Ojibway Music From Minnesota: a Century of Song for Voice and Drum

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Book Notices


REVIEWED BY WILLIAM K. POWERS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

This recording of tribal music of the Great Lakes, part of the Minnesota Musical Tradition series, is a welcome addition to the study of Native American music in general. Its compiler and author, Thomas Vennum, Jr., senior ethnomusicologist, Office of Folklife Programs, Smithsonian Institution, has made an excellent selection of historic and contemporary Ojibwa songs and singers.

The album contains a total of fifteen songs. The first five on side A were recorded live at the First Annual Bemidji International Indian Fair, August, 1988, and represent contemporary powwow songs of the Kingbird Singers, Leech Lake Intertribal Singers, WhiteFish Bay Singers, Ponemah Ramblers, and Red Lake Singers, and provide a good cross-section of popular Ojibwa music. Also featured are a Dream Song from 1910 and a Woman’s Dance Song recorded by the Ponemah Singers in 1972. Side B contains two moccasin game songs recorded in 1899 and 1988; a story song about Winabozho and the Ducks; three love songs, one recorded in 1899, the others in 1971; and two popular urban songs by Keith Secola, sung in Ojibwa with modern accompaniment.

The album is accompanied by a fifteen-page pamphlet containing “The Anatomy of a Powwow: Bemidji,” an ethnographic description of the powwow whose songs are featured on the album. It also includes useful information on the dream song, moccasin (or hand) game songs, story songs, love songs, and contemporary urban popular music. Vennum points out that the continuity and change of Ojibwa music is enunciated by the fact that the songs recorded here come from a variety of sources, such as wax discs, reel-to-reel tape, cassettes, and digital recording in sound studios. Despite the advances in technology, traditional songs remain true to Ojibwa history, and even popular singers acknowledge tribal influence on their
music. The pamphlet is handsomely illustrated with photographs of
singers and dancers, and with excellent translations of Ojibwa texts.

The album and pamphlet should find wide usage among ele-
mentary and high school teachers, as well as college courses focusing
on Native American culture. Of course, the Ojibwa people themselves
should delight in discovering that their music lives not only within
their own tradition but within the larger American society.

"Yours for the Revolution": The “Appeal to Reason,” 1895-1922, edited by
John Graham. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. xii, 332
pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. $19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD W. JUDD, UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

The socialist press was a major force in American political culture
prior to World War I. The most successful socialist newspaper was the
Appeal to Reason, founded by Julius A. Wayland and published
between 1897 and 1922 in Girard, Kansas. With a paid circulation of
760,000 in 1913 and single-issue printings reaching as high as 4.1 mil-
lion, the paper dwarfed the circulations of all but a few popular peri-
odicals. The story of the Appeal is significant in its own right, but more
important is the light this collection of Appeal articles sheds on the
rank-and-file activities of a complex and diverse midwestern socialist
movement.

Of particular interest to Iowa readers is the section on the “land
question.” The Appeal’s primary readership came from the vast trans-
Mississippi West, where resentment over rising tenancy, railroad
rates, crop liens, foreclosures, and land grabs fueled socialist senti-
ment in numerous small towns. The Appeal was at its best in blending
indigenous midwestern values, the legacy of Populism, and socialist
analysis. Thus the articles reveal not only the essence of heartland
radicalism, but also much about the midwestern popular ethos. In
addition, this section provides a richly textured picture of life on the
land, drawn by staff writers, socialist organizers, and by the farmers
themselves.

Yours for the Revolution offers a marvelous cross-section of analy-
sis, opinion, and observation on midwestern radicalism, and fits into
a growing literature on grass-roots American socialism. The articles
are arranged chronologically within each section, which promotes a
mild sense of déjà vu as the reader passes from section to section, but
demonstrating the evolving socialist perspective in each topic makes
this arrangement imperative. Graham’s carefully chosen selections
reveal the mentality of rank-and-file radicals, and above all, the abid-