

--> **Voir l'erratum** concernant cet article

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This collection of articles, most of which were developed from conference papers presented at the 1988 meetings of the ICTM Music and Gender Study Group in Heidelberg, is a welcome successor to *Women and Music in Cross-cultural Perspective* (edited by Ellen Koskoff, Westport CT: Greenwood, 1987). It differs from the earlier compilation in several ways, however. Most notably, the authors emanate from six different European and American nations and, hence, reflect a wider variety of methodological and ideological perspectives than the American-based, Koskoff anthology. Perhaps not surprisingly, the American articles are strongest on ethnography while the German ones devote more attention to description of musical style. Another distinctive feature of most of the articles is their reflexivity about the influence of gender on the research process. Included here are studies which could only be effected by a team of female and male researchers, studies which were hampered by the sex of the scholar, or alternatively, facilitated by the same factor. All of the authors are women since, according to the editors, it was not their intention "to require equal participation by male and female scholars," but rather "inclusiveness, in terms of evaluating gender roles and music" (p. 8). In my view, the exclusion of papers by the male members of the Study Group was unfortunate in that it serves to reinforce an illogical stereotypic equation of gender studies with women scholars, an equation which perpetuates the very symbolic dichotomies which feminists of all genders seek to unpack.

The volume ranges over a broad spectrum of ethno-cultural communities and musical subjects. Included are articles on musical traditions of Scandinavia (2), Eastern Europe (2), Turkey (2), North Africa (2), Asia and South East Asia (2), Oceania (2), and America (3). Perhaps relevant to the "political" statement made by this volume is the fact that Scandinavian and East European scholars as well as four of the Americans represented here offer studies of their own cultural traditions, while the majority of those from Germany (both East and West at the time of publication) present papers on cultural Others. Of considerable significance is the inclusion of work by a number of senior scholars (e.g., Reinhard, Yurchenko, Czechanowska) who reflect on long careers of ethnomusicological study during which gender was not a central issue in their work. The perspective of this generation and the length of their involvement with the cultures they study make their observations, however impressionistic, valuable descriptive documents.

As the editors observe in their concluding summary, the societies described in this volume conceptualize gender categories and relationships in dramatically different ways. Gender-based systems of “power” and “privilege” range from societies such as that of the Dinaric region of Yugoslavia where the women are regarded as socially inferior to men in virtually every context, to communities such as those of the Kel Ahaggar of southern Algeria, an Islamic society in which men rather than women wear the veil and are hierarchically less powerful. The relationship of male and female domains may be viewed as separate and oppositional (e.g., in the context of Swedish mythology as described by Johnson or of weddings in rural Turkey as represented by Ziegler). Alternatively, the relationship between (or among) genders may be viewed as necessary complements in a balanced and harmonious system (e.g., in Cherokee or Tongan cultures). The authors explore how music serves to articulate and shape these very different gender structures.

Some scholars focus on the norms of specific musical styles or performance traditions, norms which might be said to reflect social “theory” in that they confirm symbolic constructions of gender in specific cultural and historical contexts. Others focus on musical “practice”—the musical responses of individuals or groups to those symbolic gender constructions. In the “theory” group are papers about gender-specific repertoires (Tolbert on the Finnish-Karelian lament; Ziegler on South Western Turkish wedding songs; Czechanowska on Slavonic harvest songs, spring songs, wedding songs, and lullabies; Rossen on Mungiki tangi laments and other gender-restricted music-dance genres), gender-specific instrument symbolism (Johnson on Swedish fiddle and horn traditions; Brandes on the Key Ahaggar *imzad* and *tazammart*; Schworer-Kohl comparing Hmong and Lahu performance on the mouth organ), or gender-specific social institutions (Schmidt on Kpelle women’s Sande associations for initiation and rice cooperatives). A number of studies demonstrate how song texts and performance styles define gender categories: e.g., Yeh’s exploration of the “feminine” style of *nanyin*; Czechanowska’s semiotic analysis of Slavonic vocal styles. On the other hand, song texts and performance style are often shown to be mechanisms for resisting gender, class, and race stereotyping especially in the hands of gifted composers such as Bessie Smith (discussed here by Yurchenko), Turkish poet-singer Sah Turna (presented by Reinhard), or Mungiki composer Tekamu (discussed by Rossen). Other studies of “practice” include Kaepler’s analysis of the manipulation of power in the songs of Tongan Queen Salote, or Kimberlin’s exploration of “environments” which shape attitudes about gender and music for five professional women musicians in California.

Of particular significance are studies which get beyond the dichotomization of

“male” and “female” and reductionist equations with “public” and “private” domains. Studies which recognize that “gender” is, in itself, a concept framed by ethno-centric and historo-centric concerns, are important here. Among these is Herndon’s discussion of the broadly-based principles of balance and harmony in Cherokee thought, principles which embrace gender among other things; she describes how musical performance may juxtapose genres which are male, female, and other in order to effect harmony (e.g., men’s responsorial songs, women’s salacious dance songs, and conjurer’s formulae in the context of the Cherokee stick ball game). Also among these is Kaeppler’s outline of Tongan principles of social hierarchy and the aesthetic principle of *heliaki* or “indirectness,” both general cultural principles which relate to gender but not exclusively to gender. Hers is an excellent model for studies of the inter-relationships of gender and class. Other studies which examine the intersection of diverse power-nuanced structures – class, race, gender – include Petrovic’s representation of women in the music creation process in the Dinaric cultural zone in Yugoslavia; she outlines the changes in social status and musical participation of women at different life stages, thereby demonstrating links between musical taboo and social fears of sexual power. Petrovic also presents a wide range of musical practices, illustrating how continuity of concepts is not inconsistent with variation in practice. Brandes demonstrates the intersection of gender and class among the matriarchal Kel-Ahaggar of Algeria, while Schmidt explores how Liberian Kpelle women use music performance at times to contradict social distinctions.

Resonating with recent studies in both ethnomusicology and historical musicology are descriptions of many practices in which powerful musical roles are played by individuals with “ambiguous” identities (where the ambiguity may relate to gender or social status). The importance of such traditions in social mediation and ritual transformation are striking although most references in this volume are cursory. The adoption of new (sometimes male) musical repertoires or styles by post-menopausal women, or the employment of musicians who lack legitimate social status (e.g., Gypsies in contexts such as the Turkish weddings discussed by Ziegler) are cases in point.

On a more pragmatic note, another noteworthy feature of this volume is its index, unusual and extremely useful because of the wide range of abstractions cited. One can find references to “ambiguity”, “longing”, or “prestige” along with those to genres or instruments, regions and ethnic groups, or individuals. Is this, perhaps, an example of a feminist index?

This anthology is not without problems. Among the technical ones is the need for serious copy editing, especially of papers written by authors for whom English

was not a first language. Descriptive accounts and, even worse, abstract ideas in several papers (especially those by Czechanowska, Reinhard, and Yeh) are unclear, seemingly muddled by the process of translation. While some musical transcriptions, such as those of Kaeppler or Petrovic, appear to be exemplary representations, others omit song texts (e.g., Brandes) or labels for formal sections to which reference is made in the text of the article (p. 127 or p. 93). Other inconsistencies (e.g., the different spellings of the Turkish *delbek*) are less daunting for the reader.

More substantial “problems” must be identified if we compare this collection of essays to the broader interdisciplinary base of feminist research. While the authors are, for the most part, cognizant of their own influence on the shape of their research, few (Kimberlin being the most noteworthy exception) articulate the intellectual and ethical challenges accruing to the representation of their own participation and that of other individuals. (This is hardly an issue exclusive to feminist study; it has, of course, been widely discussed in ethnomusicology and most social sciences.) Perhaps more serious is the apparent acceptance that meaning is unified and intra-culturally homogeneous. The post-modern attention to “readings,” or feminist explorations of the nature of subjectivity would serve as theoretical underpinnings for a reinterpretation of the fascinating descriptive data presented here. So, too, would the performance theory of Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, and others. In general, with some exceptions such as the study of Tolbert, the volume is largely descriptive rather than interpretive. The useful theoretical tools developed in recent decades for studying the socially grounded meaning of expressive culture have not been much utilized.

In reality, however, this criticism is not directed toward individual scholars but more toward the reticence of the music profession to engage in the intellectual refinement of critical theories which could serve as powerful interpretive tools in music (as they have in other disciplines). The relative newness of gender studies in music, combined with the extensive amount of interdisciplinary re-training which scholars must individually undertake to conduct such studies with theoretical tools of some sophistication, are formidable but, in my view, exciting challenges.

WALTER FRISCH, ed. *Brahms and His World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. 223pp. ISBN 0-691-09139-0 (cloth), ISBN 0-691-02713-7 (paper).

The malaise, which might be termed schizophrenia, that currently characterizes both musicology in general and 19th-century studies in particular, is a result of