

Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings. By Jane C. Sugarman. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Transcriptions, photographs, tables, glossary, index, bibliography CD, xix + 395 pp, \$65.00 US, ISBN 0-226-77972-6, cloth; \$29.95 US, 0-226-77973-4, pbk.)

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is shifted from the "freak" to those who have constructed not only the freak entity, but the status whereby the classification can be applied. What this means is that *Freakery* is an innovative and often enlightening collection of cultural criticism, not a voyeuristic sojourn into the bizarre and the exotic. This collection lends itself well to any student/scholar of culture and has applications far beyond its immediate frame of reference.

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This is a thorough and multi-layered book which raises and discusses issues concretely related to the title and, through them, explores broader questions, such as gender, relations of power, multi-site ethnography, concepts of honour, negotiation of identity, the role of the ethnographer and the politics of representation. A generous compact disc is included.

The Prespa Albanians, Muslims, live in Macedonia, in villages near Lake Prespa, which borders on Albania, Macedonia and Greece. Sugarman's fieldwork was carried out both in the Prespa District and with Prespa Albanians (Prespari) living in Toronto and other North American cities.

From the beginning, the concern which forms part of the book's title is underlined: the inter-relationship between singing and subjectivity. The author combines theory and practice in a way which never loses sight of the music and its role in people's lives. The term *muabet* (134) is closely connected to musical life: basically it refers to an atmosphere of openness, cooperation and intimacy at Prespa community gatherings — and the songs which form an integral part of them — as well as the gathering itself and the activities which lead to *muabet*, balancing family and community concerns. Sugarman also discusses the adjustments which have had to be made to “making *muabet*” and to related musical practices in North America.

Each chapter begins with a description of one aspect of a wedding, so that the seven main chapters cover the week of traditional wedding activities. Each of these opening sections describes the events as they occur in a different place, illustrating both variation and continuity and offering a richly detailed window into the dynamics of the wedding situations and their participants. A fairly lengthy and dense analysis of the music itself, as well as the role of the singing situation in negotiations of power, gender roles, tradition and continuity, follows each description. This tends to obscure the continuity of the activities, which is probably why the author makes the sensible suggestion that after reading the entire volume, the reader return to the opening, descriptive section of each of the seven days of the wedding.

Prespa Albanian singing is a complex polyphonic tradition. In general, men and women do not sing with each other, though exceptions, particularly in diaspora communities, are discussed. Singers have specific roles singing lead parts, “accompanying” parts or steady, strong drones. Ornamentation and vocal timbre — generally “thick” for men and “thin” for women — is an integral component. Prespa etiquette is also a complex system, and this is reflected not only in the order who sings when, but in many other aspects as well, including the insertion of specific names into the songs.

Balanced attention is given to musical and social analysis: for example, meticulous musical transcriptions (most of which can be heard on specified tracks on the CD) are balanced by equally meticulous diagrams of seating

arrangements, kinship structures, clothing and its implications, etc. These issues, in turn, are often illustrated by song texts which embody them. Sugarman quotes extensively from her taped interviews, allowing Prespař to speak for themselves, sometimes offering unexpected viewpoints which confirm the author's cautions about presenting monolithic views of any given society (e.g. 25-26, 35), and very specific information and ideas about their music (e.g. 96).

Sugarman also describes, in an unaffected way, how she came to be involved in this tradition and her progress as a participant observer, often invited to sing at the wedding events she was studying. In fact, the first cut on the CD is the first song she was formally taught, together with her hostess/teacher's eight-year-old daughter (8-9). This song is particularly appropriate for several reasons: its role in Sugarman's own learning process, the implied importance for continuity in the voice of the child, the poignant message of the song itself: "we are turning our village into a town", describing the "progress" of electricity together with the young people leaving to work elsewhere and no one to care for the elderly — and the use of a traditional musical form with new words and thoughts about radical changes.

A minor logistic caveat: the list of CD selections would be more helpful if it included references to discussions and transcriptions of the songs in the book, especially since some songs are mentioned more than once. The list of examples is not correlated with the list of CD selections, and it can be confusing and somewhat time-consuming to, for example, hear a song on the CD and find the references to it in the text.

Transcribing this style of singing, with its distinctive timbre, slides, ornamentation and vocal techniques, is a major challenge. In general it is met well, but there are limits and in places I was not entirely convinced (e.g. CD #13, ex. 3-9, 106-7). Then again, I'm even less convinced that I myself could do it any better! The writing is generally clear, but occasionally repetitious, as if the author were trying to make sure her message gets through. Theoretical introductions are, of course, *de rigueur* in ethnomusicology and its related disciplines, and Sugarman's section on "theorizing Prespa Singing" (22-33) leaves no doubt of her close acquaintance with major theoretical issues and writings, and her own serious consideration of them. Still, I did find the theoretical introduction a trifle tedious and dry, at times verging on the earnest. On the other hand, when these considerations are integrated into the author's

detailed presentation and analysis of musical and social practice, as is the case throughout the volume, they seem to fit quite naturally.

This, though, leads me to a question which goes beyond Sugarman's fine volume. The better the theory "fits", the more I wonder about our knowledgeable, expert and — imaginative? — constructs of worlds (I was going to say "others'" worlds but then wondered about the use of "other"). In this era of "imagined communities" and "invented traditions", just what is and isn't invented; who is constructing whose worlds?

In any case, *Engendering Song* both provides a detailed reference to this one seemingly small musical world and connects it to issues which go far beyond it, while maintaining a consistently and obviously sincere, humane, and sympathetic, never condescending, vision.

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New Old-Fashioned Ways: Holidays and Popular Culture. By Jack Santino. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996. Pp. xviii + 175, index, references, \$14.95 US, 0-87049-952-1 pbk.)

Jack Santino's *New Old-Fashioned Ways* is an important and much needed study. Produced as a result of a course he taught at Bowling Green State University in "Holidays and Popular Culture," (xv) Santino's project is to understand the interrelationship between popular culture and American holidays. As the author notes, "... all holidays as manifested in popular commercial culture... suggest that there is a cultural logic to them; and by delineating some examples, to begin to outline some of the principles and processes involved in this cultural logic" (xviii).

Santino takes issue with the dismissal of popular culture artifacts as merely consumerist products, and instead, sees their *use* as reflexive of contemporary cultural meanings. The dismissal argument, the author notes, is largely irrelevant since, on the one hand, it ignores the historicity of marketing customs (4), and this argument removes the ethnographic consideration of those who willingly participate within this culture of consumerism (24). The diversity of