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Author

Morcom, Anna

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Music, Modernity, and Publicness in India. By Tejaswini Niranjana. Pp.288. (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 2020. £56. ISBN 978-0-19-012112-9.)

Review by Anna Morcom, UCLA

This edited volume brings together many strands of research on Indian music and modernization from the late nineteenth century to the present day in a novel way through a focus on publicness, which has been implicitly a part of quite a bit of work on Indian music but never received concerted attention. As traditional forms of patronage broke down in India from the late nineteenth century, cities and an urban bourgeoisie came to the fore; print, recording, and broadcast media proliferated; and the constitution of performers and listeners of different genres, and the connections with each other, and further groups of people, were shaped in radically new ways. The essays in the book look at multifarious forms and dimensions of publicness and publics, focusing on different types of music, locations, historical periods, and/or media. While publicness is interrogated to some degree in various chapters, and in particular in the succinct and highly effective introduction, the overall emphasis is not particularly theoretical, something I do not see as a fault of the book. Rather, the focus is on drawing a thread through chapters that analyse very diverse material so a multifarious sense of publicness emerges, ultimately, a focus on the music as lived and social, whether mediated or not. Another strength of the volume is that it gathers contributors with disciplinary backgrounds in history, literature, cinema and media studies, communications, business history, and development, as well as Indian musicology and ethnomusicology. It also includes senior scholars and early career scholars, and those based abroad as well as those based in India.

The first three chapters, and first section, focus on the presidency cities and the transformation of musical publics of classical, with Lakshmi Subramanian writing about Madras amidst the establishment of religious associations, music associations (the *sabhas*), new kinds of writing on music, and the challenge of the non-Brahmin Tamil Music Movement to Brahmins and Sanskrit- and Telegu-based Karnatic music. Adrian McNeil's chapter on Calcutta focuses on Hindustani music and the key role of the 'Ustads from the North', the Muslim hereditary musicians who migrated to Calcutta in the nineteenth century, seeking opportunities, and Tejaswini Niranjana's chapter explores Bombay/Mumbai in the same period, looking at the new, urban, bourgeois musicophiliacs of Hindustani music. Niranjana's chapter is one of the highlights of the book, grounded in extensive primary oral history research, including interviews with musicians, and people involved in setting up associations and running venues. It injects much vitality into our understanding of Hindustani music in Bombay and Maharashtra from the late nineteenth century, building on (and acknowledging) existing research by

authors such as Michael Rosse, Erika Kobayashi, Aneesh Pradhan, and Kathryn Hansen. It steps back from the well-established work on Hindustani music and its reform in the climate of nationalism, by Janaki Bakhle in particular, to look at the pleasure, sociality, and love of Hindustani music, providing a refreshing new perspective. Niranjana also emphasizes the close friendships and connections of Muslim hereditary ustads and new, urban, Hindu musicophiliacs which existed, although the overarching discourse that Hinduised Hindustani music and gradually marginalized Muslim performers was very real. Possibly the most significant contribution of this chapter is its presentation of Hindustani music as part of a fertile space where classical music, theatre music, and devotional music interlocked, and how it developed as a 'lingua musica'. This is a sharp contrast from the majority of research on Hindustani music that has examined it as a discrete, delineated genre, and thus contextualises its social, stylistic, and aesthetic richness and vitality in new ways.

In the next section, two more chapters examine Hindustani music, focusing on the formation of taste. Urmila Bhirdikar's chapter looks at Maharashtra, and focuses on the discursive shaping of taste in the Marathi writings of Govind Sadashiv Tembe (1881-1955), who uses the traditional Sanskrit *rasa* aesthetic theory (*rasa* being literally 'juice', an aesthetic essence), differentiating 'high' classical genres from 'vulgar' ones such as theatre, though unusually for this time, voicing clear appreciation for the musical skills of courtesans, though his arguments ultimately devalue them, as Bhirdikar points out. Amlan Das Gupta, in the next chapter, extends the focus on Hindustani music and new publics to the establishment of listeners in western countries.

The second half of the book, the third and fourth sections, moves away from classical traditions. In the first chapter of the third section on inter-medial publics, Vebhuti Duggal explores the rich spheres of listening, reading, and discussing Hindi film songs in the period 1955-75. While most prior work has focused on the role of radio or gramophone records, her focus is on print media. Importantly, as she points out, during this pre-television era many people were not able to watch films, or not frequently, and magazines were a way in which people 'read' and enjoyed music, providing lyrics and musical notations, and film synopses, including the place of the songs. These connected with listening on radio and gramophone records, or seeing films and songs in cinema theatres. The chapter is a subtle illumination of the interlocking publics, discourses, and dimensions of Hindi film song, and its pervasiveness and multi-dimensionality as a *lingua musica* (using Niranjana's term). The next chapter by Abhija Ghosh focusses on Hindi film songs from the 1990s, and their 'afterlife' in the form of proliferating mediatized circulation, as well as events where they are featured. She traces the nostalgia towards the 1990s romantic songs, which have become another classic period of Hindi cinema, and the ways in which visuality, dance, and choreography are highlighted. Paralleling Duggal's chapter in many ways,

but in the contemporary period, Ghosh traces the ways that these songs live, and live on, in mediatized activities and forms.

The last chapter in this section, 'The public sphere of marketed sound: The business of early recorded music in India', by Vibodh Parthasarathi, is another I found to be a real highlight of the book, making us look anew at something already researched: the advent of recording and a music business in India. Rather than centering on particular performers and genres as previous studies by ethnomusicologists and musicologists have done, Parthasarathi focuses on business history. The chapter is extremely rich in its examination of sources, and meticulously critical in interrogating the many developments and changes that can often be reduced to phases that somehow lead one to the other: cylinders and gramophone disks, the before and after of the expeditions of recording entrepreneurs of which Gaisberg was the first, and the creation of a market of Indian recorded music. Never falling into vagueness, Parthasarathi gives a dynamic vision of people, encounters, entrepreneurship, business imperatives, technology, and the larger context of colonial trade, full of details and analysis. For example, the excellent sales of blank cylinders in India, which people used to record Indian music, caught the attention of entrepreneurs and was one thing that led to the trips to India by Gaisberg and others to 'can' and sell Indian music. By looking not only on the material production of recorded music in India, but on 'the making of its selling' (190), advertising and marketing, this chapter opens up new vistas of the public spheres of business, marketing, music, musicians, and audiences, the creation 'of value systems' (202) and the manufacture of consumers. His phrase, 'the economic imagination of marketed sound', encapsulates this (190).

The final section of the book turns to regional and folk or vernacular musics. While film music in India has been discussed most extensively in terms of commercialism, music industries, and mass-media hegemony, Kaley Mason's chapter on Malayalam film music reveals a very different vision, where these songs bolstered radical counterpublics in the 1950s. The final chapter of the volume, by Aditi Deo, looks at one of the stops of the Kabir Yatra, the 'pilgrimage' of performances of songs of the mystical medieval poet, Kabir, in Bikaner, Rajasthan. The Kabir Yatra is a new manifestation of folk or vernacular music that involves, though does little to mix, publics of elite big city urbanites and local people of low caste, and the chapter contributes to growing research on Kabir and folk music by authors such as Vivek Virani and Stefan Fiol.

My only criticism of the book at an overarching level is the rather conventional predominance of chapters on classical music, which take up half the book, though classical music certainly does not constitute half of the music of India. However, this reflects unevennesses in research on Indian music far more broadly, with disproportionate amounts on classical traditions (and the same for dance), and rapidly increasing amounts on dominant forms of film or popular music, notably Hindi film music, on which there are

two chapters in this book. It is certainly something researchers should be thinking carefully about, as it clearly reflects preferences and interests rooted in caste and class amongst Indians in India and abroad, and non-Indian researchers (who may not have caste, but connect in terms of social milieu and taste with the upper echelons of Indian society, something that dates back to colonial knowledge). Furthermore, the focus of the first three chapters on the trinity of presidency cities is logical, because they became the centres of new money which flowed from colonial trade and industry, the heart of Indian modernization, and the home to the most influential new publics, and they have remained the most important sites for Hindustani music (Calcutta and Bombay/Mumbai), and Karnatak music (Madras/Chennai). However, this focus is, again, conventional, and renews my eagerness to see researchers look beyond these big centres, and at smaller towns (the only one featured in the book is Bikaner, and that is for a chapter focused on vernacular music). Classical music and light classical genres permeate urban India at different degrees of concentration, and intersect with 'folk' traditions and popular traditions too, as some chapters highlighted, and it would be refreshing to see the national character of Indian classical and pop traditions interrogated beyond the major cities in more thoroughgoing ways.