

Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998  
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Music has played a part in many political movements. In the social movements analysed in this book, its role has been particularly important, and has had far reaching effects on popular music generally. The book explores music in a succession of radical and protest movements in the United States, in the black civil rights movement, and in the Swedish popular music movement of the 1970s. The authors argue that music was not merely an organisational and communicative tool of the movements, but was part of the creation of new concepts of society which were the deeper projects of the movements. The analysis develops some new approaches to the potent link between music and social structure.

The authors are scholars and theorists of social movements. As such they will provide for many musicologists a new window on social and political theory. Social movements such as the black civil rights movement or the 1960s counterculture, which form the main subject matter of the book, or the more recent feminist or environmental movements, are seen by political sociologists as a distinctive type of organisation. Diffuse in organisational style and political objectives, they are aimed as much at the generation of new paradigms of political action and power, and at transforming their participants' styles of self identification, as at the attainment of any list of demands or objectives. The authors think of these movements as 'cognitive praxis,' a theoretical formation which stresses the way types of social knowledge are created in action. This places musicians as pre-eminent intellectuals of these movements, and ascribes to music the role of carrier and creator of political and social meaning.

The social movements examined here have drawn upon musical styles which are characterised as folk musics or musical traditions. How can the radical and transformatory political framework of the social movements be reconciled with such a conservative notion as 'tradition'? Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential collection *The Invention of Tradition*, in describing the ways in which fabricated historical continuities have been used for conservative political ends, implied the possibility of a pure, un-selfconscious tradition.<sup>1</sup> But for Eyerman and Jamison, traditions are inherently reflected upon and selfconscious. In this sense they are always 'invented,' and are reinventing relations with the past. The authors use this theory to describe the use of a popular music 'folk' tradition, first by the early twentieth-century syndicalist socialists, the Industrial Workers of the World, with their famed songsmith Joe Hill; later by the popular front intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s, including musicologist Charles Seeger; and by performers such as Woody Guthrie and Huddie 'Leadbelly' Ledbetter, Seeger's son Pete and the Weavers, who brought the socialist Popular Front concept of populist folk song into mainstream Popular music.

The black civil rights movement is seen as another tradition, which ultimately converges with the predominantly white radical folk movement in the vigorous use of song as an

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

organising weapon in the mass peaceful civil disobedience which it mobilised in the 1950s and 1960s. The authors document this tradition through which the music culture of black Americans has been incorporated into the political movements for cultural and political identity. They start with the Harlem renaissance of the 1920s, which advanced the power of Negro culture, especially through the recognition of the epochal significance of the Blues and Jazz. Since then, through the evolution of Gospel and Bebop, through to the Civil Rights protest songs, and on to the developments of Soul and Rap, black cultural identity has been expressed and represented primarily by music.

The youth movement of the 1960s was most clearly defined by its music. The authors emphasise that the folk revival provided much of the musical basis for the counterculture's engagement with social change, for its anti-materialism, for its romanticised politics and for its festivals, concerts and performances. These were the situations in which a youth movement recognised itself, and where it outlined the relations between popular culture and political action. As Simon Frith has pointed out, the idea of an authentically expressive 'rock' music seen as being in opposition to a commercial and mindless pop, derived from the idealism of the folk revival of the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

Although Eyerman and Jamison contribute a useful and productive theoretical framework within which to understand politically committed genres, most of the musico-political movements are familiar to the English-speaking world. However, the Swedish popular music movement of the 1970s which they analyse is less widely known. This movement brought together musicians and cultural activists who were intent on creating a local and independent popular music scene. It drew upon residual folk musics, on a Swedish ballad or *visa* tradition, as well as on a contemporary progressive rock. Although its political impact eventually dissipated in the early 1980s, the industry which it fostered produced eminently successful groups such as Roxette or Ace of Bass of the 1980s and 1990s. Its successes and its limitations are of particular interest for Australia, which has a similar peripheral status in the global world of popular music production, and where the cultural role of a local popular music voice and industry is perennially debated.

In many ways, this book is inspired by the example of the political engagement of the 1960s, and a certain utopian nostalgia infuses its analysis of the movements. Thus the career of Phil Ochs, the troubadour who refused to sell out, but whose career ended in suicide, is contrasted with the contradictory trajectory of Bob Dylan from spokesman for the movement to individualist poet. Similarly the seduction of Janis Joplin or Jimi Hendrix by 'commercialism' is contrasted with the principled distance from the music industry maintained by Joan Baez or Richie Havens. The social movements studied are regarded as progressive, and the authors contend that in them 'music can recover at least some of its ancient truth-bearing role' (p. 25). Yet, as they readily acknowledge, many contemporary social movements are less attractive. Could the idea of musical and social truth be as easily applied to the so-called Newly Composed Yugoslav Folk Song, a popular music style of the former Yugoslavia which, it may be argued, played an important part in the new Serbian identity that prosecuted the Bosnian and Kosovan conflicts?

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<sup>2</sup> Simon Frith, "'The Magic That Can Set You Free:': The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community,' *Popular Music* 1 (1981): 159-68.

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