

## Book Reviews

**Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken. *Island Sounds in the Global City: Caribbean Popular Music and Identity in New York*. (New York: New York Folklore Society and The Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, 1998).185 pp., \$17.95 paper.**

In putting together *Island Sounds in the Global City: Caribbean Popular Music and Identity in New York*, editors Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken were undaunted by the enormity of their tasks of contextualizing and capsulizing the breadth of Latin American and Caribbean popular music, and exploring the complex nexus between these musics and ethnic identity in New York City. By eliding these tasks the editors facilitated their work.

Allen and Wilcken provide an interesting overview of the creative interplay between various genres, identity with its changing sameness, and location. Their examination of the influence of location, Caribbean homeland vis a vis North American mainland, presents salient issues faced by immigrant artists such as the advantages of recording on the North American mainland, economic and audience constraints, the need for commercial presence in the world market, and the challenges of class and race. Further, they indicate the accommodation and negotiation of cross ethnic cultural influences. The editors examined historical periods, the evolution of community institutions, case studies of folkloric and professional groups, and the impact of new instruments such as the steel pan and the creation of new musical forms. For example we

see the early development of popular music within the New York's Puerto Rican community, and the link between this music and the growth of new forms such as contemporary Latin rap music.

The essayists demonstrate that roughly a century ago New York began to emerge as the center of Latin American and Caribbean music, and the most populous pan-Caribbean community in North America. The articles are alive with images of hopeful artists struggling to find artistic acceptance and commercial success in New York. Through the inclusion of song lyrics, we hear the voices of these cultural workers and feel their experiences which vividly tell stories of people not so much letting go of their Caribbean homes but of wanderers and pioneers finding new and challenging locations to call home. These communities, their sense of self, and the music created were constantly being revitalized by new arrivals and by those artists who traveled between their two homes. From this Allen and Wilcken clearly demonstrate that these musics, the island sounds, define the immigrant group's uniqueness, create an exponential growth in the Caribbean/Latin/African based aesthetic, and at the same time have established a broader based cross ethnic cultural community working to realize goals.

The nine essays provide absorbing materials for those interested in ethnic identity, but their greatest appeal is to those interested in the coming of Latin America and Caribbean music to New York. As with any study of this scope, choices were made to delimit the subject. What is disappointing in the book is the glaring omission of a description of the establishment of New York's Jamaican community, and the musics of Jamaica — reggae and others that have crossed over to the larger community with clear and important influences. Omitted also are insights into the lives and challenges faced by female cultural workers from the region; and speculative insights into new directions in the music that come out of African based spiritual practices with the innovative experiments to update and popularize these by mixing them with rap and other contemporary influences. The exclusion of these and similar themes is understandable, for they are among many subjects each of which could present several volumes in themselves.

In essence *Island Sounds in the Global City* speaks

directly and quite rhythmically about ethnicity and creative musical expressions, community institutions, and cultural influences of Puerto Rican, Dominican, Trinidadian, and Haitian immigrant communities. The editors cannot be faulted for their selection of materials, and point to a myriad of topics for further research on African diasporic communities and the music they create.

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**William G. Bowen and Derek Bok. *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998). 472 pp., \$24.95 cloth.**

The metaphor conveyed in the title, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*, captures the undercurrents, uncharted obstructions, and twists and turns as they unfold through the experiences and research of two captains who have navigated the mysteries of their journey through Affirmative Action in higher education.

Bowen and Bok's study of the long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions is drawn from a college and beyond database built by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundations consisting of more than 45,000 students. It is the most comprehensive statistically significant study of Affirmative Action to date.

The research focus is an analysis of data from 28 select colleges and universities. The cohort sets consisted of data collected the Fall of 1951, Fall 1976 and Fall of 1989. The database from the 1976 and 1989 cohorts recorded demographic information on race, sex, SAT scores, rank in high school class, college majors, grades, and extra-curricular activities. Later surveys were conducted to ascertain advanced degrees earned, employment sector occupation, income, marital status, number of children, civic activities, and attitudes about their college experiences. In addition, surveys of the