



Pillorikput Inuit: Inuktitut Arias for All Seasons. Deantha Edmunds, soprano, Karrie Obed, tenor, Innismara Vocal Ensemble, Suncor Energy String Quartet, Tom Gordon, organ. Independent CD, 2015. 1 compact disc (70 mins).

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Moravian missions amongst Inuit in Labrador have been the subject of scholarly inquiry in the areas of anthropology and history, with many scholars commenting on the impact of

colonization on traditional Inuit practices and the vitality of Inuit themselves.¹ Quite notable is the work of Tom Gordon, professor emeritus from Memorial University, and his team of researchers and performers in collaborating with Inuit musicians in Labrador to create the CD *Pillorikput Inuit: Inuktitut Arias for All Seasons*. Bringing to life for listeners (and readers) the rich tradition of Inuit performance of European art and church music dating from the mid-18th century onwards, *Pillorikput Inuit*—which translates to “Blessed are the People!”—shows the creativity of the Inuit in their use and adaptation of this repertoire in their language.

This CD is rich for so many reasons. Importantly, it demonstrates the ongoing valuation of these musical and liturgical practices by local Indigenous peoples and it documents the impact of church-led colonization efforts in Indigenous communities globally.² Indeed, coupled with the



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1. See Beatrix Arendt, “Caribou to Cod: Moravian Missionary Influence on Inuit Subsistence Strategies,” *Historical Archaeology* 44, no. 3 (2010): 81–101; and Hans J. Rollmann, “Hopedale: Inuit Gateway to the South and Moravian Settlement,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 28, no. 2 (2013): 153–192.

2. Sources that examine the use of art music in colonial missionary work include Geoff Baker, “Latin American Baroque: Performance as a Post-Colonial Act?” *Early Music* 36, no. 3 (2008): 441–448; María Gembero-Ustároz, “Integrating Musical Otherness in a New Social Order: Indigenous Music from Moxos, Bolivia, under Spanish Governor Lázaro de Ribera” (r.1786–1792),” *Early Music* 40, no. 2 (2012): 237–51; David R. M. Irving, “Latin American Baroque,” *Early Music* 39, no. 2 (2011): 295–298; Piotr Nawrot, “Teaching of Music and the Celebration of Liturgical Events in the Jesuit Reductions,” *Anthropos: International Review of Anthropology and Linguistics* 99, no. 1 (2004): 73–84; and Leonardo Waisman, “Urban Music in the Wilderness: Ideology and Power in the Jesuit Reducciones, 1609–1767,” in *Music and Urban Society in Colonial Latin America*, edited by Geoffrey Baker and Tess Knighton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), among others.

CBC documentary *Till We Meet Again: Moravian Music in Labrador* and the ongoing research led by Tom Gordon, this CD documents the historic impact of Moravian missions on the musical and spiritual life of Inuit in Labrador, and the creativity of resetting these pieces to suit local resources, skills and aesthetics.³ Furthermore, the contents of this recording demonstrate the role of this repertoire for language revitalization and valuation—all of the songs are in Inuktitut and the liner notes are also provided in Inuktitut.

The CD is an ambitious recording of sixteen selections for solo voice and duet with instrumental accompaniment. The repertoire has long been performed for worship on special church days or weeks, organized on the CD accordingly: Christmas (3), Married Peoples' Day (2), Palm Sunday (2), Holy Week (6), Easter (1), and the Church Anniversary Festival (2). The recordings were made based on manuscript collections found in church archives in Hopedale, Makkovik, and Nain, all Inuit communities in Labrador. The recording itself was made in St. John's, Newfoundland, yet many of the performers had travelled throughout the Inuit communities in Labrador to engage with community members and participate in the performance of some of this repertoire with local musicians.

The CD includes a mix of familiar Western art music pieces, including two arias by Handel and one by Haydn, as well as pieces that were composed for church use by Moravian composers based around Dresden and London in the 18th and 19th centuries. As Gordon has noted, while these pieces can be traced to their origins in Europe, the scores had been modified to reflect the aesthetics of local performers and the instruments on hand.⁴ Indeed, as indicated in the liner notes, multiple versions of the pieces have been found in different communities. An important feature of this repertoire is that the original texts were translated by missionaries into Inuktitut, a feat that certainly would have been a challenge due to linguistic differences, as well as profound differences in worldview.

The CD liner notes provide historic photos of an early organ in Okak and Moravian choirs in Nain in ca. 1900 and 1967, and valuable information about the context in which this repertoire was performed, as well as a few sentences about each piece. The CD case itself features a black and white photo of the Nain choir from 1905, and on the inside, a colour photo of the two Inuit

3. See Nigel Markham, *Till We Meet Again: Moravian Music in Labrador* (Lazybank Productions), originally posted on the CBC website August 4, 2012, soon to be available through the National Film Board (NFB): https://www.nfb.ca/film/till_we_meet_again_moravian_music_in_labrador/; Tom Gordon, "Found in Translation: The Inuit Voice in Moravian Music," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, no. 1 (2007): 287-314; and Jeff Green, "'Circle of Conversation': Memorial-led Partnership Yields Inuit Symposium in Labrador," *Memorial University Gazette* (28 January 2016), <https://gazette.mun.ca/research/circle-of-conversation/>, accessed 15 June 2017. See also "Circle of Conversation," *Memorial Online News*, Oct. 21, 2015, <http://today.mun.ca/news.php?id=9755>, accessed 15 June 2017.

4. "Found in Translation"; see also Tom Artiss, "Music and Change in Nain, Nunatsiavut: More White Does Not Always Mean Less Inuit," *Etudes Inuit* 38, no. 1-2 (2014): 33-52.

soloists, soprano Deantha Edmunds and tenor Karrie Obed. Song lyrics are not provided, however, so listeners who want a deeper understanding of the meanings of the text (in the original language and the Inuktitut translation) would have some individual research to do. In addition to the names of the performers and technical crew, the booklet includes biographies of the soloists, and Kellie Walsh, the director of St. John's-based Innismara Vocal Ensemble.

The recording captures the performers' enthusiasm for the repertoire: Edmunds, a classically trained soprano, offers polished interpretations, complemented by the passionate, though less-polished singing of Obed. At times the interaction between the soloists is imbalanced, yet this is easily forgivable when one considers that Obed is a tradition bearer of this repertoire, and he has sung it for decades. The instrumental ensemble, comprised of classically trained musicians in St. John's, is generally well balanced, accurate, strong, and demonstrating a good sense of style for this repertoire.

The valuing of this repertoire and its performance by Inuit and other audience members attests to its importance to Inuit in Labrador. As noted in the booklet, this "expressive practice [was] re-conceived to reflect the spirituality and aesthetic preferences of Inuit musicians" and "it was re-imagined by Inuit musicians and became a centrepiece of religious celebrations at Christmas and Easter, as well as community events throughout the year." This showcase of Inuit Moravian church music and performances is a testimony to the resilience, creativity and vitality of Inuit culture in Labrador today.

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