



Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music (Book Review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

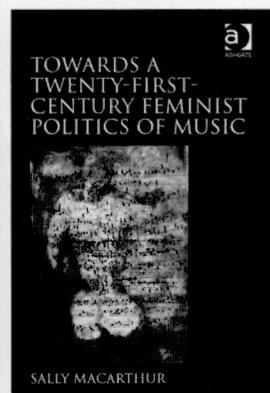
Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music

Sally Macarthur

Surrey: Ashgate, 2010. 193 pp.

ISBN9781409409823

Reviewed by Brydie-Leigh Bartleet



This is the kind of book that stays with you long after you've finished reading it. It's not what you would call a comfortable read. Breaking free from the tired and worn out stories of women's underrepresentation in music, it challenges readers to look at this 'problem' differently, and imagine a future beyond the status quo.

Macarthur suggests we need to move away from the conversations that characterized much feminist musicology in the 1970s and 1990s. She argues these earlier attempts at addressing women's erasures from Western music history uncovered a wealth of music, but didn't translate into any significant changes in music curricula, textbooks, concert programming, etc. This is because these projects envisaged the future from the standpoint of the present, and somewhat unknowingly replicated the restrictive structures they were

seeking to challenge. Macarthur asks her readers to move beyond such repetitive ways of thinking.

To realize such an ambitious goal, Macarthur draws on the work of philosopher Deleuze, as well as Deleuze with Guattari, and a raft of feminist thinkers. Each chapter is inspired by Deleuzian concepts, and includes 'the event' (chapter 1), 'machinic assemblage' (chapter 2), 'territorialisation,' 'deteritorialisation' and 'capital flow' (chapter 3), 'active and reactive' (chapter 4), the 'virtual' and the 'line of flight' (chapter 5) and 'becoming' (chapter 6).

Macarthur masterfully strikes a balance between Deleuzian concepts and how they are realized in music. In other words, the philosophical ideas never fully take over, and the discussions are always grounded in examples of 'new' music and women composers. These examples include Sofia Gubaidulina, Elena Kats-Chernon, Anne Boyd, electronic dance music by Katharine Nelligan and a new music festival curated by Danielle Bentley. Despite the book's heavy weighting towards Western art music, I was pleased to at least see some references to popular music in these examples and case studies.

The book is beautifully crafted and eloquently written; however, it does rely on its readers having a certain affinity with post-structuralist thought and feminist theory. While it meticulously explains its key terms and theoretical concepts, it does hit the ground running, so to speak. I hope this doesn't alienate some of the musicians most likely to contribute towards the future the book speaks of.

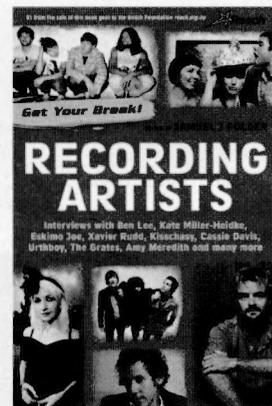
I have one major criticism. The book's imagining of a twenty-first-century politics in music

seems to miss out on the richness and diversity of viewpoints that would come from a non-Western perspective. Aside from fleeting references to non-Western music and the work of ethnomusicologists such as Ellen Koskoff, it seems to perpetuate the notion that feminism is a white, educated, middle-class woman's project. The work of writers, such as bell hooks, who have spoken about the interconnectivity of gender and race, would have added a broader and deeper imagining of the future that radically distinguishes itself from the past.

This criticism doesn't take away from the contribution the book makes towards imagining a different future for women composers in the Western realm, but this non-Western perspective is certainly worth adding to the dialogue Macarthur invites in the final pages of her book.

Get Your Break! Recording Artists

Ed. Samuel J Folder. Interviews with 21 contemporary music artists, managers, a broadcaster. Spit Junction, NSW: Red Hill Press, 2011. 285pp.
ISBN 978-0-9808291-0-5 (pbk.)
Reviewed by Lindy Morrison



Get Your Break! is a book of interviews of recording artists and industry experts. The main focus is on artists, diverse in genre and styles and in different stages in their careers. This book follows the tradition set by Tracee Hutchison's *Your Names on the Door* (ABC 1992) and to a lesser extent the seminal *Stranded* by Clinton Walker (Macmillan 1996). However unlike those books, in this, there is no analysis from the writer. The book is interviews only.

Stories from these artists are fascinating. For instance Charlie and Josie who record under the name Dash and Will express how little has changed for female artists since the sixties. Josie comments 'It can be quite depressing when radio reports back "Too many female artists on the air this month" or we can't add Dash and Will because Pink is filling up the rocky girl sound.'

Kate Miller-Heidke speaks of the importance of getting the song and recording synched into a moving image. She had no commercial play until her song was synched into *Neighbours*. Miller-Heidke discusses how upset she felt after Triple J disowned her once her album went commercial. She then wasn't played on Triple J who had supported her in the beginning because the production values didn't comply with Triple J's indie branding.

Some of the stories are already out of date. To name just two artists: The Cassette Kids and Cassie Davis wax lyrical about their deal with a major label and neither is now signed to that label. It would be valuable to know the story behind that.

Peter Karpin head of Mercury Records talks about the artist Megan Washington whom he signed on a recommendation from Alberts publishing. He comments that as an artist she knew exactly

who she was. 'An act with no real sense of who they are can quickly come off the rails or not even get on in the first place.' His definition of the role of the A&R should be the standard used by any music business teacher.

One of the most interesting interviews for me is with Tim Levinson (Urthboy), who has pioneered hip hop in Australia. He was the only person initially working in Elefant Traks, the label The Herd put together to enable the release of hip hop records here.

Every interview is useful to anyone looking to break into the industry whether as an artist or as a person starting a small

music business. Samuel Folder's questions delve deep so the reader finds interesting and worthwhile insights from these artists and experts from the industry. It helps to know that it is not just talent; with single mindedness, a sense of business and after living poor for some time, one can have a career in the music industry. It's one for the stayers.

Book Reviewers

Dr Brydie-Leigh Bartleet is a Senior Lecturer at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. She is the MCA Councilor for Research. She currently holds an ARC grant, an ALTC grant, has over 80 publications in music,

and is a Commissioner on the ISME Community Music Activity Commission. b.bartleet@griffith.edu.au

Lindy Morrison is the National Welfare Co-ordinator with Support Act the music industry benevolent society and Artist Director on Phonographic Performance Company of Australia. She teaches copyright and works in community music.

Books Received

Indig-curious. Who can play Aboriginal roles? Jane Harrison. Sydney: Currency House Inc., 2012, 64pp. ISBN 978 0 9807982 9 6. This is about theatre, not music, but the discussion has relevance to music.

More than Music. The life and work of

Kenneth W Tribe AC. Gwen Bennett. Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 248pp. ISBN 2011 9780909168780 (pbk.)

Opera Indigene: Re/presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures. Ed. Pamela Karantonis and Dylan Robinson. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 357pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-6989-0 (hardcover : alk. paper)

Transforming Education through the Arts. Brian Caldwell and Tanya Vaughan. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012. 166pp. ISBN 978-0-415-68702-7 (pbk)

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