

Baldacchino, Godfrey, ed. *Island Songs. A Global Repertoire*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011. xli + 299 pp. Index, hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8108-8177-8, \$70.00.

Why focus on island song? What about islands captures our fancy? How do the characteristics of island life give rise to song? How do the songs of one island merit comparison to any other? Why should those of us not living on islands care? We might ask these very questions of the new book *Island Songs*. In his opening chapter, editor Godfrey Baldacchino does more than justify the focus of this book; he and the contributing authors frame the study of islands, their culture, and their music in various contexts that reveal the value of song and singing to islanders and by extension to us all.

For music educators seeking sophisticated explorations of the relationship between song, culture, and historical contexts, this collection of essays is a valued resource. It is not the first book to focus on island music. *Island Music* (2004) by Kevin Dawe—who wrote the preface to this book—precedes it, as do many other studies that Baldacchino reviews in his introduction. While earlier publications share the comparative scope of *Island Songs*, the specific focus on song sets this publication apart. However, despite the reference to repertoire implied in the title, the book does not provide educators with songs for their students to sing. Certainly an industrious reader could use the lists and discographies that conclude each chapter to identify and collate a collection of songs from islands spanning the globe featured in the chapters. The essays address performance practice for Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Barthélemy, St. Martin, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, Hebrides, Jersey, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Chiloé, Crete, Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Ibiza, Formentera, Gotland, with passing reference to others including Iceland, Melanesia, and East Timor. The scope is impressive and critical to the editor's intent to compare expression across geographical and cultural divides. Thus, while it would be quite an undertaking to cull a representative song list from those entries, mining the cultural analysis provided in *Island Songs* is likely to be far more rewarding to music scholars and teachers.

Godfrey Baldacchino is a sociologist and research chair of island studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. The founder and executive editor of the *Island Studies Journal*, his three earlier books, *A World of Islands* (2007), *Bridging Islands* (2007), and *Island Enclaves* (2010), demonstrate his commitment to exploring the relationship between geographic conditions, social relationships, and culture. He admits to limited music expertise but has a long-standing relationship with the organization Advancing Interdisciplinary

Research in Singing (AIRS), which cosponsored this book and helped determine its focus. Significantly, Baldacchino understands islands as concentrated depositories of the world's diversity and as ideal candidates for observing and critiquing the dynamic of globalization (xxiv). He further sees songs as ideal tools for deciphering the contradictions and paradoxes that comprise island life (xxii).

The diversity of perspectives represented by the authors is a main strength of the book. The contributors are an international team (many representing the islands they examine) whose experiences range from academics to cultural activism: Ijahnya Christian (English Caribbean), Soraya Marcano (Spanish Caribbean), Yoko Oryu and Godfrey Baldacchino (French Caribbean), Heather Sparling (Cape Breton), Deatra Walsh (Newfoundland), Ray Burnett and Kathryn A. Burnett (Scottish Hebrides), Henry Johnson (Jersey Islands), Oli Wilson (Papua New Guinea), Jennifer Cattermole (Fiji), Walter Garrido and Philip Hayward (Chiloé), Maria Hnaraki (Crete), Sergio Bonanzinga (Sicily), Cristoforo Garigliano (Aeolian Islands), Judith R. Cohen (Ibiza and Formentera), Owe Ronström (Gotland), John Connell (epilogue). They represent an even wider array of disciplines, including sociology, ethnomusicology, psychology, cognitive science, geography, anthropology, music performance, visual art, and media broadcasting and recording.

Despite the variety of perspectives, shared concerns clearly emerge as the reader moves through the collection. Each author provides a profile of songs that matter to islanders and why. A strong focus exists in most chapters on song lyrics over any other dimension, with relatively little discussion of the musical sound characteristics. Emphasis on music's role in island society reigns supreme, and contributors share an interest in the networks that connect island residents to the rest of the world. Islands are no longer—if they ever truly were—the isolated places that many imagine them to be. Globalization and the speed of communication make it possible for islanders to transcend place and for all of us, to some degree or another, to connect to island life.

One recurrent theme is migration and immigration and the role that music plays in those processes. The influence of that experience on island music making and on the islanders' identity through their connection with this music, whether on the island or abroad, is the subject of Soraya Marcano's chapter "Spanish Caribbean: Liquid Identities." This chapter caught my attention because of my professional interests and research expertise with the region. Marcano, a practicing visual artist, begins by introducing the intriguing concept that Caribbean islanders share an identity attached to an imagined island. She writes: "The island that each Caribbean inhabits is part physical, part imaginary, (re)invented throughout history and collective experience" (19). She then examines this claim by focusing on the music of Puerto Rico, including a brief

consideration of Cuban song as it intersects with Puerto Rican song in the shared genre of salsa, a somewhat surprising focus considering the importance of salsa as an instrumental dance style.

Marcano does not explore Cuban culture enough to balance her focus on Puerto Rico and omits any mention of the third major Spanish Caribbean island, the Dominican Republic. Nor does she mention the San Andres and Provincia islands located in the Caribbean Sea, officially belonging to Colombia (although lying closer to Nicaragua, which also lays claim to them), despite the rather encyclopedic tone of her chapter. Including the latter would require greater discussion of English language incursions in Puerto Rican song, a topic worthy of additional consideration that might link her focus on migration with other contributors' examinations of linguistic practice and crosscultural networks. Marcano acknowledges that many contemporary Puerto Rican singers, particularly those living in the United States, also sing in English, reflecting both the reality of their dual national allegiance and appeal to crossover audiences. It must be admitted that the space limitations of a compendium are difficult for authors to surmount, and readers of *Island Songs* can draw satisfaction from the insightful nuggets that emerge from the broad overviews that, perhaps necessarily, comprise much of the volume.

Sprinkled among the macro observations in *Island Songs* are sparkling gems of detailed insight that capture the reader's imagination and linger in the memory. Judith Cohen writes of the historic custom of illiterate women of Ibiza who construct complex song lyrics following strict rules of rhyme and meter (226) operating alongside new age songs that incorporate rock and world music influences. Fortunately, other authors also document how cultural fashions shaped by international communication, commerce, and tourism affect historic custom and musical values. Cohen attributes the demise of the distinctive Catalan ballad on Ibiza to the contemporary taste for songs as "objects of sound rather than communication" (231). A topic suggested by the vanishing practices that Cohen laments might be a comparison of those on Ibiza with Hispanic poetic song resulting from the legacy of Spanish imperialism in practices sonically and places geographically far removed from Ibiza. The strategies of male *jibaro trovadores* (rural ballad singers) of Puerto Rico come to mind as one example.

Educators will find this text most useful as a reference volume or as a catalyst in university seminars for discussion of research aims and methods used to collect information and identify critical themes. Exemplary reporting appears in several essays, although as in most compendiums the essays are not of equal quality. The editor has ensured that the volume provides outstanding attention to critical scholarship and each essay includes excellent bibliographic, discographic, and other reference listings. Lamentably, there is no accompanying

audio recording. The volume represents the renewed and revised approach to comparative study in the discipline of ethnomusicology, and readers of *JHRME* will surely find satisfaction in John Connell's epilogue with its review of such changing trends in scholarship.

As the contemporary proliferation of island music festivals around the globe confirms, modern fascination with islands persists, often fueled by persistent and simplistic stereotypes of exotic people living in isolation in a fossilized past. In *Island Songs: A Global Repertoire*, Baldacchino and colleagues provide an antidote to such views. This engaging collection of serious studies illustrates the contemporary relevance of island life and shows how often islands songs speak not only for those who create them but also for us.

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