

PERFORMING GENDER, PLACE,  
AND EMOTION IN MUSIC

Global Perspectives

*Edited by*

Fiona Magowan and Louise Wrazen



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 UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

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Place, and Emotion in Music*

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# Eastman/Rochester Studies in Ethnomusicology

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*Performing Gender, Place, and Emotion in Music:  
Global Perspectives*  
Edited by Fiona Magowan and Louise Wrazen

# *Acknowledgments*

This volume has had a long gestation period since its conception. It was originally inspired by suggestions for a gender and music study group conference panel at the 2007 International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM) in Vienna. This evolved into a plenary at this Thirty-Ninth ICTM World Conference. Contributors to the volume were asked to take up some of the issues raised in the ensuing conference debate. Since then, these issues have also been enhanced by complementary perspectives from anthropology, gender studies, musicology, cultural geography, music psychology, and philosophy. Thus, the diversity and richness of the contributions illustrate multiple ways in which debates around these themes cross over and diverge within and between disciplines.

As editors, we would like to thank the contributors for their enthusiasm and lively engagement with the issues, as well as for their patience in the revising and publishing stages of the volume. Their willingness to stay with the project across the time frame is testament to the significance of the issues they raise for ethnomusicology, which speak to changing perspectives around these contemporary concerns.

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## Introduction

# *Musical Intersections, Embodiments, and Emplacements*

Fiona Magowan and Louise Wrazen

The following ethnographic accounts of music and dance from Europe, Southeast Asia, and Australasia examine how performances of gender, place, and emotion intersect. Ethnomusicology and anthropology have long recognized the connections between these aspects of performance, yet they are seldom analyzed together. Most recent studies have examined music in relation to either gender, place, or emotion. Instead of addressing each field of inquiry as an individual lens through which to understand musical practices, our aim is to explore the ways in which the three elements overlap. Our volume proposes that the intersections of gender, place, and emotion generate an interplay of performative issues, rather than discrete, bounded areas of inquiry.

The studies presented here reveal how the gendered practices of music making are intimately shaped by performers' emotional engagements with place. In addition, because places feed into performers' imaginations, affecting gendered musical meanings and experiences, contributors to this volume show how these elements of performance—gender, place, and emotion—intertwine in a “relationship of circularity.”<sup>1</sup> “Circularity” in this sense refers to a multilayered approach in which each element implicates the others in a coconstitutive relationship. The process is examined from different regions around the globe, as contributors address two key questions: How are aesthetic, emotional, and imagined relations between performers and places embodied musically? And in what ways is the performance of emotion gendered across quotidian, ritual, and staged events?

The book is divided into three parts, each elaborating on gender, place, and emotion as interrelated facets of music making. The first part addresses how gender influences performers' emotional engagements with landscapes; the second part considers how emotional attachments to place are variously

affirmed or contested through singing; and the third part reveals how these attachments to place provide catalysts for national performances of solidarity and cultural revival. Together the three sections develop themes related to gender as musical performance, emotional resonance in performance, and the dynamics of performative environments, which we discuss here before turning to an overview of the chapters themselves.

## Gender as Musical Performance

Through the study of gender, place, and emotion in music, our contributors marshal a new generation or wave of scholarship built on the histories and diverse theoretical foundations of the well-established domain of gender research.<sup>2</sup> In their landmark volume, Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond observe that the publications of the 1990s reveal “how difficult it has been to articulate a theoretical agenda” around music and gender.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Ellen Koskoff notes that “we in ethnomusicology have not crystallized our gendered stories into a ‘grand’ or ‘field’ theory,” and she has articulated a general skepticism toward the potential effectiveness of making any “grand theories about anything for all musical cultures.”<sup>4</sup> As the contributors to this volume reflect on the dynamics of gender performativity, their theoretical contributions also avoid “a homogeneous approach to gender studies,” preferring instead a “range of positioning.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is not our intention to create an overarching theory of gender in relation to music, place, and emotion per se but to address (as Marcia Herndon argues) the ongoing need for “the inclusion of gender as an essential aspect of all ethnomusicological research.”<sup>6</sup> The authors of these essays develop a thematic agenda for the cross-cultural comparison of gendered values in music making, through ways of being masculine and feminine as organizing principles of performative action.

Regarding this first theoretical strand of the volume, our contributors examine how the gendered dynamics of performance influence performers’ emotional engagements with their natural and social environments. In doing so, they provide new perspectives on how to “situate gender in its proper place as a major factor in musical exegesis and analysis.”<sup>7</sup> They illustrate how gendered experiences are mediated between performers and listeners as men and women engage emotionally in the real and imagined worlds in which they perform. Music making is thus not just about being male or female but it is also about becoming men or women and understanding their spheres of participation and senses of belonging in the world. By singing and dancing, performers evoke different kinds of emotional bonds among themselves and with their audiences, creating varied senses of interdependency, intimacy, and reciprocity. Some contributors, for example, show how singers’ repertoires enable

audiences to relate to the sentiments and politics of belonging to a place. Singers invite listeners to participate in a sense of musical intimacy through the affective power of songs, lyrics, and meanings which, in turn, gives rise to sentiments of identity, place, and nation. This kind of musical intimacy is generated by four processes: mutuality (in terms of a shared sense of interdependency), belonging (as an affiliation to people and places), meaning making (through gendered, ethnic, political, national, and other identifications), and performative competency (as expressed through musical relations, skills, and insights achieved through the course of performing).<sup>8</sup> Musical intimacy can also extend beyond a particular performance context, influencing the wider popularity of a musical genre and its political impact upon public life. As mass audiences come to relate to the politics and personae of particular male and female performers, these singers may become catalysts of a broader “cultural intimacy” as they shape audiences’ views about a nation or region through their popular appeal.<sup>9</sup> Issues of musical and cultural intimacy in performance, therefore, speak to changing ideas of gender and embodiment in current music scholarship.

### Emotional Resonance in Performance

The second key strand in our volume is the analysis of emotion in shaping men’s and women’s roles in and experiences of music making. Authors explore how the gender dimensions of musical intimacy arise as learned and intensely emotional practices of intersubjectivity.<sup>10</sup> Thus, they analyze how music making is a means of disciplining mind and body through gendered experiences, representations, and significations. A key problem in the neuroscientific study of emotion, however, is that the experience of music (i.e., how performers or audiences feel) and the emotions that are intended to be generated by musical production may not correspond, since these are two different kinds of processes.<sup>11</sup> Feelings have generally been distinguished from emotions on the basis that the latter entail conscious judgments as a result of having particular sensations.<sup>12</sup> Emotional meaning for an individual thus arises, in part, from the analysis of sensations or feelings. This creates a dilemma for analysts who wish to understand how feelings are shared with others within particular performance contexts. Recognizing that a key conundrum for scholars working in cross-cultural contexts has been how to approach “the translation of emotion concepts and the social processes surrounding their use,” authors examine the evocation of emotion as a dialectical relationship among music making, gender, and environment.<sup>13</sup> They avoid trying to pin down certain emotions to cultural terms that describe what others say about how they feel. Instead, they address Ruth Finnegan’s call for “in-depth research exploring the complex and subtle intertwining of cultural expectation, specific setting, and individually

embodied practice.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as Ramon Pelinski has argued, even if the feelings evoked by a performer seem to mirror those of a listener, one can never know if the experience is shared between the two.<sup>15</sup>

Some scholars have shown how discourses of “emotion-talk” might bridge interpretive problems between meaning and feeling. They have asserted that emotions (derived from bodily feelings) pertain to cultural categories, and can therefore be performed and analyzed in culturally informed, gender-specific ways.<sup>16</sup> As Denis Dutton notes, emotional expression in performance is a matter of “technical mastery and of feeling—of ‘meaning it.’”<sup>17</sup> Whether performing informally or formally, onstage or in ritual, participants and audiences can variously perpetuate or contest meanings and feelings.<sup>18</sup> Emotional efficacy, thus, resides in the ways in which sounds and movements are cognitively and affectively integrated in what Feld has identified as a “felt iconic wholeness.”<sup>19</sup>

Music psychologists have further recognized that a music-body-memory nexus is shaped by environmental factors that modulate emotion and mood states.<sup>20</sup> Patrik N. Juslin outlines a series of seven mechanisms that induce musical emotion in addition to cognitive assessment, abbreviated as the BRECVEM model. This music-body-memory nexus involves “*Brain stem reflexes, Rhythmic entrainment, Evaluative conditioning, Contagion, Visual imagery, Episodic memory, and Musical expectancy.*”<sup>21</sup> Music psychologists have shown how musical practices have physiological effects on the body and voice in performance, on mood associations, on race and gender bias, and on perceptions of self-identity.<sup>22</sup> Dieter Lohmar argues that emotional effects occur because “‘mirror neurons’ secure the empathetic opening of the individual to the lived experience of the other.”<sup>23</sup> Bringing together issues of gender and emotion in performance through a phenomenological framework, contributors to this volume consider why there is “remarkable consistency in the constructions different individuals make of essential aspects of the environment (textures, sounds, shapes, colours, space).”<sup>24</sup> Thus, they address our final mediating influence, that of relationships to place and the performative environment, to examine how shared experiences might be best interpreted in performance.

## Performative Environments

Place is a deeply contested notion that has become increasingly contingent in the twenty-first century. Edward L. Casey has suggested that we are “ineluctably place-bound,” with the result that “we are not only in places but of them.”<sup>25</sup> Insofar as this suggests that “we are never without emplaced experiences,”<sup>26</sup> this place-bound existence may be highly contested or unstable, providing the larger conceptual framework for the gender-performance dynamics explored in this volume. While the study of place-related components such as geography, landscape, environment, home, and country, among others, has inspired

a rich academic discourse, these terms ultimately overlap to create potentially conflicting frames of reference and understandings of a place destabilized; place is both everywhere and nowhere.<sup>27</sup> To say that place is everywhere is self-evident: at its most fundamental, place is where we always are as much as it is contained within the “inner place,” that is, the body as a context for understanding and perceiving the external situatedness of being. To suggest that place is nowhere and has lost its solidity is an oxymoron,<sup>28</sup> yet one becoming increasingly imaginable as human displacement, global communication systems, and environmental vulnerabilities redefine human relationships and destabilize once certain associations.<sup>29</sup>

Since the influential work of R. Murray Schafer on soundscapes focused on resonances of the landscape as modalities of performance, questions of what constitutes acoustemological fragmentation, or the dislocation of sounds from their ecological source (unsettled “senses of place”), have not dissipated but have become all the more important for understanding the musical complexities of performance.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, questions of globalization and musical change are at the forefront of identity politics and human rights, as communities address issues of deterritorialization that have generated fractures in deeply held cultural, social, and geographical relations. While deterritorialization may be considered to have negative consequences for communities because it operates at the expense of stable cultural identities, it also invites cultural transformation as a positive response to global influences. In this mode, rather than seeking to sustain previous cultural practices, the imagination becomes the tool for the creation of alternative identities and experiences, which in turn demand more sophisticated analyses of the contested relationships of attachment and belonging. Political conflict and bloodshed, a globally driven economic marketplace, environmental degradation, and expanding virtual worlds all contribute to sensual fragmentation and emotional insecurity. Inevitably, analyzing the effects of performance in such shape-shifting environments poses particular challenges for scholars. As Zygmunt Bauman has noted, “fluid modernity” is not easy to capture, for its malleability “requires a lot of attention, constant vigilance and perpetual effort—and even then the success of the effort is anything but a foregone conclusion.”<sup>31</sup>

Problems of how to grapple with such complexities of place have gathered clarity and momentum through their interrogation by philosophers who have discussed the interweaving of place with body and body with place, as well as through the work of cultural geographers, ecologists, and anthropologists who have variously shown how engagements with landscape are fluid and shifting.<sup>32</sup> Music research has responded in various ways to contested pluralities of place through reconceiving the local, recognizing a more expansive system of relationships, and, in general, a theoretical shift toward the global economy, which, according to Ellen Koskoff, has occurred at the expense of field research built on “real people and the truth of their musical lives.”<sup>33</sup>

As the vessels through which gendered musical lives are constructed, musicians' bodies act as emotional conduits for performers' social relationships and their attachments to place. Although emotional meanings are not consistent between music practitioners, Ruth Finnegan has argued that performers' "habitual musical pathways" are based on "shared and purposive collective actions."<sup>34</sup> As performers' social networks and musical pathways meet and merge, so they come to generate new kinds of musical experiences out of their constructions and intimations of place.<sup>35</sup> Contributors argue that performance is to a large extent contingent on performers' imagined and emotional relationships with place, whether in terms of its ecological features or related nationalist sentiments. Some, for example, illustrate how the performance of cultural continuity can be a response to indigenous expectations around rights and relationships to the land as well as being an articulation of power and cultural critique. Others show how Western and indigenous performances cut across boundaries of time, place, and context and how their impacts are difficult to anticipate either on performers or on the cultures to which they belong. Indeed, they bring categories such as Western and indigenous into question, generating competing senses of identity that can transform musicians' senses of place. What constitutes indigenous performance is rendered problematic, destabilizing claims to nationalism, ethnicity, and land rights. By questioning how shared musical emotions are generated, our authors propose that gendered attachments to place are shaped through differentiated musical experiences. Thus the embodiment of place is arguably among the most and least stable aspects of lived experience today: on the one hand, it is ideologically rooted, fixed, and stable; while, on the other hand, it is imagined, moveable, and dependent upon human desire. Thus, contributors debate how places are ever-changing performative resources for music making.

## Chapter Organization

While the common objective of exploring the performative interplay among gender, place, and emotion unifies the geocultural diversity of chapters, the volume is organized into three parts to foreground distinctive themes: Landscape and Emotion, Memory and Attachment, and Nationalism and Indigeneity. Each of these sections explores its own thematic focus while also integrating the chapters around ideas of embodiment and experience, performing emotion, and gendered sentiments.

### *Part 1: Landscape and Emotion*

The first three chapters ask how we should understand musical tensions between ideas of ecology, emotional belonging, and spirituality. These authors

develop theoretical insights into what Keith H. Basso terms “interanimation,” as performers attend to particularities of the landscape that evoke images of place-making as personally and communally affecting. They variously discuss how singers and dancers enliven the topography through a “vigorous conflation of attentive subject and geographical object,” creating fields of meanings.<sup>36</sup> These fields of emotional meanings are not confined to performers, however, since places also hold memories for others listening. This is particularly evident in many instances of indigenous performativity, which require that performers and listeners attend to the sensuous and sentimental aspects of their natural environment.

As Barley Norton (Vietnam), Jonathan McIntosh (Bali), and Fiona Magowan (Aboriginal Australia) show, locally produced musics interact with the “local structure of feeling” to create gendered senses of difference.<sup>37</sup> They illustrate how rituals from Southeast Asia to Australia derive their power in part from the mediational forces of their particular environments that conjoin noumenal with phenomenal realms. Central to their arguments are the ways in which sentient landscapes shape musical senses of belonging through an indigenous hermeneutics of performance. They consider what kinds of emotions can be generated by sounds within landscapes and analyze how spiritual and emotional engagements are evoked through male and female song and dance performances that tie participants to places. Each author takes up the question of how to understand musical experiences of place and environment in shaping collective “emotional labor.”<sup>38</sup>

Drawing on field research in northern Vietnam, Barley Norton explores how the performances of spirit mediums embody geocultural associations that connect gender and emotion to the environment, while in Bali Jonathan McIntosh shows how geographic orientation is related to the noumenal effects of dance, influencing how boys and girls learn about their environment and access social and spiritual power. In the last chapter of this section, Fiona Magowan examines how the sentient environment in the Northern Territory of Australia is the basis of men’s and women’s performances in Aboriginal ritual, where noumenal power is directed toward the ancestral law—as “the music of nature becomes the nature of [not only] music” but also art and dance.<sup>39</sup> Men’s and women’s ritual singing is shown to be a means of emplacing performers politically in the landscape through the evocation of ancestral rights to land. As singing facilitates the recollection of past experiences, so it affords performers and listeners the opportunity to reestablish connections with a landscape that may have been “rendered absent,” legitimizing memories of the past for the purposes of asserting their rights in the present.<sup>40</sup>

Each of these chapters illustrates how the performance of emotions is powerful for participants and audiences. As the effects of trance influence performers’ emotional relationships with the spirit world in Vietnam, so too in Bali do children come to appreciate the complex spiritual and emotional dynamics

evoked by the masculine and feminine characters performed in the Barong. In Aboriginal Australia the sounds and contours of sea and land are spiritual essences that animate the activities of singing, dancing, and painting. In each case emotions extend outward from performers through their representations of the landscape, in turn bringing the spiritual effects of the land into their and others' bodies. This is an important process in indigenous performance and provides a basis for understanding the role of the environment in illness and well-being, as also evidenced elsewhere. In an Amerindian context, for example, Henry Stobart has captured a rich relationship between the healing powers of sound and their presence in the landscape to speak of "landscapes of music."<sup>41</sup> For many indigenous groups today, performing emotions and memories of places and ancestors in ritual continues to be key to intergenerational continuity, environmental sustainability, and personal well-being.

### *Part 2: Memory and Attachment*

The following three chapters consider how singing can evoke emotions through musical memories and the musical imagination. Contributors each illustrate how the immediacy of the performing voice resonates within the singing body as a musical instrument, eliciting powerful emotions in listeners. They argue that singing can inspire place memories by generating links with places remembered while affecting listeners through their associations with the locations in which songs are performed. Thus, they explore the effects that places have on male and female performers and show how emotions experienced in singing not only affect the constitution of social relations but also influence the nature of gender identity through performance. Authors further demonstrate how performers' voices "inhabit an intersubjective acoustic space."<sup>42</sup> In doing so, they contribute to a culturally delimited vocality within which "meanings cannot be recovered without reconstructing the contexts of their hearing."<sup>43</sup>

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg (Aboriginal Australia), Sara R. Walmsley-Pledl (Germany), and Louise Wrazen (Poland) examine singing as a context in which music has come to shape affective movements of the inner self, memory, and imagination. How places enter into men's and women's emotions and imaginations in the present draws our attention to place as contingent of time. These chapters resonate with Casey's notion of being "*of a place*" even while not necessarily *in it*.<sup>44</sup> The first two of these chapters, by Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg and Sara R. Walmsley-Pledl, refocus the performative lens toward feelings of well-being (or, alternatively, trauma) in vocal performances. In Queensland, Australia, Swijghuisen Reigersberg contends that choral singing performed for young male offenders in a detention center evokes senses of home, history, and longing. Other feelings of nostalgia, transcendence, and self-revelation infuse choral singing as a site of memory in East Bavaria, as



recounted by Walmsley-Pledl. In this context, choral singing is seen as a liberating experience because it has the potential to rewrite scarred memories of unhappy musical experiences from childhood. In the third chapter, Wrazen extends the impact of musical influences on the inner self to suggest that voice can connect the “inner and outer” worlds through performance and lifelong attachments to the landscape in the Podhale region of southern Poland. She shows how one woman’s voice has led her to new places in the world while simultaneously reinforcing strong associations with those landscapes most familiar to her. Tied to a sensory experience of place, singing has here become essential to processes of memory, even when moved to the recording studio or concert hall.

Each of these chapters elaborates on individual music experience as constituted in relation to the specifics of a local setting. While chapters 4 and 5 examine how narrating musical events and singing about experiences of local environments influence performers’ senses of well-being in choral settings, Wrazen focuses, in chapter 6, on one woman (in a polyphonic singing tradition) to consider women’s experience of singing in, and of, the landscape as a way of creating a personal intimacy with place. All three contributors explore how singing can create resilience and transform negative emotions, such as loss or hurt, to feelings of harmony and empowerment through gendered senses of spatial and temporal belonging. In each case, contributors show how managing emotions is important for performers to ensure an appropriate social order is maintained around “feeling rules,” either to create continuity with the past or to reenvision it.<sup>45</sup> As these chapters show, singing can thus offer an emotional catharsis that also transforms the singer into an active agent through the possibility of reimagining current realities. As an aspect of the “audible voice,” singing becomes “an instrument of empowerment.”<sup>46</sup> Through singing, processes of remembering can span a gamut of emotions, ultimately reaching an accord and empathy with and through the landscape.

### *Part 3: Nationalism and Indigeneity*

The recording studio and public stage are the key dimensions of the third section of the volume. Contributors elaborate on how the performance of emotions within and across regions and borders is an essential part of the construction of nationalism and indigenous personhood. Music is often used as a means of engaging political concerns to critique or transcend nationalist sentiment, producing a transnational consciousness about the politics of identity. Contributors show how performativity can be influential in expressing contested identities across different domains: from politicized responses in theatrical dramatization to emotional performances of life-changing events that have socially transformative outcomes for the nation. As nations come together to assert their rights, these authors ask, what are the homogenizing