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**Gordana Lazarevich. *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. x. 331 pp.**

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he must have thought that his life was almost over. Although he did not know it, a new and far more fruitful life was about to begin.

Gaynor G. Jones

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GORDANA LAZAREVICH. *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. x. 331 pp.

As suggested by her title, Gordana Lazarevich recounts the careers of Frances James and Murray Adaskin “with reference to the social, political, and cultural circumstances that affected them.” And indeed, the somewhat self-contained chapters 3 and 4 (*The Canadian performer in the 1940s; A Canadian composer in the 1940s*) might be sobering reading for today’s aspiring performers and composers who on one hand will gain an appreciation of the challenges faced four decades ago, but on the other may lament what appear to be lesser opportunities now, particularly for cross-country touring (no matter if poorly paid) and CBC employment and exposure. Perhaps it remains for a sociologist to determine whether the situation in the late 1980s is demonstrably superior to “perhaps the most difficult time in Canadian cultural history.”

In Dr. Lazarevich’s estimation, the correspondence in 1948 between Frances James and Ward French, President of the Community Concert Series, “documents an incident of considerable importance in Canadian cultural history.” The plight of the performer in the United States was not entirely dissimilar, however, for as Abram Chasins observed in *Leopold Stokowski — A Profile*, “around 1930 (Arthur) Judson acquired a subtle stranglehold on the concert business through Columbia Artists Management” and had “firm control over the musical activities and destinies of many famous orchestras, conductors, and soloists . . . this meant not only where they played but also what.”

That artists elsewhere may have languished under monopolistic practises in no way detracts from the achievements of Frances or Murray Adaskin; indeed their integrity, perseverance and artistry resulted in an enduring contribution to Canadian cultural life both directly and through countless others whose talents they nurtured.

Murray too could rise to a challenge, for in 1952 he almost singlehandedly raised funds for a Toronto Symphony concert of music by the newly formed Canadian League of Composers of which he was one of eight founding members.

Although it was not Dr. Lazarevich’s intent to provide a detailed technical analysis of Murray Adaskin’s music, Chapter 6 is an overview of “The Compositions of the Saskatoon period”, 35 musical examples of which appear in an appendix. Other appendices offer a catalogue of Adaskin’s compositions, “First or early performances

given by Frances James of works by Canadian composers”, and the “Content of air-check discs recorded by Frances James for the CBC.” These, as well as photos, a bibliography and an index will be valuable not only to the general reader but also to performers attracted by this biography to compositions of Murray Adaskin and the many others Frances James introduced to the Canadian public.

When Mary Frances James (1903–1988) and Murray Adaskin (b. 1906) married in Banff in 1931, Frances was the star lyric soprano in Banff ballad operas and in festivals at Canadian Pacific hotels throughout Canada. Born in New Brunswick and educated in Montreal, James — having met John Murray Gibbon, the general publicity manager for the Canadian Pacific Railway (“this country’s first cultural organization”) — had been employed at Banff and Lake Louise beginning in the summer of 1925 as tourist information clerk and singer.

A native of Toronto, Murray left public school at 15 to pursue violin studies full-time. Movie-houses, department stores, theatres and hotels engaged chamber groups or orchestras during the 1920s and Murray was active as performer and ensemble leader. Invited by Harold Eustace Key, the head of music for CPR hotels to be official violinist for the Banff Springs Hotel, Murray assumed that position in the summer of 1930.

After their marriage Frances James and Murray Adaskin continued to perform during summers at the Banff Springs Hotel until its closing in 1941 for the war years. During winters Frances toured throughout Canada as solo and chamber music artist with repertoire ranging from folk-songs and European art-songs to twentieth-century works; she appeared also as soloist in large choral works. The Banff Springs Trio (later the Toronto Trio) with Murray as violinist and leader was formed in 1932, performing in Banff and at Toronto’s Royal York Hotel (1938–52).

During the 1930s Frances and Murray broadcast extensively on the CBC and its predecessor, the CNR (Canadian National Railway Co.). When employment for musicians collapsed with the demise of silent films, instrumentalists such as Murray made their livelihood from radio orchestras and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

After several short-lived attempts at studying composition, Murray Adaskin began lessons with John Weinzweig in 1946; in the summers of 1949, 1950 and 1953 he studied with Darius Milhaud with whom he established a warm friendship. Meanwhile Frances Adaskin throughout the 1940s introduced approximately 65 songs by 18 Canadian composers and gave the first Canadian performance and the first Canadian broadcast of Paul Hindemith’s *Das Marienleben*.

In 1952 the Adaskins moved to Saskatoon where Murray had been engaged to develop and head a music program at the University of Saskatchewan. As Lazarevich states, Murray Adaskin became “the driving force behind a Prairie renaissance of the arts”, although notable contributions were made in other prairie locales by, among others, Richard Eaton, Howard Leyton-Brown and Lorne Watson.

Murray taught composition and music appreciation and instituted a remarkable series of Sunday Evening Recitals which continued until his retirement and move to Victoria

in 1973. (He had continued as Department head until 1966 when he was appointed composer-in-residence.) Although Frances Adaskin's performing career was curtailed by the move to Saskatoon, she continued some CBC broadcasting and became as she described it "a teacher of singing and a singer on the side."

Their retirement years in Victoria showed no slackening of activities, both having teaching associations with the Victoria Conservatory of Music and the University of Victoria. (One Adaskin piano work, *Ontario Variation*, has not quite "suffered an obscure fate", for it — along with variations by Hugh Hartwell, Godfrey Ridout and R. Murray Schafer — was performed by this reviewer and composer of the theme at the Canadian University Music Society's conference at the University of Guelph in 1984; other performance locales have included London, Ontario and San Diego, California.)

This book is engaging, and though occasionally the reader might wish for greater detail or depth (and may spot the rare misprint or identification error — "John" Ward should be Robert Ward), some sense of Murray's "passion" does shine through. Perhaps the reader will be impelled (as was I) to listen to the Radio Canada International Anthology of Canadian Music devoted to works of Murray Adaskin from 1946 to 1981, among them a two-minute gem of Frances James performing with admirable clarity and diction Murray's *Epitaph* on a text of Apollinaire.

Through these and other recordings, and now this admirable biography which captures both the artistic and human dimensions of Frances James and Murray Adaskin, their legacy which should inspire future generations is assured.

Jack Behrens

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CATHERINE CLÉMENT. *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Foreword by Susan McClary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 201 pp.

Despite the adoption of feminist criticism as a viable analytical method within literary and film studies, musicology still approaches gender issues with apprehension. Because publications have applied feminist perspectives to the study of "folk" and sociological "popular" musics within the last decade, one might have expected historical musicology to follow the trend. That, however, has not been the case, and there is a surprising paucity of feminist criticism in this discipline.

The few existing musicological-feminist texts are either anthologies or source readings describing the role of female composers and performers. There has been little delving into a feminist critique of the image of women in music. One notable exception,