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Tuesday, November 23, 2010
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From the Western Woods: The late solo piano music of Jean Coulthard

Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa, piano

Image Astrale (1980)

Sketches from the Western Woods (1970)
The Silent Pool
Revelation in the Forest

Sonata no. 2 (1986)
1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Threnody: Adagio mesto
3. Allegro vigoroso

About Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa

Hailed in the press as a **"keyboard virtuoso"** (Georgia Straight) and for her ability to take a piece **"from notes on a page to a stunning work of art"** (Victoria Times Colonist), pianist Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa has performed as soloist and chamber musician in Canada, the United States and Germany. Known for bold and innovative concerts, Rachel combines her warmth and curiosity to touch the hearts and minds of audiences, whether she is playing Beethoven and Schumann or Ligeti and Saariaho. Her debut solo CD, *Cosmophony*, featuring Crumb's *Makrokosmos* volume 2, and works by eleven Canadian composers including Denis Gougeon, Rodney Sharman, Marci Rabe, Alexander Pechenyuk, Jocelyn Morlock, Chris Kovarik, Jeffrey Ryan, Stefan Udell, Jennifer Butler and Emily Doolittle, was released this summer on Redshift Records, and is distributed by the Canadian Music Centre. Meet Rachel online at www.iwaasa.com.

About Jean Coulthard

Jean Coulthard was born in Vancouver in 1908 to a pioneering British Columbia doctor, Walter Coulthard, and to Jean Robinson Coulthard, a singer, music teacher, and influential figure in early musical life on the west coast.

Coulthard attended public schools in Vancouver, then spent a few experimental months at the new Point Grey campus of the University of British Columbia. But Coulthard and her parents knew she was headed for a thoroughly musical life and career. In the late 1920s she traveled to London for a year of study with Ralph Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music.

Although these initial studies proved insufficient to allow her to work as a professional composer, her persistence in composition, combined with travels in North America and Europe, help to explain her consistent productivity through the years of Depression and War. At various times, she knew and worked with Aaron Copland, Darius Milhaud, Arnold Schoenberg, and Béla Bartók. Then, with her husband in war service, Coulthard chose to complete her formal composition studies in 1944–45 in New York with Bernard Wagenaar, a professor at the Juilliard School.

Jean Coulthard married Donald Adams in 1935. Their daughter, Jane, was born in 1943, and in 1946 the young family returned to Vancouver. Just a year later, Coulthard began a 26-year-long career teaching theory and, later, composition in the Department of Music at the University of British Columbia. But her work at the university was often marginalized by male American and Canadian colleagues. By mid-century Coulthard's work was often considered out of touch by the new music establishment. A year in France convinced her to write as she pleased.

By her official "retirement" in 1973 Coulthard had written and published a vast and important body of works in all genres to which she added nearly two further decades of enormous productivity. She was becoming internationally well-known and connected, and by the end of the century was recognized as one of the most significant composers of her sex. Her music was popular, occasionally with her "serious music" colleagues, sometimes with the public, and sometimes with both. It was performed by learners and by virtuosi, live, on broadcast, and in recording, to great effect.

Coulthard was a member of the Order of Canada (1978), holder of honorary doctorates from two universities, and decorated many times in competitions between 1948 and her death in 2000. All through her adult life, Coulthard was staunchly of the view that her legacy was in her family; in her compositions; and in her students, a body of young and highly individualistic Canadian composers who have shaped the national musical arts from the late 1960s onward.