

Explorations in Sights and Sounds, No. 13 (1993)

William K. Powers. *War Dance: Plains Indian Musical Performance.* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990) xx, 199 pp., \$24.95 cloth.

This book on Plains Indian music and dance goes far beyond its geographically indicated target. It provides an instructive view of musical performances as a paradigm for understanding cultural continuity and change not only among American Indians in general but, I submit, many other ethnic and minority groups. Powers's discussion includes descriptive material pertaining to the movements and costumes involved in Plains Indian tribal and intertribal dances. He also reviews and critiques a number of available audio tapes and records which should be of special interest to readers of *Sights and Sounds*.

Powers draws upon his thirty years of ethnographic study, ethnomusicological analysis, and participant observation in the subject about which he writes. Since many sections of the book are reprinted or revised versions presented and/or published elsewhere (especially in the journal *Ethnomusicology* and *American Indian Tradition*), each chapter can stand alone. But Powers has drawn the material together in a meaningful way with a lucid and succinct introduction, a challenging final chapter (cleverly entitled "Have Drum, Will Travel"), informative chapter notes, an extensive bibliography, and useful index.

For those interested primarily in the narrower topic, Powers provides a good deal of information pertaining to previous studies of Plains Indian music and dance, various typological frameworks, kinds of musical instruments used, and regional variations in costumes. There are also clear descriptions of the morphology of songs, the formats of powwows, and the structure of the War Dance which is the dance form most widely practiced at intertribal gatherings.

At a more general level, Powers's discussion is particularly intriguing since it deals with aspects of American Indian culture which outsiders can observe with relative ease, especially at powwows which are generally open to the public. These opportunities offer insights and a gauge to other aspects of the cultural system which are more private but nonetheless parts of the evolving historical continuity. In vehemently eschewing the term and conceptual underpinnings of "Pan-Indianism," Powers distinguishes between tribalism and intertribalism among American Indians. Although the two are often intermixed at powwows and other arenas, their goals are distinct. Powers argues that "Tribalism reinforces ethnic identity," and relates music and dance to other social and cultural categories which are meaningful within individual tribes. Intertribal music and dance reinforce American Indian identity at a higher level

where this identity is directly threatened by "non-Indian influences" (40-41). Thus we can look at music and dance as they operate both within and between groups of American Indians and see some different though related functions being achieved in regard to individual and group identities.

Central to Powers's presentation is the conviction that Plains Indian music and dance are not remnants of a dying culture. They are rather vibrant expressions of an ongoing tradition which has roots in the past and which, as all aspects of cultural systems, is constantly changing. With no apologies for my pun, Powers's viewpoint is upbeat. In his words, "What we are witnessing today in the form of tribal and intertribal events is not so much a revival or revitalization as it is a *vitalization* of American Indian culture" (159). This conclusion could no doubt be applied with profit to many other human groups as well.

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Robert Rotenberg and Gary McDonogh, eds. *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*. (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993) 224 pp., \$16.95 paper.

The chapters presented here are searching for the basis for ascribing social and cultural values to the cityscape and the built urban environment.

So begins *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*, a compilation of urban case studies edited by Robert Rotenberg, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the International Studies Program at DePaul University, and Gary W. McDonogh, Visiting Professor and Director of the Growth and Structure of Cities Program at Bryn Mawr. These twelve very diverse chapters attempt to understand the construction of an urban landscape from the cultural and social perspectives of those groups that experience and manipulate the landscape. It is the "discourses" of those groups that give meaning and structure to the landscape:

A discourse focuses on a subset of experiences for a group within a large body of social experiences. The idea of discourse enables us to break up the unwieldy idea of culture into smaller, definable units. Each set relates to particular groups of people, such as conquistadors, urban planners, commercial developers, gardeners or neighborhood residents. As people participate in the