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Teri Hansen, Sheila and Jim Rich, Cougar Buschmann and Sky Real performing at the Gathering of Oregon's First Nation Powwow, Salem, 2011.

MATT BUXTON/The Oregonian /Landov

An intertribal Native American performance event derived from Plains Indian musical and cultural practices; the most public genre of Native performance in the United States and Canada. Powwows range from intimate, local gatherings of a few hundred people, to large arena shows with several thousand people from distant places. Locations include rural, outdoor dance grounds on private property, school gymnasiums, community centers, college campuses, and urban exposition arenas. As celebrations of contemporary Native life, powwows maintain family and community social networks while expressing modern Indian identities.

Powwow history is complex; it represents a creative adaptation to the forces of colonization. The musical form and style of modern powwow songs developed among the Plains tribes by the 1840s. By 1890 this style had diffused throughout the Plains. Government officials attempted to suppress Plains dances from the 1890s through the 1920s, while simultaneously, new contexts for Native dancing appeared, including Wild West shows. Thus the War Dance emerged in the 1920s through the blending

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of historic Plains genres with innovations from professionalized entertainments. The War Dance is a collective performance in which each participant dances independently while moving around a circle in coordination with the other dancers. It is the focal point of contemporary powwows.

Program details vary from one powwow to the next, depending in part on whether it is a traditional or contest powwow. Powwows open with a Grand Entry, when dancers process into the arena, led by flag bearers, a color guard, honored elders, head dancers, and the powwow princess. Flag Songs are sung, a prayer is offered in a Native language, the colors are posted, and a dance honoring veterans occurs; the emphasis on honoring veterans connects powwows to earlier traditions of Plains warrior societies. The remainder of the program features intertribal War Dances, alternating with social dances, exhibition dances, specials, and competition dances. The colors are retired at the conclusion of the powwow. Anyone may dance during intertribals and social dances, but only dancers wearing the appropriate regalia may perform during exhibition and contest dances. Styles of regalia correspond to different dance styles, including Men's Traditional, Men's Grass Dance, Men's Fancy Dance, Women's Traditional (Buckskin Dress or Cloth Dress), Women's Jingle Dress, and Women's Fancy Shawl. Specials include memorials, honorings, and demonstrations of Native dances from beyond the Plains area. Social dances, performed by couples, include Round Dances and Two-Steps.

War Dance songs are performed by a group of men, seated in a circle around a large drum; the men beat the drum in unison, each using a padded drumstick. The drum beat represents the heartbeat. The drum group may include women who stand behind the men, doubling their vocal line at the octave. In some groups, women also sit at the drum. The vocal phrasing is separate from the duple or triple drum meter, reflecting "the spiritual belief that the drum is a living being with a voice separate from that of the singers" (Browner, 2009, 224). Singers employ tense and nasal vocal production, pulsating on sustained tones. Songs emphasize five-tone gapped scales; melodies start high and descend in a terraced or undulating contour. War Dance songs use a two-part strophic form. The first part has one phrase, introduced by the head singer and then sung by the whole group. The second part has two phrases, which are repeated. The strophe may be diagrammed as: *A1 A/BC BC*. The strophe repeats many times, with subtle variations on each rendition. Singers call the strophe a "round," emphasizing the circular nature of the form. Some songs conclude with a coda or "tail." Powwow style has been incorporated into Native American popular music and orchestral works, by artists such as Buffy Sainte-Marie and Brent Michael Davids.

## Recordings

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*Honor the Earth Powwow: Songs of the Great Lakes Indians*, 1991, Ryko, RACS 0199

*Gathering of Nations Pow Wow 1999, 2000*, SOAR, SOAR 200 CD

*High Noon—Live at Taos 2000*, 2000, IH, IH 4452

*Thunder Hill: Relentless*, 2009, Can., CR-6465

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