Biography of William Hoskins
BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM HOSKINS
J.U.'s Composer-in-Residence

William Hoskins, who has been Jacksonville University's Composer-in-Residence since 1960, is a native Floridian; he was born at Fort Pierce Farms in 1917. His mother was a pianist and music teacher; his father played violin; both encouraged his early interest in music. He received his primary and secondary education and his early musical training in West Virginia, and did his undergraduate collegiate work at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, where he was a pupil in composition of Normand Lockwood.

After further study with Otto Luening and William Mitchell at Columbia, and a summer of work with Nadia Boulanger, he taught for two years at West Virginia University. In 1948 he moved to Jacksonville, becoming Director of Composition and Theory at Jacksonville College of Music. In 1954 he became president of that institution, and in that capacity he helped in arranging the merger with Jacksonville Junior College. The two institutions merged to become the present Jacksonville University in 1958, and Prof. Hoskins served as Dean of the J.U. College of Music from that year through 1961 when the present College of Fine Arts was formed with Dr. Frances Kinne as its dean.

During the 1950's and 1960's Prof. Hoskins had been active in composition and performance; he also served as an officer in both Florida Composers League and Southeastern Composers League. His most popular work of the 1950's was Israfel, a Symphonic Ode
for chorus and orchestra, which received nine performances (two in Jacksonville) and an international broadcast. In the same period his Concert Overture No. 1 received six performances (one in Jacksonville); his major piano work Variations on a Random Theme was performed by several different pianists and won critical acclaim in Washington. The 1960's witnessed performances of his String Quartet No. 1 and the Elegy for string quartet; also the Sonata for Brass Quartet (included in a record album by Golden Crest) and two large choral works: The Search for Christmas, written for and performed by the J.U. Chorus under Edward Bryan, and Requiem for the Six Million, with text by Charles White McGehee. Many smaller works such as the Queensboro Suite for two pianos and the Canon Suite for two trumpets and piano, were also written and performed during these years.

In the 1950's Prof. Hoskins collaborated with pianist Hans Barth by writing an intermezzo, Kaleidoscope, for inclusion in an album of quarter-tone music for Barth's experimental two-keyboard piano. This was an early expression of a persistent interest, on Hoskins' part, in experimental music. In 1961, after retiring from administrative work, Prof. Hoskins wrote a memo urging the creation of a laboratory of experimental music at J.U.; he also corresponded with Richard Dorf, of Schober Organs, concerning the possibility of building a quarter-tone electronic organ. Before these plans came to fruition, however, word began to reach J.U. about new electronic instruments called "synthesizers". IN 1967 Prof. Hoskins visited Robert Moog, the pioneer in this field, at Trumansburg; in 1968, with the enthusiastic support of Dean Kinne, he began planning an electronic music studio for J.U.; and in Oct. 1968 the
J.U. College of Fine Arts received its Moog Synthesizer and proudly opened the doors of the first collegiate electronic music studio in Florida.

As Director of Electronic Music, Prof. Hoskins embarked on a second composing career in this new medium, writing and realizing a complete new electronic score for Ibsen's Peer Gynt, four Stereo Suites, two ballets, a score for a movie, suites and concertinos for "live" instruments with synthesizer, and the large works, Galactic Fantasy and Eastern Reflections. Other large works included the Dialogs for chorus and synthesizer, the Passacaglia: Prayer for Mankind; and several works intended for sound/light presentation, including ColorsSpin Rondo and Polychrome Suite. These latest works form a part of Prof. Hoskins' collaboration with J.U. Art Chairman S. Barre Barrett and with off-campus artist Jon Darling, in the creation of a multimedia form which they have christened "Lumasonics".

From 1948 to the present year, Prof. Hoskins has also functioned as a full-time teacher of theory and composition. Beginning in 1979 he asked for, and received, part-time status at J.U.; he is continuing his work in teaching composition and electronic music, and is using his free time in the editing and revision of his entire output, as well as the planning of several new works.

The release of a new recording of his electronic works by Spectrum represents the fulfillment of a dream—of reaching a wider audience—which he says he has harbored ever since the invention of the LP.