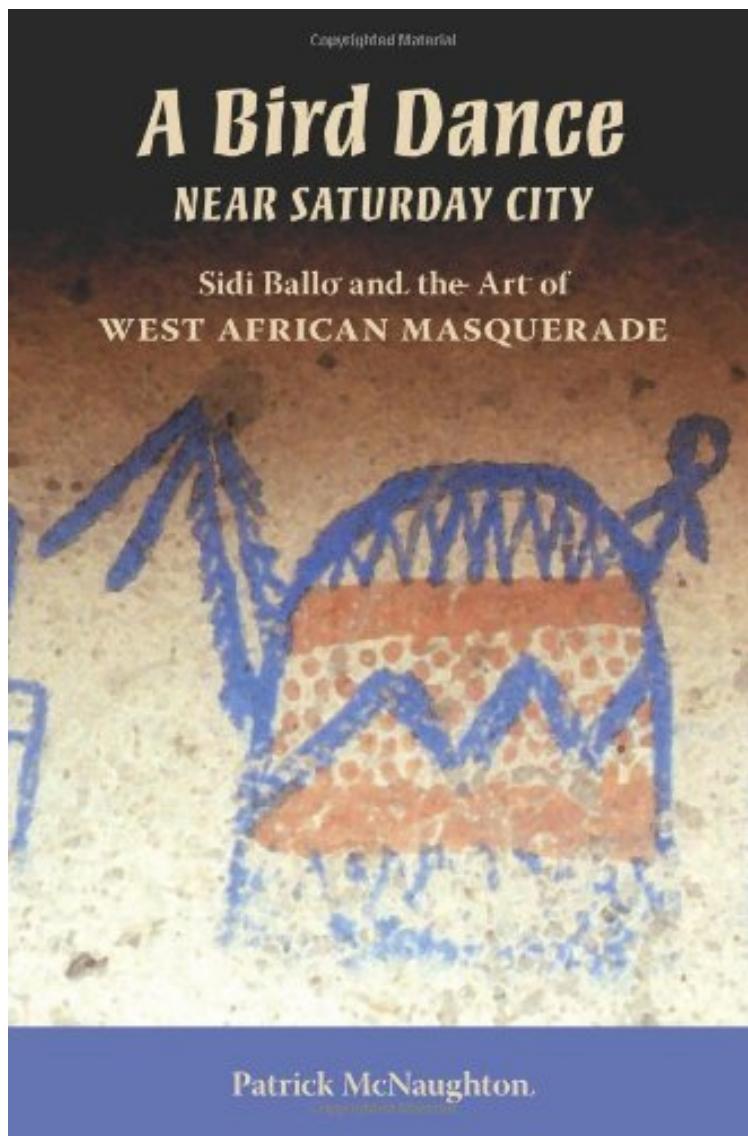


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In 1978, Patrick McNaughton witnessed a bird dance masquerade in the small town of Dogoduman. He was so affected by this performance that its dazzling artistic power has never left him. As he revisits that very special evening in A Bird Dance near Saturday City, McNaughton carefully considers the components of the performance, its pace, the performers, and what the entire experience means for understandings of Bamana and West African aesthetics and culture. The performance of virtuoso dancer Sidi Ballo becomes McNaughton's vehicle for understanding the power of individuals in African art and the power of aesthetics as a cultural phenomenon. Topics such as what makes art effective, what makes it "good," how production is wrapped in individual virtuosity, and what individual artistry suggests about society reveal how individuals work together to create the indelible experience of outstanding performance. This exuberant and captivating book will influence views of society, culture, art, history, and their makers in West Africa for years to come.

"For the first time, a scholar makes us experience the charisma and 'starAppeal' of the men behind the masks in Africa. McNaughton makes the 'Mande' world vivid and brilliantly succeeds in his goal of using stories about individuals to bring societies to life. No one will think about African masquerade in the same way again after reading this book." —Z. S. Strother, Columbia University (Z. S. Strother, Columbia University)"... a book well worth reading about a galvanizing masquerade event; its star performer; the ideas and other people with whom he created the event; and the ramifications for the study of individuality, aesthetics, and the making of meaning and value." —H-AfrArts (H-AfrArts 2009-01-00)"[A] fascinating study of Sidi Ballo and his art of bird dancing from the Mande masking tradition.... This is a book that will be immensely useful to students and scholars of African cultures, performance, and orature.... [I]ts open style will appeal also to non-specialists or those with just a passing interest in Africa." —New Theatre Quarterly (New Theatre Quarterly)"This work is theoretically informed, drawing on performance studies, critiques of ethnographic representation, radical empiricism, and praxis/agency theory, but thankfully, it is a terrific read, and uses this theory to clear the way for an informed and appreciative engagement in depth with human expression in context." —Journal of Folklore Research, September, 2011 (Journal of Folklore Research 2011-01-00)"Just as the title captures our attention, so too does Ballor's larger-than-life bird masquerade. McNaughton is clearly not afraid of admitting to and appreciating the awe-inspiring power of art, and it is this appreciation that provides new ways of critically thinking about art, artistic behavior, and performance; both in Africa and more universally." —caa.reviews (caa.reviews)From the Publisher"For the first time, a scholar makes us experience the charisma and 'starAppeal' of the men behind the masks in Africa. McNaughton makes the 'Mande' world vivid and brilliantly succeeds in his goal of using stories about individuals to bring societies to life. No one will think about African masquerade in the same way again after reading this book." —Z. S. Strother, Columbia UniversityAbout the AuthorPatrick McNaughton is Chancellor's Professor of African Art at Indiana University, Bloomington. He is author of *Mande Blacksmiths* (IUP, 1988).