



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Songs, Dreamings, and Ghosts: The Wangga of North Australia* by Allan Marett

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inders, documentation, reference literature, and comments. Very helpful and of much interest are the old photos, transcriptions, sketches, etc., provided for many collections.

On pp. 329–91, short biographical notes for each collector are presented, and many have photographs. Reading this part was a particular pleasure for me. Here the personal backgrounds of the collectors are provided—behind each name written on the wax-cylinder boxes, an individual human life appears. I can imagine that this section demanded a great deal of research from the author, but it will be much appreciated by readers.

The various appendices provide colour pictures of the equipment, a glossary (mainly concerning the various terms and spellings of places and regions), a huge bibliography, discography, list of Internet addresses, and several indices.

Of special value to Ziegler's publication, however, is the CD-ROM (in an envelope glued to the back endpaper). This includes musical examples and a catalogue as a PDF file. The sound examples number seventy-three wax cylinder recordings as WAV files, most of them previously unpublished and selected to illustrate the diversity of the collections. On many of the recordings the collectors themselves announce the music—thus providing, for example, a unique occasion to hear Hornbostel's voice. The catalogue in PDF format on the CD-ROM runs to about a thousand pages; it is heavily based on the original catalogue of the Phonogramm-Archiv and includes the numbers and names as in the original. Scans of mostly handwritten documents by the collectors are also included.

Thus Ziegler's *Die Wachszylinder des Berliner Phonogramm-Archivs* gives us the unique chance to look at a very detailed catalogue of ethnomusicology's earliest recordings and to listen to many sound examples. It is an exceptional document on the history of *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* and a very useful and much appreciated tool for every library and scholar in the field.

RAYMOND AMMANN

Marett, Allan. *Songs, Dreamings, and Ghosts: The Wangga of North Australia*.

Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005. xxiii, 292 pp., photographs, maps, figures, tables, musical examples, bibliography, notes, CD, index.

This book began, as the author states on p. 3, as a project to describe a major genre of Australian Aboriginal ceremonial music, originating in the Daly River region of Northwest Australia and known over a wider area. Over the course of fifteen years' research the project matured into a deep engagement with the peoples, performers, and cultures of the region, and a close analysis of musical style, structure, and performance. The result is a brilliant synthesis of ethnographic and analytical approaches to music that deserves to be read by anyone interested in what music means.

The book begins with three scene-setting chapters covering the principal repertoires of *wangga*, the cosmological belief-systems that they embody, traditions of

transmission, and the ceremonial contexts of performance. Next follow an introduction to the conventions of song and dance, and close readings of selected songs representing four different traditions of *wangga* composition and transmission. Finally the perspective broadens again in a survey of the modes of musical signification that typify all the repertoires, and a consideration of what happens to the music and its meanings when songs are disseminated to the surrounding regions.

In his introduction the author places musical analysis at the heart of his approach. He takes as a starting point John Blacking's aim "not simply to describe the cultural background of the music as human behavior, and *then* to analyze peculiarities of style ... but to describe *both* music *and* its cultural background as dialectically interrelated parts of a total system" (p. 9). Marett's achievement in this book is to fulfil this aim as profoundly as one could wish for, something rarely achieved in ethnomusicology. Later in the book, Susan McClary's contention, that musical meaning resides in the conventional structures of music as well as in particular deviations from those conventions (p. 79), becomes another key concept. But the author's objective is not to "decode" hidden meanings in the music (p. 9), but to identify, with the help of its performers and through personal experience of performance, those aspects of music, text, and dance that participate in the creation of a meaningful artefact or event. Marett ends his introduction, which is worth reading on its own as a well-argued and helpful position statement, by locating himself in relation to the culture he has studied, noting with refreshing pragmatism that despite his sense of responsibility to represent his informants' views, they expect him to take responsibility himself for his own text: "Now it is up to me to sing what I have learned."

The author's approach is worked out in the detailed analysis of some seventeen songs in the central chapters, in which the textual structure, melodic and rhythmic modes, formal patterns, and other aspects of performance are related at every point to the social identity of the composer, performers, and other performers present at the recording; the composition and transmission history of the song and its place in the repertoire; the ceremonial or other occasion for performance; and the system of geographically grounded beliefs about life and (especially) death that is evoked and referenced—often with ambivalent meaning—by the words of the song. The four repertoires discussed in this way stem from different communities speaking related but different languages and having similar but distinct mythologies of place, interconnected by reciprocal social and ceremonial relations that, as Marett shows, are articulated in the music. Thus, to take but one example, one of the performances analysed is a Mari-ammu re-composition of a Marri-tjevin *wangga*, as sung by its Mari-ammu composer in the presence of a group of Marri-tjevin songmen (p. 137ff.): here Marett teases out, through analysis, the dynamics of socio-musical signification in a particularly clear and convincing case.

The analysis of songs features transcriptions, tabulations of musical and textual variables to show groupings and norms, paradigms showing textual and formal structures, and comparative scores of parallel performances from recordings of different dates (the use of archive recordings adds a historical dimension to the study). These techniques are transparently effective without the need for any armoury of

semiotic theory. Their origins lie rather in Marett's distinguished work in a rather different field, the study of manuscript sources for the history of Japanese court music (*tōgaku*). The fact that similar analytical techniques can be successfully applied in the study of both written and oral musical repertoires is significant, and their use is surely justified here, in that they are always used in order to highlight norms and variables that can then be interpreted, in combination with other factors, as embodying meaning. To take another example, analysis of the Walakandha repertory reveals that two heptatonic modes are associated with different musical lineages within the Marri-tjevin community, that one of them exists in different pentatonic variants, and that these variants correlate not only with lineages but with coastal and inland regions (p. 117ff.): the relationship of music with country, in which social identity, culture, and mythology are grounded, is a recurrent theme throughout the book. The concrete reality of such musically embodied meanings becomes apparent when singers from different lineages sing together (p. 120).

We can readily share the author's astonishment at "the amount of information that can be packed into a performance that lasts less than one minute" (p. 152). The problem of identifying musical meaning is clearly not that such meaning is tenuous, but that it is rich, complex, and intimately dependent on both structure and context. As Marett shows in his last chapter, when *wangga* are sung outside their region of origin, the delicate relationships between textual and musical structures, context and meaning are loosened or dissolve, and when recordings of diasporic versions are played to Daly River songmen the reactions range from hilarity to anger or incomprehension. Any new meanings that might be acquired by such versions in the diaspora are not recognized in the home country, and Marett does not pursue them further in this study.

As befits a work that both encapsulates a musical culture and speaks to a world audience, the book is a model of presentation. The writing is lucid and compelling, sophisticated but never obscure or pretentious, and above all passionately respectful of the human subjects and their music. The songs analysed are presented in clear transcriptions, and can all be heard on the accompanying CD (in which one can hear the non-tempered intervals and rhythmic nuances that sometimes elude exact representation in staff notation). A selection of photographs enables the reader to picture the world of *wangga* performance and some of its leading representatives. The book is virtually free from typographical errors and is handsomely designed. To read this book, and to listen to the songs, is both a pleasure and an inspiration. Marett has learned much and sung it well.

RICHARD WIDDESS

Bakhle, Janaki. *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. xv, 338 pp., photos, notes, glossary, bibliography, and index.

The waves of political and social change that washed over South Asia in the first half of the twentieth century swept up all and sundry, including some of the most