**Adaskin, Murray (1906-2002)**

Jeremy Strachan

Born at Toronto, Ontario and died at Victoria, British Columbia, Murray Adaskin was a violinist, composer, and academic whose music was widely performed in Canada. Adaskin was violinist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra from 1926-36, and held senior academic and administrative positions at the University of Saskatchewan (1952-73) and the Canada Council for the Arts (1966-69). His compositional style largely avoids allegiance to modern and experimental currents of the twentieth century, and balances conservatism and lyricality with atonal and folk elements. An expedition to Canada’s arctic to record Inuit singing in 1965 proved influential to Adaskin, and resulted in several works, including *QALALA AND NILAULA OF THE NORTH*, (1969 for small orchestra), *RANKIN INLET* (1978 for piano duo), and *ESKIMO MELODIES* (1980 for piano). Adaskin wrote that he hoped his music would “someday be recognized for its Canadian flavour” and much of his programmatic oeuvre dedicates itself to regional and national topics. His chamber opera based on the Metis fur trader *GRANT, WARDEN OF THE PLAINS* was commissioned for Canada’s centenary of 1967. Along with brothers John (1908-1964) and Harry (1901-1994) the Adaskins were significant influences on the cultivation of art music in Canada during the postwar period.

**Selected Works**

*SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO*, 1946

*CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA*, 1956

*ALGONQUIN SYMPHONY*, 1957

*SASKATECHWAN LEGEND*, 1959

*GRANT, WARDEN OF THE PLAINS*, 1967

*OF MAN AND THE UNIVERSE*, 1967

*QALALA AND NILAULA OF THE NORTH*, 1969

*THERE IS MY PEOPLE SLEEPING*, 1970

*NOOTKA RITUAL*, 1974

*DUO FOR VIOLA AND GUITAR*, 1996

**Photo**



Source: <http://dev.musiccentre.ca/sites/www.musiccentre.ca/files/imagecache/showcase_image/resources/images/RSN_headshot2_62183_adaskin_img.jpg>

**Links**

Adaskin’s biography and link to his works, including archival recordings, through the Canadian Music Centre:

<http://www.musiccentre.ca/influences/composer.cfm?authpeopleid=494&themeid=2>

An annotated guide to Adaskin’s complete catalogue of music, edited by Gordana Lazarevich and Robyn Cathcart:

<http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/300/dolce_publications/murray_adaskin/Adaskin_catalogue_web.pdf>

Adaskin’s personal page on CBC Music:

<http://music.cbc.ca/#/artists/Murray-Adaskin>

**References**

(1964) *Thirty-Four Biographies of Canadian Composers*,Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation International Service. (A brief bilingual overview of Adaskin is included, along with a selected works list.)

Beckwith, J. and MacMillan, K. (eds.) (1975) *Contemporary Canadian Composers*, Toronto: Oxford. (Summative entry on Adaskin by pianist William Aide, chronicling his life and work.)

Lazarevich, G. (1988) *The Musical Worlds of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Comprehensive monograph on Adaskin’s life and music, with musical examples, in-depth biographical history, and broader discussion on the composer’s career.