



Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant, *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective*

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SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FOR MUSIC CULTURES is the rare edited volume that hangs together tightly from beginning to end, and where each chapter is structurally and thematically closely connected to the others despite analyzing wildly disparate traditions. This may be in part because this well-curated volume is not the product of a conference panel, but of a long-term research project, funded by the Australian Research Council, that brought together experts on several music traditions from around the globe under the premise that music cultures are best viewed as ecologies, and that assessing the sustainability of a culture might benefit from this ecological perspective. To do this, the scholars established a single research protocol and analytic framework through which the ecology of each tradition might usefully be studied, and interviewed individuals involved at all levels of the music process—from instrument makers to teachers and beyond. The results were then disseminated not only in the form of this book, but also through a freely available website (soundfutures.org).

The case studies in *Sustainable Futures* were chosen to include both robust and endangered traditions. This diverse set of case studies ensures both enhanced comparability and, therefore, the enhanced opportunity to understand the building blocks of sustainability. Some of the traditions benefit from strong governmental support. Others require private patronage. Some are closely woven into the ritual and social life of strong communities; others struggle to maintain relevance in a changing world. Some have robust support and hope for intergenerational transmission in the near future, while others may be considered critically endangered. These diverse examples provide fertile ground for comparison.

The premise that music cultures are ecosystems required the researchers to view each tradition holistically. To make the ecosystem legible, each chapter focuses on a single case study that begins with an introduction to the tradition, followed by a systematic examination of the tradition's vitality in five domains: "systems of learning music," "musicians and communities," "contexts and constructs," "regulations and infrastructure," and "media and music industries." Each chapter also ends with a conclusion describing past and present sustainability efforts and assesses the tradition's future prospects.

The care that has gone into crafting this volume is evident from the opening pages, with a foreword by the inimitable Toni Seeger giving a sense of this volume's significant contribution. The body of the book opens with two introductory chapters. In Chapter 1, "Sound Futures: Exploring the Ecology of Music Sustainability," Huib Schippers introduces the concepts of sustainability, the ecological metaphor, the five domains (see above) around which the book is structured, and the format of the volume itself. In Chapter 2, "Music Sustainability: Strategies and Interventions," Catherine Grant then surveys the state of the field of sustainability, fleshes out the five domains in greater depth, and introduces some existing cultural sustainability initiatives

around the world. Following this, readers are then treated to nine case studies, each based on the same set of questions asked of those involved in the given traditions. The traditions are, in order of their appearance: Ghanaian Ewe, Hindustani music, Central Australian Yawulyu/Awelye, Balinese Gamelan, Western opera, Amami Shimi Uta from Japan's Amami Islands, Korean SamulNori, Mexican Mariachi, and Vietnamese Ca Trù.

In the concluding chapter, the editors team up to describe how we might evaluate these case studies and their implications for theoretical and applied work in the field of cultural sustainability. In particular, they highlight the role of prestige in sustaining traditional practices. Prestige may motivate an individual to invest the considerable amount of time (and sometimes capital) necessary to learning a musical tradition. Prestige may also motivate private and governmental patronage and ensure continued audiences for a tradition. Nevertheless, the editors also caution that any findings should not be taken as a one-size-fits-all blueprint for sustainability but rather a set of guidelines for assessing traditions and their ecosystems.

This path-breaking book will be of interest to folklorists, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists alike. The early chapters provide something of a primer on cultural sustainability and the ecological metaphor; the book's remaining, uniformly structured chapters are written in a fairly accessible style, which ensures that any individual chapter can be assigned for class reading at both undergraduate and graduate levels, while a group of chapters can also be assigned for comparative purposes. While I recommend the volume in its entirety, readers of *Asian Ethnology* might be interested in the Asia-focused case studies, including chapters on Balinese Gamelan, Hindustani music, Japanese Amami Shima Uta, Korean SamulNori, and Vietnamese Ca Trù traditions.

If there is a critique to be made of this incredible work, it is that the method for assessing a tradition's ecology does not seem to explicitly account for the role of other (especially non-musical) traditional forms that might either be in competition with or complementary to them. It stands to reason that such music-adjacent traditions within the same community may have important consequences for sustainability, particularly as it relates to cultivating competent audiences with interest in traditional forms. This in turn may affect the all-important prestige factor. Nevertheless, this minor quibble should not detract from the incredible value and contribution of *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures*, and I am pleased to enthusiastically recommend this book.

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