

“It’s not a festival for divas”:
A conversation with Carmen Braden and Robert Uchida
by Keith Stratton

Longshadow Music Festival celebrates the music of the 20th and 21st Centuries, in particular the music of Canadians - and happens in northern Canada. Carmen Braden’s music company Black Ice Sound organizes the festival, with Carmen leading as Artistic Director. Alongside special guests and feature concerts, the festival explores ideas about improvisation, composition, performance, collaboration, the soundscape, acoustic ecology, field recording, and more.

Carmen Braden is a versatile, genre-jumping musician from the Canadian sub-Arctic. Winner of the 2019 and 2020 Western Canadian Music Award for Classical Composer of the Year, Carmen is a composer/performer based in her hometown of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, enjoys a varied career as a soloist, orchestral and chamber musician, and educator. Robert has been a concerto soloist with orchestras including the Alberta Baroque Ensemble, Edmonton Symphony, Kingston Symphony, Ottawa Symphony, Red Deer Symphony, Symphony New Brunswick, Symphony Nova Scotia, Orchestre de la Francophonie, and the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada.



photograph by Hannah Eden



photograph by Erik Visser

When researching new music festivals across Canada, I was delighted to find out about this new festival based in Yellowknife. I had heard Carmen and Robert’s names for years, especially as they had both spent significant time in the Maritimes while I was studying there. I was excited to finally meet them both and learn more about Longshadow as we sat down over a video call on July 14, 2022.

1. [Music and geography](#)
2. [Longshadow Music Festival](#)
3. [Collaborations](#)
4. [Spontaneity and tradition](#)
5. [Breaking down genres](#)
6. [Young audiences and young musicians](#)
7. [Ideas for future festivals](#)
8. [Silver linings from the pandemic](#)
9. [Finding balance](#)
10. [Looking forward](#)

“Sometimes you can get quicker to an intimacy”

Music and geography

Keith Stratton: *My first question is for Robert. In your travels, in your musical work - east, west, north and south - can you compare and contrast the classical music communities, or traditions, in any of these regions? Have you noticed differences or similarities?*

Robert Uchida: To be honest, my experience has been, across the country, one of openness. One of being excited to hear the old masterworks, and also to hear the new masterworks. In some of the places where maybe there are only a few new music concerts in a year, my experience has also been one where giving context to the piece can be highly useful. Mind you, it's also highly useful in Montreal, or Toronto, or wherever. To be honest, I think all audiences benefit from context. My experience throughout the country has been one of openness and excitement to hear new works.

KS: *Carmen, when it comes to actual musical aesthetics too, as a composer, as a performer, is there an East coast sound, is there a West coast, Prairie sound? Or do you find it's more individual?*

Carmen Braden: It's super individual. I remember coming across this question when I was studying, like 'is there a Canadian sound'? Will a piece of music from a Canadian composer sound like a Canadian piece if it's played somewhere else, or in another part of the country? It's a tricky question, and there's no right answer, because so many people writing have such different backgrounds and family histories that they love to draw on. I think that is one of the hallmarks of a piece of Canadian music, is that it has this context, that draws from other geographies and other cultures. If I think of a lot of the people who have made international names for themselves as composers, they often draw on their lineage and their own histories. And that's kind of what I love. We had Dinuk Wijeratne on the

program in Yellowknife, and he's Sri Lankan and Canadian. We had Wesley Hardisty, who's an indigenous musician. They're drawing on their contexts, and that's what I love. One thing I will say about playing music in smaller places that aren't these big population centers, is sometimes you can get quicker to an intimacy, and access to not only the performers, but somehow the music as well. Maybe 'cause the venues are smaller, or because it's not in this more saturated environment, but it seems to like, get people quicker and closer, which I like.

KS: *That's great, and that's a huge advantage, I think, in playing in small places. It's also like, that degree of intimacy, it's like the morning after the concert, you see them at like, the cafe.*

CB: At the coffee shop!

RU: That happens, yeah. (laughs)

"It's important for our programs to be representative of our society"

Longshadow Music Festival

KS: *Now let's get specific to the Longshadow Festival, which Carmen, you founded, and Robert, you were the most recent artistic director. That's been happening in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Carmen, when you came up with the idea for Longshadow, did this come out of the blue to you? Or were there a lot of precedents that you felt inspired you, that were already happening in Yellowknife or in Northern Canada in general?*

CB: There's not a lot of established organizations that focus on contemporary music, or the avant-garde, or music that kind of exists on the edges, which is where this festival wants to lie. There's not that much going on in the North - population, right? There's just not as many things. So, my experiences with having newer music in front of an audience up here has been through, kind of, one or two pieces on a program, at a local theater, or my own compositions that I get people to play in certain places. A few other composers in the Yukon, and increasingly in Nunavut as well, are working to connect with Southern ensembles when they come up and play that kind of music here. But there wasn't a lot, so I felt it could be a real interesting thing to explore in a more intense way. Not just one piece on a program, but a few days dedicated to exploring things that are maybe not so traditional.

KS: *Robert, when I looked at the programming, checked out some little videos and blurbs, to me it seemed diversified and also focused in a few ways. Diversified in the sense of, having compositions from world premieres, to Northern Canada premieres, to Yellowknife premieres, and also highlighting composers*

from different backgrounds, different styles, as well as different identities. But there's also a lot of focus on certain things too. Of course, string music, but also, the intent and the context. How did you approach the artistic direction? What were some of your initial ideas, and how did you see that through?

RU: Well, I think Carmen and I both feel that it's important for our programs to be representative of our society. It's not a question of trying to check boxes, but just that there's a lot of great music out there, and a lot of opportunities to explore it. So I hope this doesn't sound weird, but it actually wasn't that hard to program. Because there's lots of great music to choose from. Yes, we wanted to present great old music, masterworks that have been around for generations, and we also wanted to present new masterworks, pieces that we expect to be around for generations. I know you had also been a bit curious about the folk music element that we had as part of the festival. I think it's really fascinating to see, if you go back four hundred years, where traditional fiddle playing and baroque music, where they kind of intersect. So that was kind of an inspiration for exploring how they intersect, and where they diverge, and exploring all of that in our programming as well.

-

"It's not a festival for divas"

Collaborations

KS: *I think that's super interesting and refreshing to break down the wall. Maybe at certain points, in certain eras, we've had classical violin as a high art, fiddle as a low art, but now it's being presented on the same bill. I notice, going through the program, the level of collaborations. Daniel Gervais, coming in to play with the quartet...*

RU: Well, Daniel just makes it so easy, he can do everything, it's unbelievable. We played Dvorak's American string quartet, we all did it together actually, and The Devil Went Down To Georgia (laughs), which was super fun! It's really interesting to present all of this music all in the same package. It's really a lot of fun, and I think it enhances everything, actually.

KS: *Right, by contrast and comparison?*

RU: Yeah. I think sometimes we get into a kind of false binary, where we think programming is this *or* that. I think it's absolutely a false binary, it can easily be this *and* that. So, for me and for Carmen too, the inspiration behind what we were trying to do. On the mainstage concert, the whole first half of the concert was 21st-century music, which was a really fun thing to present, and it was really well received, with a lot of excitement and openness. We played a piece by - how old was he again?

CB: He was sixteen.

RU: Yeah! Sixteen-year-old Canadian composer. Phenomenal! It's like, really, really, exciting. And then we had Dvorak on the second half, and why not? It can be *and*.

KS: *Right, I love that way of thinking of it! How important is finding the right people? And does the music then kind of follow? Rather than thinking, 'it has to be these pieces, we'll bring the random people in from here and here, and hopefully it'll work'. To me, looking at the programming, there's a bit of a collective, kind of forging those bonds, and then seeing what music people have in common. Do you find that was a big part of it?*

CB: Oh, absolutely. And I'll give a lot of credit to Robert for this, but even at the start, the partnership that Robert and I had was because we knew each other, and we wanted to explore something together. We didn't know each other super well. In a few different contexts, we'd gotten to know each other more, but it was like - a weird way to put it - musical dating? (laughs) Like, when you meet a new colleague, and you're excited to get to know them, and explore things together, it's really fun, but there needs to be a level of trust. So then, Robert took that, and found the people that could bring a versatility to the pieces, and a versatility to attitudes as well, and approaches, and to playing in a smaller community, and to changing things quickly and being super chill and just lovely people. When I started the festival, it was that as well. It was a bit of, 'I want to bring amazing musicians, but they have to bring a relationship that builds into the music in a positive way'. It's not a festival for divas. Maybe that should be our tagline!

KS: *Time and time again, it only makes sense that positive personal connections lead to good music. It's great to have it so plain and simple. As you were mentioning, you had a teenage composer, Alex Ketchum, get to hear their music being played. How did that happen? Was there a call for submissions or was it just sort of a personal connection?*

RU: Well, Alex is a composition student of Carmen's, and we did a kind of workshop with him. We had two movements of his string quartet written, and so we did a reading of those movements, and observed some things, and maybe asked for a little bit more clarity in some of the articulation markings and some of the emotional instructions. Also, the first movement of his quartet - it was quite finished, actually. His voice - he knew what he wanted. It was a really fun experience working with him. At the end of the workshop I said, 'hey, let's play that first movement again', and I asked Carmen to time it. I think Keith Hamm said something like 'Robert has an idea'. (laughs) So, it was about three minutes, and we got to the end and I looked around the group, and looked over at Keith, and he was just like

'yeah'. We asked Alex if he would allow us to add it to the program two days later. He thought about it for a minute actually, and then he said 'yeah, sure'. That's how it came to be, it wasn't a formula or anything, but maybe it could be for the future, because it was, I think, enriching for us all.

-
"To allow them to be surprised, is something that I liked"

Spontaneity and tradition

KS: *That's awesome, what a great opportunity. Just a little moment like that can totally alter the path of someone's career. I'm sure we've all had those moments as young musicians, where it's like 'hey, wow, I'm having a connection with professionals, they're taking me seriously, they're being open and encouraging'. And on that note of openness and flexibility, when I was going down the program and saw the Fiddlecats performing, it said that their program is 'to be called from the stage!' In my life, when I talk to certain people who are outside of the classical music world, they assume 'oh, that's when you have to put on a full tux, and you have to sit down, you have to be quiet, you're going to sit for hours in this whole routine'. Which can be true in some contexts still, but just to have that, 'ah, we're gonna work it out on the fly' attitude, did you feel like that brought spontaneity to the programming?*

RU: Carmen created that partnership, which was amazing, and then Daniel really ran with it. Not only did they call the program from the stage, they had actually composed a piece that they wrote together. Daniel's really great at assimilating all these different ideas. He was writing out a chart, and Keith played guitar for us on that too, which was amazing. He was so willing to put down the viola and pick up a guitar and play with the Fiddlecats, which was also really inspiring. The Fiddlecats were super excited. Rafael Hoekman also joined them for that piece, and they were super excited about playing with cello.

CB: I'm a big fan of trying to see what the expectations are around a certain thing like classical music concerts. Not to just avoid them, but really actively flip it on its head. At our big theater concert, people were clapping in between movements, and we were talking in between movements. We were trying to make it so that all of these things about etiquette and the formality kind of go away. If you think of a pop music concert or a folk music concert, or a folk festival, you don't get a program. Drake's not going to have his program listed on his website for his concerts, right? People are going with a bit of an expectation, but also trust that this is the gift that the performers are giving us now, and we're just going to have to take it. Actually, having a bit of an element of that more relaxed sense, also of building that trust up with an audience, is, I think, where I'd like to get. Maybe we just have a mystery concert, and nobody knows who's going to be playing or what they're going to be doing. As a composer, this is a tricky thing. If I look at a piece of music, it's written out from start to finish, usually.

There's sometimes things built in, but you have your map. To give a bit of that freedom to an audience to not know exactly what to expect, and to allow them to be surprised, is something that I liked.

-

“Music shouldn't be presented in silos”

Breaking down genres

KS: *On that note, Carmen, maybe a mystery concert could be really cool in the future. In general with Longshadow, are there particular long-term or short-term goals? You seem to be talking a lot about building trust with an audience. What do you hope for in the next season, versus five, ten years down the road?*

CB: Before I started this festival, I had maybe a forty-year plan for it. I had a long vision of what this festival could end up like. I had modeled that in my head after being to some other new music festivals. But I don't want this to be a 'new music festival' at all, I think it's not a healthy thing actually, when you have a festival or even a concert or series that is only new music without putting it in a context. I love putting things within the history, and within things that people can kind of ground themselves around. But this was the second one. The first one was 2019, and then Covid - cancel, cancel. 2020 was supposed to be a vocal-featured year, and those ones have gotten shelved. I'd love to bring them back. So this one was just the second one I've ever done, and it was very different then the first one. So, it's a very open future for it, how it would look, and how often it would happen, and who would be involved, and what the concerts would look like, and even where they would be geographically. Yellowknife is just one city within the larger Northwest Territories, within the larger concept of the Canadian North. It has had so much of a good response from the audience here, which was due to many factors of it being one of the first things after releases from Covid restrictions. So everyone has been hungry, I think, for live music, as well as the exceptional musicality of the performers, the wild programming, the different venues we had. Lots of things really worked that I would draw back on. But even Robert and I haven't exactly hashed out what we're gonna be doing next.

RU: That meeting's tomorrow, actually. (laughs)

KS: *You could go into it right now! (laughs)*

RU: I think Carmen and I both kind of feel like music shouldn't be presented in silos. You know? I mean, that's something we've talked a lot about. I guess it's just one big silo. But not lots of little ones.

CB: Yeah, and even within like, a classical umbrella, is not where my own music lies either. I love to write songs. I just had a huge composing block this morning, and then I was like, I just need to make this into - I just need to have words. I just need to have some connection to a song behind this thing, and all of a sudden it was like, 'ah, that was great'. But people who are working in other genres - which is not my favourite concept - but who are pushing the boundaries of their own music, is where I'd love to keep going.

KS: *On that note, just as an aside, Carmen, about your own writing. You've done stuff that to me, it kind of fits into the contemporary classical world, but also the singer-songwriter world. I was just wondering, behind it, is it like 'alright, today is a singer-songwriter day, that's how I'm gonna approach it', or is it more like, 'hey, I'm just coming out with stuff, and it could either go that way or that way'?*

CB: A few years ago, it was more spontaneous like that, but now I've got two kids, and not as much time to be free and spontaneous. I'm working right now on some great projects with collaborators and commissioners and deadlines. Also things like, I have an album project that I know I'm working on with a producer, I've got grants for it. A little bit more of a plan now, so it's not as carefree and kind of like, 'squirrel!' as it was in my early twenties. But that feels good too. The thing that feels really good is I've made myself keep this balance, and not just abandon one to feel like, I need to focus on one to stay in this genre, or this expectation of where it might end up.

-

"There's different points on a journey"

Young audiences and young musicians

KS: *There's a lot of kids and young people involved in Longshadow, and the more I looked into it, not only having Alex Ketchum's piece performed, but just from watching the footage you both took, I can see a lot of kids hanging out. What do you think, as musicians, as educators and programmers, about the next generation? What's your ideal exposure that kids and young musicians can have?*

RU: Well I think the answer really lies within your question. The answer is exposure. Everyone's gonna find something that interests them, and it won't be the same for everyone. So I think it's just important for young people to have as much exposure to as many different types of music, and instruments as they can. If it can be presented in a way that says, 'hey, isn't this cool', and just see if they enjoy it, as opposed to saying, 'you have to like this, because this is a masterpiece'. I think that really the key is just exposure, as you said.

CB: This year we had a role that was filled by Wesley Hardisty, as our emerging artist for the festival. So Wesley is a fiddler, and a composer himself, and he's from the Dene First Nation in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, which is kind of to the West toward the Yukon. I'd worked with Wesley for many years, and I wanted him to be a part of this festival that celebrates youth, and emerging people, and people on their journey. Wesley's own music - he's writing a piece with me right now - he's like 'Carmen, this one's kind of crooked, I hope it's okay'. I was like, 'this is great'. He meant timing - it's just not four-on-the-floor. So he's exploring things from his own tradition and his own background, and he got to be within this context of other people who are at different points in their journey. Like, Daniel Gervais is a type of grandmaster fiddler, Wesley is a bit younger, and then Alex was even younger, so having this range of music, I think, was awesome for not just adult audiences, but for kids in the audience to see that there's different points on a journey. Like, Beethoven didn't come out of the womb like, writing this stuff. He pooped like everyone else in a diaper for a long time. So it is, I think, a really humbling and humanizing thing to have people at all different levels of their journey presenting music that is worth listening to.

RU: Absolutely. I can say that, you know, Wesley's piece, and Alex's piece, they were received extremely well by the audience. There was so much enthusiasm for their music.

KS: *Robert, compared to the audience and context you had in mind at the inception, at the beginning of the programming, did you find that by the end of it, it was pretty much the audience you expected? Or did the audience surprise you?*

RU: Every audience was an amazing surprise. I credit it all to Carmen. We were so fortunate - the community was so engaged and so supportive of the festival. I didn't really know what to expect, I don't think I really had any clear expectations, but I was just so inspired by the enthusiasm and the support of the community for the festival.

-

"Using space differently"
Ideas for future festivals

KS: *Carmen, you mentioned the 'forty-year plan', which I understand is maybe not the case anymore, but when you had the forty-year plan, were there any specific ideas for say, 2055? Can you give me any specifics on what that looked like?*

CB: Yeah, sure, I made a poster actually. It was 'Carmen Braden retires'. It was like the headline on this poster. Musicians rarely retire - you just do different things. Maybe get some pension once in a while.

Let's see - some of the things I think would still be great, is to have more students involved at a performing level. Some of my universities had new music ensembles, but I think even within a high school context up here, you could have a group that would learn a piece of new music that they would play. There would be a series of commissions that would have come out of the festival, which I think could still be a great goal. In the first one, Wesley was commissioned. In 2019, I commissioned Wesley. It was the first time I, as a composer, commissioned another composer, which felt super cool, and kinda weird. I had hoped to expand to more than one community, so to have a portion of the festival that would travel to some of the smaller communities to play there. To bring a more kind of Territorial concept to the events. And it would have a more international focus as well. So, whether it was a guest composer that came when their music was being featured, or a performer, or a songwriter, or improvisers. Or other Indigenous musicians from the Circumpolar region, who are increasingly being sought after as collaborators, and composers, and performers, within the context of settler music, that we still bring, and play, and celebrate. So, those kinds of things are still in the back of my head. I think another one that I would add would be, using space differently. So we played in a bar this time, we played in a theatre, we played outside at the city hall park, and we played in this beautiful little log cabin cafe. I have visions of different spaces in Yellowknife that are not musical spaces but sound amazing, or have a real crazy vibe. Building partnerships with those kinds of businesses or spaces to have music, again, outside of the concert hall. I think that's one of the quickest ways to let people hear things in a new way.

KS: *Is there a specific spot that's like 'music would never be played there, but I need to hear music there'?*

CB: The Buffalo Airways hangar. Buffalo Airways was the original ice pilots show. There's big DC-3s, vintage airplanes that are still used as workhorses around the NWT. It's huge, it's spacious, there's glass, the planes are amazing. So I would love to have people like, up on these crazy scaffolds around the planes, playing kind of, up? Anyways. That was one.

KS: *In terms of Longshadow being a traveling festival versus a Yellowknife festival, after doing it twice, are you more inclined to keep programming it in Yellowknife, keep people coming back to the same place, or would you love to see, you know, 'Longshadow - Dawson City', in the next few years, or something?*

CB: Oh, I'd love to go to Dawson! The Yukon's gorgeous. This festival will probably have a fairly humble next couple of years, still. Everyone's building things and figuring out how they want to work after the pandemic - funding, expectations, timing, lots of things are still feeling unsettled. So, probably not for a little while. But if the right opportunity came up, or there were different partnerships or

different people that would connect us to a place that could help that happen, of course, in a heartbeat, I'd love to.

-

“The audience is an integral part of a performance”

Silver linings from the pandemic

KS: *Obviously, the pandemic has really hindered everyone's plans. Especially for this festival that was just getting going, you know, after its first season. But I was wondering if I could flip that on its head. Have there been any silver linings? Were there any ways that, having that extra time, helped either of you, with this past season? Or was it just a hindrance?*

RU: Well, just in general, I do think there were a lot of silver linings with Covid, and I am speaking in the past tense because I really hope that we're finished with it. As a performer, I didn't ever really fully understand the role of the audience in a performance, until we didn't have them. We were playing for empty concert halls, and trying to do virtual performances. The audience is an integral part of a performance, and to have it taken away, and then to get to play for audiences again. So it was a huge learning experience, and I know a lot of my colleagues feel that way, that we've never appreciated an audience as much as we do now. It's just amazing now, when we get to play for a sold-out house, it's incredible. So I think that's a real gift. In terms of planning and everything, Carmen and I actually got to know each other quite a bit better through Covid, so that's a silver lining for sure. I was fortunate to get to commission Carmen in a solo violin piece that we worked on exclusively online, and Carmen didn't hear it live until actually last month at Longshadow. So, for sure, having more time with the music. Actually we had this all planned for, I think it was...

CB: September.

RU: Yeah, September 2021, and it got canceled at that time as well. But I would say the festival definitely continued to grow and ideas continued to develop because we had that extra time. I think if you want to look at it in a positive way, there are lots of things that we learned, and lots of things that were opportunities that came out of Covid.

KS: *A renewed sense of gratitude, maybe, in terms of the performer-audience relationship?*

RU: A hundred percent. Absolutely.

-

“It will always be something that has to change”

Finding balance

KS: *As programmers and facilitators of the festival, you're also both very busy working musicians, on your own music, your own personal expression. How do you balance these things in your careers? On one side there are more personal endeavours, on the other side, there's the desire to lift others up. Do you have any advice for those who want to do both, and to find that balance?*

CB: Having been somebody who was very supported, and I still am, by so many other people - organizations, funders, performers, ensembles, and family - it's been a journey where I've never felt alone, or that it was impossible, or that I might have to give up. There always seemed to be a way that I could move forward. So knowing that makes me want to do that for others. But I'm realizing that the work that I do on my own as a composer, when I'm writing in my own career to move myself forward, does that as well. As an example, as a woman composer, as a mother, as a person from a more remote part of the country. Just me doing that, I know has an impact. I hope it has an impact. And then to have something like this happen, where it takes a lot of time, and resources of all kinds - again, this is the second time we're doing it. I'm learning the balance. And it will always be something that has to change. You never balance all the time - balance is always kind of moving and shifting and adjusting. So there's lots of lessons to be learned from how we did this one, to balance it better. There were times when I felt unbalanced, I will happily admit. And I had to shift the balance, otherwise it was gonna become unhealthy, or untenable.

KS: *But the good thing is that you had that awareness when you felt it shift, that you can bring it back.*

CB: Sometimes. Sometimes other people had to tell me that I was going off-balance.

RU: Carmen's really good at that though, I have to say.

CB: At what, telling you when you're off-balance? (laughs)

RU: (laughs) No, no, about trying to sustain that balance, actually. It's something I admire. I feel exactly the same as Carmen, about being so fortunate and being so supported. And I would just say, again, be careful with your binaries. Because I don't think it's *or*. No musician exists in a vacuum. I think it's always *and*.

-
"We start from a small pinpoint"

Looking forward

KS: *What excites you about Canadian contemporary music in 2022? And with that, what changes and improvements do you hope to see within the industry, within the work environments?*

CB: I'm loving the increased focus that needs to continue on bringing diverse voices to the fore. Especially Indigenous voices, and especially people who have struggled with whatever their demographic is. It's giving that space deliberately, consciously, respectfully, is something that I'm so happy to see change now within my lifetime, and within the heart of what I feel is the next stage of my own musical journey. To know the people that are doing that personally is a huge thing for me. That for me, is really exciting, and needs to continue, and I think, will continue.

KS: *How about you, Robert? What do you find exciting?*

RU: Well I just think, music is for everyone. And so I think that music and our programming needs to be representative of our society. And I'd love to see that continue. I think we've made a lot of great steps, and I hope that we continue to do so. I just think, with that sensibility as we move forward, I think I'm just really excited to see how Canadian music continues to grow and develop, and what we hear. Just excited.

KS: *In terms of industry changes or improvements, overall, are there any changes that you're hoping to see? This year, next year, in ten years?*

RU: The one thing I would say - I would love to see us get away from the term 'inclusion'. And that's why I'm really careful to not use it. I like the term 'representative'. I think there's a different mentality in thinking about music being representative, rather than 'we need to include a certain group of people'. Do you see what I mean? It's like we start from a small pinpoint and then we just decide to make the point a little bit bigger, as opposed to thinking of it from a global scale, which involves many other people.

KS: *Sure. It seems to me, a bit like what we were talking about - building those connections, and then making music out of that, rather than feeling like, 'okay here's what it has to be, so now we're just grabbing random people', and forcing them into a room together, 'make beautiful music!'*

RU: Yeah.

KS: *How about you, Carmen?*

CB: I'd love to not have to fight so hard to have a creative focus be accepted, or taken as normal in things like schools, or in things like a government's budget. It seems like a fight that we have to continue to fight, to protect the way that we can make music, 'cause nobody's buying albums anymore. People don't pay as much for concerts, when concerts are able to happen. And to actually make a living, and to have young people see that they can make a living, there has to be ways that the arts of all kinds have the support they need. When it changes from government to government, or economy to economy, it's something that makes me tired now, and I'm only in my mid-thirties. I'm hoping to do this for quite a bit longer.

KS: *Are there any final thoughts, going back to Longshadow, that you'd like to let people know about? Or any quick shout outs or closing remarks?*

RU: Well first of all, Carmen made the festival, and a lot of people supported the festival. I think we were really fortunate, and I'd just like to say thank you.

CB: We had great funders, we had Prairie Debut on board as a presenting sponsor, and local companies got involved. I don't think any musician can do what they're doing without some support from their family or friends. So that was a huge thing. I was so happy but not surprised. The friendships that have now formed with the musicians, with other people in Yellowknife as well, those things for me were the best part about it. Seeing those new relationships start. I know Robert's keen to keep this relationship going and growing, so I'd sign off with a thanks to Robert.

KS: *What are friends for, and what is music for, other than connections?*

CB: Exactly!