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**Communities of musical practice**, by Ailbhe Kenny, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2016, xii + 156 pp, ISBN 9781472456755 (£95.00, hardback)

Communities of Practice (CoP) – defined by Wenger as 'groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (2015) – have hitherto been little examined in relation to musical practices. The CoP framework connects learning and participation through a tripartite model: mutual engagement (domain), joint enterprise (process/community) and shared repertoire (practice) (Wenger 1998, 70-3). In short, community members interact with one another due to a shared learning need, bond due to collective learning, and produce common resources (such as jargon) as a result.

Kenny's ambitious monograph seeks to challenge and extend the CoP framework by developing a sociocultural learning model in response to data gathered during extensive ethnographic fieldwork in County Limerick (Republic of Ireland) and online. Her disciplinary orientation as a lecturer in music education is evident from the outset: she is fundamentally concerned with 'the social process of musical learning' (1) in three distinct Communities of Musical Practice (CoMP): Limerick Jazz Workshop (LJW), County Limerick Youth Choir (CLYC) and the Online Academy of Irish Music (OAIM). She sets out broad research questions in response: what music teaching, learning and participation practices take place in CoMPs? What is the relationship between community, music and learning within CoMPs? What actions, roles, behaviours, experiences and relationships manifest in CoMPs? How are musical identities both formed and informed within CoMPs (2)?

The book is structured in three parts. The first, 'A place for communities of musical practice', presents the theoretical foundations and methodological approach adopted. Kenny positions collective music-making as a social phenomenon which evolves in particular contexts, enabling the construction of social realities and identities by individuals through musical and ergo social interaction. She draws upon the work of Bourdieu, de Certeau, Vygotsky and Bruner among others in extending Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of a CoP to musical communities.

The second of the book's three parts provides illustrations of CoMPs where the CoP model is utilised as an analytical tool. Each case study is parallel in structure, presenting community and musical practices from both group and individual perspectives. Kenny begins by arguing that every CoMP 'has particular norms, rules, structures, interactions and "practices" distinct to their collective situations' (46). She highlights the particular values of each group: creativity at LJW, belonging at CLYC and tradition at the OAIM. Detailed ethnographic data is presented and analysed, demonstrating how membership and identities are formed and mediated through socio-musical interaction.

Notably, Kenny demonstrates that learning tools and processes reflect the distinctive practices in each case: 'jazz lore' as an induction tool at LJW; the shared history among CLYC members, enabling specific use and reactions to musical signals; and the utilisation of live streaming technology by OAIM so community members can join a music session in an Irish pub from any continent. Throughout the three case studies, a focus on dialogue prevails. For instance, the aforementioned 'jazz lore' – 'essentially jazz stories, anecdotes and jokes typically referencing "jazz legends"' – functions very clearly as 'domain-specific dialogue' (46-47). Similarly, the OAIM CoMP constructs a very clear Irish identity despite its online existence.

In the final part, Kenny draws together insights from the CoMPs examined. She identifies three persistent themes: a sense of belonging, collaborative learning and identity-building. Kenny makes a series of policy and practice recommendations based upon the insights gleaned. Many readers of this journal would support the aspiration to 'appreciate differing levels of participation and collaboration' (132) and likely already endeavour to do so in their own teaching. What would have been more helpful is an explanation of *how* this might be achieved – by developing local leadership training programmes, for example.

While focused on musical practices (i.e. processes), Kenny's qualitative case study analysis of three distinct CoMPs contains some musicological analysis. For instance, the author includes an extract from her **o**bservational data of OAIM video tutorials. She recounts how a 'jig in 6/8 time with a feel of two beats in the bar … [where] the ornament was isolated and then added into the tune' (97) is presented to learners. While an accompanying CD or DVD may have been unviable, the lack of URL links or notation hinders our understanding of how social practices affect music-making. In short, the author refers to evidence that cannot be accessed by the reader; a particularly frustrating omission given that video recordings are the cornerstone of Kenny's ethnographic method and sheet music is used by learners in all three case studies.

As researchers examining the phenomenon of 'people making music' (Titon 2008, 30), ethnomusicologists might justly argue that they have long studied CoMPs but have simply not labelled them as such. While Kenny's monograph makes a vital and timely contribution to a field that has been under-addressed, it is somewhat challenging to identify how a CoMP – 'a group of people who form a community of practice through shared music-making and/or musical interests' (16) – differs from a CoP when musical outputs are largely overlooked. For instance, it is not difficult to imagine the distinct practices of creativity, belonging and tradition being cultivated through non-musical practices (e.g. painting classes or a sports team). The value of the monograph to the study of music seems somewhat limited when the dynamics of a CoMP are indistinguishable from a CoP. Nevertheless, the monograph will undoubtedly serve as a springboard for potential engagement by

scholars operating in the fields of ethnomusicology, music psychology, community music and music education.

### *References*

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