

by women musicians is considered in discussions of the use of the genre in female conventual religious houses. The twenty-two chapters in *El villancico en la encrucijada* chart the evolution, apogee, and gradual disappearance of the villancico as a musical and poetic genre, and present new information on and fresh interpretations of the dissemination and importance of this genre throughout the Iberian and Iberoamerican worlds. *El villancico en la encrucijada* expands our understanding of the richness and complexity of American and Iberian musics, and the many transatlantic connections between these two interconnected spheres.

The two excellent essay collections reviewed here will be of interest to a wide range of readers, and both books have already begun to shape the discourse on Iberian and Iberoamerican musics. Beyond and within Latin American studies, these collections can spark discussion and encourage further research in a wide, diverse variety of areas in American music: Colonial and postcolonial theory, studies in gender and religion, musical sources and their dissemination back and forth across the Atlantic and Pacific, paleography and codicology, printing in early Spanish America, and other topics. Both essay collections are invaluable additions to the literature on Latin American music and are very highly recommended.

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Sing and Sing On: Sentinel Musicians and the Making of the Ethiopian American Diaspora

By Kay Kaufman Shelemay. London and Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

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Building on nearly a half century of deep, principled, and productive engagement with the music of Ethiopia and its diaspora, Kay Kaufman Shelemay identifies and analyzes the complex roles that musicians can play in an age of global dispossession and displacement. *Sing and Sing On* explores how war, migration, and economic austerity disrupt the traditional workings of the nation state and reveal previously occluded aspects of the relationships linking tradition and change, people and places, and expressive culture and collective social life. This book is at one and the same time a broad, deep, and nearly encyclopedic survey of a wide array of musicians and music from a particular culture as well as a provocative and profound challenge to the ways scholars, critics, and cultural workers perceive and negotiate the relationships between the local and global, and between the particular and the universal.

For Shelemay the study of music cannot be confined to sonic structures, but must instead explore “what sound tells the listener about the world from which it emerged” (149). Music is thus more than the notes, chord progressions, timbres, and rhythms that ethnomusicologists can hear and transcribe; it is a generator of sensations that undergird particular epistemologies and ontologies. “The way a society senses,” Shelemay argues, “is the way it understands” (73). *Sing and Sing On* introduces and develops

Shelemay's generative concept of the "sentinel musician," the music maker who takes on the role of guarding a traditional culture yet guiding it in new directions in response to the changing political, social, and institutional needs of the people. In carrying out the difficult work they have chosen to do, sentinel musicians must look and listen beyond surface appearances and sounds to find hidden inner meanings. They deploy a metaphorical opposition between "wax"—which connotes the outer easily accessible features of music, and "gold"—which symbolizes the deep knowledge lodged beneath the surface. As a social as well as musical actor, the sentinel musician digs beneath the wax of sales and celebrity status to participate instead in a collective mission committed to recognize the gold that resides in community life as it is interpreted through the diverse and plural practices of musical composition, performance, and reception.

Sing and Sing On utilizes mixed methods in order to capture the dynamism and unpredictability of the compositions and performances it explores. It is a multitemporal study constructed from repeated engagements over time in different places with both the continuities and ruptures of Ethiopian music, politics, and social life. The book advances its argument conceptually rather than chronologically or geographically through chapters focused topically on a series of terms as indicated in chapter titles. These announce attention to frameworks, thresholds, mobilities, senses, processes, conflicts, movements, communities, transformations, sounds, signs, creativities, and horizons. Shelemay presents biographies of fifty-four accomplished and distinguished musicians that chronicle the life achievements, aspirations, and epistemologies of representative and exceptional individuals. Nevertheless as she observes, individuals are also products of deep and broad networks of instruction, apprenticeship, and accompaniment. They derive methods and techniques from trained specialists to be sure, but they also borrow ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of creating from observing how displaced migrant, exile, and refugee workers craft livable destinies under conditions they do not control, how people find something left to love in themselves and in others in a world that offers too little love, and how memories of the past both enable and inhibit agency in the present.

Sing and Sing On presents research in ethnomusicology as an ongoing exercise in collaborative learning, as a matter of not simply playing an already composed score but rather as a process of responding to interlocutors and their changing situations in order to accompany them and convey their experiences and aspirations accurately and responsibly. Many of the most innovative features of *Sing and Sing On* emanate from the author's ability to improvise in response to unexpected turns in the research. Shelemay began field work in Ethiopia in 1974 at the moment when revolutionary forces overthrew a long-established regime and sparked a long, brutal, and bitter civil war that exposed deep divisions and fissures in the nation. Migration, exile, and seeking refuge compelled musicians to move with their music across the nation, the region, and the world. In the midst of disruption and displacement the seeming unity of the Ethiopian nation and its culture came into question. By the time *Sing and Sing On* neared publication, Shelemay's informants told her that Washington, D.C. (the capital of the United States) had become home to more Ethiopian musicians than Addis Ababa (the capital of Ethiopia). Nevertheless, new technologies enabled the children of exiles, refugees, and migrants to have daily contact with the homelands their parents left, enabling the youths to experience part of their lives as living in a "home" where they may never have in fact lived. Responding to these new cognitive mappings of community and place, Shelemay treats Ethiopian music as a mobile floating equilibrium rather than a site of a static place bound to unbroken tradition.

Shelemay salutes the musicians central to her research for their "ability to pivot among multiple domains and to re-invent themselves as situations demand" (xxv). *Sing and Sing On* displays those very qualities. In the audit culture of neoliberal scholarship and the institutions that support it, research proposals often purport to know in advance what they propose to find. Nevertheless, researchers know that unexpected surprises can lead to the most important results. Shelemay notes that her research design did not initially envision investigation of the Orchestra Ethiopia, but when she encountered traces of it over and over again, these traces enabled her to discern an unexpectedly strong stream of modernism pervading "traditional" Ethiopian musical styles. From her perspective, this finding

underscores a crucial principle of ethnography: That “what seems to be marginal at the outset can in the fullness of time provide entry into other rich topics and new insights” (173).

Sing and Sing On successfully deploys the traditional methods of research that we have come to associate with ethnomusicology: Musical participation, social observation, biographical compilation, and face to face conversation. Nevertheless it also breaks with patterns of previous research in significant ways. The enduring effects of the colonial origins of anthropology and ethnomusicology encourage direct observations in discrete places and evaluating the uses and effects of traditional cultures presumed to be isolated from modernity. The historical emphasis on the nation state in humanities disciplines leads to studies that focus primarily on national histories, languages, and cultures. Thus readers may come to *Sing and Sing On* expecting to learn about a finite set of particular practices at a fixed time in a specific place inside the Ethiopian nation. This expectation rests on uninterrogated assumptions about binary tensions and oppositions between tradition and change, places of origin and places of arrival, and unity and disunity within the national culture. However in a music shaped by war, migration, and economic necessity there is no single unbroken pre-modern tradition, no sole local site of cultural production cut off from the rest of the world, and no comprehensive unified national culture. Civil war and its displacements give new meaning to historical Ethiopian ethnic and linguistic differences that undermine the utility of paying primary attention to the nation state. Of course, the practices and patterns of the past do not disappear. They continue to shape the perspectives and practices of the present and the future. Nevertheless as musician Meklit Hadero explains to Shelemay, the times and places when and where people are born and live are important, but they hardly exhaust the sources of identity and aspiration that artists cultivate and audiences crave that can be found in alternative cognitive and social maps (219).

Many readers of this journal will no doubt be familiar with the impressive body of books and articles Shelemay has produced in a long and distinguished career that has gained her a well-earned reputation as a meticulous researcher, an eloquent writer, and an astute analyst and theorist. Some, however, may also recognize her, to their dismay, as one of the Harvard faculty members who coauthored and signed a public letter seeking exculpation for Professor John Comaroff in the face of serious charges of misconduct against him by graduate students. That letter mobilized the prestige of celebrity scholars on behalf of someone with status similar to their own and minimized the concerns and complaints of people with less power. To her credit, Shelemay retracted her support for that letter when protests made it clear to her and other signatories that it misrepresented basic facts about the case. Nevertheless, the incident also underscores the perils of the kinds of power imbalances explored in *Sing and Sing On*. Just as sentinel musicians must look beyond the wax of professional success and stardom to guide their community, scholars can and should look beyond the wax of ingroup circles, scholarly citations, book sales, and curriculum vitae entries to find the gold of ethical responsibility and accountability. Writing true and useful things about a world in turmoil is no easy task. No one is immune to making mistakes, misrepresenting reality, or inflicting pain on people we think we are helping. Nevertheless, we can also try to be sentinels of the greater good, to learn from people like the musicians in *Sing and Sing On* how to look beneath the wax that protects the paths of least resistance and instead seek the gold that resides in vigilance, self-reflexivity, accountability, and social responsibility.

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