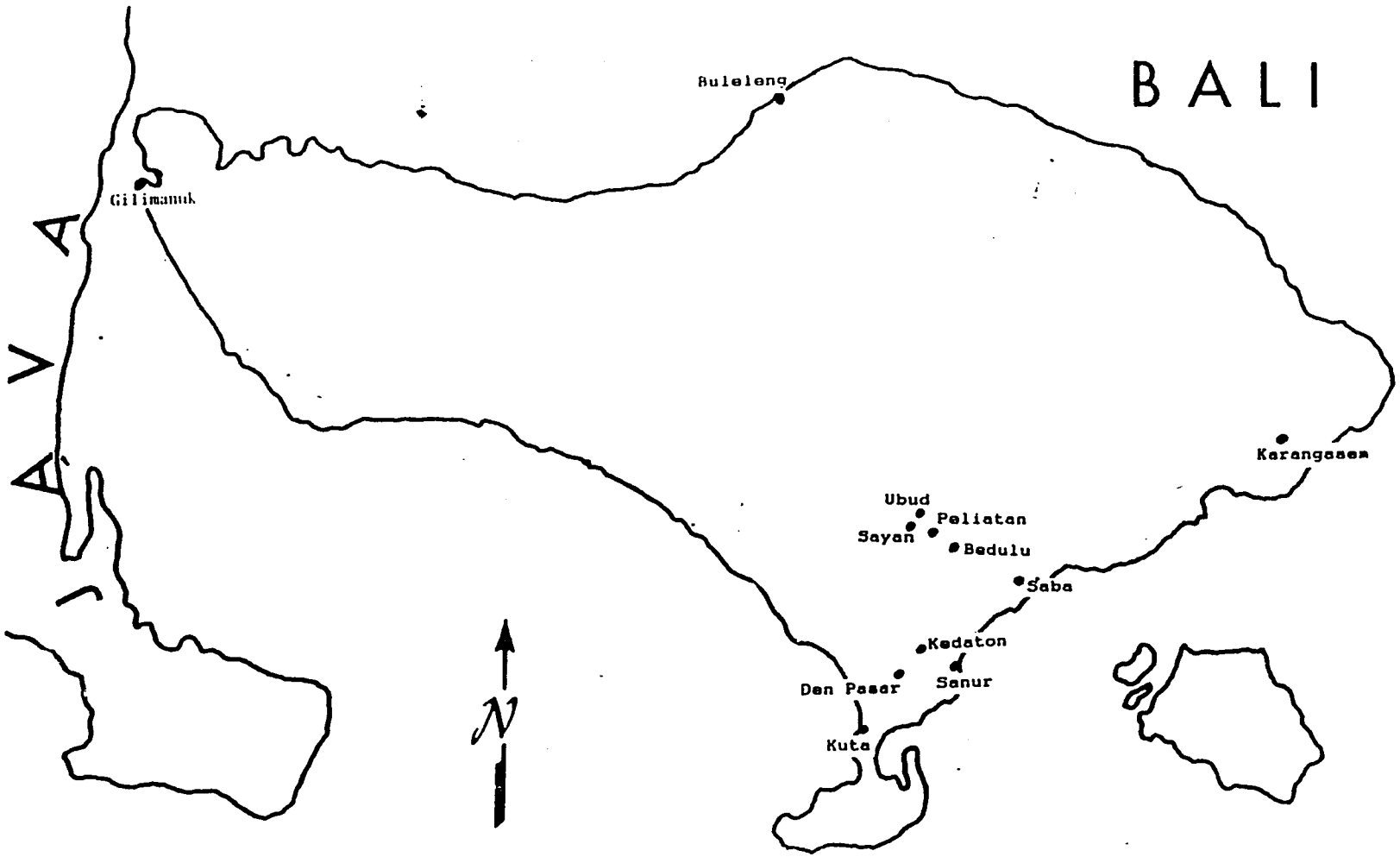


Figure 2. Map of Bali.

into an unharried tropical existence.

This first house was "small and square, with a roof of corrugated tin and walls covered inside and out with damp white plaster."[17] It had four rooms, a cement floor, and in traditional Balinese style a separate building for the kitchen and bath. The house was lighted with coconut-oil lamps, and servants brought water up from the springs.[18]

> The doors creaked; the rooms were musty; the place had been shut a year. But from the deep veranda in front you looked out through the palms over gleaming ricefields and caught a glimpse of the sea beyond.[19]

Suddenly, in January 1932, Colin and Jane sailed back to Paris.[20] Their six-month visitors' permit had expired, and, as Colin described it, they had completely lost track of time. If they had wanted to stay, they would have had to take up resident status, and they were not yet ready for such a step.[21]

In Paris they rented "a small apartment" at 35, Rue de Fleurus.[22] The transition back to Western life was hard.

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[17]House, p. 15.

[18]Belo, TBC, p. xv.

[19]House, p. 15.

[20]Walter Spies wrote to Jane from Bali on 7 January 1932. She was in India, en route to Paris. Mead Collection/LC.

[21]House, p. 71.

[22]House, p. 78.

McPhee felt a tension in the air around him, partly because of the political uncertainty after Hitler's recent election, but also because of the contrast of his European existence to his idyllic stay in Bali. That spring he wrote to Carl Van Vechten in New York:

> Life seems cold, sad and dreary after the charms of Bali. We had a marvelous time there, and are thinking seriously of returning in June to stay indefinitely. The world is a horrible place at present, and I feel quite out of it.[23]

During these months, McPhee was disenchanted with Western music. He found himself "restless" at concerts, and claimed that "the programs of new music that I once delighted in now seem dull and intellectual."[24] He yearned for the magic of the "sunny music" of Bali. So, consumed with a need to uncover the secrets of this musical culture, he and Jane returned to Bali in May 1932.[25] For him, the attraction of Balinese music was overwhelming. It was sensual, it satisfied his yen for hearing vibrant rhythms and bright timbres, and it brought him in touch with the primitive. "Such music appealed strongly to my imagination, rich as it was in the implications of a time

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[23]Letter, McPhee to Carl Van Vechten, written from 35, Rue de Fleurus, Paris, dated 4 . . . 1932 [postmark is blurred]. Beinecke Library/Yale.

[24]House, p. 78.

[25]McPhee wrote to Carl Van Vechten on the Rotterdamsche Lloyd, headed back for Bali, in a letter postmarked 17 May 1932. Beinecke Library/Yale.

when the world was young and men had simple needs."[26]

Building the House

In May 1932, on board the Rotterdamsche Lloyd, headed for Bali from Marseilles, Colin calmly announced his future plans to Carl Van Vechten: "Well, we are on the way back to Bali. . . . We shall build a house there, in the Balinese style, and live quietly and happily."[27]

Immediately after arriving, Colin and Jane began looking for property. The Anak Agung of Saba--an old friend who lived in a village on the southeast coast of the island--tried to convince them to live near him. Nyoman Kalér, a musician friend, hoped they would settle once again in Kedaton. But Colin had other ideas. He searched for a spot up in the hills, where it was cooler, quieter, and more conducive to work.[28] The site he found was all that and more. It was on the outskirts of Sayan, a small village not far from Ubud, which lay on a mountain ridge. The property overlooked a deep ravine, at the bottom of which rushed a broad stream. Terraced rice fields lined the other side, and the mountains of Tabanan were visible in the distance. The view was stunning.

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[26]Colin McPhee, "Musical Exploration in Bali," Musical America (10 February 1940).

[27]Letter to Van Vechten, 17 May 1932.

[28]House, p. 80.

In choosing a village like Sayan, Colin and Jane reconciled themselves to a life that would hew to Balinese customs. Sayan was small and a bit off the beaten track; it was quiet and conservative, "a peasant village, not very old but running according to old Balinese law."[29] There were no shops, only "a small market every two days."[30] Few there spoke Malay, so the McPhees had to start learning the Balinese language, a complex one with three variants--high, middle, and low.[31] When Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson arrived in 1936, they decided to live in an even more remote village--the mountain town of Bayung Gedé. Mead found the people there "sulky and frightened" and the culture "simple and inarticulate."[32] Yet she realized that

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[29]House, p. 81.

[30]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, postmark, Hong Kong, 17 May 1933. Beinecke Library/Yale.

[31]Margaret Mead described Balinese as "intricate to learn":

> Endless small conventions . . . governed the speech of people of different rank and caste in Bali. We had to learn to deal with seventeen levels of vocabulary. . . . And words were extraordinarily specific. If you showed a Balinese a loaf of bread and asked him to slice it but used another verb instead of the one that meant to cut in even slices the thickness of which was less than their length and breadth, he would look at you with an abolutely blank expression.

(Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 230. Hereinafter this is referred to as "Mead, Blackberry."

[32]Mead, Letter, 1 September 1937 (Letters, p. 211).

the simplicity of the mountain people forced them to acquire a better knowledge of Balinese and that its cooler climate brought "health instead of languor."

The house in Sayan was built in Balinese style of bamboo with a thatched roof. According to an undated inventory of the property, there were at least four buildings: a "large house" with veranda, dining alcove, studio, and balcony; a "bedroom house" with two verandas and two bedrooms; a bath house; and a "kitchen house."[33] There was also a separate garage. Teak, durian, nutmeg, coconut, and "several other untranslatable woods" went into the structure.[34] All the materials were from Bali, except the floors, which were of polished Borneo cement.[35] McPhee's chauffeur and musical informant, I Madé Lebah, remembers the main building as being simple, with no sculpture or paintings. It had exceptionally high ceilings, beautifully carved rafters, and many Balinese textiles.[36] Its design accomodated McPhee's work:

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[33]"Inventory McPhee House, Sajan," [4 pp. typescript]. Mead Collection/LC. Most likely this inventory was prepared by Jane just before she left Bali in June 1939.

[34]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, postmarked 17 May 1933, Hong Kong. Beinecke Library/Yale. In a letter to his mother, Walter Spies said the house also had a horse stable and dog house. (Letter, 4 October 1932). Published in Hans Rhodius, ed., Schönheit und Reichtum des Lebens Walter Spies: Maler und Musiker auf Bali 1895-1942 (Den Haag: L.J.C. Boucher, n.d., p. 308.)

[35]House, p. 85.

[36]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

> It had been built in the style of a theater pavilion, and the long veranda was large enough to hold both gamelan and dancers. A wide lower step ran around the entire pavilion where an audience might sit and look on. . . . At one end of the pavilion, where the curtains that concealed the actors might have hung, I had closed off a room for my piano and books. Above was a little balcony which overlooked the veranda. Here I wrote. The pavilion stood at the very edge of the cliff, and as I looked out from the balcony through the break in the sloping roof, out and down over the ravine and curving river, it was like looking out from a plane.[37]

Colin was a talented cook and had two kitchens built on the property. One was fully outfitted for preparing an array of international cuisines; the other was "purely Balinese."

> It was a simple thatched pavilion with neat mud walls on three sides, wide open on the fourth. The stove was built of hardened clay, in which only the dried ribs and fronds of the coconut palms around the house were burned. I insisted that all utensils be Balinese; an array of earthen pots stood in a line for stewing, steaming rice, etc. The strainers and sieves were of bamboo; the coconut grated [sic] of prickly ratan. Ladles and spoons were made from coconut shell; there was a low bamboo bench for a table, on which the cook sat while she prepared her spices. A couple of thick cross sections of giant tree trunk served as chopping blocks. There was a stone mortar and pestle, a thick earthen plate for grinding spices, and several large shallow Chinese pans for frying. With this simple equipment, like a show case in a natural history museum, she turned out elaborate, and delicious Balinese food--hashes, steamed things, formeats [sic] and dumplings, grills,

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[37] House, pp. 118-19.

curries and meats fried crisp in fresh coconut oil.[38]

Sketches for some of these buildings exist--all in the hand of Walter Spies, who was living in Ubud.[39] According to Spies, he, Colin, and Jane drew up the plans together.[40] McPhee described walking around the property with his friend to "discuss the best position for the house."[41] Spies had come to Java from Germany in August 1923.[42] He worked first as a pianist in a Chinese movie theater in Bandung and then began giving piano lessons to Russians living in Java. From there he went to Jogjakarta, where he became Master of the Sultan's Music for a Javanese prince. In 1927, after a few brief excursions to Bali, he decided to move there and settled in Ubud in the palace of the Sukawatis. By early 1928 the Sukawati family gave him land and materials to build a house at Campuan, on the outskirts of Ubud, northeast of

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[38]McPhee, undated field notes. UCLA.

[39]These sketches are at UCLA.

[40]"Ihr Haus wird wunderschön, wir haben all die Plane zusammen entworfen." (Schönheit und Reichtum, p. 308.) Jane, in a tribute to Spies, says, "Walter helped very considerably in drawing the plans for the house and in finding us skilled workmen, beautiful wood carvers and workers in bamboo." ("An Appreciation of the Artist Walter Spies," Schönheit und Reichtum, p. 317.)

[41]House, 85.

[42]See: Hans Rhodius and John Darling, Walter Spies and Balinese Art, ed. John Stowell (Zutphen: Terra Publishing, 1980).

Den Pasar. Spies's house, like McPhee's, was in native style.[43]

Colin and Jane rented Spies's house while their own was being built. Spies stayed in another building on the property. Writing to his mother in October 1932, Spies described his days with the McPhees as lots of fun:

> Wir leben sehr ruhig und fröhlich beineinander, McPhees und ich. Er hat sich einen Steinwayflügel gekauft, und so spielen wir viel auf zwei Klavieren. Vielleicht, doch sehr unwahrscheinlich, werden wir eine kleine concerttournee durch Java machen! . . . Wir haben viel Spass beim Haushalt.[44]

Spies went on to call McPhee an "unwahrscheinlich guter Koch."

Adapting to Life in Bali

Despite its Balinese style, the McPhee house stood out in a simple village like Sayan. Not only were there exceptional details in the buildings, but their inhabitants were Westerners. Colin was aware that their presence could be disruptive, and difficulties did arise. While he was still planning the house, there was a problem in negotiating a lease of the land, a matter that eventually

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[43]It still stands and is a tourist resort today.

[44](Letter, Walter Spies to his mother, 4 October 1932, in Schönheit und Reichtum, p. 308.)

was resolved.[45] Then, as soon as they moved in, the villagers barricaded the house because it was next to the graveyard (a most sacred spot); later demons appeared (also because of the graveyard).[46] A neighbor arrived one day to survey the McPhee house and pronounced it a "palace." McPhee, who had wanted to slip unobtrusively into the community, was hurt by this remark. Yet he took some comfort in knowing that the Balinese princes who lived in real palaces were not haughty at all but worked side-by-side with the villagers in the most common of menial tasks.[47]

There were aspects of the McPhees' life that might have made it seem palatial to the Balinese. Like other

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[45]House, pp. 83-84. Foreigners could not purchase land in Bali, so Colin and Jane leased the property. Jane was the legal owner of the house; most likely, she provided all the capital for the project. Two documents prepared on 15 June 1939 declare that the house and property in Sayan belong to Jane Belo. Both documents were drawn up so that Godfried Abraham Schotel would manage the property while Jane was in the United States. (Mead Collection/LC). Another sheet among Belo's papers in the Mead Collection is in longhand: "Contract dated, 12/7/32, signed by Jacobs Controlleur, I Njaadet, Colin McPhee, good till July 12, 1942, given to Mr. Schotel c/o Afscheep & Commissiezaak, Den Pasar." In House, McPhee mentions that they leased the land for 10 years (p. 83).

[46]House, pp. 92-93. Other Westerners on the island had similar problems. Margaret Mead, for example, walked through her village's cemetery on one of her first days there only to find out that it was taboo for a woman to do so; the village assessed a fine against her. [Mead, letter, 21 June 1936 (Letters pp. 164-65).]

[47]House, pp. 96-97.

Westerners living there during the thirties, they had a large retinue of servants. In 1933, Colin wrote to Carl Van Vechten, proudly describing his tropical establishment: "How I wish you could see [the house] . . . Twelve servants--all beautiful and naked to the waist."[48] Ni Murni, an Ubud woman whose mother worked for McPhee, remembers there were six servants in the McPhee kitchen alone: several to carry water up from the river (a big job with such a large household), one to wash clothes, others to cook.[49] Colin names several servants in A House in Bali. Rantun was special among the cooks,[50] and there was a stream of houseboys and chauffeurs: Kesyur, Durus, Pugig, and I Madé Lebah. Lebah was the most important of them all: he was not only the chauffeur, but McPhee's principal musical informant. He remembers being treated well by McPhee; they had good times together. The pay was generous, and McPhee had great compassion towards him: "If I was sick, he would cry and go look for a doctor for me."[51]

Jane was accustomed to this grand life. Her family was wealthy (owners for a time of the Dallas News), and

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[48]Letter, CM to Van Vechten, postmark Hong Kong, 17 May 1933. Beinecke Library/Yale.

[49]Interview with Ni Murni, Ubud, Bali, 14 April 1984.

[50]A photograph of Rantun by McPhee is reproduced in House.

[51]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

servants were an accepted part of daily existence.[52] Yet Jane was not considered haughty or ostentatious by friends. Jane's friend Zora Neale Hurston, writing to her in 1939, gently chided her for being so sheepish about her money, and Rhoda Métraux, an associate of Margaret Mead who also worked with Jane, called her "modest and generous."[53]

Despite the McPhees' large household establishment, life in Bali was rugged in a number of ways. There was no plumbing or electricity and few shops or cars; travel to the West involved a twenty-day trip by ship; and access to the materials needed for research was difficult--books and paper were at a premium, even newspapers arrived two months late.[54] Mail was not delivered to their door but to

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[52]Among Belo's papers is an unsigned sheet of biographical notes (Mead Collection--LC). Minna Lederman, a longtime friend of both Colin and Jane, remembers them when they were back in New York in the mid-thirties, living in an apartment kept by Jane's mother in Gramercy Park: "Colin [gave a dinner that] took two or three days of preparation using the household staff of Mrs. Belo, which was large at the time." (Interview with Minna Lederman, New York City, 12 October 1981.)

[53]Letter, Zora Neale Hurston to Jane Belo, (3 December 1938; Mead Collection/LC). Jane financed some of Huraton's field work in the south. [See Robert E. Hemenway, Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 274.] Rhoda Métraux, "Jane Belo Tannenbaum," American Anthropologist LXX (1968), 1169.

[54]In Blackberry Winter (p. 236), Mead talks about the time lag in receiving newspapers.

the Bali Hotel in Den Pasar.[55] Added to this was the isolation of working in a foreign culture, not just for several weeks or months but for six years (with only a few breaks).

Other Westerners on Bali lived similarly. When Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson arrived in 1936, they also hired help for research and household tasks. "When we came home at midnight, dinner would be waiting, hot and delicious."[56] Both had years of field work in primitive cultures behind them--Mead in Samoa and New Guinea and Bateson in New Guinea. Mead saw Bali as a "paradise" for the anthropologist. Ceremonies, both in their village and in nearby ones, were easily accessible for daily observation, and "informants, scribes, secretaries were ready to be trained for the asking."[57] But in a letter written from Bali in 1937, Mead revealed how taxing field work could be, even in circumstances as optimal as those in Bali:

> One realizes what a strain conscientious anthropological research in a native village of 500 people is--people whose every word, grunt, scratch, stomach-ache, change of wearing apparel, snatch of

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[55]Colin directed all of his correspondents to send mail to the Bali Hotel.

[56]Blackberry Winter, p. 230.

[57]Ibid.

> song sung on the road or jest flung over someone else's wall is relevant.[58]

McPhee seems to have combined a pleasant existence with a determination to document the musical culture around him. Although he had no formal training in field work or in any aspect of scholarship, he fell into anthropological research with natural ease. The secure comforts of a gentleman scholar gave a firm foundation to his work. In the 1933 letter to Carl Van Vechten already cited, he describes life in Bali as "lazy and unproductive. I leisurely collect Balinese music and make notes for a book, and the rest of the time plant trees and flowers, or ride the horse."[59] Yet the quantity of his transcriptions and the quality of his writing on Balinese music show that the pace, if "leisurely," was none the less dogged. In later years, Margaret Mead told Sidney Cowell that "Colin worked hard in Bali," and I Madé Lebah, who was by McPhee's side for so much of the Bali stay, describes a rigorous schedule in the Sayan house.[60] Most days, Colin practiced piano for several hours in the morning, and then he and Lebah settled down to a long session of transcription. McPhee's tone in describing his

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[58]Mead, letter, 1 July 1937 (Letters, p. 200).

[59]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, postmarked Hong Kong, 17 May 1933.

[60]Interview with Sidney Cowell, Shady New York, 10 October 1981. Interview with I Madé Lebah.

daily life to Van Vechten is much like the one he would later use in A House in Bali--that of fantasy. Unlike Margaret Mead, he did not succinctly describe his work in practical terms.

Yet there is a balance between storytelling and critical appraisal in all of McPhee's writings from the Bali years. His prose is poetic yet precise, evoking the magic of Bali at the same time as giving an objective view of its details. He perceived the subtleties in Balinese temperament, for example, with its "sudden enthusiasms and quick reactions"[61] at the same time as he saw "a Buddhist gentleness of manner, a fine sense of public decorum, politeness, a control of emotion, and above all a sense of dignity and a personal pride that is both primitive and highly civilized."[62] And he captured the landscape vividly, as in this description of the jungle:

> The forest was flooded with a soft golden light that glanced off the surface of huge thick leaves, turned others transparent, and penetrated caves that lay between tense, clutching roots. Not a flower to brighten this secret world; nor a sound, except the sudden brief note of some bird that rang for a moment like a tuning-fork.[63]

Or this one of early-morning hours on the island:

> A cock began to crow. Up and down the valley the call was repeated, echoed, taken up by one voice

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[61] House, p. 214.

[62] McPhee, undated field notes. UCLA.

[63] House, p. 5.

> after another. In the garden there was the first faint glimmer of light. In the trees the dove-orchids had opened in the night, and the air was filled with fragrance. Across the valley the signal-drum of Bongkasa began its hollow toc-tic-tic-toc, and suddenly, in the sky, the clouds reflected the pink light of the sun below the horizon.[64]

McPhee was not only an observer of Balinese culture but an active member of his community who adhered closely to local customs. Lebah affirms that McPhee was liked by the people of Sayan. He took part in their temple ceremonies and was accepted as part of the community.[65] Hugo Bernatzik, a Viennese ethnologist and explorer who stopped in Bali on the way back from a field trip in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea, gives a Westerner's perspective on Colin and Jane's sympathy for the Balinese:

> Among all the whites whom I met on my travels they were the only ones who, amid the beautiful tropical scenery, did not live in barracks and had not, though their means would have permitted, built themselves houses in the loud colonial style. They had real artistic natures, whose whole endeavour was to encourage and maintain the good characteristics and disposition which the Bali people so richly possess. . . . My hosts were tireless.[66]

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[64]McPhee, undated field notes. UCLA.

[65]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

[66]Hugo Adolf Bernatzik, South Seas, translated by Vivian Ogilvie (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 157, 165. Belo describes Bernatzik briefly in TBC, p. xxi.

A Community of Anthropologists

Colin and Jane were part of an active period of anthropological research in Bali. Years later, Jane gathered together essays by Westerners who had worked there during the thirties and published them under the title Traditional Balinese Culture.[67] The volume opens with an introduction in which she discusses the work of this community.

Walter Spies was the group's acknowledged leader. He was the first to settle in Bali, where he painted local scenes in a naive, Rousseau-like style, and he also published with Beryl de Zoete a book titled Dance and Drama in Bali.[68] Spies was the person sought out immediately by any Westerner arriving on the island, and he was generous in helping others get settled. As Margaret Mead said, "Walter . . . has welcomed and entertained all the interesting people who have come here."[69] And there were a lot of "interesting people": Barbara Hutton, Charlie Chaplin, Noël Coward, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, the Baron and Baroness Von Plessen, Leopold Stokowski, as well as many scholars and writers.

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[67]Jane Belo, ed. Traditional Balinese Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

[68]Beryle de Zoete and Walter Spies, Dance and Drama in Bali, preface by Arthur Waley (London: Faber and Faber, 1938).

[69]Mead, Letter, 29 April 1936 (Letters, p. 160).

A long bibliography of writings about Bali was generated by Westerners living there in the thirties.[70] Jane remembered Gregor Kraus's Bali of 1930, a photo album about the island, as having made a strong impression on her and Colin before they set sail.[71] Kraus captured the tropical density of Bali in photos remarkable for their formal concision and effective play of light. The same year, Hickman Powell, an American newspaperman, produced a Bali adventure story, The Last Paradise, with photographs by André Roosevelt.[72] From then until the outbreak of World War II, the boom for such books was on. The Mexican painter Covarrubias and his wife Rose published Island of Bali in 1936.[73] They too had been inspired by Kraus's book to sail for Bali from New York in the spring of 1930. They stayed six months and returned again in the summer of 1933. Katharane Mershon, who built a house at Sanur Beach with her husband Jack, published Seven Plus Seven: Mysterious Life-

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[70]See the bibliography in TBC, pp. 403-407.

[71]Belo, TBC, p. xviii. Gregor Kraus and Karl With, Bali: Volk, Land, Tänze, Feste, Temple (Hagen: Folkwang Verlag, 1913). The book was also published in French and Dutch translations.

[72]Hickman Powell, The Last Paradise, illustrations by Alexander King and photographs by André Roosevelt (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930).

[73]Miguel Covarrubias, Island of Bali, photographs by Rose Covarrubias (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937). Covarrubias tells about their trips to Bali on pages xvii and xxiii.

Rituals in Bali in 1971.[74] Claire Holt, a student of dance and sculpture who worked both in Java and Bali, wrote a number of studies about Bali, the most important of which was Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change.[75] And the novelist Vicki Baum (author of Grand Hotel), who arrived in 1935 to spend time with both Spies and Mershon learning about Balinese life, published A Tale from Bali in 1937, a historical novel about the 1906 battle between the Dutch and the Balinese Raja of Bandung, in which many Balinese committed suicide rather than submit to outside rule.[76]

Among this group of Westerners, the two stars were Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson.[77] When they arrived in 1936 they joined with Belo and Mershon to study the arts in

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[74](New York: Vantage Press, 1971). Much of the research done by Westerners in Bali during the thirties did not reach print until decades later.

[75](Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

[76]Translated by Basil Creighton (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937).

[77]Mead and Bateson's principal publication from this period was: Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis (Special Publications of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. II, New York: The Academy, 1942; reprinted, 1962). With Frances Cooke Macgregor, Mead also wrote Growth and Culture: A Photographic Study of Balinese Childhood (New York: Putnam, 1951). Mead and Bateson came to Bali primarily because of the McPhees (Jane had known Margaret when she was a student a Barnard.) In 1934, while back in New York, Jane showed Margaret a collection of Balinese lamak designs ("decorative panels made of cut-out green palm leaf pinned on to a panel of yellowish young palm leaf, which were hung from the religious shrines at New Year's and at every festival time") and also a film of dancers made by McPhee. Belo, TBC, p. xxxiv.

Bali, as well as aspects of family life and temperament. Jane later said of her relationship to her colleagues: "We were not exactly a team, yet we communicated and were aware of the ongoing studies being made by each of us. There was cross-stimulation, and cooperation when it was needed."[78]

Photography played a big role in their research. A complex method was devised for rapidly shooting photographic stills of a given occasion at the same time as a moving-film record was made. Notes were taken simultaneously by several observers, both Western and Balinese.[79] Mead and Bateson shot some 25,000 stills during their Bali years; they purchased a rapid winder and bought a developing tank to handle ten rolls of film at a time. Mead saw this research method as revolutionary:

> In 1971, when the American Anthropological Association held a symposium of the newest methods of using and analyzing film and tape, Gregory's films of Balinese and Iamatul parents and children still were shown as models of what can be done with photography.[80]

The method was based on volume. By taking notes in Balinese and English and shooting photographs that were both moving and still, cross-checks could be made of various

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[78]Ibid, p. xxvii.

[79]Accounts of this collaboration can be found in Belo's introduction to TBC (p. xxv), Mead, Letters (pp. 153-55), and Mead Blackberry (p. 234).

[80]Mead, Blackberry, pp. 234-35.

observations of a given event. Often a stopwatch was used to synchronize the data. Mead, Bateson, Mershon, and Belo worked together with their Balinese secretaries, yet all was not peaceful within the group; artistic natures clashed with scientific method. According to Mead, "This brought us into some conflict with our artist-hosts, a conflict that intensified when Jane Belo . . . rebelled against what she called 'cold and analytical' procedures."[81]

Colin and Jane took many photographs for their own

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[81]Mead, Blackberry, p. 231. Mead describes the research roles assumed by each member of this group in her introduction to Jane Belo's Trance in Bali (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. v-vi. Mead says:

> [Jane] participated actively and eagerly in our experiments with new methods of recording, even though the rigor of time observations, matter-of-fact cataloguing, and firmly schooled translations seemed at first to be a way of dissecting and denaturing the beauty of the whole. But she was as convinced a scientist as she had been an artist. . . .
>
> Initially, we worked along parallel lines, [Jane] in the village of Sajan, Gregory Bateson and I in the village of Bajoeng Gedé, and our two secretaries, Made Kaler and Goesti Madé Soemeng worked in parallel as we developed the complex methods of recording necessary to cope with such a complicated culture. It soon became apparent that an appropriate division of labor would be for Jane Belo to take over the study of trance. . . . Katharane Mershon, who had lived and observed and participated in the life of the village of Sanoer, District of Intaran, out of her previous experience as a dancer, was also drawn into the project. Ketoet Moerda, the youngest of the Balinese secretaries [Mershon's adopted child] learned to touch type and record in Balinese. . . . Occasionally we all met, to record some particularly complicated trance drama, and messengers went back and forth across Bali, carrying our notes to one another.

research, even before Mead and Bateson arrived. "We invested in our first movie camera and, using a Rolleiflex and a Leica, were learning to capture the moment in the sequences of behavior."[82] Colin alone shot hundreds of photographs in Bali. A few were included in his various publications, but most have yet to see print.[83] In 1941, applying for funds for yet another field-work project (this one in South America), McPhee described his use of photography in Bali; his method was similar to that of Mead and Bateson:

> I began my work by taking motion-pictures of the different orchestra-types (together with performances), and attending as many ceremonies as possible. In these pictures stress was laid on technic of playing the different instruments, which were photographed at length. Stills were made at the same time, which were later converted into slides, thus supplementing in detail the motion-pictures.[84]

According to Jane, she and Colin learned a great deal from

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[82]Belo, TBC, p. xxi. According to Belo's account, as well as to McPhee's in House (pp. 72-73), she and Colin were busy taking photographs before they returned to the United States in 1934. Jack Mershon's photographs were used in Jane Belo's Trance in Bali; Hugo Bernatzik did the photography for his South Seas (op cit).

[83]Most of McPhee's photographs and films are at the Ethnomusicology Archive at the University of California at Los Angeles--both prints and negatives--and many contact prints are contained in the Margaret Mead Collection at the Library of Congress.

[84]Letter, CM to Carleton Sprague Smith, 3 April 1941. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

other photographers living in Bali, especially Jack Mershon and Hugo Bernatzik.[85]

From Composer to Ethnomusicologist

Colin later described how he slowly became oriented to Balinese music: "I . . . spent a considerable amount of time surveying the field and growing familiar with the musical idiom."[86] During that time of discovery, and indeed throughout his stay in Bali, Colin kept up with Western music by playing the piano and listening to the phonograph. Already during his first six months there, while living in the rented house in Kedaton, Colin was able to find a piano, "a shrill upright," which he got from another resident on the island.[87] He was eager to have a piano around, both because his fingers were feeling stiff and because he wanted to hear some of the gamelan music he had been transcribing. Then, while the Sayan house was being built in 1932, McPhee purchased a Steinway grand. It was supposed to be resistant to tropical weather but emerged a bit waterlogged from its first rainy season.[88] Colin played frequently, both at home and on board ships anchored in the Bali port, where, according

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[85]TBC, p. xxi.

[86]Letter, CM to Carleton Sprague Smith.

[87]House, p. 42.

[88]House, p. 87.

to Lebah, he would entertain visiting Westerners. Lebah remembers him mostly playing jazz.[89]

Yet despite a continued connection to Western music, composition moved to the background for McPhee during these years. While in Paris in the spring of 1932, he admitted to Carl Van Vechten:

> I've written no music since I left N.Y. So I imagine the good impression created by the music with cinema [i.e. H2O and Mechanical Principles] has quite evaporated by now. Slonimsky wanted to play it in one of the Paris Concerts, but I said no (for several reasons) and I am getting the reputation as the composer who doesn't care.[90]

In A House in Bali, McPhee described himself as arriving in Paris with one goal: to compose. But the muse stubbornly eluded him. "Weeks passed and the pages on the piano were filled with no more than scraps of themes."[91] The restlessness he had felt in New York, before coming to Bali, did not diminish.

Lebah claims McPhee did little composing after he

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[89]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

[90]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, written from 35, rue de Fleurus, Paris, postmark "4 . . . 1932." Beinecke Library/Yale. When McPhee says that "Slonimsky wanted to play it," he is referring to his Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet. Two letters exchanged between Henry Cowell and Nicolas Slonimsky clarify the matter. They had planned to include the Concerto on a Paris concert conducted by Slonimsky in February 1931. In both, the possibility of having McPhee appear as piano soloist is explored. (Letters, Henry Cowell to Nicolas Slonimsky, 14 January [1931] and 25 February [1931]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.)

[91]House, p. 78.

returned to Bali from Paris and built the house. Most likely, the excitement of encountering the music of a new culture eclipsed the urge to compose for a time--especially when the music was as intoxicating as that of Bali. Mantle Hood, a composer who also turned to ethnomusicology, believes his own experience in some ways parallels McPhee's:

> I went to Java as a composer, not an ethnomusicologist. I took a stack of score paper three-feet high and all my black pencils. I came back after two years with the same blank score paper. I couldn't write a note. And I didn't write again for ten years.[92]

McPhee's description of himself around 1934, after several years of intensive study of the gamelan, reminds one of Hood's:

> I was entirely absorbed in work. Everything seemed of greatest interest, from the detail of the 'flower parts' in a far-off village by the sea, to the bare and simple melodies of the mountain gamelans. As the days passed, I found myself thinking less and less of composing. I began a work for orchestra, but I knew I should not finish it. I wrote a few short pieces and forgot about them a week later.[93]

Yet McPhee acknowledged there was more to his waning interest in composition than simply the urge to explore. For him, composing had become an "oppressive responsibility." As the drive to write music left, he felt "free and happy,

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[92]Interview with Mantle Hood, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 10 January 1984.

[93]House, p. 171.

liberated from [something] in which I no longer believed."[94]

More and more McPhee's attention turned to study of the gamelan. Yet even though he stopped composing for a time, he never fully saw himself as a scholar but as a composer working within a brotherhood of fellow musicians, inquiring how persons like himself functioned in another culture. In Music in Bali, the scholarly culmination of his field work, McPhee began the introduction with a flat declaration of his status: "The present book is a composer's account of music in Bali."[95]

The pace of McPhee's discoveries about Balinese music is difficult to chart because most of his field notes and transcriptions are undated. He must have begun his research soon after arriving there in 1931, because when he describes his sudden realization in 1932 that his visa is about to expire, forcing him to return to Paris for a while, he calls his last two weeks on the island ones of "feverish activity." He photographed musicians and

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[94]Ibid.

[95]Colin McPhee, Music in Bali (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), xiii. McPhee gave some sense of his opinion of scholars in various comparisons that he made of two Balinese musicians: Nyoman Kalér, a performer and teacher, and I Lotring, a composer and performer. "If Nyoman Kalér was the soul of the academic, Lotring seemed to me the spirit of all that was living and creative. He was everything that Nyoman was not." (House, p. 175). In undated field notes McPhee called Kalér "pedantic." (UCLA)

instruments and took "endless moving pictures." He worked steadily with musicians making transcriptions. "When I at last gathered my pages together and locked them in my trunk I had the feeling of storing a folio of pressed flowers."[96]

A Gallery of Balinese Musicians

McPhee learned about Balinese music by working closely with musicians on the island, several of whom played prominent roles in his life there. Nyoman Kaler was the first. The two met soon after McPhee rented the house in Kedaton in 1931. Kalér was a légong dance teacher (a dance style performed by young girls) and was the leader of all three gamelans in McPhee's banjar. "He was a slight man, perhaps thirty, with intelligent eyes and a smiling, well-shaped mouth that was both sensual and sarcastic."[97] Kalér filled McPhee's ears with tales of court gamelans from by-gone days. He gave him tips on special performances to attend and introduced him to artists in the area, like Ida Bagus Anom, a scholar and dalang (puppeteer in the shadow play).[98] Through Kalér, McPhee first began to understand the music's intricacies.

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[96]House, pp. 72-73.

[97]House, p. 22.

[98]House, p. 34. McPhee spins a lovely story out of his first experience seeing a shadow play; Kalér introduced him to it, too. (House, pp. 30-34).

Several times a week, McPhee attended rehearsals of Kalér's légong club, across the road from his house:

> At first, as I listened [to the légong club] from the house, the music was simply a delicious confusion, a strangely sensuous and quite unfathomable art, mysteriously aerial, aeolian, filled with joy and radiance. Each night as the music started up I experienced the same sensation of freedom and indescribable freshness. . . . [It was] sound broken up into beautiful patterns. . . . Already I began to have a feeling of form and elaborate architecture.[99]

Kalér began teaching the gamelan instruments to McPhee. He brought over a gendér from an angklung ensemble, later a drum, then a gangsa. "Soon the house was filled with gongs, drums, cymbals and flutes, looking like a museum in disorder."[100] Together they began the painstaking process of transcribing. Kalér would play a melody on the gendér; McPhee would write it down in Western notation and play it back on the piano. Kalér would suggest corrections. "Nyoman had all the patience in the world. We would work for an hour or so each morning or late afternoon, to relax afterwards by driving down to the sea with Kesyur and Chetig or Tantra [house boys] for a swim."[101] McPhee sketched Kalér's character on several

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[99]House, p. 37.

[100]House, pp. 41-42.

[101]House, p. 69.

occasions. More than once he called him "pedantic,"[102] and within the pages of A House in Bali, a jealous man gradually emerges. Once McPhee innocently asked about the gamelan in a neighboring banjar, which turned out to be a rival to Kalér's own group. As Kalér answered McPhee's question, "His voice was suddenly thin. . . . He sat for awhile, preoccupied and no longer communicative, and soon he rose and took a ceremonious departure."[103]

Kalér withdrew similarly when McPhee enthusiastically asked to meet I Lotring, a composer from Kuta village on the southwest coast of the island. Lotring was a man McPhee had wanted to meet for some time. He had first heard Lotring's music in the twenties, as played by his légong gamelan on the Odéon recordings.[104] Lotring's gamelan had been famous then, but in 1929 internal tensions forced it to disband and store the instruments, leaving Lotring without an ensemble. McPhee finally met Lotring through Kesyur, one of the houseboys. At the time Lotring was making "a scanty living" as a goldsmith; he also

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[102]McPhee does so in two separate pages of his undated field notes. UCLA.

[103]House, 23. A banjar is a village.

[104]Odéon RA-20477, RA-204786, RA-204787, all released in 1928. Six works by the légong gamelan of Kuta are included on these recordings. See Andrew Toth, Recordings of the Traditional Music of Bali and Lombok (n.p.: The Society for Ethnomusicology, 1980), pp. 76, 78.

trained dancers for other clubs, and his wives wove mats.[105]

In undated notes, McPhee gave his impression of Lotring:

> Short, slight, . . . a mild, guileless smile, hair very thin (this is rare) 'from so much thinking'; a goldsmith; a famous cook; lives by the sea in a very poor house; several wives; unreliable and a little tricky; dreams of pieces at night; . . . studied together with Kalér; same style but Kalér a pedant and Lotring imaginative.[106]

Lotring and McPhee spent a little time together before McPhee went to Paris in 1932. But it was after his return that "our acquaintance developed into a friendship that was to last as long as I remained in Bali."[107]

The Revivals Begin

As McPhee learned more about the Balinese gamelan, he yearned for concentrated periods of work with individual groups so that he could better understand their playing technique and repertoire. What he sought was a laboratory-like environment, where musicians could be observed closely over extended periods of time.

Suddenly, when presented with Lotring, a composer from whom he could learn so much, yet one without a gamelan, McPhee had an idea: he and Lotring would revive the Kuta group. That way Lotring would have the stimulus

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[105]House, p. 174.

[106]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[107]House, 174.

to compose, and McPhee would be able to observe and learn. McPhee later remembered, "As I listened to the records [of Lotring's gamelan, made in the twenties] I felt I would not rest until I had succeeded in bringing the gamelan back to life."[108] At the time, McPhee was obsessed by the desire to grasp one of Lotring's pieces, one that only the Kuta gamelan could play. "Lotring had tried to teach it to me. But I never got past the melody. The rest was impossible to grasp except through a performance."[109]

Negotiations began with the men of Kuta, and soon a plan was hatched for forming a new group. Some old members refused to return, but their investment in instruments was reimbursed (or, as McPhee says, they were "bought off"). A budget of 240 rupiah ($144) was drawn up, which included costs for repairing the gold leaf on the instruments (which had long been in storage), bringing in a tuner, buying back the big gong from the local pawn shop, purchasing cloth and goldleaf for costumes, and paying the old members. McPhee volunteered to shoulder 150 rupiah of the expenses. In return, he asked the men of the gamelan to build him a hut on the beach.[110]

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[108] House, p. 176.

[109] The piece McPhee admired so much was Gonteng (Djawa) ("Alarm Clock"). It is recorded on Odéon RA-204777(B). (House, p. 175-77.)

[110] House, p. 179.

The hut was soon completed, and McPhee immediately settled there for three straight months of work in Kuta, returning only occasionally to Sayan. The hut was a welcome retreat:

> It stood at the edge of the beach, beneath the palms, and through the open door you looked straight out on the sea. It was long and narrow, and the palm-thatch came down like a tent, touching the ground. The pillars were thick columns of coconut that had been planed smooth, and rested on heavy round blocks of coral. The floor was of white sand.[111]

The Kuta gamelan was revived quickly and soon was playing even better than before.[112] Lotring composed steadily, and the club quickly gained fame. In Music in Bali, McPhee analyzes several of Lotring's compositions, especially Gending Pelugon and Gending Sekar Ginotan; he was fascinated with Lotring's "intricate figurations" and "special love for rhythmic complexities."[113] Lotring never notated his compositions but taught them to the musicians

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[111] House, p. 179-80.

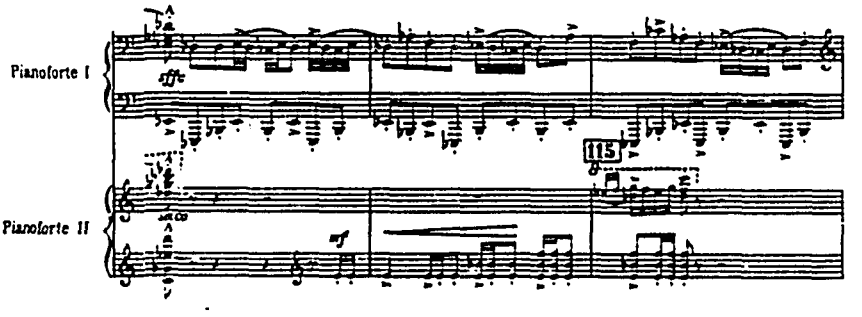
[112] Buried within McPhee's account of the club's success is one of his maddening inconsistencies in chronology. He is precise in describing people, places, and music but seems to have had a blind spot for dates. He says, "In a few months [after being revived] the gamelan had reached its former brilliance, and to me it sounded even more enchanting than it did in the records that had been made eight years before (House, p. 181; italics mine). The Kuta gamelan recorded for Odéon in 1928, and since McPhee describes its revival as taking place before he went to New York in 1935 (Music in Bali, p. 308), he meant "six" or at most "seven" years.

[113] Music in Bali, pp. 165 and 227. The scores are found on pp. 311-24.

in sections. Most often he drew upon traditional material and transformed it into something of his own.
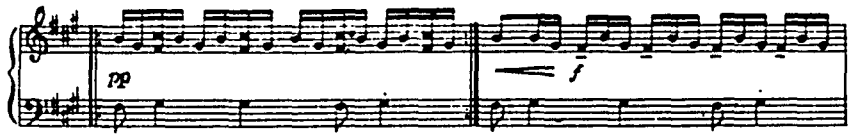
McPhee was enthralled with Lotring, not only because he was one of the few composers McPhee worked with in Bali, but perhaps also because of a common aesthetic. Here was a man whose music was an imaginative re-working of existing material: "These transferences always seemed surprisingly natural, and gave continually new aspects to the original melodies and ornamental figuration."[114] The rhythmic complexity of Lotring's music appealed to McPhee as well. In Music in Bali he returns repeatedly to this aspect of Lotring's style, and in one example of the composer's cross-accentuation focuses on a passage using rhythmic devices much like those in McPhee's own Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet of 1928:

Example 35-A. McPhee, Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, third movement, measures 113-115.



[114] Music in Bali, p. 308-309.

Example 35-B. I Lotring, Angkatan. Transcription by McPhee from Music in Bali, page 227. Measures 1-2.



In his accounts of working with Lotring and the Kuta gamelan, McPhee is euphoric. Here was the situation he had longed for: not a library with records of dead traditions but a living art, growing in front of his eyes. This study brought utter contentment:

> Often, as I sat on the floor of the clubhouse, listening to the men rehearse, I would ask a g'nder player to move aside while I took his place for a while. . . . This was enough . . . for me to experience the sensation of being, at least for the moment, completely united, in close and absolute sympathy with the players, lost with them in the rhythm of the music. I knew the melodies by heart, and as I played I felt both peace and exhilaration in this nameless, tacit accord. Here there was no conductor's stick to beat time, no overeloquent hands to urge or subdue. The drumming of Lotring was at times barely audible; you felt it rather than heard it, and the music seemed to rush ahead on its own impetus. You were swept along the stream, no longer knew what you were doing. It was something free and purely physical, like swimming or running.[115]

More Portraits

Two other Balinese entered McPhee's life before he returned to New York in 1935: I Sampih and I Madé Lebah. Both were to play a central role in his musical activities there.

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[115] House, p. 181.

Sampih was a child of about eight when McPhee first met him in 1932, while the house was being built.[116] As McPhee tells the story, one day he walked down to the river below his house and was suddenly caught in a flash flood. Sampih saw him struggling, leaped in, and led him to safety. The two struck up a tentative friendship, and soon Sampih was stopping frequently at the McPhee house. Eventually he came there to live. McPhee probably never adopted Sampih legally. In A House in Bali he does not use the term "adoption," although he does talk of custody negotiations with the child's parents.[117] Katharane Mershon also took in a Balinese boy; hers was named Murda. Mershon claims she paid Murda's family about a dollar a month so that she could keep the child; she also educated him. In return, Murda taught her Balinese and became her secretary.[118]

One day, quite by accident, McPhee discovered that Sampih had talent as a dancer:

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[116]In House (p. 124), McPhee claims Sampih was eight when he met him; he says the meeting occurred soon after work had begun on the house in 1932 (p. 123). However, in Sampih's New York Times obituary (3 May 1954), Sampih's birthdate was given as 1926, which would have made him six when McPhee first met him.

[117]Sampih is said to have been "adopted' by McPhee in the obituary just cited and in McPhee's own New York Times obituary (8 January 1964). McPhee's dealings with Sampih's parents are described in House, pp. 126-27, 131-32.

[118]Interview with Katharane Mershon.

> I came home unexpectedly one evening to find the phonograph on the floor, playing the loudest and most syncopated gamelan record, and Sampih seated beside it improvising a wild kebyar dance. . . . Although he stopped the moment he saw me, it was not before I had a glimpse of melodramatic gestures, coquettish eyes and flashing hands that caught with surprising precision the violent and abrupt accents of the music.[119]

Sampih was a lively, precocious child, with a personality as wild as the kebyar dance he improvised.[120] Already, on the first day that Colin met him, he noticed that Sampih was the "more boisterous, . . . the leading spirit" of the group of children he was playing with.[121] Another time, when McPhee had a group of twenty-five boys at his house, all waiting to work with a génggong (jew's harp) teacher, he again described Sampih's energy: "He could not be suppressed, but always took the lead, laughing and dancing with his shoulders."[122] But there was a rough, moody side to the child, too. His parents were peasants, and while living with them he had been exposed to a violent life. Before meeting McPhee, Sampih had stolen money from his father and run away from home after

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[119]House, p. 128.

[120]McPhee describes kebyar as "the brilliant exhibition dance, performed by a youth or small boy. . . . The dancer translates into movement the constantly changing moods of the music." (Music in Bali, p. 356.)

[121]House, p. 123.

[122]CM, Field notes, dated 4 April, 7 p.m. [!]. UCLA.

watching his father beat his mother.[123] Another time, McPhee and Sampih found Sampih's mother lying in a field, the skin of her head split open by a blow from her husband. She recovered quickly, but Sampih did not. McPhee watched a sinister transformation occur in the child as he planned retribution: "'I will surely kill [my father] when I am older, he said [to McPhee] in a low voice that was tense with ferocity"; McPhee went on to observe that Sampih's face had become "dark, . . . it suddenly resembled his father's."[124]

McPhee was devoted to giving Sampih every opportunity to learn how to dance. That devotion is apparent throughout A House in Bali and is remembered by those around McPhee, such as Lebah, who recalls how intensely McPhee loved the boy. McPhee brought the best dancing teachers in Bali to Sayan.[125] Sampih's first teacher was Nyoman Kalér. But Kalér had little sympathy for Sampih's temperament. What to others might have seemed dynamic, to Kalér was crude and wild; he thought it "vain to spend time on this mountain child."[126] But McPhee persisted. He then brought Champlung, a young, female

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[123]House, p. 127.

[124]House, p. 196.

[125]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

[126]House, p. 138.

légong dancer from Bedulu, to Sayan a few days a week to teach Sampih. Immediately, the child began to grow artistically. As McPhee recalled,

> [Champlung's] style had sweep, imagination, a fluidity that made Nyoman's teaching seem dry and superficial. . . . She put all her youthful energy into these lessons, difficult, moreover, for her to give, for she had a willful and far from supple boy to deal with. . . . Sampih adored her. Their bright peasant natures understood each other.[127]

Two musicians came with Champlung--a gendér player and a drummer. The latter was I Madé Lebah.[128] Lebah was from Peliatan, a village not far from Sayan, and was a member of its gamelan--one of the most famous on the island. He had gone to Paris in 1931 to perform in the Colonial Exposition, and his background made him the ideal musical informant and comrade for McPhee.

> He was a high-strung, rather fragile youth, perhaps twenty, filled with some mysterious nervous energy, for when he was not rehearsing, his long slender fingers were forever drumming lightly against some vibrant surface, and when he laughed his voice was high and excited. He had the most agreeable nature in the world.[129]

According to McPhee's field notes, Lebah "never went to

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[127]House, p. 155. Lebah remembers Sampih also studying with Mario, a famous dancer of the time. Mario's performance style is described by Covarrubias in Island of Bali, pp. 232-35.

[128]Lebah, however, recalls meeting McPhee somewhat later--in 1934 when McPhee became a full member of the Gong Peliatan so that Sampih would have a good kebyar group with which to perform regularly. (Interview with I Madé Lebah.)

[129]House, p. 156.

school" but was "always learning music" and "always in demand. . . . He is an instinctive rather than a technical musician [who] loves to teach. His culture is restricted."[130]

Lebah still loves to teach, and he still fits McPhee's description pretty closely.[131] His frame is wiry, and his words tumble out in a high-pitched torrent. He is shy, yet beneath the shyness is complete self-assurance. The passing of the years has raised Lebah's status to that of guru. When McPhee discovered him, he was young and unknown. Since then, he has become a major musical figure in Bali.

Lebah's presence brought calm to McPhee's work. Once he joined the household, the two began a stint of uninterrupted work. McPhee had worked previously with Nyoman Kalér and with I Lotring, but both had lived outside of Sayan and could stay only for short periods. With Lebah in residence, however, it was possible to get into the rhythm of a daily routine.

Transcription was the learning tool they used. McPhee recalled their daily schedule:

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[130]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[131]I met Lebah in Peliatan in April 1984 and heard him perform with both the Peliatan gamelan kebyar and gamelan semar pegulingan. I also sat in on a drum lesson he was giving to his grandson.

> In the afternoon Lebah would sit down near the piano, to play phrase by phrase some g'nder melody while I wrote. Or he would pick up a drum to show me the rhythm in a certain part of the music. Seriously, leisurely, we worked together till sundown. At last we would decide to stop. We would walk down the hillside to bathe in the spring halfway down, or else in the pool far below, where through the ferns the water fell from overhead.[132]

Lebah's memory of the transcription process concurs with McPhee's. "I played, he listened, and then he wrote. He'd play back on the piano and that's how we checked for accuracy. He couldn't play actual gamelan instruments. He knew the music but he couldn't play the instruments."[133]

The work with Lebah was interrupted for a time when McPhee returned to the United States in 1935, but it was resumed when he returned in 1937.

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[132]House, pp. 157-58.

[133]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

CHAPTER VI

A WESTERN INTERLUDE (1935-1936)

Colin and Jane left Bali in late December of 1934 just as the rainy season descended. They craved Western civilization. In November Colin wrote to Carl Van Vechten grumbling about the growing numbers of tourists and missionaries in Bali; he was also perturbed by the high taxes levied against Westerners.[1] In A House in Bali he mentions having "business to attend to" in the United States. "I also felt I needed to get away."[2] Colin and Jane passed through Surabaya, Java, on 31 December and made several stops on the way to Marseilles: Bangkok, Angkor, Madras, Colombo.[3] After reaching France they went to Spain

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[1]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, written from Bali, postmarked 17 November 1934. Beinecke Library/Yale. A 1933 tax bill for the McPhee's Bali house is included among Jane Belo's papers at LC.

[2]House, p. 194.

[3]The McPhees' route can be traced through visa stamps in his passport (British passport no. 19756, issued in Shanghai, 9 May 1934). His passport was stamped by the American consul in Surabaya on 31 Decmeber 1934; a visa to visit Bangkok was issued in Batavia, Java on 15 January 1935; his passport was stamped in Bangkok on 1 February 1935; he left Siam for Angkor on 8 February 1935; and his passport was stamped in Madras (with no date) and then in Colombo on 28 February. UCLA.

to see the paintings of El Greco.[4]

En route to New York that spring McPhee heralded his arrival in a letter to Henry Cowell: "After those years of silence, and geographical remoteness, I announce my return to the land of the living."[5] His letter overflowed with plans. He was "in the midst of" a book on Balinese music and expected "to have a couple of orchestral work[s] finished by fall--a prelude and tocatta [sic], and a 'fantasia' for piano and orchestra on Balinese melodies and rhythms--authentic stuff and not dished-up impressionism à la Eichheim."

Soon after arriving in New York the McPhees headed for Toronto to see Colin's parents--the first visit he had made there since leaving for Paris in 1924.[6] It was the

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[4]At least they had planned to do so. In the letter to Van Vechten cited above, McPhee said, "We are going through Sumatra first, and then to Siam and Indochina; from there to Marseilles, and perhaps to Spain for a short time to see the El Grecos, and then home."

[5]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, written from "New York Central Lines--En Route," [spring 1935]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. McPhee refers here to Henry Eichheim, whose orchestral works Java and Bali had been written in the early thirties.

[6]Colin and Jane probably arrived in the United States in late spring of 1935. He published "The Absolute Music of Bali" in the May/June 1935 issue of Modern Music (XII/4, 163-69) and is identified on the back page as having "just returned from . . . Bali." According to the magazine's editor Minna Lederman he would have had to have submitted the copy at least one month before publication (Telephone interview, 22 May 1984).

only time his family ever met Jane.[7] Augustus Bridle, the critic who had so faithfully followed McPhee's youthful performances, wrote in The Toronto Daily Star that Colin and Jane had arrived via Canadian Pacific Railroad and stayed only a day or two.[8] Janet McPhee remembers that Colin and Jane went to Campbellville for a few days to visit family and then stopped overnight in Montreal, where she and Colin's brother Douglas were living. Jane's worldliness was enchanting to Janet McPhee: "She was beautiful, very elegant, . . . every hair in place, and perfectly dressed!"[9] Jane seemed especially glamorous as she described her life in New York that coming winter, with gallery openings and concerts as daily fare. "I was very naive and thinking how Dougie and I [were living] out on a lakeshore then, lugging big stones to build our driveway." But Janet McPhee and the rest of Colin's family found Jane friendly.[10]

This was the last time Colin ever went home. Yet

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[7]Interview with Janet McPhee, Toronto Canada, 1 May 1983.

[8]Augustus Bridle, "Former Toronto Musician Lives Three Years in Bali," Toronto Daily Star [undated clipping, summer 1935]. UCLA. Bridle says McPhee was "just about two weeks from Bali," which confuses the date of McPhee's arrival in New York. He was definitely in Canada in mid-July because a certification of his birth was issued by the Superior Court of Montreal on 18 July 1935. UCLA.

[9]Interview with Janet McPhee.

[10]Ibid.

this trip had a purpose beyond simply visiting family: since he was not yet an American citizen, he had to go back to Canada in order to stay in the U.S. for an extended period.[11]

New York in 1935 was different from 1931, when Colin and Jane had left, principally because the Depression had worsened. Franklin Roosevelt was in the third year of his first term as president. The Works Progress Administration was established in May of that year; soon after followed the Federal Music Project and, as an offshoot of it, the Composers' Forum-Laboratory.

As in 1926, Colin hit the New York new-music turf with a determined stride. He was only in New York for the 1935-36 concert season and for the fall of 1936 but managed to pack the time full of activities. Soon after his arrival, he was offered a commission by the League of Composers, one of six the League gave out that year--to Joseph Achron (for a string quartet), Aaron Copland (Statements), Leo Ornstein (Dance of the Fates), Quincy Porter (a string quartet), William Grant Still (Kaintuck), and McPhee. It is difficult to imagine how the commission came about. Not only had McPhee been out of sight for nearly four years, but he had had no direct connection with the League before leaving for Bali; neither he nor

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[11]Interview with Janet McPhee.

his music had appeared on any League concerts. Perhaps his friendship with Copland, which went back at least to the days of the Copland-Sessions Concerts, was the key. 1935 was only the second year that the League had issued commissions; all included guarantees of performance.[12]

While at work on a piece to fulfill the League commission, McPhee began preaching about Bali with a missionary's zeal. In the May-June 1935 issue of Modern Music appeared "The Absolute Music of Bali," his first piece about Balinese music; in it, he describes the potential of this music for Westerners.[13] The article is written by a composer, not a scholar, and it is addressed to composers. McPhee relates how Balinese music fits snugly into society as a functional craft rather than a rarefied art; his wish is that the same could be true in the West--that the music produced by contemporary composers would not be so separated from the daily flow of

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[12]"League of Composers Commissions Six Works," Musical America LV/16 (25 October 1935), 4, and "Progress Seen in Plan of Composers' League," Musical America LVI/6 (25 March 1936), 12. Although the details of McPhee's commission are not known, those for one to Nicolai Berezowsky in 1934 are found in a letter to him from Claire Reis. The fee was $250; the League had rights to first performance of the work and promised to arrange it; the composer was to pay for copying; and a score was to be given to the League library. (Letter, Claire Reis to Nicolai Berezowsky, 23 February 1934, Columbia University Library.)

[13]Modern Music XII/4 (May-June 1935), 163-69.

life. McPhee admires most the rhythmic vitality of Balinese music. He opens and closes with an invitation to explore the music of this small island; in between he cites specific aspects of Balinese music that might have appeal in the West, especially the uses of ostinato, polyrhythms, and syncopation.

McPhee brought the sounds of Bali to New York's Cosmopolitan Club on 6 November 1935.[14] The program featured three of McPhee's films of Balinese musicians accompanied by appropriate segments from the Odéon gamelan recordings and three groups of McPhee's own gamelan transcriptions for two pianos. It even included a Balinese dinner.[15] Each of the two-piano segments was curiously subtitled "Music recorded for two pianos." "Recorded" must have meant "transcribed." Marc Blitzstein was at the second piano. McPhee and Blitzstein were old friends whose association went back at

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[14][Program:] "Bali/Colin McPhee." The Cosmopolitan Club, 6 November 1935. The complete contents of the program is appended. At bottom: "Colin McPhee and Marc Blitzstein at the pianos. Balinese records played on the Ansley dynaphone." UCLA.

[15]Letter, Wynne Fooshee (Archivist for the Cosmopolitan Club) to author, 1 June 1984.

least to the days of the Copland-Sessions Concerts.[16]

In January 1936 McPhee began a series of radio programs on WEVD (New York) titled "Modern American Music." They were broadcast on Sunday evenings at 8:30 P.M.; McPhee chose the programs and was the commentator. A flier for the series advertised new works by Blitzstein, Copland, Cowell, Chavez, Diamond, Harris, Piston, Riegger, Varèse, and "workers songs."[17] Soon after the series started, McPhee wrote to Cowell about having to cancel a performance of Cowell's "new quartet" (which must have been the "Mosaic" of 1935). In the same letter, McPhee had something to say about women writing music:

> Berkman's [sic] Hebrides vocalises went very well [on the show]; I liked them in spite of my disfavor of female composers, and I was not grudging in my

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[16]McPhee and Blitzstein were both involved in Copland-Sessions concerts on 30 December 1928 and 15 March 1931. In 1936 McPhee reviewed a Blitzstein concert given by the Composers' Forum Laboratory and found Blitzstein's Piano Concerto of 1932 to be "an excellent and well constructed piece of music." ["New York's Spring Season, 1936," Modern Music XIII/4 (May-June 1936), 39.] In an article titled "Composers as Lecturers and in Concerts," Blitzstein, in turn, wrote: "McPhee, returned from the East, says Javanese music has practically died out because of the phonograph, but that the Balinese do not cotton to canned music, preferring still to make their own." [Modern Music XIII/1 (Nov-Dec 1935), 49.]

[17][Flier:] "The WEVD University of the Air Presents Modern American Music Series," Colin McPhee, commentator. Cowell Collection/NYPL. See also: "Modern American Composers Series Presented Under the Direction of Colin McPhee," unidentified clipping, 7 January 1936. UCLA. And "Speaking of Music on the Air," Musical America LVI/2 (25 January 1936), 27.

enthusiasm when I spoke to her afterwards.[18]

Then in early February, McPhee went up to Hartford to judge a composition festival held by the Friends and Enemies of Modern Music (the same group that had given the premiere of Virgil Thomson's Four Saints in 1934). The other two judges were Harold Berkeley and Aaron Copland; first prize was awarded to Ross Lee Finney for three songs.[19]

In the midst of this musical activity Colin and Jane led a busy social life. They stayed in her mother's apartment in Gramercy Park and had at least one dinner party there that was memorable. Minna Lederman, the editor of Modern Music, attended it with her husband Mell Daniel. Two dozen guests, including Carl Van Vechten and his wife, were seated around the table in an apartment that was "a very pleasant place with a few Balinese and other Indonesian objects around." Colin prepared an elaborate rijstafel, which took two or three days to cook and involved the services of Mrs. Belo's staff. Minna Lederman remembers the evening:

The feast was overwhelming. I stopped eating

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[18]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, [late January 1936]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. McPhee was referring to Evelyn Berckman.

[19]Arthur W. Locke, "Festival at Hartford," Modern Music (March-April 1936), 56; "Controversial New Music Gives Zest to Events of Hartford Festival, "Musical America LVI/4 (25 February 1936), 1, 22.

> halfway through, but my husband, who is fond of rice, ate to the end. It was apparently the thing to do. It was an absolutely gorgeous evening, and the first indication to us that Colin was a master chef.[20]

The McPhees were present at another dinner party that turned out to affect their work during the next few years. According to Jane, Margaret Mead invited them to meet Gregory Bateson (to whom Mead was not yet married). Bateson described his work in New Guinea, where he had formulated his "theory of schismogenesis to describe the continuingly split relations between the male and female sexes."[21] Anthropology was the talk of the evening. Jane claims that as a result, Mead and Bateson decided to head for Bali in 1936.

On 27 March 1936 McPhee re-entered New York as a composer with the premiere of From the Revelation of St. John the Divine, the work commissioned by the League of Composers. It was performed by the Princeton University Glee Club, conducted by James A. Giddings, in the Grand

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[20]Interview with Minna Lederman, New York City, 12 October 1981.

[21]Belo, TBC, p. xxiv-xxv. Margaret Mead later said, "It was because of Jane Belo's preliminary work on Balinese art, trance, and ritual that we thought of going to Bali. From her first four years in Bali, she brought back such complete and fascinating segments of Balinese culture that it seemed the ideal culture within which to plan a project on the cultural aspects of schizophrenia." (Preface to Belo's Trance in Bali, p. v.)

Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria.[22] The score is now lost.[23]

There is little hint of why McPhee turned to texts from Revelations at this point in his life. Israel Citkowitz, who reviewed the work for Modern Music, thought it was because of Revelations' "terrifying visions of war, famine, and destruction [that have] a distinct bearing on the catastrophic events of the present."[24] Two years earlier McPhee had acknowledged that he found the growing world political turmoil to be "numbing."[25] Perhaps this composition was his statement about current events. Still, the choice is curious. McPhee was full of Bali at the time and at work on the orchestral piece that would become Tabuh-Tabuhan. From the Revelation may have provided a break from Indonesian music--a means of re-connecting with the West.

From a letter McPhee wrote to Elizabeth Mayer in

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[22][Program:] "Princeton University Glee Club/Wellesley College Choir, The Waldorf Astoria, March 27 [1936]." The program also included works by Bach, Weelkes, Purcell, Holst, and Borodin, as well as the New York premiere of some folk-song settings by Robert Delaney. UCLA.

[23]McPhee must not have complied with one stipulation of the commission--that a score be deposited in the League's library. There is no score there or at UCLA or Princeton University (in either the Music Library or Glee Club files). (Letters to author from Paula Morgan, Music Librarian, Princeton University, 3 December 1982, 22 September 1983.)

[24]Israel Citkowitz, "Biblical Texts Set to Music," Modern Music XIII/4 (May-June 1936), 49.

[25]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, written from Java-China-Japan Lijn, postmarked 17 May 1933. Beinecke Library/Yale.

the forties, we know that From the Revelation was scored for men's chorus, two pianos, three trumpets, and two sets of timpani--a scoring reminiscent of the Sea Shanty Suite of 1928.[26] In the same letter McPhee said that a New York University choral group had recently asked for the score but that he had turned down the request. He thought the piece had "sounded well" in its original version but had "always wanted to change it and alas, have not done so." The music must have been in storage then because McPhee said, "I can't get at the score to work on it, and it would need all new parts." At about the same time, the conductor William Strickland tried to get the score from McPhee for a performance but was unsuccessful. "He wouldn't let me have it, and everybody talked about it as such an interesting work."[27]

Citkowitz's review is the only description we have of the piece. He did not find it consistenty successful. The texts of Revelation presented "insuperable difficulties in setting" because their "sheer allegory" made it "impossible to seize hold of that kernel of poetic thought . . . which permits a choral form to develop in

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[26]Letter, CM to Elizabeth Mayer, written from Woodstock, New York [early 1940s]. Collection of Mrs. Beata Sauerlander.

[27]Interview with William Strickland, Westport, Connecticut, 5 December 1981.

all musical freedom."[28] Citkowitz felt McPhee's work suffered "from the excess of verbal detail and image which the music is called upon to digest." The words were largely declaimed in recitative, a technique that lost its grip "after a highly effective opening."

In the spring of 1936, McPhee published in Modern Music two reviews of New York concerts.[29] His association with the magazine had begun in 1931, when he wrote a similar group of concert reviews; it continued briefly in the fall of 1936 and then launched into full swing after his final return to New York from Bali early in 1939. Although he had published some writing before, Modern Music was the first--and only--journal to which he contributed with any regularity. His reviews from the spring of 1936 show him to have been an avid concert-goer with wide-ranging tastes and strongly formed opinions. Among his contemporaries, he admired Blitzstein, Chávez, Copland, Paul Bowles, David Diamond, Frederick Jacobi, Walter Piston, Wallingford Riegger, and Lazare Saminsky. He had less respect for Roy Harris, Werner Josten, and Bernard Rogers.

McPhee's criticism was often very personal; on

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[28]Citkowitz, Ibid.

[29]"New York--January, February, 1936," Modern Music XIII/3 (March-April 1936), 41-46, and "New York's Spring Season, 1936," XIII/4 (May-June 1936), 39-42.

occasion, it could be scathing. In a review of a "ballet-pantomime" by Werner Josten, titled Joseph and his Brethren, McPhee voiced his opinions about how non-Western materials should be used:

> The music wavers between angular pedanticisms (neoclassic?) and the sort of Oriental melodies formerly heard at the circus in the vicinity of the snake charmers. From the standpoint of phrasing and rhythm, I do not see how it could possibly stimulate the body to expressive motion. The music is pricked with dissonance like a pincushion stuck with pins.[30]

In comparing Berg and Hindemith he spoke as a graduate of the neo-classical school:

> The texture of Berg's music is always of too rich and complicated a weave for my own ultimate enjoyment; there is too much to admire, too much to be asked to digest. I find the atmosphere rather suffocating. The clean-cut lines of the Hindemith work [Viola Concerto] seem to me far more eloquent.[31]

That spring (1936) McPhee aimed his sharpest barbs at the music of Roy Harris. He had no sympathy whatsoever for the man's work. Reviewing a Philadelphia performance of the Farewell to Pioneers, he wrote:

> In Farewell to Pioneers the orchestra labored along far more wearily than did any of the most fatigued pioneers. The sonority was weak and lacking in resonance. . . . Why the music had been published before performance is a mystery to me, for much

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[30]"New York's Spring Season, 1936," p. 40. In 1931 Josten had been a board member with McPhee of the New York Polyhymnia--the group dedicated to fostering international musical exchanges:

[31]"New York--January, February, 1936," p. 45.

will have to be done to it before it can sound.[32]

A Mexican Premiere

In New York during the winter of 1935-36 McPhee renewed his friendship with Chávez, an alliance that was to affect his career greatly. The two had known each other at least since November 1926, when both had works performed on a concert by the International Composers' Guild.[33] McPhee and Chávez traveled in common circles. Both were friendly with Copland, Cowell, and Varèse; both were involved with the Pan American Association. And both came to New York from neighboring countries. They seem to have been fairly good friends by the spring of 1928, because they visited Jane Belo's (then Jane Biddle's) house in Croton-on-Hudson together. Chavez lived in New York from 1926 to 1928 and fortuitously enough settled there again during the winter of McPhee's return from Bali.

McPhee was a great admirer of Chávez's music, especially Sinfonia de Antigona (Symphony No. 1) of 1933 and Sinfonia India (No. 2) of 1935-36. In January 1936 Sinfonia India received its premiere over CBS radio. Soon after the performance McPhee wrote to Cowell: "Chávez did some new works over the air, all Mexican . . . and very good, and

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[32]Ibid., p. 42.

[33]Chávez's H.P. and McPhee's Pastorale and Rondino were performed. [Program:] "The International Composers' Guild, Inc., . . . November 28, 1926." UCLA.

including an Indian symphony of his own (very short) which was simply ripping. I wish you could see your way to publishing it. I don't know when I've enjoyed a new work more."[34] McPhee reviewed the same piece in Modern Music that spring with more detailed enthusiasm.[35] He responded most to Chávez's use of ethnic materials (in this case Mexican Indian), which he found true to their source: "One feels on hearing this music first of all a primitive energy that has nothing of the exotic but is a clear and forceful expression of racial vitality both youthful and healthy." McPhee was relieved to hear "none of the Europeanisms or French impressionism still lingering in the works of so many Latin-American composers." Chávez's workmanship appealed to him, with its orchestration "in primary colors," its "hard and penetrating" sonorities, and its "resilient percussive base." Since McPhee was then hard at work on Tabuh-Tabuhan, his favorable response to a composer working with ethnic materials comes as no surprise.

When McPhee left Bali in December 1934, he clearly was turning his attention back to composition. The urge he had once described as an "oppressive burden" was

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[34]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, [January 1936]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[35]Colin McPhee, "Forecast and Review: New York--January, February, 1936," Modern Music XIII/3 (March-April 1936), 42-43.

asserting itself once again. Throughout the spring of 1935 and the fall and winter of 1935-36, references to a work-in-progress begin to appear. On the boat en route to New York, McPhee wrote Cowell of his plans for two orchestral works on Balinese themes: a "prelude and toccata" and a "fantasia for piano and orchestra."[36] In the May-June 1935 issue of Modern Music he is identified as being at work on a "Rhapsody on Balinese themes."[37] By the May-June issue of the following year the piece had a title--Tabuh-Tabuhan. McPhee was said to be "completing a symphonic work . . . which is Balinese in motif and in musical construction. Mr. McPhee is now on his way to Mexico."[38] Around that time, he wrote to Cowell that he was composing "a concerto for piano and large orchestra using Bali-jazz-and-McPhee elements.[39] As McPhee remembered it many years later, the genesis of Tabuh-Tabuhan was simple and Carlos Chávez's role significant:

> It was in the mid-30's, back in New York for a year, that I suddenly had the idea, partly suggested by Carlos Chávez, of writing an orchestral work utilizing material I had collected

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[36]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, written from New York Central Lines, [Spring 1935]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[37]"Contributors to this Issue," Modern Music XII/4 (May-June 1935).

[38]"Contributors to this Issue," Modern Music XIII/4 (May-June 1936).

[39]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, written from New York City [Spring 1936]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

in Bali. 'Come to Mexico City,' he said, 'write it, and I will play it with the orchestra.'"[40]

McPhee did just that. He and Jane arrived in Mexico City by early June of 1936. They first spent a week traveling through the ruins of Yucatan and then settled in a small house in Taxco, just south of Mexico City, while Colin finished his new work.[41] They brought a piano in immediately, and Colin began arranging for Chávez to see the score. On 4 June McPhee told Chávez about his progress on Tabuh-Tabuhan. He was composing with ease--no doubts, no blocks. "The score is going so well. I hope you will like the nocturne--the slow movement. It's quite short. I hope to have the whole work finished inside of two weeks."[42] The summer was spent putting the finishing touches on Tabuh-Tabuhan and rehearsing it, with a short breather in Acapulco.

Chávez had founded the Orquesta Sinfónica de México in 1928. The summer of 1936 they performed eight subscription concerts, beginning 17 July, at the Palacio de bellas artes, in a concert hall so magnificent that it

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[40]Colin McPhee, "The Sounds of Bali," Hi-Fi Review (December 1958), 30.

[41]McPhee talked about the first part of his summer in a letter to "Madeleine," 5 August 1936. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[42]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, [early June 1936]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

boasted a "million-dollar Tiffany glass curtain."[43] There was a concurrent series of popular concerts for workers, for which tickets were distributed through labor unions. The orchestra presented a balanced fare of standard European orchestral literature with contemporary Mexican, American, and Spanish works.[44] That summer Gustavo Pittaluga and Ernesto Halffter were the Spanish composers represented; the Mexicans included Candelario Huizar and Chávez himself. Copland and McPhee were the two Americans. McPhee wrote to his friend Eva Gauthier in early September about the group's summer program:

> Chávez . . . has done excellent work with the orchestra here. I think he is a fine musician, particularly in modern things. He is very eager to be a good 'classical' conductor at present. . . . It is hard to tell just how sure he is of himself yet in these, as such works show up the orchestra here very much. . . . They are excellent in modern works, but still lack finish for classics.[45]

Copland was in Mexico that same summer at work on The

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[43]Helen L. Kaufmann, "Carlos Chávez: Decidedly No Manana Mexican," LVI/14 (Septebmer 1936), 11, 26. Two other articles about that season include: Francisco Agea, "Two Orchestras Hold Mexico City Spotlight," Musical America LV/16 (25 October 1935), 34, and "Mexico City to Hear Orchestral Series," LVI/12 (July 1936), 17.

[44][Season Program Booklet:] "Orquesta Sinfónica de México, 1936," [p. 5]. That summer they performed Bach's second and third Brandenburg Concertos, the Beethoven Seventh and Ninth Symphonies, the Tchaikovsky Pathetique, and works by Mozart, Haydn, Scarlatti, and Monteverdi.

[45]Letter, CM to Eva Gauthier, from San Angel Inn, 1 September [1936]. Gauthier Collection/NYPL.

Second Hurricane.[46] But it was his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra of 1926 that Chávez performed in July.

As early as 27 June, McPhee and Chávez were arranging rehearsals for the premiere of Tabuh-Tabuhan, to take place on 4 September (it had originally been scheduled for 21 August).[47] They began by working with the two pianists, Francisco Agea and Eduardo Hernandez Moncada, and then moved to full orchestra early in August.[48] That same month, as rehearsals of Tabuh-Tabuhan became more frequent, Colin and Jane settled "in town" at the San Angel Inn, "just outside of Mexico City."

> It was formerly an old monastery, and has a beautiful quasi tropical park all about it. From the veranda you can see the snow-capped volcanoes, glistening in the sun like plates of ice cream. . . . A lot of New York friends have turned up during the summer, for Mexico seems very popular, in spite

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[46]In a letter to Koussevitzky, written soon after his return to New York from Mexico, Copland said: "I have recently come back from Mexico where I had a wonderful summer. I almost completed my opera for high school pupils." (5 October 1936. Koussevitzky Collection/LC.)

[47][Program:] Orquesta Sinfónica de México, 4 September 1936. UCLA.

[48]In a letter to CM, Chávez talks about arranging a rehearsal with the two pianists. (27 June 1936; Chávez Collection/Mexico City.) On 5 August 1936, McPhee says that the first orchestral rehearsal of Tabuh is "next week." (Letter to "Madeleine.") Chávez was sympathetic to the fellow composers whose work he performed. A Musical America article of September 1936 describes how painstakingly he worked with Copland on the Piano Concerto; presumably he did the same for McPhee's Tabuh. . (Helen L. Kaufmann, "Carlos Chávez," p. 11.)

> of strikes, bandits, and assassinations. Safer than Europe, however.[49]

The McPhees saw Rose and Miguel Covarrubias almost every day.

In late August, McPhee gave a lecture-concert on Balinese music at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, the same program he had presented at the Cosmopolitan Club in New York in November 1935 with Marc Blitzstein. This time Eduardo Hernandez Moncada was the second pianist.[50] His presentation was received enthusiastically by "a large and delighted audience."[51]

McPhee's letters of that summer are alive with hope.[52] He was forging an individual style based on his experiences among the musicians of Bali, and he seemed confident of the product. Perhaps most importantly, an orchestra was waiting to perform his new work.

Tabuh-Tabuhan

From beginning to end, Tabuh-Tabuhan is a celebration of the Balinese gamelan. Its title is "a

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[49]Letter, CM to "Madeleine."

[50][Program:] "La musica de Bali, por Colin McPhee." [no date] UCLA. The program is a Spanish translation of the one used at the Cosmopolitan Club.

[51]Letter to "Madeleine."

[52]Letters to "Madeleine" and Eva Gauthier.

Balinese collective noun, meaning different drum rhythms, metric forms, gong punctuations, and music essentially percussive."[53] Its instrumentation pits a "nuclear gamelan" of two pianos, celesta, xylophone, marimba, and glockenspiel--all Western instruments except for two Balinese gongs--against a standard symphony orchestra.[54] And its themes, rhythms, and textures are drawn from McPhee's own gamelan transcriptions. In many ways, Tabuh-Tabuhan was conceived with the same missionary spirit that energized the pages of "The Absolute Music in Bali" and was behind the concerts of transcriptions McPhee gave in New York and Mexico City.[55] McPhee was newly emerged from an invigorating musical experience--an unusual one for a Western composer--and he was eager to share it with others.

As McPhee acknowledged, Tabuh-Tabuhan was the biggest piece he had ever written.[56] Its subtitle, "Toccata for Orchestra and 2 Pianos," is warranted by the

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[53]Colin McPhee, "Note," Tabuh-Tabuhan: Toccata for Orchestra and 2 Pianos (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1960), p. [1]. Tabuh-Tabuhan was recorded in 1956 on Mercury MG-50104 by Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra; it was re-released on Mercury SRI-75116 (1980).

[54]Ibid.

[55]Modern Music XII/4 (May-June 1935), 163-69.

[56]Letter to Eva Gauthier.

flash and flare of much of the instrumental writing, yet "Concerto" would have been equally as appropriate. McPhee's large works before Tabuh had all been concertos, and here again the concerto principle predominates; McPhee even called it once a "concerto grosso," for indeed the "nuclear gamelan" often functions as a solo group, the full orchestra reserved for tutti passages.[57]

McPhee was picking up from the crisis point he had reached before leaving for Bali. He had gone through several approaches to composition during his last few years in the United States--neoclassical, folk-inspired, even atonal--and had ended up, in Mechanical Principles and H_2O, seeking a less elite art. He spoke of these works as having a connection "with daily life--its noise, rhythm, energy, and mechanical daring."[58] His trip to Bali brought him in contact with an aesthetic close to his own. There, as McPhee stressed in the opening sentence of "The Absolute Music of Bali," music "play[ed] a most important part in the life of the people."[59] His musical interests

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[57]Colin McPhee, "The Sounds of Bali," Hi-Fi Review (December 1958), p. 30.

[58]This quotation from McPhee appears in: Wallingford Riegger, "Adolph Weiss and Colin McPhee," American Composers on American Music: A Symposium, edited by Henry Cowell. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1933; reprint: New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1961), p. 40.

[59]p. 163.

remained constant, whether working in the field or the concert hall.

Tabuh-Tabuhan marks the union of McPhee the composer and McPhee the ethnomusicologist.[60] The work draws on many of McPhee's transcriptions from Bali and also seems to emulate the very process by which Balinese music is composed. McPhee described that process in "The Absolute Music of Bali":

> Retaining its traditional melodies and phrase formulae [the music] receives new treatment by successive generations of gurus (teachers) who take the place of the composer. The present tendency . . . is to break up the old compositions and weld fragments or episodes from these into new works. . . . In Bali music is not composed but rearranged. [emphasis mine][61]

Yet McPhee the Western composer is ever-visible. Formally, there are three well-balanced movements, perhaps in keeping with a concerto-like conception: the first and last are lively and spirited, and the middle is slow. Each presents a parade of transcriptions, creating what Mueller has aptly termed "a montage-like structure."[62] The first movement is sectional, with seven different theme groups blocked out in succession, each drawing upon a

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[60]The only existing large study of McPhee's music is an analysis of the role of transcriptions in Tabuh-Tabuhan: Richard Mueller, Imitation and Stylization in the Balinese Music of Colin McPhee, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1983.

[61]"The Absolute Music of Bali," p. 165.

[62]Mueller, p. 204.

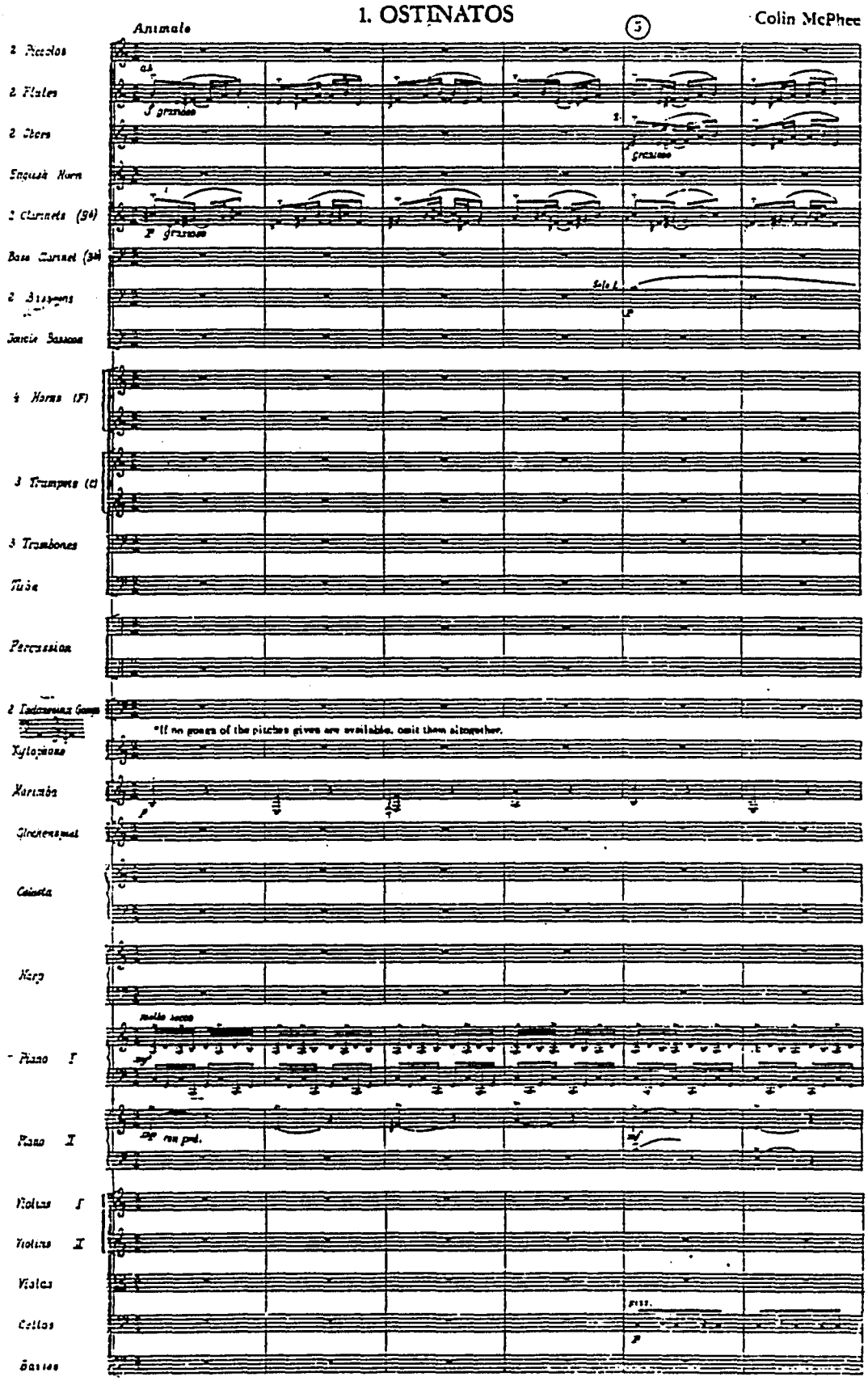
separate transcription.[63] After all the themes are stated there is a reprise. The second movement draws upon three transcriptions and closes with a return to the opening material. The third, however, moves continually forward with no reprise at the close. It has four principal sections and quotes from at least five different gamelan compositions. Yet despite its continual forward push, this movement recalls motifs from the first.

The harmonic materials are Balinese in some ways, Western in others. Chords are generated from four- or five-note scales, drawn from various forms of the Balinese pelog and slendro. Several different pitch groups often sound simultaneously, yet on the whole they remain the same throughout a single transcription (i.e. each section of a movement), adhering to Balinese models of pitch constancy within a single composition. Where the Westerner enters is in the transitions between these sections. Most move to a new set of pitch groups. In the opening of the first movement, for example, McPhee uses two four-note patterns, one based on E (in the flute, clarinet, marimba, and Piano II), the other a transposition of the first on A (in Piano II; see Example 36). Beneath both sounds an ostinato on C and G--

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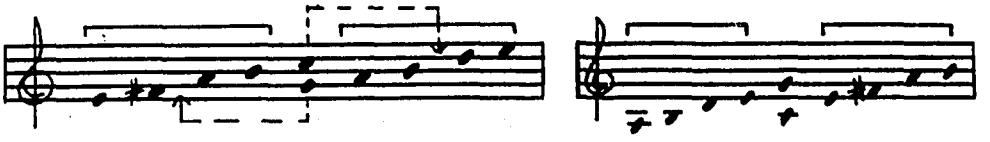
[63]Mueller includes a table of the "Major Borrowings" in Tabuh-Tabuhan on pp. 193-95.

Example 36. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, measures 1-6.



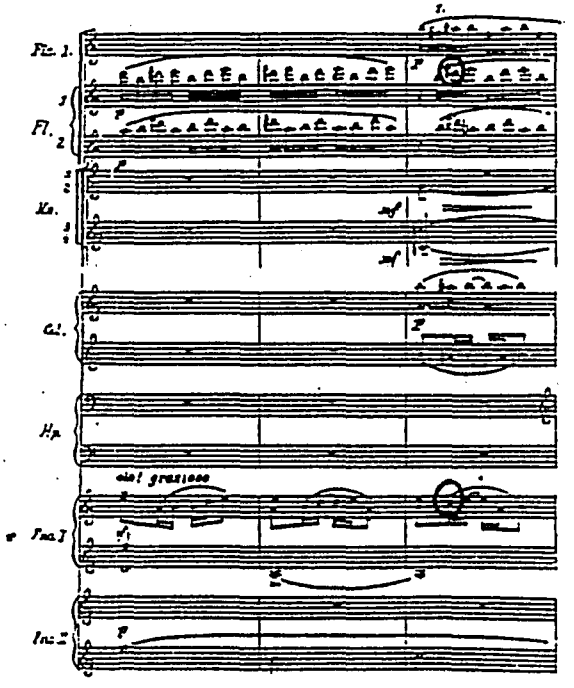
significantly the two missing axis pitches from the four-note groups. The four-note patterns interlock in two different ways:

Example 37. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan. Pitch collections used at the opening of the first movement.



The shift to new pitch material begins in m. 25, where a D-sharp is introduced in the flute, a slight modification of one of the original patterns. Juxtaposed in Piano I, however, is the original D-natural--a familiar McPhee technique from the late twenties:

Example 38. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, 25-27.

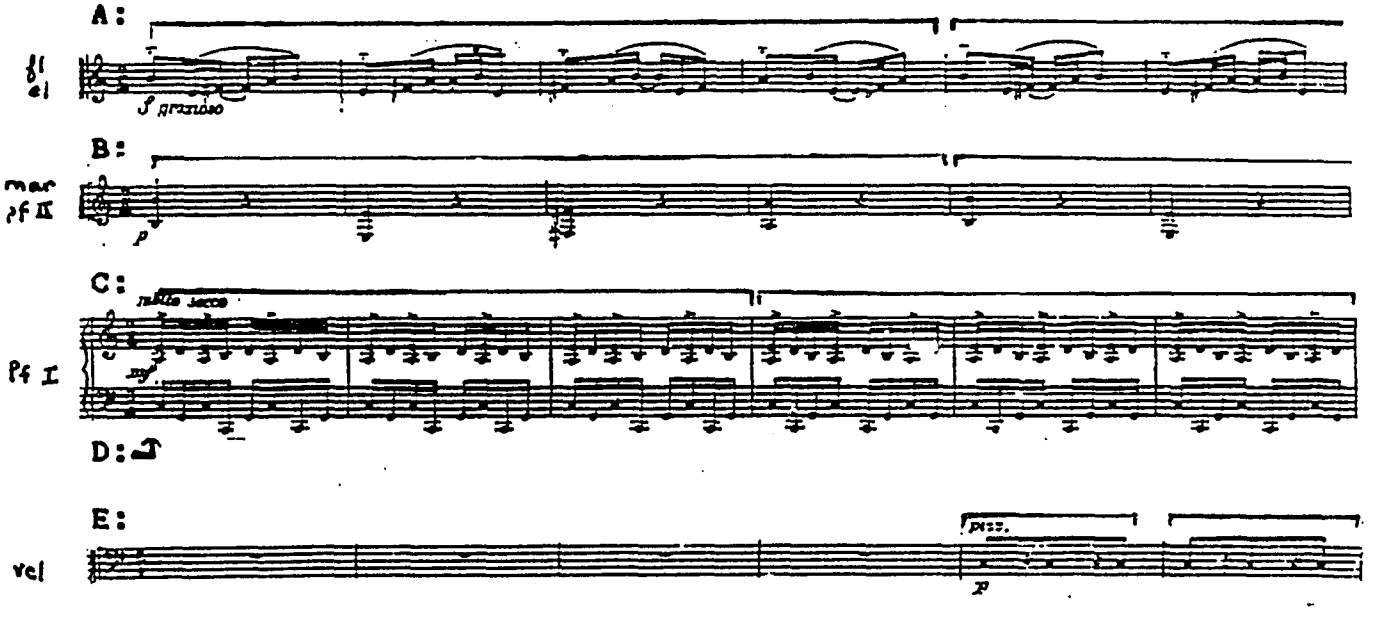


One pitch area overlays another in this transitional

passage until a new five-note pattern on C is reached at m. 49 (see Example 40). Similar procedures are found throughout the work.

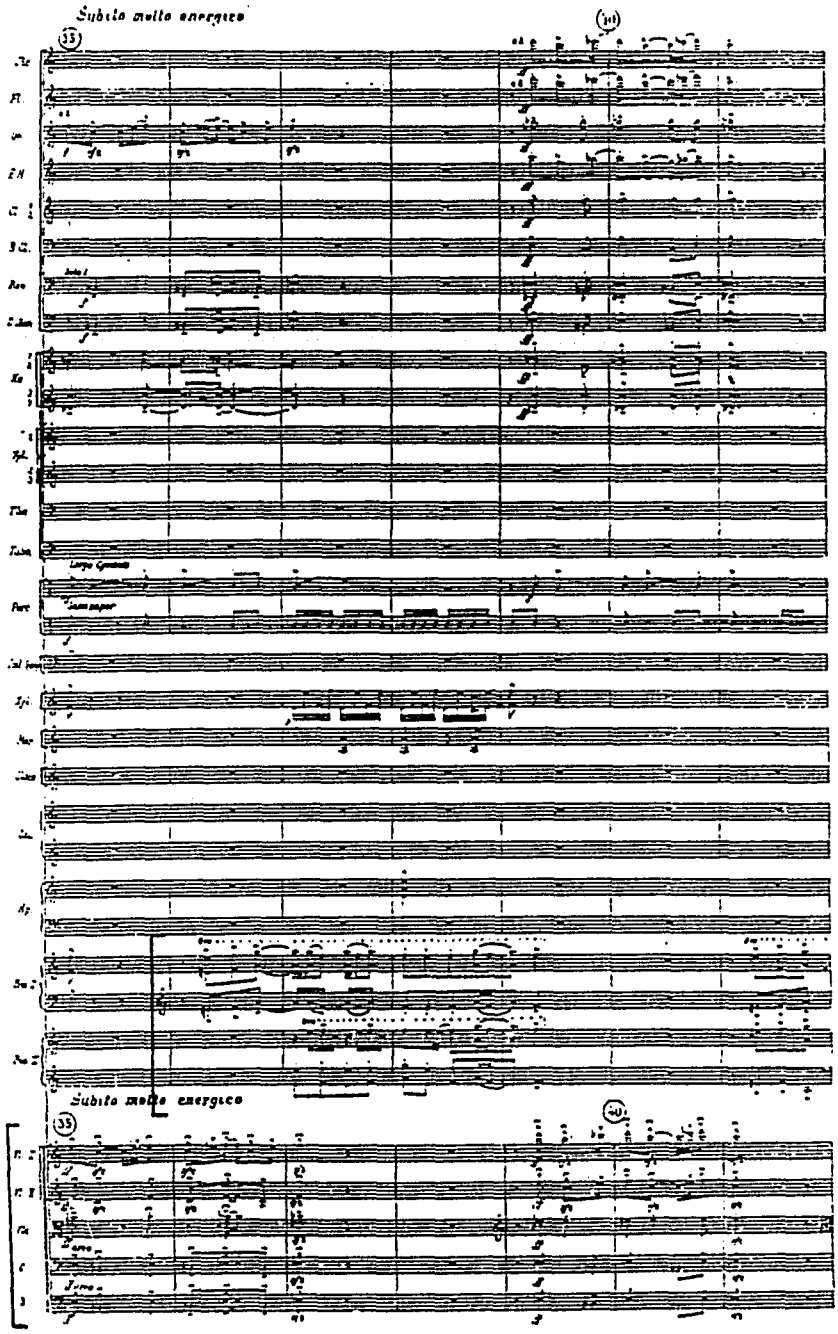
The first page of the score reveals much about McPhee's compositional procedures in the piece. Most prominant are irregular ostinatos, stratified registral placement, and, on many levels, a layering of materials. The first movement is titled "ostinatos," and they are its fundamental building block. At the opening, five separate ostinatos sound. Each has internally shifting pitches and accents. All interrelate:

Example 39. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, five ostinatos from the opening. (All instruments not shown here are tacet.)
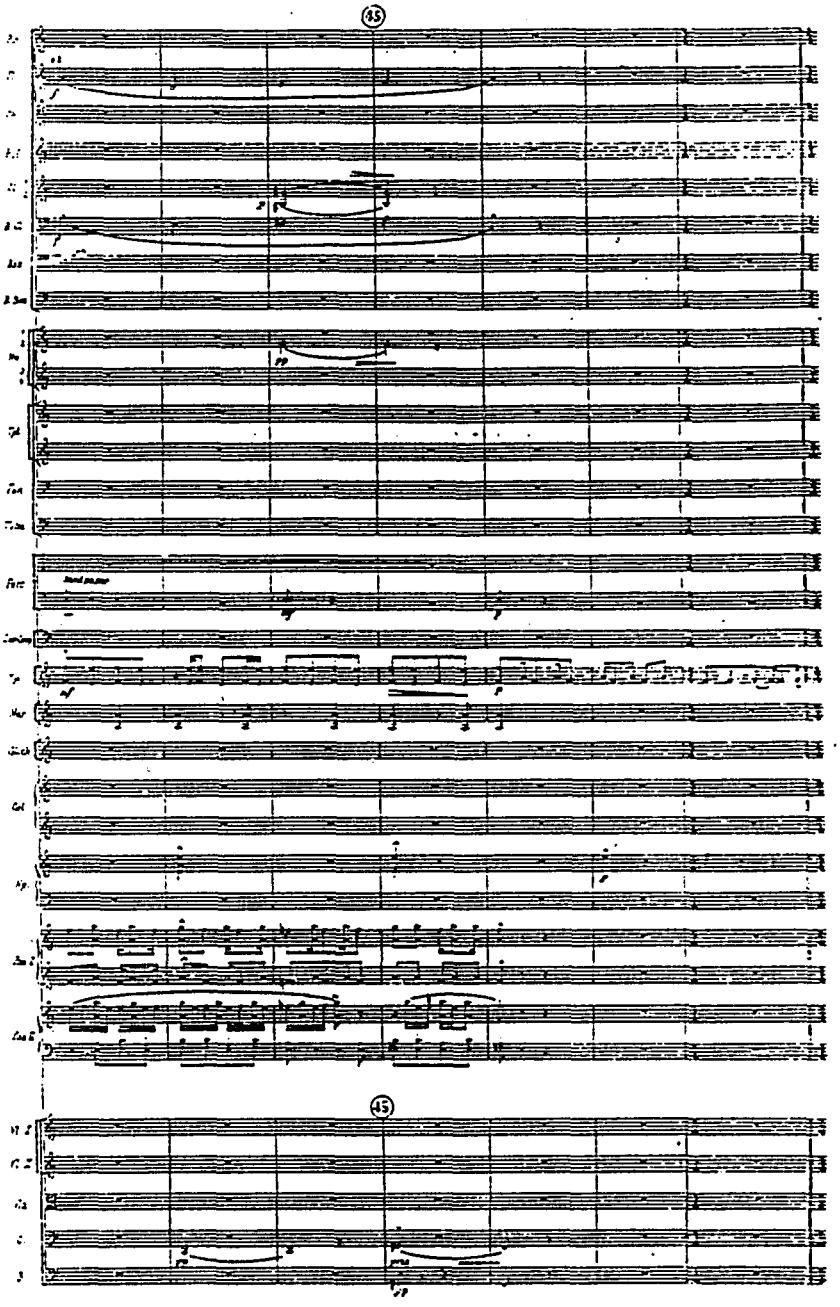


Ostinato B is an augmented version of A; C is built of pitches transposed from A; D uses the two missing pivotal

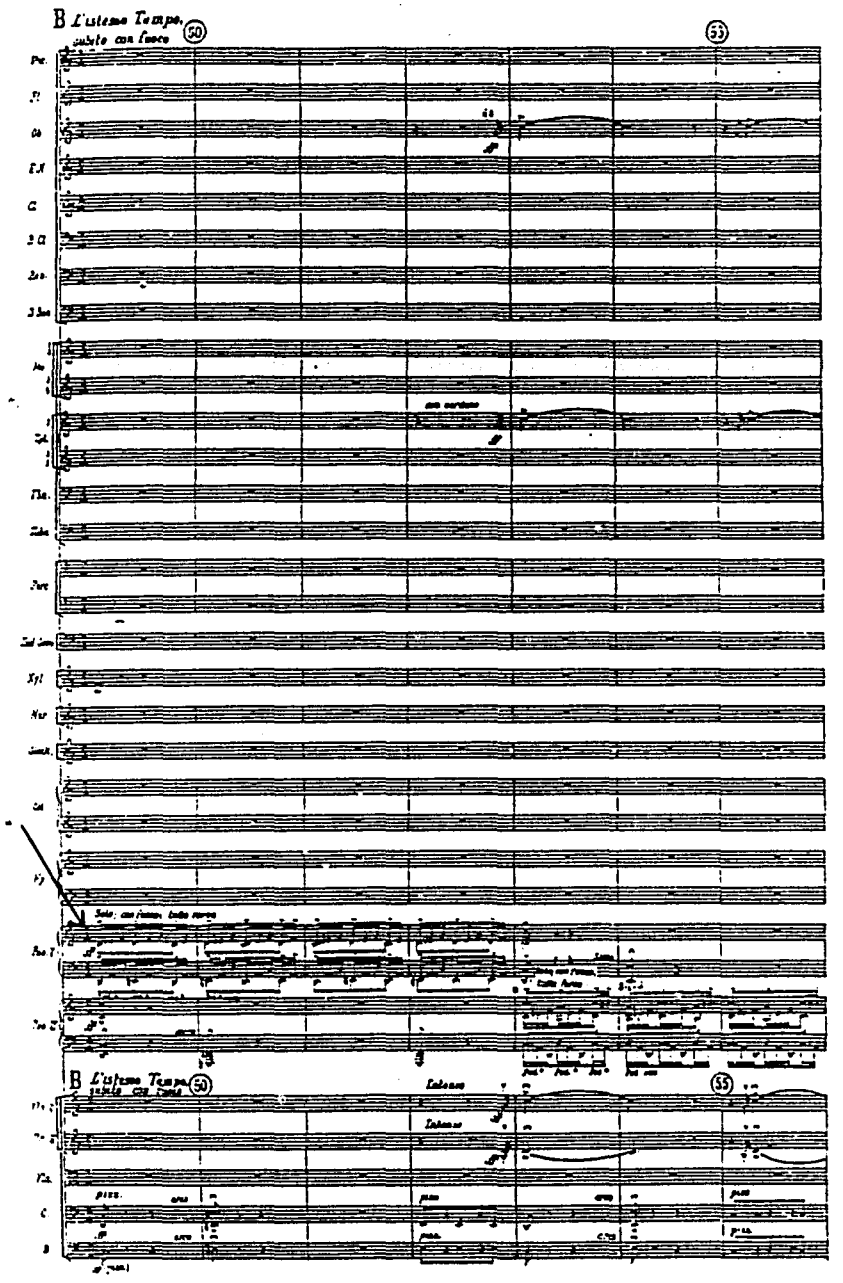
Example 40. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, measures 35-41.



Example 40 (page two). McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, measures 42-48.



Example 40 (page three). McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, measures 49-55.



pitches of A and C; and E reinforces the 3 + 3 + 2 rhythmic division implied in D (beginning in mm. 4-5). Each ostinato falls into broader patterns of repetition; those patterns, in turn, overlap irregularly (see brackets showing ostinato length in Example 39).
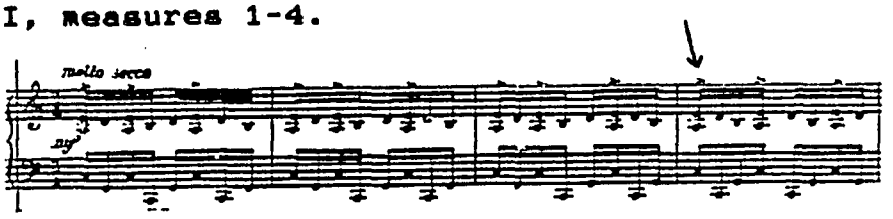
McPhee carefully distributes the registers of these ostinatos. Most stay within a closely circumscribed area; ostinato B is doubled at the octave. By doing so, he achieves a transparent layering in which each individual line is delicately delineated.

At the opening of Tabuh-Tabuhan, McPhee draws upon a specific Balinese repertory--that for gamelan angklung. Yet he seems to be emulating the principles of its construction, not literally quoting any field transcriptions. Mueller has examined this passage in detail, comparing the right-hand of Piano I to one of McPhee's transcriptions of gamelan angklung, and calls attention to a correspondence between the two at m. 4.[64] Yet he rightly concludes that this passage is not directly imitative but one in which McPhee has absorbed and transformed the stylistic traits of the angklung repertory:
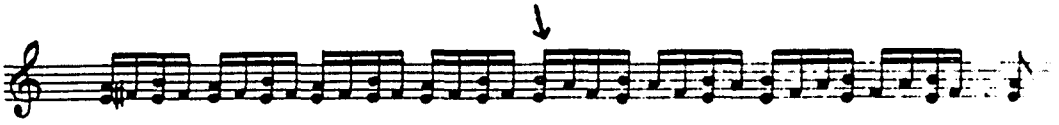
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[64]Mueller, p. 197. Soon after composing Tabuh-Tabuhan, McPhee published the article, "Angkloeng Gamelans in Bali," Djawa XVII (1937), 1-29.

Example 41-A. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, Piano I, measures 1-4.



Example 41-B. Pengechét Sutrian (from gamelan angklung repertory), transcribed by McPhee in Music in Bali, p. 236.



McPhee's use of transcriptions in Tabuh-Tabuhan varies from literal to free; the second movement provides a concise summary of his different approaches. There are basically four sections to the movement, the last of which recalls the first. Each features a separate transcription. McPhee later identified the sources for each section of this movement:

> The first [section] is my arrangement of a Balinese flute melody. The second is the quiet passage from the modern gamelan piece, Kebiar ding. The third is the . . . gamelan angklung. This last represents the style rather than the actual music, which I composed myself.[65]

Lagu ardja, the flute melody used in the "Nocturne," is taken from McPhee's own transcription/arrangement for flute and piano.[66] McPhee later commented on the piano

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[65]McPhee, "An American Composer in Bali," Part 3 of the script for a 5-part radio show that McPhee did for Voice of America in 1958.

[66]The score is at UCLA. Lagu ardja was recorded in 1941 by McPhee and Georges Barrère. (Schirmer-17, released in 1941.)

accompaniment that he added to the flute transcription:

> I tried composing light, percussive accompaniments for the piano, choosing tones that would suggest gongs and other Balinese instruments. . . . Here the composer emerges somewhat, although remaining discreetly in the background.[67]

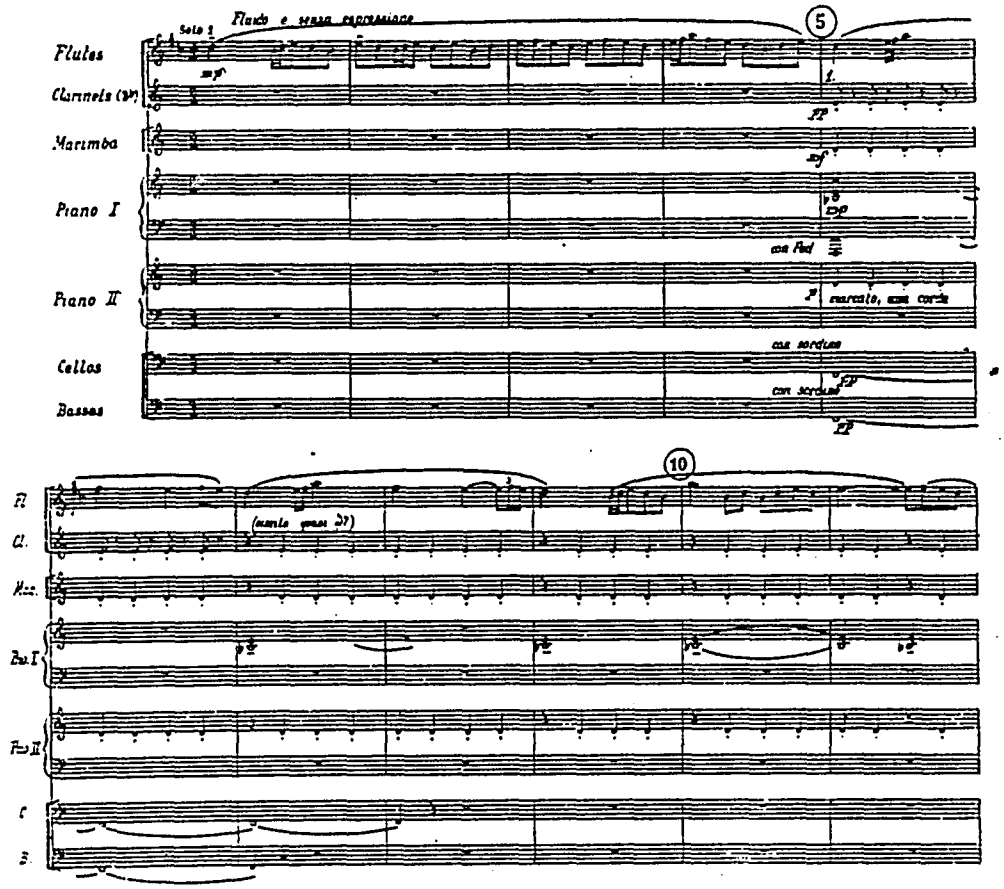
In the "Nocturne," McPhee transfers the first two-thirds of his arrangement of Lagu ardja nearly literally to the orchestra. The melody is transposed down a step and a few ornamental details differ; in the orchestrated version phrasing is added to clarify the shape of the flute part, and the tempo is slower.[68] Yet the melody notes are mostly preserved, and the accompaniment is much the same. McPhee retains the spareness of the piano accompaniment by whittling the instrumentation down to clarinets, marimba, two pianos, cellos, and basses. Here again registral independence is prominent. The F-natural pedal in the low strings and Piano-I bass sounds against an F-sharp high above in the flute:

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[67]"An American Composer in Bali," part 2.

[68]The melody given in the "Nocturne" is one step lower than in the flute/piano score; it is a half step lower than the recording. The metronome marking in the flute/piano score is 120 per quarter note; in the "Nocturne" it is 108.

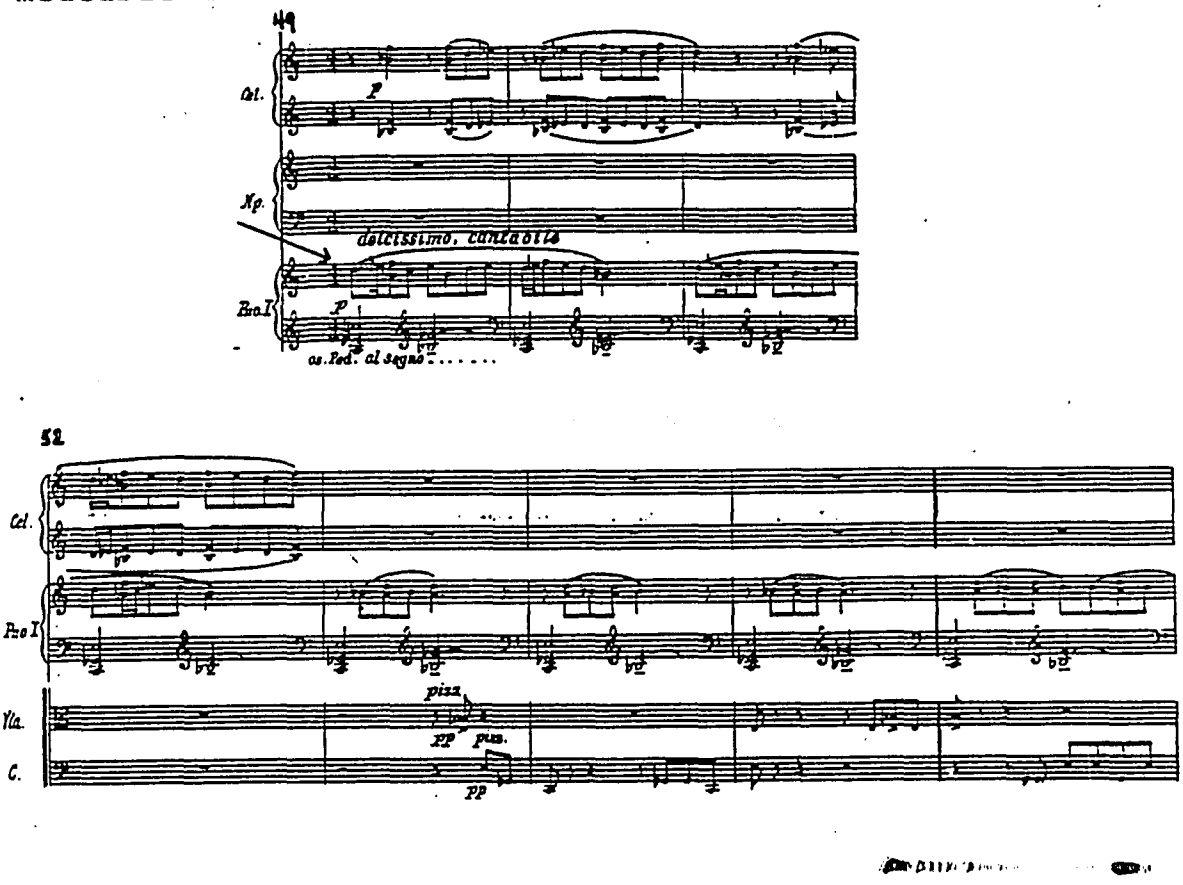
Example 42. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, second movement, measures 1-11.
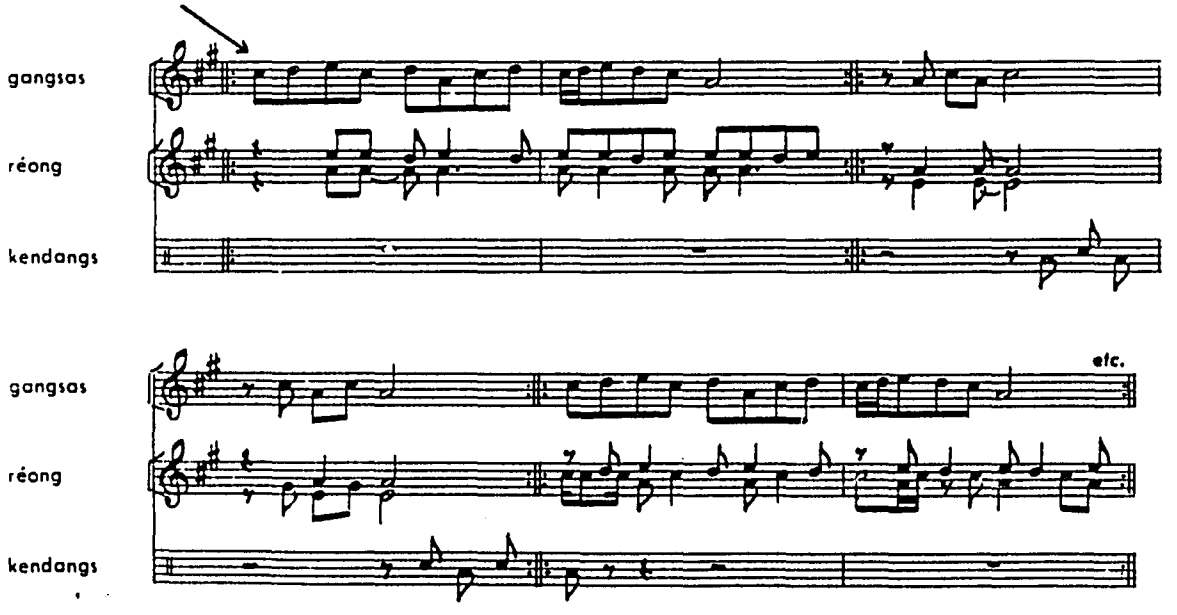


McPhee adheres less closely to the flute/piano transcription once its second section is reached ("Nocturne," m. 33); a string counterpoint is added to the flute, and at the very end of the section he moves to a new pitch area, right before leaving Lagu ardja behind. It will return at the end of the movement.

The part of the movement that stays closest to its transcribed source--Kebyar ding--is heard next. Kebyar ding appears on the Odéon recordings from the late twenties, in much the same form as it is used in Tabuh-Tabuhan (and later transcribed in Music in Bali) (compare Example 43-A to 43-B).[69] In the "Nocturne" version Kebyar

Example 43-A. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, second movement, measures 49-56.



Example 43-B. Kebyar Ding. Transcription by McPhee in Music in Bali, page 341.



ding is transposed (as was Lagu ardja)--this time up a half step from the transcription. (The starting pitch of the music on the Odéon recording is between C-sharp and D.) The scoring of this section, like the opening of the "Nocturne," is pared down and percussive. The first part (mm. 49-72) uses piano and celesta, and assigns the drum part to pizzicato strings.

Next comes the angklung section. As at the opening of the first movement, here McPhee captures the essence of the style, in both pitch and rhythm, conveying what he described as the core of the angklung idea: "The constant interlocking of . . . parts, and the sudden rhythmic breaks that occur from time to time, maintain a steady tension throughout the music."[70] One of McPhee's transcriptions from Music in Bali illustrates the style he was imitating (compare Example 44-A to 44-B). At the close, Lagu ardja returns.
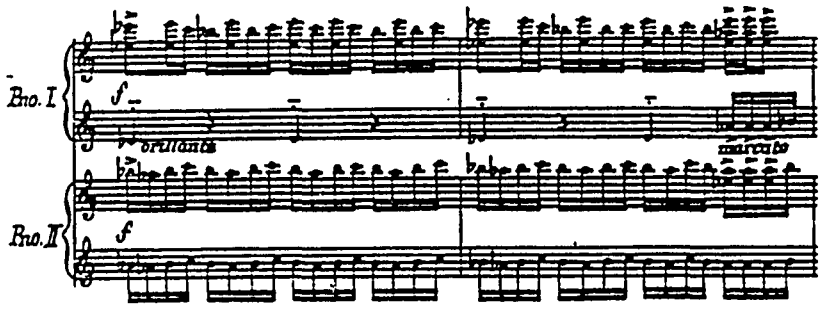
In "The Absolute Music of Bali," McPhee says of the Balinese gamelan, "Its chief strength is its rhythm"[71] and,

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[69]Kebyar, during McPhee's day, was a relatively new style of gamelan music that had "freedom of form, lavish and varied orchestral effects, and bold syncopations and intricate passage-work." (Music in Bali, p. 328). The recording of "Kebijar Ding I" is found on Odeon RA-204780, released in 1928. The Gamelan Gong of Belaluan is performing.

[70]Music in Bali, p. 254.

Example 44-A. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, second movement, pianos, measures 77-78.



Example 44-B. Pengechét Bérong, from the Gamelan Angklung repertory. Transcription by McPhee from Music in Bali, page 250.



accordingly, Tabuh-Tabuhan is in many ways an essay in rhythmic intricacy. Again McPhee is consistent with previous works. As early as 1926, in his statement about the Pastorale and Rondino, he focused on "vigorous" rhythmic changes. The Invention from the same year had a few polyrhythmic areas. And the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet of 1928 thrived on the layering of rhythmic groups and on shifting ostinatos.

In A House in Bali, McPhee describes the process by which he learned Balinese music; one of the characteristics

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[71]p. 166.

that struck him first was its complex rhythms:

> I sat watching the concentration of the players. . . . The music was rapid, the rhythms intricate. Yet without effort, with eyes closed, or staring out into the night, as though each player were in an isolated world of his own, the men performed their isolated parts with mysterious unity, fell upon the syncopated accents with hair's-breadth precision . . . This, I thought, is the way music was meant to be, blithe, transparent, rejoicing the soul with its eager rhythm and lovely sound.[72]

McPhee's writings are filled with observations about Balinese rhythm. He recognizes its role in creating tension:

> The oriental relies on rhythm to create dissonance; he is unconscious of it melodically (or harmonically). Polyrhythm means dissonance.[73]

He also returns to images conveying the vitality of the music, using emotional and physical metaphors:

> syncopation--the joy of striking a note in advance of its intended place, or deliberately sounding it too late, and making up for it later; the joy of cross-rhythm is something like that of swimming across stream; conflict
>
> a contest between two rhythms; a disturbance of balance, like a tightrope act

A random glance at any page of Tabuh-Tabuhan reveals a stratification of rhythmic patterns that are usually presented as different ostinatos. These multi-leveled rhythmic patterns are part of a greater scheme in which the layering of individual lines--either through the

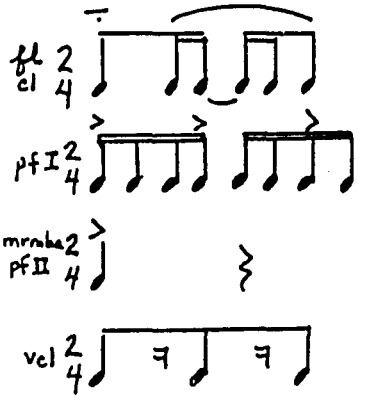
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[72]House, p. 38.

[73]This and the following quotations about rhythm are taken from undated field notes. UCLA.

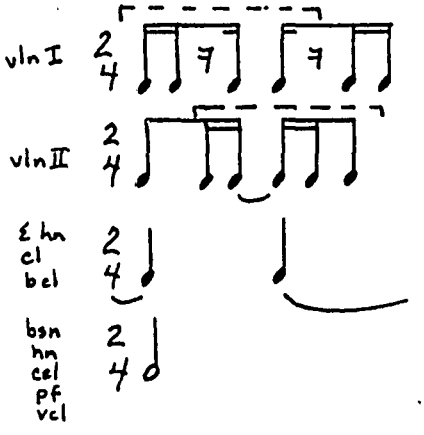
simultaneous use of distinct registers, pitch patterns, or ostinatos--is a central concept behind the work. McPhee's rhythmic levels in Tabuh-Tabuhan are sometimes compatible, articulating different subdivisions of a regularly sounding beat; often, however, they are not. The piece starts off with a bold cross-accent and proceeds from there to incorporate a variety of cross-rhythms; a sampling from the first movement follows. Some of the cross-accents are simple:

Example 45. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement. Rhythmic patterns used in measure 5.



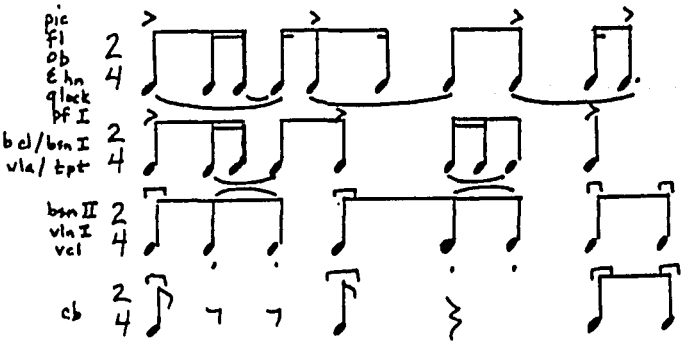
Occasionally a rhythmic counterpoint is used:

Example 46. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement. Rhythmic patterns used in measure 181.



In one instance, the placement of accents and downbows, together with phrasing and beaming, creates a shifting stress:

Example 47. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement. Rhythmic patterns used in measure 127.

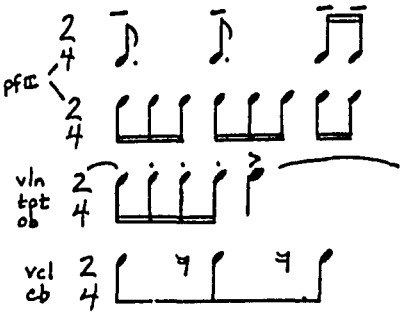


Most frequent, however, are patterns bred of some version of the grouping of eighth notes within 4/4 (or sixteenths within 2/4) as 3 + 3 + 2--a division of the bar that McPhee later called "complex and of apparently inexhaustible vitality." Its presence is common in Balinese music, as McPhee illustrated in "Eight to the Bar,"[74] and it is played upon relentlessly in Tabuh-Tabuhan. The pattern occurs as early as m. 5 of the first movement (see the cello in Example 36); it returns tentatively in m. 44; by m. 49 it is in full evidence; and in m. 56 it sounds against 4 + 4:

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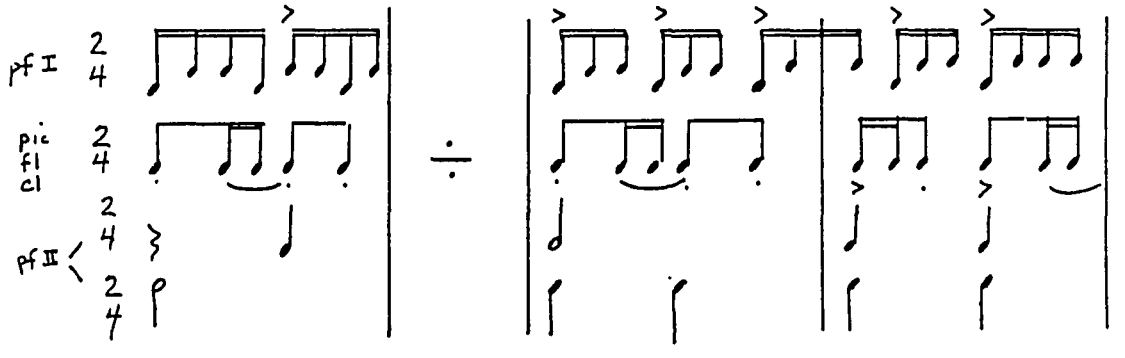
[74]Modern Music XX/4 (May-June 1943), 236.

Example 48. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement. Rhythmic patterns used in measure 56.



Often the cross-stresses are intense, as at m. 221 where the pitches of Piano I outline 3 + 3 + 2, but their accents and beaming are duple. By m. 223, the accents allow the 3 + 3 + 2 grouping to surface, only to be shifted yet again in m. 224. All occur against an undisturbed pulse:

Example 49. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement. Rhythmic patterns used in measures 221-224.



In writing Tabuh-Tabuhan, McPhee was well aware of the pitfalls of using exotic material. In his first known mention of the piece, he reassured Henry Cowell that he was writing "authentic stuff"[75] and in "The Absolute Music

[75]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, [spring 1935].

of Bali" he addressed the issue squarely:

> Just how much, and in what manner a so-called primitive music can be utilized by the occidental composer is a question for each individual conscience. The difference between a pastiche and a creative work in which foreign material has been so absorbed by the artist as to become part of his equipment is something which has never been completely recognized.[76]

Tabuh-Tabuhan, as a work thoroughly imbued with the Balinese gamelan, invites evaluation on this very level. It is by no means a "pastiche" but a work in which McPhee absorbed the "foreign" influence as "part of his equipment." McPhee himself acknowledged the inspiration of Balinese materials within Tabuh-Tabuhan but firmly asserted his own role: "I consider it a personal creation."[77] Some years later, he commented in a Voice of America program:

> This work was composed in 1936, when I was completely given over to the study of Balinese music. The metallic resonance of the gamelan and the exuberance of Balinese rhythms were fresh to my ears, and full of musical suggestions.[78]

At the same time as Tabuh-Tabuhan draws upon gamelan sources it is consonant with McPhee's own style before he went to Bali. The cross-rhythms, irregular ostinatos, sectional structures, and layered textures in

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[76]p. 166.

[77]McPhee, Notes to published score.

[78]"An American Composer in Bali," part 5.

Tabuh-Tabuhan were all present in McPhee's work from the late twenties. He did not tack on Balinese effects but found in the music of the gamelan traits common to his own personal voice. The marriage of his musical aesthetic to that of Bali proved fruitful.

Tabuh-Tabuhan was written in a decade when many American composers were turning to traditional music for inspiration. Some, such as Virgil Thomson in The Plow that Broke the Plains and Roy Harris in the Folksong Symphony, used American folk melodies in a mood of nostalgia. Others drew upon a variety of folk and non-Western musics: Henry Cowell in Ostinato Pianissimo and Pulse, Aaron Copland in El salon Mexico, even Carlos Chávez in Sinfonia India. Tabuh-Tabuhan occupies a leading--even a singular--position within these works of ethnic inspiration, as well as within the whole of twentieth-century American music. It is one of the earliest attempts by a Western composer to meet the East on its own terms. Henry Cowell recognized this when he reviewed a 1947 radio performance of the work:

> It seems to me certain that future progress in creative music for composers of the Western world must inevitably go towards the exploration and integration of elements drawn from more than one of the world's cultures. I think Tabuh-Tabuhan will prove to be an important landmark.[79]

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[79]"Current Chronicle," The Musical Quarterly XXXIV/3 (July 1948), p. 412.

A Brief Return to New York

In mid-September of 1936 Jane and Colin sailed back to New York on the S. S. Orizaba, New York and Cuba Steamship Line. Tabuh-Tabuhan and its brilliant premiere were behind them; Bali lay once again in the future. There was every reason for the glow they basked in. Colin was happy with his new work, and Jane realized that Chavez had given him the opportunity to write it. She wrote Chávez from the ship:

> I wanted to thank you for our Mexican summer, because you were responsible for our coming, and for making it a great success. It was marvellous for Colin. If he hadn't had you behind him he probably would never have finished the work, and to have the performance right away was a great stimulus to him. I am so glad, because when he was in Bali I really thought he might never write anything again.[80]

Even before the premiere McPhee began dreaming of a glorious future for the piece. He had plans for a recording, "which I hope will succeed and am sure will succeed."[81] He went on to say that Stokowski had written asking about the piece, "but as St. is always a bit vague as to near dates, I prefer to have Chávez."[82] By early September, McPhee's sights were set even higher: "Carlos

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[80]Letter, Jane Belo to Carlos Chávez, 18 September 1936. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[81]Letter to "Madeleine."

[82]Ibid.

wants to do [Tabuh-Tabuhan] next season, but wants to broadcast it, as he says it would sound very well on the air. However, I prefer Carnegie Hall and want to induce him that way."[83]

During the fall of 1936, Copland and Chávez tried to help McPhee get a New York performance of Tabuh-Tabuhan. Copland wrote him a letter of introduction to Koussevitzky. It was a warm letter, inviting Koussevitzky to listen to Tabuh-Tabuhan ("I think you will find it full of exotic charm and new sonorities.")[84] And Chávez promoted Tabuh-Tabuhan in letters to five conductors--F. Charles Adler, José Iturbi, Artur Rodzinsky, Koussevitzky, and Stokowski:

> In my series just past in this City I gave the premiere of McPhee's Tabu Tabuhan [sic]. This is, I think, a superb work, and I believe you will have real interest in looking at the score. I am suggesting [to] McPhee to see about the possibility of having a copy available for you.[85]

In the same mail, he sent carbons of the letters to McPhee, suggesting that he contact the conductors himself.[86] By mid-December, Adler, Iturbi, and Rodzinski had all responded positively and asked that McPhee bring

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[83]Letter to Eva Gauthier.

[84]Letter, Aaron Copland to Serge Koussevitzky, 5 October 1936. Koussevitzky Collection/LC.

[85]Letters by Carlos Chávez, all dated 12 November 1936. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[86]Letter, Carlos Chávez to Colin McPhee, 12 November 1936. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

them the score.[87] But it appears that McPhee visited only Koussevitzky and Stokowski and then gave up.

That fall, Jane went back to Bali ahead of Colin, leaving sometime in mid-October.[88] Colin sailed in late December and wrote Chávez from the boat--apparently the first letter he had sent him in some months. He thanked Chávez for his efforts on behalf of Tabuh-Tabuhan but described them as futile: "I played [Tabuh-Tabuhan] to Koussevitzky early in October--nothing. I also gave a score to Stokowski, who professed so much interest in Balinese music--nothing."[89] A sense of failure--even self-pity--weighs down the letter. More than ever, Bali seems like an escape:

> I don't really care [about Stokowski and Koussevitzky's reactions], as my heart is in the East, and this time I feel I am going out for good.

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[87]Chávez relayed their responses in two letters to McPhee, 25 November and 17 December 1936. Chávez Collection-Mexico City.

[88]In a letter to Henry Cowell, Colin says "Jane sails this week by way of Tahiti, and I shall go in January, probably by way of Japan." (13 October [1936], Cowell Collection/NYPL.)

[89]Letter, Colin McPhee to Carlos Chávez, written on the S. S. Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 24 December 1936. Chávez Collection/Mexico City. Perhaps Stokowski's reaction to Tabuh-Tabuhan was affected by a review that McPhee published in Modern Music in the fall of 1936. McPhee complimented Stokowski on his recent arrangement of Boris Godunov, which employed Javanese gongs, but looked less favorably on Stokowski's performance of the Rachmaninov Third Symphony: "There is nothing to be said about this work from our point of view, except that admirers of Rachmaninov's music seemed definitely disappointed on hearing it." ["New York, Autumn of 1936," Modern Music XIV/1 (November-December 1936), 31.]

> Nothing matters to me except to shut out the hideous nightmare which is called civilization.

McPhee was easily defeated: "Although I feel injustice, too, I have not the energy to demand that things should be different." He went on to say that his true musical calling may not be as a composer: "I feel that if I must function in life, it is as a recorder, a preserver of musical ideas which we call primitive, but which will prove to be of great value to future musicians." In closing, he made a plea for sustaining their friendship: "I feel you are one of the few people who can see my point of view. . . . And you are the only one in my life to have shown real enthusiasm for anything I have written."

During the next few years in Bali, McPhee wrote no new music. As before, study of the gamelan was all-consuming. Transcription was to be his primary outlet for putting notes on paper.

CHAPTER VII

THE FINAL YEARS IN BALI (1937-1938)

Sometime in late January 1937 Colin arrived back at his island home. Jane had preceded him by a few months. That March, Colin wrote Ann Hull a letter full of enthusiasm for his work in Bali; it contrasted sharply with the defeated attitude he had shown just months before toward composing.[1] The people of Sayan staged a big celebration to welcome back the McPhees: "The whole village turned out. . . . [There was] dancing and music and feasting, and offerings made for our safe return." His response to Bali remained strong: "Place looks as beautiful as ever; eight different kinds of orchids in bloom at the moment; a mother monkey with two babies brought as a gift; the babies just learning to jump from the piano into the ink."

During their New York interlude, Colin and Jane had received news of Bali from Walter Spies, who mostly wrote

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[1]Letter, CM to Ann Hull, 16 March [1937]. Music Division--LC. Both of the following quotations are from this letter.

of Western visitors he was entertaining. In the spring of 1935 Vicki Baum (author of A Tale from Bali) and her brother had arrived to stay with him. They were soon followed by Cole Porter and his wife Linda. Barbara Hutton had been expected, but instead returned directly to America from India.[2]

Spies's letters show how Bali was fast becoming a chic tourist spot--an island retreat for wealthy playpeople. Others, returning to the West from Bali, observed the same trend. In her introduction to A Tale from Bali (1938), Vicki Baum claimed, "Bali has become the fashion. . . . [There is] an invasion of Bali bars and Bali bathing suits and Bali songs."[3] Perhaps the most popular of those songs was On the Beach at Bali-Bali, which was recorded by at least eight groups in 1936.[4] The song is about an American who "sailed across the ocean to find romance across the sea" but ended up falling in love with the girl from next door:

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[2]Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo and Colin McPhee, 12 June 1935. Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo, 4 November [1936]. Both in Mead Collection/LC.

[3]Vicki Baum, Preface to A Tale from Bali, translated by Basil Creighton (New York: The Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1938), p. xi.

[4]Al Sherman, Jack Meskill, and Abner Silver, On the Beach at Bali-Bali (New York: Edwin H. Morris & Company, 1936). In 1936, the song was recorded by Tommy Dorsey (Victor 25349) and Jimmie Lunceford (Decca 915), among others.

Chorus:
It happened on the beach at Bali-Bali,
I found her dreaming on the golden sands,
It happened on the beach at Bali-Bali,
It wasn't long till we were holding hands.

And while we strolled along the beach together,
We kissed and then she promised to be mine.
You could have knocked me over with a feather
When she told me that she came from Caroline.

Ten years later there was another Bali boom. Pieces like Belle of Bali and Bali Boogie were published, and one of the hits of Rodgers and Hammerstein's South Pacific (1949) was Bali Ha'i.[5]

Colin noticed a change in Bali after his return. By the next spring he was complaining, "Many people from god-knows-where are building houses. . . . Everyone wants to be Robinson Crusoe, and takes others' footprints in the sand as personal insults."[6] But one aspect of life remained untouched: "The music . . . is still marvelous." There were other more serious visitors to Bali, especially Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, who had arrived in the spring of 1936 and worked in the mountain village of Bayung Gedé.[7] Their presence gave added incentive to

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[5]Paul Lamkoff, Belle of Bali (Hollywood: Nordyke Publishing, 1947); Sylvia Fine, Bali Boogie (Hollywood: Samuel Goldwyn, 1946).

[6]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, 10 February 1938. Beinecke Library/Yale.

[7]On 2 May 1937, Mead wrote, "Jane and Colin McPhee have come back and are settled at Sajan with constant communication between us, which adds, as it were, another dimension to life." (Letters from the Field, p. 196.)

Colin's and Jane's work.

Immediately upon his return to Bali, Colin settled down to study the music with renewed purpose.[8] Although at times old doubts and insecurities surfaced, he seemed to have a steady sense of the importance of his research. His drive to compose may have lessened temporarily, but his desire to study Balinese music remained strong. By building on contacts he had made during his first years on the island, McPhee was able to intensify his pace.

Scattered among Colin's field notes are various thoughts about his role in the musical life of Bali. He describes a process of piecing together "scraps of knowledge [that] lay scattered within the isolated minds of musicians all over the island."[9] In some ways he is overwhelmed by the task at hand; increased study reveals greater complexity: "The inner meaning of the music seemed to recede the more I knew it."[10] Yet he felt a strong conviction about his field work, a conviction that is revealed in a number of letters to friends. For example, early in 1938 he wrote Copland:

> I am really glad I came back, for there has been loads of new material to absorb; all that I really

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[8]"Both Jane and I are hard at work." (Letter to Ann Hull.)

[9]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[10]Ibid.

> studied before and knew well was the outer surface, the beautiful shell. . . . I feel sure that this work is going to have great value for Western musicians, if they survive.[11]

A Bali Congress

When McPhee arrived in the spring of 1937 the island was bustling with plans for a three-day all-Bali festival, scheduled for late June. Its purpose was to celebrate the restoration of self-government.[12] Lebah met McPhee at the boat, preoccupied with preparations for the festival. The Peliatan kebyar group--of which Lebah was a member--was to take part in a competition with gamelans from across the island. For this occasion, they had commissioned a dazzling new piece from Gedé Manik, a drummer and composer who lived on the north side of Bali. Manik's drumming was so spectacular that McPhee once described him as playing "with the energy of the devil."[13]

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[11]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 16 February [1938]. Collection of Aaron Copland. McPhee expresses similar confidence in his ethnomusicological work in letters to Chávez (24 December 1936; Chávez Collection/Mexico City) and Van Vechten (13 February 1938; Beinecke Library/ Yale). To Van Vechten he writes: "Perhaps 50 years from now if life still persists in any organized form, there will be musicians who will get ideas from the neat patterns and fascinating technic."

[12]"By order of the Queen [of Holland] the eight regents would be reinvested with a semblance of their earlier power; in a month's time each regent would, in his own district, swear a new oath of allegiance in the temple before the high priest and receive from the resident the new title of Zelf-Bestuurder or self-ruler." (House, p. 198.)

[13]Undated field notes. UCLA.

McPhee gives a detailed account of the intrigue that preceded the festival--an example of just how seriously the Balinese took such musical contests. The Peliatan gamelan had to ward off spies from the village of Blahbatu, who were trying to steal their new piece. Ultimately the Peliatan men won the contest (after catching the spies), and Lebah was able to return to Sayan to work with McPhee.[14]

In October of that same year, McPhee and Spies presented a program of gamelan transcriptions for two pianos as part of a congress staged in Bali by the Java Institute of Jakarta. Programs for three concerts of two-piano transcriptions by McPhee and Spies exist; none is dated.[15] In a letter to his mother, Spies describes their performance at the Bali congress:

> Im Oktober haben wir hier einem Kongress vom Java-Institut. Dreihundert Menschen kommen aus aller Welt. . . . Mit McPhee gebe ich ein Konzert auf zwei Klavieren von balinesischer Musik als Beweis, dass sie

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[14]McPhee tells this story in House, pp. 198-203.

[15]See the appended programs.

auch auf Pianos zu spielen ist und aufzuschrieben, und überhaupt weil sie schön ist, auch ohne Gamelan.[16]

In A House in Bali, McPhee tells of a later performance with Spies that was given at the Harmony Club in Den Pasar; it was a repeat of their Bali-Congress program.

> This time I invited the Regents and a few musicians to come and hear what their music sounded like when arranged this way. They were quite delighted. . . . When it was over the Regent of Tabanan made a quite charming little speech of compliments, in which he lamented only that the tuning of the piano did not always match.[17]

Spies had been transcribing Balinese and Javanese music since the mid-1920s, when he worked as music director for the Sultan of Jogyakarta.[18] While there, he learned to play gamelan instruments and began making transcriptions of the repertory for two pianos, which he

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[16]Letter, Walter Spies to his mother, 26 July 1937. Schönheit und Reichtum des Lebens Walter Spies (Maler und Musiker auf Bali 1895-1942), edited by Hans Rhodius (Den Haag: L.J.C. Boucher, n.d.), p. 350.

Jaap Kunst, in a tribute to Spies, claims that McPhee and Spies gave a concert at a Bali congress in 1934; he must have meant 1937 because Jane Belo, in the introduction to her article, "Balinese Children's Drawing," states: "This paper was originally prepared for the Cultural Congress organized by the Java Instituut, the first conference to bring together in Bali scholars from other specialized areas of Indonesia. The congress was held in October, 1937." (Jaap Kunst, "Walter Spies als Musiker," in Schönheit und Reichtum, p. 239; Jane Belo, TBC, p. 240.)

[17]House, pp. 222-23.

[18]Spies was employed there beginning in 1923. [Hans Rhodius and John Darling, Walter Spies and Balinese Art, ed. John Stowell (Zutphen: Terra, 1980), p. 21.]

performed with a German woman living in Java.[19] Jaap Kunst, who did field work in Java during the twenties, was a great admirer of Spies and, in a letter written to Erich von Hornbostel in 1926, described scores for six Balinese gamelan works that Spies had transcribed and performed for him. Kunst talked of the problems in transferring Balinese tunings to the piano and then exclaims about Spies's transcriptions: "Wie schön war es!"[20]

Just how many transcriptions were made by Spies and how great their influence was on McPhee is not known. McPhee's decision to score so many transcriptions for two pianos was probably not a coincidence. He had previously shown some interest in that instrumental combination with his Sea Shanty Suite of 1928, where two pianos form the basis of the accompaniment. But once he reached Bali that scoring became a mainstay in his translation of Balinese music into Western terms. Lebah remembers that McPhee and Spies made music together frequently. They played two-piano works for a time but mostly gave solo performances for each other.[21]

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[19]Spies's piano partner was a Frau Hofland. (Rhodius and Darling, p. 27.)

[20]Letter, Jaap Kunst to Erich von Hornbostel, 8 May 1926. Reprinted in Schönheit und Reichtum, pp. 240-41.

[21]Interview with I Madé Lebah. McPhee's transcriptions are discussed in Chapter VIII.

The "Gamelan Semar Pegulingan"

During the summer of 1938, after the excitement of the Bali Festival was over and Lebah had returned to Sayan to work, he and McPhee began discussing plans to start a gamelan in Sayan--one devoted to the music of semar pegulingan. This was a special ensemble dedicated to Semar, the god of love ("god of the pillowed bed"), that had been performed in the palace courtyards, mostly in the afternoons and evenings.[22] After the courts had been disbanded under Dutch rule, the gamelan semar pegulingan had all but disappeared. McPhee found this music ravishing. The instruments were decorated with carvings of flowers and dragons in red lacquer and gold leaf, and their sound was "elegant, [and] sweetly poignant."[23] But for McPhee the strongest appeal of all was that of a mysterious, nearly lost genre, vital in bygone days when Bali was still untouched by the West.

This was not the first gamelan McPhee had organized in Sayan. After Sampih joined the household, McPhee had formed a gandrung club to accompany the boy's dancing. (Gandrung--or joged--was a popular dance form using an

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[22]House, p. 25 and Music in Bali, p.xiv. McPhee describes the founding of this gamelan in House, pp. 203-212.

[23]House, p. 121.

orchestra of bamboo xylophones.)[24] For a time, this took the edge off of the long Sayan evenings, which McPhee found too quiet. There was no other gamelan active in Sayan at the time; a previous one had been disbanded some years before. Besides, it took time to build up rapport with the villagers, to establish the kind of trust that would allow them to accept an outsider's participation in their music-making. The gandrung club was short-lived; McPhee claims he had only moderate success with the group.

McPhee's luck with the gamelan semar pegulingan was quite different. By the 1930s, the style had become mostly a historical one. Few sets of instruments remained, and even fewer clubs performed upon them. McPhee first heard about the music through Nyoman Kalér during his early days on the island. But not until the summer of 1932, when the Sayan house was being built, did McPhee confront the music itself. With two houseboys, he traveled to remote villages, east of the base of Gunung Agung, the most sacred of Balinese mountains. In one of those villages, he heard an incomplete semar pegulingan--

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[24]Music in Bali, pp. xvi, 7. McPhee describes the founding of this first group in the introduction to his "Children and Music in Bali," Djawa XVIII/6 (1938), 1. The article was revised in 1954 and reprinted twice. First, in Childhood in Contemporary Cultures, ed. Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 70-94. Later, in TBC, pp. 212-239.

just enough to whet his appetite.[25] He was able to hear a complete ensemble on only a few occasions in the old palace in the region of Gianyar.[26] In Music in Bali, McPhee bases his discussion of semar pegulingan upon an ensemble in Badung.[27] So, with musical activity nearly non-existent in Sayan and Lebah at hand to help out, McPhee founded the semar pegulingan ensemble:

> I had no idea of bringing about a belated renaissance in Sayan, for I did not expect much enthusiasm over my plan among the young men of the village. But for me there would be both pleasure and profit, for I was tired of going about the island with a notebook, asking questions like a government official. By forming a club not only would I have music near the house once more, but I could learn the forgotten court style of playing in the most natural way possible, by hearing it pass from teacher to pupils.[28]

The instruments were borrowed from Anak Agung Gedé Mandera of Peliatan, whose family had won them in battle from the palace in Nagara, south of Peliatan.[29] After the instruments were acquired, McPhee called together the men and boys of Sayan and formed a club, in the Balinese

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[25]House, p. 108.

[26]House, p. 167.

[27]Music in Bali, pp. 140-49.

[28]House, p. 204.

[29]Interview with Anak Agung Gedé Mandera, Peliatan, Bali, 11 April 1984. Lebah claims that McPhee paid approximately 5 ringgit to rent the instruments. (Interview with I Madé Lebah by Carol Warren, Peliatan, Bali. n.d. Warren is writing a biography of Lebah.)

style. Each member made a small deposit upon joining, and fines were assessed for missed rehearsals. Lebah was elected the leader.[30]

The next step was to find a teacher, someone well-enough acquainted with this old repertory to be able to pass it on to the musicians of Sayan. McPhee was fortunate in locating I Lunyuh, who thirty years earlier had been a leading musician in the palace of Payangan, approximately ten miles from Sayan, which in its heyday had boasted a beautiful semar pegulingan ensemble.[31] After some coaxing, Lunyuh accepted the invitation. In his field notes, McPhee described Lunyuh as

> . . . about 60, slightly deaf, naive, phlegmatic, pock-marked, hasn't bathed for years [in A House in Bali McPhee says, "he smelled rather like a dried fish"], thick-set, clothed in the old-style, has a marvelous memory, and plays trompong and drum in excellent style.[32]

It was Lunyuh's trompong playing (a principal element in the semar pegulingan ensemble) that especially appealed to McPhee. In manuscript notes, McPhee recorded his surprise "at the grace and agility of his style, his free syncopations."[33] He went on to observe, "The rest of the gamelan was a background. He was like a star pianist

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[30]"Children and Music in Bali," p. 2.

[31]House, p. 205; Music in Bali, p. xvii.

[32]Undated field notes. UCLA. House, p. 209.

[33]Undated field notes.

in a concerto"--not a surprising comparison for a composer whose big works had all been piano concertos. In describing Lunyuh McPhee also attempted to convey the paradox of Balinese music, which is so animated, while by contrast the physical bearing of the musicians is so impassive:

> The guru [Lunyuh] had begun very simply, but soon his playing began to take on life. . . . The music had become almost a dance, a dance that was light, agile, filled with sensuous grace. Yet he sat there, a stolid figure of apathy to the outside world, never moving, except to reach out for the farthest gongs.[34]

With Lunyuh, as with Lebah, Lotring, and Kalér, McPhee feverishly wrote out transcriptions--taking down the old tunes as they poured forth from the man's memory. McPhee claimed that Lunyuh knew much more music than he could ever teach the club during the three days he spent working with them each week.[35]

According to Mandera, who followed the group's progress, all the musicians in McPhee's gamelan semar pegulingan were from the area surrounding Sayan, except Lebah.[36] Sometime after McPhee's days there, the instruments were moved back to Peliatan, which is also

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[34]House, p. 209.

[35]House, p. 211. In Music, p. xvii, McPhee says Lunyuh came to Sayan twice a week.

[36]Interview with Anak Agung Gedé Mandera.

Lebah's home village.[37] They lay unused until 1968, when Lebah revived the ensemble; recordings of them have been made since.[38] Today the group performs much of the traditional repertory, including works by Lebah, Lunyuh, and Lotring. Lebah, although now retired as leader of the group, still performs with them occasionally.[39]

The "Club of Small Men"

Besides semar pegulingan, there was another old style that especially intrigued McPhee--that of gamelan angklung--so he started an ensemble in Sayan to perform its repertory. This time the group was made up of village children between the ages of six and eleven. According to McPhee it was unique on the island for that reason. McPhee wrote a good deal about the founding of this ensemble. Its story fills a chapter in A House in Bali; he wrote an article about it for Djåwå (1938); and in 1948 he turned the tale into a charming children's book, A Club of

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[37]In describing his final weeks in Bali, McPhee says that the semar pegulingan club was disbanded, "for the instruments must return to Peliatan." (House, p. 226.)

[38]One recording was produced by Robert E. Brown in 1971: "Gamelan of the Love God," Nonesuch H-72046, released 1972. Brown and Philip B. Yampolsky sketch the group's history in liner notes.

[39]I heard the semar pegulingan perform in full costume at an outdoor amphitheater in Peliatan in April 1984. They played one composition by Lotring and two by Lebah. Lebah performed with them that day, even though he is now retired from the group.

Small Men.[40]

As with semar pegulingan, McPhee had been enchanted with gamelan angklung since his early days in Bali. It was a musical style at the opposite end of the social scale from that of semar pegulingan: no court connection at all but music of the village people, a "folk orchestra" (or so McPhee calls it in Music in Bali).[41] Although angklung ensembles--made up mostly of four-keyed metallophones--were not uncommon in Bali during McPhee's time, the incorporation of the actual instrument called an "angklung" was. McPhee describes the instrument as having "three bamboo tubes of different lengths which are hung within a light wooden frame and tuned to sound a single tone in three octaves when the frame is shaken."[42]

The founding of the children's gamelan seems to have grown naturally out of other work going on in Sayan. Because of Sampih, there were many children in the Sayan house, and they were entranced by the semar pegulingan when it was first formed. McPhee describes them hanging

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[40]House, pp. 212-220; "Children and Music in Bali," op. cit.; A Club of Small Men (New York: The John Day Company, 1948). One of his earliest studies of Balinese music was about the angklung: "Angkloeng Gamelans in Bali," Djåwå XVII (1937), 1-29.

[41]p. 234.

[42]An angklung could also have four tubes, "Two larger tubes of equal length produce the basic tone, while two smaller tubes sound the tone an octave higher." (Music in Bali, p. 235.)

around at rehearsals and then sneaking off to try out the instruments while they were not being used.[43] During this period, both Colin's wife Jane and Margaret Mead were working closely with children on the island, probably contributing to his interest in them.[44] But equally as compelling was the angklung music itself; McPhee wanted an ensemble of his own close at hand to study and enjoy.

Once again, McPhee had to find a teacher for the ensemble--this time, someone who not only knew the musical style but could work with children. McPhee chose I Nengah, from the village of Selat. He described him as being "perhaps forty, shy, gentle, a man of few words."[45] Nengah came to live in McPhee's house and was a great favorite with the children.

Through Nengah's work with the angklung ensemble, McPhee not only had a chance to study its repertory but to

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[43]House, pp. 212-13.

[44]In a footnote in "Children and Music in Bali" (p. 8) McPhee writes: "Drawings by these [same] children are reproduced in the paper by Jane Belo (Mrs. McPhee), 'Balinese Children's Drawing,' (Djåwå, Sept.-Dec., 1937), which fills in another side of the picture I am attempting to create." Belo's article has been reprinted in, Childhood in Contemporary Cultures, ed. Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 52-69 and in TBC, pp. 240-59. Mead's "Children and Ritual in Bali" was published in Childhood in Contemporary Cultures, pp. 40-51 and reprinted in TBC, pp. 198-211.

[45]"Children and Music in Bali," p. 7.

observe Balinese pedagogical methods. McPhee found Nengah's method of teaching a new work "strange" yet typical on the island.

> He says nothing, does not even look at the children. Dreamily he plays through the first movement. He plays it again. He then plays the first phrase alone, with more emphasis. He now indicates that the children are to commence. . . . Bit by bit the children who are learning the melody go from phrase to phrase, forgetting, remembering, gaining assurance.[46]

The Sayan gamelan angklung, like the gamelan semar pegulingan, still plays together today. The small men have become big. Although many of the original members are now dead, approximately half of the ensemble of thirty-six is from the original group; some are sons of original members. Although they have purchased a new set of instruments since the thirties, at least one of their angklung was a gift from McPhee. They remember McPhee and smile proudly when discussing their connection with his work.[47]

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[46]"Children and Music in Bali," pp. 7-8.

[47]In April 1984, I heard this ensemble play and talked to some of the original members. I Wayan Rima, who is not of the original ensemble but whose mother was a cook for McPhee, told me that the group's angklung are the ones given them by McPhee. (Interview with I Wayan Rima, Sayan, Bali, 7 April 1984.) To the 1954 revision of "Children and Music in Bali" McPhee added a postscript telling what he had heard in 1952 of the gamelan's progress. Lebah, who was in New York then with the Peliatan group, told him that they had added many instruments to the original ensemble given them by McPhee and that "they play everywhere." (TBC, p. 236.)

In his field notes, McPhee mused over what benefit, if any, these revivals had to the people of Bali. At one point he states, "A revived art is always futile (necromantic)."[48] Elsewhere he compares the work of Lotring, Lebah, and Lunyuh, and then considers his own role:

> As for me--I had succeeded in helping prolong the past. To delay it even for a day, change which brought inevitable decline, was my one wish. . . . Who had benefitted? None. But at the same time, none were harmed by this look toward the past, and from it much pleasure had been derived, many evenings of diversion had been the result.[49]

To McPhee it seemed as though these gamelan revivals mostly aided his own study. Even in his introduction to Music in Bali, he talks of them as preserving a "record" of Balinese music, especially of older styles.[50] But McPhee underestimated the lasting effects of his work. I Madé Bandem, a Balinese dancer, musician, and scholar, who is director of the Academy of Music and Arts in Den Pasar, Bali, has studied in the West and hence has an outside perspective on the music of his people. He claims that two of McPhee's great contributions to the music of his island were to revive these old styles and to expose musicians to works from other villages.

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[48]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[49]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[50]Music in Bali, p. xiv.

> McPhee had a great reputation for bringing new repertoire to certain clubs by bringing teachers from one village to another. He exchanged repertoire between north and south Bali. In 1938, north Bali had a great repertory called kebyar légong. They were fanatic about it in north Bali, and Gedé Manik taught one of their pieces in Beluluan, Den Pasar. As an exchange, a club from South Bali--I Madé Regog was the leader--brought their own kebyar style to the group in north Bali. All of these ideas came from McPhee. I was told by my teacher Nyoman Kalér about that.[51]

Through his gamelan revivals, McPhee not only preserved a record of dying repertories but brought the music itself back to life.

Travel During the Bali Years

McPhee's other principal means of studying Balinese music was to travel across the island, searching out as many varieties of gamelan playing as could be found. While criss-crossing Bali, he was quite careful about keeping detailed notes, many of which are preserved in the McPhee Collection at UCLA. In them, a process of systematic exploration and inquiry is revealed.

Lebah accompanied McPhee on many of those trips. He drove McPhee's 1931 Chevrolet and served as a go-between with the villagers, reassuring them about the purpose of this white man's visit and coaxing them into sharing their musical secrets. Lebah remembers long stays

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[51]Interview with I Madé Bandem, Den Pasar, Bali, 11 April 1984.

in Kuta (to work with Lotring), in Karangasem, and in Desa Culik and also recalls the care McPhee took in taking notes.[52] According to Lebah, McPhee kept a notebook for each of the principal Balinese musical styles--which is confirmed by the organization of the books of transcriptions at UCLA.[53]

Excerpts from these field notes reveal something of the musical characteristics McPhee took special interest in (and of life on the road). From the village of Tenganan, he writes:

> I lie in the hard iron cot, half suffocated by the thick mosquito netting and the lack of air in the stuffy little room. . . . Through the air floats the music of the selunding, sweet, mechanical, like the leisurely chiming of a giant music-box. . . . As I listen I think of the enigmatic indifference, the weary reverence with which the men turn out this music.[54]

In his notes, McPhee repeatedly compares the music of south Bali (where he lived) to that of the north. He not only finds the music, but also the people, to be different. At one point he asks, "Where is the real Bali? In the exuberant North, or in the more mysterious, more reserved South?"[55] The contrast of the north with Sayan is

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[52]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

[53]Interview with I Madé Lebah by Carol Warren.

[54]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[55]This is one of the few pages of field notes that is dated: "16 August 1938, North Bali." UCLA.

marked:

> Once more back in Sayan, the whole North Bali excursion seems like the exploration of another land, where people are brusque, energetic, cordial, careless, and emancipated. A land of sunshine and loud music, bold gestures, handsome people, uninhibited sex impulses.[56]

McPhee was by no means so enamored of Bali and its music that he lost his critical abilities. In writing of the angklung in the village of Sibetan, he spares few words: "Disagreeable and rude people, noisy and always on the defensive. Bad playing. . . . Gamelan only interesting for its five notes and example of decadence." Another angklung, in the village of Prasi, west of Karangasem, was, "A strange sekaha of men who seem half wild, half crazy, and very fantastic. Willing, however."[57]

Some trips were purely for pleasure. One page in the field notes is simply titled "Holiday" and describes an excursion to Gilimanuk, on the Western tip of Bali, with Lebah and Walter Spies. McPhee says the car was loaded down with provisions, "piled around us like sandbags." Included were necessities like food, but also "luxuries: rum, Dutch gin, cigarettes, a portable tent, the portable phonograph, folding chairs, dominos, cameras,

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[56]Undated field notes. UCLA.

[57]These quotes are taken from separate pages of undated field notes. UCLA.

a batch of Ellingtons, frying pans."[58]

McPhee often took time in these notes not only to jot down observations in some short, efficient form, but to shape stories. He practiced his prose constantly and seemed to be thinking always about the books that lay in the future. Words are inspired by every level of experience, from visiting the local market to observing musicians, and a narrative sense is ever present. He recounted another trip to Gilimanuk--this one in August 1937 with Jane, Spies, and some houseboys:

> Spent a week at Gilimanoek with Walter, Jane, and the boys. We put up two tents. Spent the days sailing in praus across the straights [sic] of Java. Frigate birds high in the air in the late afternoon. Each evening at dusk the flying-foxes come out by the hundreds from the mangrove swamps and flap slowly over our heads across the water to Java, where the mango trees are plentiful and ripe. We shoot through the wings of several; they are close enough for us to see the hole left [sic]. A weird, Doree-like [sic] sight. We spend the afternoons--the tide is out at this time--walking over the coral reefs, and peering down into crystal depths. Small fish of incredible brilliance, gold, scarlet, crimson, ultramarine and silver; enormous starfish; the coral life a window on the Museum of Natural History. Gaping below are the huge Bear Paws or giant clams--the same whose shells are used in Cathedrals of France for l'eau benit (Tridacna maculatus?) We thrust a bamboo pole in one, it closes at once and no human strength can remove it. Alas for the pearl diver whose foot entered here. As we return we find two of these giant clams near the surface. With the help of the boys we pry them loose of the coral and bring them out of the water.

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[58]Undated field notes. UCLA.

> One measures a foot and a half, the other is slightly smaller. They seem to weigh a ton. . . .[59]

McPhee also traveled a good deal outside of Bali. Originally, he had envisioned his stay on the island as the first leg in a journey throughout Southeast Asia--to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos.[60] But the appeal of Bali held him there for most of his time in Asia. McPhee's travels outside Bali are sketchily documented. In A House in Bali he mentions several trips to Java, and in letters to Van Vechten he describes his route back to the United States in 1934 through Southeast Asia and a trip to Java.[61] There are also twenty-one typewritten pages of notes from trips through Colombo, Sumatra (two separate sets of notes), Java, and Peking in the McPhee Collection at UCLA. All, except for the second set on Sumatra, are couched as though they were planned for a guidebook of some sort--a plan that never materialized. The notes include nothing about music but describe especially appealing sights, good restaurants, and comfortable sleeping accomodations. The second set of Sumatra notes (with a beginning date of January 20--no year) is a daily digest of a trip McPhee took from Padang north across the equator.

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[59]Field notes, Aug. 15, 1937. UCLA.

[60]Music in Bali, xiii.

[61]House, pp. 105, 215. Letter to Carl Van Vechten, 10 November 1934. Letter to Carl Van Vechten, 13 February 1938. Beinecke Library/Yale.

An Aborted Recording Project

Towards the end of McPhee's days in Bali, one bitter disappointment cast a shadow upon work that otherwise had been consistently gratifying. Through Columbia University he had received a grant of $1,000 to support his field work; part of the money was to go toward recording Balinese music, a project he desperately wanted to complete.[62] The Odéon recordings of 1928 were the only ones that had been made of Balinese music, and the unsold stock had been destroyed by a salesman in Den Pasar during the 1930s.[63] McPhee's hope was to record many of the gamelans he had worked with--to have aural documents to complement his written transcriptions. In a detailed letter to Ruth Benedict at Columbia University, he described the failure of his effort, "which breaks my heart."[64]

He worked together with a 32-year-old Austrian musicologist, one Dr. Halusa, who was in charge of musical instruments at the museum in Batavia. Halusa was said to

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[62]McPhee tried to get a Guggenheim award in the fall of 1936 but failed (Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, 13 October [1936]. Cowell Collection/NYPL). The full story of his attempt to make recordings is told in two letters in Mead Collection/LC: CM to Ruth [Benedict], 18 November [1938]; CM to Margaret Mead, 3 January [1939].

[63]House, p. 72.

[64]Letter, CM to Ruth Benedict.

have made recordings in Sumatra, and he was recommended to McPhee by Willem Stutterheim, an anthropologist and director of the museum.[65] McPhee advanced Halusa the money to order 500 records, as well as needles, from Sweden. But the equipment refused to function properly when Halusa arrived in Bali in August 1938: "From the standpoint of recording sonority the machine was good; it would not, however, record without an alteration of pitch once, twice or more during the record."[66] Various remedies were tried. Extra batteries were purchased; an expensive transformer was brought in. A mechanic was also consulted:

> Gamelans were scheduled to come to the house; they did so, sitting there all day while we wasted record after record. This went on two and a half weeks; we had used 60 sides without getting satisfactory results.[67]

The failure of this project was not only a blow to McPhee's hopes for documenting Balinese music but a direct hit to his pride. He felt that he had been duped by Halusa. After Halusa's failure in Bali, McPhee found out that the Sumatra recordings had not yet been heard by anyone. McPhee told Benedict that the museum people in Batavia were "furious" with Halusa and that the local

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[65]Willem Stutterheim was the author of Indian Influences in Old-Javanese Art (London: The India Society, 1935).

[66]Letter to Ruth Benedict. In House, McPhee gives the date of the recording attempt as August 1938 (p. 224).

[67]Ibid.

papers had published articles exposing his incompetence. That September, Walter Spies wrote to Jane (who was then in New York) of Colin's failure with the project; he seems to think Colin might have been able to make a success of it with a little perseverance:

> Of course you heard of all the misfortunes that poor Colin had with his recordings! It is too dreadful--and I think he is a fool not to try to do it in some other way. Now that everything is prepared--and . . . o god--it is so difficult to speak to him about it.[68]

For McPhee, a unique opportunity had been lost. Whether because of funding limitations or simple procrastination, McPhee had waited until the very end of his stay in Bali to attempt the recordings. It was the only chance he would ever have to make them.

Life on the Personal Front

Details of Colin McPhee's personal life in Bali--especially of his relationship to Jane Belo--are sketchy at best. The two were married not long before going to Bali in 1931 and divorced in July 1938, close to the end of their stay there. They lived separate lives for some time in Bali, and Jane finally left in late March 1938

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[68]Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo [in English], September 1938. Mead Collection/LC.

with Mead and Bateson.[69] Her traveling companions went on to New Guinea, and she returned to the United States. Her relationship to Colin is a key element in understanding the whole Bali experience.

Although Colin and Jane were equally devoted to Balinese culture, they were able to live there only because Jane had the money to do so. She paid for the house in Sayan, and from all indications she completely supported Colin financially during their marriage.[70]

Nowhere in his writings about Bali does Colin acknowledge this financial support. In A House in Bali (published in 1946) not only does he never mention Jane but he couches his tale, from beginning to end, in the first-person singular. To readers of that book, it appears as though Colin went to Bali alone, built the house himself, and experienced every detail of life there

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[69]In a letter of 10 February 1939 to "Johnny" (no last name), Jane says she and Colin were divorced "last July." Mead Collection/LC.

[70]Jane talks about ownership of the house, which she paid for but was deeded in Colin's name, in several letters written after her divorce. Perhaps the most complete is one to her mother (10 February [1939]. Mead Collection/LC). Minna Lederman has said that Jane gave Colin money "for a time after their divorce." (Telephone interview, 5 October 1982).

as a single man.[71] Only when Music in Bali was published (posthumously) was Jane's name included--in the acknowledgments, within a list of several people thanked "for further collaboration in the field."[72]

Lebah is perhaps the person who knows most about Colin and Jane during the Bali years because he lived in the Sayan house. But he has little to say about the relationship.[73] Madé Peghi, a Balinese woman who was married for a time to Theo Maier, a Belgian painter living in Bali, remembers that Jane spent a lot of time away from Sayan in "her mountain house."[74] What Peghi is probably referring to is Jane's many trips to Bayung Gede, where Mead and Bateson were working.

Although none of McPhee's writings from the thirties reveal much about his life with Jane, in the mid-forties he wrote several letters to Sidney Cowell in which he reflected back on the marriage. In one, he responded to Mrs. Cowell's proposal that he stay in Shady, New York while both she and Henry were there. Colin was sure such

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[71]While at work on House, Colin wrote to Carlos Chávez: "Jane is furious, for her name is not mentioned once in the book, and indeed I give no indication of having been married--au contraire." (Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 5 November [1945]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.)

[72]Music in Bali, p. vii.

[73]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

[74]Interview with Madé Peghi, Sanur, Bali, 8 April 1984.

an arrangement would not work:

> I never expect to live with anyone again, and I have gradually realized that even the warmth of a romantic attachment cannot compensate for the loss of cool solitude. Groan as I may at coming home forever to an empty place, an empty life, I seem actually to prefer it so. . . . If I were different, I'd probably still be happily married to Jane. As it was, we lived in separate houses in Bali, as far apart as possible on the grounds.[75]

In another letter, he acknowledged that he could be difficult:

> I realize that everyone of my few friends have reproached me, at one time or another, with either my harshness or withdrawal. That does not exclude either Margaret [Mead] or Minna [Lederman]. Or George Davis or a boy called Vinny. And most of all Jane . . .[76]

In yet another he recognized his difficulty in accepting and nurturing love:

> It's my great and basic, unfortunate trait that the warmth and affection which you (and Henry) have given so wholeheartedly, to which I owe my life today, and which I have, in one form or another, seemed to depend upon all my life, I feel at times I must deny and destroy. I managed that to perfection with Jane, to both our ruin. I don't want to destroy, by following the same pattern, our friendship.[77]

Even though Jane had known from the beginning that Colin was homosexual, this eventually became a dividing

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[75]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, June 22 [mid-1940s]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[76]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, October 31 [post 1947]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[77]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Tuesday" [post 1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

issue. In Colin's Bali field notes, he occasionally makes allusions to affairs with Balinese men, but he is mostly discreet and extremely private. Several of his friends have suggested that one of the appeals of Bali was its openness to homosexuality.[78] Colin later bluntly described to Sidney Cowell at least one reason for the end of the relationship:

> . . . my few emotional-sentimental relations have not penetrated too deeply. My alliance with Jane was broken off by me in a final fit of stubbornness, and on the whole I don't regret it, for she had turned into what for me was a prig, probably because she was tired of my untidy and carefree attitude towards life. Anyway, I was in love at the time with a Balinese, which she knew, and to have him continually around was too much for her vanity. So it all ended as I had foreseen at the beginning, and Jane was unbelievably loyal long after there was any reason for it. . . . My one experience with marriage and the opposite sex was quite enough.[79]

In retrospect Jane gave a picture of what their life together had been like. Soon after her divorce from McPhee, she married Frank Tannenbaum (a scholar and author on Latin American topics), and she wrote Margaret Mead about her relief at living with someone who was not hypersensitive in his work habits:

Isn't it lovely that [Frank] can write with me in

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[78]Interview with Virgil Thomson, Chicago, Illinois, 6 January 1982. Interview with Shirley Hawkins, Los Angeles, California, 16 June 1982.

[79]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 23 May [post-1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

> the room? He said to me a little while ago, between pages--'I'm not the sort of person who has a fit if someone sneezes'--I wonder if he realizes how welcome to me is that sort of ease in a creative person.[80]

Jane seems to have been sympathetic to Colin's struggles with composition and to have encouraged him during the years they were together. Besides her letter to Carlos Chávez after the premiere of Tabuh-Tabuhan, in which she thanked him for bringing Colin back to composition,[81] she wrote with similar concern to Willem Stutterheim in Java after she and Colin were divorced:

> I heard Colin reached New York, and had a splendid reception. I do so hope he will get started now and write a lot of lovely music. That's what he should have been doing, you know Stutt, all these years. Working on Balinese music is all right, very good, but he is a composer.[82]

Colin stayed alone in Bali for nearly a year after Jane left. He sailed from Batavia on 26 December 1938.[83] A number of factors conspired to make his departure necessary. First and foremost was a lack of money. Although Jane seems to have supported him for a time after their divorce, she would not do so indefinitely. During

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[80]Letter, Jane Belo to Margaret Mead, 26 May 1940. Mead Collection/LC.

[81]Letter, Jane Belo to Carlos Chávez, 18 September 1936. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[82]Letter, Jane Belo to Willem Stutterheim, from Sayan, Bali. 9 March 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

[83]Letter to Ruth Benedict.

this period, he got his first outside grant--the $1,000 from Columbia University--but such money was not plentiful. Political events also forced him to leave. By late 1938 the war clouds in Germany and Japan even began to affect an island as small as Bali. In October 1938, shortly after the Munich crisis, a Japanese photographer suddenly visited McPhee's house. He claimed to be showing a friend sights on the island, but McPhee sensed that his house was being surveyed--"[His] friend seemed to be counting even the coconuts in the trees."[84] Around the same time the Dutch authorities in the East Indies mounted what Margaret Mead has called "a witch hunt against homosexuals."[85] Many Westerners in Bali were under suspicion and several, including Walter Spies, were thrown in jail. Spies's arrest took place on 31 December 1938, only days after McPhee had left Bali. Nowhere does McPhee record himself as the object of such suspicion, yet the timing of his departure suggests that he was affected. Besides, he had not allowed Jane to tell anyone that they had been divorced the previous summer.[86]

A dispiriting shroud covers the closing pages of A House in Bali, as McPhee describes his preparations for

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[84]House, pp. 224-25.

[85]Letters from the Field, p. 155.

[86]Jane states this in several letters written in 1939, especially one to "Johnny", 10 February 1939.

departure. He spent his final evening there driving with Lebah along his favorite roads, and Lebah took him to the boat the following morning.[87] McPhee sailed via the Cape of Good Hope and Halifax to New York, where he arrived in mid-February of 1939.[88]

McPhee was at peace in Bali, enjoying an inner contentment that no environment would ever again provide. In 1942, as he followed from America the effect of the war upon his cherished island, McPhee wrote:

> Everyone carries within him his own private paradise, some beloved territory whose assault is an assault on the heart. Some felt this when Paris was taken, others when Britain was bombed. For me it was Bali, for I had lived there a long time and had been very happy.[89]

A Bali Postscript

Jane Belo returned to Bali in January 1939, not long after Colin had left, and found it quite different. On one level it was hard "to pick up life again without Colin to make things interestingly difficult";[90] on another, all Westerners on the island were being harrassed

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[87] House, pp. 228-30.

[88] McPhee wrote to Carl Van Vechten on board ship and gave his route and anticipated arrival date. (8 January 1939, Beinecke Library/Yale)

[89] Colin McPhee, "The Green Earth Scorched," Modern Music XIX/3 (March-April 1942), p. 166.

[90] Letter, Jane Belo to "Johnny," 10 February 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

by the Dutch authorities. The purpose of Jane's trip was to finish research on Balinese trance.[91] En route, she met Mead and Bateson in Sydney, Australia. They had just finished field work in New Guinea and were debating whether or not to return to the U.S. The situation in Bali was unsettled enough that they decided Jane should not travel there alone. So they accompanied her and spent six weeks following up on work they had done one year earlier.[92] Jane offered to pay the increased expenses of the trip, and Mead and Bateson accepted on the condition that the money be given through the Museum of Natural History.[93] After a brief stay with Katharane Mershon in Sanur, the three of them moved to the house in Sayan.[94]

Like Colin and Jane's return to Sayan in 1937, hers alone this time was celebrated by the villagers:

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[91]This research culminated in the book, Trance in Bali, preface by Margaret Mead (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

[92]Mead describes their decision to return to Bali in Letters from the Field, p. 155.

[93]Dates for this trip are given in Margaret Mead's "Diary Covering Period from Rabaul, November 26, to January 20, on board SS Marella" (typescript). The cover of this diary gives the dates "Nov 1935-Sept 1936," but the dates specified inside, beginning with Jan. 4 (no year), relate to 1939, not 1936.

[94]Jane described her re-entry into Bali in a letter to her mother (10 February 1939, Mead Collection/LC). According to this letter, Katharane Mershon's husband, Jack, was among the many Americans who had left Bali and returned to the United States.

> The people all seem delighted to have me back; they gave me a tremendous welcome party with the 2 orchestras that Colin had trained, the dancing girls who now number 34, . . . and dozens of beautiful offerings were brought by all my friends.[95]

Walter Spies had taken over stewardship of the two Sayan gamelans immediately after Colin left Bali. But when he was thrown into jail on 31 December 1938, the task became a bit complicated.[96] By late January, Spies was writing to Jane expressing concern for the future of the groups; he asked that she let the children continue to practice at the Sayan house.[97] But in March, Jane reported to Willem Stutterheim that Spies continued to direct the groups while in jail.[98]

Westerners on Bali were not having an easy time of it. Accusations of homosexuality had been flung at many; even Jane was harrassed:

> All of us who lived in a pleasant way in Bali had been investigated--police in and out of our houses, all our servants arrested and questioned. Of the 34 dancing girls in my village, all were questioned on my habits, down to the 3 year olds. Thank heaven I had a free conscience and could stand up

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Ironically enough, Spies wrote to his mother about his new responsibilities with the gamelans on 31 December 1938, the day of his arrest. (Letter, in Schönheit und Reichtum, pp. 378-79.)

[97] Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo, 23 January 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

[98] Letter, Jane Belo to Willem Stutterheim, 9 March 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

in a haughty manner and demand an explanation for such bandying of my good name.[99]

Since Colin had kept their divorce a secret, she had difficulty convincing the authorities that she was "an individual, with a name, a passport, and a soul of my own." Finally, after several days of questioning, she was allowed to live in the Sayan house again.[100] Jane was among the lucky ones, because "at least half of the people living in Bali have been asked to leave, or have left of their own accord, one dares not wonder why. . . . The Balinese think the whole white caste has gone mad."[101]

Several letters written by Jane during her final months in Bali remain; all center around the problem of getting Walter Spies released. Jane was devoted to Spies, and together with Mead, Bateson, and Katharane Mershon, she found him a lawyer and tried to pull as many strings as possible. In letters written during this period, Jane is careful in describing the charges against Spies, mostly because the mail was being censored.[102] It seems Spies had been arrested on several counts, especially for turning

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[99]From her description, Jane seems to have been questioned about possible homosexual liasons, too. (Letter, Jane Belo to "Johnny," 10 February 1939.)

[100]Ibid.

[101]Ibid.

[102]"Letters are confiscated, opened, read, held up, police are in and out of our houses." (Ibid.)

his house in Ubud into "a rendezvous for homosexuals"[103] and for having sexual relations with minors.[104] The handling of the case was confused enough that Jane, who spoke out repeatedly in his defense, was unclear about what was happening:

> There is a good deal of feeling that the case against Walter is a little bit unjust, that he has simply been caught up in the turmoil--semi-political, I gather--that started in Java, and that he is actually innocent of the charges which do apply to some of the other charming residents of our island--the point about minors.[105]

The Balinese were baffled by these charges. Homosexuality was not a crime to them, and Spies had been a good friend, with much sympathy for Balinese culture. One day, a man from the village of Selat talked to Jane about the situation; Jane's papers contain notes of the conversation:

> He made the statement that according to Balinese law the offence is not recognized. In Bali, he said, to be 'salah mekoerenan' (wrongly married) is to have relations with an animal, or for a man to take a girl not yet mature, or a woman of higher caste. Mekoerenan means male with female (lanang-istri), and male with male cannot be mekoerenan.[106]

The days of joy in Bali for Westerners were

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[103]Letter, Jane Belo to "Gerald" [last name unknown]. 7 April 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

[104]Letter to Willem Stutterheim.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Jane Belo, typescript notes, 18 March 1939. Mead Collection/LC.

temporarily over. Although Spies was released on 1 September 1939, he was put back in prison nine months later when Hitler's troops invaded the Netherlands; all Germans living in the Dutch East Indies were arrested then. Spies died on 18 January 1942, while on board a boat with prisoners being transported from Sumatra to Ceylon; the boat was downed by a Japanese plane.[107]

Jane's stay in Bali lasted until 26 June 1939. She finished her field work and then made plans to rent the house.[108] Her hope was to hold onto it as a retreat:

> The house is altogether too nice to sacrifice, and it was too much trouble to build, not to keep it up for whenever I or any of our friends want to come to Bali for a few months. My idea is not to be a resident. As a tourist, one can come and go--which really suits me better. One gets more work done if one stays a short time.[109]

That plan was successful for at least a little while. Rudolf Bonnet wrote Jane in June 1940, reporting on the condition of the house and of life on the island. He had just eaten dinner there the previous evening with Theo

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[107]The story of Spies's final days is given in Rhodius, pp. 49-50.

[108]In Mead Collection/LC are a number of papers prepared before Jane left Bali in 1939. Two documents drawn up on 15 June 1939 declare that the house and property in Sayan belong to Jane Belo and that Godfried Abraham Schotel would manage the property while Jane was in the United States. A four-page inventory of the house's contents also exists.

[109]Jane Belo, Letter to her mother.

Maier, who was renting the place.[110] According to I Wayan Rima, who today lives next to the McPhee property, the Japanese eventually ransacked the house; they took away furniture and cut down the beautifully carved rafters.[111] The other parts of the buildings were eaten by white ants.[112] Today, only the foundation remains.

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[110]Letter, R. Bonnet to Jane Belo, 17 June 1940. Mead Collection/LC.

[111]Interview with I Wayan Rima.

[112]McPhee had a premonition about the fate of the house. In the closing pages of A House in Bali, as he discusses preparations for leaving the island, he quotes one of the the house boys as saying, "You will not come back this time. . . . I see it in your eyes. . . Look, . . . White ants have begun to bore through the floor." (House, p. 228.)

CHAPTER VIII

HARD TIMES IN NEW YORK (1939-1952)

In January 1939, McPhee once again announced his return to New York in a letter from the ship. This time his spirit was subdued, without the buoyancy and self-confidence of 1935. He told Carl Van Vechten that upon reaching New York he wanted to see him "at once."

> That may sound a little high-pitched, but I assure you it's true; I have been literally starved for friends, and since Jane left last March have spoken nothing but Malay. The Balinese are good comrades, but there is still a lot to be desired in their friendship.[1]

As in 1935, McPhee immediately published an article about Bali in Modern Music, yet his mood was changed. In 1935 he had touted the glories of Balinese music, hopeful of its potential for Western composers.[2] But in 1939, his first post-Bali publication, "Decline of the East," is despairing.[3] He reviewed changes on the island since the

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[1]Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, 8 January 1939; written "between Sumatra and Colombo; heavy seas." Beinecke Library/Yale.

[2]"The Absolute Music of Bali," Modern Music XII/4 (May-June 1935), 163-69.

[3]Modern Music XVI/3 (1939), 160-167.

Dutch take-over at the turn of the century and charted a steady cultural demise:

> The radjahs have now given up all pretense of elaborate court-life; they are no longer interested even in encouraging Balinese arts. Nearly all their gamelans have been discarded; now they buy cars, motorcycles and European clothes, send their sons to school in Java or even Europe, discuss the price of sugar and Hitler. . . . The visible general effect of all this is sordid, deplorable.[4]

It is a bitter article, full of anger at Western society for ravaging the East. At its core is a personal lament. Not only was traditional Balinese music in danger of being lost to the people of the island, in an immediate sense it was lost to Colin McPhee.

Stripped of his house in the Sayan hills, with its servants and breathtaking view, and of the money that had provided these comforts, McPhee was adrift in New York, trying to find a solid mooring in seas that became choppier each year. The life of a gentleman scholar had suited him perfectly. He loved good food, good drink--the good life. Now, the man who had existed in Baltimore and Paris on the generosity of patrons, in New York on occasional piano accompanying and solo jobs, and in Bali on the beneficence of his wife suddenly found himself with no financial support. Once that support was taken away, his creative energy, which had flowed unpredictably even

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[4]Ibid., p. 164.

under the most comfortable circumstances, began to wheeze in tortured spurts. He acknowledged that his luck had "turned" when he split with Jane.[5] And in a letter to Sidney Cowell he stated just how closely money was related to that luck:

> I'll never be happy or contented with a small amount of money, first of all because money that comes from work seems to me somehow tarnished, and secondly, the only things in life that I want are the things money can buy.[6]

It would have been a hard time for any composer to re-enter the United States, especially after an absence of nearly a decade. Money was tight--even for those who had stuck it out here--and attention was focused on the war abroad. In March 1939, just a month after McPhee's return to New York, the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia, then Poland; the Russians invaded Finland. The world was in tumult.

A Missionary for Bali

By March 1939 McPhee had found an apartment on East 10th Street in New York and had begun trying to build a new life. However changed his mood, McPhee still was determined to spread news of Bali. Soon after his article in

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[5]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 16 October [1946]. Chavez Collection/Mexico City.

[6]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 28 April [ca. 1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

Modern Music came a piece for the New York Times, "Report on Bali's Music," which is essentially a reworking of "The Absolute Music of Bali" from 1935.[7] Other articles followed in Musical America, the Peabody Bulletin, Modern Music, and Asia and the Americas.[8] As a result, many New York composers (and others) learned about Balinese music. Minna Lederman, editor of the journal Modern Music, recalls, "Colin's Bali was in the air, . . . we all seemed to be familiar with Bali."[9]

McPhee was injecting Balinese music into a New York air that was increasingly receptive to Asian influences. Henry Cowell had been teaching a course, "Music of the World's Peoples," at the New School for Social Research, and his articles in Modern Music reflected a growing concern with the musical resources offered by the East. For example, Cowell's "Music of the Hemispheres" from 1929 is merely a story of his encounter with a Chinese

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[7](5 March 1939), X, 7-8.

[8]"Musical Exploration in Bali," Musical America LX/3 (10 February 1940), 12, 263; "Figuration in Balinese Music," Peabody Bulletin XXXVI/2, 23-26; "The Green Earth Scorched," Modern Music XIX/3 (March/April 1942), 163-166; "Eight to the Bar," Modern Music XX/4 (May/June 1943), 235-242; "In This Far Island," series of eight articles in Asia and the Americas XLIV-XL (1944-45).

[9]Interview with Minna Lederman, New York City, 12 October 1981.

musician,[10] but in his "Towards Neo-Primitivism," written four years later, he exhorts his contemporaries to look outside their own culture:

> Now the time has come for a strong new counter-movement, full-blooded and vital. . . . This tendency [i.e. of contemporary composers to explore non-Western musics] is obviously neo-primitive in its drive for vitality and simplicity. It is not an attempt to imitate primitive music, but rather to draw on those materials common to the music of all the peoples of the world, to build a new music particularly related to our century.[11]

Similar articles by other musicians followed. In 1934, Raymond Petit wrote for Modern Music about "Exotic and Contemporary Music"; in 1943 Paul Nettl published "The West Faces East"; and in 1946 John Cage produced "The East in the West."[12]

Cowell and McPhee had shared an interest in Asian musics since at least the late 1920s, when they listened to the famous Balinese recordings together.[13] In the early forties, McPhee gave some sense of the bond--and

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[10]Modern Music VI/3 (1929), 12-18.

[11]Modern Music X/3 (1933), 150, 151.

[12]Petit, MM XI/4 (1934), 200-203; Nettl, MM XX/2 (1943), 90-94; Cage, MM XXIII/2 (1946), 111-115.

[13]In reviewing the 1952 visit by a Balinese troupe to New York, Cowell recalled his own history with the music: "When good recordings of Balinese music were made with Odeon and Beka labels in the 1920's, McPhee and I heard them together and wondered enthusiastically over them. He went to Bali, stayed seven years, became intimately acquainted with this music. I stayed home, read McPhee's writings, and listened to more recordings." ("Current Chronicle," The Musical Quarterly XXXIX/1 (January 1953), 98.)

conflicts--between them:

> I find [Henry] has a really sensitive ear, at least when it comes to discriminating listening to exotic records, and it is a pleasure to play Javanese and what-have-you records to him and discuss them. At the same time he is stubborn and pedantic, with the mind of a child, and I simply avoid any clash by keeping away from serious discussion. As a matter of fact, he has indicated quite a lot of folk music about which I knew nothing, and been very generous in lending me records which were both rare and interesting.[14]

After returning to New York, McPhee cultivated friendships with others interested in non-Western musics, such as the ethnomusicologist George Herzog. He and McPhee made recordings of Javanese musicians at the 1939 New York World's Fair and shared an interest in American Indian music.[15] McPhee had other such colleagues: Carleton Sprague Smith, with his longtime involvement in Latin-America, and of course Carlos Chávez.

Again, as in his 1935, McPhee brought the sounds of Bali to New York. He published three two-piano transcriptions of gamelan works under the title Balinese Ceremonial Music in 1940, and he issued a recording titled The Music of Bali in 1941, which included transcriptions

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[14]Letter, CM to Minna Lederman, 15 May [1943 or 44]. Archives of Modern Music/LC.

[15]The Archives of Traditional Music at the University of Indiana has a fifteen-minute recording made by McPhee and Herzog at the World's Fair in 1939. (Telephone conversation with Louise Spear, Librarian, 19 July 1984.)

for two pianos and for flute and piano.[16] Both attracted some attention in the New York Times.[17] The published works were hailed as "a unique contribution, opening up new vistas in the tonal realm."

All three pieces in Balinese Ceremonial Music are dedicated to Margaret Mead. The first two--Pemoengkah and Gambangan--date from 1934; they had been performed on McPhee's 1936 concerts of Balinese music in New York and Mexico City. The third--Taboeh Teloe--was completed in 1938.[18] Each illustrates a different facet of the gamelan repertory. Pemoengkah is from the overture to the shadow play, Gambangan from ancient music used in cremation ceremonies, and Taboeh Teloe from feast music played by the Gamelan gong gedé (Gamelan of the Great Gongs). Each

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[16]Colin McPhee, Balinese Ceremonial Music (New York: G. Schirmer, 1940). McPhee, Music of Bali, Schirmer 17, released in 1941. Schirmer has no files about these works.

[17]Balinese Ceremonial Music was reviewed in the New York Times ("Three Bali Pieces Transcribed"), 14 July 1940; Music of Bali was reviewed in the same paper by Ross Parmenter ("Records: From Bali"), 15 June 1941.

[18]Dates for each are given in the score. McPhee must have submitted the first two transcriptions to Schirmer while he was in New York during 1935-36, because after returning to Bali he wrote his Peabody chum, Ann Hull: "I would like to ask you a favour. Before I left I sent in to Schirmers the ms. of two Bali pieces for 2 pianos--the ones accepted last year. I also wrote to Engel about them. No word. Could you phone Miss Daniels and ask what is doing about them? I would also like to have word from them regarding the pieces, and also a contract." (Letter, CM to Ann Hull, 16 March [?1937]. Hull Collection/LC.)

has an opening description by McPhee, conveying the atmosphere of the piece, as well as its function, original tuning (given in a chart), and concise but detailed performance-practice instructions. With Pemoengkah, for example, McPhee describes the quartet of gendér used for the original Balinese piece:

> It is difficult to convey by words an impression of the strange beauty of the sound from these instruments. Sweet, yet acid, soft, yet metallic, the four gendér are in perfect accord with the nature of the performance. The clear-cut design of the music and the delicate arabesques are reflected in the transparent lacework of the puppets, whose gestures, miniature and heroic, nervous and menacing, are in turn retranslated into sound by the sensitive and, at times, vaguely sinister nature of the music.
>
> The music must be played lightly and transparently, not expressively, with just enough pedal to attain a good legato.[19]

McPhee conscientiously points out that Pemoengkah and Gambangan were included on the 1928 Odéon recordings but that his transcriptions were taken from "actual playing."[20]

The Schirmer recording was made with McPhee and Benjamin Britten at the pianos; Georges Barrère was flutist. The album includes seven pieces--the three published ones, as well as Rebong and Lagu delem (both for two pianos) and Lagu Ardja and Kambing Slem (both for flute and piano). Three ten-inch records were released,

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[19]McPhee, [Introduction to] Pemoengkah, in Balinese Ceremonial Music, p. [2].

[20]Ibid.

and the set sold for $2.50.[21] McPhee wrote Copland after the records came out, "I must say they are not bad; . . . they are not flawless, from my point of view, but on the whole I'm pleased."[22] Listening to the original 78s today, the poor recording quality makes it difficult to perceive subtle performance nuances. Yet there is a flexible interchange between parts and an inviting rhythmic gait. Britten and McPhee were responsive to one another at the keyboard. Presumably Britten played second piano, because his score for Balinese Ceremonial Music has that part circled.[23] The two closely followed McPhee's performance suggestions. In Pemoengkah, for example, their touch is "light" and the texture "transparent," as McPhee asks.[24] And in McPhee's opening solo to Gambangan, his playing has a fluid rhythm and resonant, ringing timbre, in keeping with the "noble and robust" tone of the gamelan gong that

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[21]"Records: From Bali/An Album of Works prepared by Colin McPhee--Other Recent Releases," New York Times (15 June 1941). A lovely recording of Balinese Ceremonial Music was made in 1982 by Douglas Young and Peter Hill (Cameo Classics GOCLP9018D).

[22]Letter, CM to Copland, 27 March [1941]. Copland Collection.

[23]The first page of Britten's copy of Pemoengkah is reproduced in Donald Mitchell's Benjamin Britten 1913-1976: Pictures from a Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), No. 176.

[24][Introduction to] Pemoengkah, [p. 2].

he described in his preface.[25]

Britten and McPhee had known each other since at least 1939, when both were frequent guests at the home of Dr. and Mrs. William Mayer in Amityville, Long Island.[26] Britten's biographers have traced his later involvement with oriental musics back to this early collaboration with McPhee. It was 1956 before Britten actually traveled to Bali.[27]

A Transcriber at Work

The pieces in Balinese Ceremonial Music were three among hundreds of transcriptions made by McPhee in Bali. They now fill 12 notebooks and many randomly stuffed folders at UCLA. The transcriptions are of two sorts: direct notations in score of the instrumental parts to a gamelan piece, and arrangements for Western instruments. Of the latter group, 36 separate titles for piano and 2

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[25][Introduction to] Gambangan, [p. 2]. This is the only extant recording of McPhee's piano playing. He made at least one other while working for the Office of War Information. It also includes two-piano transcriptions of Balinese music. (Mentioned in letters to Sidney Cowell, 2 October [?1945] and Henry Cowell, 12 September [?1945]. NYPL.). I have been unable to locate a copy.

[26]The Mayer's guest books show that McPhee visited them frequently between 1939 and 1943. (Collection of Beata Sauerlander)

[27]Britten's trip to Bali is documented in Mitchell, Nos. 296-298.

for flute and piano are extant (a number of them including several variants).[28] All of these transcriptions--whether notated for Balinese or Western instruments--are products of the same working process. McPhee constantly used the piano as his transcribing tool; notation was the only means available to him for documenting the music. Musicians gathered at his house for long sessions, and as he later recalled, "I wrote down melodies as they played them, [then I] played them back on the piano, while they patiently corrected my mistakes."[29] Some of these pieces emerged as arrangements for the piano; others did not. Many exist in both forms. But most were literal renderings of the music as he heard it.

Since McPhee transcribed at the piano, it was only natural that some of his pieces should end up as works for that medium. But there were other reasons as well. McPhee had a long and intimate history with the instrument; it had been at the core of nearly all his compositions. He also had some experience in reworking music for the piano, with arrangements of the Liszt Rákoczy March and Gershwin's "The Man I Love" in his background. McPhee

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[28]See the appended work catalogue for a complete catalogue of the extant transcriptions for Western instruments.

[29]CM, Part 2 of "An American Composer in Bali," radio script for Voice of America series in the 1950s. UCLA. [exact date unknown]

claimed he was inspired to transfer the sounds of the gamelan to piano by hearing ". . . the little duets at the piano by the children [of Sayan]. . . . The clear, incisive tones of the gamelan seemed to find a natural echo in the tones of the piano, so I began to make a few experimental arrangements."[30] But he had a predecessor--Walter Spies--who by the time McPhee arrived in Bali had already spent several years transcribing gamelan music for two pianos.[31]

McPhee's first transcriptions were drawn from the gendér wayang repertory--music for the enchanting nighttime shadow-play performances.[32] It was a repertory he dearly loved, calling it the "most perfect expression" of Balinese music,[33] and it was a good place for a newcomer to start unraveling the gamelan's intricacies. The gendér wayang ensemble is small: a quartet of gendér), with the two small instruments doubling the two large ones an octave above. The music is divided into individual parts

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[30]Ibid.

[31]McPhee's two-piano performances with Spies of gamelan transcriptions are described in Chapter VII.

[32]"An American Composers in Bali." Pemoengkah, one of the transcriptions published in Balinese Ceremonial Music, is from the gendér wayang music.

[33]This quotation is part of McPhee's opening sentence in his chapter on "The Gender Wayang Ensemble" in Music in Bali, p. 201. He also wrote an article on the topic, "The Balinese Wajang Koelit and its Music," Djawa XVI/1 (1936), 322-66.

that change as the action of the shadow play unfolds.

Lagu délem, a piece from the gendér wayang repertory, illustrates McPhee's varied approaches to the transcription process. Eight versions of this composition are extant--4 for solo piano, 2 for two pianos, and 2 for gendér wayang quartet--as outlined below:

Extant Versions of "Lagu délem"

A: Solo piano. Dated "Bali, 1935."
Andantino. Holograph. (See Example 50)

B: Solo piano. Dated "Bali, 1935."
Andantino. Holograph.
Comment: Some fuller voicings than A, especially Part II where l.h. is doubled at the octave

C: Solo Piano. Dated "Amityville, June 9 -41."
Commodo. Holograph.
Comment: Rhythm of l.h. ostinato is notated differently than A,B,E,F,G; phrasing given in Part II r.h. only

D: Solo Piano. Dated, "Bali 1934" [reworked in 1950s or 60s].
Commodo ♩ =80. Holograph.
Comment: Much like C (including l.h. rhythm); phrasing included for Part I (all phrasing is different from A and B)
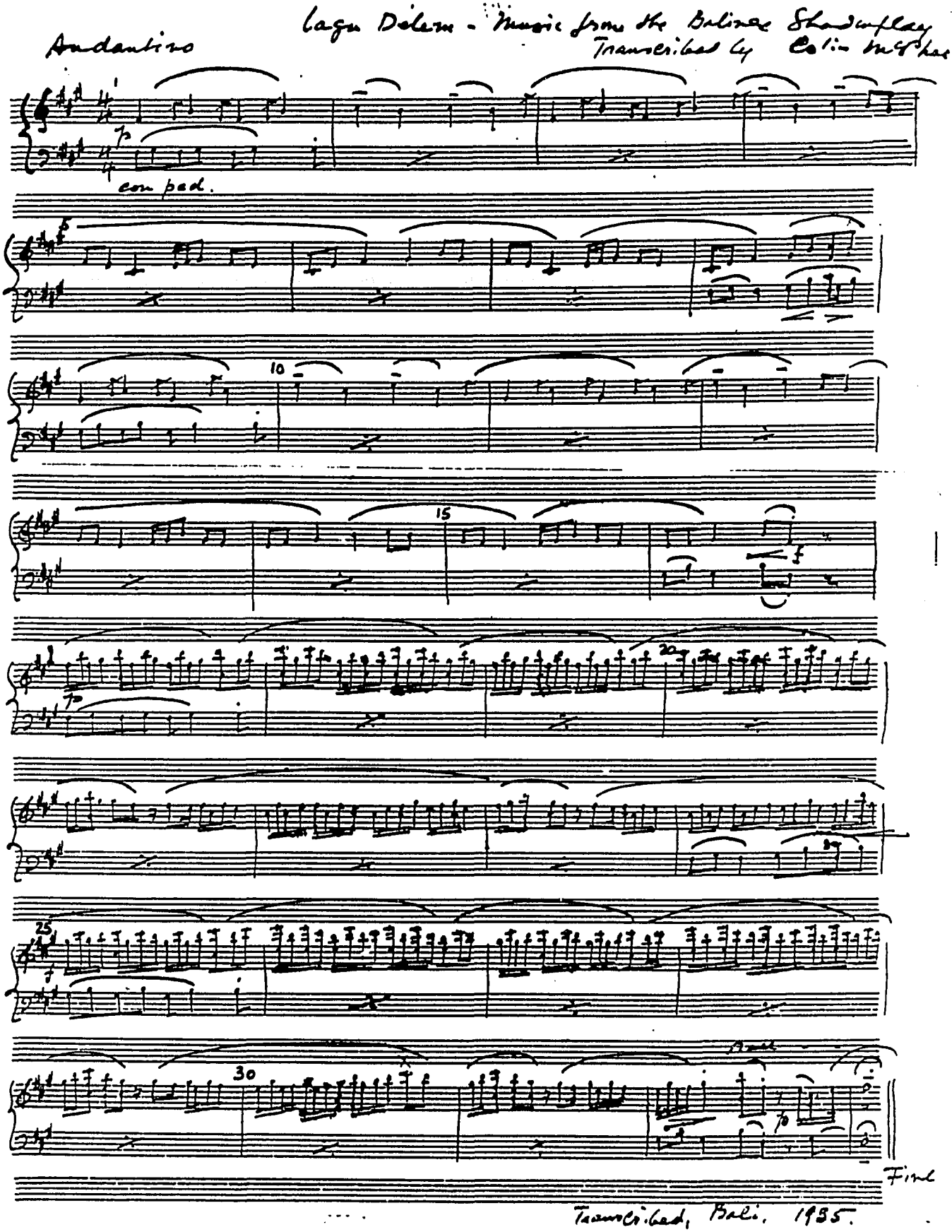
E: Two Pianos. n.d.
Moderato/pesante. Holograph
Comment: Part I with repeat and second ending; no Part II; First piano doubles second at the octave

F: Two Pianos. [1956 or 1962][34]
Moderato. Holograph
Comment: Includes Part II with figuration; much more varied voicing than E (e.g. opens with Piano II alone, then adds r.h. octave doubling at m. 4)

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[34]See the appended catalogue of transcriptions for an explanation of dating.

Example 50. Lagu dĕlem, transcribed by Colin McPhee.



G: Gendér Quartet. Dated "Lotring--Kuta Village, 1933"; included in Music of the Balinese Gendér Wayang (transcription of a complete set of pieces for the shadow play that was compiled by McPhee in 1962)
Deliberato. Holograph. (See Example 51)
Comment: No phrasing; upper score of Part II is beamed to show interplay of 2 voices

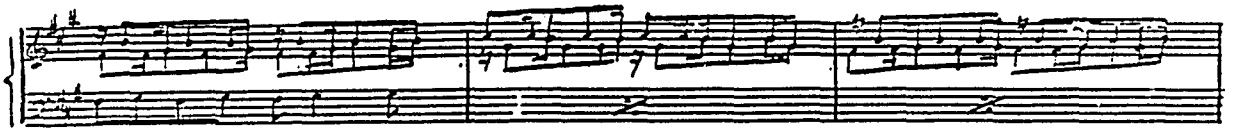
H: Gendér Quartet. n.d.
♩ = 69. Found in Music in Bali, Examples 219-20 "Kuta Village"
Comment: No phrasing; Upper score of Part II is beamed as in A-F

Although there are slight differences among these versions, all are renderings of the same piece, transcribed from I Lotring's gendér wayang in Kuta and reworked over the years.[35] McPhee gave more dynamics and phrasing indications in the solo-piano and two-piano scores (there are almost none in the ones for gendér), and he seemed to change his mind about tempo (going from "Andantino" in A and B, to "Moderato/pesante in E, to "Commodo" in C and D). The different versions also clarify one another, as in Part II of G, where the beaming for two separate gendér players illustrates an interplay of voices not visible in the piano scores:

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[35]The earliest date given on a Lagu délem manuscript is 1933 (G); the latest reworking of the piece was in 1962 (F).

Example 51. Lagu délem, from Music of the Balinese Gendér Wayang, transcribed by Colin McPhee, measures 17-19.



Many of Lagu délem's characteristics are in line with McPhee's own musical interests. The scale collection (sléndro roughly translated into Western pitches by McPhee as F#, G#, B, C#, E) is constant, but the tonic changes from the first eight-bar section to the second (see Example 50, mm. 9-16), where the opening material is restated, with slight modifications, one step higher. Another trait that relates to McPhee's personal style is found in the right-hand ornamentation of the reprise, which essentially forms a shifting ostinato (mm. 17-34).

McPhee's other transcriptions for Western instruments are of this same sort, with parallel versions in gamelan scoring often found in either Music in Bali or his field notes (or both). There are two, however, that McPhee himself singled out as representing a middle ground between literal transcription and free composition: Lagu

ardja and Kambing slem, both scored for flute and piano.[36] Lagu ardja is quoted in the middle movement ("Nocturne") of Tabuh-Tabuhan and discussed together with that piece. Kambing slem, from 1935, is similar. It is essentially a series of variations on a suling (bamboo flute) melody, taken from the gamelan arja repertory (a popular theater form with singing in which the suling is often an "obbligato instrument, weaving ornamental figuration around the voice in the octave above").[37] McPhee uses ornamentation as the basis for variation and claims to have set the nine-bar melody "in relief" with his piano accompaniment.[38] The work is structured as follows:

A (mm. 1-9): Unaccompanied flute solo

A^1 (mm. 10-21): Extended repeat of opening solo over piano ostinato

A^2 (mm. 22-33): Flute 8^{va} higher with increased ornamentation over new piano ostinato

A^3 (mm. 34-48): Piano only with melody (taken from flute) over shifting ostinato

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[36]In his Voice of America script, McPhee talked about these works after discussing his literal transcriptions: "I now come to the next step in my arrangements of Balinese music. I had already made a collection of little melodies which boys delighted in playing on the suling. . . . Out in the ricefields or under a tree, they would spend hours improvising on these little tunes. As these had no accompaniment, I tried composing light, percussive accompaniments for the piano, choosing tones that would suggest gongs and other Balinese percussion instruments." ("American Composer in Bali," Part 2).

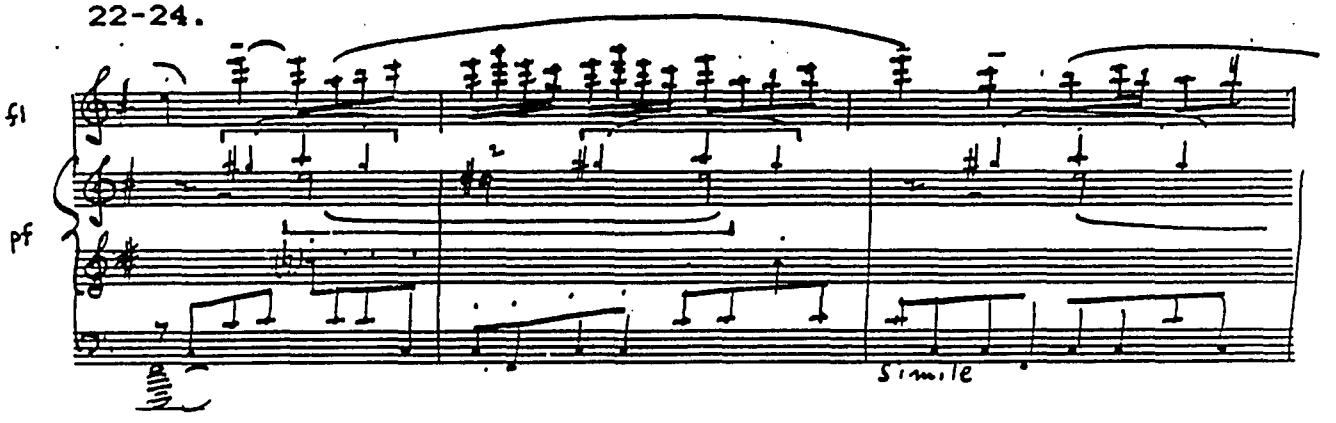
[37]Music in Bali, p. 294.

[38]"An American Composer in Bali," Part 3.

A^4 (mm. 49-62): Flute 8^{va} higher with little ornamentation; melody doubled in piano bass (some heterophony between the two); shifting ostinato in piano treble

The flute part is based on a six-note scale (usual for suling arja) and the piano draws from the same pitch group, with one notable exception--Section A^2. There McPhee's own compositional style shines out of an accompaniment filled with Balinese gestures:

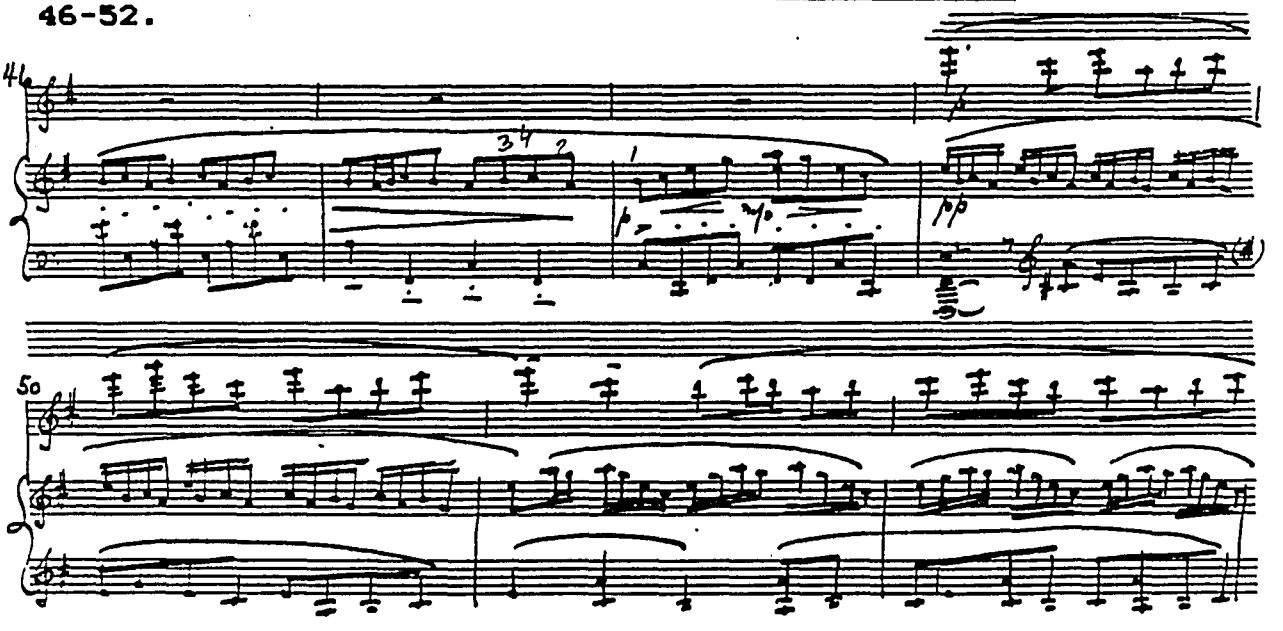
Example 52. McPhee, Arrangement of Kambing slem, measures 22-24.
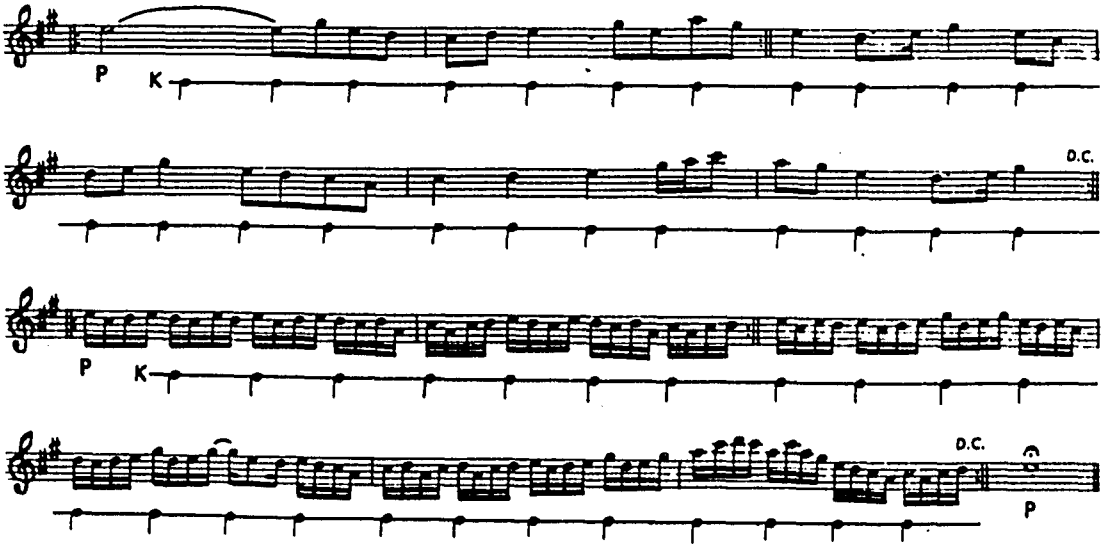


The flute melody continues to revolve around its tonic A (the other pitches used here are B, C#, E, F, and G) while three ostinatos are layered below. Although the use of such interlocking ostinatos is traditionally Balinese, it is also a longstanding trait in McPhee's work and is employed here with a characteristic touch: multiple tonal centers. The piano part sounds a shifting pattern of C and F; above it, two mirrored ostinatos are heard, one in augmentation of the other. Both center around focal pitches of the flute scale (A and E) but are approached by semitones (G# and D#)--notes outside of the flute's realm.

Another noteworthy feature of this work is the heterophonic ornamentation of the flute melody by the piano r.h. in A^4 (Example 53). Such a device occupies the ground shared both by authentic suling practice (compare with McPhee's transcription of ornamentation for another suling melody in Example 54) and by McPhee's own musical sensibility.

Example 53. McPhee, Arrangement of Kambing slem, measures 46-52.



Example 54. Pererén arja, transcribed by McPhee in Music in Bali, page 296.



Struggling to Compose

While his Balinese transcriptions were being published and recorded in the early forties, McPhee set to work composing. He seems to have been writing a new piano concerto,[39] but his first completed work resulted from a commission for incidental music to a revival of Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones, which ran for one week at the Westport (Connecticut) Country Playhouse and a second week at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, in August 1940.[40] O'Neill's play dates from 1920. It is set in the West Indies and charts the fall of a black leader, Brutus Jones, an ex-Pullman-porter from Harlem. The role of Jones was a famous one for black actors. Charles Gilpin first played it and then in 1924 Paul Robeson assumed the part.[41] Robeson starred in the revival for which McPhee's music was written. The score is lost.

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[39]In December 1940, Chávez wrote McPhee, "How is the score of the Piano Concerto going?" It is the only hint that McPhee was at work on such a piece. (Letter, 9 December 1940. Chávez Collection/Mexico City)

[40][Program:] "Paul Robeson in The Emperor Jones," Princeton Summer Theatre Season, McCarter Theatre, week of August 12, 1940 (Collection of Alan Hewitt). [Program:] "Week beginning August 5, 1940, Westport Country Playhouse . . . Presents Paul Robeson in 'The Emperor Jones'" (UCLA). The Princeton program states that "Colin McPhee has spent the past seven years in South Africa, Bali, and Martinique studying native music."

[41]Louis Schaeffer, O'Neill: Son and Artist (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co, 1973), 29, 33, 37.

It is intriguing to contemplate what kind of music McPhee might have written for a West Indian setting with black characters, especially since his interest in Afro-American culture had such a long history. The score was for Hammond organ, played by Max Marlin. The instrument was probably re-wired for the performance.[42] Robert Lawrence, a critic for the New York Herald Tribune, was enthusiastic about McPhee's music, calling it "subtle," "insistent," "masterly."[43] He most appreciated two aspects: a sympathy for dramatic detail ("his treatment aims not at dominating the drama but supporting it") and effective uses of rhythm. McPhee wrote no prelude and left the opening scene stark, without music. The second scene began with "a haunting melody, built upon shifting rhythmic figures." At one point the drum part (used in addition to the organ) rapidly increased in speed, building to "an elaborate scale of metronomic markings." McPhee incorporated at least one "Negro melody" and a passage "in cakewalk rhythm." He also wrote short interludes to connect scenes. There was no Balinese material in the score.

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[42]Alan Hewitt, "Colin McPhee and 'The Emperor Jones,'" appended to a letter to the author, 7 November 1982.

[43]Robert Lawrence, "New Theater Music," New York Herald Tribune (18 August 1940). Lawrence claimed McPhee had "no previous experience in the theater." He must not have known about his work at the Hart House Theatre in Toronto. The following quotations are all drawn from this review.

Probably on the strength of his score for The Emperor Jones, McPhee was again asked to write incidental music in 1940, this time for the opening of a new play by the young Tennessee Williams. The play was Battle of Angels; it starred Miriam Hopkins and was produced by the Theatre Guild in Boston. In Tennessee Williams's own words, the play was "a disaster."[44] It opened around Christmas of 1940 and was forced to close two weeks later. Williams claimed his work "was pretty far out for its time and included, among other tactical errors, a mixture of super religiosity and hysterial sexuality coexisting in a central character. The critics and police censors seemed to regard this play as a theatrical counterpart of the bubonic plague surfacing in their city."[45] McPhee's score to this play also is lost.[46] For him, the sudden closing of the production was devastating. He wrote Henry Cowell, "It has depressed me all week, and I am trying to forget it with rye and Javanese records."[47] Ten years later he told Chávez it had been an "unhappy experience. . . . The

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[44]Tennessee Williams, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1975), 61.

[45]Ibid, p. 62.

[46]There is no score at UCLA, and Tennessee Williams's agent has "no knowledge of the score." (Letter, Luis Sanjura to author, 4 August 1983)

[47]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, 9 January 1941. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

music started out well but ended dismally. It broke me up for six months. . . . That was the last time I ever tried to compose."[48]

And, indeed, although there were a few stabs at composing during the next twelve years, they were infrequent and often unsuccessful. Writing music became ever more "oppressive" as the balm of Bali passed. During the summer of 1941, soon after the Tennessee Williams disaster, McPhee began a series of arrangements of other people's music. Once again, when composition got tough he started tinkering with pre-existent music. He made three arrangements of works by Dietrich Buxtehude, a Ciacona [sic], In dulci jubilo, and Nun komm der heiden Heiland. All are for two pianos.[49] In dulci jubilo is dated 7 December 1939, just months after McPhee reviewed Chávez's orchestral arrangement of a Chaconne by Buxtehude

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[48]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 1 May [1950]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[49]The manuscripts to Nun komm der heiden Heiland and Ciacona have no date. All are in the possession of Oliver Daniel. Two letters from 1941 reveal that McPhee was working on the transcriptions then; both were written by CM from Yaddo to Elizabeth Mayer: 20 August and 27 October 1941. (Collection of Beata Sauerlander.) For a time, it loked as though Boosey and Hawkes would publish the scores, but they decided not to. (Letters, CM to Copland, 3 June [1941] and "Wednesday" [1941]. Copland Collection.)

for Modern Music.[50]

In the spring of 1942, McPhee arranged Benjamin Britten's Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge for two pianos under the title Jinx. Eugene Loring and his Dance Players used the score in a ballet about the circus that was choreographed by Lew Christensen.[51] During that summer, McPhee proposed to Copland that he make a two-piano arrangement of Billy the Kid. Boosey and Hawkes was interested in publishing such a score, and McPhee was eager to do it. He wrote Copland, "It would frankly be a piano-transcription; not a note-for-note extraction, but a piano orchestration. You know I admire your music enough to respect every grace-note, and that this would be a labor of love (paid by B&H)."[52] The arrangement was never

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[50]"Scores and Records," Modern Music XIII/1 (October-November 1939), 52. According to clippings for concerts by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, they performed McPhee's Buxtehude transcriptions in 1941. (Three unidentified reviews of their New York performances on 9 December 1941. NYPL clipping files.)

[51]McPhee's score is part of the Britten-Pears collection at The Red House in Aldeburgh, Great Britain. It is dated "Feb-March 1942." On 24 March 1942, Elizabeth Mayer wrote Benjamin Britten that "[Colin] has finished the 2 piano arrangement of the Variations." (Letter in the collection of Beata Sauerlander.) Eric Walter White, in Benjamin Britten: His Life and Operas, says that Britten "allowed" his Variations "to be used by Dance Players as an accompaniment to Jinx, a ballet about circus people and their superstitions." (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 34.

[52]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 3 June [1942]. Copland Collection.

made.[53] During the same period, McPhee wrote Chávez that he was thinking of orchestrating Liszt's Mephisto Waltz. "I think it is a fine piece, but the orchestral version does not do the music justice. I would do something very sensuous and mysterious for the middle part, and the finale with the hard brightness of Petrouschka [sic]."[54] No trace of this arrangement exists. In the summer of 1943, McPhee was at work on "a boogie-woogie piece," which is not extant either.[55]

Iroquois Dances

In 1944/45, McPhee composed Four Iroquois Dances, commissioned by the Instituto Indigenista Inter-Americano of Mexico City for broadcast to Latin America. The Dances were

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[53]According to Copland's long-time assistant, David Walker, Copland himself made a two-piano arrangement of Billy the Kid. None by McPhee is known to exist. (Letter to author, 22 July [1982].)

[54]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 11 April [1942]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[55]McPhee mentions writing a "boogie-woogie" in letters to Carlos Chávez, 14 June [1943] (Chávez Collection/Mexico City), and Aaron Copland, 23 August [1943] (Copland Collection).

published in New Music in July 1945.[56] They also rely on transcription and, curiously, are based on American-Indian sources. McPhee had done no field work among American Indians and had even been disdainful of their music when he reviewed a field recording made by Laura Bolton in 1941:

> I have never felt that the American Indian had any intense musical urge. Compared with the exuberant musicality of the Negro this is thin stuff. Most noticeable is the lack of rhythmic interest and energy.[57]

Yet here he was, just a few years later, pulling together transcriptions of Indian music for an orchestral suite. McPhee must have been scrupulous in doing research for this assignment, because the collection of his papers at UCLA contains a large group of articles about American Indian music. Most prominent among them are studies by George Herzog, with whom McPhee seems to have maintained a professional connection until at least 1948, when Herzog

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[56]New Music XVIII/4. According to McPhee's application to the American Composers Alliance, the Dances were recorded in 1945 for broadcast by a student orchestra in Washington D. C. ("Confidential Report for ACA Negotiating Committee," dated "April 25" [presumably 1955, since it is the year of the latest composition cited]). He told Sidney Cowell, in October of 1945 that Charles Seeger was making the recording and that he was using "only part of the Dances." (Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 22 October [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL) No such recording seems to be extant. On 2 January [1946], McPhee wrote Sidney Cowell, "Seeger never sent me my promised copy of the recording. He does not answer my letters. I do feel sore." (Cowell Collection/NYPL)

[57]"Records and Scores," Modern Music XVIII/3 (March-April 1941), 188.

moved to the University of Indiana.[58] Despite his apparent disdain of Indian music, McPhee was already exploring general literature on the subject in the fall of 1941, when he wrote Margaret Mead asking about the reliability of Clark Wissler's American Indian of 1922.[59]

McPhee scored the Dances for woodwinds, horns, trumpets, strings, timpani, maracas, and tom-tom and introduced the published score with a statement clearly describing his sources:

> The musical material was taken from records made by William N. Fenton and published by the Library of Congress in an album titled Songs from the Iroquois Longhouse. . . . The melodic structure of each chant is left intact; the stanzas are repeated several times with a different orchestration. Only in the final Medicine Dance, . . . have I found it necessary to resort to a construction, however simple, of my own.[60]

The first three movements--Corn Dance, Eagle Dance, and Scalping Dance--stick close to excerpts buried deep

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[58]Fourteen such articles on American Indian music, published during the 1930s and 40s, are in the McPhee Collection. George Herzog died in November 1983, and his estate has not been settled at the time of this writing. Hence I do not know if any correspondence between him and McPhee survives. (Telephone conversation with Louise Spear, Archives of Traditional Music, 19 July 1984.)

[59]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 1 October [1941]. Mead responded with, "The authoritative edition of Wissler's American Indian is the THIRD edition, 1938." (Letter, Margaret Mead to CM, 3 October 1941. Mead Collection/LC.)
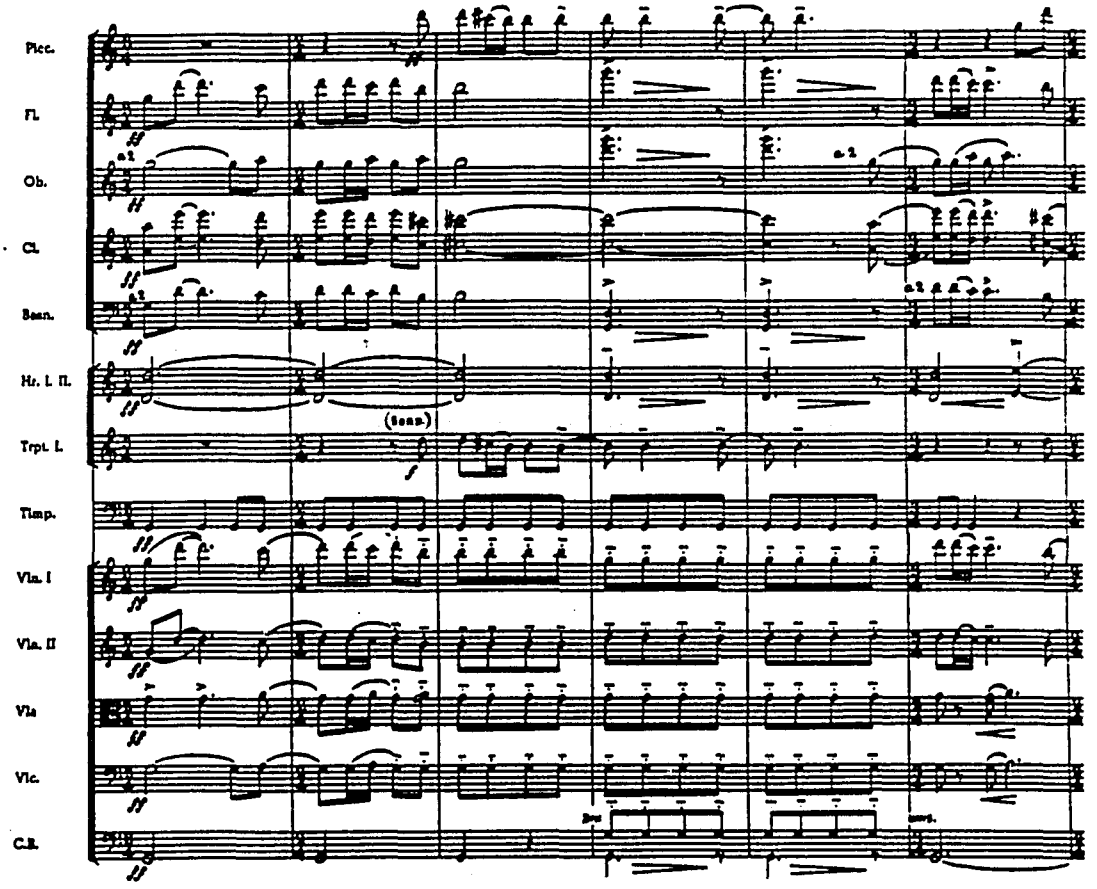
[60]p. 2. Fenton's recording was first published as Songs from the Iroquois Longhouse (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1942). A booklet was included.

within the corresponding songs on Fenton's field recording. McPhee makes some alterations in structure (for example, his Eagle Dance closes with a return to the opening material, a symmetrical device absent from the recording) and injects some touches of his own, yet he mostly translates the originals for a new medium. He uses much unison writing (the recordings feature solos or unison singing by two performers) and often alternates instruments to imitate dialogue between singers. Even when McPhee's own ideas are imposed, they in some way relate back to the Indian songs. In Corn Dance, for example, the final section diverges from a mostly unison setting to present the Iroquois melody heterophonically (Example 55). The principal melody--sounded in the flute, clarinet, bassoon, and violins and accompanied by unison pedal points in the oboe, horns, viola, cello, and bass--is elaborated by the piccolo and trumpet in m. 53.[61] The embellishment is largely rhythmic, reminiscent of an early seventeenth-century Italian trillo, but it also includes slight melodic embroidery. Heterophony of this sort, in which a pitch is broken up rhythmically in a simultaneously sounding part, is present in Fenton's recording of Corn Dances but not in the spot that McPhee quoted.

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[61]Fenton highlights the heterophony of Corn Dance in the booklet accompanying his recording, calling the performance "antiphonal." (p. 33)
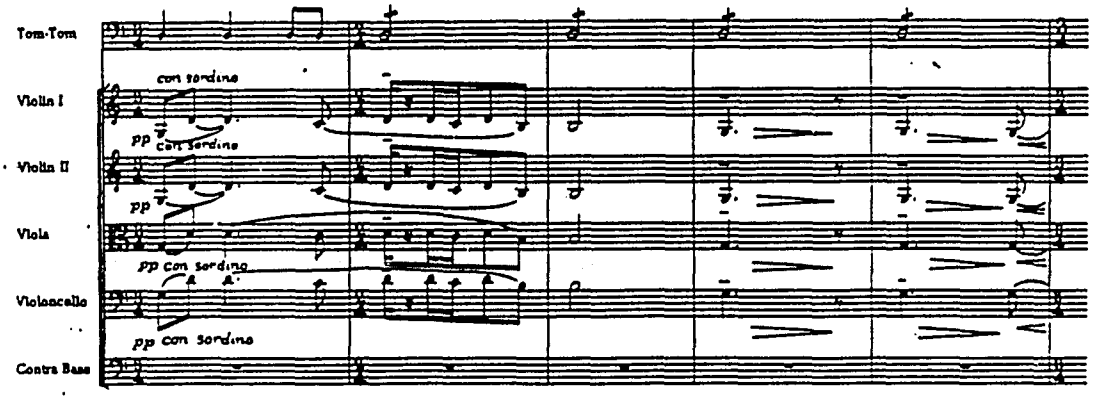
Example 55. McPhee, Corn Dance, from Iroquois Dances, measures 51-56.
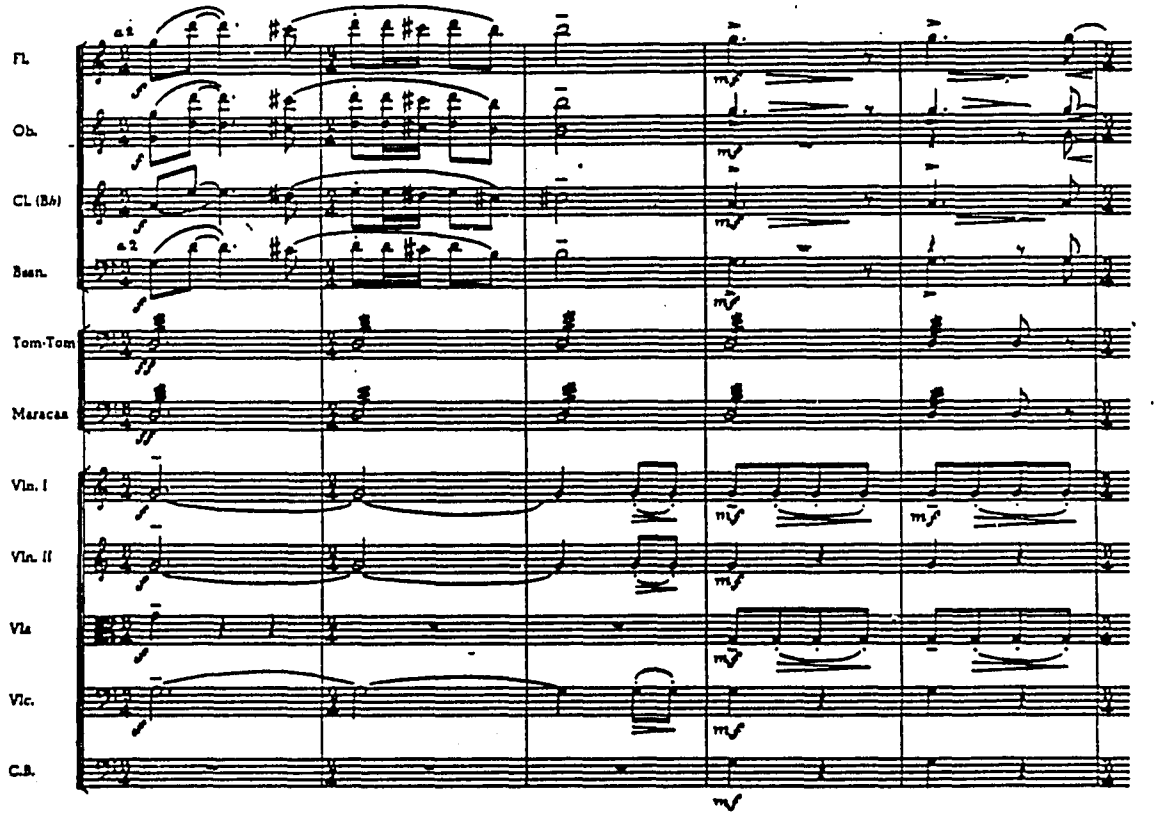


The Iroquois Dances give insights into McPhee's methods as a transcriber. In Corn Dance, for example, he shaped the form of his instrumental version to highlight a particular nuance in the Iroquois singing. Corn Dance repeats one section from the Indian song (itself with an internal repetition), the first time with G, B, C-natural, D as the principal tones, the second with G, B, C-sharp, D (compare Example 56-A to 56-B). On Fenton's recording, the C is neither sharp nor natural but somewhere in between. Perhaps McPhee was trying to be a responsible transcriber by presenting both alternatives. And yet there is also the possibility that his own longstanding captivation with inflected pitches made him respond to this

particular aspect of the Iroquois performance.

Example 56-A. McPhee, Corn Dance, from Iroquois Dances, measures 6-8.
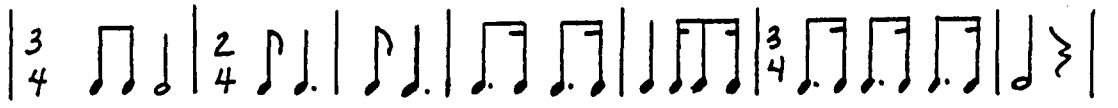


Example 56-B. McPhee, Corn Dance, from Iroquois Dances, measures 36-38.



Although McPhee stays close to the recorded sources, he occasionally gives metrical transcriptions for passages that are actually plainsong-like. For example,
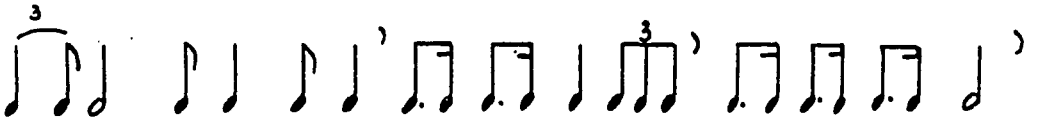
McPhee transcribes the rhythm of the opening of Scalping Dance as:

Example 57. McPhee, Scalping Dance, from Iroquois Dances. Rhythm of measures 1-7.



Yet the singer on the recording is less bound by any strong accent:

Example 58. Corresponding rhythm from the recording of Scalping Dance on Songs of the Iroquois Longhouse.
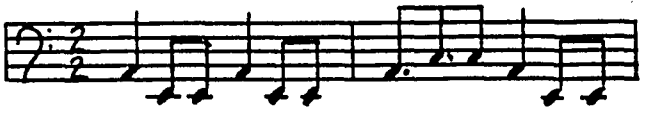


Similar instances can be found throughout the first three dances, especially at the outset of each, where the Indian singers are freer in presenting their material. Often as they move into a piece, however, strong metrical accents enter.
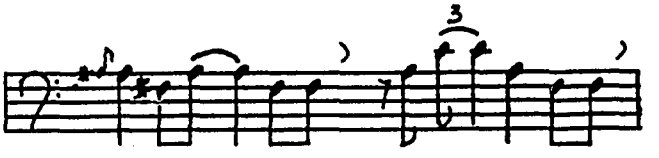
McPhee's transcription of Medicine Dance, the final movement of his suite, takes more liberties with the Iroquois material than any other. It is based on two rhythmic patterns, one of sixteen measures and the other of four (as McPhee transcribes them). The melodic shape of the first pattern is retained in McPhee's version, but the actual intervals are different. There are also rhythmic changes. As in Eagle Dance, McPhee imposes a meter on free-flowing material. He also inserts his favorite

rhythmic pattern  , which is found later on in the field recording of Medicine Dance but not in this particular spot.

Example 59. McPhee, Medicine Dance from Iroquois Dances. Rhythm of measures 1-2 in timpani.

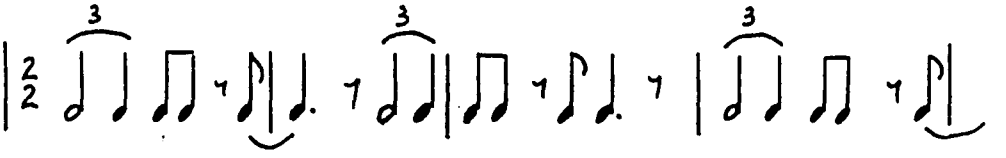


Example 60. Corresponding rhythm from recording of Medicine Dance in Songs of the Iroquois Longhouse.

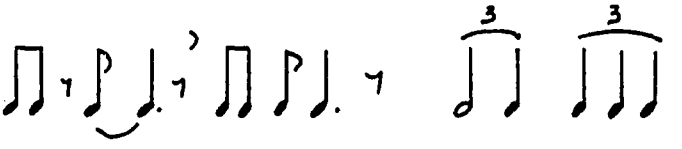


The second principal motive for McPhee's version is altered even more by shifting the rhythmic weight:

Example 61. McPhee, Medicine Dance from Iroquois Dances. Rhythm of measures 17-20 in woodwinds.
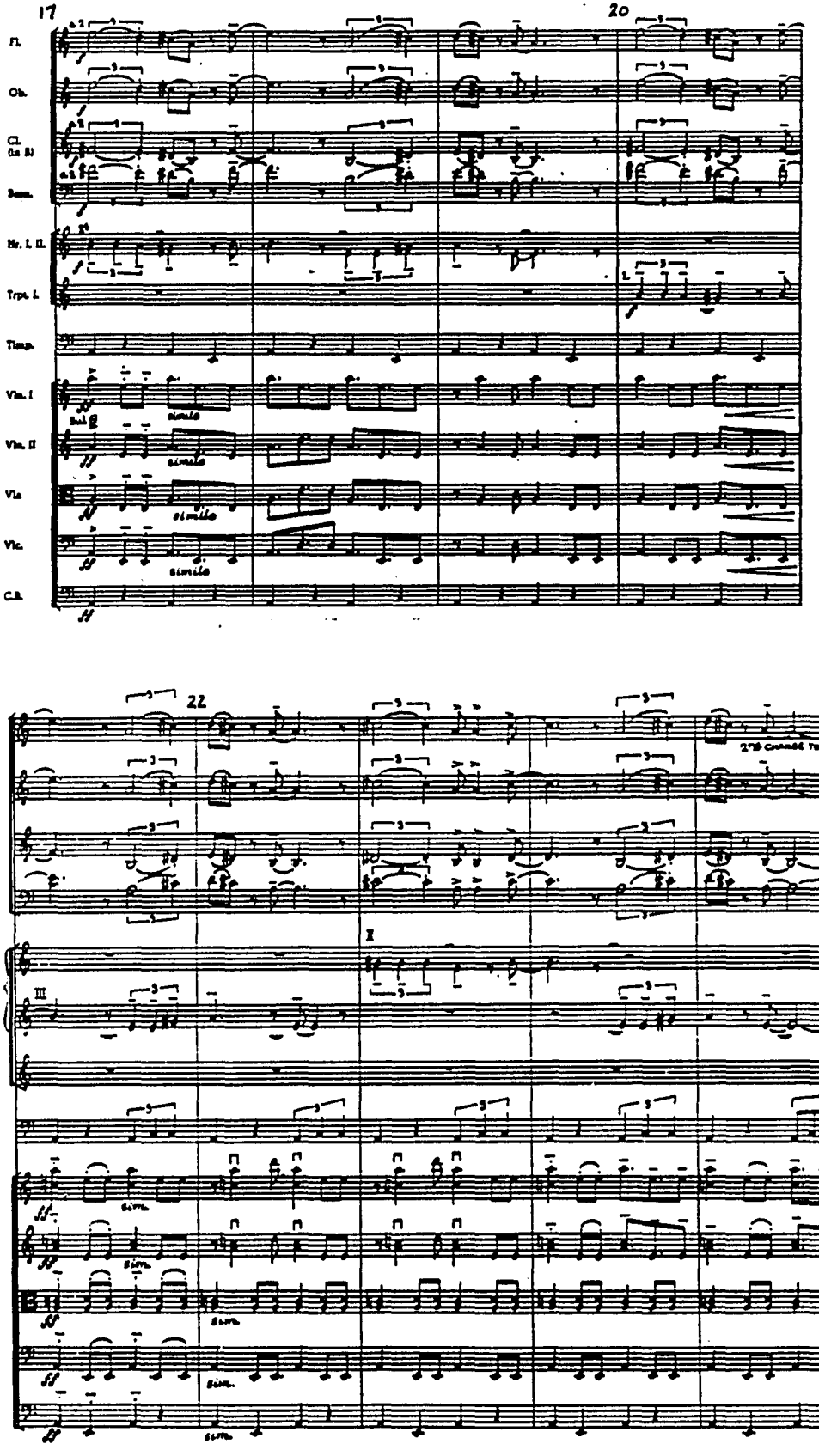


Example 62. Corresponding rhythm from recording of Medicine Dance in Songs of the Iroquois Longhouse.



McPhee begins his Medicine Dance by stating the entire first motive in the timpani and strings. The second motive is then superimposed in the woodwinds over a fractured version of the first (Example 63). Adding a C-natural in the strings at m. 21 produces simple, open

Example 63. McPhee, *Medicine Dance*, from *Iroquois Dances*, measures 17-25.



harmonies, which tug, in typical McPhee fashion, against the C-sharp in the woodwinds and horns.

Yet despite a greater measure of McPhee's own input, Medicine Dance, like the other movements of the work, is not completely successful as an instrumental composition. Throughout, McPhee is so obsessed with authenticity--especially with adhering to the unison singing style on the recordings--that his arrangements are a bit too literal. The rhythmic drive of Tabuh-Tabuhan and timbral pungency of the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet are absent, as are some of his most engaging compositional traits: layered textures, cross-rhythms, and bimodal juxtapositions (the latter meekly present in parts of the Iroquois Dances). And there is none of the balanced blend of authentic traditional material with effective reshaping that characterizes both the Sea Shanty Suite and Tabuh-Tabuhan. Perhaps the root of the problem lay in transporting the Indian melodies so far from their native setting and timbre, yet not properly outfitting them for the voyage. In the Sea Shanty Suite McPhee kept human voices as the principal medium and added a lightly scored accompaniment, and, in Tabuh-Tabuhan, he centered the work around the timbre of its native source by using a percussive "nuclear gamelan." With Iroquois Dances, however, he leaves behind the native scoring--voice and tom-tom or rattle--and employs an alien sound world.

Just a few months after Iroquois Dances were

published, McPhee acknowledged to Chávez that they were "rather chaste after Tabuh-Tabuhan" and went on to say that they were his "sole creative effort in five years"--a revealing choice of words.[62] By 1945, McPhee's compositional activity had slowed down so completely that literal transcriptions like these--with so little material of his own--stood out as being creative. Yet, rather than reviving his confidence as a composer, they came to represent yet another failure. Only two years after they were published, McPhee was writing harshly of them: "I really detest those pauky little Indian Dances of mine that New Music published. No one has ever so much as looked at them, and why Henry wanted to publish them is beyond me!"[63] In the sixties, when Presser took over the New Music catalogue, McPhee withdrew the Dances because he "was not pleased with them."[64]

Final Compositions of the Forties

McPhee kept composing for the next few years, even though he found the process increasingly difficult. In

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[62]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 29 September 1945. Chávez Collection.

[63]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 17 November [1947]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[64]Letter, CM to Nicholas J. Elsier, Jr., 16 August 1962. UCLA.

1946, he scored a group of Javanese transcriptions for chamber ensemble. They were performed in a Ballet Society concert in January 1947, together with the Nocturne from Tabuh-Tabuhan.[65] Lincoln Kirstein, secretary to the Ballet Society, of which George Balanchine was director, engineered the commission; he seems to have been inspired by the publication of A House in Bali, but he had heard McPhee's transcriptions as early as 1941, when he and Chávez listened to the Schirmer recording with McPhee.[66] The three dancers on the program were Javanese, and McPhee supervised the dances and sets.[67] The instrumentalists sat behind "a series of copper-gold scrims," perhaps to lend an exotic touch.[68] The works were scored for 3 pianos, glockenspiel, xylophone, celesta, 4 cellos, and 2 basses.

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[65][Program:] "The Ballet Society, George Balanchine, Artistic Director, 13 and 14 January 1947, Hunter Playhouse." The program included Pastorella by Paul Bowles; "Nocturne" from Tabuh-Tabuhan by McPhee, Babar Layar, Gending Luang, Suduk Maru, and Ramayana by McPhee; Iris Mabry by Ralph Gilbert; and Renard by Igor Stravinsky.

[66]McPhee wrote to Sidney Cowell, describing Kirstein's offer to stage the ballet, which was made immediately after House came out. (Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.) In 1941, McPhee wrote to Aaron Copland, "Chávez brought Kirstein down to see films, and here [sic] the new records (not yet out) that Ben and I made of Bali. K was really impressed." (Letter, 27 March [1941]. Copland Collection.)

[67][Program:] "The Ballet Society," and Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, [1946]. (Cowell Collection/NYPL)

[68]"The Ballet Society, 1946-47, Vol. I." (New York: Ballet Society, Inc., 1947), 25.

All are at UCLA, with two Balinese transcriptions added: Gambangan and Pemungkah (both expanded scorings of the Schirmer publications of 1940).

McPhee's final stab at composition, before what seems to have been a hiatus of six years, was music for a CBS radio documentary, "Arrows in the Dust," which was about the plight of American Indians. It was aired on 22 May 1948.[69] Oliver Daniel, the longtime friend of McPhee who was working for CBS at the time, remembers that McPhee was hired to do the music because of his Four Iroquois Dances. "Colin was a not a fast worker," says Daniel, but his score was "extraordinarily beautiful."[70] McPhee was given the assignment only shortly before the documentary went on the air and finished on time, despite his slow pace. Unfortunately, no score or transcription of the broadcast exists.[71] McPhee's only comment about the assignment was that he found himself "composing in a style rather unexpected. . . . It was fun to do."[72]

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[69]The producer of "Arrows in the Dust" was Sig Mickelson and the co-producer Dr. Philip Eisenberg. The program originated in Minneapolis. (Information given over the phone by Carol Parne, CBS Industry Librarian, 31 January 1983.)

[70]Interview with Oliver Daniel, Ardsley, New York, 3 October 1981.

[71]There is none at UCLA or CBS.

[72]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, [1948]. Mead Collection/LC.

By 1950, when McPhee was asked to write music for a play by Clare Boothe Luce, he declined.[73] He no longer was able to compose. The assignment was for a score using folk material, which he felt competent to handle, but he confided to Chávez, "The parts which called for composed music I don't feel I could manage at all. I simply don't think in terms of music any more--never hear a single musical sound in my imagination."[74]

An Invading Depression

Central to McPhee's increasing apathy toward composition was the feeling of being ignored as a composer, especially when it came to his magnum opus--Tabuh-Tabuhan. During the forties, McPhee yearned for a New York performance of the work, but none materialized. He was delighted when Chávez performed it in Mexico City in August 1941 and even more delighted that Chávez's enthusiasm for it continued. Soon after the performance, Chávez wrote McPhee:

> It gave me real pleasure to restudy and revive this work. There is nothing but music in it, and music of the most musical nature. The logic and continuity

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[73]McPhee discusses his negotiations with Luce in two letters to Chavez: the first was written before 26 April 1950, the second on 1 May [1950]. Chávez responded on 26 April 1950. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[74]Letter, CM to Chávez, 1 May [1950].

> and the integration of the score is thoroughly amazing. The performance itself was much better than the premiere you heard in 1936.[75]

McPhee replied, "You can't imagine how happy [your letter] made me."[76] In his letter, Chávez had launched into a litany that he was to repeat over and over in the ensuing years: "It is unpardonable that you have not written more, that there are not more scores coming from you and of course I do not mean necessarily Balinese sources."[77] But McPhee was paralyzed creatively. The ideas no longer flowed; his confidence was shaken. In 1941 McPhee reviewed a work by Carl Engel and made an observation that said as much about himself as his colleague: "The urge to create music is a mysterious one that comes and goes."[78]

McPhee's sporadic compositional output was rooted in increasingly frequent bouts of depression. He poured out his woes in letters to Sidney Cowell and Elizabeth Mayer, two friends whom he had made after returning to New York in 1939. He also confided, although less frequently, to Margaret Mead and Carlos Chávez. In August 1941, midway through a long stay at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, McPhee

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[75]Letter, Chávez to CM, 20 September 1941. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[76]Letter, CM to Chávez, 1 October [1941]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[77]Ibid.

[78]McPhee, "Records and Scores," Modern Music XVIII (April-May 1941), 189.

wrote Mayer a letter that was to become typical in the ensuing years:

> I feel very well and rested after this pleasant summer, but have never felt so completely invaded with hopelessness and lack of any direction whatsoever. I think it is the feeling that there has been something within that cried for expression, but in what form I have never really known, and it is too late to worry about anyway. I know this is a familiar symptom, but it does not make it any the less poignant. And it is all the more baffling when it goes together with a perfectly sound body, indestructably good health, and the general inclination to enjoy the simple pleasures of life.[79]

McPhee suffered from "spells" in which isolation seemed to be his only cure. "I seem to lose all sense of identity and nothing but solitude will help me recover."[80] Life had become "an empty desolate affair--I have these crises of terrific weeping that are utterly exhausting."[81] For a time during the 1940s he was treated for depression by Dr. William Mayer, Director of the Long Island Home in Amityville--a psychiatric hospital. Mayer prescribed Benzedrine for McPhee, but McPhee was reluctant to become dependent on medication and took it for only a short time. In the mid-forties, McPhee confided his frustration to Sidney Cowell: "If I thought the doctor with his pill

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[79]Letter, CM to Elizabeth Mayer, 20 August 1941. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.

[80]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, mid-1940s. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[81]Ibid.

would be of some use, I'd go very soon, but really, I doubt it. You can do nothing for Celtic melancholia, and I wish to god someone would transform me into a seagull flying around some misty rock in the Hebrides."[82]

In the midst of his depressions, McPhee occasionally threatened suicide. To Sidney Cowell he repeatedly confided his waning hold on life:

> You can't combat with any weapons the state of one who no longer has any desire to live. This of course has gone on since I returned to America, and although I've made occasional attempts to get out of it, each one has been a failure. . . . Ten years ago, I could see this time with so much clarity . . . even before then. And never did I have a feeling of hope, nothing, nothing, but the conviction of approaching doom. Well, here we are.[83]

He often had days of total enervation, when he would just "loll" around. To him this was "simply an experimental form

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[82]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 13 May 1945. Cowell Collection/NYPL. In January 1943 McPhee wrote to Elizabeth Mayer: "Feeling so wretched, and tired during the day, in spite of Benzedrine, and only waking up around eight at night. Then I work till one, fall asleep, only to wake again at three precisely. Now only the blue pills take effect. How topsy-turvy it all is, and what a bore." (Letter, 12 January 1943. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.)

[83]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, no date. Written while McPhee was staying at the Cowells' house in Shady, New York, sometime during the forties. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

of suicide I try out over and over."[84]

Repeatedly, McPhee described the genesis of his depressions as lying deep in the past. In 1942 he wrote his psychiatrist, Dr. William Mayer:

> I remember that at nineteen I was filled with the idea I had something precious to say, and that at twenty-three I no longer believed it. I already felt lost, filled with despair, and took refuge in living completely for the moment. Many times there was a decision to make between some important opportunity and a sexual (homosexual) relationship which was purely sensual. I never hesitated to choose the latter.[85]

In a letter to Sidney Cowell from 1945, McPhee described ripping up old Toronto concert programs, an act that seems to have been a metaphor for killing the musician in himself. Here, too, he talked of his condition as having a long history.

> Knowing that I've had a certain talent has always made me all the more determined to destroy it. I don't know when this perverse feeling began, but I know that when I went to Paris to study I was already half-hearted about a career.[86]

He went on to describe his time in Bali as "an escape from

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[84]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 13 May [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. Many other such letters exist. Sidney Cowell confirms that McPhee repeatedly threatened suicide when he was staying at the Cowells' house in Shady (Interview with Sidney Cowell, Shady, New York, 10 October 1981).

[85]Letter, CM to Dr. William Mayer, "Monday" [postmarked 2 September 1942]. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.

[86]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 25 August [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

the vulgarity of America, and the sordid materialism, the competetive [sic] and all the modern virtures."[87]

McPhee sometimes spoke vaguely of a split personality. For example, in the early fifties, he described nights as "torture . . . everything comes crashing through in dreams I seem to have no power to reject or forget," and went on to express utter bewilderment at his state: "I simply can't understand what is actually taking place inside me. Try as I will to act or think in a normal, mature way, I seem possessed of another self that will never allow this, has prevented me from functioning almost all my life."[88]

Although McPhee was describing his problem as one rooted in his youth, he may also have found it difficult to re-adjust to Western life. Watching him weave through A House in Bali, we sense a man lost in the mysteries of this distant land. Not only did he respond to the island's music and food, but something about the very temperament of the place seemed to mesh with his own. McPhee described completely losing track of time--often even of contact with the West--and of being sympathetic to the "sudden depression and boredom that can descend on a

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[87]Ibid.

[88]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, postmarked 5 May 1951. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

Balinese without a moment's warning."[89] He also found comfort in the island's acceptance of homosexuality.

The Balinese are a people for whom time is in some ways suspended, and the progression of daily life has few climaxes.[90] The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has described these traits:

> It amounts to the fact that social activities do not build, or are not permitted to build, toward definite consummations. Quarrels appear and disappear, on occasion they even persist, but they hardly ever come to a head. Issues are not sharpened for decision, they are blunted and softened in the hope that the mere evolution of circumstances will resolve them, or better yet, that they will simply evaporate. Daily life consists of self-contained, monadic encounters in which something either happens or does not--an intention is realized or it is not, a task accomplished or not. When the thing doesn't happen--the intention is frustrated, the task unaccomplished--the effort may be made again from the beginning at some other time; or it may simply be abandoned.[91]

McPhee functioned for six years in this timeless warp. Pressure was removed, and life flowed evenly forward, with little competition. He later acknowledged how calm and leisurely his work in Bali had been: "I did nothing while I was there except live, look and listen, until the time came when I felt I had to write about the

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[89]McPhee, A House in Bali, pp. 71, 114.

[90]As Clifford Geertz has noted: "They [the Balinese] are largely used not to measure the elapse of time." ("Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 391.

[91]Ibid, p. 403.

music. . . . It seemed to contain some lesson, and reminded me of a time when I thought music a mysterious art. I envied [the Balinese] their impersonal life."[92] Readjustment to the brisk pace of New York must have been jolting.

Jane Belo--then Colin's ex-wife--was also going through troubled times after her return from Bali. Like Colin, she spent some years turning her Bali research into a book. Belo's papers at the Library of Congress contain a large group of "Hospital Notes: 1944-55," which are essentially field notes documenting her own experiences, as well as the reactions of patients around her, during repeated stays in a psychiatric hospital. The exact nature of her illness is not given.[93]

Friends for a New Life

After returning to New York in 1939, McPhee made several friends who were to stick by him during the tough years ahead. Chávez, Copland, and Henry Cowell were three

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[92]Letter, CM to Dr. William Mayer, "Monday" [postmarked 2 September 1942]. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.

[93]In her notes, Belo describes being put in a straight-jacket and goes on in detail about her dreams.

from the pre-Bali days.[94] The three, together with Oliver Daniel, whom McPhee met in the mid-Forties, encouraged McPhee to compose and helped him find grants and commissions. Chávez visited New York occasionally and, when in Mexico, kept up a lively correspondence with McPhee. But through all this time there were four women in whom McPhee confided regularly: Sidney Cowell, Elizabeth Mayer, Minna Lederman, and Margaret Mead. A fifth, Marian Eames, came on the scene in the late forties.

McPhee met Sidney Cowell in the summer of 1942 in Woodstock, New York. He was renting "a house with a shed with a screen porch added on," and Henry and Sidney were also renting while they looked for a house to buy.[95] Colin had known Henry since the late twenties, but Sidney was new to him. He and she immediately became great friends (he later told her, "You I liked at once"),[96] and his letters to her (now in the Cowell Collection at the New York Public Library) tell more about what was in his

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[94]Carl Van Vechten, another friend from the twenties, seemed to fade out of McPhee's life. Only one letter from McPhee to Van Vechten survives from after the Bali period. It was written in 1944. McPhee says that "It seems too bad, to me at least, that we must glare like that at each other, as last night at the ballet." (11 October 1944. Beinecke Library/Yale)

[95]Interview with Sidney Cowell.

[96]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 24 July [1946 or '47]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

heart than any other group of documents. They include laments about his personal life and work problems, as well as charming anecdotes about shared loves: cats, food, books. The Cowells' house in Shady, New York, became a retreat for McPhee; he often stayed there for long periods while they were away.

Elizabeth Mayer was in McPhee's life for a shorter time, yet during those years she was a special confidante. Between 1939 and 1943, while a frequent guest at the home of Mayer and her husband Dr. William Mayer (McPhee's psychiatrist), McPhee mingled with Britten, Copland, Peter Pears, Wystan Auden, and Chester Kallman.[97] Elizabeth Mayer was a pianist who had studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Stuttgart and, for a time, had dreamed of a professional career.[98] In 1942 Colin gave her piano lessons; he even added the name of the famous writer of pianos excercises to his own when he signed the Mayers' guestbook, "Colin (Pischna) McPhee." In July 1942, Mrs. Mayer wrote Benjamin Britten, "Colin was down here for two days, giving me excellent lessons, writing some marvellous

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[97]A photograph of McPhee and Britten on the lawn at the Mayers' home is reproduced in Donald Mitchell and John Evans, Benjamin Britten: Pictures from a Life 1913-76 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), No. 125. Mitchell says that McPhee's name turns up in Britten's "pocket diary" in 1939. (Letter to author, 22 November 1982.)

[98]Elizabeth Mayer's concert ambitions are mentioned in Ibid, No. 150.

excercises for my fingers, and even promising to write some piano pieces for me."[99]

McPhee's acquaintance with Margaret Mead went back to the Bali days and was both personally and professionally sustaining. She encouraged him to finish Music in Bali--his letters to her are preoccupied with the topic--and also helped him obtain grants. McPhee was inspired by her optimism ("You have a remarkable gift for imparting courage and faith"),[100] yet it was so unlike his own as to be exhausting. He once confided to Sidney Cowell, "I love Margaret M. . . . but at intervals, and at a distance. I'd hate to have that YWCA energy around me for more than a couple of hours."[101]

McPhee had known Minna Lederman since he started writing for Modern Music in 1931, and Marian (Marne) Eames came into his life in 1948, when he wrote a piece for Dance Index, the journal she edited with Lincoln

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[99]Letter, Elizabeth Mayer to Benjamin Britten, 1 July 1942 (Transcribed by Beata Sauerlander).

[100]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 4 October [1945]. Mead Collection/LC.

[101]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 24 July [1946-47]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

Kirstein.[102] All these women were sympathetic to McPhee's struggles.

The Search for an Income

During the forties, McPhee pursued several means of earning money and re-establishing himself professionally. Very soon after his arrival in New York he began looking for lecture engagements, and by at least October 1940 he had his first speaking date. His topic was of course the music of Bali. The Boosey and Hawkes Artist Bureau managed his lectures and produced an illustrated eight-panel pamphlet promoting a series of eight talks.[103] Engagements were hard to come by, as McPhee wrote Margaret Mead in October 1941:

> I feel very well, and chastened. There would be nothing the matter with me if I could only get some lecture engagements. Try as I may, I can get no results. My agent has got me nothing. . . . I can't understand it except that I am not good enough, and in all seriousness I can't believe it. Don't give it much thought, but for gods sake if you see any chance let me know. I really need it for my morale, and

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[102]McPhee's first piece for Modern Music was "Winter Chronicle, New York," VIII/3 (March-April 1931), 42-45. Few of his letters to Minna Lederman are extant. His article for Dance Index was "Dance in Bali" VII/7-8 (1948), 156-207.

[103]A copy of the promotional pamphlet is in the McPhee Collection at UCLA. The earliest notice of one of his lectures was published in the Hartford Courant (8 October 1940). Boosey and Hawkes sold its Artist Bureau in the late forties and kept none of its files (Telephone converstion with Morey Newburger and Sylvia Goldstein, 31 January 1983).

also a little bit for my budget.[104]

Mead responded immediately, telling him not to take the lack of response personally:

> About lectures. I'd put it down to the times. If your agent had got you a lecture in a given spot one year and failed the next year--you could say it was you. But I don't see how no bids for lectures on the basis of lecture bureau folder can be interpreted as you. I find that I am being asked to lecture less and less on the South Seas and more and more on the present emergency.[105]

In the spring of 1942, McPhee went on at least one lecture tour which included Chicago, Urbana, and Boston; other cities may also have been on his itinerary.[106]

During the forties, McPhee made repeated attempts to get funding for field work abroad. None was successful. In April 1941 he proposed an expedition to South America--especially Peru and Bolivia--to Carleton Sprague Smith, then Chief of the Music Division of the New York Public Library. McPhee described his Bali field work

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[104]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 1 October [1941]. Mead Collection/LC. Mead addressed a letter "To Whom It May Concern," recommending McPhee as a lecturer. (9 July 1940. Mead Collection/LC)

[105]Letter, Margaret Mead to CM, 3 October 1941. Mead Collection/LC.

[106]McPhee's lecture dates are nearly impossible to trace. He mentions a lecture at Sarah Lawrence College in the spring of 1941 (Letter to Aaron Copland, 27 March [1941]. Copland Collection). Elizabeth Mayers' diary for 1942 mentions McPhee lectures in Chicago on 22 April and Urbana on 23 April. His letters to her from that spring also mention a Boston lecture on 27 April. (Letter, CM to Elizabeth Mayer, 27 April 1942. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.)

in some detail and went on to suggest that his new project focus mostly on vocal music: "Work songs, recreational and ritualistic music would occupy the greater part of the program, although where interesting instrumental music was found it would be dealt with in the same way as in Bali."[107] McPhee requested a recording machine and motion-picture camera, as well as one or two assistants. Charles Seeger and George Herzog were also involved in planning the project and helped McPhee refine his goals. Seeger was enthusiastic and proposed that McPhee "go down to Peru and Bolivia for a year, record, take movies, and collaborate with the anthropologist Valcarcel."[108] McPhee confided to Chávez in 1941 just how much the project meant to him:

> I have no right to count on this thing at all, and yet I have been rather counting on it for the last two months, for it means much to me both financially and morally. I shall be at very loose ends if I am in New York next autumn, and shall have to look for some kind of job, and god only knows what I can do.[109]

The proposal never took off. By June McPhee was beseeching Copland, "If you can push [the proposal] in any way, please do," and told him that an offer of $3,000 had been made (McPhee asked for $8,000), which was

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[107]As quoted in: Letter, CM to Carleton Sprague Smith, 5 April 1941 (Chavez Collection/Mexico City).

[108]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 16 May [1941] (Chávez Collection/Mexico City). [109]Ibid.

[110]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 7 June [1941]. (Copland Collection)

unacceptable: "I have to be paid, as I have no money to do it on myself."[110] Soon after, he wrote Margaret Mead, asking what she knew of the project's success. McPhee was impatient to know the outcome so he could start preparing.

> The one snag (not impossible, however) is that Smith and Seeger are primarily interested in the popular folk-music--you know, that dull hybrid of Indian and Latin copulation, while George and I would like to get the real stuff, which is much harder to find.[111]

Eventually Seeger wrote McPhee that he would never "completely give up the idea, but [the project] looks impossible."[112] Earlier in the summer, McPhee had told Chávez the project was at a "standstill." "I am not surprised, because it is just one disappointment in a series that I am long resigned to. Life has been incredibly dull and empty since I returned [from Bali], and now I must add to all that financial problems."[113]

In 1942, McPhee's luck changed when he was given a grant by the Guggenheim Foundation "for preparation of a book on Balinese music." The grant was renewed in 1943.[114] Mead

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[111]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 15 June [1941]. (Mead Collection/LC)

[112]As quoted in, Letter, CM to Margaret Mead [1941]. (Mead Collection/LC)

[113]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 19 June [1941]. (Chávez Collection/Mexico City)

[114]Telephone conversation with Eileen Holden, Research Office of Guggenheim Foundation, 31 January 1983. The Guggenheim Foundation will not release the amount of their grants.

wrote a strong letter of recommendation for him, which sympathetically pinpointed the problems of his ill-defined standing:

> I am intimately acquainted with Mr. McPhee's work in Bali; I have worked with him in the field, I have observed his handling of informants, the skill and persistence with which he has adapted his research methods to local possibilities, the imagination and constructiveness which he has used in interpreting his material. He has been working on this project for several years, with very slight funds and without the status which his abilities and the importance of his research justify.[115]

Her most perceptive plea came in the penultimate paragraph: "A fellowship would . . . confer dignity upon the scholar-artist who is doing the work."

After A House in Bali was published in 1946, McPhee began to develop plans for travel that would lead to a similar book, evocative of culture and landscape and directed to a general reader. In 1947 he proposed the first of these schemes when the John Day Company (publisher of A House in Bali) offered him an advance for a book on Java. McPhee, in turn, sought another Guggenheim grant to supplement his travel expenses (this

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[115]Letter, Margaret Mead to Guggenheim Foundation (undated draft [1942].) Mead Collection/LC.

one for $3,000).[116] He hoped to borrow recording equipment from the Library of Congress. To McPhee, despite post-war political turmoil in Indonesia (perhaps because of it), there was great urgency in doing field work there as soon as possible. He wanted to return to Indonesia to do recording--the part of his mission that had failed previously.

> One thing IS clear in my mind. The next ten years will be absolutely the last chance for a recorded collection to be made of Indonesian music. With the changes coming, it will go just like that. . . . Nostalgia for the East is so strong right now that I am growing a bowl of ginger. It's up six inches and looks rather nice.[117]

The Guggenheim Foundation turned him down, and Harold Spivacke wrote from the Library of Congress to say, "It goes without saying that we are interested in obtaining recorded music of Java. . . . At the moment we have no recording machines available since they are all out in the field."[118] Spivacke thought the American Council of Learned Societies (to which McPhee was planning to apply for funds) would not help him out because they were in the

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[116]A copy of McPhee's proposal to the Guggenheim Foundation is in the Mead Collection, together with a draft of her letter of recommendation for him. Both are undated. But an attached letter from Henry Allen Moe of the Guggenheim Foundation was written on 13 November 1947. (Mead Collection/LC)

[117]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Sunday" [1947]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[118]Letter, Harold Spivacke to CM (5 February 1947). Music Division/LC.

midst of reorganization.

In 1949 McPhee won yet another fellowship to support his work on Music in Bali--this one from the prestigious Bollingen Foundation. The stipend totaled $3,600 ($300 per month for a year, beginning March 1950). He later received a six-month extension until August 1950.[119]

Even before the Bollingen fellowship came through McPhee had begun attempting to organize an expedition to Burma. Again he wanted to do a book like A House in Bali--although "less precious, more close to life."[120] In 1950, he received a Fulbright grant for work in the northeast Shan states, but once more the Library of Congress denied him recording equipment, this time because political conditions were too dangerous. McPhee was forced to decline the Fulbright grant and conceded to the Commission that indeed Burma was risky at the time: "I can get no confirmation that I can venture much further north than Mandalay; even further South, my most direct information stresses restrictions of movement and

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[119]Information about McPhee's grant is found in the Bollingen Archives in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

[120]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Thursday," [1950?]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

inevitable limitations in field work."[121] In 1949, McPhee also considered doing field work for a book on Haiti or Mexico.[122]

In May 1945, Colin began his first near-to-full-time job, which lasted for a year and a half.[123] The job was with the Radio Program Branch of the Office of War Information, a propaganda arm of the State Department, and seems to have been gotten for him by Henry Cowell.[124] According to sketchy references in letters from the period, Colin designed radio programs--mostly of jazz,

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[121]Letter, CM to Howard Backus (Chief, Fulbright Programs Exchange), 18 September 1950. Mead Collection/LC.

[122]McPhee mentions these plans in letters to Copland (25 January [1949], Copland Collection) and Chávez (15 January [1949], Chávez Collection/Mexico City).

[123]McPhee was with the Radio Program Branch of the Office of War Information (224 West 57 Street, New York) OWI records show that his employment began on 25 May 1945; they have no terminal date for his employment. His salary started at $8.88/hour. (Letter, Timothy R. Crotty, Chief, Workforce Records Management Division, United States Office of Personnel Management, to author, 20 September 1984.) In June 1946, McPhee told Sidney Cowell his salary might go up to the "middle of the 4000 bracket." (Letter, CM to SRC, 22 June [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.)

[124]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 12 March [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. The Office of War Information was established in 1942. John Houseman talks about the New York branch in Studs Terkel, "The Good War: An Oral History of World War II," The Atlantic Monthly (July 1984), 67-68.

spirituals, and folk music--and made some recordings.[125] For example, he prepared a three-part series on the history of jazz, for which he wrote the script and narrated.[126] By June McPhee was reporting a positive response to the shows:

> My jazz programs are really a success. All the offices--I mean English, French, Italy, and Czech use them and the scripts, and I have correspondence on their magnificence from Porto Rico and Panama. And all this comes of not having once put on a record which I did not consider most beautiful--and in time anywhere from 1924 to 1946.[127]

One of McPhee's more spirited accounts of work at OWI arose from an expedition to Harlem in July 1946, where he recorded the the Camp Meeting Choir of South Carolina. He had heard the group a month earlier at a Battle of Song in Madison Square Garden and was delighted with himself when he coaxed the singers into a "brilliant" performance ("It took my best anthropological technic").[128] Besides the radio shows on jazz, he recorded a half hour program "of new two-piano arrangements" with the pianist Maro Ajemian, who later was to make the first recording of John

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[125]The only real description of McPhee's work there is included in letters to Sidney Cowell, a number of which are cited below.

[126]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 15 May [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[127]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 18 June [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[128]Letters, CM to Sidney Cowell, 3 June [1946] and 24 July [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

Cage's Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano.

> The arrangements I did either at the office with machines playing full blast, or at home at three AM without so much as a look at the piano. Result; absolute fresh effects, new, completely charming. A fine pianist, an Armenian girl, Maro Ajemian, who plays exotic concertos, etc, and is intelligent and a fine musician. We really did well. Much too good for the archives of OWI.[129]

As in other aspects of his life, McPhee's spirits vacillated with this job. Initially he found it interesting--"It's remarkable how less tired you feel if you've done a full day's work"--and was rising at six to write prose for an hour before going in to the office.[130] He seemed to enjoy much of the work, and yet depressions frequently took over. At one point he wrote Chávez:

> Government work is exhausting and sordid; there is nothing left of one by the end of the day, no urge to do anything creative, no desire to comment on anything. I come home and fall asleep at nine, to wake next morning and set out once more.[131]

At other times he hoped the job might make him feel "somewhat

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[129]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Friday" [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. I have not been able to locate these recordings, either in the OWI's archives or with Maro Ajemian. (George Avakian, who is married to Anahid Ajemian, Maro's sister, knows of no copy of the recording. Letter to author from George Avakian, 6 August 1982.) Ajemian's Cage recordings were made in 1951 (Dial-19).

[130]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 31 July [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[131]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 5 October [1946]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

secure."[132] He gave up the position at OWI, however, in December 1946.[133]

Finding a Home

McPhee lived in several different places during these years. He never seemed to settle anywhere for long. At first he found an apartment on St. Mark's Place in the East Village.[134] Then in June 1941 he was awarded a residency at Yaddo, in Saratoga Springs, New York, where he stayed until 2 December.[135] During those months he got a good start on both Music in Bali and A House in Bali and seemed to be content. "I am in luck. I have a studio all to myself, far out in the fields, away from it all, and live in a neighbouring house with only two other guests."[136]

From September 1943 until June 1947, he lived in

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[132]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 22 August [1945?]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[133]This date is approximate. In a letter written on 7 November 1946, McPhee told Carlos Chávez that he was "giving up the State Dept job end of year." (Chávez Collection/Mexico City)

[134]McPhee lived at 129 East 10 Street from March 1939 to May 1941 and October 1942 to September 1943.

[135]Records at Yaddo show that McPhee was there from 15 June to 31 July and 11 August to 2 December of 1941. No other information about him is in the Yaddo archives. (Letter to author from Kjersti Board, Yaddo, 24 June 1984).

[136]Letter, CM to Elizabeth Mayer, 16 June [1941]. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.

a Brooklyn Heights brownstone at 7 Middagh Street.[137] The house had been leased by George Davis, then fiction editor at Harper's Bazaar, and rooms were rented to an illustrious group of artists: Wystan Auden, Carson McCullers, Paul and Jane Bowles, Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears, Oliver Smith (the stage designer), Thomas Mann's son Golo, and Gypsy Rose Lee. Truman Capote, a longtime Brooklyn Heights resident, later recalled, "Each of the tenants in this ivory-tower boarding-house contributed to its upkeep, lights, heat, [and] the wages of a general cook (a former Cotton Club chorine). The boarders changed frequently, but overall it was a pleasant place to live."[138] Paul Bowles remembers the house as "well heated, and . . . quiet, save when Benjamin Britten was working in the first-floor parlor, where he had installed a big black Steinway."[139] The Middagh Street house was razed in 1947, and McPhee moved to another building that George Davis leased, this one on East 86th Street in Manhattan.[140] He stayed there for nearly a year and then moved between various hotels on West 22nd, in the vicinity

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[137]The house was torn down to make way for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

[138]Truman Capote, "Brooklyn Heights: A Personal Memoir," Holiday (February 1959), 65.

[139]Paul Bowles, Without Stopping (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), 233.

[140]305 East 86 Street. McPhee lived there from June 1947 to April 1948.

of the Hotel Chelsea.[141]

During these years of moving from apartment to apartment, Henry and Sidney Cowell's house in Shady, New York, became a stable retreat.[142] Repeatedly, in letters to the Cowells (especially Sidney), McPhee thanked them for their kindness, exclaiming at one point: "I hope you realize how wonderful it has been to have Shady to work in--a lovely piano, country-house, friends, and sympathy."[143] He did much of the writing of both A House in Bali and Music in Bali there, and most often stayed in the house alone, while the Cowells were in their New York apartment.

A Writer Emerges

As musical composition became increasingly difficult, McPhee turned more and more to writing prose. Bali was his principal topic. He had planned a book on Balinese music from the very beginning of his stay there and was barely off the island in January 1939 when he began sketching plans in a letter to Margaret Mead: "I don't know in what key to pitch my book, whom to address it to. I think a purely technical analysis dooms the book

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[141]McPhee lived in the Chelsea off and on in 1949 and '50.

[142]Many of McPhee's letters from these years give Shady as a return address.

[143]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, no date [ca. 1949], written from the Hotel Chelsea. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

to an audience of sticks, and yet I hold the literary approach in suspicion."[144] By the summer of 1941, when McPhee was working at Yaddo, the two conflicting approaches had become independent:

> I'm doing a book on daily life in Bali, as a relaxation from the one on music. It has gone very well--18000 words in three weeks, and I am really happy in doing it. I can allow my romantic libido to find expression in a way it can't in the other thing. I write so much better than I compose that I wish a miracle might happen, even at this late date, and that I could express the something that I feel within, that has never found satisfactory utterance.[145]

That fall he called his book on daily life "an emotional outlet against the cold analysis of the book on Balinese music."[146]

The book, which was to became A House in Bali, was four years in the making (completed in the fall of 1944).[147] For McPhee, it was the first foray into a large-scale writing project, and it brought much joy. He took care with his prose, going through "at least" three revisions:

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[144]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 3 January [1939]. Mead Collection/LC. McPhee had mentioned a book as his goal already in 1932, when he had returned to Paris after six months in Bali (Letter, CM to Carl Van Vechten, 4 . . . 1932. Beinecke Library/Yale).

[145]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 20 July [1941]. Copland Collection.

[146]Letter, CM to William Mayer, 30 October [1941]. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.

[147]In a letter to Benjamin Britten, Elizabeth Mayer said that "Colin has nearly finished his Travel Book on Bali." (8 July 1944; transcribed by Beata Sauerlander).

"Writing the book has been like making bread--You let the dough rise, cut [it] down, let it rise again."[148] He told Margaret Mead not long before its publication:

> I daresay I was a fool to be so fussy about what I thought was style, but I've always had ambitions as a writer, and at last when I had a subject, I could not resist playing with it self-indulgently. At the same time I was trying to make a complex experience crystal-clear.[149]

According to Sidney Cowell, McPhee puzzled over the organization of the book, wondering how to structure such an episodic story. He turned to at least two books for inspiration. The first was Isak Dinesen's Out of Africa from 1937, in which a continuous, forward-moving narrative is strung on a series of anecdotes: Dinesen's years as manager of a coffee plantation in Kenya are described through vignettes of places, people, and events. In the fourth section of her five-part book, Dinesen abandons any attempt at a unified story and breaks the work down into short sketches, like a series of minute operas.[150]

McPhee was also influenced by Cora Du Bois's The

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[148]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 11 September [1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[149]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 16 July [?1945]. Mead Collection/LC.

[150]Isak Dinesen, Out of Africa (New York: Random House, 1938). Sidney Cowell claims that Dinesen's book was a model for McPhee (Interview, 10 October 1981). Henry Cowell compares the two in his review in Notes IV/1 (December 1946), 85.

People of Alor of 1944, which he reviewed for the New York Times.[151] Du Bois's book was a personal memoir, with a scientific twist, and McPhee was "fascinated by the organization of the material."[152]

McPhee was confident in writing A House in Bali, and he was proud of the product. He worked closely with his publisher (John Day Company, a division of Asia House) on the book's format and, after a long day of work on its lay-out, wrote Sidney Cowell to share his feelings about the project. His letter sounds as spontaneous as a late-night chat over the kitchen table:

> Really, I'm pleased with the book. It's a snobbish book, in a way, for what I've withheld, and where I've placed the accents. And yet it has a wide appeal, I know, from the variety of readers who have enjoyed the pieces. The only effect that counts in the long run is one of mystery, of what you imply rather than say. Perhaps I feel that way because I've been trained as a musician, and feel words the way I feel tones. The sentence must float, if you know what I mean. Not be weighted down. Just as the music of Mozart floats, while Beethoven, my god, and Bach too at times, sinks, sinks to the bottom of the glass. That's what comes of being too insistent about being sincere, or putting yourself into it. Chopin floats; Schubert too. What is it, exactly? Something like wind, gentle or wild--I can't put my finger on it.[153]

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[151] New York Times Book Review (17 September 1944). The full title of Du Bois's book was: The People of Alor: A Social-Psychological Study of an East-Indian Island (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944).

[152] Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 4 October [1945]. Mead Collection/LC.

[153] Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Friday" [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

The "pieces" to which McPhee referred were from an an eight-part serialized preview of A House in Bali, titled "In This Far Island," that was published between December 1944 and July 1945 in the magazine Asia and the Americas.[154] It was an abridged version of the book, with only parts of the story told, but the same structure and much of the same language was used. Many modifications were made between the first installments of "In This Far Island" and A House in Bali. But by the last couple of issues of "Far Island" McPhee had reworked the material into final shape. A comparison of these two versions tells something about McPhee's writing process.[155] His sentences did not always "float" automatically but underwent extensive revisions. Often he made single word changes that either sharpened the meaning of a passage, gave it a better rhythm, or simply made it cleaner and less image-laden. There is no record of how much outside editorial help he had. The following excerpts show the kinds of revisions that were made. (Sections that differ are underlined.)

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[154]Colin McPhee, "In This Far Island" Asia and the Americas (December 1944-June 1945).

[155]No complete draft exists for A House in Bali. Short sections that later made their way into the book are included in McPhee's Bali field notes at UCLA.

In This Far Island	A House in Bali[156]
A g'nder is delicately adjusted and easily goes off pitch. If the bamboo resonators are out of tune with the keys, the tone is dead. When the instrument is in tune it has a haunting sound, prolonged and softly ringing. The hammers strike the keys, and in the seasoned tubes the sound is caught goes round and round, sinks, softens, matures like wine in a cask, rises again to float away, dissolving in the air. It is the presence of these instruments which gives a gamelan its aereal, luminous sound.	A g'nder is delicately adjusted and easily goes off pitch. If the bamboo resonators are out of tune, the tone is dead, but when the instrument is perfectly in tune it has a haunting sound, prolonged and softly ringing. It is the presence of many of these instruments that gives a gamelan its floating, disembodied sound.

What is most remarkable about McPhee's writing style in A House in Bali is how his language has the same "floating, disembodied" quality as the music he describes. In writing about the sounds produced by Lotring's gamelan in Kuta, McPhee uses words that could apply to his own prose.

> . . . the familiar tones floated in the air, perfumed and softly ringing, covered with dreamy arabesques that created an undefinable atmosphere of sensuous mysticism.[157]

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[156]The first column is taken from Part II of "In This Far Island," which is titled "Portrait of a Prince" (January 1945), p. 38. The second column is from A House in Bali, p. 41.

[157]"In This Far Island," Part VII, p. 306.

McPhee also contributed the photographs reproduced in the back of A House in Bali and seems to have worked a good deal on the book's design.[158] The release had been planned for spring 1946 but because of a paper shortage was delayed until fall.[159]

The book was a success, with consistently glowing reviews in music journals, such as Notes and Musical Courier, as well as in magazines and newspapers with a wider circulation--Saturday Review, The New Statesman, the New York Times, and the New York Herald Tribune.[160] Most reviewers commented on its atmospheric quality. Henry Cowell wrote, "Almost nothing is explained, only incidents and sense impressions are delicately described and sensitively reported."[161] When McPhee talked of "mystery" as "the only thing that counts," he revealed that the

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[158]He talks about this part of the book in a letter to Sidney Cowell, 12 March [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[159]On 29 November [1945], McPhee wrote Sidney Cowell that the book was "announced for April. Text--finished! Slight changes in process, to meet deadline of Dec. 5." Then on 5 April [1946] he wrote, "My book is delayed--paper shortage for the photographs." (Cowell Collection/NYPL)

[160]Reviews of A House in Bali: Henry Cowell in Notes; unsigned in Musical Courier (15 November 1946), 26; Minna Lederman in Saturday Review (23 November 1946), 19; Beryl de Zoete in The New Statesman and Nation (3 April 1948), 279; Ruth Benedict in New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review (6 October 1946).

[161]Cowell, Notes.

book's limpid, ethereal quality was a deliberate part of a style that he had worked hard to achieve.

McPhee hung his hopes on this book, just as he had on Tabuh-Tabuhan. For one thing, if sales were good he planned to quit his job at the Office of War Information: "The moment, if it comes, I have a thousand dollars in the bank from my book, I shall stop [working at OWI] and take a chance on what will follow in my life."[162] By mid-December of 1946 the first press run (of unknown size) had been sold, and Colin was disgusted at the publisher for delaying the production of more copies. "To let a book die after the reviews it got seems to me outrageous. I was not seeking to make my fortune, but I had at least hoped to gain some self-respect."[163] McPhee had a well-known literary agent, Harold Ober Associates--the same agent who represented William Faulkner and Langston Hughes (Ivan van Aauw was the individual who handled McPhee's work).[164] In 1947, A House in Bali was published in London

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[162]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Saturday" [Fall 1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[163]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 17 December [1946]. Mead Collection/LC.

[164]The archives of Harold Ober Associates are in the Princeton University Library but contain no information about McPhee. (Letter to author from Mardel Pacheco, Assistant to the Curator of Manuscripts, 22 October 1981).

and in 1951 in Italy.[165] Recently, it has been reprinted in New York.[166]

A House in Bali, although highly touted by writers, anthropologists, and musicians, never brought McPhee the acclaim--and money--he sought.[167] Yet despite deepening poverty, he gave ten percent of his royalties to I Madé Lebah, the musician who had taught him so much about Balinese music. Lebah remembers that when the Peliatan Gamelan Kebyar visited New York in 1952, McPhee brought him to a bookstore where A House in Bali was on display, showed him a copy of the book, and offered him a share of the royalties. After Lebah returned to Bali, checks arrived periodically from McPhee.[168]

Just two years later, McPhee published A Club of Small Men (again, a John Day imprint), a children's story about the gamelan angklung he established for the boys in

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[165]Some idea of the size of these press runs is given in a letter from McPhee to Carlos Chávez: "Editions of some 3000 sold out in England and Italy in a few months." (16 October [1952]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City)

[166]Reprint, New York: AMS Press, [1980].

[167]In 1949 (or so) McPhee wrote Copland: "I had hoped House in Bali would have helped open some doors. I don't know why, but I might just as well have never written it." (31 August [1949 or '50]. Copland Collection.)

[168]Interview with I Madé Lebah, Peliatan, Bali, 9 April 1984.

Sayan.[169] For this book he not only contributed photographs but line drawings that introduce each chapter.

Music in Bali

Unlike A House in Bali, work on Music in Bali was long and fitful. Over the years McPhee fluctuated between periods of productivity and ones of total inertia; as went his energy-level so went his progress on the book. There were many reasons why work was difficult. Had McPhee been able to maintain his status as a gentleman scholar, the project would have been a pleasant diversion--albeit a substantial one--in a life of comfort. But as he continually scraped along, trying to eke out a living through grants and occasional free-lance writing, the book became a millstone. Long after McPhee was without money, his pride remained fierce:

> To do the book on Balinese music as a sort of pastime, in a life of freedom from shabbiness, would be a pleasure. But to do it as a duty, for the sake of science and knowledge, on a miserable allowance, is nothing but sheer drudgery, unrewarding and humiliating. I did not live in Bali to collect material. I lived there because I wanted to, for the pleasure of it.[170]

Another problem for McPhee was his lack of academic training. Sometimes he felt impeded by it, especially in

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[169]The book is dedicated "To Cathy" [Bateson], Margaret Mead's daughter. A Club of Small Men (New York: The John Day Company, 1948).

[170]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 8 April [ca. 1945]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

writing sections such as the one tracing the historical background of Balinese music: "I find this all very hard, since I am no scholar."[171] At other times, he was disdainful of scholarship's rigors. In one instance, for example, he wanted to purge the book of "all stupid jargon-like aeophones [sic], idiophones, [that are] beloved [by] Sachs and Hornbostel."[172] Minna Lederman, who watched McPhee struggle with the project for years, felt he had "a terrible feeling of not being able to handle the material."[173] Yet despite occasional bouts of insecurity, he consistently acted like a scholar, especially in his extraordinary fastidiousness, both about interpreting his research and about refining his language. Once, in the midst of a successful work stint, he confessed to Sidney Cowell: "Little, trivial things seem able to disturb me for hours. You'd think I was James or Flaubert."[174]

A graph of McPhee's yearly progress on Music in Bali would be wildly jagged. Already in 1941, the ups and downs had started: "I'm at Yaddo . . . to finish the book on

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[171]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, "Tuesday" [1949 or '50]. Mead Collection/LC.

[172]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 12 July [ca. 1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[173]Interview with Minna Lederman.

[174]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 3 August 1949 [date added in ink by SRC]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

Balinese music, but it is hard work, as my heart is no longer in it."[175] That October, by contrast, he was "getting on well with the book."[176] And so it went as the years passed and the book remained unfinished. In August 1944, McPhee wrote Margaret Mead in a guilt-ridden fit because he had not completed the book during the period (1942-43) of his Guggenheim grant:

> As you were the key sponsor for my Guggenheim project, and the one perhaps most interested, I feel you ought to know that it is now clear to me that the book will not materialize. I have to admit defeat for a number of reasons, the main one being that I have not the background to put it together the right way. I was able to kid myself that I could overcome this somehow, while the experience was still fresh and I had the enthusiasm. But I seem to have rather gone to pieces, and it has shown to such an extent in my work that I realize that it is useless to think further about it.[177]

McPhee always saw A House in Bali as a diversion from what he called "the real book."[178] As House neared completion (around 1944), he stopped working on Music in Bali. And by September 1945, when House was finished, Music in Bali was "still only half done. I may go back to it now with fresh

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[175]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 19 June [1941]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[176]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 17 October [1941]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[177]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 21 August [1944]. Mead Collection/LC.

[178]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 29 September 1945. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

enthusiasm, now that I've said farewell to romance."[179] Around the same time he was writing Margaret Mead, "The music book has presented problems that I felt I could not solve, as I've said so many times, but now with the encouragement of one publication, I shall go on with it again--tear it apart once more and put it together again in a new way."[180] By May 1946 his hopes had again soured; the material was "dead" to him, "something [had] simply snapped" inside.[181]

The excitement of publishing A House in Bali and waiting for reviews took up much of the summer and fall of 1946. McPhee mentioned the music book little during those months. By December he sounded carefree and almost indifferent, with far more enticing diversions at hand.

> I got myself a Christmas present which is and will be more than I can afford in the shape of a young man named Vincent. We don't have much in common, but I like to look at him and have him around. He works on a construction job, carrying bricks, I believe. . . . I don't see myself getting started on another book--I have nothing to write about. As for the book on music--that tome--I've simply decided, in the words of Vincent, Aw, fuck it! It really is not worth the effort.[182]

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 4 October [1945]. Mead Collection/LC.

[181] Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 6 May [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[182] Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 26 December [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

During the next few years work on the book progressed poorly. The material became stale for McPhee, and he, in turn, was enervated by his increasing need for money[183] McPhee claimed, "I just don't think about the Balinese music book, and spend my free days from the [OWI] office lolling on the bed," but the book remained on his conscience because he continued referring to it in letters.[184] Suddenly in 1949, his energy revived with the help of a Bollingen grant. He had done "a lot of revision and rewriting, . . . and the whole thing has gained a great deal from having been put away."[185] By December 1949 he was re-immersed in the project.

> I'm in a state of deepest concentration, for I've picked apart and had to reorganise the whole chapter on Balinese scales. I'm not out of it yet, and I mustn't let what I have almost got hold of slip. . . . I nearly lost my mind over this, and may still do so, but there's no use getting panicky.[186]

But by the early fifties, the pendulum had swung back in the other direction. McPhee complained about "a lack of continuity" in the book. "My music never had that

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[183]As he wrote to Sidney Cowell, 'I am sick of the subject of Bali" (Letter, 10 December [1946 or '47]. Cowell Collection/NYPL).

[184]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 28 April [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. Many other such references exist.

[185]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 31 August [1949 or '50]. Copland Collection.

[186]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, postmarked 20 December 1949. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

quality."[187] Again, the project seemed "hopeless to complete."

> I've spent the last week going over the first part, and find it all so unreadable and repetitious. You know--paragraphs over a page long and all; the eye can tell at a glance. I do feel I've tried to the best of my ability in this work. But I'm not a good writer, for the simple reason I keep trying to say several different things at the same time, and it is terribly difficult for me to put things in correct order.[188]

Then in June 1952, Colin wrote Chávez that recently he had done little else but work on the book. It was completed and "being re-edited before showing."[189] Several bouts of completion and re-editing still lay ahead.

A Music Journalist

During these years McPhee was doing other writing as well. Most prominent in his output were reviews and articles published in Modern Music between 1931 and 1946. His first article on Balinese music appeared there,[190] and he filled approximately 140 pages of Modern Music during his tenure with the magazine. He wrote four special articles, all relating to Bali, and also took on two

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[187]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, "Tuesday" [clipped with letters from 1950-52]. Mead Collection/LC.

[188]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, "Monday" [clipped with letters from 1950-52]. Mead Collection/LC.

[189]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 16 June 1952, Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[190]"The Absolute Music of Bali," Modern Music XII/4 (1935).

regular features--"Scores and Records" (1939-45) and "The Torrid Zone" (1943-1946)--the only steady writing assignments he ever had. Minna Lederman, editor of Modern Music, feels McPhee had "a natural literary gift--he wrote with ease, with a very personal style. He had such a brilliant way of making musical life in Bali, and in other places, clear to all of us. . . . His reviewing was also quite brilliant. He would go to a concert--he had a great deal of wit--and review it and give you the essence of it very well indeed. He was a born story-teller."[191]

McPhee's first feature, "Scores and Records" had been started in 1936 by Copland, who turned it over to McPhee in 1939. In it, McPhee reviewed a wide variety of music--from Bach, as played on a new organ at Harvard, to Chávez's arrangement of a Chaconne by Buxtehude; from a recording of MacDowell's Second Suite to one of African music made by Laura Bolton.[192] He could be devastatingly caustic when he did not like a work. For example, he called Charles Ives's Sixty-Seventh Psalm "three minutes of the most horrible sound it has ever been my lot to hear" and dubbed Robert McBride's Jingle-Jangle "a sort of Nola rewritten to glorify the vibraphone, that insipid

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[191]Interview with Minna Lederman.

[192]Modern Music XVII/2 (Jan-Feb 1940), 110; XVII/1 (Oct-Nov 1939), 52; Ibid; XVIII/3 (Jan-Feb 1941), 160.

American version of a lovely Javanese instrument."[193] Each installment covered a large number of newly issued scores and recordings, with vivid descriptions of the music. Here, for example, is his review of the Mercury publication of Virgil Thomson's Third Piano Sonata of 1930:

> Adventure in C might better describe this chaste and Lilliputian work where a sharp would be as disturbing as a coarse word at a church social. The frame is further restricted, for the melodic line is bounded by the octave. Within these narrow confines the music manages to have an amusing vitality that is not completely guileless.[194]

McPhee seemed to evaluate each new work of a composer individually, with little false loyalty to someone whose earlier music he might have admired--or to a friend. McPhee's writing about Copland is a good example. He admired the early works, like Music for the Theatre, but had trouble with the Lincoln Portrait ("the eloquent simplicity somehow does not ring quite true to my ears")[195] and especially the Violin Sonata of 1942-43:

> More robust, more taut and co-ordinated than the Piano Sonata, its vigor is, nevertheless, ambiguous. We are confronted with a style which by now is almost too familiar and perfected, a style that can be both recherché and baffling in its simplicity, understatement, and Stein-like syntax.

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[193] Modern Music XVII/2 (Oct-Nov 1939), 53; XVII/3 (March-April 1940), 180.

[194] Modern Music XXI/3 (March-April 1944), 183.

[195] Modern Music XVIII/4 (May-June 1941), 267; XX/4 (May-June 1943), 277.

> For some this style will be warm and revealing, but to many it must remain an enigma.[196]

McPhee was well aware of the politics of writing music criticism. Right after his negative review of Lincoln Portrait, he wrote Copland, trying to smooth things over, "I [am] glad you bore no grudge regarding Lincoln."[197] McPhee discussed the ethical issues of criticism quite frankly with Copland on several occasions. In 1941, for example, when he was waiting for word about funding to do fieldwork in South America--a decision in which Charles Seeger would have some say--McPhee confessed that he was playing a bit with his journalistic power.

> This column gets more and more a pain in the neck. . . . See what I said about Carl Engel, and see what I shall say about Ruth Crawford, wife of Sieger [sic] and so involved in the SA project. I can no longer be what I once called honest, but then, when you've reached forty you find that you are no longer shocked to find your tongue in your cheek at times.[198]

McPhee's other regular feature for Modern Music, "The Torrid Zone," grew naturally out of his longtime fascination with Harlem and its jazz. His forays there had begun in the twenties and continued to satisfy an unrelenting anthropological lust. McPhee once told Sidney

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[196]Modern Music XXII/1 (November-December 1944), 58.

[197]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 23 August [1943]. Copland Collection.

[198]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 27 March 1941. Copland Collection.

Cowell just how much Harlem affected him:

> I don't know why it is, but the moment I am among Negroes, I feel strangely at peace and happy, and always wish I lived in Harlem, desperate Ghetto even that it is. It is only the feeling that a white must remain an outsider and unwelcome that keeps my [sic] from looking for a place there.[199]

McPhee had brought his race records to Bali and revealed in A House in Bali that Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, or Ethel Waters were the only Western musicians to whom the Balinese responded.[200]

McPhee signed "The Torrid Zone" with the mysterious pseudonym "Mercure"--perhaps identifying himself by his mercurial temperament. Minna Lederman admits that a column about the Apollo Theatre and jazz "was rather outstanding in Modern Music."[201] The column guides readers through the newest in jazz releases and advises of clubs for the hottest listening. All the reviews show a long and intimate acquaintance with the music. For example, in 1945 McPhee wrote, "Stuff Smith's fiddle sound[s] very much the same way it did ten years ago."[202] Another section

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[199]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 3 June [1940s]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. McPhee once confessed the same desire to Elizabeth Mayer: "I have a great longing to live for a while in Harlem, amidst the warmth and hustle of Negroes." (Letter, 31 August [1941]. Collection of Beata Sauerlander.)

[200]House.

[201]Interview with Minna Lederman.

[202]Modern Music XXII/2 (Jan-Feb 1945), 140.

of the same issue shows that McPhee's writing in "The Torrid Zone" was as spiked with opinions as his reviews of concert music:

> Josh White's plaintive voice, his clear diction, and his beautiful and restrained guitar playing combine to make the Asch album of songs by this folk-blues artist one of the events of the season. The success of one song, One Meat Ball, has been a sensation. . . . But if you want an object-lesson in the degradation of a Negro tune, once it falls into the hands of white musicians, listen to two subsequent recordings rushed out to cash in on the success--the Bay Ridge interpretation by Louis Prima and his band, and the sexy and goonlike voices of the Andrews Sisters, those Rhine maidens of the juke-box.[203]

McPhee did other free-lance writing during these years, principally for Mademoiselle.[204] He also published a group of Balinese recipes in Harper's Bazaar and elsewhere two substantial essays, "Dance in Bali" (1948) and "The Five-Tone Gamelan Music of Bali" (1949).[205] Lou Harrison remembers being very affected by the latter article and copying out all of the musical examples.[206]

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[203]Ibid., 141.

[204]"Shadows in Bali," Mademoiselle (October 1946), 190-91, 306-308; McPhee reviewed records for Mademoiselle in 1943.

[205]"Gourmet in Bali" (Nov 1949), 200-201, 203; "Dance in Bali," Dance Index VII/7-8 (1948), 153-208; "The Five-Tone Gamelan Music of Bali," The Musical Quarterly XXXV/2 (April 1949), 250-81.

[206]Interview with Lou Harrison, Aptos, California, 23 June 1982.

Striving for Performances

Central to McPhee's declining productivity and dampened spirits was the problem of getting his music performed. Otto Luening, a fellow composer who had known McPhee since 1928 and even played some of his flute-and-piano transcriptions in the early forties, is sympathetic as he looks back on McPhee's state of mind:

> Through the thirties and forties, American composers were pretty much ignored. McPhee had a reason to feel depressed; the only thing is he probably thought he was the only one being ignored. The lack of performances, in general, was depressing. Another composer, Charles Naginski, committed suicide at Yaddo because of it.[207]

Minna Lederman concurs: "Composers were a species under attack in America."[208]

In this struggle some composers, such as Copland and Cowell, fought indomitably for recognition and performances, for dignity to be granted the status of "composer." Yet others, like McPhee and Naginski, lacked the spirit for battle. McPhee's problem, in addition to spirit, was a combination of spoiled self-indulgence and good, old-fashioned pride:

> Long, long ago, long before I met Jane, I decided the most important thing in life was immediate pleasure, and how many times have I thrown aside the work which was my "career" deliberately, partly for its sake, partly for contempt of what I was supposed to be

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[207]Interview with Otto Luening.

[208]Part of Minna Lederman's toast to Aaron Copland at a party on 16 August 1984.

> taking seriously. I was too lazy to practise piano every day, for a life devoted to Chopin and Bach seemed pretty dull; I took composing seriously, but I was too proud to sell my symphonies by going the rounds.[209]

McPhee saved few letters or clippings from the past, yet among his papers at the time of his death was a 1940 article by Ashley Pettis from the New York Times: "Composers' Livelihood: Survey Shows that Few Americans Earn Living from Creative Work."[210] Pettis described the agony of getting music performed in the U.S. and called for some form of patronage. McPhee may have derived comfort in knowing he was not alone in this struggle, yet it had a debilitating effect on his creative life. He did take one practical step, though, by joining the American Composers Alliance in 1944, but he resigned on 1 January 1946.[211]

For McPhee, the cruelest blow of all was that Tabuh-Tabuhan--his supposed masterpiece--had never been played in the United States. Chávez's 1941 performance was only a temporary boost, for it took place in Mexico City, not New York. It was November 1947 before Tabuh-

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[209]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 23 May [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[210](21 April 1940).

[211]The files of the American Composer Alliance contain an application for membership from McPhee dated 7 May 1939. Apparently he did not become a member until 27 June 1944 (date on his contract with ACA). McPhee's resignation from ACA took effect 1 January 1946 (Letter, Harrison Kerr to CM, 19 October 1945. ACA files)

Tabuhan was heard in America, and then it was on the radio, as part of the CBS "School of the Air" series. McPhee pared the work's orchestration down for the occasion. Oliver Daniel, who directed the series, recalls:

> I hired him at CBS. . . . The orchestra I had was simply a 35-piece orchestra, and I could augment it by maybe four players. But to do Tabuh-Tabuhan, which was for a huge orchestra, we had to reduce the score, and Colin was then hired to make a smaller version. That was the first time I met him.[212]

Only the second and third movements were performed.

McPhee was overwhelmed at confronting Tabuh-Tabuhan once again and confided the intensity of his reaction to Chávez, who had been so close to the work's creation.

> I've just had a shattering experience. NBC [sic] did Tabuh-Tabuhan over the air a couple of days ago. I got recordings--wonderful--and have been playing them over and over. You are right. I should have been composing all this time. I can't think what I've been doing with my life, except nothing at all, deliberately, to torture myself, I suppose. Actually, it all boils down to economics; I've been so humiliatingly poor since I came back to America that I did not have the energy and exuberance it takes to compose. I gave up years ago, when I had to sell my piano. . . . Forgive this rather lamentoso note. . . . It is the climax in the last movement of TT which has brought this on. I simply can't believe I wrote it.[213]

McPhee still had some years to wait before a live perfor-

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[212]Interview with Oliver Daniel, 3 October 1981.

[213]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 15 November [1947]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

mance of the full work would take place in the United States.

Few of McPhee's other compositions were heard in this period, except for Balinese Ceremonial Music, which attracted some attention. After making the Schirmer recording with McPhee, Benjamin Britten took the score back to London and performed all three transcriptions on at least one concert there.[214] In February 1942, Béla Bartók and his wife Ditta Pasztory performed the works at Amherst College.[215]

Continuing Problems

With Tabuh-Tabuhan still relatively unknown in America, his compositional energy sapped, and Music in Bali evading completion, McPhee's life grew bleaker as the forties drew to a close. He had occasional odd jobs, such as doing radio programs on Javanese and Balinese music for WNYC, and he sold four of his Balinese transcriptions and many of his personal belongings--all in desperate attempts

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[214]The performance took place in 1944 at Wigmore Hall. (Mitchell, Benjamin Britten: Pictures from a Life, No. 174.)

[215]Henry G. Miskin, "Bartók at Amherst," Amherst (Winter 1978), 14-15.

to get cash.[216] Perhaps the biggest disappointment came when a plan to do a film version of A House in Bali failed. An unnamed Hollywood film company, together with the Indonesian Ministries of Information, Education, and Finance, considered the project for a while. McPhee was filled with expectation:

> To do [the film] would turn me into a different being. Apart from the financial relief, there would be that wonderful feeling that here was something I could do, with ease and confidence, and apart from anything else, there [sic] were composing a score could easily return me to writing music again, even at this late date.[217]

Nothing ever came of the plan.

McPhee had other wild ideas for earning a living: starting a restaurant in Oregon ("a self-respecting lunch wagon . . . [with] a superb view") and getting a contract for a cookbook ("a trivial idea, but amusing").[218] They were passing fantasies.

Beginning in 1946, as McPhee's financial situation became increasingly strained, he started borrowing money

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[216]McPhee mentions the WNYC job in a letter to Margaret Mead ("Friday" [probably 1947 or '48]. Mead Collection/LC. McPhee sold "four Balinese pieces to that Blanche Evans for that hundred." (Letter to Sidney Cowell, no date [ca. 1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.) He describes selling his personal belongings in many letters.

[217]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Thursday" [1950 or '51]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. McPhee talks about the film project in several letters to SRC.

[218]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 19 July [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, "Friday" [1948]. Mead Collection/LC.

occasionally from friends--loans that he always paid back. The Cowells, Margaret Mead, and Aaron Copland were among those who helped out in the forties; by the fifties Oliver Daniel was chipping in too.[219] Part of the problem was family-related. McPhee's mother had a stroke in 1948 and required nurses' care. Colin and his brother Douglas were forced to support her. Part of Colin's share came from royalties on A House in Bali, part from Jane Belo.[220] For Colin, this meant not only an added financial burden, but renewed contact with a family from which he had alienated himself. His mother died in 1949.

McPhee was drinking heavily during this period, mostly privately, although his friends were aware of the problem.[221] He had also done so in Bali. I Madé Lebah recalls that

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[219]There are many places in McPhee's correspondence where he either asks for money or thanks someone for having sent it. Following are three examples: CM to Sidney Cowell, 25 March [1946] ("You will be distressed to know that I cashed your check but have not yet gone to doctors.") CM to Margaret Mead, 24 April [1949] ("I never thanked you for those checks, really. . . . I never felt such a heel in my life as the last time I asked you to help me.") CM to Aaron Copland, 20 September [1948] (asked for money from the "Arts and Letters emergency fund"; on other occasions he appealed to Copland himself.)

[220]McPhee discusses his problems with his mother in letters to Sidney Cowell ("Friday" [1948]) and Margaret Mead (also "Friday" [1948]). Douglas McPhee wrote at least two letters to Jane Belo asking her for money (26 January 1948 and 8 March 1948; Mead Collection/LC).

[221]Interview with Oliver Daniel.

McPhee and Walter Spies frequently drank together and that McPhee had an ugly temper when he was drunk.[222] By the late forties and early fifties, McPhee's weight fluctuated a great deal, also due to liquor.

Many dreams remained unrealized as McPhee moved into his fifties. He seemed incapable of re-energizing himself and needed stimulation from the outside. Yet he continued to reach for that stimulation, to hope his life as a composer was not yet over.

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[222]Interview with I Madé Lebah.

CHAPTER IX

CHANGING FORTUNES (1952-1959)

On 16 September 1952, the Gamelan kebyar from Peliatan, Bali, arrived in New York City to perform at the Fulton Theatre. It was an event that heralded a new beginning for Colin McPhee. The troupe of approximately twenty-five musicians and fifteen dancers was brought here by the English manager John Coast for the first appearance in the United States of Balinese musicians.[1] It played to a full house and had rave reviews. McPhee wrote two preview pieces about the group for the New York Times and was proud that one of the principal dancers was Sampih, whose training he had supervised.[2] McPhee was eager to visit with old friends and hopeful that Tabuh-Tabuhan might get some residual attention. In early September he expressed that hope in a letter to Oliver Daniel, then at

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[1]Coast traces this tour in his Dancers of Bali (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1953).

[2]Colin McPhee, "Visitors from Bali," New York Times (31 August 1952) and "They Live the Dance: The Balinese who appear here this month for the first time bring a unique art form," New York Times Magazine (7 September 1952).

CBS radio, who in the years ahead was to do much to promote McPhee's music:

> I'm writing, naturally, to ask a favor. As you know, a Balinese company will be here for a month, which promises to be a sensation. Sampih, the kid in my book, is one of the stars, and the gamelan is one of which I was once an honorary member. . . . There is terrific interest already among musicians, dancers, and I was wondering if there would be any way you could think of to get the recording of Tabuh-T on the air on some program at CBS during the month they are here. There's a legitimate tie-up, and of course you know how I've felt about it's never having been played elsewhere in US.[3]

No such broadcast came about, but McPhee did get some attention in the press. He took Virgil Thomson, then music critic for the Herald Tribune, backstage after the performance to "meet the stars,"[4] and although he later made it clear to Thomson that "I certainly don't want any secondary gleanings of publicity from this affair," he was happy when his connection with the troupe was made clear in Thomson's review of the performance.[5]

In addition to Sampih, two of McPhee's old Bali friends, I Madé Lebah and Anak Agung Gedé Mandera, came to New York with the troupe. Lebah and Mandera both remember

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[3]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 5 September [1952]. ACA files.

[4]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, no date [early September 1952]. Thomson Collection/Yale.

[5]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, 30 September [1952]; also, "Tuesday" [September 1952]. Thomson Collection/Yale.

being given a grand tour of New York by McPhee.[6]

By his early fifties, McPhee's life as a composer seemed to be over, yet he continued to work on Music in Bali. His financial woes remained unrelieved, and he had few emotional or professional rewards, only a feeling of being neglected and somehow not fulfilling his potential. The depressions and swings of mood of the forties continued, as did the drinking. In 1951 or '52 he moved again, this time to a single room in a cheap Puerto Rican rooming house on West 22nd Street (his rent was $6 per week), where he was to stay for most of the fifties.[7] McPhee was ashamed of the place and at first told only the inner circle about it--Sidney Cowell, Minna Lederman, Marian Eames, and his literary agent.[8] There was no phone in his room, but he could be reached by calling the desk, which contacted him by buzzer. When he moved in, he reassured Sidney Cowell, "I am not fleeing debts, as I owe

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[6]Interview with I Madé Lebah, 9 April 1984, Peliatan, Bali. Interview with Anak Agung Gedé Mandera. Mandera has a plaque on his wall that includes the names of all the instrumentalists and dancers who were part of this New York trip.

[7]473 West 22nd Street. McPhee describes the room in a letter to Carlos Chávez, 8 November [1953]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[8]McPhee confided this to Sidney Cowell when he moved (Letter, "Thursday" [early fifties], Cowell Collection/ NYPL.)

no one a cent."[9] Oliver Daniel remembers that McPhee seldom let friends see his room. "He became terribly depressed when, on one CBS telecast, they were showing different slums in the city and showed his street and the actual house he lived in."[10]

By the time he settled on West 22nd Street, McPhee had divested himself of most of his personal possessions, including many of the artifacts he had brought back from Bali, as well as his musical scores and piano. Both Sidney Cowell and Minna Lederman remember him giving away and selling batiks, gongs, drums, shadow puppets, and masks.[11] This was done partly out of necessity, for his small room could hold very little, and partly out of a desire to eliminate painful memories of the past.[12] But the process was disheartening, as he wrote Sidney Cowell:

> Of course I'm unhappy, with practically all I own in the world in three suitcases. It's a strange feeling. You know how eagerly I've been getting rid of belongings in the past year. Now that they have dwindled to nothing (which I barely regret), and with my mother dead, I feel so utterly unsubstantial. I've put so much value in home and possessions, and especially after the elaborate

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[9]Ibid.

[10]Interview with Oliver Daniel, 3 October 1981, Ardsley, New York.

[11]Interview with Sidney Cowell, 10 October 1981; Interview with Minna Lederman, 12 October 1981.

[12]For example, CM described ripping up Toronto concert programs in a letter to Sidney Cowell (25 August [1945]). Cowell Collection/NYPL.

> set-ups in Bali and New York, this contrast is at times hard to take.[13]

All of McPhee's friends remember poignant stories about him from these years: threatened suicides,[14] a New Year's Eve spent alone with a bottle of gin and a jar of herring,[15] bouts of living on beer because he believed it nutritionally sustaining.[16] All were sympathetic and tried to help. McPhee continued to use the Cowells' house in Shady as a retreat--he even had his own cat there, Ketut ("A very sharp cat with whom Colin used to do tricks. They liked to go for walks together.").[17]

Although McPhee could be difficult and demanding of friends ("petulant" is a word Oliver Daniel and Sidney Cowell have used independently), there was something about him that kept people close. Sidney Cowell recalls:

> If things didn't go right, or if you served something he didn't like, he was just like a spoiled child. He was a very spoiled man in many ways because he had had such triumph and been at the top with money. Yet he always did something so charming and delightful that everybody would do anything he possibly wanted.[18]

McPhee knew how difficult he could be and often

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[13]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Saturday" [early fifties]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[14]Interview with Sidney Cowell.

[15]Interview with Oliver Daniel.

[16]Interview with Sidney Cowell.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

complimented Sidney Cowell on her valor in putting up with the vagaries of his spirit. He was well aware of his effect on others, as revealed in this story about an evening with Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson:

> Margaret and her husband Gregory were here a few nights ago, and Margaret, tight as usual on a thimble of Sherry, began to ask, first, what I understood by the word bitch, (not meaning canine variety) to which I said Katharine Anne Porter, and after we had worried that she said, what was the male version, and what was the name. This we mulled over for an hour, as I cooked a perfect paprika chicken, with asparagus in a perfecter [sic] mousseline sauce, and although I felt the conversation was directed towards me in a covert way, I did not let it curdle the sauce.[19]

McPhee prepared many a delectable dish for eager friends. Indeed, one of his more irresistible charms seems to have been his skill in the kitchen, a talent remembered by almost everyone who has written or talked about him. He had studied at the Cordon Bleu in Paris,[20] and, according to Sidney Cowell, "He could cook Javanese, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Balinese, French, Italian--and then he'd make cornmeal mush and fried potatoes."[21] Before he moved to West 22nd Street,

> He loved to give dinner parties for just two or three people, not more. He felt that the flavors, the delicate and exotic flavors that he

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[19]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 11 June [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[20]Interviews with Sidney Cowell and Oliver Daniel.

[21]Interview with Sidney Cowell.

> liked, had to blend or to marry, just so. And they wouldn't do so for large amounts of people. He would set Balinese and Javanese records going in the background and then bring out things, like sarongs, for the guests to play with. He always wore his sarong when he was cooking.[22]

Paul Bowles remembers Colin coming to visit him and Jane at a house they rented on Staten Island in the forties. He cooked in a sarong there, too.[23] Occasionally in the fifties, he would go to a friend's house and take over the kitchen. Minna Lederman recalls:

> He often came to cook at our house, and we would ask people in. Virgil Thomson was a great addict of the McPhee cuisine, and I recall one evening, Colin decided to make scallops in at least a thousand different ways. I think Virgil demanded still more.[24]

Another time, when Colin was staying in Shady, he sent Lederman a "very charming letter with little cats on the paper" that demonstrated just how far his resourcefulness in the kitchen could go:

> He was very good with cats, and one night a cat came in with a bird it had found. Colin examined the bird and thought it a rare and edible creature. He decided not to waste it on a cat and prepared it for himself. 'Couldn't have been better!' said he.[25]

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[22]Ibid.

[23]Letter to author from Paul Bowles, 29 October 1981.

[24]Interview with Minna Lederman.

[25]Ibid.

Tabuh-Tabuhan Revisited

Despite occasional dinners and a group of caring friends, McPhee's life was largely solitary as he moved into his fifties. He had told Sidney Cowell that "isolation" was necessary for him to work, and even though work proceeded fitfully, he still sought isolation.[26]

Probably because of the excitement generated by the visiting gamelan and dancers from Peliatan, Tabuh-Tabuhan was finally performed in a New York concert in October 1953, one year after the Balinese had left. It was an event for which McPhee had waited nearly twenty years. The concert was conducted by Leopold Stokowski in a program of works by Canadian composers sponsored by Broadcast Music Incorporated.[27] When first aproached about the performance, McPhee said "No", but Henry Cowell talked him into participating.[28] McPhee was apprehensive as the event approached; after all, he had been complaining for years about how devastating it had been to have Tabuh-Tabuhan ignored. Now, suddenly, the piece was to be exposed to public scrutiny.

Although McPhee worked closely with Stokowski in

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[26]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, mid-1940s. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[27]A program for the concert is at UCLA.

[28]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 8 October [1953]. Copland Collection.

rehearsals, he grew increasingly uneasy as the evening drew near.[29] Two days before the concert he wrote Copland,

> I certainly don't recommend you come to the concert on my account. I'm really shocked by Stokowski's change in standards. The work depends on the rhythmic coordination of two pianos. I have two indifferent dray horses who apparently have never heard of syncopation. In addition, instead of grand pianos, to give essential resonance in many passages, I have two tiny Baldwins. All the ensemble is incredibly ragged, and it will be a real floperoo. When I think of the time and loving care Carlos gave it. . . . It will simply be the last nail, establishing me publicly as a completely incompetent composer. . . . I'm going with Minna, some comfort, for I'd rather be shot.[30]

McPhee's fears were in vain. The performance went splendidly, and critics praised the work. Carnegie Hall was decorated with Canadian colors and filled with United Nations representatives. Oliver Daniel and Don Ott remember the Soviet delegate, André Vishinsky, sitting in the box right over their seats.[31] Virgil Thomson called Tabuh-Tabuhan "the evening's most brilliant and striking work," and he featured McPhee's photograph with the review.

> [Tabuh-Tabuhan's] themes and rhythms are all authentic (and very beautiful), its sound and

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[29]Stokowski wrote McPhee on 30 September 1953, discussing details of the performance and inviting him to rehearsal. (Letter, Collection of Oliver Daniel.)

[30]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 14 October [1953]. Copland Collection.

[31]This is among a number of references to McPhee that Ott, a longtime friend of Oliver Daniel, has culled from his diary. The entry is dated 16 October 1953.

> structure very nearly so. . . . The whole piece is a delight for bright sounds, lively rhythms and lovely tunes. It may be the ending-piece that all conductors are looking for.[32]

Olin Downes of the New York Times was more moderate in his enthusiasm but made some of the same observations: "This score is fascinating for its timbres, for the use of overlapping rhythm groups and the dramatic accumulating power of its deep pulse and its super-imposed rhythms."[33]

McPhee was elated. The day after the concert he sent notes to both Thomson and Downes, thanking them for such generous treatment.[34] But to Chávez he confided his true reaction:

> Stokowski at long last played Tabuh at a concert of 'Canadian Music' at Carnegie Hall last Friday, when I re-emerged as an exotic Canadian and Tabuh had terrific success. . . . Stokowski played the work quite superbly in places, but almost tripped in several passages. Fortunately the work has repeats in every passage, and should be titled The Second Chance Symphony. I couldn't forget the loving care and beautiful performance you gave the work.[35]

Suddenly things began to happen. Associated Music

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[32]Virgil Thomson, "Canadian Music," New York Herald Tribune (17 October 1953).

[33]Olin Downes, "Stokowski Offers 5 Canadian Works," New York Times (17 October 1953).

[34]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, "Saturday" [17 October 1954]. Thomson Collection/Yale. Letter, CM to Olin Downes, 17 October [1953]. Downes Collection/University of Georgia.

[35]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 18 October [1953]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

Publishers contacted McPhee immediately about publishing Tabuh-Tabuhan (for which McPhee received a $300 advance),[36] Artur Rodzinski called the morning after the concert asking to see the score,[37] and within the next six months three possibilities for commissions emerged--from the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Louisville Orchestra, and Lincoln Kirstein. Again McPhee's friends stepped in to help. Copland seems to have pushed for a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation, Chávez worked on both the Louisville Orchestra and Kirstein, and Daniel assisted with all three.[38]

The morning after Tabuh-Tabuhan, even before these commissions became a possibility, McPhee was talking about returning to composition. "There is music it seems I should like to write at this period in my life, but only orchestra."[39] Over the years, he had become increasingly

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[36]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, 22 October [1953]. Thomson Collection/Yale. McPhee mentioned the advance in a letter to Copland (16 November [1954]. Copland Collection.)

[37]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 19 October [1953]. Copland Collection.

[38]On 23 June [1954] McPhee wrote Copland about the Koussevitzky commission ("to thank you for your part in it"). (Copland Collection.) Chávez and McPhee discussed these commissions in several letters, beginning with one from Chávez, 3 November 1953. Also, Interview with Oliver Daniel.

[39]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 18 October 1953. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

convinced that his strength lay in that medium, a conviction that he had clearly articulated to Sidney Cowell in 1947:

> Only music done in the grand manner, which I do extremely well, appeals to me; no songs or violin sonatas for me, thank you. The Balinese have a special word for what I mean--ramé--festive noise. Only a symphony or piano concerto![40]

In the fifties, McPhee clung fast to that statement.

Transitions

With help from Chávez and Copland, McPhee secured a commission in 1954: the Koussevitzky Foundation asked him to write a work for cello and orchestra. He responded: "I know nothing about the cello and could care less."[41] The Foundation's board reconsidered and agreed to an orchestral piece of approximately 16 minutes, to be written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vancouver Symphony.[42] McPhee began it in August 1954 and was finished by that December.[43]

Considering nine years had passed since McPhee had

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[40]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 17 November [1947]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[41]McPhee told about the offer in a letter to Chávez, 3 June [1954]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[42]Details of the commission are given in a letter from CM to Aaron Copland, 23 June [1954]. Copland Collection.

[43]McPhee, Typescript program notes to Transitions. UCLA.

written his last orchestral piece, he seems to have been relatively undaunted at facing manuscript paper again. His letters from the period are buoyant, filled with renewed energy from the commission. In early October, he confessed to Chávez that composing was bringing with it "many difficulties" but largely attributed them to "writing on transparent sheets for quick duplication, something I've not done before."[44] By early November, though, he told Copland that the going had become smoother.

> I find the more I write the easier it is, and I hope there will be no snags near the end! I found I did not make good progress unless I began scoring. I wrote Tabuh in complete score form from start to finish, with only a few pages in reduced score, and practically no changes in orchestration. It's rash, but I seem to think that way. . . . If this work comes out satisfactorily I shall be very happy. I've enjoyed doing it, and only wish I had more time.[45]

Yet problems remained, mostly because he had been so far removed from active music-making--not just composing but playing the piano. "It was hard to get back into writing. I have no back log of material, absolutely no scores--of mine or anyone else's. Bought a volume of Schumann to practise, . . . for literally I hadn't touched a piano key in five years."[46]

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[44]Letter, 11 October [1954]. Chávez Collection/ Mexico City.

[45]Letter, 4 November 1954. Copland Collection.

[46]Ibid.

McPhee completed Transitions on 6 December 1954, and it received its premiere by the Vancouver Symphony on 20 March 1955.[47] Irwin Hoffman was the conductor, and the concert was broadcast throughout Canada.[48] During the same fall McPhee finished an article on "Children and Music in Bali" for Childhood in Contemporary Cultures, edited by Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein.[49]

Despite McPhee's optimism while composing, Transitions in some ways shows a composer who had been out of touch with his craft. Significantly, McPhee was unsure about the title, calling the work "Marine Horizons," "Atlantis," and "Symphonic Transitions" before he finally settled on "Transitions," which, as he said in a program note, "refers to the changing moods and tempos of the music, and to the musical structure, which consists of a

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[47]There are several copies of McPhee's holograph of Transitions at UCLA. This date is given at the end of the one titled "Atlantis."

[48]McPhee wrote to Chávez about the broadcast on 21 March 1955. (Chávez Collection/Mexico City.) Oliver Daniel has a tape of the radio broadcast.

[49](Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 40-51. The article was later reprinted in Traditional Balinese Culture, edited by Jane Belo (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 212-39.

series of thematically related episodes."[50] These transitions are foremost among the piece's problems. Each of the three principal sections and several of the inner sub-sections are linked with a sudden, subdued hush which heralds the entrance of new material. These junctures serve to darken the stage, for perhaps too long, before a new scene begins. Rather than surging forward, the piece sinks into each moment it occupies.

McPhee saw Transitions not only as a sectional work, bound together by short passages, but as one suggesting pictorial images. "Transitions is really a marine piece, an evocation of some legendary coastline, flooded with Arctic sunlight or lost in tropic fog."[51] The sea setting is inspired by the shanty, Lowlands Away, which is not articulated until the very end of Transitions (in the horns at m. 368), and only the first phrase is heard there. But the interval and rhythm of the shanty's opening two notes serve as the basis for much of the work. McPhee claimed he turned to Lowlands Away because it had "long remained fixed in my mind for its nostalgia and

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[50]Typescript UCLA. McPhee said to Chavez in October 1954, "I don't know about a title, but in my mind is the image, Marine Horizons. How would that strike you, if you were a stranger?" (Letter, 22 October [1954]. Chavez Collection/Mexico City.) He called the piece "Atlantis" in a letter to Copland ("Thursday" [1954]). All these titles, except the first, appear on various versions of the score.

[51]Typescript program notes.

special sea atmosphere, and I had always intended to use it sometime as [the] point of departure for an orchestral work."[52] Indeed, he had already set the song in his Sea Shanty Suite of 1929, and he was in close touch with the Suite while Transitions was being composed because he was rehearsing it for performance at a Composers Forum Concert.[53]

Transitions is essentially built of three large sections--or as McPhee put it, "three connected movements"[54] and a coda. McPhee's own formal analysis subdivides each section into several parts and shows the work's crazy-quilt character. Although McPhee does not indicate them as such, recurring sections are all variants of their first statements (measure numbers are mine).

A	B	C	D	A	first section
[m. 1-32	33-50	?51-74	75-97	98-114	
E	C	E			second section
[115-129	130-163	164-181]			
F	G	F	G	F	third section
[182-216	217-223	224-293	294-307	308-318]	
A [319-331]					climax and link to
B [332-367]					coda
H [368-372]					key motif; quotation from Lowlands Away

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[52]Ibid.

[53]The program on 6 November 1954 is discussed later in this chapter.

[54]Typescript program notes.

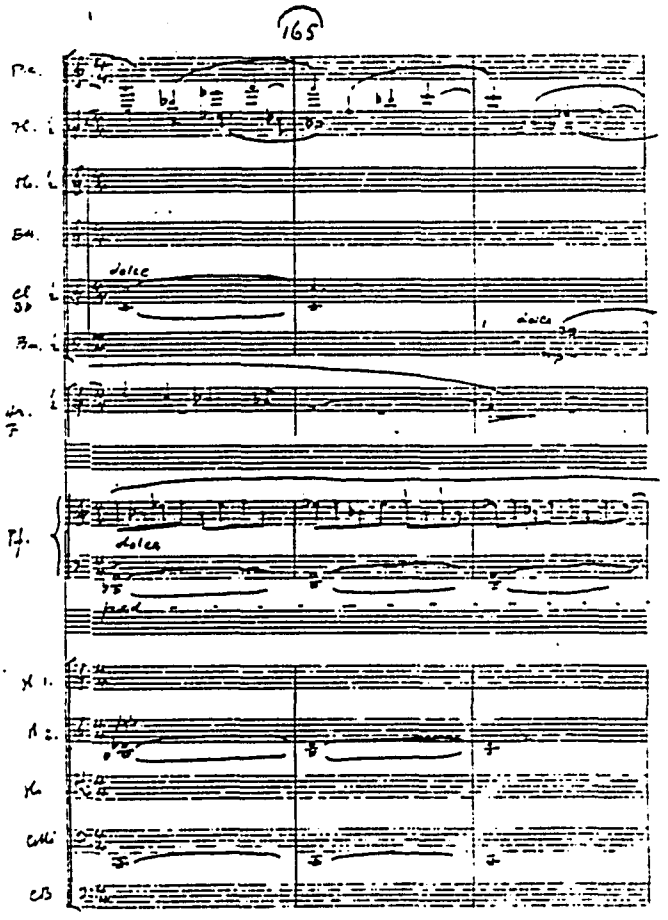
E [373-end] closing phrase

Many traits from McPhee's early works surface again in Transitions. He had played with thematic connections between movements in both his Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet and in Tabuh-Tabuhan. Here, as his formal scheme shows, themes A, B, C, and E all recur, making the piece one interconnected whole. Again, the piano is prominent in the orchestra, joining occasionally with the glockenspiel (mm. 35-44) and timpani (mm. 242-285) for a percussive effect much like that of the "nuclear gamelan" of Tabuh-Tabuhan (although here its use is more spare). And the influence of the gamelan is occasionally present, even though there are no overt Balinese references (McPhee reported to Aaron Copland in the midst of composing, "So far, no Bali themes or treatment, you'll be glad to know.")[55] For example, the section beginning in measure 164 (Example 64) is built on a four-note ostinato pattern in the piano, which is augmented in the flute above.

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[55]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 4 November 1954. Copland Collection.
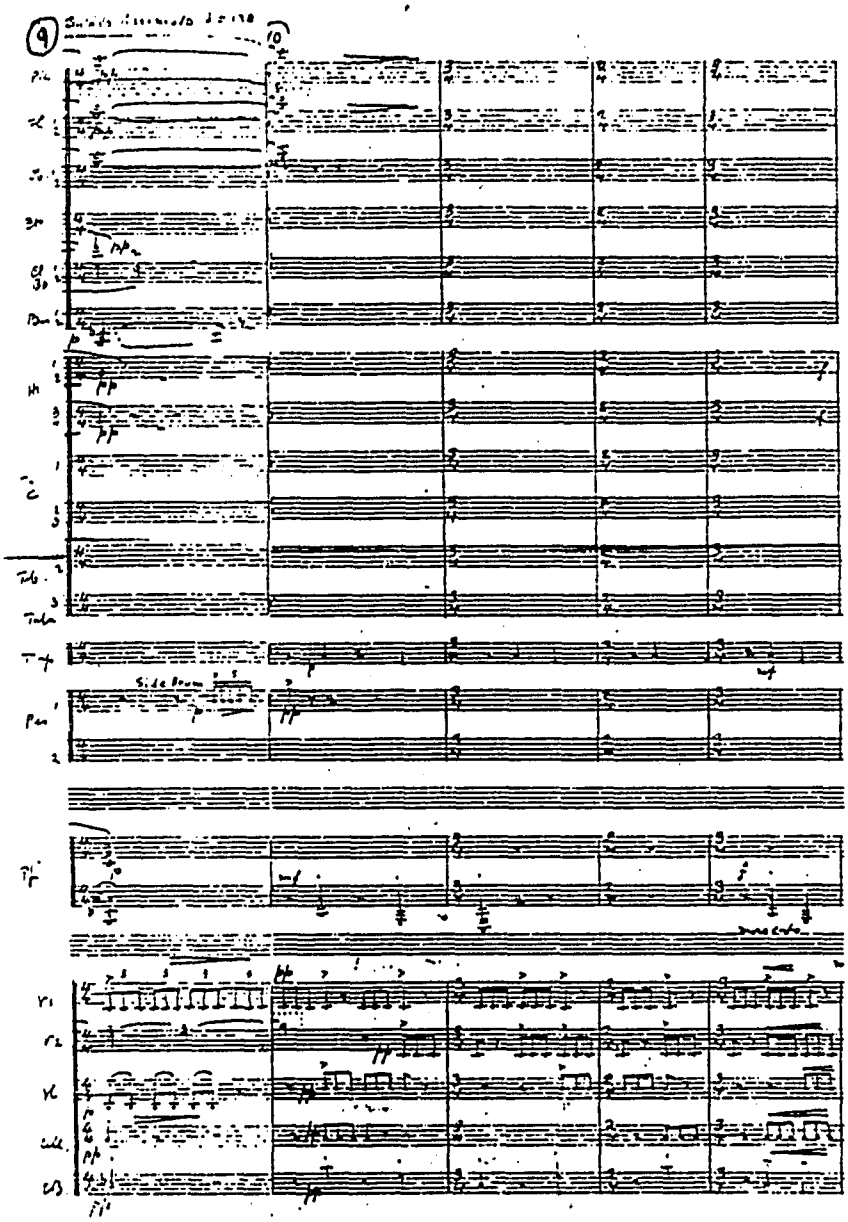
Example 64. McPhee, Transitions, measures 164-66 (only the instruments sounding are given below).



Also, the gong is used to punctuate several major divisions in the work, for example in m. 181 at the end of the middle section.
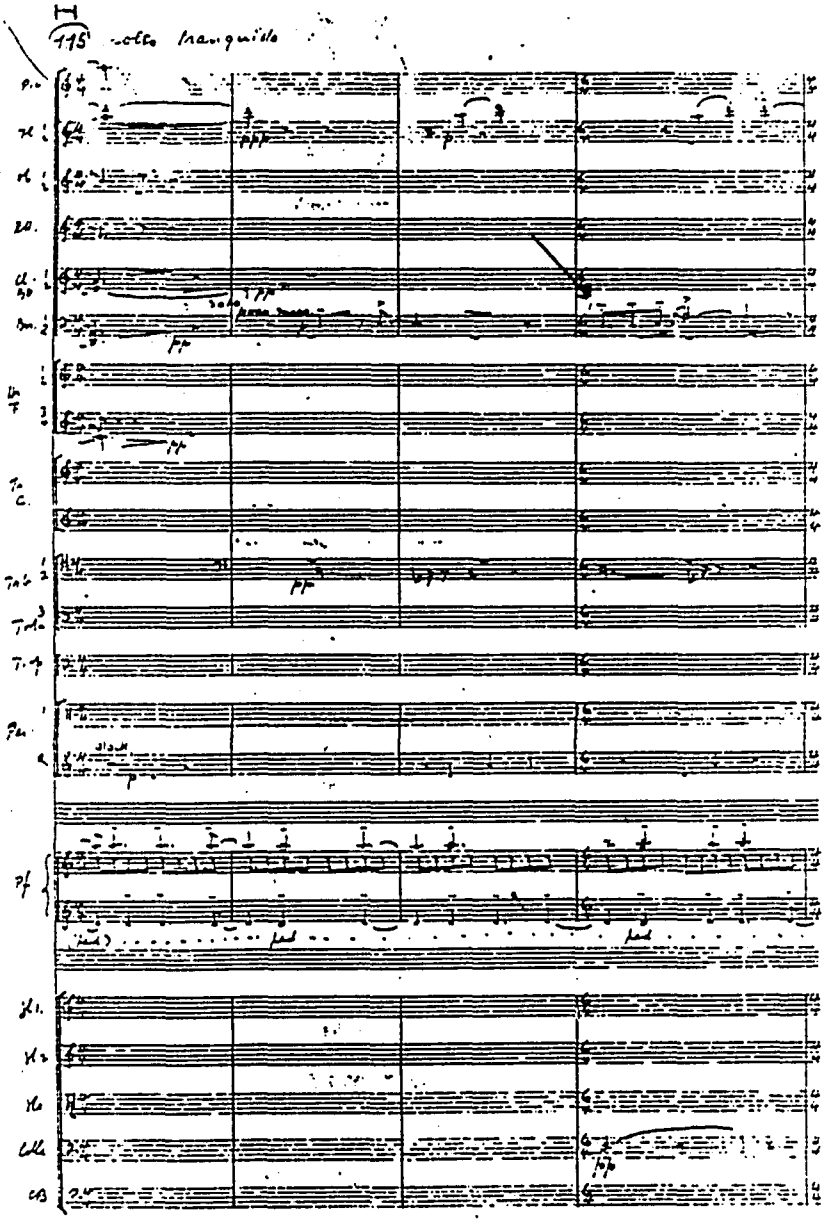
Other aspects of Transitions are consistent with McPhee's previous works. He returned to asymmetrically accented rhythmic patterns, frequently focusing them on a single pitch. Soon after the opening of the work, for example, the strings hammer out triplet C's that are jolted by shifting accents and by the varied quarter-note pattern in the string bass:

Example 65. McPhee, Transitions, measures 9-13.



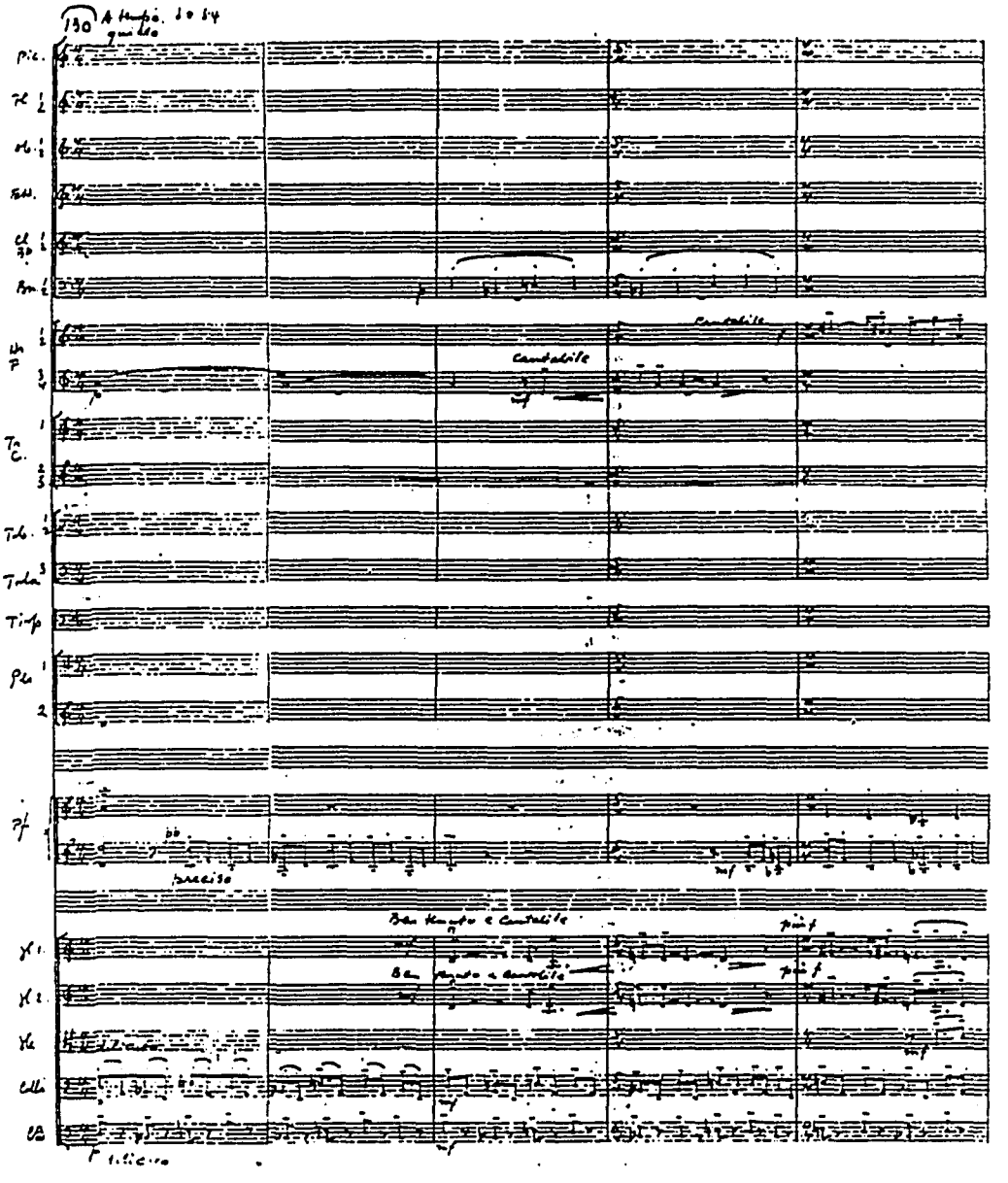
Other instances can be found throughout the work, for example in the opening of the middle section, where the piano's steady eighth notes on D sound in the midst of an uneven A-D pattern in the flute and where the familiar 3 + 3 + 2 rhythm enters in the bassoon at m. 118:

Example 66. McPhee, Transitions, measures 115-118.



Similarly, in the second part of the middle section cross-accents result from meter changes and from the ostinato's length of six eighth notes within an initial 4/4 bar (see Example 67). The scoring has become much thinner than in earlier compositions, with the rhythmic patterns carried mainly by strings.
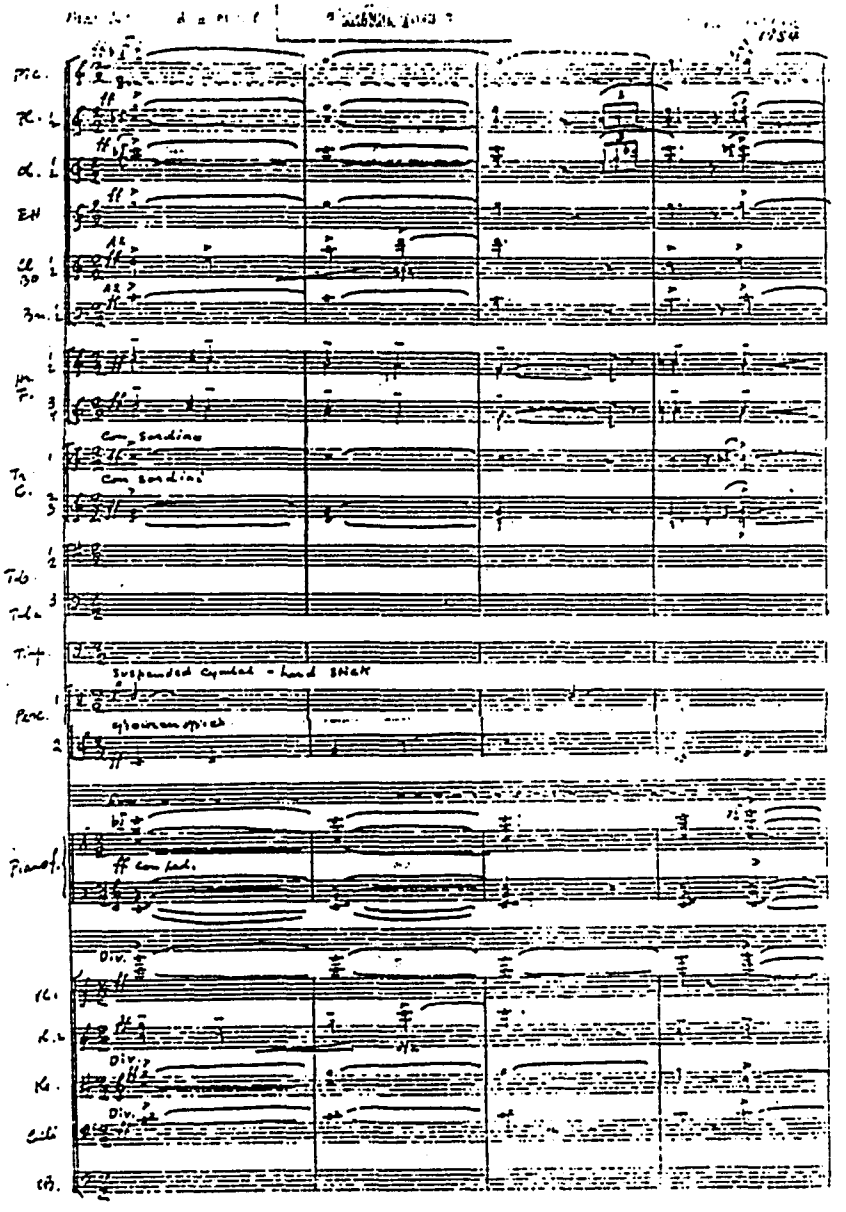
Example 67. McPhee, Transitions, measures 130-33.



Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the work is its relationship to McPhee's 1928 choral setting of Lowlands Away. His two-piano accompaniment there used many quartal and quintal harmonies, the latter often with an added second. In Transitions he employs the same
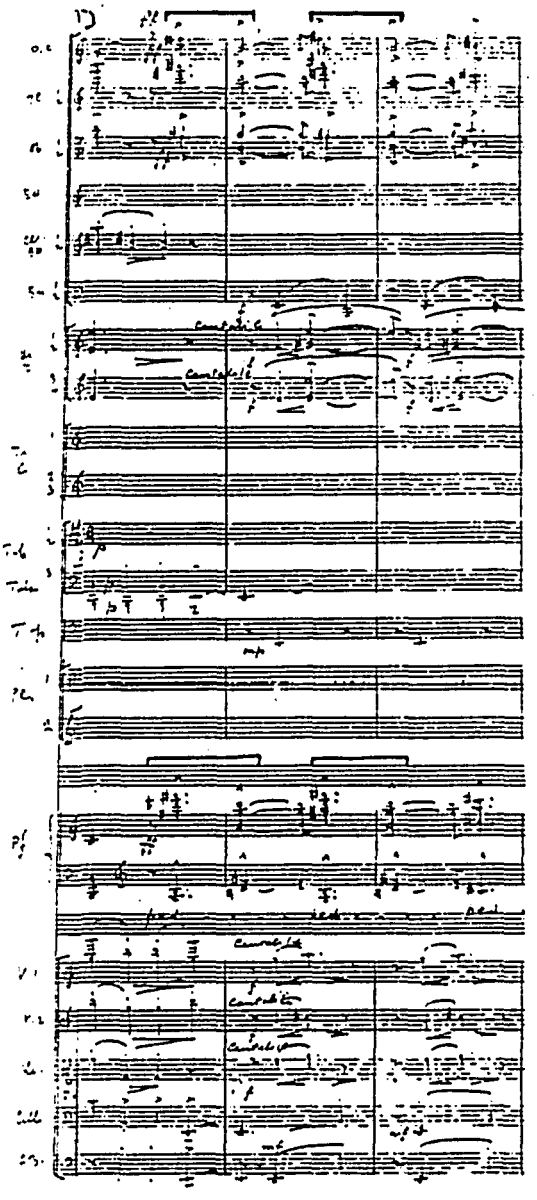
practice from the outset, where the piano, strings, and woodwinds sound C-G, with D interposed, and for added flair, a B-flat anticipation:

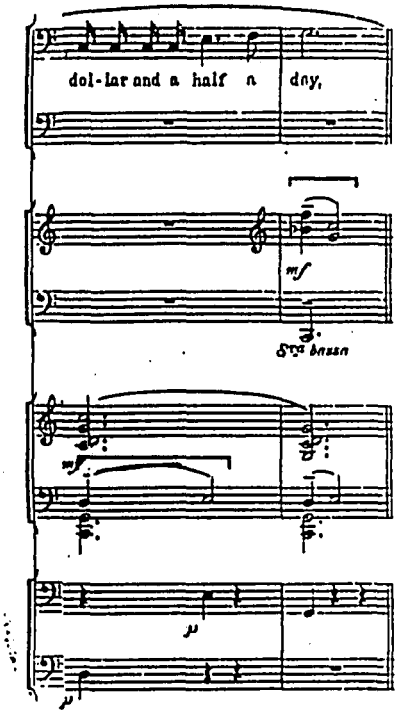
Example 68. McPhee, Transitions, measures 1-4.



Also, the opening rhythmic gesture of the Lowlands melody (♩ 𝅗𝅥) occurs frequently in both the choral setting and in Transitions:

Example 69. McPhee, Transitions, measures 62-64 (on the left) and "Lowlands Away", from Sea Shanty Suite (on the right).





McPhee's use of pitch material in Transitions takes him back to earlier days as well. The opening is quintal on C (using C, G, D), with C-natural against C-flat in the piano at m. 9 (see Example 65). There are some uses of Balinese four-note scales, as already discussed, and modulation, as in Tabuh-Tabuhan, accompanies each

transition to a new section or sub-section. McPhee's harmonic palette has become less strident, however, less colored with sharp bi-chordal juxtapositions. Although McPhee seemed to have been pleased with Transitions immediately after it was completed, there is no record of his later evaluation of the work.

1954-1956: A Busy Period

In January 1955, McPhee wrote Chávez an energetic letter full of news about his recent musical activities. Recordings of the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet and of Tabuh-Tabuhan were planned, the premiere of Transitions was imminent, and a second New York performance of Tabuh-Tabuhan was scheduled. "All in all, I'm happy at the moment, in a subdued sort of way. I have you to thank first of all, for much of this, and secondly Aaron."[56]

Tabuh-Tabuhan was performed twice during those years--first on 18 February 1955 by the National Orchestral Association, conducted by Leon Barzin, with McPhee at one of the pianos, in a concert of music by composers who had won grants from the National Institute

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[56]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 16 January [1955]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

of Arts and Letters the previous year.[57] The second performance took place at the United Nations on 24 October 1956 and was conducted by Hugh Ross, McPhee's old friend from the Schola Cantorum.[58] But perhaps McPhee's biggest triumph was in having the work recorded by Howard Hanson and the Eastman Rochester Symphony Orchestra (McPhee had tried to get Chávez to record the work, with no success). The recording was released by Mercury in the spring of 1956 under a subsidy from the American Composers Alliance,[59] and McPhee seemed happy with Hanson's interpretation--with some reservations. He shared his reaction with Chavez immediately after the record was released:

> Tabuh, recorded by Hanson is out. He seems to have done it with enthusiastic attention. They play for all they are worth. It sounds wonderful. But I could not go up for the recording, and tempos here and there are devastatingly wrong. As far as I'm concerned, nothing can ever be too fast, and

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[57]"Colin McPhee, Hugo Weisgall and Ingolf Dahl received $1,000 grants presented to composers last year by the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Late yesterday afternoon the institute honored them further by presenting a program of their music at Carnegie Hall." In New York Times (19 February 1955).

[58][Program:] "United Nations Day, 24 October 1956. (Collection of Oliver Daniel). Hugh Ross conducted the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra.

[59]Tabuh-Tabuhan was released on Mercury MG-5013 in 1956. In 1980 it was re-released on Mercury SRI-75116. ACA subsidy of the recording is discussed in a letter from Carol Truax, Coordinating Manager of ACA, to Charles Wall, President, Associated Music Publishers, 5 October 1955. ACA.

anything can be too slow. Hanson chooses the latter course.[60]

This recording gave McPhee and Tabuh-Tabuhan some long-awaited national exposure. It was favorably reviewed in High Fidelity (by Alfred Frankenstein) and in the American Record Guide.[61]

Within this same period another early McPhee work, the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, was revived in a 1954 concert by the Composers Forum; a recording was released in 1956.[62] On both occasions Grant Johannesen was the pianist and Carlos Surinach the conductor. The Composers Forum Concert on 6 November 1954 also included McPhee's Sea Shanty Suite. The concert was organized by Peggy Glanville-Hicks and the discussion afterwards moderated by Virgil Thomson.

The concert was a big success. There were nearly a

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[60]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 26 May 1956. (Chávez Collection/Mexico City).

[61]Alfred Frankenstein, [Review of Tabuh-Tabuhan], High Fidelity VI/7 (July, 1956), 44. P.H.R. [Peter Hugh Reed], "Notes and Reviews," American Record Guide (July 1956), 177.

[62]The Concerto was released on Columbia ML-5105 in 1956. It was re-released on CRI-315 in 1974. A program for the Composers Forum concert is in the Chávez Collection. McPhee shared the program with the composer Russell Smith. Both were available afterwards to answer questions. A tape of both the concert and discussion session is in the Princeton Electronic Music Center Library. Don Ott noted in his diary that there was a party after the concert at Irving Drutman's apartment. Present were Oliver Daniel, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, McPhee, Margaret Mead and her daughter, George Davis, Lotte Lenya (to whom Davis was then married), Hermione Gingold, Aaron Copland, Arthur Berger and his wife, and Otto Luening.

thousand people in McMillan Theatre at Columbia University, including many composers: Copland, Cowell, Riegger, Thomson, Alexei Haieff, and Arthur Berger.[63] Both the New York Times and Herald Tribune gave McPhee raves, especially the latter:

> The McPhee Concerto is surely one of the classics of the '20s; its three movements expound instrumental and acoustic originality that--though colored by the era--is highly personal, highly expert. Its first movement, the most interesting thematically is perhaps the least perfect in form; its slow movement is a dream: A choral of Gothic calm is veiled, yet magically transcends a pointillated modern surface texture. The Finale, as all the movements, demonstrates the composer's mastery in elaborative pianism that remains organic.[64]

A review of the recording by Edward T. Cone was far less complimentary, however. Cone went on at length about the glories of Roger Sessions's Second String Quartet, which was on the flip side, and then turned to the McPhee Concerto, which he called "trivial and eclectic." Cone's association with Sessions had been long and close; aesthetically the two were in a very different camp from composers like McPhee:

> If I have devoted most of my space to the Quartet at the expense of the McPhee Concerto, it is because the former is obviously the more important composition. . . . [The McPhee Concerto] strongly suggests Les Six in its use of simple diatonic or

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[63]These composers were listed in the New York Times review by R[oss] P[armeter], "Forum Presents Modern Program," (8 November 1954).

[64]Peggy Glanville-Hicks, "Composers Forum," New York Herald-Tribune (8 November 1954).

> modal melodies accompanied by irrelevant dissonances, in its immediate juxtapositions of distant keys, and in such devices as chordal counterpoints of parallel triads.[65]

He found the finale to be "a brilliant toccata" with "quite a bit of rhythmic excitement," yet its ending was "characteristically 'cute.'"

In the midst of this new rush of attention, McPhee's spirits rose, and he became more productive. Yet some of the old problems remained. He stayed at the West 22nd Street rooming house and lived sparingly from one commission to the next. Both Copland and Daniel continued to help out with occasional loans or outright cash gifts. In March 1955, for example, three months after Transitions had been submitted to the Koussevitzky Foundation, McPhee still had not been paid. He wrote Copland asking if anything could be done to "speed up" the process. Copland responded with a check.[66] Others followed.[67] Daniel gave similar help, and there were other small boosts, like a $250 Benedict Grant in 1956 from the Museum of Natural History, a $300 advance on a commission from the National

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[65]The Musical Quarterly XLIII/1 (January 1957), 141-42.

[66]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 7 March 1955. Copland Collection. McPhee does not tell how much money was involved.

[67]There are four other letters that discuss loans from Copland: "Thursday" [?1954], "Friday" [?1955], "Thursday" [?1956], 29 November [1956].

Institute of Arts and Letters, and occasional pick-up jobs, such as one preparing a filmstrip on Indonesia for Life.[68] While he was in the midst of working for Life, McPhee described how precarious his financial situation continued to be:

> I'm back at my old game of touch and go, with money in bank to barely last me through March, starvation rates, my standard. However, god intervened momentarily, and as I thought, in terms of a small assignment from Life magazine . . . with the result that I don't have to take the revolver from the drawer till May.[69]

He concluded:

> What amazes me, of course, is my general instinct for steering, which has enabled me to survive all this time, doing nothing I was trained to do, and taking no job I did not feel fairly sure I could tackle.[70]

A big blow came in May of 1954 when Sampih, McPhee's "child," was murdered in Bali. Sampih had been strangled en

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[68]A letter from McPhee to Oliver Daniel dated "Friday" [1955?] discusses a loan, and Daniel has two canceled checks totaling $250 that were issued to McPhee on 15 July 1958. McPhee received word of the Benedict Grant through a letter from Margaret Mead (3 April 1956; Mead Collection/LC). McPhee asked the National Institute of Arts and Letters for a $300 loan (he had received a previous loan, too) against his $1,000 commission from the Louisville Orchestra (Letter, CM to Felicia Geffen, National Institute of Arts and Letters, 27 June 1957. A copy of the letter was sent to Virgil Thomson (as chairman of the Institute's music committee) and is now with his papers at Yale.) Marian Eames discussed McPhee's work with Life (for which she was an employee) in an interview in London on 27 August 1983.

[69]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Thursday" [1950?]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[70]Ibid.

route to a performance for President Sukarno of Indonesia. McPhee thought that jealousy at Sampih's stardom and newly acquired riches was behind the killing; only two years before, Sampih had traveled with the Peliatan gamelan to New York. McPhee was devastated: "I feel depressed and hopeless more than ever before. I've been in bed almost a week with chills and fever."[71]

McPhee had moments of fantasy about Jane, hoping that they might be reconciled. In October 1952, not long after the Balinese troupe visited the United States, he and she ran into each other "by a mystic accident" at the Museum of Natural History.[72] Colin had not seen her "since she rashly became engaged to FT [Frank Tannenbaum]." He told Chávez,

> She looked beautiful, sad, aged, nervous, and everything that would break your heart. We had a wonderful twenty minute reconciliation, and she has much to forgive, and I hope to help her to emerge *from* the utterly tragic mess she is in by going over past Bali film material with the idea of making a short documentary, under the aegis of Margaret Mead.

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[71]The "chills and fever" were symptoms of malaria, which McPhee had contracted in Bali and which continued to plague him after returning to the U.S. McPhee told Margaret Mead he had heard about the murder from Bobby Bruyns in Java (his former travel agent). Letter, CM to Margaret Mead "Monday" [1954]. Mead Collection/LC. Sampih's obituary was published in the New York Herald Tribune (3 May 1954).

[72]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 21 October [1952]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

> . . . Whether [Jane and I] join forces again for the finale is a matter of delicate chance.[73]

They seem to have had little further contact. McPhee thanked her in 1954 for a copy of one of her latest publication: "It is really so much more than bare anthropology--a poetic approach that after all I could only expect. . . . I hope you will publish more very soon."[74]

Continuing Work on "Music in Bali"

Throughout these years, McPhee worked at Music in Bali, announcing every two years or so that it was done. As before, his pace was fitful, vacillating with his moods. In early 1952, for example, he wrote Sidney Cowell, "I must work like mad to finish book by March, which seems very likely as page succeeds page. I'm not happy with it, as you know, but some days it seems worth my effort and the Bollingen investment, others a tale told by an idiot."[75] By June 1952, he claimed to be done with

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[73]Ibid.

[74]Letter, CM to Jane Belo, 24 February 1954. Mead Collection/LC. Omitted from this letter is a short paragraph about the Stokowski performance of Tabuh-Tabuhan. The publication referred to is probably Belo's Bali: Temple Festival, American Ethnological Society Monographs, 22 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1953).

[75]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Thursday" [1952]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

the book; a similar point was reached in February 1954.[76] However, in May 1956 McPhee delivered a completed manuscript to the Bollingen Foundation so that they could recommend a publisher.[77] After all the years of anguish, he experienced a bit of post-partem depression when he finally had a draft in hand. "I feel lost with the end of the book, suddenly too aware of the time devoted to it."[78] By July, Yale University Press was considering the manuscript. It would be an expensive book to produce, with (as McPhee first conceived it) 400 musical examples, 100 photographs, and about 60 scales showing the relation of Balinese to Western tuning.[79] Yale University Press held the manuscript for two years and finally accepted it for publication in 1958, after the Bollingen Foundation decided to contribute a $12,000 subvention.[80]

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[76]On 16 June 1952, McPhee wrote Chávez that Music in Bali "is now done, and being reedited before showing." (Chávez Collection) On 23 February 1954, he wrote Copland, "I've finished at last that book on Bali music." (Copland Collection)

[77]On 26 May 1956 McPhee wrote Chávez, "Just a line to say hello, and also to announce the safe delivery of complete book to Bollingen Foundation." (Chávez Collection)

[78]Ibid.

[79]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 4 July [1956]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[80]Bollingen Archives/LC.

Symphony No. 2

The seeds sown by Carlos Chávez after the 1953 performance of Tabuh-Tabuhan finally produced a commission from the Louisville Orchestra in 1956.[81] Also at Chávez's instigation, McPhee applied for a residency at the Huntington Hartford Foundation in Los Angeles.[82] There he wrote Symphony No. 2, "Pastorale," to fulfill his new assignment.

McPhee took a bus cross country and arrived in Los Angeles on 30 June 1956. It was a "grim" trip.[83] But he was delighted to be in a new climate viewing new landscape. His beginning there was not auspicious, however.

> When I got here around 10 at night, I looked at the inviting bed with pleasure. I had barely sat on the edge when crash! down came mattress to the floor. I slept nine hours, however, in a well upholstered armchair, with feet on coffee table. The bed was fixed at once, of course, a slight business of supports.[84]

Despite the commission and Huntington Hartford residency,

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[81]Chávez and McPhee corresponded frequently about a Louisville commission. The subject was first brought up by Chávez on 3 November 1953: "I was . . . delighted to read about the success of Tabuh. I hope this means that you really reemerge as a composer. Probably a commission from Lincoln or from the Louisville Orchestra. Would you like me to mention it to them?" (Chávez Collection)

[82]Chávez first proposed the Huntington Hartford Foundation to McPhee on 9 June 1954 (Letter in Chávez Collection).

[83]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, [June 1956]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[84]Ibid.

McPhee's financial situation remained shaky. Immediately before leaving New York he wrote Copland, thanking him for a loan ("I want you to know I couldn't have made out . . . without your help. I still have no idea when I can hope to return it.")[85] And Oliver Daniel advanced him some money against the Louisville commission.[86] McPhee stayed in Los Angeles for six months.

While at Huntington Hartford, McPhee made a new friend, Mantle Hood, a fellow composer and specialist in Javanese music, who was soon to play an important role in McPhee's life. McPhee contacted Hood to talk about Music in Bali, and Hood went to McPhee's room for drinks before dinner.

> Huntington Hartford had these marvelous, big, private studios, quite elegant, and he had a grand piano there with the lid up. I saw two things at once when I entered: one was the complete, handwritten orchestral score to Tabuh-Tabuhan, the other was a sizable jug of martinis without ice.[87]

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[85]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, "Sunday" [1956]. Collection of Aaron Copland.

[86]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 8 June [1956]. Collection of Oliver Daniel. John Vincent, Director of the Huntington Hartford, was concerned about McPhee's finances, because he would have to pay for his own laundry and postage: "We furnish all food, transportation, and reasonable local telephone calls." $150 had also been budgeted for music supplies. (Letter, John Vincent to Oliver Daniel, 26 June 1956. Collection of Oliver Daniel.)

[87]Interview with Mantle Hood, 10 January 1984, Baltimore, Maryland.

McPhee was at Huntington Hartford principally to write his Second Symphony, but unlike the work on Transitions, his pace was slow. In September he confided to Chávez, "My own work goes badly, I'm sorry to say, and this is between us. I feel I am bleeding to death through time and loss of self. No one here would know this, and I must keep it hidden."[88] One month later, his progress was no better. This time, McPhee turned to Copland, sarcastically saying he was writing "a so-called symphony."

> I find it hard to take up threads, especially trying to break free of Bali clichés. Perhaps I shouldn't bother, but just accept fate. I'm so near calling it a day, at least musically, and going on with this particular work is just a struggle, to be renewed each morning. All the comforts, and there are many, of HHF are of little avail, which just goes to show how perverse the creative spirit can generally be.[89]

By the end of that month, McPhee panicked about meeting the commission deadline and wrote Oliver Daniel asking help. "I'm simply nowhere with the Symphony, having worked and rejected for the last three months until I'm no longer sure of a single phrase."[90] He had asked Robert Whitney, conductor of the Louisville Orchestra, for

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[88]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 10 September [1956]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[89]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, 9 October [1956]. Collection of Aaron Copland.

[90]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 28 October 1956. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

an extension until November, but felt that he could not meet this deadline either. To Daniel he said:

> I now don't know what to write or do. Ask for further postponement? Keep on slugging at what seems so futile? Or face it and give up the commission altogether. . . . And believe me, I want to write it, and should. . . . In many ways I feel more secure than when I saw you last, and do not feel that my creative life is necessarily over. But the present block now daily assumes greater proportions as time passes.[91]

McPhee must have put the score away for some months after returning to New York in late December 1956.[92] He wrote music for two U.N. films and then returned "with fresh enthusiasm" to the Louisville commission in the fall of 1957. He delivered the finished score in late December 1957, and it had its premiere on 15 January 1958--"a close shave!"[93] The work was recorded in April, and the recording released in early 1959.[94] Reviews in local Louisville papers were largely favorable.[95]

By the time of the Second Symphony, McPhee's

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[91]Ibid.

[92]According to Don Ott's diary, McPhee was back in New York by January 1957.

[93]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 1 January 1958. Chávez Collection.

[94]The recording was released in the Louisville Orchestra series as LOU-59-2.

[95]Reviews were published by Eugene Lees, Louisville Times (16 January 1958) and William Mootz, [Louisville] Courier-Journal (16 January 1958. UCLA and Oliver Daniel Collection.

relationship to Bali was dramatically different from 1936, when Tabuh-Tabuhan was composed. No longer were the clangorous sounds of the gamelan fresh in his ears. They had been muted with the passing years and now were part of some far-off memory. McPhee himself was different. The self-assured man of 1936 had been humbled by poverty. His standing in the music world was tenuous, and his productivity shaken. The Second Symphony reflects these changes. It is a subdued work, without the joyous exuberance of Tabuh-Tabuhan. As McPhee told Aaron Copland while it was being composed: "[The symphony] was meant to be as much understatement as T-T was the reverse."[96]

In his program notes for the Symphony, McPhee acknowledged how fully he had absorbed the music of Bali:

> It is primarily a lyrical work, based largely on pentatonic scale forms, and making considerable use of Balinese melodic materials collected during the years I spent on the island of Bali. The various melodies employed here no longer retain their original Balinese character. They serve primarily as motifs, as points of departure for the creation of a broader and more personal melodic line. All have continued to hold strong nostalgic associations in my memory, and one or two I have used on other works, but always treated in an entirely different fashion.[97]

The Second Symphony is "nostalgic" in several ways,

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[96]Letter, CM to Aaron Copland, [January 1958]. Copland Collection.

[97]CM, Typescript program notes to Second Symphony (slightly different from the printed notes). [Late 1957 or early 1958.] UCLA.

not just in calling upon Balinese materials but in using composition methods that reached back to even earlier, pre-Bali days. As McPhee returned to writing music, first with Transitions, then with the Second Symphony, he seemed suffused with memories of the past. The very act of composing probably brought this on, as did renewed acquaintance with his early works through performances and recordings. In Transitions he had quoted a shanty tune used decades before and had cast the work in a cyclic form based on transformations of themes. In the Second Symphony, McPhee returned again to the formal principles of Liszt, as he suggested in his notes:

> The symphony is cyclic in form, consisting of three movements, which might be described as exposition, interlude, and transformed restatement. The work is framed by the opening section of the first movement, which not only terminates the first movement, but forms the conclusion to the complete symphony.[98]

Like the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet and Tabuh-Tabuhan, the three movements of the Symphony have thematic connections but with even more internal cross-references than previously. Each of the Symphony's movements is sectional, another longtime McPhee practice. The opening movement, for example, is built in five parts, the first of which returns as the fifth. McPhee uses linking devices, as in Transitions, to bind the various parts.
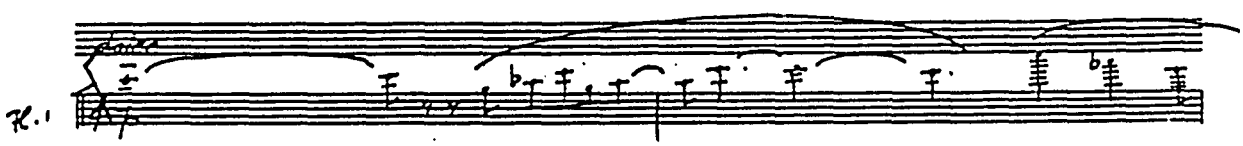
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[98]CM, Typescript program notes.

Here, however, these sections have more strength and vitality.

Another tie to McPhee's past is found in the way he breaks down the gamelan material into small pieces, often alluding to a melody rather than clearly stating it. The beginning of the Symphony, a critical section which, as McPhee said, "frames" the composition, provides a good example of this technique. At measure 5 (see Example 71) a melody is implied within the winds, yet never fully articulated. Its outer interval (B/F-sharp) is sounded in the clarinet, followed by the oboe (m. 7) and flute (m. 10), and its inner pitches are given in the flute (m. 6) and are ever-present in the strings. The motive suggested here was to be forthrightly stated by McPhee later that same year as the principal theme in his next composition, the Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra:

Example 70. McPhee, Nocturne, flute in measures 1-2.



Throughout the Second Symphony, allusion reigns. McPhee writes of the first movement as "impressionistic--color is withdrawn from a mist-shrouded tonal painting."[99]

[99]CM, Typescript program notes for Second Symphony.

He goes on to describe the final movement as "vigorous," one that builds up and then "sink[s] back into the mist; . . . the end reverts to the veiled quality of the opening." He was intrigued, both as a prose writer and composer, by suggestively conjuring up sensory images of Bali. That attitude was behind A House in Bali, as McPhee had told Sidney Cowell: "The only effect that counts in the long run is one of mystery, of what you imply rather than say."[100] He also liked to see himself as an enigmatic figure, not easily understood by his peers.[101]
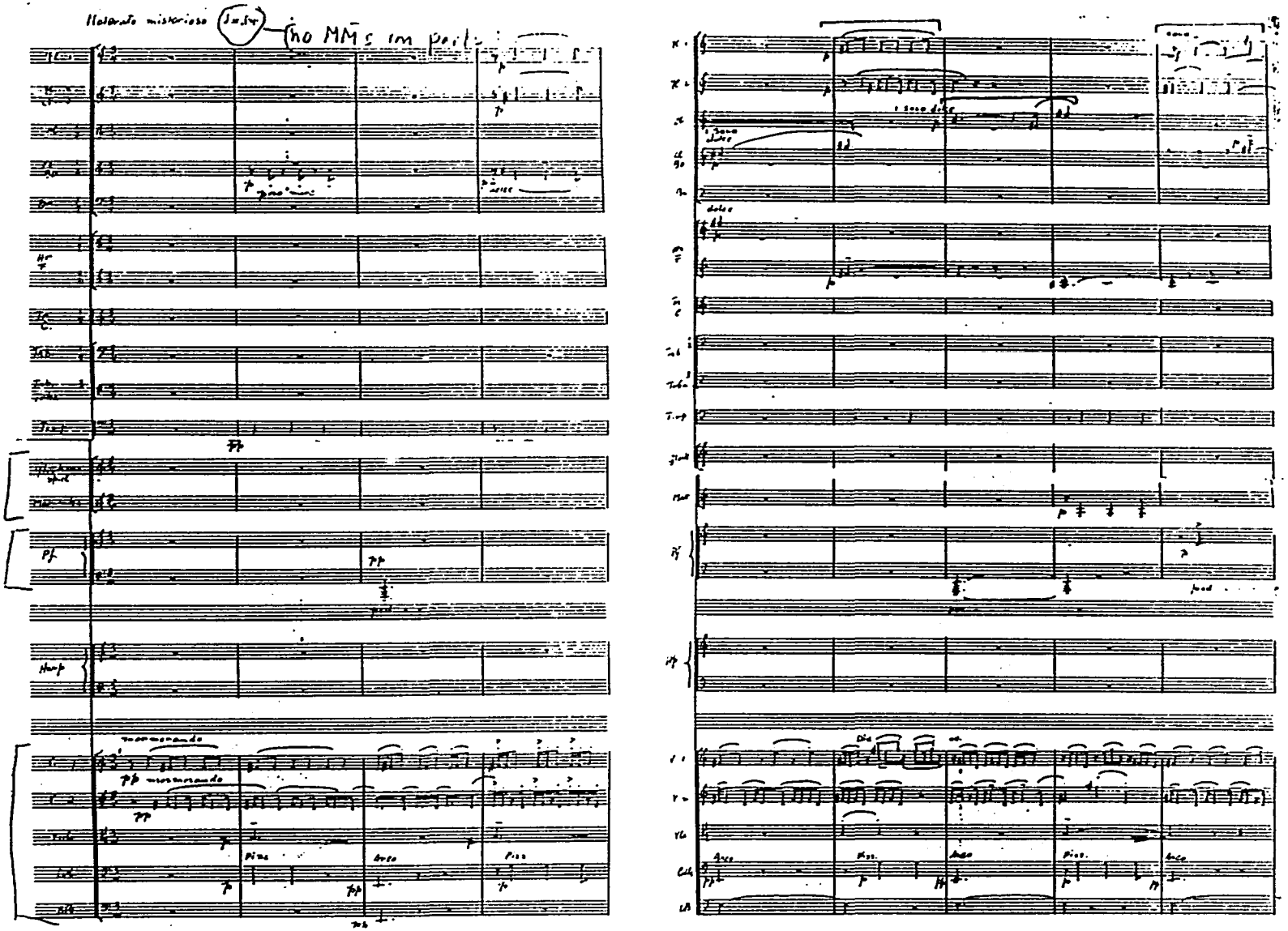
In his notes to the Second Symphony, McPhee wrote: "Certain passages, notably toward the middle of the first movement, derive from Balinese gamelan methods of orchestration." Indeed, the material in that section recurs throughout the work and is based, as Mueller has termed it, on the "jõbog principle" of Balinese orchestration, which is central to the repertory of the Gamelan pelégongan.[102] McPhee had drawn upon this gamelan style frequently in Tabuh-Tabuhan, as in this example from
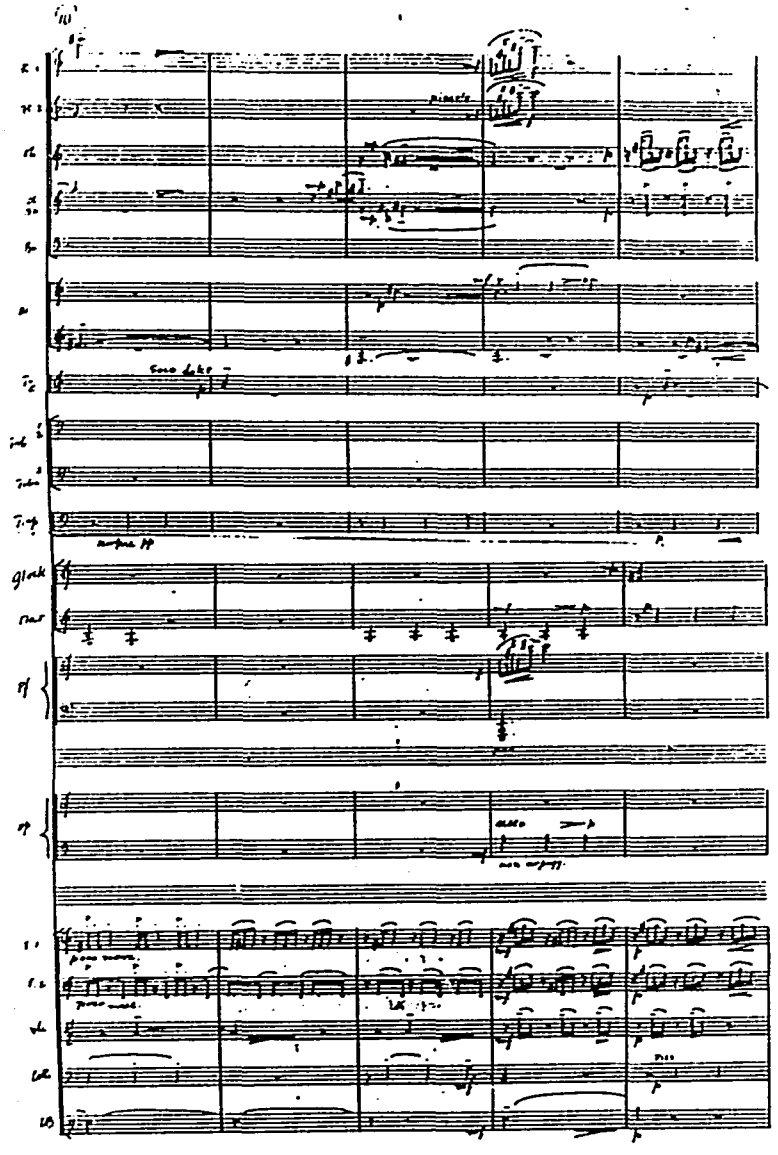
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[100]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Friday" [1946]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[101]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 3 August 1949 [date added in pencil]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[102]Richard Mueller, Imitation and Stylization in the Balinese Music of Colin McPhee (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1983), p. 356-63. Joboq is a type of dance composition played by the gamelan pelégongan.
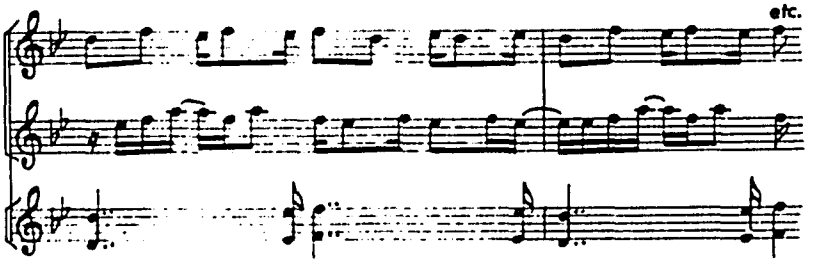


Example 71 (page one). McPhee, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 1-9.
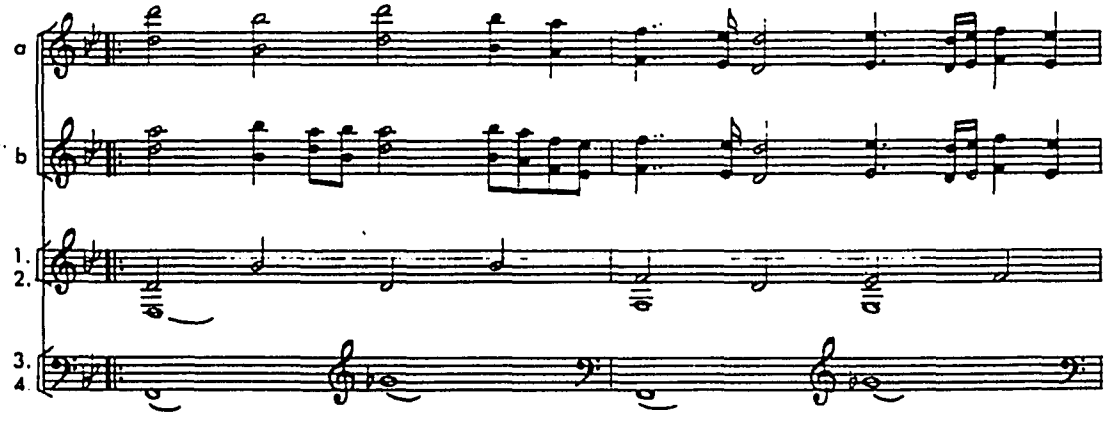


Example 71 (page two). McPhee, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 10-15.

the first movement (Example 73). Two basic elements inspired McPhee: ornamentation of a central ostinato with passing or connecting tones (Example 72-A) and use of a concurrent bass ostinato that shifts regularly between a low and high chord (Example 72-B).

Example 72-A. Kōtékan, pengipuk Jōbog, transcribed by McPhee in Music in Bali, p. 163.



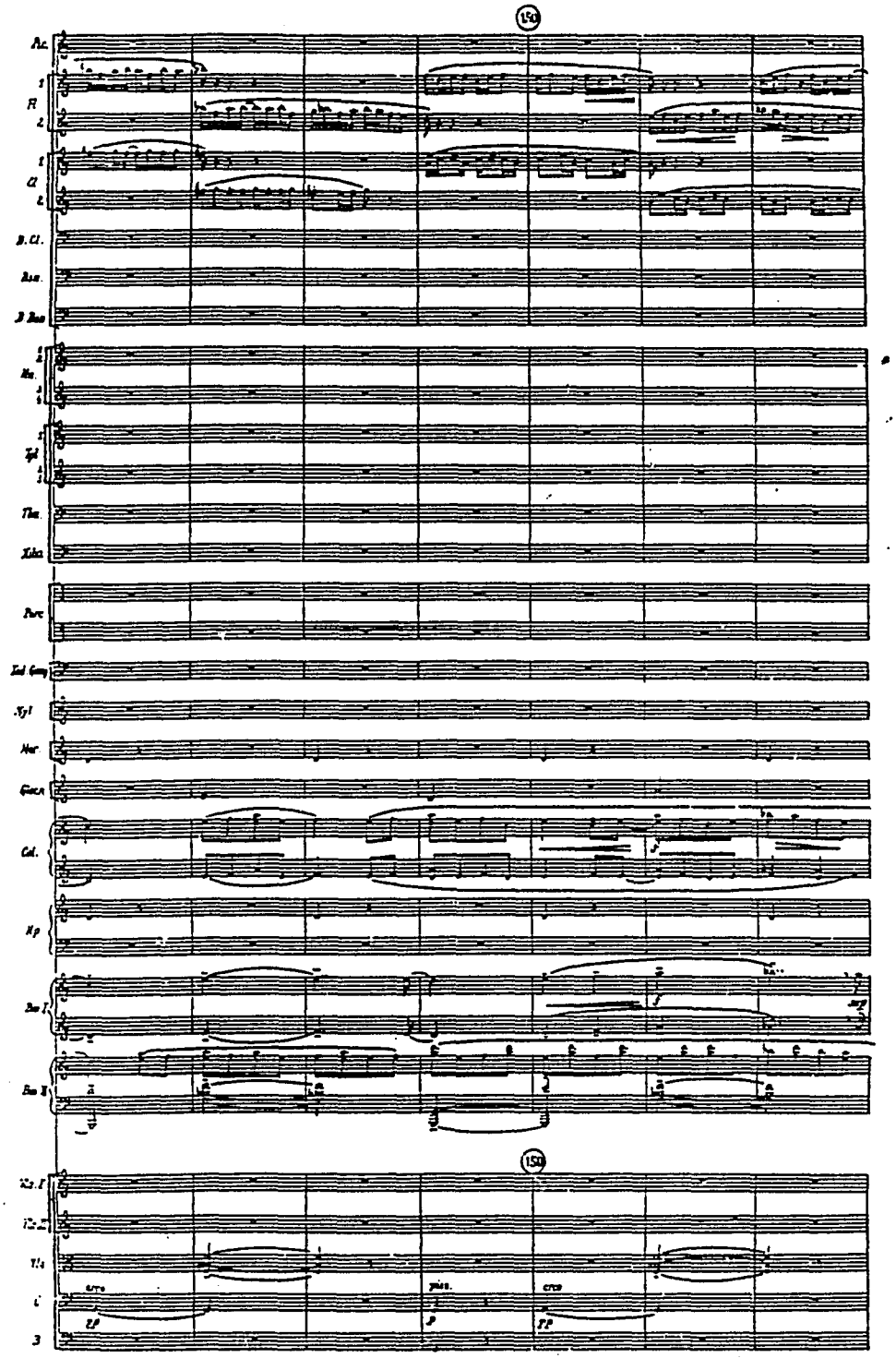
Example 72-B. Pengechét Jōbog, transcribed by McPhee in Music in Bali, p. 158.
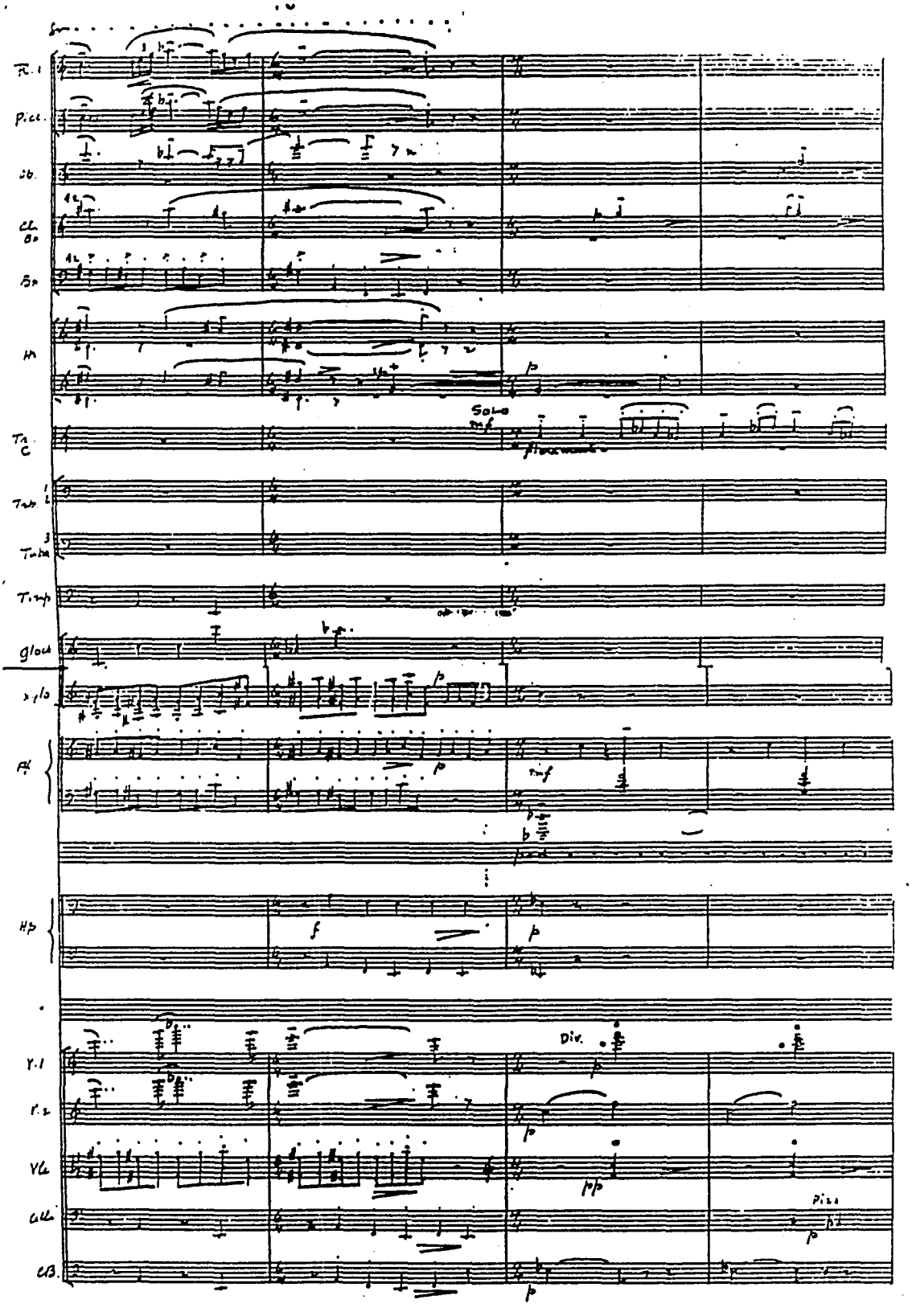


The middle section of the first movement of the Second Symphony (Example 74) employs the latter characteristic; there the strings and piano together form a pendulum of recurring high-low chords. A similar procedure occurs beginning at m. 112 in the first movement, m. 32 in the second, and m. 28 in the third.

McPhee prunes down the orchestration from what it

Example 73. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, measures 146-151.
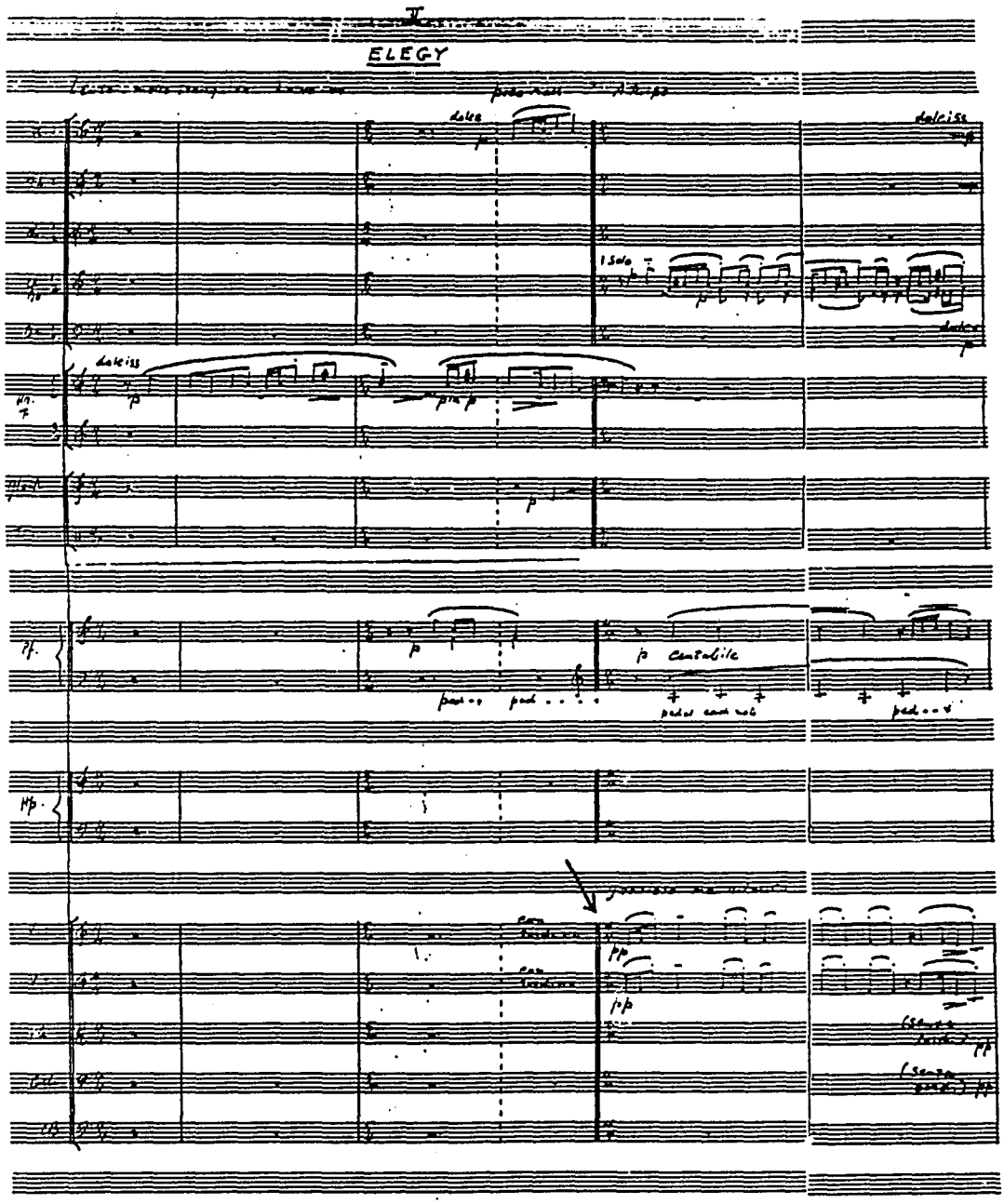


Example 74. McPhee, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 69-72.



had been in Tabuh-Tabuhan, but it is by no means as lean as in his next work, the Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra. Like Tabuh-Tabuhan, the Symphony has a "nuclear gamelan" of piano, glockenspiel, xylophone, and marimba. It sounds as a unit, often when accompanying wind solos. Throughout, individual instrumental lines are often exposed; the parts weave in and out and often do not sound simultaneously.

McPhee's use of pitches adheres mostly to his practice in Tabuh-Tabuhan. He employs many four- and five-note Balinese patterns, although in the Symphony more areas stay solely within the focal pitch group of the moment. For example, the opening of the first movement (see Example 71) draws exclusively from one five-note collection (E, F-sharp, G, B, D). But the first section of the second movement is the most unusual for McPhee, written solely in white notes and using dance-like supporting rhythms and wide textural spacing--all reminiscent of Aaron Copland's Appalachian Spring of 1945 (Example 75). McPhee had kept up with Copland's work over the years, as was evident in his reviews for Modern Music, and may have been inspired by Appalachian Spring not only in this section (where the opening gesture of the violin melody even suggests "Simple Gifts") but in the atmospheric quality and instrumental counterpoint of theme fragments at the beginning. Both have parallels in the introduction to Appalachian Spring.

Example 75. McPhee, Symphony No. 2, second movement, measures 1-4.



A Film Composer

In 1957, when work on the Second Symphony had ground to a halt, McPhee composed two scores for U.N. films. Doing so restored his self-confidence. The first, Air Skills, was written between 12 February and 20 March; the second, The Blue Vanguard, between 10 August and 17 September.[103] After taking nearly twenty years to write Music in Bali and not being able to meet the deadline for his symphony commission, McPhee was delighted with himself. "This last job shows me I still can deliver efficiently, on time, and I hope will lead to others. . . . The music is all done, and was recorded Tuesday. Really a success from all angles. Everyone loves it, even me."[104]

McPhee was recommended for the first U.N. job by Virgil Thomson, who advised Thorald Dickinson, a film producer then living in the Chelsea Hotel, of local composers for various films.[105] Thomson's generosity back-fired a bit, for McPhee wrote him in January 1957,

> Saw Dickinson yesterday and all seems set, though will not be confirmed till Monday. The film sounds attractive, and I'm offered five hundred. I have a problem, however, in finding money for getting a

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[103]Holographs of the scores are in the McPhee Collection at UCLA. Both are proudly dated by CM.

[104]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, "Thursday" [1957]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[105]Interview with Virgil Thomson, 6 January 1982, Chicago. In addition to McPhee, Thomson recommended McPhee, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, and Marc Blitzstein.

> piano. The man I rent from always wants cartage both ways and three months in advance--about $75. I daren't pay this out right now, and if you could possibly advance this for the present, I could pay it back as soon as paid for UN score.[106]

There is no record of Thomson's having lent McPhee the money.

The Blue Vanguard was produced for the U.N. by the National Film Board of Canada. It was a 55-minute documentary about the United Nations Emergency Force set up during the Suez Canal crisis by Lester B. Pearson, former Canadian Prime Minister.[107] McPhee must have finished the score at the last minute, because it is dated 17 September and, according to a pre-production schedule, the first recording session was scheduled for the 16th.[108] McPhee went to Montreal in late September to help with the mixing. As luck would have it, the film was never released because tension in the Middle East was too great.

Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra

In 1958, McPhee was awarded yet another commission, this one from the Contemporary Music Society for a piece called Nocturne, that was given its premiere at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 3 December 1958 with Leopold

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[106]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, 31 January [1957]. Thomson Collection/Yale.

[107]Letter, Marion Meadows, National Film Board of Canada, to author, 8 November 1982.

[108]The schedule was sent me by Marion Meadows.

Stokowski conducting.[109] McPhee's friend Oliver Daniel was behind the founding of this society and brought in Stokowski as its conductor. He had much to do with engineering McPhee's commission. In addition, McPhee and Stokowski had a connection that went back to 1936, when McPhee showed him the score of Tabuh-Tabuhan, in hopes of getting a performance. And in 1953, after finally conducting the American premiere of the work, Stokowski had written McPhee:

> What would you think of composing another composition, perhaps to last about ten minutes and to be in one movement, of your memories of Balinese music? A composition of this length would be enthusiastically welcomed by listeners all over the country, and, eventually, all over the world.[110]

No letters survive to document McPhee's work on the Nocturne, only an entry in the diary of Don Ott for October 1958, six weeks before the premiere: "Colin played the first part--finished--of his new composition for the Stokowski concert. . . . The piece was beautiful even on the

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[109][Program:] "The Contemporary Music Society Presents Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra." 3 December 1958. Collection of Oliver Daniel. The program included a number of Asian or Asia-inspired works: Fantasia-Tahmeel by Halim El-Dabh, Persian Set by Henry Cowell, Yiskor by Odeon Partos, Ten Haikus by Basho by Shukichi Mitsukuri, October Mountain by Alan Hovhaness, To a Wayfarer by Chou Wen-Chung. The Nocturne was recorded in 1968 by the Hessian Radio Symphony with David Van Vactor conducting (CRI-219).

[110]Letter, Leopold Stokowski to CM, 19 October 1953. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

piano."[111]

Indeed, the Nocturne is a lovely work that is an outgrowth not only of McPhee's work in Bali but, like the Second Symphony, of Tabuh-Tabuhan. Its starting point is the middle movement of Tabuh-Tabuhan, also called "Nocturne," to which it is closely related in mood, shape, and texture. Tabuh-Tabuhan's "Nocturne" featured a suling flute in a rounded form of four parts, the first returning at the close. Its scoring was mostly lean, often for two pianos, marimba, xylophone, celesta, and woodwinds, with plucked strings adding to the percussive effect. The Nocturne of 1958 combines these elements within smaller dimensions; it is shorter and uses fewer instruments (no brass and only one piano). But perhaps the principal difference lies in a more secure maturity on the part of its composer. As in the Second Symphony, Balinese elements had been comfortably absorbed into McPhee's vocabulary. The Nocturne has less raw energy than Tabuh-Tabuhan but more of a gentle swing, and its scoring is representative of the metallic sonority of the gamelan. Contrasting timbres are clearly exploited.

Although the Nocturne has only one movement, like Transitions of 1954, it is divided into many sections. At its core is the familiar "nuclear gamelan": piano,
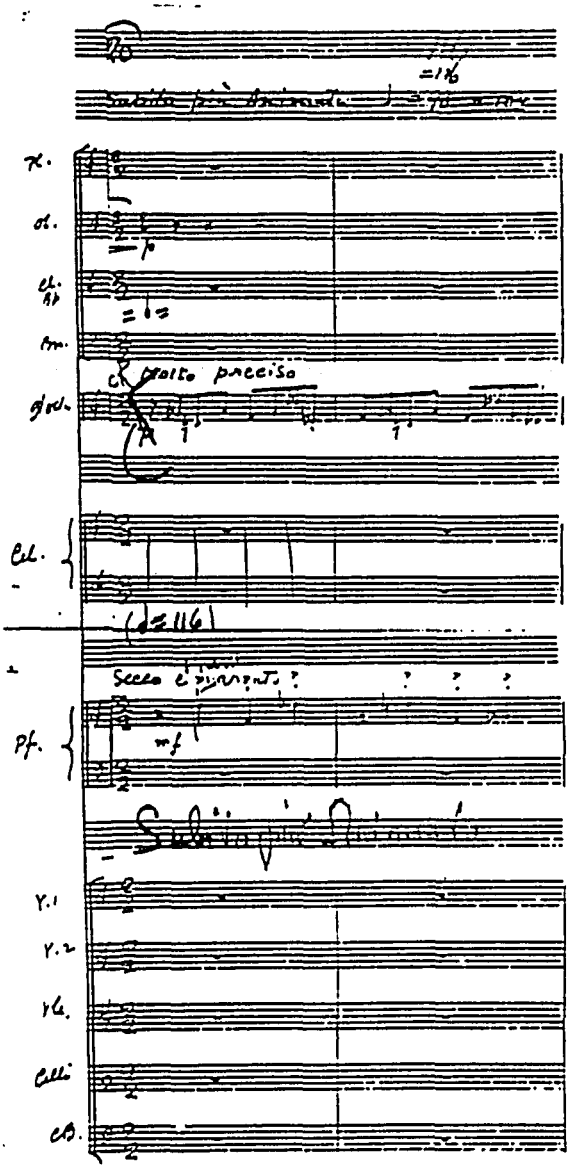
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[111]Diary of Don Ott, 23 October 1958.

xylophone, glockenspiel, and celesta. And as in so many other works by McPhee, the concerto principle is a shaping force. Sections with a limpid flute solo alternate with ones featuring the nuclear gamelan. The opening section is presented at three different pitch levels, with the flute solo centering first on C (mm. 3-6), then B-flat (mm. 8-10) and C-sharp (mm. 13-17). A contrasting section begins at m. 20, which is largely percussive, without a woodwind melody, and presents several irregular ostinatos heterophonically, with the glockenspiel elaborating a pattern in the piano and strings. Soon the roles begin to switch, and the more florid part is taken up in turns by the piano and first violin (m. 24), celesta (m. 29), and celesta and piano (m. 33). A third section begins in m. 38 with the flute re-entering in a paraphrase of the opening melody, which is tossed between oboe (m. 46) and flute (m. 48). Another heterophonic ostinato section starts at m. 53, with glockenspiel, celesta, and piano again at the fore. A celesta-piano duet (mm. 90 ff.), again exploiting heterophony, leads to the return of the opening material at its original pitch level in m. 101.

Several characteristics stand out in the piece. First is the effective use of heterophony found in all the sections featuring nuclear gamelan. In some instances the technique--so central to the multi-layered texture of Balinese music--is employed simply, between glockenspiel and piano:
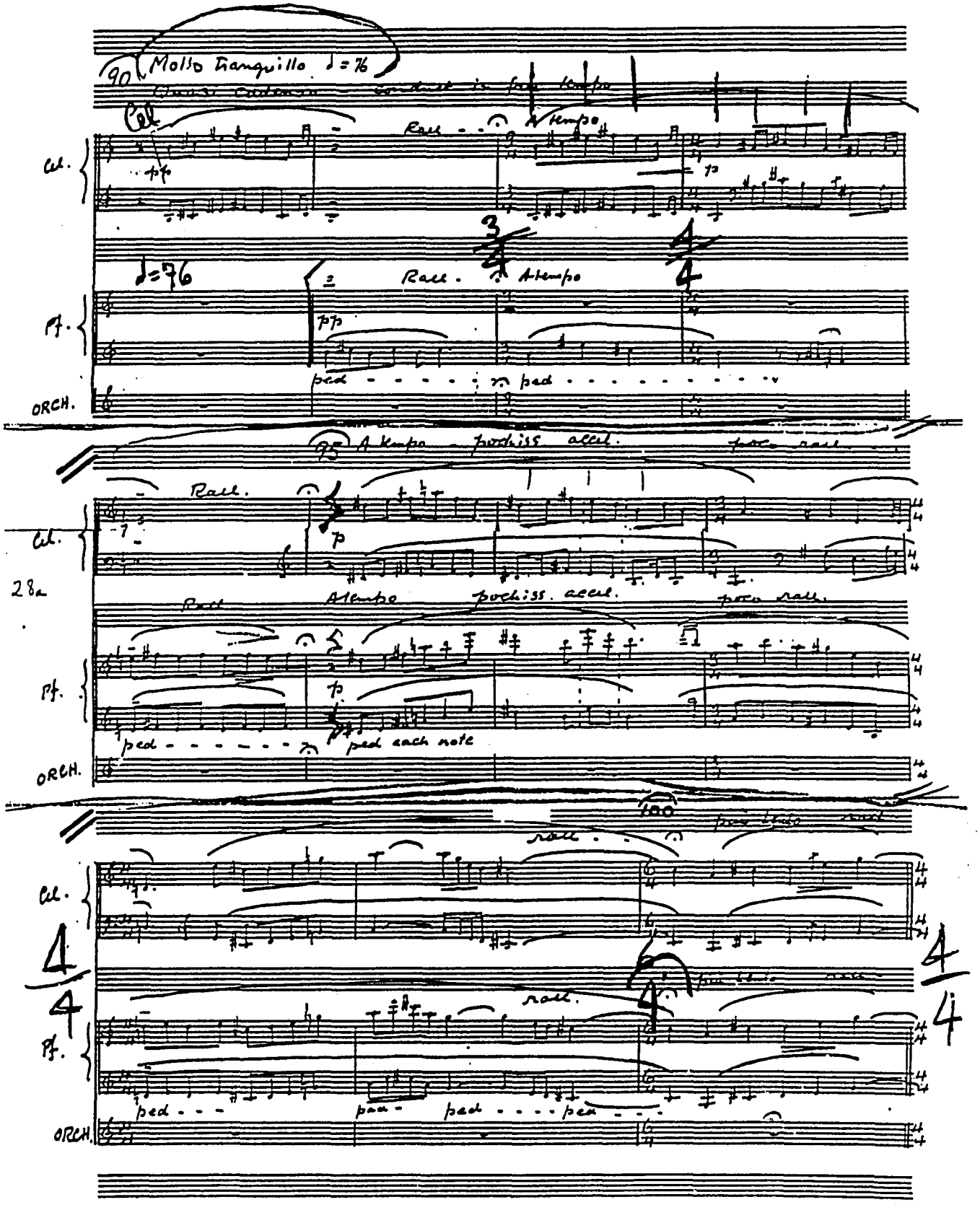
Example 76. McPhee, Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra, measures 20-21.



In others, especially the final transition back to the opening material (see Example 77), heterophony becomes the focal point, with the role of elaborator bandied between the two principal instruments for a beautifully layered exchange.

Another striking trait of the Nocturne is its sectionalism. Transitions was weakened by its non-
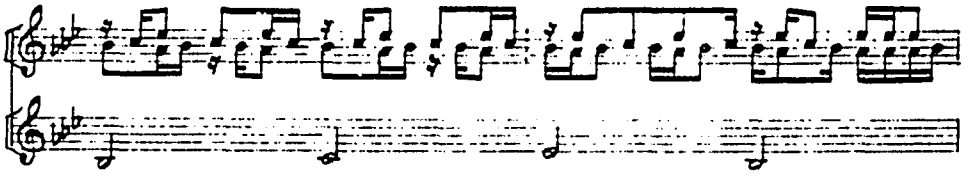
Example 77. McPhee, Nocturne, measures 90-100. (Crayon markings in the score were made by Stokowski for the premiere performance.)



continuous stop-and-start quality. In Nocturne, however, McPhee seems to have made peace with this organizational method, combining a number of clearly distinct sections and yet maintaining a constant forward momentum. His transitions, as in the Second Symphony, have a personality of their own. With them, McPhee most often progresses from one pitch area to another.

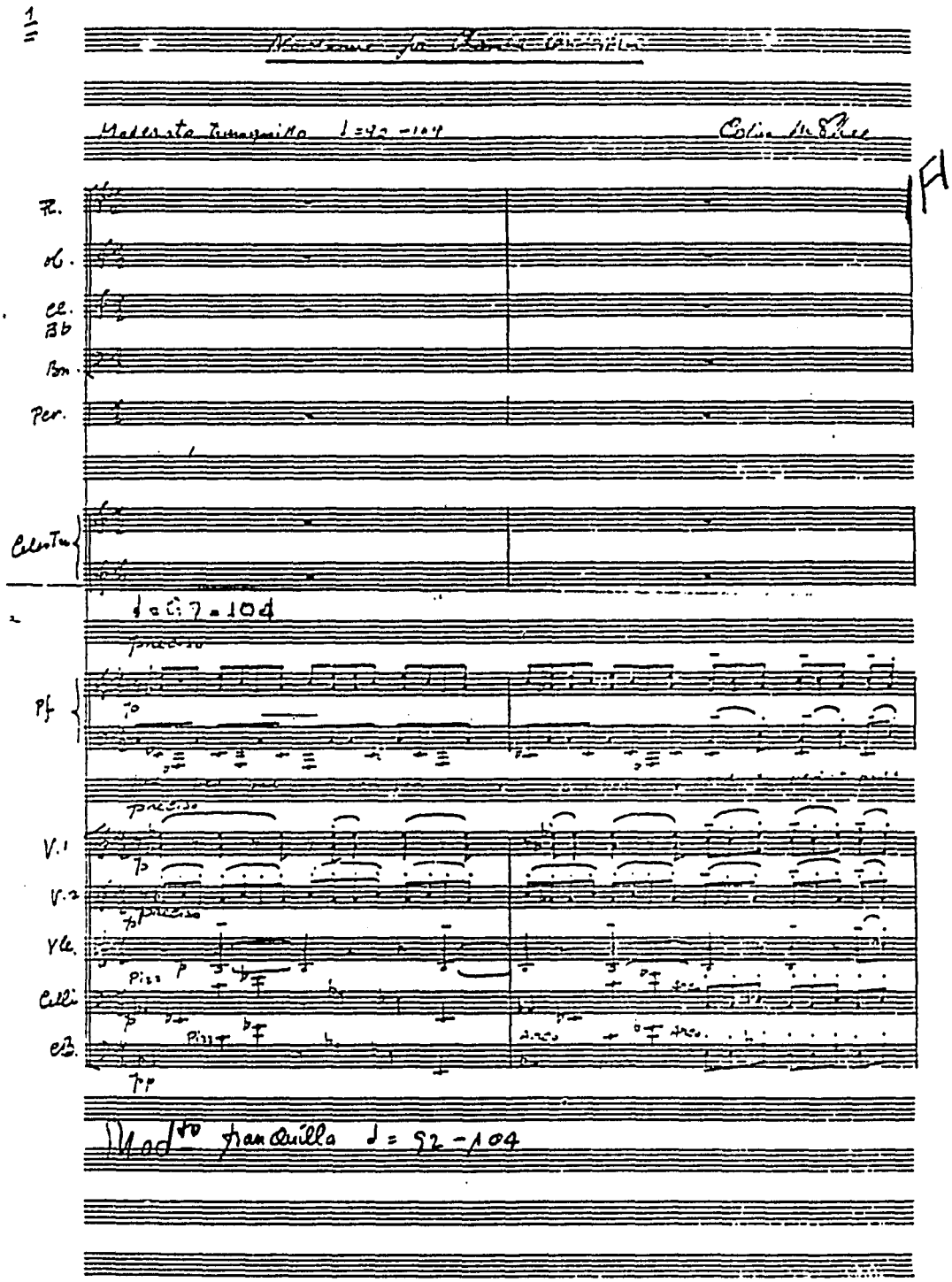
In the Nocturne, McPhee largely draws upon Balinese pitch collections, but in a simpler way than previously. At the opening, four-note patterns reminiscent of the gamelan angklung (compare Example 78 to 79), sound alone, with no other pattern juxtaposed.

Example 78. Gamelan angklung, excerpt transcribed by McPhee from Music in Bali, p. 246.



Yet in other instances, such juxtapositions occur. The second statement of the flute theme in m. 8, for example, combines the pitches of B-flat minor with a raised third degree (D natural). Perhaps the most successful aspect of the Nocturne, however, is its orchestration. Using a chamber ensemble with no brass and employing the strings with a light hand makes the textures shimmer and the rhythms bounce. McPhee exploits a wide timbral palette, varying themes as much through instrumental color as through heterophony. In Tabuh-Tabuhan's "Nocturne" the

Example 79. McPhee, Nocturne, measures 1-2.



flute carried the suling melody--perhaps out of McPhee's rigorous respect for the Balinese original. Here, however, various woodwind instruments share the melody for lovely changes in tone color. The melody's second entrance at m. 8 begins in the piccolo and then is elaborated by the clarinet. In the third statement at m. 13, there is similar polyphonic interplay, this time between the flute and clarinet. Likewise, the reprise features first flute (m. 111), then oboe (m. 121), clarinet (m. 115), and finally clarinet and bassoon with flute (m. 125). With similar clarity and contrast, the timbres of the nuclear gamelan stand out from the ensemble and often combine for variety in both sonority and textural density.

Concerto for Wind Orchestra

1959 was a difficult year--a "dismal" one in McPhee's own words. He grappled with his last composition, the Concerto for Wind Orchestra,[112] and was preparing the "final" manuscript of Music in Bali. Once again he fell into a foul mood:

> As far as composing is concerned, I give up. I don't expect to continue. I'm nowhere in the least demand, nor hope to be. I'm fundamentally embarrassed by the music I've written with recent commissions, and long ago was ready to call it a day.[113]

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[112]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 1 January 1960. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[113]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, "Wednesday" [6 March 1959--penciled in by OD]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

That fall, the lament continued: "Everything is so financially hopeless . . . I'm more destitute than I've ever been, with not even clothes. I could not go any place this hot summer because I had only a winter suit. . . . I'm very weary of it all, I can tell you."[114]

At some point amidst this misery, McPhee had received a commission from Robert Boudreau's American Wind Symphony and began writing the Concerto for Winds.[115] Given his financial and emotional state, work on the piece did not progress smoothly. In November he reported to Oliver Daniel that although he had been composing he could "see no way to finishing [the piece]. . . . I really don't know how to carry on any further. I'll be without money again before Christmas."[116] Daniel proposed another small commission, which McPhee declined, and there was also talk of writing a work for the Joffrey Ballet, which

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[114]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, "Friday," [Fall 1959]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[115]In the letter to Oliver Daniel from the Fall of 1959 (the one in which he complains of not having had a suit the previous summer), McPhee mentions having already received a commission from Boudreau. In another letter to Daniel, dated only "Wednesday" McPhee reports "Contract with Boudreau signed today." "1959?" has been penciled in at the top by OD. (Collection of Oliver Daniel)

[116]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, "Sunday" [Nov '59? added by OD in pencil]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

never came through.[117] McPhee was eager to do the Boudreau work, however, and promised Virgil Thomson, "No Oriental ambience in any sense this time."[118]

McPhee's deadline had been April 1960, and again, as with the Louisville commission, he did not meet it. In early March he wrote Boudreau asking to be released from the assignment; he had been sick much of January. "Perhaps through fatigue or other preoccupations I found I had lost all contact with the work as far as it had gone, and in which I no longer have any confidence."[119] He sent a carbon of his letter to Oliver Daniel, with a cover note confiding, "I have not known a day or night free from tension and anxiety for months."[120] Somehow or other he was persuaded to try again and in June submitted a completed score, which "took me six weeks to write."[121]

In spite of his promise to Virgil Thomson, McPhee filled the Concerto with Balinese themes, many of which

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[117]McPhee mentioned the possibility of a Joffrey commission in a letter to Oliver Daniel, "Wednesday" ["July 1, 1959" is penciled in]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[118]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, "Friday" [1959?]. Thomson Collection/Yale.
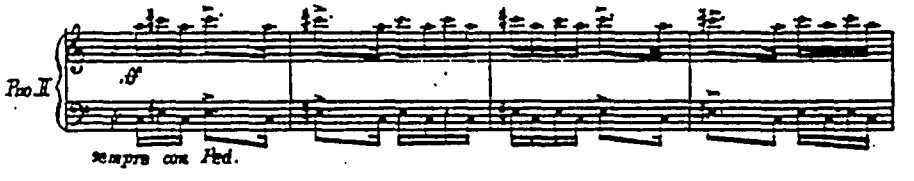
[119]Letter, CM to Robert Boudreau, 6 March 1960. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[120]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, [March 1960]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.
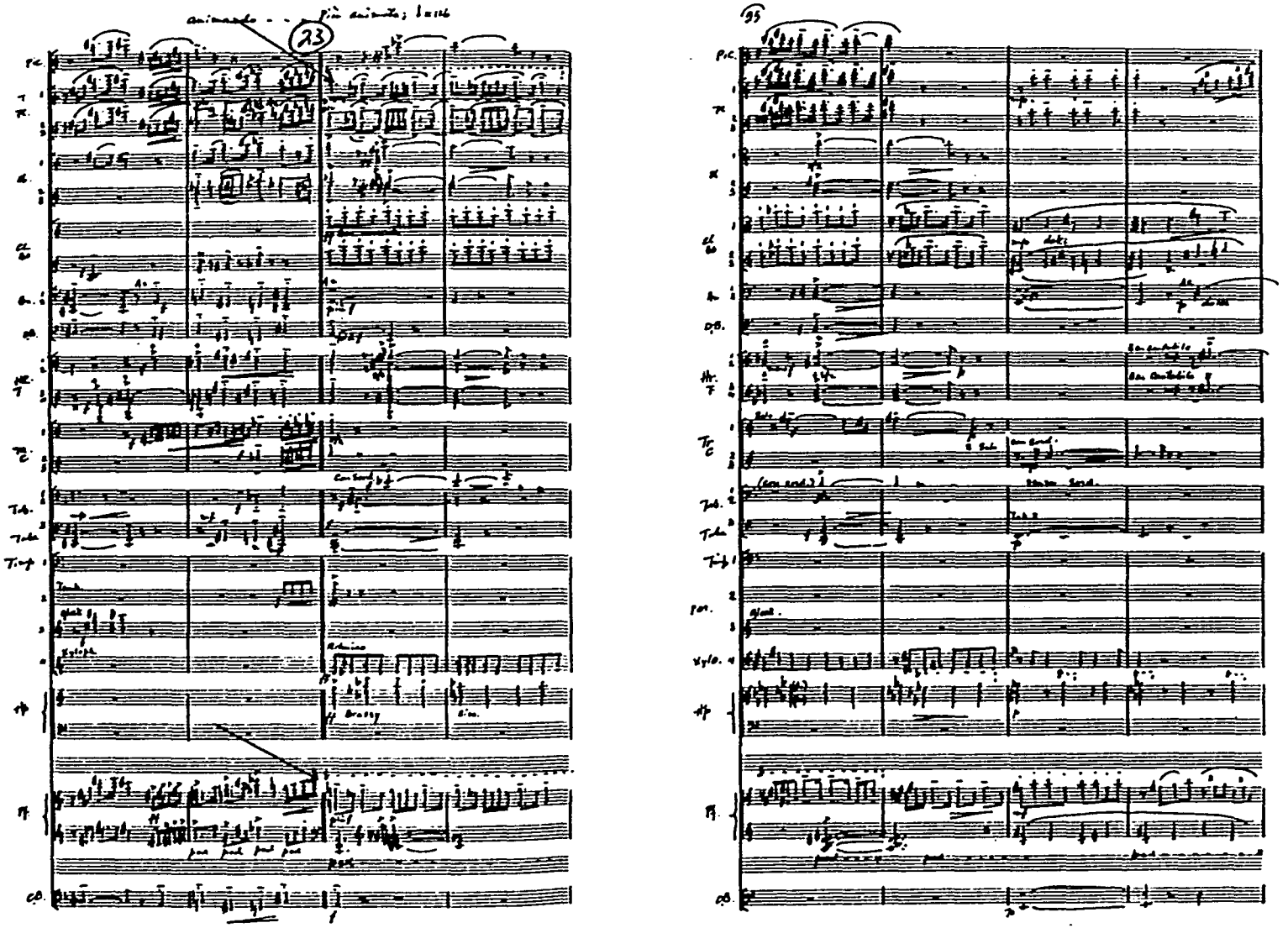
[121]Letter, CM to Carl Haverlin (of BMI), 5 June 1960. Collectr Daniel.

were drawn from Tabuh-Tabuhan. Yet this time his references back to the earlier work were bald, even tired, by comparison to the imaginative recollection that had pervaded the Nocturne and Second Symphony. Much of the first movement, for example, is culled directly from Tabuh-Tabuhan. The second section (see piano in Example 81) is taken from the third section of Tabuh-Tabuhan's first movement (compare to Example 80 below) and transposed one step lower. This is followed by another borrowing.

Example 80. McPhee, Tabuh-Tabuhan, first movement, piano, measures 90-93.



The Wind Concerto has many other parallels to Tabuh-Tabuhan and follows a familiar McPhee mold: three movements (fast, slow, very fast) with thematic relationships between them. The concerto principle dominates once again, although here in a freely structured way. The solo role, first taken by the trumpet, moves throughout the wind ensemble. And the scoring, although new in eliminating strings (string bass and harp are present), falls back on a nuclear gamelan of piano, marimba, and xylophone. Even McPhee's program notes for the piece seem a little hackneyed, using much the same language as those for the Second Symphony. However, he



Example 81. McPhee, Concerto for Wind Orchestra, first movement, measures 21-28.
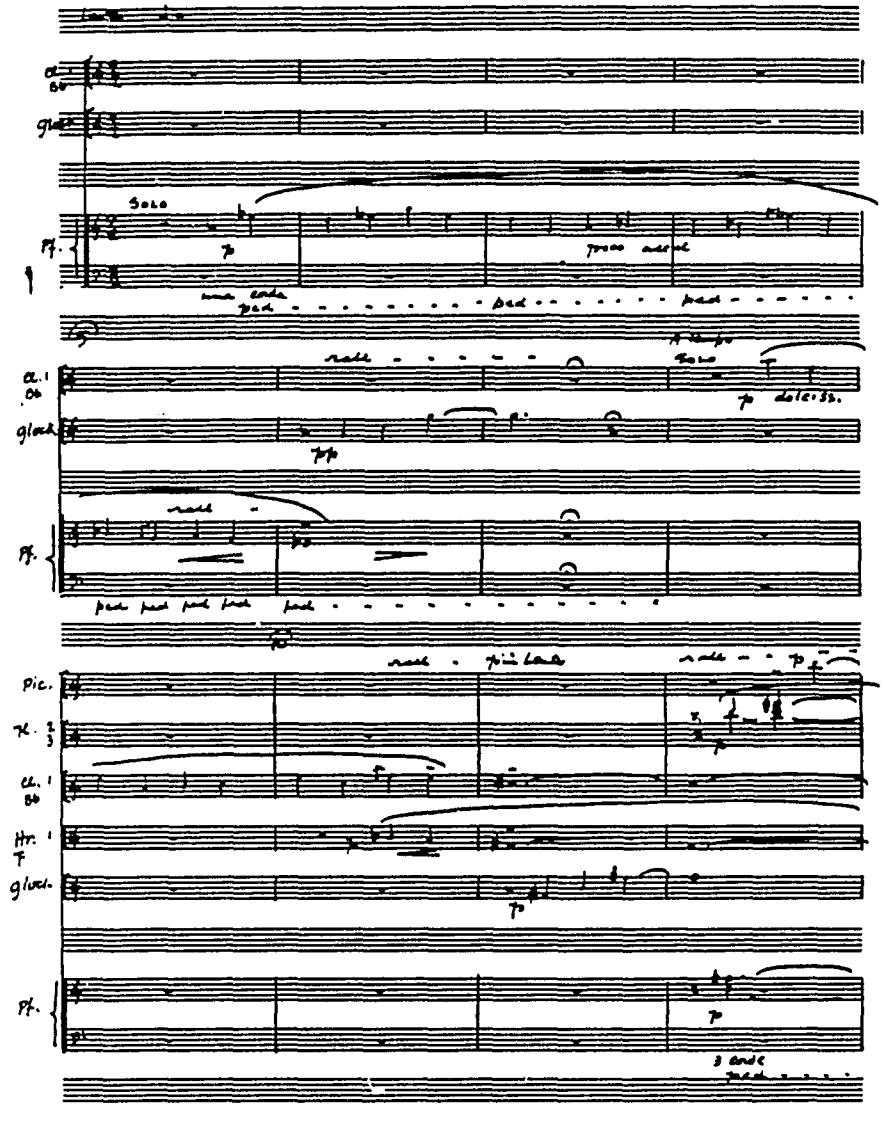
incorporates two new elements: the middle movement quotes "a type of romantic song popular in Sunda [Java]" and both the first and second movements use a melody by I Madé Lebah, McPhee's devoted musical comrade (Example 82).[122]

Of the works composed during McPhee's musical renaissance of the fifties, the Nocturne and Second Symphony stand out as most successful. Despite poverty and a long hiatus from composing, he was able to write music once again and, through composition, to continue drawing upon his experiences in Bali. Both the Nocturne and Second Symphony deserve to be revived.

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[122]Quotation from McPhee's program notes.

Example 82. McPhee, Concerto for Wind Orchestra, second movement, measures 1-12.



CHAPTER X

THE YEARS AT UCLA (1960-64)

Completion of the Concerto for Winds in June 1960 marked another turning point for McPhee. Within days of submitting the score he received a large commission from Broadcast Music, Inc.--$1,000 in advance--for an orchestral work in celebration of BMI's 20th anniversary. But the most significant event of all was the offer of a teaching position at UCLA.

Mantle Hood, who was responsible for bringing McPhee to UCLA, recalls how the appointment came about:

> In 1958, when I came back through New York, after being in Indonesia for two years, I went to see him. He was living in very modest quarters--with a quick look around you could tell things weren't all that good financially. I said 'Colin, why don't you come out to UCLA and do some teaching?' Well, he couldn't stand the idea of teaching; he would hate the idea of teaching. I persisted in a soft way, and when I got back to UCLA I phoned him and finally talked him into trying it.[1]

So in September 1960 Colin McPhee became a

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[1]Interview with Mantle Hood, Baltimore, Maryland, 10 January 1984.

university professor.[2] He was apprehensive about leaving friends in New York ("friends I never see but feel at least geographically close to") and a bit daunted by the challenge of teaching ("the courses seem as unpredictable to me as a cadenza"). [3] Before moving he stored many of his belongings, but his possessions were so whittled down that there was little to worry about. He told Sidney Cowell, "I can't help smiling when you mention things to leave behind. Do you realize I have nothing--no clothes, no books, no nothing at all. All my clothes and belongings you could put in a zipper bag, after records and films are packed."[4]

Once he reached Los Angeles, McPhee settled in the Dracker Hotel in Westwood Village--quite a contrast, as even he noted, from conditions on West 22nd Street. His apartment was comfortable, an easy walk from the University,

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[2]According to the UCLA Academic Personnel Office, McPhee was on the UCLA payroll from 2 July 1960 to 31 December 1963 (Letter, Stephen Fry, Music Librarian, UCLA, to author, 5 September 1984.)

[3]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Monday" (postmarked 6 September 1960). Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[4]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Tuesday" [1960]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. McPhee gave away quite a few of his possessions before he moved. He also rented a storage room somewhere in Manhattan. Shirley Hawkins remembers seeing the storage ticket sometime before McPhee's death but afterwards it was lost. (Interview with Shirley Hawkins, Los Angeles, 16 June 1982.)

and in it was a rented piano.[5] During the fall semester he taught ethnomusicology and composition under a part-time appointment. At first he found teaching difficult, especially the composition course. In December he wrote Oliver Daniel, "The composition class, though only elementary, throws me, for lack of experience. The really advanced Ethnomusicology course goes better, though far from smoothly."[6] But by February 1961 he was happily reporting, "I have found my level, I think, and am beginning to enjoy it."[7] That summer he enthusiastically described his ethnomusicology students to Sidney Cowell: "The class was truly brilliant. Most having done work already in Persia, Greece, India, Mexico, and Thailand. Am reading papers now, and very touched by the accurate and painstaking answers."[8]

Despite the stimulation of students and the peace of a paycheck, McPhee was lonely in Los Angeles: "No one my age to make friends with--and the friendly students so

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[5]Letter, CM to Henry Cowell, no date [Fall 1960]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[6]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, no date [December 1960]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[7]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 18 February 1961. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[8]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 9 June [1961]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

separated by time."[9] Yet it was preferable to the life of abject poverty in New York. From all accounts, McPhee was a gifted teacher. Mantle Hood recalls,

> A great delight and sadness simultaneously was the discovery during those 3 years at UCLA that he loved to teach, and the students loved him. He gave so much. It was sad that he hadn't discovered it earlier.[10]

A longtime friend of McPhee's, the anthropologist Rhoda Métraux, visited him in Los Angeles in late 1963 and saw a striking change from the man she had known in New York:

> It was almost as if darkness turned into light and he found himself living in a sunny world. He had an admiring, affectionate group of students, he discovered himself as a teacher, a role that to his own surprise, he enjoyed immensely, and he had solid academic backing and new, mature friendships. He also knew that his most important work on Balinese music would be published in great style.[11]

Life Outside of Teaching

Alongside this new-found career, McPhee continued to compose and work on production of Music in Bali. He

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[9]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 9 June [1961]. Cowell Collection/NYPL. At about the same time he wrote Oliver Daniel, "I'm happy to stay on here, but very very lonely, having no friends here beyond John V[incent] and Mantle. My Ethno students of the past year are all very friendly and hospitable, and keep asking me to dinner or parties. But the time-gap is too great, and I find such an evening very exhausting. Miss you and other New York friends very much." ("June '61" penciled in by Oliver Daniel. Collection of Oliver Daniel.)

[10]Interview with Mantle Hood.

[11]Letter, Rhoda Métraux to author, 18 November 1982.

also made one last trip to Asia--to Tokyo for a conference titled "East-West Music Encounter" that was held 17-24 April 1961. McPhee at first declined the invitation to attend--mostly because of a concern for having enough pocket money while he was there. But he finally accepted and went with five other Americans: Elliott Carter, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, Mantle Hood, and Virgil Thomson.[12] McPhee spoke on 19 April on the topic, "Problems of Indonesian Musical Traditions Today (The Music Crisis in Bali Today)."[13] In his paper he reiterated the stand that had shaped much of his writing about Balinese music: the old styles were being replaced by a flashier, less musically interesting repertoire. "Balanced form and metric breadth have given way to restless fantasias in which short excerpts from traditional melodies follow each other in purely arbitrary succession."[14] McPhee described his efforts during the thirties to convince musicians of the importance of preserving their classical repertory, and he went on to propose a comprehensive project, "To record every type of music still to be found on the island, and to revive, if possible, traditional styles of

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[12]A newspaper clipping at UCLA (no paper name or date) cites the conference participants (Eloise Cunningham, "Music Encounter in Japan.")

[13]A typescript of his paper is in the McPhee Collection at UCLA.

[14]Ibid.

the past. Copies of the recordings could be [made] . . . readily available to Balinese musicians."[15] McPhee was calling for a continuation of his own work in the thirties, for a chance to record ensembles on the island before the old traditions died away.

For nearly twenty-five years, McPhee had dreamed of returning to Bali to complete his work. During that time, he had proposed trips to do field work in various locales, but Bali remained the spot he most wanted to see again. In 1962, probably not long after the East-West Conference, Mantle Hood drew up a proposal for a five-man team to spend fourteen months in Bali. He and McPhee were to head it, working with a professional photographer, a sound engineer, and an anthropologist.

> We tried and tried but we couldn't get the funding. As I recall it was a little under $100,000. . . . That same year the National Science Foundation gave one-and-a-half million dollars to find a fish they thought was off the shores of Madagascar.[16]

In February 1962, while the Bali proposal was pending, McPhee made the first of several stays in the hospital (others followed in December 1962, and April and June 1963). He had cirrhosis of the liver, a condition that steadily worsened: "Years of malnutrition and too

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Interview with Mantle Hood.

much alcohol in proportion finally undermined me."[17] Margaret Mead visited him in the hospital in December 1962 and reported to Sidney Cowell, "I saw him last week. He's frail--a little less pleased with life than usual! But he quickly fires with enthusiasm again. What he really wants to do is to go to Indonesia once more and look at the music."[18]

McPhee persisted in looking for funds to take him to Bali, even after Mantle Hood's proposal fell through. In January 1963 he began plans for a solo expedition:

> I am writing to ask if you have any idea where I could turn for an independent grant to take me East for a year. I'd spend part of the time in Bali noting cultural changes that had taken place since I left, interviewing musicians, . . . I would also like to explore the musical situation in one or two nearby islands such as Madura, Lombok, and Celebes, where little musical research has been undertaken.[19]

Perhaps his plans were given impetus by a proposal from Stanford University Press for him to undertake a new book on Balinese music, from "a completely different angle."[20]

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[17]Letter, CM to Henry and Sidney Cowell, 4 March [1962]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[18]Letter, Margaret Mead to Sidney Cowell, 5 December 1962. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

[19]Letter, CM to Virgil Thomson, 29 January 1963. Thomson then suggested that McPhee write to Nicolas Nabokov at UNESCO (Letter, 30 January 1963), which McPhee did (Letter, 8 February 1963). Nabokov replied that he could be of little help (Letter, 25 February 1963). UCLA (copy also in Thomson Collection/Yale).

[20]Letter, CM to Marian Eames, 20 April [1963]. Collection of Marian Eames.

By June 1963 Margaret Mead had collected $2,000 for his trip.[21] But by September McPhee sadly told her that he was not well enough to make the trip alone: "I'm far from strong, need occasional transfusions, and frequent doctor's check-ups."[22] He never saw Bali again.

Symphony No. 3

The commission McPhee had received from BMI in June 1960 was for an orchestral work "with or without soloist." Once again, Oliver Daniel helped McPhee obtain the assignment.[23] McPhee worked on the piece intermittently during the early sixties but never finished. For some time, it seemed as though he was going to write another piano concerto but eventually the work took on the title

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[21]Letter, Margaret Mead to Colin McPhee, 3 June 1963. Mead Collection/LC.

[22]Letter, CM to Margaret Mead, 10 September 1963. UCLA.

[23]Letter, Carl Haverlin of BMI to CM, offering him the commission (3 June 1960). UCLA. McPhee had asked Daniel to play his Second Symphony for Haverlin and to try "to persuade him a BMI commission for another work would be both encouraging and literally life-saving." (Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, "Saturday" ["'60?" added in pencil by OD.] Collection of Oliver Daniel.)

"Symphony No. 3."[24] In the summer of 1960, McPhee promised the score would be ready that fall "at the latest," a promise he was unable to keep."[25] Little seems to have been accomplished on the piece in 1961, and McPhee returned to it in the summer of 1962 while he was in residence at Huntington Hartford. That fall, a publishing agreement was signed with Peters.[26] But with repeated trips to the hospital, classes to prepare, and Music in Bali in production, he was able to work on the piece only sporadically. Yet it remained on his conscience. In the spring of 1963 he closed a letter to his old friend Marian Eames with a poem that had been floating through his head when he woke up that morning:

> Little nips of brandy
> Little spots of tea

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[24]In response to Haverlin's letter offering him the commission, McPhee wrote, "I feel I perhaps should do a work in a single movement, since I already have a number of orchestral works in several movements, then again, I have long wanted to write a piano concerto, and wonder if this is the time." (5 June 1960. UCLA) On 6 September 1960, CM wrote Sidney Cowell, "I also have a commissioned piano concerto which is due this fall." (Cowell Collection--NYPL) By 2 September 1962, however, he wrote to Oliver Daniel, "The work is to be entitled Symphony No. 3." (Collection of Oliver Daniel)

[25]Letter, CM to Carl Haverlin, 5 June 1960. UCLA.

[26]Walter Hinrichsen sent McPhee a contract on 5 September 1952, together with an advance royalty check of $100. (Letter, UCLA)

Helps the great composer
Write his symphony.[27]

The symphony was never completed.

McPhee continued teaching at UCLA for the next two-and-a-half years until his health forced him to resign in November 1963.[28] He had recovered from repeated attacks of cirrhosis of the liver and had been given loving attention by friends and students alike. During his first bout, for example, which entailed two full days of transfusions, students responded by donating blood, and he received "loads of mail from N.Y., and a steady stream of visitors--once twelve in a day!"[29] He was also helped by UCLA colleagues, especially Mantle Hood and his wife Shirley, who took him into their home after he was released from the hospital in late March,[30] and from John Vincent, who made arrangements for McPhee to stay at the Huntington Hartford during the

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[27]Letter, CM to Marian Eames, "Thursday" [Spring 1963]. Collection of Marian Eames. In a letter written to Shirley Hawkins after McPhee's death, Oliver Daniel said he thought the symphony "was in some way to be connected with Thoreau." (Letter, 20 January 1964. UCLA)

[28]Letter, CM to Minna Lederman, 11 October 1963. Archives of Modern Music/LC.

[29]Letter, CM to OD, 27 February [1962 added in pencil]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[30]Interview with Shirley [Hood] Hawkins. Mrs. Hawkins says her place was a "half-way house for Colin; he would stay there a month or so each time he left the hospital.

summer of 1962.[31]

Production of "Music in Bali"

During these years McPhee kept working with Yale University Press on the production of his book. The copy editing and proofreading dragged on as interminably as had the writing. Most delays came from McPhee himself. According to Hood, "He was meticulous. I first saw the manuscript [in 1956] and in my judgment it was not too far from ready for the press then. But he went on and did a great deal to it."[32]

While McPhee was at UCLA, the book repeatedly seemed near release, only to be held back by another delay. In January 1960, McPhee wrote Chávez that it was going into production and would be out "around September [1960]."[33] By September, however, he was writing Sidney Cowell, "The amount of unforeseen last minute work on the book, to prevent costly misunderstandings, is unbelievable. . . . I hand in the ms. for better or worse tomorrow."[34] In June 1961 he was "going through the edited

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[31]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 25 March [1962 added in pencil]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[32]Interview with Mantle Hood.

[33]Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 1 January 1960. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.

[34]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, 6 September 1960. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

ms. . . . which I've had for three months" and hoped the book would be out the following spring.[35] One year later, he had finished correcting proofs of music examples--an early stage in production.[36] By December 1962 galleys were arriving daily ("I'm literally snowed under").[37]

Despite steady physical deterioration, McPhee earnestly read proofs. Jane Olson, McPhee's editor at Yale, reported to Sidney Cowell in late October of 1963: "Unfortunately, although we have done everything possible to speed up the appearance of the book, it is still a long way from publication. He [McPhee] is, as you must know if you are a friend, a perfectionist, and every time he has proofs to check, he seems unable to release them."[38]

Finally, late in the fall of 1963, Jane Olson asked Rhoda Metraux, who was traveling to Los Angeles, to get the last set of galleys from McPhee. Métraux recalls her meetings with McPhee:

> So for a period I worked with Colin, went over the galleys with him again and again--it seemed he could not let them go, he was a perfectionist and a little obsessed with this work--and finally I suggested that

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[35]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 18 June 1961. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[36]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel [9 July 1962 added in pencil]. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[37]Letter, CM to Oliver Daniel, 9 December 1962. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

[38]Letter, Jane Olson to Sidney Cowell, 31 October 1963. Cowell Collection.

> on a certain day, at a certain hour, he would hand over the proofs, and so free himself. On that day, at that hour, I had a friend stop by the apartment and she picked up the package of proofs and took them away; I stayed and Colin talked at length, as he had each day, about the discoveries he had made [through teaching] about living happily.
>
> It was as if, having sent the galleys on, he had voluntarily resigned from living.[39]

By the fall of 1963, as McPhee's health worsened, his handwriting had become a spindly scratch. Few letters were typed, and the sentences often were disconnected. Shirley Hawkins took him into her home for a time,[40] but in December he was placed in the Crescent Bay Convalescent Hospital, and on 7 January 1964 he died.[41]

In death, as in life, there was recognition of a respectful but subdued sort. A memorial concert was held at UCLA on 14 January 1964 and attended by a large crowd of students.[42] William Melnitz, Dean of the College of Fine Arts at UCLA, spoke, as did Roy Harris and Charles Seeger. Some of McPhee's compositions were played, and telegrams were read from Jane Belo, Sidney Cowell, Claire Holt, Mantle Hood, Otto Luening, Margaret Mead, Rhoda Métraux, and

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[39]Letter, Rhoda Métraux to author, 18 November 1982.

[40]Interview with Shirley Hawkins.

[41]Colin McPhee, Certificate of Death, State of California, No. 7053/309. Dated 7 January 1964. UCLA. [Obituary:] "Colin McPhee, Composer, Dies; Authority on Balinese Music, 62," The New York Times, 8 January 1964. (Here McPhee's birth date is given incorrectly as 1901.)

[42]Interview with Shirley Hawkins.

Leopold Stokowski.[43] On 4 February, a gathering of McPhee's old friends took place in New York. According to Oliver Daniel, "We played two tapes--his Nocturne and his Pastorale Symphony. . . . Everyone told little anecdotes and stories about Colin, and it was all very warm and filled with affection and remembrance."[44]

A Posthumous Publication

In 1966, two years after McPhee's death, Music in Bali was finally published.[45] Twenty-five years had passed since McPhee began writing the book, thirty-five since he first set sail for the island.[46] Music in Bali is monumental in every sense of the word. It is massive (430 quarto-sized pages with 358 musical examples and 120 photographs--all by McPhee),[47] and it is a lasting chronicle of a complex musical culture. Today, Western

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[43]A program for the service is in the Cowell Collection at NYPL.

[44]Interview with Oliver Daniel.

[45](New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). In 1976 the book was reprinted by Da Capo Press in New York.

[46]McPhee began the book during the summer of 1941, when he had a residency at Yaddo. In his introduction to Music in Bali, he says that the residency took place in 1942, but Yaddo records and his own correspondence suggest otherwise. (See discussion in Chapter VIII.)

[47]Little was cut out from what McPhee first submitted to Yale University Press in 1956 (Letter, CM to Carlos Chávez, 4 July [1956]. Chávez Collection/Mexico City.)

musicians and scholars turn to the book to learn about Balinese music as practiced during the 1930s, and Balinese musicians are consulting it as a record of musical styles that have either changed or vanished.[48] Reviewing the book in 1968, the ethnomusicologist Judith Becker called it "one of the most carefully written, complete and precise descriptions of any musical style outside of the Western world."[49]

Music in Bali documents a significant period in the island's music. Although Bali was feeling the effects of contact with the West during McPhee's time there, its music was still largely untouched by outside influences. The 1930s marked the end of the pre-radio, pre-Japanese-invasion, even pre-jet-strip era. Today Bali is a different place. Yet even McPhee's Bali had an evolving culture. The sumptuous court gamelan of semar pegulingan, for example, had fallen out of use by the 1930s. McPhee's revival of the music and subsequent detailed analysis of it in Music in Bali have kept it from passing into obscure legend.[50]

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[48]According to I Madé Bandem, Director of the Academy of Music and Arts in Den Pasar, Bali, students there use McPhee's book as a basic text in studying their own music (Interview, Den Pasar, Bali, 11 April 1984)

[49]Journal of the American Musicological Society XXI/3 (Fall 1968), p. 404.

[50]McPhee's gamelan revivals have been discussed in Chapters V and VII.

Throughout the book there is a beautiful balance of penetrating musical analysis with consummate readability. The prose artist of A House in Bali is still present. His tone may not be as lush or mysterious, yet within the scholarly constraints of delivering facts and information, he uses imaginative language to color descriptions vividly. McPhee's years of reflection are revealed on every page.

The book primarily covers instrumental music in Bali. It includes 19 chapters that discuss the role of music in Balinese culture, scale systems and tunings, and individual musical styles. The genres that McPhee analyzes are gamelan gong, gamelan gambuh, gamelan semar pegulingan, gamelan pelégongan, gendér wayang, gamelan angklung, gamelan arja, kebyar, and "Four Sacred Ensembles" (selundéng, charuk, gambang, gamelan luang). He also devotes an entire chapter to the compositions of I Lotring, whose work he so admired. Each section is lavishly illustrated with musical examples, many of which are whole sections of gamelan compositions.

Mantle Hood's foreword to the volume summarizes McPhee's achievement:

> This is a book which could have been written by only one man--a sensitive composer with a deep musicological interest, a man whose musical ear and musical integrity could not be content with a superficial examination. . . . For the Western composer, performer, and teacher of music, Balinese music is here described in its own terms and clearly evaluated and explained. For the humanist, the social scientist, and the anthropologist,

> McPhee has placed Balinese music within the proper context of society. For present and future generations of Balinese musicians Music in Bali will stand as a record of their most sacred heritage.[51]

Indeed, scholars and musicians will be returning to Music in Bali for generations to come. The book is not only a summary of music-making on that legendary island but of Colin McPhee's lifelong commitment and passion.

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[51]p. vi. Hood's foreword is dated January 1964.

AFTERWORD

Colin McPhee's ashes were placed in a tiny wall cubicle in Westwood Memorial Park, a cemetery where large flower-bedecked monuments to Marilyn Monroe and Natalie Wood are much more conspicuous. His position there symbolizes, in a slightly absurd way, his standing in life. From 1926, when McPhee first arrived in New York City as a composer, and throughout the ensuing years years, he was closely connected with some of the major figures in American new music--Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, Virgil Thomson, Edgard Varèse. Each of these men in some way became a star. McPhee did not. He had great talent, and he produced some great works. Yet he never achieved widespread fame. Without it, he seems to have been thwarted from attaining his full potential. McPhee was acutely aware of the toll that inattention took on his creative spirit, as he wrote to Sidney Cowell in 1949:

> It is always very warming to hear that I'm liked. . . . I suppose anyone who refuses to do anything except what he believes in is worth the effort--actually a superior tramp--[and] will always have the magic charm of Tao. The beautiful mystery is this: that my few friends admire or love me, not for what I've accomplished, but what they think I might have done. A work of art which does not exist is the most beautiful of all. I stand for all the things which might have been done--a rich blend of nostalgia, Puritan stoicism and

> futility. Shake well, add fresh ginger and pour through a fine sieve.[1]

In looking back on McPhee's life, it is easy to fall into his own view of himself--to let the depressions and the years of broken productivity obscure the achievements. Yet his achievements are many, and they will live on.

McPhee's earliest extant compositions from the 1920s--the Invention, the Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet, and the Sea Shanty Suite--are imaginative essays in neoclassicism, and they show a clearly defined personal style. He reached his summit as a composer early--at 36--with Tabuh-Tabuhan, a work for which Henry Cowell predicted "landmark status." Cowell's prediction may still come true. In fact, perhaps it already has. Tabuh-Tabuhan represents a crucial link in the chain of works by Western composers, from Claude Debussy to Steve Reich, that have drawn upon non-Western musics. It was the first product of McPhee's intensive study of the gamelan, and it is also one of the earliest Western compositions to achieve a successful fusion of the musics of different cultures. Its success comes not only from McPhee's skill as a composer but from the depth of his knowledge about Balinese music and the degree to which that music was consonant with his own aesthetic. His use of materials

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[1]Letter, CM to Sidney Cowell, "Wednesday" [Aug. 3, 1949 added below in ink]. Cowell Collection/NYPL.

from the gamelan was not superficial or decorative but profoundly integrative.

Tabuh-Tabuhan had a great impact on McPhee's career. He must have realized that he had broken new ground with it, and he hoped for recognition of his achievement. As the years passed and the piece remained unperformed in America, his spirit faltered, and this paralyzed him creatively. Who was to blame for the neglect of such an important work? Some responsibility must be placed with McPhee himself for failing to promote the piece. Yet he faced formidable obstacles. Music by American composers, as a whole, was little heard in American concert halls; large orchestral works were given especially short shrift. To a large extent, what McPhee experienced personally was America's pervasive lack of support for its own artists. His Old-World sensibility made him the kind of composer who required a patron. He lacked New-World enterprise.

The impact of Tabuh-Tabuhan on American music is much more difficult to evaluate. Because an American performance was so long in the making, the work was known for many years by reputation only. During that time (1936-1953) McPhee primarily communicated his experiences in Bali through his many articles about the gamelan, through A House in Bali, and through his publication and recording of two-piano transcriptions. After Tabuh-Tabuhan was finally performed in New York in 1953 and then

recorded in 1956, it became available for wider dissemination, making it possible for McPhee's contemporaries, as well as successors, to benefit from his achievement.

Yet despite its years as only a legend, the very existence of Tabuh-Tabuhan was significant, especially as we view the turn that Western music has taken in the twenty years since McPhee's death. Many composers now live in two worlds. In the forties and fifties when McPhee was in New York, writing A House in Bali and Music in Bali and composing the Nocturne and Second Symphony, he had only a few colleagues sympathetic to his preoccupation with Bali. Today there are gamelans in major universities across the country, and composers galore who draw upon all kinds of Asian resources. In 1973, Steve Reich wrote that "non-Western music is presently the single most important source of new ideas for Western composers and musicians."[2] Colin McPhee was among the pioneers who first realized that potential.

* * *

Perhaps the unifying quality in McPhee's life and work--whether in composition, prose writing, personal relationships, even cooking--was a delight in the sensual.

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[2]Steve Reich, "Postscript to a Brief Study of Balinese and African Music, 1973," in Writings About Music (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 38.

He claimed that at an early age he had determined to live a life "devoted to the senses," and despite the odds against him he stayed true to that philosophy. It brought him to Bali in the first place and made the music there so appealing to him. It also enlivened his descriptions of Balinese music and life, giving his writing its special atmospheric quality. Yet it meant, on a practical level, that he sometimes handled life ineffectively, even capriciously, often forgoing responsibility or discipline to indulge the desire of the moment.

In the years after McPhee returned to New York from Bali, his energies were mostly dedicated to communicating his experiences there. His two principal compositions from the 1950s--Symphony No. 2 and the Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra--both drew upon the gamelan, and his prose centered around Balinese topics as well. Perhaps his major effort went to completing Music in Bali. He realized that he had witnessed the end of an era on the island and that he alone could give posterity an account of music-making during that time. Work on the book was arduous--often nearly overwhelming. At the same time, it was a life-sustaining mission. Ultimately McPhee's writings have not only taught Westerners about music-making in Bali but have contributed much to the people of the island by preserving a record of the gamelan as it sounded in the 1930s. This is especially important since Bali, like many Eastern lands, has steadily been

infiltrated by the culture of the West.

McPhee's legacy, then, has many facets. His longtime friend Henry Cowell paid tribute to his achievements in a handwritten eulogy, which is now buried deep within the McPhee papers saved by Oliver Daniel:

> Colin McPhee, before he went to Bali, was one of the most prodigious young composers in America.
>
> While in Bali he became a world-authority on every detail of Balinese music.
>
> He was a great pioneer in composing for Western instruments so that they sounded completely and astoundingly Indonesian in his hands.
>
> He was unique.[3]

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[3]Henry Cowell, undated statment. Collection of Oliver Daniel.

APPENDIX A

Colin McPhee's Recital Programs at the Peabody Conservatory (1918-1921)

(This list tabulates the contents of programs on file in the Music Library of Peabody Conservatory and in the private collection of Sylvan Levin, a Peabody classmate of McPhee. In all of these programs, McPhee was at the piano.)

*indicates a solo recital

20 November 1918

"Students under the Director [Harold Randolph] and Mr. Van Hulsteyn"

J. S. Bach	French Suite in E major
Johannesa Brahms	Intermezzo in A major
	Ballad in G minor

4 March 1919

"Students under the Director"

Robert Schumann	Concerto in A minor (with accompaniment of a second piano)

7 May 1919

"Sixth Manuscript Evening"

Colin McPhee	La mère au berceau
	Il neige
	Habanera
	Regret
	Lumière
	Prelude
	Intermezzo

[all for solo piano]

12 May 1919

"Students under Messrs. Thatcher, Phillips and Strube"

Colin McPhee	Sonata for piano
	First movement

20 May 1919

"Students under the Director and Mr. Van Hulsteyn"

Claude Debussy	Reflets dans l'eau
Gabriel Fauré	Impromptu in F minor

28 May 1919
"Five Concerts by Advanced Students of the Conservatory: [No. 3] Works by Members of the Classes in Composition"
Colin McPhee — Sonata for piano
First movement

30 May 1919
"Fifth Exhibition Concert by Advanced Students of the Conservatory"
McPhee did not perform but received a Teacher's Certificate in piano.

22 October 1919
"Students under the Director"
Franz Liszt — Gondoliera from "Venezia e Napoli"
Frédéric Chopin — Waltz in C-sharp minor
Etude in A minor

10 December 1919
"Students under the Director"
Ludwig van Beethoven — Sonata in E major (Op. 109)

2 February 1920
"Students under the Director"
Franz Liszt — Sonata in B minor

16 February 1920
"Students under the Director, Mrs. Rabold, Mrs. Robertson and Mr. Van Hulsteyn"
Robert Schumann — Hunting Song
Bird as Prophet
Toccata

3 March 1920
"Seventh Manuscript Evening"
Mary Carlisle Howe — Three Preludes for piano
[Concert announced in The Baltimore Sun (2/29/20), p.4]

12 April 1920
"Students under the Director and Mrs. Willard"
Ludwig van Beethoven — Piano Concerto in G major (with accompaniment of a second piano; cadenza to first movement by Colin McPhee)

26 May 1920
"Third Exhibition Concert by the Students' Orchestra/Gustav Strube, Conductor"
Colin McPhee — Symphonic Poem, "Le Mort d'Arthur" for piano and orchestra
[Concert announced in The Baltimore Sun (5/23/20), p. IV:6, and The Baltimore News (5/23/20), p. 10]

*3 November 1920
"Student under the Director"
Ludwig van Beethoven — Sonata in C-sharp minor
Frédéric Chopin — Preludes in B-flat major, F-sharp minor, and C-sharp minor
Ballade in G minor
Franz Liszt — Feux Follets
Frédéric Chopin — Sonata in B-flat minor

24 January 1921
Saints-Saëns — Concerto No. 4 in C minor (with second piano)
[No program exists; concert announced in Peabody Bulletin XVII/2 (Spring 1921), 12]

4 April 1921
"Students under the Director"
Ludwig van Beethoven — Sonata Appassionata

6 April 1921
"Eighth Manuscript Evening"
Colin McPhee — Two Preludes for piano (awarded a prize in the alumni manuscript competition)
[Concert announced in The Baltimore Sun (4/3/21), p. IV:2]

25 April 1921
"Students under the Director"
Frédéric Chopin — Etude in C-sharp minor
Etude in E major
Polonaise in A-flat

*20 May 1921
"Peabody Diploma Recital: Colin McPhee and Louis Rosenberg, Composers"
Colin McPhee — Three Songs for Soprano
"At Night Thy Voice is like the Nightingale"
"La Silence de Mnasidika"
"Music, When Soft Voices Die"
(Mary Spence, soprano)
Sonata in E-flat minor for piano (in one movement)
Poème
Two Hymns for a Sunset
Il danse
(all for solo piano)
[Concert announced in The Baltimore Sun (5/15/21), p. IV:1]

26 May 1921
"[Concert] by the Students' Orchestra"
Saint-Saëns — Concerto No. 4 in C minor

27 May 1921

"Fifth Exhibition Concert"

McPhee did not perform but received a diploma in harmony and composition.

APPENDIX B

Colin McPhee's Toronto Recital Programs (1922-1924)

(The library location for each program is given in brackets at the head of the entry.)

16 February 1922

The Canadian Academy of Music [UCLA]

Johannes Brahms	Four Waltzes
	Intermezzo, Op. 116
Ludwig van Beethoven	Sonata, Op. 27, No. 1
Franz Schubert	Impromptu in A-Flat
Felix Mendelssohn	Prelude in E Minor
Mendelssohn-Liszt	On Wings of Song
Robert Schumann	Soaring
Frédéric Chopin	Fantasia, Op. 49
Maurice Ravel	Jeux d'eau
Colin McPhee	Elegy
Isaac Albéniz	El Albaicín
Franz Liszt	Harmonies du soir
	Waldesrauschen
Frédéric Chopin	Polonaise in A-Flat

18 April 1922

Toronto Centre of the Canadian College of Organists

"Mr. McPhee played a group of Chopin and Liszt, ending with a brilliant rendering of Chopin's A-flat Polonaise." [Musical Canada, May 1922, p. 19; no program exists.]

12 November 1922

"Hart House Sunday Evening Concert," with Reginald Stewart and Colin McPhee (both at the piano) and J. Campbell-McInnes, choral conductor [Hart House Collection]

Johannes Brahms	Love Songs, Opus 52
J. S. Bach	Cantata: "God's Time is the Best"

4 December 1922

Hart House Theatre (first of three recitals) [UCLA]

Ludwig van Beethoven	Sonata, Op. 27, No. 1
Frédéric Chopin	Ten Etudes
Sergei Rachmoninoff	Prelude in B minor, Op. 32
	Barcarolle
Maurice Ravel	Jeux d'eau

4 December 1922 (continued)

Isaac Albéniz	El Albaicín
Franz Liszt	Suraum corda
	Waldesrauschen
	Valse impromptu
	Consolation
Liszt (arr. McPhee)	Rákoczy March

12 December 1922

"Tuesday Nine O'Clock [Concerts] at Jenkins Galleries" Colin McPhee, with J. Campbell-McInness and Reginald Stewart. [Clipping Files, Toronto Public Library]

Johannes Brahms	Love Song, Waltzes

December 1922 [day not known]

Owen Sound Women's Music Club, Knox Church Auditorium [Musical Canada IV/1 (January 1923), p. 14]

Frédéric Chopin	Three Etudes
	Polonaise in A-flat
Maurice Ravel	Jeux d'eau
Colin McPhee	Hymn for a Sunset
Cyril Scott	Danse Nègre
Mendelssohn-Liszt	On Wings of Song
Franz Liszt	Waldesrauschen
Liszt-McPhee	Rákoczy March

4 January 1923

Hart House Theatre (second of three recitals) [UCLA]

Robert Schumann	Fantasie, Op. 17
Claude Debussy	Dr. Gradus ad parnassum
	Reflets dans l'eau
Colin McPhee	Improvisation
	Sea Legend
Franz Liszt	Meine Freuden (Chopin)
	Rhapsody No. 16
Frédéric Chopin	Barcarolle
	Prelude B-flat
	Prelude F-sharp minor
	Polonaise A-flat

4 February 1923

Hart House Theatre ("Fourth Sunday Evening Concert") [Collection of Hart House]

Frédéric Chopin	Etude
	Nocturne
	Scherzo in B Minor
Robert Schumann	Night Piece
	Bird as Prophet
Colin McPhee	Sea Legend
Isaac Albeniz	Malaguena
Maurice Ravel	Jeux d'eau
Franz Liszt	Valse Impromptu
Liszt/McPhee	Rákoczy March

8 March 1923

Hart House Theatre (third of three recitals) [UCLA]

Franz Liszt	Harmonies du soir
	Sonata in B minor
Alexander Scriabin	Satanic Poem
Nikolai Medtner	Fairy Tale
Frederic Chopin	Scherzo, B minor
Isaac Albéniz	Malaguena
Mily Balakirev	Islamey Fantasie

19 November [no year]

"American Women's Club of Toronto/Piano Recital/given by/Colin McPhee/at the home of Mrs. Ralph Connable"

Frédéric Chopin	Fantasie
	2 Etudes
	Valse in D-Flat
	Scherzo in B-Minor
Gabriel Fauré	Impromptu
Robert Schumann	Child Falling Asleep
Franz Liszt	Consolation
	Valse
	Etude in D-Flat
Colin McPhee	Polka

29 March 1924

"Farewell Recital" at Foresters' Hall [UCLA]

Ludwig van Beethoven	Sonata in C-sharp Minor
Franz Schubert	Impromptu
Robert Schumann	Soaring
Frédéric Chopin	Preludes
	Etude in F Minor
	Valse in A Flat
	Ballade in G Minor
Claude Debussy	Reflets dans l'eau
Cyril Scott	Etude
Selim Palmgren	Night in May
Colin McPhee	Three Moods
	1. Prelude
	2. Spring Afternoon
	3. Death Music
Franz Liszt	Valse Oubliée
	Eglogue
	Waldesrauschen
Liszt/McPhee	Rákoczy March

APPENDIX C

Catalogue of the Music of Colin McPhee

PREFATORY NOTE:

This catalogue is arranged chronologically. If, within a given year, the order of composition is not known, the pieces are listed in alphabetical order.

In most cases, only the principal source for dating a work is given. Most work lists for McPhee--including those that he compiled--are filled with errors. For example, McPhee himself confirmed that Reis-47 has misinformation, including one piece that he did not compose: "The Reis material is not very exact, and list[s] one work of mine, entitled Bali, which is an error, for there is not such a piece. In addition, certain scores listed there have long since been destroyed." (Letter, CM to Ruth Watanabe, 28 March 1955. Sibley Music Library.)

ABBREVIATIONS:

ACA-55 "Confidential Report for ACA [American Composers Alliance] Negotiating Committee." April 25 [?1955]. Filled out by McPhee in application for ACA membership.

AMP Associated Music Publishers, New York

CFP C. F. Peters Corporation, New York

NLC National Library of Canada; Ottawa, Canada

NYPL New York Public Library; Music Division of Performing Arts Library

OD Oliver Daniel; Ardsley, New York

Reis-32 Claire Reis, American Composers, 2nd edition. New York: The United States Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, 1932.

Reis-47 Claire Reis. Composers in America: Biographical Sketches of Contemporary Composers with a Record of their Works. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Schwerké-25 Letter, CM to Irving Schwerké, Paris, [20 May 1925]. Schwerké Collection/Library of Congress.

UCLA Music Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Standard abbreviations for instruments (as found in the BMI Symphonic Catalogue) are used.

1912

1. [Piece for Children's Percussion Band with Strings]
ca. 1912
Score lost
Source: Letter, CM to Dr. William Mayer, postmarked 2 September 1942.

Pre-1915

2. Album Leaves pre-1915
Piano
Score lost
Source: Cited in an untitled Toronto newspaper review of the annual concert of the Hambourg Conservatory on 27 May 1915. Clipping at UCLA. (The recital was also covered in Musical Canada, X/3 [July 1915], p. 67.) This piece was not performed on the concert but simply mentioned by the reviewer.

3. Caprices pre-1915
Piano
Score lost
Source: Cited in an untitled Toronto newspaper review of the annual concert of the Hambourg Conservatory on 27 May 1915. Clipping at UCLA. (The recital was also covered in Musical Canada, X/3 [July 1915], p. 67.) This piece was not performed on the concert but simply mentioned by the reviewer.

4. The Robin pre-1915
Voice, piano
Words by Pauline Johnson
Score lost
Source: Cited in an untitled Toronto newspaper review of the annual concert of the Hambourg Conservatory on 27 May 1915. Clipping at UCLA. (The recital was also covered in Musical Canada, X/3 [July 1915], p. 67.) This piece was not performed on the concert but simply mentioned by the reviewer.
Note: This song was part of a group of songs later described by Hector Charlesworth: "[McPhee] was a bright-eyed, fair-haired youngster, and the little pieces he played (one I think had been inspired by the song of a robin) had fresh, ingenuous qualities." ("Colin McPhee's Career," Toronto Globe and Mail, 21 June 1941).

1915

5. Polonaise ?1915
Piano
Score lost
Source: Untitled Toronto newspaper review of the annual concert of the Hambourg Conservatory on 27 May 1915. (The recital was also covered in Musical Canada, X/3 [July 1915], p. 67.) Polonaise was performed on this concert.

1916

6. Four Piano Sketches 1916
Piano
Published: Toronto, Empire Music and Travel Club, 1916 "Water Nymph" was also published in The Canadian Journal of Music II/10 (February 1916), p. 177. Copy at NLC.
Movements:
[No. 1] April
[No. 2] Prelude
[No. 3] Water Nymph
[No. 4] Silhouette

1917

7. Arm Canadians!/March to Glory! 1917
Voice, Piano
Text by Victor Wyldes
"Dedicated to Canada's Heroic Army"
Published: Toronto, Whaley, Royce, & Co., 1917. Copy at NLC.

1919

8. Habanera 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

9. Intermezzo 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

10. Lumière 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

11. La Mère au berceau 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

12. Il Neige 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

13. Prelude 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

14. Regret 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 7 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital

15. Sonata 1919
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 12 May 1919, CM in Peabody student recital
(Only the first movement was performed.)

1920

16. Death March of King Pendragon 1920
Soprano, piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 20 May 1920; Hazel Bornschein, sop; CM, pf; Stieff Hall

17. Le [sic] Mort d'Arthur 1920
"Symphonic Poem for Piano and Orchestra" [CM often referred to this work as his first piano concerto]
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 26 May 1920; CM, pf; Peabody Students' Orchestra; Gustav Strube, cond.

1921

18. Il Danse 1921
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 20 May 1921, CM in Peabody student recital

19. Poème 1921
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 20 May 1921, CM in Peabody student recital

20. Three Songs 1921
"At Night Thy Voice Is Like the Nightingale"
"La Silence de Mnasidika"
"Music, When Soft Voices Die"
Soprano, piano
Scores lost
Source: [Program:] 20 May 1921; CM, pf; Mary Spence, soprano; Peabody student recital

21. Two Hymns for a Sunset 1921
Piano
Score Lost
Source: Undated newspaper clipping at UCLA [Baltimore, April 1920].
Performance: 9 April 1920, CM at piano with "Henri" dancing, Lyric Theatre, Baltimore

22. Two Preludes 1921
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 6 April 1921, CM in Peabody student recital

23. Sonata in E-flat Minor 1921
(in one movement)
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 20 May 1921, CM in Peabody student recital

24. Elegy 1922
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 16 February 1922; CM, solo piano recital; The Canadian Academy of Music, Toronto

25. "Euripides" by Hippolytus [Incidental Music] 1922
Soprano solo, women's chorus, string trio, ob, fl, hp
Score lost
Source: Undated newspaper clipping at UCLA; notice in The Toronto Globe (25 November 1922)
Performance: Hart House Theatre, November 1922

26. Rákoczy March 1922
Arrangement by McPhee of the piece by Franz Liszt
Piano
Score lost
Source: Numerous Toronto programs, beginning with 4 December 1922, for a solo recital by McPhee at the Hart House Theatre

27. Improvisation 1922/1923
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 4 January 1923; CM, pf; Hart House Theatre, Toronto

28. Polonaise in A-flat 1922/1923
Arrangement by McPhee of the piece by Frédéric Chopin
Score lost
Source: No Toronto concert program lists this work. CM cited it in a list of his works included in Schwerké-25.

29. Sea Legend 1922/23
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 4 January 1923; CM, pf; Hart House Theatre, Toronto

30. Polka 1922-1924
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 19 November [no year], American Women's Club of Toronto, at the home of Mrs. Ralph Connable, CM solo recital
Note: This score was written sometime during McPhee's final years in Toronto

1923

31. Piano Concerto No. 2 in B 1923
Piano and Orchestra
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 15 January 1924, New Symphony Orchestra; Luigi von Kunits, cond; CM, pf; Massey Hall, Toronto
Note: Program notes read: "The Concerto No. 2 was commenced in June 1923 and was completed in November of the same year." Listed in Reis-32 and Reis-47 as in manuscript.

32. Ballad of Youth ?1923
Piano
Score lost
Source: "Announcement" for McPhee recital of 8 March 1923, given on the back of [Program:] 4 January 1923, Hart House Theatre, Toronto; the piece is not included on the March program, however. Perhaps it was never completed.

33. The Forsaken Merman 1923 or 1924
Piano; musical accompaniment to a melodrama
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 10 February [no year given; either 1923 or 1924]; Hart House Theatre; CM, pf

1924

34. Three Moods 1924
Piano
Score lost
Movements:
1. Prelude
2. Spring Afternoon
3. Death Music
Source: [Program:] 29 March 1924, CM in solo recital, Foresters' Hall, Toronto

1925

35. Sarabande 1925
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 20 April 1925, recital by Clara Rabinowitch, Salle Erard, Paris
Note: McPhee later dated this work as "1923" when performing it on a program at the Greenwich Village Theatre in New York, 13 March 1927. But since his dating was often incorrect, I have used the first-performance date.

36. Pastorale and Rondino 1925
Subtitle: "Sonatina for two flutes, clarinet, trumpet and and piano"
Score lost
Source: [Program:] 28 November 1926, International Composers' Guild, New York
Note: In ACA-55, McPhee listed both a "Pastorale for 3 w.w. & piano, [performed by] chamber ensemble, [in] Paris 1925" and "Sonatina for 2 fl, cl, trumpet, piano, American [sic] Composers' Guild, New York, 1926." Listed in Reis-32 as in manuscript.

1926

37. String Quartet 1926 or earlier
Score lost
Source: Cited in a list of McPhee's works, given in program notes for a performance of his Pastorale and Rondino by the International Composers' Guild, 28 November 1926.

38. Songs 1926
Soprano and Piano
Score(s) lost
Source: In ACA-55, McPhee listed "songs" [untitled] performed by Jeanne [recte Jane] Bathori in Paris in 1926. Perhaps they included the songs listed as Nos. 42-45 below.

39. Invention 1926
Piano
Published in New Music III/3 (July 1930)
Note: The published score is dated "New York/Aug. 12, 1926." Although no manuscript copies of the Invention exist, there is a photocopy of the published version at UCLA that includes handwritten corrections by CM in red pen.

1927

40. The Man I Love [arrangement] 1927
Arrangement of the song by George Gershwin
Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Piano Recital by CM; Greenwich Village Theatre; 13 March 1927
Note: McPhee played this arrangement several times in the late 1920s. There may never have been a written score.

41. Sarabande 1927
Orchestra
Score lost
Source: The only mention of this work is in Reis-32 and Reis-47, where it is listed as being in manuscript. Perhaps this was confused with the 1925 Sarabande for piano (see No. 35).

1928

42. C'est la bergère Nanette ?1928
Soprano and Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Abbie Mitchell, soprano; CM, pf; Engineering Auditorium, New York, 15 April 1928.
Note: The song was also performed by either Marjorie Nash or Janet Creighton (both names are listed on the program with no indication of who performed which pieces) in a concert at Town Hall, 1 May 1928.

43. Cradle Song ?1928
Soprano and Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Abbie Mitchell, soprano; CM, pf; Engineering Auditorium, New York, 15 April 1928.
Note: The song was also performed by either Marjorie Nash or Janet Creighton (both names are listed on the program with no indication of who performed which pieces) in a concert at Town Hall, 1 May 1928.

44. Petit chaperone rouge ?1928
Soprano and Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Abbie Mitchell, soprano; CM, pf; Engineering Auditorium, New York, 15 April 1928 (not listed on Town-Hall program).

45. Theris ?1928
Soprano and Piano
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Abbie Mitchell, soprano; CM, pf; Engineering Auditorium, New York, 15 April 1928 (not listed on Town-Hall program).

46. Concerto for Piano and Wind Octet 1928
2 fl, ob, cl, bsn, hn, tpt, tbn, pf
"To Jane Belo"
Published: New Music IV/2 (January 1931)
Rental score: AMP
Premiere: The Rochester Little Symphony; Howard Hanson, cond; CM, pf; Eastman School of Music; 22 February 1929
Recording: Grant Johannesen, pf; Carlos Surinach, cond; Columbia ML-5105; released in 1956. Re-released in 1974 as CRI-315.
Note: At its premiere, the work was titled "Concerto for Piano and Seven Wind Instruments." By its second performance by the Chamber Orchestra of Boston on 11 March 1929 (Nicolas Slonimsky, cond; CM, pf), the piece was titled "Concerto for Piano and Eight Wind Instruments." The New Music score is signed "Woodstock, June-October 1928." No manuscript is extant. There are parts at UCLA, together with a sheet of notes and corrections by CM.

1929

47. Sea Shanty Suite 1929
Baritone solo, male chorus, 2 pf, 2 timp
"To Hugh Ross in Friendship"
Movements:
"Lowlands Away"
"Billy Boy"
"Stormalong"
"What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?"
"Tom's Gone to Hilo"
"Fire Down Below"
"Highland Laddie"
Published: New York, Edwin F. Kalmus, 1930. ("Fire Down Below" was not part of the published Suite and is now lost.)
Premiere: Schola Cantorum; Hugh Ross, cond; CM, pf; 13 March 1929
Note: At head of p. 1: "The Melody [sic] collected and Edited by Sir Richard Terry." Tunes from Terry's The Shanty Book (Part I, London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1921) were used in "Lowlands Away," "Billy Boy," "What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor," and "Tom's Gone to Hilo." Although no manuscript copies of the Suite exist, there is a copy of the published version at UCLA that includes handwritten corrections by CM.

1930

48. Kinesis 1930
Piano
Published in New Music III/3 (July 1930)
Note: The published score is dated "9 May 1930." Although no manuscript copies of Kinesis exist, there is a xerox of the published version at UCLA that includes handwritten corrections by CM in red pen.

49. Symphony [No. 1] in One Movement 1930
Score lost
Source: Listed in Reis-32 and Reis-47 as being in manuscript. Although McPhee never mentioned this symphony in any of his correspondence or work lists, it must have existed because when he wrote a symphony for the Louisville Orchestra in 1957 he titled it "Symphony No. 2."

1931

50. H_2O 1931
Orchestra
Score lost
Score to a film by Ralph Steiner
Source: [Program:] Copland-Sessions Concert, 15 March 1931, Broadhurst Theatre, New York; 30 members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Hugh Ross, cond.
Note: There is no score at UCLA. Neither Ralph Steiner nor Hugh Ross has a copy.

51. Mechanical Principles 1931
Orchestra
Score lost
Score to a film by Ralph Steiner
Source: [Program:] Copland-Sessions Concert, 15 March 1931, Broadhurst Theatre, New York; 30 members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Hugh Ross, cond.
Note: There is no score at UCLA. Neither Ralph Steiner nor Hugh Ross has a copy.

1936

52. Revelation of St. John the Divine 1936
Men's chorus, 2 pf, 3 tpt, 2 timp
Commissioned by the League of Composers
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Princeton University Glee Club; James A. Giddings, cond; 27 March [1936]; Waldorf-Astoria, New York

[Revelation of St. John the Divine] continued
Note: Neither the Princeton University Music Library nor the Princeton Glee Club has a score (Letters, Paula Morgan, Librarian, Princeton Music Library, to author, 3 December 1982 and 22 September 1983). Reis-47 says the work is in manuscript.

53. Tabuh-Tabuhan 1936
"Toccata for Orchestra and 2 Pianos"
2 pic, 2 fl, 2 ob, E hn, 2 cl, b cl, 2 bsn, dbl bsn, 4 hn, 3 tpt, 3 tbn, tu, cel, hp, 2 pf, 6 percussionists (cymbals, Balinese cymbals, triangle, sandpaper blocks, bass drum, Balinese gongs, tam-tam, xyl, mrmb, glock, chimes)
Premiere: 4 September 1936; Orquesta Sinfónica de México; Carlos Chávez, cond; Mexico City
Holographs (both in CM's hand; both in collection of OD):
1. "Tabuh-Tabuhan/Toccata for Orchestra on Balinese motifs." Dated at end: "Mexico City, August 19, 1936." Includes red- and blue-crayon marks, presumably made by Leopold Stokowski (as was his custom) for the 1953 performance in New York.
2. "Tabuh-Tabuhan/Toccata for orchestra and 2 pianos." On page 1: "Revised version." Dated at end: "Mexico, June-August 1936." Revision made ca. 1956 for publication by Associated Music Publishers.
Publication: New York, Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1960.
Rental Score: AMP
Recording: Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra; Howard Hanson, cond; Mercury MG-50103; released in 1959. Re-released in 1980 as Mercury SRI-75116.

1939

54. Chorale Prelude "In dulci jubilo" 1939
Arrangement by McPhee of the Buxtehude chorale prelude
2 pianos
Holographs (both in CM's hand; both in collection of OD):
1. "In dulci Jubilo/Dec. 7/39/(7PM-11PM)." Both piano parts are given in score.
2. "Chorale-prelude/"In dulci jubilum"/ Buxtehude/arranged for 2 pianos/by/Colin McPhee." Below the title the words "To Ethel and Rae Robertson" have been erased. Both piano parts are given in the score. No date.
Performance: Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson performed this work on 9 December 1941 in New York (Clipping files, NYPL).

[Chorale Prelude "In dulci jubilo"] continued
Note: At the end of both scores is a 5-bar section titled "Interlude." (The word "Modulation" has been crossed out.) "In dulci jubilo" is in G major; the "Interlude" begins in G minor and ends in C major (first inversion).

1940

55. Incidental Music to "The Emperor Jones" 1940
Hammond organ
Score lost
Source: [Program:] Westport Country Playhouse . . . Presents Paul Robeson in The Emperor Jones; Week beginning August 5, 1940. (McPhee's score was played by Max Marlin.)
Note: McPhee's score was written for a revival of Eugene O'Neill's play of 1920.

56. Incidental Music to "Battle of Angels" 1940
Medium unknown
Score lost
Source: ACA-55. McPhee also mentioned the score in letters to Henry Cowell (9 January 1941, Cowell Collection/NYPL) and Carlos Chávez (1 May [1950], Chávez Collection/Mexico City).
Note: McPhee's score was written for an early play by Tennessee Williams, staged in Boston in December 1940. The play was a flop.

1941

57. Ciacona [sic] ?1941
Arrangement by McPhee of a Buxtehude Ciaccona in G major
2 pianos
Holograph (in CM's hand; in collection of OD):
"Ciacona/Buxtehude/arranged for 2 pianos/Colin McPhee/Edition Breitkopf & Härtel/(Spitta-Seiffert). No date. Both piano parts are in score.
Performance: Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson performed this work on 9 December 1941 in New York (Clipping files, NYPL).
Note: The layout of this score is much like that of the second holograph of "In dulci jubilo." In a letter to Elizabeth Mayer (20 August [1941], McPhee wrote, "I suppose I must finish the Buxtehude piece after all." He does not give the title of the piece he is working on.

58. Nun komm, der heiden Heiland ?1941
Arrangement by McPhee of the Buxtehude chorale prelude
2 pianos
Holographs (both in CM's hand; both in collection of OD):
1. "Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland," no date. Both piano parts in score. In G minor, with indication at beginning "Semi-tone higher."
2. "Choral Prelude/Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland/ Buxtehude/Arr./Colin McPhee/2nd piano," no date. Piano 2 only. In G-sharp minor.
Performance: Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson performed this work on 9 December 1941 in New York (Clipping files, NYPL).
Note: In a letter to Elizabeth Mayer (20 August [1941], McPhee wrote, "I suppose I must finish the Buxtehude piece after all." He does not give the title of the piece he is working on.

1942

59. Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge [Jinx] 1942
Arrangement by McPhee of Benjamin Britten's Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge
2 pianos
Holograph: In CM's hand, as part of the Britten Collection in the Red House, Aldeburgh, England. At head of p. 1: "Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge/Britten-McPhee." Date at end: "Feb-March/1942."
Note: The score was used as accompaniment to a ballet titled Jinx, staged by Eugene Loring and his Dance Players, with choreography by Lew Christensen, in New York in April 1942. On 24 March 1942, Elizabeth Mayer wrote Benjamin Britten that "[Colin] has finished the 2 piano arrangement of the Variations." (Letter in collection of Beata Sauerlander.)

1943

60. [Boogie-Woogie] 1943.
2 pianos
Score lost
Source: McPhee mentioned writing a "boogie-woogie" in letters to Chávez (14 June [1943]) and Copland (23 August [1943]). It is not known whether he ever completed the piece.

1944/1945

61. Iroquois Dances 1944/1945
2 fl, 2 ob, 2 cl, 2 bsn, 4 hn, 2 tpt, timp, maracas, tom-tom, strings
"To Sidney Cowell"

[Iroquois Dances] continued
Commissioned by the Instituto Indigenista Inter-Americano of Mexico City
Published: New Music XVIII/4 (July 1945)
Movements:
1. "Corn Dance"
2. "Eagle Dance"
3. "Scalping Dance"
4. "Medicine Dance"

Note: No holograph is extant. The parts are at UCLA. In an introduction to the score McPhee states: "The Four Iroquois Dances were written at the request of the Instituto Indigenista Inter-americano of Mexico City for broadcast to Latin-America." In ACA-55 McPhee lists, under "Compositions Performed": "Four Iroquois Dances"/Student Orchestra for broadcast/ Washington D.C. 1945." McPhee mentions the recording in letters to Sidney Cowell (22 October [1945] and 2 January [1946]) and says that the recording was made by Charles Seeger; apparently McPhee never received a copy. I have been unable to locate one. Later McPhee renounced the pieces entirely: "When notified by Mr. Cowell and Mr. Usachevsky of the taking over of the N[ew] M[usic] catalogue, I wrote them at once informing them I wished to withdraw the Iroquois Dances entirely, as I was not pleased with them. (Letter, CM to Nicolas J. Elsier, Jr., 16 August 1962). In an undated typescript resumé, now at UCLA, CM also listed "Iroquois Ecologue," the piece is also cited in Reis-47 as being in manuscript.

1948

62. Broken Arrow 1948
Orchestra (exact instrumentation unknown)
Score lost
Performance: CBS radio; 22 May 1948

Note: CM's score was written for a radio documentary about the plight of American Indians; it was titled "Arrows in the Dust. Sig Mickelson was the producer; Dr. Philip Eisenberg the co-producer. The show originated in Minneapolis. CBS no longer has a transcript of the show.

1954

63. Transitions 1954
Pic, 2 fl, 2 ob, E hn, 2 cl, bsn, 4 hn, 3 tpt, 3 tbn, tb, timp, pf, strings, 2 percussionists (cymbal, glock)
Commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress
"Dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky"
Holograph: There are four reproductions of the complete holograph at UCLA. The reproductions have different titles and some have pencil corrections, as noted below:
1. Title page: "Symphonic Transitions/for orchestra/by Colin McPhee." (Title is typed and pasted on.) At head of p. 1: "Transitions" (pasted on). This score includes a few pencil corrections by CM.
2. Title page: "Transitions/for/orchestra." (Title in longhand; pasted on.) At head of p. 1: "Transitions." "1954" added in ink beneath CM's name. Includes a few pencil corrections by CM.
3. Title page: "Transitions/for Orchestra" (longhand; pasted in). At head of p. 1: "Transitions." Title page has "1st score" added in pencil. No pencil corrections.
4. Title page: "Atlantis/for orchestra" (longhand; not a paste-over). At head of p. 1: "Atlantis." Date at end: "Dec 6 1954."
At UCLA there are also a piano score in CM's hand, transparencies of pages 69 and 72, and typed corrections for the parts.
Rental score: AMP
Premiere: Vancouver Symphony; Irwin Hoffman, cond; 20 March 1955. The concert was broadcast throughout Canada.

1957

64. Air Skills 1957
Pic, fl, hn, pf, glock, timp, gong, triangle
Holograph: Full score at UCLA in CM's hand. "U.N. Film/Air Skills/18m." At head of p. 1: "Music for U.N. Film/on/Aviation in the East/Colin McPhee." At end: "New York, Feb 12-March 20 [no year]." Parts are also at UCLA.
Note: Score was for a United Nations film.

65. Blue Vanguard 1957
Pic, 2 fl, ob, cl, bsn, 2 hn, tpt, tbn, glock, timp, pf, strings
Holograph: Full score at UCLA in CM's hand in ink transparencies and a reproduction. "Music for the Film, Blue Vanguard." At end: "Aug 10-Sept 17/1957."
Note: The Blue Vanguard was produced for the United Nations by the National Film Board of Canada. Carlos Surinach was the conductor. The film was a 55-minute documentary about the Suez Canal crisis. (Information about the film comes from a letter by Marion Meadows, National Film Board of Canada, to author, 8 November 1982.)

66. In Our Hands ?1957
Fl, ob, hn, tpt, tbn, pf, triangle, glock, timp
Holograph: Transparencies in CM's hand at UCLA; also reproduction of full score and parts. No title page.
Note: From cues in the score, it is apparent that this was also written to accompany a film. The score is not dated, however, and no other documentary evidence is known.

67. Symphony No. 2 1957
2 fl, 2 ob, 2 cl, 2 bsn, 4 hn, 2 tpt, 3 tbn, tu, timp, glock, mrmba, pf, hp, strings
Commissioned by the Louisville Orchestra
Holograph: There are four reproductions of the complete holograph at UCLA. One has added material on the title page: "Symphony No. 2/(Pastorale)/ Commissioned by/The Louisville Orchestra/To OLIVER DANIEL." Dated at end: "December 15, 1957."
Rental score: AMP
Premiere: Louisville Orchestra; Robert Whitney, cond; 15 January 1958; Louisville, Kentucky
Recording: Louisville Orchestra; Robert Whitney, cond; LOU-59-2; released in 1960.

68. Concerto for Piano with Wind Octette Accompaniment 1928/1957
2 pianos
Published: AMP, 1957
Note: At head of p. 1: "Reduction of the Wind Octette by the composer." McPhee also published a piano reduction of the wind parts in the New Music score of 1931. No holograph exists. One published version at UCLA has a few changes indicated by CM.

1958

69. Nocturne for Chamber Orchestra 1958
Fl, ob, cl, bsn, xyl, glock, triangle, tambourine, gong, cel, pf, strings
Commissioned by the Contemporary Music Society
Holograph: Reproduction of holograph at UCLA (both full score and incomplete set of parts). "Nocturne/ for Chamber Orchestra/by/Collin [sic] McPhee." At end: "New York, Nov. 11, 1958."
Rental score: CFP
Premiere: Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra, 3 December 1958, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Recording: Hessian Radio Symphony; David Van Vactor, cond; CRI-219; released in 1968

1960

70. Concerto for Wind Orchestra 1960
4 pic, 3 fl, 3 ob, 3 cl, 2 bsn, cb, 4 hn, 3 tpt, 3 tbn, triangle, timp, hp, pf, cb
Commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver M. Kaufmann for Robert Boudreau's American Wind Symphony
Holograph: 2 reproductions at UCLA. At end: "New York City/June 9/1960."
Published: CFP [1962]. Pocket score, reduced from CM holograph. In a letter to CM, Walter Hinrichsen of C. F. Peters said the score was to be out "by or before the end of November 1962." (Letter, 2 November 1962)
Rental score: CFP
Premiere: Robert Boudreau's American Wind Symphony, July 1960, Pittsburgh

Post-1960

71. Symphony No. 3 [never completed]
Orchestra
Commission by Broadcast Music, Inc. for its 20th anniversary
Note: CM was offered the commission in a letter from Carl Haverlin, 3 June 1960. He never completed the work.

[Out of the Depths and Magnificat 1962]
SATB, org

Note: These two manuscripts are part of the McPhee Collection at UCLA. Neither is signed by him nor bears any resemblance to his compositional style. Neither is in his hand. And neither is mentioned in any of his correspondence from the period. In short, these works are most likely not by McPhee. One is signed "8/2/62--Pacific Palisades', the other "8/6/62--Pacific Palisades." McPhee was in residence at the Huntington Hartford in Pacific Palisades that summer; perhaps these scores were given to him by a colleague there.

APPENDIX D

Gamelan Transcriptions for Western Instruments by Colin McPhee: A Preliminary Inventory

PREFATORY NOTE:

This inventory is arranged alphabetically. Tune names beginning with the words "Lagu" (meaning "melody" or "tune") or "Gamelan" (meaning "percussion orchestra") are alphabetized under the second word of the title. McPhee's spellings of titles--many of which follow the Dutch method of the 1930s--are retained as found in the manuscripts. Numberings continue from those in the catalogue of McPhee's music (Appendix C).

ABBREVIATIONS:

McPhee gave at least five recitals of transcriptions during the 1930s and recorded a group of transcriptions for the Schirmer label in 1941. The recitals and transcriptions are abbreviated in the catalogue as follows:

NY — Cosmopolitan Club, New York City, 6 November 1935; CM and Marc Blitzstein, pianos. UCLA.

MC — Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City, August 1936; CM and Eduardo Hernandez Moncada, pianos. Chávez Collection, Mexico City.

Bali-A — Bali-Congress/Java-Instituut [Location and date not given on program]. [October 1937] CM and Walter Spies, pianos. UCLA.

Bali-B — Bali-Congress/Java-Instituut [Location and date not given on program; different from Bali-A]. [October 1937] CM and Walter Spies, pianos. UCLA.

Bali-C — "Program of Balinese Music," [no date or location; perhaps this was the program at the Harmony Club in Den Pasar, mentioned by CM in A House in Bali, pp. 222-23; performers are not cited, but presumably they were CM and Spies]. UCLA.

Schirmer-17 — "The Music of Bali," Schirmer's Library of Recorded Music, Set No. 17, released in 1941. CM and Benjamin Britten, pianos; Georges Barrère, flute

Other abbreviations:

MB — Music in Bali by Colin McPhee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

NYPL — New York Public Library; Music Division of Performing Arts Library

UCLA — University of California at Los Angeles; Music Library and Ethnomusicology Archive

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72. Angar Angolar n.d.
Solo piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Note: The title is unclear on the manuscript

73. [Bandjoewangian] Lagoe Bandjoewangian (Angkloeng) [1931-1937]
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Performances: Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

74. Bapang [1931-1937]
2 pianos
Source: CM holograh NYPL
Performances: Bali-B, Bali-C

75. Barong n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph NYPL

76. Batél [1931-1937]
2 pianos
Score not located
Performance: Bali-A
MB: Example 218 or 251

77. Bima Krohda. Gender Wayang n.d.
Solo piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA

78. [Délem] Lagu Délem--Music from the Balinese Shadow Play
1935/1941/late 1950s
Solo Piano
Sources:
(1) CM holograph UCLA. Signed at top: "Transcribed by Colin McPhee." Dated at end: "Transcribed, Bali, 1935."
(2) CM holograph UCLA. Signed at top: "Transcribed by Colin McPhee." Dated at end: "Bali, 1935." This is a fuller version than the preceding: many octave doublings in left hand; performance indications are written out rather than abbreviated.
(3) CM holograph UCLA. Dated: "Amityville . . June 9 -41"
(4) CM holograph UCLA. Dated, "Bali 1934." Reworked in 1950s or 60s.
Recording: Sylvia Marlowe (harpsichord), Decca DL-10001/ DL-710001; released in 1959
MB: Examples 219-220

79. [Délem] Lagu Délem [1956 or 1962]
2 Pianos
Sources: (1) CM holograph UCLA. This probably dates from 1956 or '62. Copies of it are in a folder labeled "Cameo Music Productions" and addressed to CM at Huntington Hartford (where he was in residence in 1956 and 1962).
(2) CM holograph UCLA. No date. Differs from preceding: opens with both pianos. This score matches the first part of the Schirmer recording but lacks an ornamented reprise (as the recording and the score above have).
Performances: NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C
Recording: Schirmer-17

80. Doerga [1931-1937]
2 pianos
Score not located
Performances: Bali-B, Bali-C

81. Gabor [1931-1935]
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Performances: NY, MC

82. Gambangan 1934
2 pianos
"For Margaret Mead"
Source: Published in Balinese Ceremonial Music (NY: G. Schirmer, 1940)
Dated at end: "Bali, 1934"
Performances (McPhee performed three different versions of "Gambangan" on each of the programs listed here): NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C
Recordings: Schirmer-17; Douglas Young and Peter Hill, Cameo Classics GOCLP9018, released in 1982
Note: UCLA copy has a cello part added in pencil.

Gambangan (see also No. 114)

83. Ganderangan--Klandis. Pedjogedan n.d.
Solo piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA
MB: Examples 172, 174-180

84. Garoeda [1931-1937]
2 pianos
Score not located
Performances: Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

85. [Gendér Wayang] Music of the Balinese Gendér Wayang
1932-38/1962
Gender Wayang Ensemble
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Dated on Cover: "Transcribed by Colin McPhee, 1932-28/ Copyright, 1962"
Note: Although this transcription is not for Western instruments, it is included here because it is the only full-length reconstruction of a Balinese musical event made by McPhee (58 pp.)

86. [Jaran Sirig] Djaran Sirig . . . (Selat) 1937
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Dated on cover page: "March 18 -37"
MB: Example 248
Performances (the following may have been performances of this piece or the one that follows): Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

87. [Jaran Sirig] Djaran Sirig n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Note: Different piece than preceding

88. Kambing Slem 1935
Flute and Piano
Sources (2 CM holographs at UCLA):
(1) Flute part only (written out twice). It is part of a group of pieces titled, "2 Balinese flute melodies/transcribed for modern flute and piano/Colin McPhee."
(2) Flute and piano score. Date at end: "Bali--1935."
Recording: Schirmer-17
Note: In a Voice of America series done during the 1950s, McPhee described this piece as a "popular flute tune played without accompaniment. . . . I composed a piano accompaniment to set [it] in relief."

89. Kochapi Mas 1955
Solo piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA (negative)
Dated: "October 12, 1955"

90. [Luang] Gamelan Gending Luang n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA

91. Merak Ngilo [1931-1937]
2 pianos
No score located
Performance: Bali-A

92. Mésem [1931-1937]
2 pianos
No score located
Performance: Bali-A

93. Pemoengkah 1934/[1956 or 1962]
2 Pianos
"For Margaret Mead"
Sources: (1) Published in Balinese Ceremonial Music (NY: G. Schirmer, 1940). Date at end: "Bali, 1934"
(2) CM holograph UCLA. This is different from the published version and probably dates from 1956 or '62. A copy is in a folder labeled "Cameo Music Productions" and addressed to CM at Huntington Hartford (where he was in residence in 1956 and 1962).
MB: Examples 181-212
Performances: NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C
Recordings: Schirmer-17; Douglas Young and Peter Hill, Cameo Classics GOCLP9018, released in 1982
Note: (1) One copy of the published score at UCLA has pencil markings for solo performance; a second has celesta and cello parts added in pencil.
(2) The performances and recording were made of the score that was eventually published.

94. Pemoengkah--Samban (Oeboed) 1937
Sketch [solo piano?]
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Dated at beginning: "July 9 -37"

95. Pemoengkah 13. Gen[der] Wajang. Koeta n.d.
Sketch [solo piano?]
Source: CM holograph UCLA

Pemoengkah (see also No. 114)

96. Pemungkah Angklung n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Note: Different from preceding transcriptions

97. [Pengechét Bérong] Gamelan Angkloeng--Bérong, pengechét
n.d.
2 Pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
MB: Examples 244-46

98. . . . Pengipoek. Klandis . . . Djobok n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
MB: Examples 130-36; 138

99. Rébong [1931-1935]/[1956 or 1962]
2 pianos
Sources: (1) CM holograph UCLA, no date.
(2) CM holograph UCLA. This is a revision from 1956 or '62, since, like Pemungkah, it is in a folder labeled "Cameo Music Productions" and addressed to CM at Huntington Hartford (where he was in residence in 1956 and 1962).
MB: Examples 221-23
Performances: Bali-A, Bali-C; Bali-B (lists CM as soloist)
Recording: Schirmer-17

100. Seduk Maru n.d.
2 pianos
Source: copyist score UCLA
MB: Example 120

101. Sekar Ginotan n.d.
Solo Piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA
MB: Examples 296-299; 302-304

102. Sekar Ginotan [1931-1935]
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph (and negative) UCLA [untitled]
Performances: NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

103. Selendero. Genderwajang. Koeta [1931-1937]
Piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Performance: Bali-C (2-piano version)
Note: This appears to be Piano I of a 2-piano score. It is a loose manuscript, shelved together with a gamelan transcription of "Selendero" signed at end: "From I Lotring, Koeta, at Sajan, Bali/ Sept. 21-23/33"

104. Selunding Bali 1945
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Signed and dated at end: "Sept 14 -45"

105. [Sesoelingan Ardja] Lagoe Sesoelingan Ardja 1936
Flute and Piano
Sources: (1) CM holograph UCLA. Date at end: "Arranged Feb 3, 1936/New York." Score of both flute and piano.
(2) CM holograph UCLA. Part of: "2 Balinese flute melodies/transcribed for modern flute and piano/Colin McPhee." Only flute part is given; it is written out twice.
Recording: Schirmer-17
Note: In a Voice of America series done during the 1950s, McPhee described this piece as a "popular flute tune played without accompaniment. . . . I composed a piano accompaniment to set [it] in relief."

106. Sumbambang Djawa n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph NYPL

107. Taboeh Teloe [1937-1938]
2 pianos
"For Margaret Mead"
Source: Published in Balinese Ceremonial Music (NY: G. Schirmer, 1940)
Dated at end: "Bali, June, 1938"
MB: Examples 7, 320, and 348
Performances: Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C
Recordings: Schirmer-17; Douglas Young and Peter Hill, Cameo Classics GOCLP9018, released in 1982
Note: (1) At least two of the performances listed here took place in 1937. Either an earlier version of Taboe Teloe was heard on them or McPhee's date on the manuscript is incorrect. (2) UCLA copy has no performance indications penciled in (as it does for the other two movements of BCM).

108. [Tangis] Lagoe Tangis deh Angkloeng Bandjaroema 1937
2 pianos
Sources: (1) CM holograph UCLA. Dated: "Sept. 17 / 37."
(2) CM holograph UCLA, no date. Appears to be an earlier version of preceding; largely the same through m. 39 (although this copy lacks a few accents and other details); then trails off into sketches for concluding section.
Performances: Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

109. [Tjandang] [Lagoe Tjandang] [1931-1935]
2 Pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Performances: NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C
Note: The second-piano part is found first in McPhee's notebook (titled); the first-piano follows (untitled)

110. [Tjoepak] Lagoe Tjoepak [1931-1935]
2 Pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Performances: NY, MC, Bali-A, Bali-B, Bali-C

111. [Tjoepak] Lagoe Tjoepak (Batel) 1933
Solo Piano
Source: CM holograph UCLA
Dated: Nov. 11--1933

112. Wargasari n.d.
2 pianos
Source: CM holograph UCLA

* * *

Following is a special set of transcriptions, orchestrated by McPhee in 1946.

113. [Suite of Gamelan Transcriptions] [1946]
3 pf, glock, xyl, cel, 4 vcl, 2 cb
Sources: Some full-score holographs at UCLA (as itemized below); also copyist's (unnamed) parts at UCLA (as itemized below)
Premiere: "Babar Layar," "Gending Luang," and "Suduk Maru" were performed at a Ballet Society concert on 13 and 14 January 1947, with choreography by George Balanchine. The three dancers were Javanese. [Program at UCLA]

[Suite of Gamelan Transcriptions] continued
Movements (as itemized below):
No. 1: Babar Layar
No. 2: Gending Luang
No. 3: Seduk Maru
No. 4: Gambangan
No. 5: Pemungkah
No. 6: Repeat of Babar Layar
Note: The first three transcriptions are of Javanese court dances; the last two are Balinese

No. 1: Babar Layar
3 pf, glock, xyl, cel, 4 vcl, 2 cb
Sources: Full Score (CM holograph)
Copyist Parts:
Piano I/II/III, celesta (played by piano I in second section only), cello, bass, glockenspiel [no xylophone]

No. 2: Gending Luang
3 pf, 4 vcl, 2 cb
Sources: Full Score (CM holograph)
CM Holograph Parts: piano III, cello, bass
Copyist Parts: piano I/II

No. 3: Seduk Maru
3 pf, 4 vcl, 2 cb
Sources: No Full Score
CM Holograph Parts: piano III, bass, cello
Copyist Parts:
Piano I/II (on same score), Piano II (also separate score)

No. 4: Gambangan
3 pf, cel, 4 vcl, 2 cb
Sources: No Full Score
CM Holograph Parts: piano III, bass, celesta
No Copyist Parts
Note: Presumably, the published 2-piano score for "Gambangan" from Balinese Ceremonial Music was used here; the copy at UCLA has a cello part added in pencil.

No. 5: Pemungkah
3 pf, cel, 4 vcl, (no bass)
Sources: No Full Score
CM Holograph Parts: piano III, cello, celesta
No Copyist Parts
Note: Again, as with "Gambangan," the 2-piano score for "Pemungkah" from Balinese Ceremonial Music was probably used here.

No. 6: Babar Layar

No score: On cover sheets for the cello, bass, and celesta parts of "Babar Layar," McPhee lists the contents of the entire suite. For No. 6, he simply indicates "Repeat #1."

APPENDIX E

Writings of Colin McPhee

(Several of McPhee's articles were reprinted in Jane Belo's Traditional Balinese Culture [New York: Columbia University Press 1970]. The book is abbreviated here as TBC.)

"The Absolute Music of Bali," Modern Music XII/4 (May/June 1935), 163-69.

"An American Composer in Bali." Unpublished 5-part script for a Voice of America radio show, ca. 1958.

"Angkloeng Gamelans in Bali," Djåwå XVII (1937), 322-350.

"The Balinese Wajang Koelit and its Music," Djåwå XVI/1 (1936), 1-50; reprint, TBC.

"A Child's ABC of Theology," The Hue and Cry [Woodstock, NY] VI/8 (17 August 1928), 3.

"Children and Music in Bali," Djåwå XVIII/6 (December 1938), 309-23; reprint, TBC.

"Clinic in the South Seas [Review of The People of Alor by Cora Du Bois]," New York Times Books Review (17 September 1944).

A Club of Small Men. New York: The John Day Company, 1948.

"The Commission." Libretto to a symphonic canata with music by Henry Cowell (for 4 vocal soloists and orchestra). Commissioned by the League of Composers. Cowell score was completed in 1954. (Manuscript at Library of Congress.)

"Dance in Bali," Dance Index VII/7-8 (1948), 156-207; reprint, TBC.

"Decline of the East," Modern Music XVI/3 (1939), 160-67.

"Eight to the Bar," Modern Music XX/4 (May-June 1943), 235-42.

The Exotic Sounds of Bali [Liner Notes]. Columbia MS-6445; released in 1963.

"Figuration in Balinese Music," Peabody Bulletin XXXVI/2 (May 1940), 23-26.

"The Five-Tone Gamelan Music of Bali," The Musical Quarterly XXXV/2 (April 1949), 250-81.

[Four Caricatures], Peabody Bulletin XVII/2 (Spring 1921), 8-9.

"Gourmet in Bali," Harper's Bazaar (November 1949), 200-201, 203.

"The Green Earth Scorched," Modern Music XIX/3 (March-April 1942), 163-66.

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"A Musician Listens to Balinese Music," Djawa XVIII/1-2 (Jan-April), 50-62.

"Orage [A Poem]," Canadian Magazine LXII (December 1923), 148.

"Report on Bali's Music," The New York Times (5 March 1939).

"Scores and Records," Modern Music XVI-XXII (1939-1945).

"Shadows in Bali," Mademoiselle (October 1946), 190-91, 306-308.

"The Sounds of Bali," Hi-Fi-Review (December 1958), 26-30.

"They Live the Dance: The Balinese Who Appear Here this Month for the First Time Bring a Unique Art Form," New York Times Magazine (7 September 1952), 24-25.

"The Torrid Zone" [signed "Mercure"], Modern Music XX-XXIII (1943-1946).

"Visitors from Bali," New York Times (31 August 1952).

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American Composers Alliance. New York, New York. Letters, membership documents.

Archivo General de la Nacion, Mexico City. Carlos Chávez Papers. Letters, clippings, programs.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. New Haven, Connecticut. Letters of Carl Van Vechten.

Cook, Mercer. Silver Springs, Maryland. Programs of Abbie Mitchell.

Copland, Aaron. Peekskill, New York. Letters.

Daniel, Oliver. Ardsley, New York. Scores, letters, clippings, programs.

Eames, Marian. London, England. Letters.

Hart House, University of Toronto. Toronto, Canada. Programs, business records.

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George Biddle Collection. Letters, scrapbooks, clippings.
Margaret Mead Collection. Includes papers of Margaret Mead and Jane Belo. Letters, photographs, films.

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