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Tom Gordon. Called Upstairs. Moravian Inuit Music in Labrador

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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Tom Gordon. *Called Upstairs. Moravian Inuit Music in Labrador*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 2023.

Tom Gordon's book, *Called Upstairs. Moravian Inuit Music in Labrador*, is the first published in-depth historical study of Labrador's Moravian Inuit music. Readers should be aware of the website that complements the book: www.erudit.org/en/journals/nflds/2007-v22-n1-nflds_22_1/nflds22_1art12/.The study is informed by Gordon's detailed knowledge of historical literature (Moravian manuscripts and other sources) and his knowledge of Labrador Inuit communities, having resided in one of the communities during his research. He also draws on his earlier study of the handwritten music manuscripts used in Labrador Inuit churches. In sum, this is an important contribution to the cultural history of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gordon offers a thorough presentation of a unique and significant musical tradition, one with both colonial history and community adoption/innovation. The book builds on earlier co-authored research (Rollman and Gordon 2018) while reflecting extensive additional work that Gordon undertook, studying a collection of handwritten hymn texts and working with Indigenous musicians in the community. Gordon must be especially commended for introducing readers to a number of individual Inuit musicians whose roles/contributions are discussed in the book.

The first two chapters present a thorough history of the Moravian missions including their establishment in Labrador. These chapters describe the Moravian production of hymn books and new Moravian compositions that would come to be used in Labrador. A time period

described as the "awakening" (1804–5) describes the early Inuit acceptance of Moravian beliefs and practices.

Chapter 3 extends the Moravian history. It begins with a quotation written by Moravian hymn-writer LaTrobe (who visited Labrador briefly) in which the success of the mission is proclaimed strongly, though Latrobe regrettably characterizes the Inuit as "previously barbaric" (109). The import of Moravian Christian practices (alongside their investment in trade) is described from missionary perspectives using correspondence and other documents that outline the success of their mission. The racism of this early literature is evident but *Called Upstairs* offers respect for and reflection on both Moravian and Inuit perspectives. There are, regrettably, only a few quotes from Inuit.

Chapter 4 begins with one of those quotes — by Evelyn Lidd, in which she speaks of her family's involvement in music and warmly describes the importance of the Inuit hymn tradition. The chapter focuses throughout on Inuit practices, some of which, such as roof-top performances by all-male brass bands and their performances to welcome visitors, developed as unique Inuit initiatives. Gordon acknowledges that the role of women was "in the shadows at best." The chapter describes Inuit agency to a large extent: choir festival days that were often associated with community dedications, the welcoming of visitors as mentioned, and local visiting that contributed to social cohesion. Inuit men assumed leadership roles within the church although they were carefully observed by the Moravians and sometimes accused of offending Moravian morality. This points to the Moravians' continuing role in social regulation more generally. Challenging events such as the devastating flu epidemic of 1918, the intergenerational trauma of residential schools that "tarnished the brass bands'" status, and the relocation of Hebron residents are referenced briefly.

Chapters 5 through 7 describe the leadership roles assumed, increasingly over time, by local Inuit in their schools, churches, and creative musical initiatives. Chapter 5 recounts how Inuit assumed leadership within the church, while also facing reprimands if their behavior pushed the boundaries of leadership that the Moravians

defined and expected. Letters were written on the keyboard of the organ in the local church to encourage new players to learn. A hymn book found a place in many homes. Inuit both copied and composed music. The chapters unfold a complicated history with thoroughness and respect for diverse points of view.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus more directly on the music repertoire itself, describing how the handwritten manuscripts of hymns enable memory, literacy, and transmission. A composition known to be created by Inuk composer Natanael Illiniartitsjok reflects what Gordon describes as "musical sensibilities that are emphatically non-European" (319). Gordon is confident that other Indigenous compositions were surely created. Additionally, he observes how copyists made changes, at times, to recast various hymns. These manuscripts also enable analyses of current repertoire and the Indigenization of performance styles.

This book is well-written and accessible for the varied readership it will undoubtedly attract. While it reflects the exigencies of academic writing — with thorough referencing — some photographs have no sources indicated, perhaps because those sources are unknown. While the Bibliography is extensive and includes scholarship on Moravian music in Indigenous communities elsewhere, there are few references in the body of the book to the work of scholars who study Moravian hymnody in other colonized regions (e.g., Brice Bennett, Eyerly, or Boonzaaier). These studies might have been useful points of comparison in order to assess the similarities and differences among different Moravian Indigenous communities. Perhaps this will be a topic for a different publication by Gordon.

What we don't encounter in this book is any comparison with Inuit practices in neighbouring communities, especially where recent revivals of traditional Inuit practices are taking place. Drum dancing has been widely reanimated by many Inuit in other Labrador communities (and elsewhere in Canada, including St. John's), and traditions of singing as well as "throat singing" (an unusual spelling as "katatjak" is used in the book) are also vibrant at present. Throat singing is mentioned in a few instances but not as a current practice in the communities studied.

I wonder to what extent contemporary Moravian influence still defines/restricts the local culture? Or, if there are revivals of Inuit traditions (as in these other Newfoundland and Labrador communities), could they have been more fully acknowledged?

In his own words, Gordon's treatment of Moravian history "should not be characterized simply by a list of historic wrongs and enduring tragedies" (53). His focus on Indigenous agency, especially in the later chapters, is a significant and laudable choice. In sum, this is a thorough and beautifully written book of great importance.

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