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Spring 2003

Review of *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* By Tara Browner

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Ellis, Clyde, "Review of *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* By Tara Browner" (2003). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2381.

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Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow. By Tara Browner. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002. xii + 163 pp. Map, photographs, illustrations, figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.

Powwows have been a powerful expression of cultural identity in Indian country for much of the past century. Adaptive and innovative, they are good examples of how some Native people simultaneously maintain connections to tradition and embrace new trends, but their history and meaning have received relatively limited attention. In this slim volume, Tara Browner combines an insider's perspective with a scholarly bent to give readers an informative account of Northern Plains powwow ways.

Browner begins by situating Northern Plains powwows in a broad historical context, but

her interpretation will likely raise some eyebrows. Unlike virtually every other scholar who has discussed the powwow's origins, Browner rejects the notion that nineteenth-century Plains dance societies diffused patterns that eventually produced the powwow. She is especially critical of Clark Wissler (whom she says misunderstood the Omaha Dance and the Grass Dance), but extends her critique to more recent scholars as well, most notably William K. Powers. While Browner is correct in asserting that the powwow's origins are complicated, she ignores accounts by Robert Lowie, Pliny Earle Goddard, James Mooney, William Meadows, George Dorsey, and Regina Flannery, to name only the most obvious, that tend to overwhelm her interpretation.

She is on firmer ground in her discussions of experience and meaning. Browner's chapter on songs is revealing in its insights on the use and power of music. Likewise, her conversations with singers are suggestive of song's many complexities. Her extensive use of Western notation, however, tends to emphasize mechanics and thus skirts a more nuanced discussion, something that will strike some readers as problematic. R. D. Theisz's work on Northern Plains song traditions is conspicuous by its absence.

By far the most engaging parts of the book are Browner's discussions with powwow people. Readers will appreciate hearing from the young women, elders, and singers whose voices take us inside the powwow world. Her description and analysis of dance styles are generally quite good, and her discussion of a typical powwow is full of insights. But her emphasis throughout on "consecrated performance space" and "sacred happenings" downplays the somewhat more complicated and often pedestrian nature of such gatherings. Her interview with George Martin hints at some of these issues, but, for the most part, Browner views powwows through a largely celebratory, uncritical lens.

Readers looking for an introduction to the essentials of Northern Plains powwows will find much to like in this volume. Browner

writes with confidence and style, gives plenty of room to powwow people and their voices, and tells a good story. Scholars will quibble with some of her interpretations, but in the main she has given us a useful account.

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