

BOOK REVIEWS

Ruth Hamm, Editor

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THE LISTENING BOOK **Discovering Your Own Music** **by W. A. Mathieu** **Shambhala, 1991. \$13.00**

In his introduction to *The Listening Book*, Mr. Mathieu suggests the reader skip around freely among this captivating collection of brief essays, not only within each section but randomly throughout the book. I strongly concur. The five sections, entitled "Listening," "Joining In," "Practicing," "The Sound Connection" and "Practices and Big Ears," have brief but widely divergent essays in each section. According to the author, "they are arranged linearly from passive to active... from awareness and appreciation of everyday sounds to participation in musical practices."

But this little book is that and more: a delicious smorgasbord of words illuminating feelings, thoughts and reactions, not only to our environment but to our hopes and strivings. It not only greatly intensifies our awareness of sounds around us, but also those sounds we can produce, and even of which we may dream. There are moments of singular beauty in the writing and an imaginativeness that reveals an author of acute sensitivity. The reader will be inspired to further cultivate his or her own potential and to reach out and beyond previous boundaries.

-Jacobeth Postl, Illinois

CHIPMUNKS, CICADAS **AND OWLS** **by Natalie Sarrazin** **Schott, 1996. \$9.95**

This Schott Supplement to the American edition of *Music for Children* consists of twelve songs from five Native American tribes: the Southeast Creek, Plains Sioux, Northwest Skagit and Snoqualmi, and the Southwest Hopi. The songs are archival, collected forty to fifty years ago and housed at the Library of Congress. The author asks us to view them as historical examples. Because the Indian photographs in the publication are from the collections at the Smithsonian Institution taken in the early part of this century, they also are not a depiction of Indian life as it is today, but rather the conditions of an earlier era. The pictures represent stereotypes no longer typical, though unfortunately many people still harbor these misconceptions.

Although some Native people have been grouped into areas of proximity, it should be noted that this does not necessarily mean similarity. Sarrazin makes reference to the Hopi, the Zuni, the Navajo and the Pueblo. These people are all located in the southwestern United States, but the only major similarity is that they all live in close-knit groups. There are many Pueblo Indian tribes with different languages and tradition and individual Pueblo names.

The presentation of material in the book seems sketchy, and in some cases confusing. For example, in the book's lesson from the Southeast, there is a list of the names for the numerals one to ten used presently by the Muskogee Creek tribe. If we try to hear these

names within the songs as the author suggests, we are handicapped by the lack of a clue as to their pronunciation. (The author does tell us that the words in the three short counting songs are phoneticized.)

What is the subject matter of the Indian text in the Sioux song presented in the book? We have no inkling, other than the suggestion that the singing style show that the "timbre is warm, almost like a lullaby."

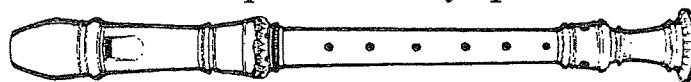
The Snoqualmi song, we are told, is a lullaby. There are no words; therefore, we may assume it is to be hummed. The author suggests it be "sung at a rather fast tempo." There are verbal instructions indicating tempo in two other songs. Only one of the twelve songs has a metronomic marking.

The teacher does have a hint to the meaning of the hunchback boy's song in the Northwest Coastal Skagit story, though it has no translation. It is suggested in the story. Perhaps the teacher might have students create a variety of their own ideas of its meaning as an extension to the story.

The author emphasizes how exceptional the aural acuity of Native people must be due to their auricular tradition. Indeed, until the proliferation of tape

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recorders this was true. Years ago, as Indian children began to talk and walk they began to learn the native music and dance through imitation. Today one finds Indians taping their heritage, since they realize their traditions are in danger of being lost.

The verbal description the author gives to imitate the timbre of the vocal sounds for these Indian songs is a valiant attempt, but it is crucial that the authentic sound be heard, for both the unique quality produced by American Indian voices and for aid in pronunciation. Though she mentions that recordings and videos are available, there is no bibliography to help the teacher make a proper choice.

The paucity of suggestions for instruction and the limited information may be a handicap for some teachers using these materials. Perhaps the book will tempt teachers especially to examine our Native peoples' music and dance in much greater depth, as well as to become acquainted with their elegant companion arts and crafts, such as painting, sculpture, pottery, weaving, beadwork, basketry, jewelry and flute making, and other art interests.

-Madelyn Schnick, New Mexico

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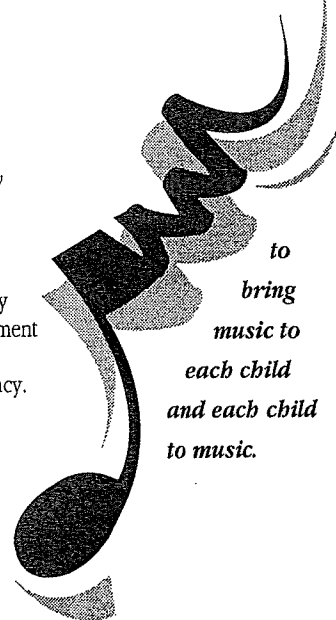
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