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**Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music.** By Lynn Whidden. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007. 174 pages. \$85.00 cloth.

Lynn Whidden's slender tome, *Essential Song: Three Decades of Cree Music*, disguises a concentrated work built on thirty years of fieldwork, research, and pedagogy in the Canadian north. In *Essential Song*, the author seeks to provide the first detailed ethnomusicology of the northern Cree of Chisasibi, Quebec, and Thompson, Manitoba. Whether Whidden intended to build on Allan Merriam's imperative to explore the "total musical culture" of these Cree groups remains unstated, but she provides the reader an insightful glimpse into several representative Cree genres including traditional hunting and shaking tent songs, hymn and fiddle songs, country music, and powwow. The language is straightforward and accessible to the layperson, but it is nonetheless a volume of primary interest to specialist ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, or musicologists instructing at the university level.

*Essential Song* is at its core a straightforward work about culture change, an issue that has held the interest of social scientists since our earliest research on indigenous North American music. This central theme is reflected most clearly in the book's broad organization, which progresses both chronologically and thematically from "traditional" musical forms (hunting songs), to syncretized forms (for example, Christian hymnody), to more recent introductions resulting from our shared position within global capitalist modernity (country music and powwow). Through the examination of these representative song forms, the text presents an established historical narrative of the cultural change and concomitant loss that arose from the contacts between Europeans and Native North Americans. Whidden supplies some tantalizing suggestions regarding historical practices of intertribal musical exchange and influence.

A good deal of Whidden's research focuses on the historical and cultural contexts of performance—as an element of the hunt, a vehicle for indigenous Cree belief, as reflective of intercultural exchange, for example—as well as the function that song fulfills within the lives of its Cree creators, performers, and consumers. The author adeptly draws on the fundamental tools of the ethnomusicologist and provides numerous song transcriptions and English translations of Cree text in order to specify these larger thematic points within the context of musical practice. Using comparative musical analysis and song transcription, in particular, Whidden convincingly establishes the tenacious continuity of a Cree musical aesthetic across time.

The supporting audio CD is a particularly useful aspect of *Essential Song* that makes the sounds of the Northern Cree accessible for educators well south of the US-Canadian border. Embedded in chapter 3, "Song and Survival" is a finely developed section on traditional Cree hunting-song aesthetics and form (67–74). This section on song form is valuable to world-music instructors in that it reveals some telltale details of Cree song craft through the analysis of the "Partridge Song," as performed by one of the author's ethnographic collaborators, George Pepabano. Analytical passages such as these can often

be convoluted and dense, yet Whidden's language is direct and informative. To reinforce her narrative, she provides in support not only an illustrative transcription but also an audio selection on the accompanying disc. Her analysis is driven home a few pages later, where she reiterates the essential aesthetic ingredients of the Cree hunting song and again links these concepts to visual (in the form of another transcription) and audio support (73–74). With thorough development and reinforcement, the reader is empowered with the ability to recognize and understand hunting-song musical form. Here, *Essential Song* proved its merit to this classroom instructor.

Two organizational problems complicate reader comprehension of passages within the central and most analytical chapter, "Song and Survival," however. Both arise from a general absence of important theoretical and methodological details in the introduction. First, song headings within the written narrative do not direct the reader to the corresponding track on the audio CD, as might be presumed. Rather, the reader must first refer to appendix 2 in order to determine that song 14 is counterintuitively located on track 8 of the accompanying CD (132–51). The reasoning behind this process is explained nowhere in the author's narrative. Second, song-selection headings are typically followed by textual passages that, as a music analyst, I initially presumed to be translations of song text. On the contrary, I deduced from grammatical cues that these passages were instead spoken summaries of lyrical content provided by her Cree partners. In this instance, the author failed to alert the reader to this important information (so necessary to contextualizing the presented data) until long after the reader had first encountered this idiosyncratic format (64). On the one hand, these problems are organizational and easily remedied by the insertion of a brief section in the introduction addressing the presentation format of listening examples within the text, the author's method of classification in the appendix, and the process for identifying the corresponding disc track within the appendix narrative. On the other hand, nonacademic readers (such as the Cree community members and broader North American readership that Whidden hopes to inform) will find it hard to link and understand textual and audio elements fully without sufficient attention to such details early in the text.

Whidden tackles more recent musical imports and adaptations including hymn song, country music, and Plains powwow in a suite of complementary articles that close out the book. Her chapter on Christian hymnody contributes to a growing body of scholarship that increasingly views hymn song as an imperiled "traditional" musical expression. The author's study of more recent popular music forms such as country music is an established thread within her oeuvre, and she provides here a refined contribution to a topic contemporary ethnomusicologists are tackling with greater (and necessary) frequency. The two chapters dedicated to powwow provide further detail to a body of scholarship analyzing indigenous North America's most prominent musical practice, particularly as it is adapted to fit within a non-Plains performance context. These chapters are essentially historical in nature, less analytical than the passages on hunting songs, and more personal in their reliance on ethnographic vignette and description.

Whidden's command of language is at times gently powerful. The pages of *Essential Song* display a knack for descriptions of northern life and music making that remains free from authorial indulgence and true to the instructive intent of her scholarship. This skill is evident from the earliest pages in which she describes deliciously the soundscape of the Canadian north in spring (1). Another fine example is her section on the Goose Dance, a couple's dance no longer practiced by the Cree. Despite its relevance in connecting Cree song craft to the northern Canadian environment, Whidden relegates some of her most potent and gently affectionate descriptive material on the Goose Dance to a footnote at the back of the book (20n3). Other passages such as her elaboration on Cree song as traditional ecological knowledge and a tool of survival for the northern hunter sparkle with concentrated clarity (49–50).

Respect for community-based knowledge and Native North American agency is important in Whidden's writings. Her customary desire to highlight the perspectives of Cree musicians is evident throughout the text. The selective and ingenious adaptation of nonindigenous musical forms is likewise an apparent subtheme throughout *Essential Song*. More personally, I think that Whidden's informative statements on pre- and early-contact intertribal exchanges between the Inuit, Ojibwe, and Cree groups are perhaps the author's most fruitful subthemes. Whidden states clearly that her work is primarily interested in exploring the impact of European music on Cree music making (31). But her fleeting development of regional Northern Canadian intertribal reciprocity provides an insightful counterclaim against the aphorism in which indigenous people "walk in two worlds"—a claim challenged by Vine Deloria, contemporary artists such as Bob Haozous, and the cosmopolitan border-crossing and cultural dynamism of pre- and early-contact peoples. By threading this subtheme into her broader narrative, shaped during her past three decades of research, Whidden gently raises an important issue on which the next generation of scholars should contemplate in the coming thirty years.

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**First Families: A Photographic History of California Indians.** By L. Frank and Kim Hogeland. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2007. 283 pages. \$23.95 paper.

L. Frank and Kim Hogeland's historic compilation offers its readers a warm and personal look at Native California through an immense collection of mostly private family photographs. L. Frank and Marina Drummer collected pictures and stories that depict several generations of Native families from every part of the state. In all, the book boasts nearly 1,500 images and numerous brief anecdotes from the photo albums and homes of California Indian families. Kim Hogeland served as the organizer for the collected photographs and stories and contributed contextualizing essays loosely connected to the gathered materials. Hogeland's chapters also reflect a division of the state into