

Episode 07: Getting the Song Out with Matthew Fava (Part 2) - Transcript

Elizabeth McDonald:

Hello everyone and welcome to the GETTING THE SONG OUT podcast! We are WOMEN ON THE VERGE

I'm Elizabeth!

Emily Martin:

I'm Emily!

Kathryn Tremills:

I'm Kathryn!

During COVID-19 we realized that we needed to keep the art song world at the forefront of the conversation. We had been talking about this project for a long time and Quarantine was the perfect time to connect with new and old friends across the country - incredible Canadian female composers ...

Kathryn Tremills

Today is the second part of our interview with Matthew Fava - Director of the Ontario Region of the Canadian Music Centre, recorded back in July 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 shut down in Ontario. We've just heard an excerpt of "Lady Bird" from *Bess* by Pursuit Grooves. Pursuit is a past participant in the CMC's "Mistress Class" workshop, one of the ways that Matthew is working along with other regional directors to make the CMC a more inclusive place. Here is where we left off.

Matthew Fava:

We need to start asking whether we are the ones to tell that story. And in a lot of cases, we're not, we're not the right people to tell that story. And we're also not the right people to be paid through public funding to tell those stories.

Emily Martin:

Yes, I think this is all really spot on. And this is the visible work that you're talking about, and I know we've already sort of touched on the visible and the invisible work that you're doing, that the CMC is doing possibly other people are doing, but can you maybe elaborate a little bit more on what that visible and invisible work you want to see in Canadian, classical Western European music going forward?

Matthew Fava:

Sure, because I think you can shape this and understand that visible, invisible in a lot of ways, and I don't want to ignore the various work that can be invisible because there are a lot, there's

lots of invisible work that I - I'm not again aware of. But there has been a segment of the work that I've connected with that I can appreciate more now than I would have when I was just an audience member - and I don't want to say just an audience member, but the fact that I was a young person listening to music and not necessarily thinking about what shaped that music, what contributed to that music. But the visible and the invisible... Do you mind if I tell another story about my failings, because this is another point of "Oh my mind is being - my perception of the world is being challenged."

Maybe a couple of years after I started working at the radio station, I started playing in a band for the first time. So previously I had played violin. I was just this nerdy kid who would play violin in these different string groups. And I really loved rock music and progressive rock music. And then in my early to mid twenties, I started playing in a band and we were a power trio. So, you know, all of my thinking about bands like Rush and Tortoise and Mogwai, oh, this is now my opportunity to compose music like them - quite lofty thinking for me at that time. But yeah I was in this group and we were going to play this house show that was a fundraiser for a local community newsletter that we really cared about, and we went to the house, we were on a bill with our friend Ali The Son of Abdul, Hip hop artist who has changed his sobriquet since then and other artists.

But we're just like, yeah, this is great. And the person who I was dating at the time was going to come to the show. I'm like, Oh wow, it's going to be great. I'm going to get to see them and we're going to hang out and they'll get to see me do this thing. I feel like this is a really fun night. And so we played our set, Ali played his set, the other artists played their set, and then I was hanging out with the person I was dating afterwards. And she said to me, Oh, you know, a friend of mine came, but she didn't want to stay very long. She felt it was a really weird vibe. And I said, Oh, what was weird? She's like, well, you know, it was only guys playing. The girls were at the bar and working the door. It was, it was really weird. And I remember like, again, that high that I had felt about, Oh, we're playing this show. Didn't we play a good set? Wasn't that awesome, and then it took this person I was dating to point out to me there were all of these hostilities embedded, implied in the way that the event ran, and it forced me to consider quite a few things differently. It forced me to remember other stories from my life as a broadcaster from my life as a musician, and this is really important here. So this is just like the kind of main point. And we can dig into other things, but visible and invisible work in our industry, there has been a lot of work, the visible work that has been monopolized by men. And even when there have been some women on stage, a lot of power and a lot of positions of power that are brokered within the performance on the stage have been monopolized by men.

And that does matter to the people who come to the show. So thinking about this, this friend of the person I was dating, who came to the show, looked around and said, Nope, this isn't my scene and left. So how many times does that play out in other settings? So there's that question of who is -

Elizabeth McDonald:

We work in academia, so it's playing out, we're in the play.

Matthew Fava:

Yeah. I kind of brought up some statistics. I don't mind just highlighting very briefly. This is from an OAC report that came out a couple of years ago around gender in the arts. And it kind of sets a strict binary, but they were looking at, in the category of conductors, composers and arrangers, the split between male and female and 65% male, 35% female. Does that number surprise us if you look at repertoire that is on the syllabus -

Emily Martin:

It's actually higher than I thought it would be.

Matthew Fava:

Well, yeah, it actually is higher than the percentage within the CMC membership of associate composer members. Which again is an interesting reflection on the CMC. How accurately do we reflect? Do we reflect this community? Do we reflect it as accurately as we think? Are we connecting it with it as honestly as we think? But -

Elizabeth McDonald:

Well it's also about how we define this community. Right, because you mentioned the binary, you know, male-females. So are we defining the community in a broader context, right? And that idea of how we define diversity and inclusion anyway, I digress, continue.

Matthew Fava:

Oh no, it's right on point. And I think, I think when we connect again with the visible and the invisible, it depends on who the subject is determining visible and invisible. Right? And so for some of us, you know, for me now I've been privy to more of what was invisible to me before more of what I missed when I was occupying a concert hall or when I picked up a recording, you know, what could I see and hear and what didn't see and hear. And so one of the important things that emerged for me in the work that I've taken on through the CMC and - you know, through a lot of this, I know that I've been using I, and I've been referring to me and I think that it's an incredible disservice to the broader we, because I've worked alongside some phenomenal artists through all of the programming that I've been involved in. So I might, I might use this opportunity to bring up certain names as well.

But when I was participating with the organizers of the Toronto creative music lab in the four year program that ran from 2016 to 2019, we put on a concert every year, we put on a concert that was open to the public. But from the very beginning, we had a lot of uncertainty about that because the concert wasn't the important part. So a lot of funders want there to be that connection to the public, and I don't want to dismiss concerts at all. But when we, as organizers

at that point in the early year, it was William Callaghan, Anastasia Turnakova, Olivia Short, Jason Dole myself. When we were talking about the concert, we recognized that it was for us a bit of a distraction because the real interrogation that we had was into the collaborative process, how do people meet? What do they learn about each other? What do they bring to the room when they're working on a piece of music? How do they negotiate the refinement or the development, the execution, that piece, the realization of that piece? How are people feeling connected and inspired in that moment? How do people feel disconnected, disengaged, upset by that experience? Are there ways to reconcile or rehabilitate that, that experience? And so the work that became important to us was thinking through relationship building. It wasn't that the music was the most important thing. It's the relationship building. That was the most important thing. And we felt very strongly that if we could build meaningful relationships between the musicians, if a variety of musicians who have a variety of experiences, learning and performing felt welcome in a space, if those people felt that they could bring their whole selves, that they weren't expected to engage as some kind of machine that could, because they are virtuosi, they could enter that space, not only with their skills as interpreters, as performers, but that they could bring their skills as a parent, they could bring their skills as someone who knits, as someone who bakes, you know, like how can we start to value the entirety of a human person and not reduce them to their instrument or to their function within, again, that, that Western European model of chamber music creation.

How do we say that, yes, a composer might make these decisions, but that those decisions can be informed intimately by their understanding of the people they're working with. That those compositional choices can leave more space for considerations in the rehearsal setting, that we can buy more time for those conversations. And so the Toronto creative music lab, which extended again for a second, third and fourth year, it grew quite a lot from that ethos that we want it to consider relationship building. And that if the relationships were important, we could care less like who the fuck cares, whether you're working with a 12 tone row, or whether you really love minimalism or wether - well, sorry, that's not the first consideration. I do care about what decisions you make artistically, but that's not the first thing I care about. Like make the art that you want to make, but make it in a way that you are going to, if you're making a decision to work collaboratively, make it in a way that is going to be collaborative and think differently about that process.

Elizabeth McDonald:

I feel like that's the whole concept of telling the stories that are relevant to now, and, you know, that idea of why are we continuing to tell a very select story that keeps being perpetuated over this you know, our Western European art music and not to always bring it back to us. But that was our challenge as female musicians that were no longer 20. And we had children and husbands and very complicated lives and getting tired of singing about mignon, the 16-year-old virgin that's been stolen and was in the circus and still wanting to tell that story. But I don't, I don't identify with being the 16-year-old virgin anymore. Right?

Matthew Fava:

Right.

Emily Martin:

I like how you're like "anymore." At some point you just -

Elizabeth McDonald:

At one point I did, okay? But that idea of how we represent who we are on stage? And I think that's the challenge now too, for all of us, as we're coming with this reckoning, looking at our students and looking at this idea of diversity of students and not just like the first thing is recognizing the diversity, because I will admit that I didn't recognize it before in that sense, in that broader context and not recognize it within the structure that we're sort of bound to in academia. But then finding that next way, how do we engage with that person in front of us? And who are they? And where do they come from and what do they have to say, and what do they want to talk about?

Emily Martin:

Well, and also to educate the ones that don't understand that either, right? So if I'm finding it, what do I say to my students? So they understand how to do that with their colleagues, this idea of collaboration, right. And I barely understand it. So how do I teach it?

Matthew Fava:

And I think another important thing that comes up around these less visible, maybe I should use that phrasing instead of invisible, less visible or visible to certain people. But, you know, there are these really small things that we can do that matter quite a lot. And I think they get, this gets talked about, I feel like this lesson can be learned just through the means that get circulated, but if you're in a group setting and there's a dude and it's often a dude, and it's very often is a white dude who interrupts other people - in particular interrupts women, isn't listening and starts to just express whatever random idea that is disconnected from what that last person was trying to say. If you see that happen, if you see that person, that dude interrupting women, tell them to shut up, tell them to stop speaking. And it's happened that I've been in the room. And I remember being a young person in the room and not helping, not intervening. And I've gotten better in my thirties at saying, Oh, no stop talking. This person is still talking. They weren't done. And if I understand correctly, you actually have to hear what they're saying, because your work depends on their expertise. Like don't deny their expertise, listen to them. Like we have to get better at that.

Elizabeth McDonald:

I have two white dudes in my house, and that has honestly been part of the conversation of raising the one white dude with, in partnership with another white dude, right? And it's fascinating and you're right. It seems like a small thing, but I'm always amazed that as a woman standing in front of a group of like 18, 19 year olds in a class setting, how often that happens to

me from the students, and that's really interesting because there's a level of acknowledgement from a certain, from some of the kids. And I call them kids, whatever young adults, and then there's a level of unawareness. And that's just part of our job as educators, and obviously as parents too, but as educators to sort of bring them into that, and you're right.

Matthew Fava:

Going back to our conversation earlier, part of the conversation where we talked about discomfort, it's like, yeah, this is going to be part of that discomfort. The discomfort of actually inserting ourselves into these routines and disrupting them and pointing out what values are being expressed when a white man is able to perpetually interrupt other people, and basically disregard their expertise, their lived experiences, their contributions to whatever is happening in the room or in the conversation at that point. So yeah, I do think that going back to this, this idea of visible and invisible, it's understanding that we are in the invisible spaces. A lot of the times we are the ones doing a lot of the work, and we can ask ourselves, what are the conditions that we are dealing with? What are the conditions that we perceive? And can we start to challenge them?

We've inherited so much, we've inherited all of these assumptions. And I can say again for myself in an administrative role, a lot of the markers of success within administration is okay. Were you able to reproduce exactly what happened last time? Like, "Oh, let me open up this word document that my predecessor used, and I'm just going to change the date. Everything's fine. But we have to start, we have to start questioning that process of just taking a pattern and replicating it, taking it and replicating it and getting this, you know, this increasingly anachronistic approach to how we make art or how we teach art or how we listen, how we engage artistically as human beings. We're going to have an increasingly anachronistic approach because we continually reproduce, copy and paste these routines.

And so I'm optimistic despite all of the worries, the woes that we are expressing. I am optimistic that we are forging a new vocabulary, a new analysis, a new perspective right now that is going to be important to survival, not only the preserving of, but also the redefinition of what we do. Like I'm also, I'm not advocating for, you know, a blanket dismissal of the music that we inherit. I'm not advocating for censorship, but I am advocating for a deep interrogation of the context of these artifacts, a deep interrogation of the values that inform these practices that informed them initially with more intention that informed our thinking and our doing now with less intention. So I'm optimistic that process can play out over the coming years.

Emily Martin:

Wonderful, because I only hope because you mentioned the word survival and I think Western European, white, dead white dudes' music, that's how we're going to survive if we keep questioning it. So to move onto something else, and about projects that are saying something and doing something. So one of the projects we know that you're involved in is something called

the Mistress Class. I have to be honest, it sounded a bit like a Dominatrix class. And I did a little searching -

Elizabeth McDonald:

Very inclusive Mathew, very inclusive.

Emily Martin:

Yes, very inclusive. And I was searching to see what it was. And I will say the first like five or six things that came up on the search were dominatrix classes. I had to go down a little bit. So I would love to hear how you had structured that and a little bit more about that project that you supported.

Matthew Fava:

If it's all - I will get to that, is it alright if I comment on a project that preceded that?

Emily Martin:

Sure, of course.

Matthew Fava:

Yeah, and please remind me if I don't get onto the topic of language. I will because the word mistress mattered, in that decision, but what else - where I'll start is with, the really phenomenal artist and organizer Rose Bolton, and Rose is one of the first associate composers I met when I arrived at the CMC, she made me feel very welcome because folks who know Rose know that she is a really thoughtful person. And she also is in certain ways is very idiosyncratic person. She has a really unique personality and a really extraordinary way of talking about music. And she engages in a lot of different music and she makes music not only for concert settings, but also for film and documentary.

She's collaborated in a number of different spaces and she's produced amazing work. And I met Rose. I think it might've even been on my first day because she was doing an installation at the CMC for new launch, and so I sat in on this meeting in what was the boardroom at the CMC, Rose showed up and I'm like, Oh, it's so nice to meet you. You're like this really cool person. And you have these amazing ideas, Oh God, this makes me feel so much better about sitting in this room. Okay, great. And, you know, she was just talking through and it was a meeting about like they needed to build a giant wall within the CMC to project onto and how they were going to diffuse the electronics for this piece. So it was very nice. It was a very nice opportunity to meet Rose in my very, very early days at the CMC.

A couple of years later - and I hope you don't mind, I'm just going to build this up with a few different stories -A couple of years later, a local Toronto blog posted a piece on the most

influential or important composers, you know, like a top 10 and they were all guys like, I'm sure you could tell where that was going. Right. But you know -

Elizabeth McDonald:

Duh of course they were...

Matthew Fava:

They were all guys. So the most important composers here are these white guys aren't they great? Naturally the reaction was swift. The condemnation was thorough. There was rage over that. And then there was a question of, well, how did you make this list? And I felt very badly, but you know, he only got feedback from guys. Like he reached out to composers to ask composers who the great composers were and he only spoke to guys, and the guys mentioned guys, and this was right around the same time. I mentioned that as a bit of backdrop, this was right around the same time that I was trying to fashion this ad hoc mentorship initiative, which was short lived. But that's, for other reasons, I won't get into the lifespan of that program, but it was, it was a program meant to say, it's like, Oh, Hey, you're a mid career composer. Or you're a senior composer and you're an early career composer. You guys should just talk to each other or go to concerts together. You know, like you should be aware of one another. It was an effort to just put people together and say, Oh, I'm going to get comp tickets for you to go to this show together. You know, whatever I could do just to create some intergenerational linkages and some informal mentorships as a result of that.

And I had reached out to Rose and I said, Hey, would you want to participate in this? And her response was, yeah, I might be able to, but I would only want to mentor a young woman. And I said, well, okay, well, that makes sense. But then she said, actually in this email thread, can I just come in and chat with you? And she came in to chat with me and she was reacting in part to this blog post that I mentioned, this guy's bigging up guys, composer, blog post. And so she was articulating a real frustration with that. And she was talking about some of these experiences, some of the experiences she had as being a young woman, composer, being a woman, composer with a lot of male peers, the complications of that. I don't want to speak too much for her because I think, you know, I'm hoping that this podcast just continues in perpetuity and that you get to speak with Rose yourself.

But she was talking about what conditions she encountered as a young woman and what kind of conditions she imagined for young women. Now, what she felt would be optimal conditions for women to explore not only composition, but specifically electronics, and so over the course of a year and a half, she would continually talk with me about this idea she had for a program that became EQ women in electronic music, and it became a multi month program, that would mentor women artists who are using electronics that would have one-on-one discussion where Rose would support an individual through a project that they might have. And again, it was the participant driven project. It wasn't Rose assigning them. It was Rose saying, what are you working on? Let's make this our project for this workshop. And then there were group sessions,

really importantly, where all of the artists in the program would be in a room together once a month.

They would have once a month mentorship once a month in the room and that could involve listening and sharing, and then it would involve Rose giving a presentation on, Oh, here's how you record and mix voice or vocal tracks. Here's how we can think about compression. Here's how we can think about equalization, but she would walk through these different aspects of electronic music creation, production, how to work in a digital audio workstation. It was incredible, and I felt really great because I got to help and witness some of that. But my role was largely making tea and bringing food and snacks, you know, so I was not in the room as a figure, as an authority, I was in the room as a support, and Rose was undeniably the authority.

But she was able to share that in a really compelling way. You know, she was the authority figure, but she created a space where not only electro-acoustic and sound artists-participants could exist, but video game makers could come beat makers and pop musicians could come. Synth players could come. People who weren't invested in Western European classical music could come and they could be valued and they could share their stories and experiences, their aesthetics, their compositional approach, their songwriting approach across these narrowly defined genre spaces or style spaces defined by style and tradition. It was amazing. And it continued for three years and I'm still chatting with Rose about how a further iteration might come up. But I credit Rose with starting this, and with challenging the CMC to be a space that can be open to beat makers and video game makers and singer-songwriters, and not only open to them in isolation, but open to them in a shared space, how that could happen and how it could be beneficial, how it could work really, really very well.

And so I tip my hat to Rose and I hope that her story gets told, her thinking around EQ gets told more and more. And what's significant about EQ in connection to the mistress class is that one of the participants in the third year of EQ was Dinah Thorpe, a Toronto based songwriter and someone who produces a lot of electronic music, and is a vocalist as well. She said, Oh, you know, this EQ experience has been one of the most profound things I've gotten to participate in. I would love to try and explore a similar program. And she was suggesting that as someone who had been in the industry for 10 plus years, who had a family, she had seen the attrition of women leaving the industry over time. And she was aware that the early relationships that she built weren't as helpful.

I don't know if I should use that word, but that she didn't have as developed a network within the industry, as she thought you would have at the beginning that a lot of those personal professional connections, they were no longer in music. And so she said in this 10 plus year period, is there an opportunity to reignite that initial sense of community, that sense of belonging with other women and non-binary folks in the industry? And so she wanted to have a series of sessions that would invite in specifically women who had been in the industry 10 plus years, that would invite in folks to talk about different topics, whether it's making money as an artist in this

context, whether it's talking about gear, talking about software, talking about audio production as women in this industry in this moment, whether it's talking about mental health, whether it's talking about a whole variety of topics.

And so I said, well, that's something that the CMC can support, and we ended up reaching out to our colleagues at the songwriters association of Canada so that it could be something of a, Hey, we can support cross promotion. We can both chip in a bit of funds to assist. So the Mistress Class hasn't had as much of a track record as EQ, but, but it was a really significant undertaking. And in this moment now, you know, several months into the pandemic, the Songwriters Association of Canada is working to remount it. And the CMC is helping and Dinah is curating a few events. But to your question about, pardon me, about the language about mistress? It wasn't intended to be a provocative choice. It was intended to say, is masterclass any better? What is the meaning of master? And going back to this question of language, like I'm actually surprised that masterclass is still in use. I'm surprised right now in this moment, when we're talking about anti-black racism, when we're talking about actively organizing and challenging.

Emily Martin:

Well, this is not just something -

Elizabeth McDonald:

Wow.

Emily Martin:

In science they use the term master and slave, right? Like the fact that we still use that, like he said, is just mind blowing. Now that we're thinking about it, but again, we weren't thinking about it.

Elizabeth McDonald:

But we weren't thinking about it. Yeah, exactly.

Matthew Fava:

And it is the case that - what are the connotations of mistress? Master is a masculine term, mistress, a feminized term. And it implies this morally horrible reality for the person who is called a mistress. And so I think Dinah was very actively trying to say, Oh, look at these words who gets to be a master, what's a mistress? And so there's, I think an element of humor and there's an element of questioning. But it is meant to provoke our thinking about language. And you know, we talk about monuments a lot now, and as an Italian-Canadian, I have a real interest in how Italians think about monuments and how Italians deal with mutually exclusive truths, mutually exclusive versions of history and how public commemoration in Italy becomes this hotly contested debate. And sometimes in Italy, you have a monument to two truths because the consequences of those truths played out over decades.

So there might be this bombing that happened in this village. And there was one version of the story that blames the communists or that blames progressive forces. There's another version that blames fascists and the debate over that has shaped that village's history in that village's experience, with that city's experience. And so the public commemoration of that event accounts for both truths, because both truths ended up having an impact. But when we're talking now about commemorating slaveholders, colonizers, and the fact that people are taking these monuments down, but yes, that's one part of it. It's like, how do we publicly commemorate and uphold or challenge those narratives of the benevolent Explorer or settler? Because there wasn't a benevolence, or it was a benevolence for the settlers, but indigenous communities, dispossessed communities, forcibly enslaved, forcibly migrated communities did not experience benevolence at all, and they've been denied benevolence for centuries.

So at the same time that we were thinking about these physical artifacts, can we think about language and how language is as much a monument to that history and you're engaging with this too. You're talking about it. When you say, how long do I have to say these words, these words don't reflect what I am. And it's like, you know, we're experiencing that. We're questioning that now. And now let's think about the other people who are going to use those words or the people for whom those words are meant to be performative. Like, are they supposed to perform these words in a song? Are they supposed to perform these words as students of music that they're going to the masterclass? You know I think we need to connect a lot of these seemingly distant debates with what is ultimately a very close experience of exactly that same condition of exactly those same histories of exactly those same oppressions.

Emily Martin:

I agree, but, you know, there was an article this morning on NPR that I was listening to, and I don't know if you're aware in America of the monument it's, there's a couple of them. There's one in Boston and one in New York, I believe of Abraham Lincoln and the slave at his feet with the loin cloth and broken chains. And it's very offensive when you look at it now. But there's a history to how it was unveiled, which I didn't know that Frederick Douglas made the speech when it was first unveiled, I believe in New York, that, that there were free black Americans that actually thought this was a good thing. So there's also, I think we have to look at the history of how, if some of these words have been used, how some of this language has some of these monuments, because that also informs why we use them and possibly why we shouldn't use them.

Matthew Fava:

But I think this does connect back, that we can't have one approach to all of these, but that we can have an interrogation of consideration of the context for all of these instances of this language, this monument, this choice of text, this poet. But yeah, just to maybe chime in on this with another experience I had, one of the people who has helped me grow as an administrator, as an organizer, is actually someone who I met when I was at York University. I mentioned that I

was in the orchestra and string orchestra. And one of the other people who I got to encounter in that moment was Melody McIver. They're an amazing Viola player. And also critically like an organizer-thinker who has spent a lot of time addressing systemic oppression within our community. And I actually, maybe I'll send you the link when I find it, but Melody contributed a really awesome piece. When I was a - one of the functions that I had up until 2016, I would edit a magazine called Ontario Notations. And we would invite composers to propose articles, that we would then stylize in this digital publication, and we would often then find other writers. We would invite to develop parallel pieces that respond to similar themes. And the piece that we commissioned was around a composer, writing a piece that was engaging with the 400th anniversary. I want to bring it up so that I remember it. I don't want to forget the exact details of it, but I believe it was celebrating the 400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain arriving on what would become Canada.

And there was a really interesting piece that Melody wrote that was talking about colonialism and colonial nostalgia, and the fact that we romanticize explorers and discoverers, and that there are a lot of ways that communities of color, indigenous communities, are made anonymous. And you're kind of like addressing some of the histories that shape the pieces that are put in these public places that are put there for commemoration.

I have kind of one other story that maybe connects with, with a lot of this too. Connects with how we talk about what the mistress class was seeking to do and EQ was seeking to do, but also it connects with how our industry actively includes or excludes certain people, and this is a story from 2016. The CMC was helping to organize an event called the international artists managers association conference. It was happening in Toronto and it was the same week that number 45 in the U S was announced as president elect. It was a really charged week, you know, and a lot of people at the conference were scoring easy points, making fun of America, making fun of how, how could they possibly elect this racist bigot, and then as the day of this conference played out, there was a panel discussion. And I can't even remember what the topic was. I think it had to do a little bit with how we were training, artists, musicians, and the kind of career opportunities that existed outside the school. And the fact that a lot of people in that room were artists managers. They worked in performance arts organizations. So they were involved in festival production, concert production.

And at one point after the panel concluded, and we were in the question and answer period, one of the audience members stood up to contribute and said that he would only hire people who completed a performing degree. And so I remember thinking to myself, it's like, well, damn, I guess I shouldn't be here if that's what you think, but I kind of wanted to say, Oh, I think that's really unfair. I mean, think about all the people who aren't represented, who would feel excluded from faculties of music in Canada, certainly, and perhaps in the United States as well. But there are a lot of people whose experience of musicianship, whose pursuit of music, musical excellence, doesn't involve a performance art degree from a university. And I thought it was

hugely offensive in this room of predominantly white people. This white guy would set up and say, I would never hire someone unless they had a performing arts degree.

And I felt like, well, maybe I should just stand up and say, Oh, I don't think that's a really good view to have, but instead the entire room erupted in cheers, there was a lot of applause. There was a lot of enthusiasm. And so for me in that moment, I thought, well, okay, these aren't my people. And I ended up not attending the majority of the rest of the conference because I felt like that's what they believe in. It's like, Oh, what's the cost of entry who's allowed to be here? And what are all of the barriers that have been set up in order to exclude among other people, racialized folks, indigenous folks, other viewpoints on, again, artistic excellence, artistic creation, who wasn't in that room, who has been actively denied access to that room. Because a lot of people in this room are thinking exactly the way that this guy is thinking that you don't belong here.

You're not allowed to be here unless you have achieved this amount of financial investment of time into a particular art form and tradition. And so when I reflect on the work that I do with the CMC or the work that I want to support through the CMC, a lot of that has to relate back to these very real barriers that I've encountered, but haven't been the victim of, but that I see other people have been challenged by and other people have felt rejected by, or other people have said, well, you know what? I've got something great. I don't need you. I'm going to go do this great thing over here, and so I think that's the other part that we need to acknowledge that the art making is happening, even if we're not aware of it and we're not supporting it, it is happening.

So I don't want us to pretend or to convince listeners that we're going to be the saviors of racialized and indigenous communities. There has been a strong tradition of art making and music-making in all of these communities. The question now is how have the privileges that have been monopolized, the resources that have been monopolized by organizations like the COC, TSO, CMC and others, how might these be better shared? How might we stop the sense of ownership, the kind of proprietary ownership, the exclusive ownership of spaces, creative spaces, and creative resources. How might we start to share that more actively.

Kathryn Tremills:

Well and that's so striking to me, listening to you this morning is, it feels that you are literally holding space. I don't feel as, as hard as you were working at all of these things and projects and initiatives and changing structure, I don't feel this sense of mission, but a sense of just holding the door open and welcoming anyone, everyone, and anyone, and just giving them the floor and the space. That's really wonderful.

Matthew Fava:

Yeah, and I do have to thank - I appreciate that. and I've taken a few moments in our conversations to acknowledge collaborators and peers. And I do have to acknowledge like the larger team at the CMC, because I kind of alluded to the fact that my job description involves

some core administrative functions, but that there's a lot about my job that feels quite loose, quite undefined, quite indeterminate. And so I get to make a lot of choices. I feel I have a lot of autonomy that is an autonomy afforded by my coworkers, my employers, who put trust in me and who take on a lot of the work that goes into maintaining that space and maintaining other services that connect with that longstanding history that the CMC is connected to. But yeah, I do think that this is the point that we have to start to embrace other rules. And we have to understand that institutional power that can be diffused, that can be dismantled in a way that's still in trines, a kind of value for the institution itself. Even though I think a lot of people are going to say, certain institutions need to retire, resources need to be distributed. I think there can be again, that interrogation, that questioning and that resurgence of what the role of the CMC can be in the coming years, that is partially informed by this opening or holding up space.

Elizabeth McDonald:

That's amazing, and I feel like that's a really great way to end or to pause, I should say a conversation that I think all three of us feel like we could have this conversation with you ongoing for forever because the work is never done. So first of all, thank you so much, for all of your thoughts. And I'm wondering if you would humor us in our speed round as a way to end our podcast? We were asking six questions of our composers. I've cut them down to five for you because one of them is not relevant from what I gather, but these are just sort of the first thing that comes to mind for you, so.

Matthew Fava:

Sure.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Yeah? Okay, awesome. My first question is, and especially because of your work at the CMC, what is your favorite place in Canada?

Matthew Fava:

Oh, geez. Favorite place in Canada. Oh my goodness. Oh God, this is a speed round. I have a very kind of a very, very narrow radius. My favorite place is my grandmother's backyard.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Oh...is she your italian nonna that grows all the things?

Matthew Fava:

My dad's mom, my paternal nonna, and yeah spent a lot of time in her backyard and I still think about it actively. She moved in with my aunt and uncle. She's 96. Her house is being rented right now, but I miss her backyard.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Oh, wow. That's awesome. Most cherished music score or soundscape - sort of keep that broad for you.

Matthew Fava:

You know what, okay. There's actually one that I've been thinking about a lot over the last year and I should, I should actually make sure I've got the name right. But it's a it's a piece by Gayle Young. So I'm not sure if, you know, Gayle Young is one of our associates, but she took part in a project that we run called Generations Conversations. And she was interviewed by a younger composer, Camille Belair, and it's an opportunity to ask the composer about what they do, how they do it. But the piece that Gayle mentioned, I believe it was called Black Bean Soup. I should verify that, but I bring it up because it does deal with texts. So when Gayle started raising her kids we spent more time in kind of like a family setting and less time actively pursuing her artistic practice. She ended up fusing both. So she would write these pieces that would have these elements of her daily routine. And the text of this black bean recipe becomes the kind of rhythmic motivation in this piece. So these performers are reciting this recipe internally, and they're playing this, this score. It's amazing. And Gayle, isn't the only composer who does that, but using texts, not as a connotative or meaning making source for the audience, but as an internal process, as an internal barometer for the pacing of musical material for the performer. So I'll mention, and I'm sorry that I'm pretty sure it's called Black Bean Soup, but that piece by Gayle Young.

Emily Martin:

We'll find out and we'll link it.

Elizabeth McDonald:

So yeah, no, that's awesome. That's sort of like the mother multitasking, you know, that's how I hear that. Favorite summer drink because we are in the heat of summer.

Matthew Fava:

Oh gosh. If you talk to my roommates, they would, they would laugh because I'm not, you know what -

Elizabeth McDonald:

It-doesn't have to be alcoholic. Everybody's worried about alcohol. It's all good.

Matthew Fava:

Yeah. I'll just stick with, with water. I am like a perpetual water drinker and I know it's silly, but it's the thing. It's my life force. It is our light force. It is my go to drink and I, and my roommates have tried really hard to get me on board when they're having wine at dinner for when they go to some of the local breweries here. But yeah, I'll go with water.

Elizabeth McDonald:

So we're going to deliver a thank-you flat of water to you, but not bottled. We're going to make sure it's like, you know, plastic, it'll be environmentally friendly water. All right, cool. Morning, noon or night for your deep thinking and your deep work?

Matthew Fava:

Oh, goodness. Lately. It's been night because days have been really heavy and -

Elizabeth McDonald:

Days have been heavy haven't they...

Matthew Fava:

Things have been heavy and I guess I mentioned in part I've been trying to get my paid work done in the evenings, but that's after all of the momentum of the time spent with my daughter, a lot of momentum that I get from meetings like this. So a lot of those conversations, I don't have a moment to really process them - a lot of the interactions with my daughter or my co-parent. I don't process them. And then I arrive at the night attempting to do work and answer emails and build spreadsheets or whatever else my work might entail and the weight of that all hits me. So, so I don't know, I guess I should say, I don't know whether it is the most constructive thoughtfulness, but it is a really saturated and prolonged thoughtfulness that happens at night. And I think that's a structural necessity perhaps, that it's the night right now, but maybe ask me again in a year and it might be different.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Well, I think you sound like us when we're structuring our work time around our kids, we're all doing it and that's sort of that's part of it. Right? And last question, which is sort of a - often the distance thing, musician, you would like to be stranded on a desert island with?

Matthew Fava:

Oh my gosh. Oh God. Okay.

Elizabeth McDonald:

I feel like this is not going to be a short answer.

Matthew Fava:

No, but it's a good question. Oh goodness, because I'm trying to figure out, would I choose someone who I could play music with and not feel intimidated by, should I play someone who I just admire or pick someone who I just admire? That's a really cool, gosh, that's a really - I'll say, I'll say Beverly Glenn Copeland right now, and that's for a whole variety of reasons, but I would be really happy to just chat with Glenn, listened to Glenn's stories, listen to Glenn's music, and then if Glenn would actually like, just say, let's make music together. I would be on board for that. Yeah. Beverly Glenn Copeland at this point.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Cool. That's awesome. You have given us so much to think about, you've educated us. You've really, I really feel like you've really opened my mind and I really felt like I was starting to do the work, but Oh my gosh, there's so much to do. And I'm so grateful. I know all three of us are really grateful for your time today. And especially during this pandemic, when things are heavy and we continue to talk about and do the work of this heaviness. But we're so grateful to you, Matthew, and we're so grateful for the work you're doing with the CMC and in the city of Toronto. And that we're, we're a small part of your connection. So thank you so much for this today.

Kathryn Tremills:

WOW - so much information and so many issues to consider as we move forward working in our identity as Canadian musicians. We are so grateful that Matthew was able to chat with us and hope that you too are as inspired as we are!

We will leave you to ponder all of these thoughts with an excerpt from artist L Cons's song "Winner" from her EP album *Whatever*.

Elizabeth McDonald:

Thanks again for listening - we are excited to keep bringing you more badass Canadian composers' thoughts and music...

Kathryn Tremills:

Please go to our website for program notes, and links mentioned for this podcast.

Emily Martin:

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