

## BOOK REVIEW

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Irene V. Jackson, (ed.) **More Than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians** (Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1986), 281 pages.

In this collection, one of the most recent research offerings of Howard University's Centre for Ethnic Music, a wide and detailed spectrum of historic and contemporary insights into what precisely Blacks contributed towards American music is lucidly presented from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. As such it constitutes another welcome chapter in the march away from musicology's traditional concern with classical musical analysis and its preoccupation with European derived music. Jackson goes to some considerable lengths in her introduction to explain the scholarly antecedents of such an ethnomusicological approach, but emphasises the plurality of the field by reminding the reader that 'there are almost as many approaches (to ethnomusicology) as there are scholars'. In short, she announces that the collection of eleven essays (which constitutes just one of a two volume edition) is about 'music as cultural expression, or music as an aspect of culture'. Whatever the definitional intricacies of the field, or its apparent need for academic justification and epistemological rigour, what follows makes good reading for all students of culture, and particularly so for those concerned with the Afro-American musical connection.

Olly Wilson's contribution: "The Association of Movement and Music as a Manifestation of a Black Conceptual Approach to Music Making" is pivotal to an understanding of the theoretical dimensions in which the collective research has its genesis: 'The artistic output of any culture reflect the collective attitudes and values of that culture'. Hence, by avoiding the totalising importation of a traditional western system of musical analysis, he reminds us that much African and hence Afro-American music is a process which often, for instance, occurs outside the conceptual paradigms of the lineal dimensions of time, which is, that it does not necessarily have an introduction, middle, or finale. Of course he omits to mention that a great deal of Western derived

music, particularly folk music, is not bound in a lineal time dimension either, but his point is an important conceptual clarification. Another equally important point is his theoretical and methodological clarification concerning the relationships between motion and music, and its associated expressive modes. By contrasting the fact that in the West, although dance and other expressive modes such as costume, scenery, drama and plastic arts can accompany music, he shows that they are for the purposes of aesthetic analysis different, but parallel expressive cultural products, as opposed to fully integrated components of the same expressive performance, which he points out is more usually the case in traditional African and Afro-American music. He requests the reader to draw upon a broader definition of music than simply one of acoustic phenomena. There is nothing new, of course, in this perspective in the analysis of music, but with some degree of dexterity Olly Wilson clears the theoretic decks upon which so many comparative musicologists find such heavy weather.

Easily the next most important contribution is Doris Evans McGinty's historical research: "The Black Presence in the Music of Washington, D.C.: 1843-1904". She commences with the insistence that the musical culture of this great city (and hence by inference the whole of the United States if not the Western world), has not only been fundamentally influenced by the musical inspirations of Blacks, but that this has been a conscious meaningful process to the Afro-American community. This she demonstrates quite simply with a historical review of the public records of individuals and communities involved in the creation and consumption of the City's music over a fifty year period. There is indeed some refreshing sociomusical historiography demonstrated by the rich cultural resources from which she draws her empirical data. 'Musical resources' such as community, church and chapel choirs are given their full purchase upon the cultural evolution of the city, as are military and community marching wind and drum bands. Now this last point is an important one which was also introduced earlier in the book by Olly Wilson and seldom gets its due from musicologists of whatever description. American marching bands are a huge cultural enterprise, and easily America's largest amateur musical endeavour and yet we find their importance to music specifically, and culture generally, relegated to the obscurity of a few odd research documents here and there. The American marching band, made great

by that all American phenomenon, Souza 'the march King' (who, incidentally, the author discovers was taught by a Black music teacher) and most fully epitomised by the street parade, the college football match and its associated or fully integrated art forms, such as drum majorettes, and display marching get given their full, if unelaborated, due in McGinty's research. Finally however, it seems a shame that after having made this point she does not mention the fact that Afro-Americans still do figure largely in the marching bands' contemporary culture.

Another exciting contribution comes from Portia Maultsby's "West African Influences and Reflections in U.S. Black Music: A Sociocultural Study". She makes the point that African slaves did not sever all their attachments to Africa after exportation to the New World, and that these ties persisted at the conscious level in the collective imagination of the Black community and thus had a large influence on the contemporary music of America. She exemplifies this point by reviewing Afro-American musical genre such as blues, gospel, and soul, and then illustrates the stylistic, syntactic, and contextual relationships between these and current traditional West African music.

There is too much variety in this collection of research essays to cover it all in a review, and suffice it to say, they all constitute mere cameos of much larger research projects still in their making, and this is problematic in itself. **More Than Dancing** certainly whets the appetite, but falls far short of being a definitive text on the field. Insights from the sociology of music and the field of cultural studies are notably absent, but would have greatly enriched and broadened the scope of the work.

Graham G. Mills