

The authors find musical meaning less in the details of individual items of performance than in the 'structures of feeling' which music creates. Thus the 'we' of 'we shall not be moved' or 'we shall overcome' became the way in which the civil rights movement created new ways of looking at society. This perspective is a useful alternative to the search for musical meaning in separable items of musical detail, which for musicology has so often ended in inconclusive arguments about the nature of representation across different aesthetic forms. For this reason, and for the lively documentation of these intensely musical social movements, this work is of great interest to anyone studying music and its social context.

GRAEME SMITH

Kay Dreyfus, Sweethearts of Rhythm: The Story of Australia's All-Girl Bands and Orchestras to the End of the Second World War

Sydney: Currency Press, 1999

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When a book appears which, for the first time ever, describes a hitherto completely unknown phenomenon, rather than just investigating new aspects of known phenomena, it is always a breath-taking experience to read it. So it is with Dr Kay Dreyfus's pioneering book *Sweethearts of Rhythm*. It gives us a vivid view of a fascinating field of musical experience: that of professional Australian women musicians—mainly in the sphere of light entertainment—until the end of the Second World War. In doing so, it closes a gap in Australian music history. It also contributes to the growing body of literature in the international field on the neglected subject of professional women musicians in different societies and epochs.

I am one of the people whose privilege it is to have been consulted by Kay Dreyfus during the process of writing her book. She first contacted me in 1996, three years after the appearance of my doctoral dissertation on nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European ladies' orchestras. I followed closely the inevitable struggle that all authors have with the handling and publication of their material. My respect for Dr Dreyfus grew as I observed the integrity and tenacity with which she confronted all the problems of collation, interpretation, sources in foreign languages and so on.

One of the lessons taught to us by postmodernism is that of the impossibility of achieving total objectivity, even in the sphere of the natural sciences. This is even more true of the humanities, dealing as they do with the shifting experience of multifarious human beings, often human beings from another time and place whom we can now only know indirectly via documentary sources. Besides, an author is not separate from her/his work. A work inevitably mirrors its author, and the conclusions to which one comes and one's depiction of the object reflect one's own experiences, values, attitudes, predilections and temperament. This is not a reservation or an attempt to evade my responsibility as a reviewer. It is essential to be aware of the limitations of the concept of objectivity, particularly since in this case the reviewer and

the reviewed differ in one important way in their conclusions. Once this is understood, one can cast oneself head-over-heels into the task of enjoying the new worlds revealed.

Sweethearts of Rhythm is a handy paperback, somewhat over one hundred pages long. It is amusing and easy to read. The Introduction is a cameo from Melbourne entitled 'At the Palais Picture Theatre, 1942.' In it, Dreyfus plunges the reader straight into an environment typical for Australian ladies' bands during the final decade of their existence. Other typical areas of women's musical activity are glanced at, likewise various factors which influenced employment. Dreyfus then works backwards to show briefly how these musicians got where they did. This is a very effective technique for catching the reader's interest. She emphasises that her book is about ordinary rank-and-file musicians who have never received much attention from anyone, and that young women musicians today, whether in popular or art music contexts, whether they know it or not, are the inheritors of a centuries-old tradition. By this means the reader is given the opportunity of feeling the significance of historical context.

Chapter One ('Musical Families') surveys Australian musical society at the start of the twentieth century from a female perspective, exemplifying possibilities by portraying four bands, three of which are family-based and one of which is an independent ladies' orchestra: the Magpies Ladies Orchestra. The flow of information is rather erratic, no doubt reflecting the nature of the source materials as well as the lack thereof. The Briglia portrait is too superficial, and the Italian name Briglia demands some explanation of its background. Dreyfus does not pursue this particular trail but prefers to give some general historical background instead. Thus we acquaint ourselves with the opportunities provided for women musicians by the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work (held in Melbourne in 1907) and the First World War.

The story of the Australian bands is broken off at this point to accommodate an excursion to nineteenth-century Europe. I think this European section would have benefitted from being a separate chapter. Here it is an unmotivated and all too brief interruption. Also, the United States and Australia are included under the heading 'The European Ladies' Orchestras of the Nineteenth Century,' which is inaccurate, even if one sees them as following in a European tradition.

It is with Dreyfus's view of the status of historical European ladies' orchestras in their society that I have my only major disagreement. In line with the German musicologist Dr Dorothea Kaufmann, Dreyfus sees the majority of ladies' orchestras as objects of male exploitation, sexual as well as economic. The reader is left with a picture of miserable lives tainted by prostitution. Kaufmann bases her view on documentary sources only. Those documentary sources which were contemporary with the ladies' orchestras were entirely male, suffused with a rank odour of misogyny. One should therefore regard them with reserve. Kaufmann does not do this, and, in relying on Kaufmann without the possibility of evaluating her sources which are all in German, neither does Dreyfus. I think she ought to have mentioned the language problem somewhere.

Firsthand accounts by women musicians themselves give an entirely different picture. Even given the fact that a woman is unlikely to admit to having prostituted herself, other factors weigh in to give credence to the view of the majority of ladies' orchestras as respectable ensembles with highly-developed mechanisms to protect the good reputation of their members.

In her account of Australian all-girls bands, I note that Dreyfus, while accurately describing the lascivious expectations connected primarily with hot jazz and jazz musicians, also quotes musicians and managers, all of whom emphasise the strict rules governing women musicians' behaviour with regard to alcohol and sex. Nowhere does she assume about her living Australian musicians the subjection to sexual exploitation that she assumes about the historical European musicians. The Australian musicians were evidently greatly concerned with their reputations and their careers and, if for no other reason, the risk of pregnancy made them careful. There is no reason to think that things were different in the nineteenth century, which had even stricter rules governing women's behaviour. Sources on historical ladies' orchestras suggest that disreputable ensembles did exist but that they were a tiny minority. This conclusion is shared by Frau Eveline Müller from Munich, the daughter and granddaughter of German women musicians from Pressnitz, and one of Dreyfus's sources. She wrote in a letter to me: "The book of Frau Kaufmann came out last year. I think you've got it. I disagree with her on the point of the private life of the woman musician."¹ The book referred to is Kaufmann's doctoral dissertation, in German, which was published too late to be used by Dreyfus.²

Chapters Two to Four in *Sweethearts of Rhythm* consist of a more or less chronological presentation of all-girls bands in Australia of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s respectively. In Chapter Two ('Transitions in the Twenties') the book really takes off. Here Dreyfus is in her element, noticeably enjoying herself whilst handling this more modern Australian material. She writes with a fluency and lightness that carry with ease the heavy load of facts with which these chapters are jampacked.

Individual musicians and three bands are described in some detail in Chapter Two, which is the longest of these three, providing a foundation for the developments brought to light in the other two chapters. The impression given of women musicians in the 1920s is one of solid musical competence and of a versatility which sometimes was quite astounding. Musicians were generally able to play quantities of music of all genres, from the sheet or improvising by ear. Most of them could play several instruments very well. For one musician to perform on half-a-dozen instruments from different instrument families was quite common. Dreyfus makes an interesting point when she writes that one main difference between women and men musicians was the women's emphasis on multi-instrumental versatility and the men's on single-instrument virtuosity. Versatility did not, of course, preclude virtuosity on one or more instruments.

In Chapters Three ('Dancing through the Depression') and Four ('Wider Horizons'), the same pattern of presentation is followed as in Chapter Two. The general social situation is analysed, showing how various factors like the dance craze of the 1930s, the Depression and the Second World War influenced the careers of all-girls bands. In each case, the analysis is backed up by quite detailed portraits of a few individuals and bands.

¹ Personal communication, 1 Mar. 1998. Müller's English is good, but I have taken the liberty of slightly modifying it to make it more idiomatic.

² Dorothea Kaufmann, "...routinierte Trommlerin gesucht." *Musikerin in einer Damenkapelle. Zum Bild eines vergessenen Frauenberufes aus der Kaiserzeit*, Schriften zur Populärmusikforschung 3 (Karben, Germany: Coda, 1997).

Sweethearts of Rhythm, while not being an overtly feminist book or expressly placed by its author in a feminist tradition, ends on an indisputably feminist note. At the end of Chapter Four, Dreyfus confronts the issue of the sex discrimination which is evident in the lives, attitudes and events covered in all the chapters. The confrontation is brief but important. Women both benefitted from being women in a men's world, where they were a novelty, and suffered from their situation, especially from the projections of masculine sexual wishful thinking, not to mention the scornful denigration which some men felt the urge to express. Dreyfus implies that the male dominance of the music profession which continues even today means that there is a need for the inspiration provided by knowledge of intrepid women musicians of the past.

I find this book extremely informative and very pleasing. The times of all-girls bands are brought alive for the reader by the inclusion of well-chosen quotations from musicians, managers and the media, as well as by quantities of photographs, newspaper cuttings and programmes scattered over the pages. Sometimes the effect can be a little confusing, as one searches for the appropriate caption to an illustration, but there is also a certain charm of authenticity about the pages that resemble those of a private scrapbook or photo album. While being popular in tone rather than 'musicological,' *Sweethearts of Rhythm* is well researched and the research is well documented, especially in the footnotes which are clear, concise and accurate. The Select Bibliography is less satisfying, not as regards content, but as regards accuracy in the section entitled 'Books and Chapters in Books.' This section is riddled with inconsistencies in the use of capitals in book titles.

One thing puzzles me about this book, and that is its title, which was also the title of the exhibition upon which the book is based: *Sweethearts of Rhythm*. As far as I can see, it is not explained anywhere in the book. A famous American all-girls swing band called International Sweethearts of Rhythm started in 1937. Is there any relationship between the two?

MARGARET MYERS

Rebecca Coyle, ed., *Screen Scores: Studies in Contemporary Australian Film Music*

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Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987) ushered in something of a new wave of literature on the interrelationship between film and music. Much of this comes from the United States and is largely concerned with the classical Hollywood score, though Royal S. Brown's *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley, 1994), for one, ranges much further afield, embracing European (largely French) films as well as a US selection going far beyond classical Hollywood. Many of the contributors to the volume under review understandably acknowledge the work of Michel