

## RECORDING REVIEWS/ COMPTES RENDUS D'ENREGISTREMENTS

Various Artists. 2018. *Ahâk! Ahâk! Moraviamiuut Tutsiagusingit Labradorimi Inuit (Behold! Behold! Moravian Music of the Labrador Inuit)*. Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media, and Place MMAP-CD10. 1 Compact Disc, 18 tracks. Booklet in English by Tom Gordon, 33 pp.

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The recently published audio collection, *Ahâk! Ahâk! Moraviamiuut Tutsiagusingit Labradorimi Inuit (Behold! Behold! Moravian Music of the Labrador Inuit)*, produced by musicologist Tom Gordon, and issued through Memorial University of Newfoundland's Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media, and Place (MMaP), documents the complex legacy of Moravian music in the Inuit homeland of northern Labrador. Two centuries after the introduction of European choral and instrumental music by German missionaries of the Moravian church, the singing of hymns, anthems, and children's songs re-texted or composed in Inuktitut, and the playing of Moravian brass bands, have become an important part of local culture on the Labrador coast. Despite the origins of these imported European repertoires as attempts by Moravian missionaries to supersede and erase traditional Inuit musical culture, the performance of Moravian music is currently recognized as an Inuit cultural practice by the Nunatsiavut government. Over two centuries, the Moravian repertory has become indigenized, representing Inuit agency in the

face of cultural and religious colonialism.

The recordings in the collection feature over 70 years of archival and rare published recordings documenting the rich choral, band, and instrumental music traditions of the communities of Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, and Hebron, Labrador. The 18 audio tracks in the *Ahâk! Ahâk!* collection represent the breadth of Inuit Moravian musical practices: choral anthems; Protestant hymn tunes (called "melodies"); Sankeys (pieces popular in the British evangelical revival led by Ira D. Sankey and Dwight Moody in the 1870s, many of which were published in an Inuktitut hymnal, *Tuksiagalautsit* [Little Hymns], in 1900); brass band pieces; children's songs; and music associated with the celebration of Christmas. *Ahâk! Ahâk!* is the first audio collection to represent the entire range of Inuit Moravian music, making it an absolutely essential acquisition for libraries, scholars, and those interested in First Nations and Canadian history.

The collection is particularly notable for the audio quality of the recordings, especially given the diverse range of original recordings represented in this collection, which spans the 20th and 21st centuries. The historic recordings have been artfully remastered. In addition, many of the tracks feature original instruments brought by Moravian missionaries from Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including a choir of brass instruments, a collection of string instruments, and the quiet Moravian-style organs that were traditionally used to play European chamber music and anthems.

These instruments are still regularly played in Inuit Moravian communities, making these recordings valuable examples of the preservation of European material and musical culture in North America.

Another important feature of this collection is Tom Gordon's extensive commentary on the music, culture, and history of Inuit Moravians, which is published in an accompanying booklet. Thanks to his many years of working with Moravian archival records, and his own experiences performing Moravian music, Gordon's textual commentary is clear, well-researched, and adds important insights into the history behind the music featured in the collection. He has also worked with translator Rita Andersen to make all the textual information in the booklet and audio collection available in Inuktitut. In addition, Inuit musicians, knowledge bearers, and government organizations have consulted or added materials for the booklet, making this a critical and necessary contribution to the study and preservation of First Nations cultural heritage. Really, the only addition that could be made to the collection would be translations of the vocal pieces. However, the lack of translations is understandable. Setting Inuktitut words to pre-existing European music often resulted in certain linguistic distortions that are today difficult to interpret and decipher. Translating them is an ongoing, multi-year process for Gordon, Andersen, and other translators working with Inuit Moravian archival records.

The first musical selections in the *Abâk! Abâk!* collection are choral anthems, including an Inuktitut version of the chorus "The Heavens Are Telling (ImgêrKattigeKta NâlegaK nertorlugo)"

from Franz Joseph Haydn's oratorio, *The Creation*, and anthems by Moravian composers John Gambold, Christian Gregor, and Christian Ignatius Latrobe, all translated into Inuktitut. Although it is not unusual to find pieces by these composers associated with Moravian missions, since missionaries typically transmitted music from the worldwide network of Moravian communities to any new settlement, what is remarkable about these recordings are the performance practices they represent. The performance of anthems such as "ImgêrKattigeKta NâlegaK nertorlugo," sung by the Nain church choir in 1966, is syncretic. The choir's approach to the piece is founded on the tonal and compositional principles of Haydn's chorus, inflected by the rhythms of traditional Inuit drumming and the chants of the angakkuk (shaman). The vocal timbres of the choir singers are clear, evidencing little vibrato. The vocal range is high and bright, a feature sometimes described by Inuit singers as being like a violin. The voices and instruments also keep a steady rhythmic pulse characteristic of Inuit drumming traditions, where drums served to beat time, rather than differentiating between strong and weak beats, or metrically divided units of time, as is common in the performance of European choral works such as *The Creation*.

The collection also features the first choral work written by an Inuit composer, *Abâk! Abâk! Gûdipta iglunga* (Behold! Behold! The Doors of God's House Are Opened) by Natanael Illiniartitsijok. Illiniartitsijok was working directly from an Inuktitut text, and so the music more closely matches the rhythm of the words than other anthems translated from German or English. In addition to Illini-

artitsijok's composition, popular melodies and Sankeys, including "Inniksalik (Es ist noch Raum; Yet There Is Room)" by Dora Rappard and "Pairjipta Jêsusib (Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice)" by Henriette Louise von Hayn, highlight frequently performed and especially beloved repertory. The recording of "Inniksalik" is particularly notable for the improvisatory passages added by a tenor singer in the Nain church choir to some of the hymn's verses.

An audio collection that aims to represent the breadth of Inuit Moravian music would not be complete without recordings of brass band music. The collection's recordings of chorale tunes performed by the Nain Brass Band highlight the important religious, ceremonial, and social functions that brass bands served in Inuit Moravian communities throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Whether sounding from the roof of the church or processing throughout the community, brass bands played multi-part chorales for funerals, civic functions, and birthdays. They announced church services (especially the traditional Moravian procession to the graveyard on Easter morning) and the New Year, welcomed ships to port, and marked the important rituals of community life. These all-male ensembles also served as keepers of communal morality through the strict moral code required for membership.

Reminiscent of the traditional importance of brass bands in Moravian communities, the Christmas songs and anthems included in *Ahâk! Ahâk!* recall nostalgic and powerful memories of Christmas celebrations in communities such as Nain and Makkovik. Commenting upon the piece, "Unuak opinak (Silent

Night)," Miriam Igloliorte Lyall, who was interviewed for the collection, states:

When I hear ["Silent Night"] in Inuktitut, I get sad.... It's so different from somebody singing it in English. It has a different character in Inuktitut ... It's so nice. After feeling sad because I heard that song, because I'm missing my parents; I'm missing my grandparents. And then after that, then you feel the sound is so beautiful.

Lyall's comments could also apply equally to the memories of people, places, and nostalgia for childhood embedded in the children's songs in this collection, "KuvianarpoK (O How Joyful)" and "Sôg kappianartut (Jesus, Son of Mary)."

This collection is perhaps most significant as a record of processes of tradition and change in Inuit Moravian communities. In recent decades, various pre-contact musical instruments and traditions, including the *qilaut* (skin drum) and *katajjaq* (throat singing), have experienced a resurgence in interest. But these practices still tend to be viewed as musical relics of more ancient cultural ways. Of the several thousand Inuit residents on the Labrador coast, around 2,000 identify as Moravian, even if they are not church members. So, it is not surprising that many people identify with the Moravian repertory in addition to locally-composed folk and country songs in Inuktitut; fiddle and accordion music from Newfoundland; and contemporary popular music (country, rock, pop, and rap). Thomas Artiss, who recently completed an ethnography of cultural practices in Nain, has argued that this type of acceptance of external musical forms and traditions

can be explained through the Inuit idea of *ajunamat*, a sense of equanimity toward environmental forces and changes that “cannot be helped” (Artiss 2014: 35). This concept may have helped to mediate the effects of sustained colonial and missionary activity. In addition, the value of borrowing and sharing culture that is inherent in the Inuit worldview perhaps allowed Inuit Moravians to accept and even desire the inclusion of hybrid Inuit-European cultural practices in their communities. What we hear, then, in *Ahâk! Ahâk!* is not just an indigenized European repertory — that is, not just a form of syncretism — but a musical tradition that represents Inuit culture and the value of adaptation and the building of relationships and cultural ties even in the face of colonialism. ❁

## REFERENCES

- Artiss, Thomas. 2014. Music and Change in Nain, Nunatsiavut: More White Does Not Always Mean Less Inuit. *Études/Inuit/Studies* 38 (1/2): 34-52.