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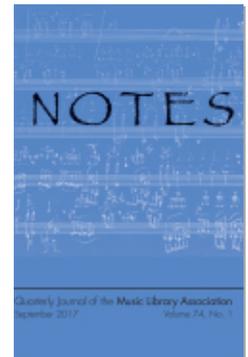
*Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Culture, Nature*  
eds. by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe (review)

Jacob A. Cohen

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ter. Using “Danza Kuduro” by Don Omar and Lucenzo as an example, Rivera-Rideau traces the diasporic linkages connecting reggaetón and marginalized Puerto Rican urban youth in New York to kuduro, an Angolan form of popular music, and Angolan and other immigrant African urban youth in Portugal. While representing racial stereotypes relating to gender and sexuality, “Danza Kuduro” and other recent reggaetón fusions, notes Rivera-Rideau, make possible diasporic affiliations that have the potential to transform local conceptions of race and national identity. Indeed, as the author notes, “the history of reggaetón is one of transformation” (p. 168).

Sound in its analysis and conclusions, *Remixing Reggaetón* resonates with contemporary scholarship on music, race, nation, gender, sexuality, and diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean. Rivera-Rideau situates reggaetón among other similarly discursive and transnational musics linked to blackness and hegemonic constructions of national identity in the African diaspora, such as rap and hip-hop, salsa, cumbia, vallenato, Jamaican dancehall, and Angolan kuduro. Doing so allows her to illuminate not only the relative agency of local communities and individuals vis-à-vis hegemonic structures of power, but also the ways in which the concept of diaspora intervenes in local struggles via expressive forms of culture, such as music, dance, and dress. In signifying and re-signifying the aesthetics of blackness, local communities are thus able to challenge and potentially transform what it means to be black and a citizen within the nation. While these arguments in and of themselves are not necessarily new within the context of the extant literature on the topic of music, race, and nation in Latin America and the Caribbean, Rivera-Rideau’s study nonetheless provides a unique and significant perspective on the ways in which the dynamics of race and racism and the counter-hegemonic cultural processes at work in the African diaspora are manifested in a transnational context.

Meticulous in its analysis and insightful in its conclusions, *Remixing Reggaetón* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on reggaetón and music, race, and nation in the African diaspora. While lacking in formal musical analysis and ethnographic

perspectives, her findings will be of great interest to scholars of music and culture in the humanities and social sciences, including cultural studies and media and communications scholars, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, and sociologists. Likewise, its theoretical foundations, analytical approach, content, conclusions, and accessible writing style make *Remixing Reggaetón* a useful classroom resource for both undergraduate and graduate level courses and is highly recommended for the collections of academic libraries at both research and teaching institutions.

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**Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Culture, Nature.** Edited by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe. (Routledge Research in Music, no. 13.) New York: Routledge, 2016. [vii, 314 p. ISBN 9781138804586 (hardback), \$148; ISBN 9781138062498 (paperback), \$49.95; ISBN 9781315752938 (e-book), varies.] Music examples, photographs, glossary, index, supplementary website.

What is ecomusicology? In a colloquy dedicated to the subject in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Aaron S. Allen began to answer this question, admitting he was “reluctant to define an emerging subfield as yet lacking in consensus, but we must start somewhere” (Aaron S. Allen, “Ecomusicology: Ecocriticism and Musicology,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 [Summer 2011]: 392). In the years since, scholarly and public interest in intersections between music, place, and the environment has blossomed, with vibrant ecomusicology groups in both the American Musicological Society and the Society for Ethnomusicology and a series of successful interdisciplinary “Ecomusicologies” conferences. From the fruits of these labors, Allen and Kevin Dawe have collected nineteen essays in the volume *Current Directions in Ecomusicology*, providing a much clearer answer to the question.

In their introductory essay, “Ecomusicologies,” Allen and Dawe maintain that

“there is no one ecomusicology but many ecomusicologies constituting a dynamic field” (p. 1), and the essays that follow certainly support this assertion. The book is divided into four “directions”: ecological, fieldwork, critical, and textual. Allen and Dawe provide an additional introduction to each of these major sections, summarizing but also connecting the essays to each other and to a wider literature. These divisions are relatively arbitrary; all of the essays involve theoretical criticism in some way, and all are concerned with interpreting specific musics or sounds as texts, for example. Yet the four “directions” impose additional framing mechanisms that give the volume cohesion, moving from a focus on ecological sciences, to ethnography, to social theory, and finally to exegesis.

The terms in the book’s subtitle—music, culture, and nature—unite all of the chapters, yet they also engage in various degrees with binaries of music/sound, culture/society, and nature/environment. Often, authors advocate a blurring or complete breakdown of these binaries. Jeff Todd Titon, in his chapter “Why Thoreau?,” argues for an ecomusicological re-framing of the *Walden* author in part because of how Thoreau described natural sounds in explicitly musical language. For Thoreau, place is experienced as an embodied encounter with sound. The musicalization of natural sounds is the subject of multiple essays, including but not limited to W. Alice Boyle and Ellen Waterman’s “The Ecology of Musical Performance: Towards a Robust Methodology,” and Helena Simonett’s “Of Human and Non-Human Birds: Indigenous Music Making in Sentient Ecology in Northwestern Mexico.”

Simonett’s essay also contests the nature/environment binary as she applies the concept of sentient ecology, which “extends the concept of personhood to animals, and ultimately, to all life in an ecosystem” (p. 99), to her analysis of indigenous Yoreme musicians in Mexico. This false binary is explored even further in the essay by Margaret Q. Guyette and Jennifer C. Post, “Ecomusicology, Ethnomusicology, and Soundscape Ecology: Scientific and Musical Responses to Sound Study.” Here the authors argue that traditional notions of nature as a space untouched by humanity, and the environment as merely built or

constructed, are problematic for anthropocentric scholarship because they limit or blind researchers from seeing how humans and the natural world are inextricable from one another. In studying the acoustic properties of landscape, Guyette and Post encourage ecologists to be aware of human noise as integral, rather than detrimental, to the soundscape, and implore ethnomusicologists to focus on non-human sound as integral to the performance practices of musical cultures. Guyette and Post are an ecologist and ethnomusicologist respectively; their essay (as well as two other co-authored entries in the volume) offers a refreshing model of not only interdisciplinarity but also of truly cross-disciplinary work that combines methodologies and epistemologies from the hard sciences and the humanities to enrich the study of music and the environment.

Indeed, one of the answers to the initial question posed in this review is that there is no single methodology or disciplinary approach to ecomusicology. Methodologies are in fact wide-ranging; Andrew Mark coins the term “ecoethnographic justice” (p. 123) to describe an ethnography that de-centers humans while incorporating a social environmentalist critique. He then applies this to his participant observation in a Hornby Island band in British Columbia that uses music to engage with environmental issues that reflect larger socio-economic disparities between year-round islanders and seasonal tourists. Sabine Feisst and Denise Von Glahn, in their separate essays, both engage with ecofeminism in their analyses of specific pieces of contemporary art music. Feisst challenges the notion that electronic music cannot be “considered truly ecological” (p. 247) and argues for an ecofeminist reading of Maggi Payne’s and Laurie Spiegel’s nature-inspired pieces, a reading that emphasizes their subversion of patriarchal power structures that govern both electronic composition and environmental exploitation. Von Glahn shows how bioregionalism and feminism intersect in a work by Libby Larsen, whose environmental activism manifests as a covert political message. Boyle and Waterman advocate for a quantitative ecological methodology, eschewing the conflation of ecology with the more socially and politically charged environmentalism “because it erodes the

core scientific meaning of the word ecology" (p. 26).

Although Boyle and Waterman attempt to separate ecology from environmentalism, the activist impulse of ecomusicology manifests in most of the essays. Indeed, Titon has elsewhere argued that ecomusicology is "the study of music, nature, culture, and the environment at a time of environmental crisis" (Jeff Todd Titon, "The Nature of Ecomusicology," *Música e Cultura* 8, no. 1 [2013]: 9). Crisis and activism are central themes to chapters by Feisst, Von Glahn, and Mark Pedelty, whose "Pop Ecology: Lessons from Mexico" examines environmentally-conscious Mexican pop music as a model for how pop artists around the world might engage with environmental activism. Robin Ryan and Dawe each address issues of climate change and resources for making musical instruments in their respective essays; Ryan invokes the ecological concept of resilience theory to view the impact of climate change and irresponsible harvesting on traditional aboriginal instruments in Australia, while Dawe explores the tensions between sustainable and traditional practices in artisanal guitar building. Especially given the current political rhetoric in the United States regarding environmental protections and regulations, studies such as these are not only welcome but also vital.

The volume's accompanying website (<http://www.ecomusicology.info/cde> [accessed 18 March 2017]) is an additional resource, providing more extensive bibliographies, abstracts, videos, color diagrams, and tables. Ryan lists the taxonomical names of popular gum-leaf and didjeridu trees, while Travis Stimeling provides YouTube links to advertisements mentioned in his chapter "Music, Television Advertising, and the Green Positioning of the Global Energy Industry." Collecting these videos into one virtual space makes it easy to follow Stimeling's argument for how energy corporations use music and image to rhetorically "greenwash" the fossil fuel industry.

Through their introductory essays to each section, the editors present ecomusicology as a field with a centrifugal reach, sending lines of flight outward to areas of inquiry and disciplines across the academic spectrum. Allen and Dawe spin a bibliographic web ranging from the hard sci-

ences (ecology, biology, animal behavior) to social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology) to the humanities (literature, history, ecocriticism), and of course a variety of subfields of music (ethnomusicology, historical musicology, zoomusicology, organology). Even this list is far from exhaustive. The celebrated diversity of the field can, at times, feel dizzying. However, one also feels a centripetal pull of self-referentiality in these introductory essays, as many of the same studies and texts are repeatedly cited with regard to the chapters contained in this volume. Allen and Dawe constantly draw connections between the volume's essays in a manner that borders on the extreme, a point they concede by explaining "we believe that identifying [these connections] . . . is of central importance to illustrating the contributions of the authors and of the field of ecomusicology" (p. 5). The effect is one of a field that is nearly endless in its inclusivity of different approaches, subject areas, and methodologies, yet one that is also self-contained and well defined. Drawing upon this core set of referential secondary sources, Allen and Dawe rein in the sprawling field and present it as a manageable entity, which gives future researchers and students an excellent starting point for their own ecomusicological investigations. *Current Directions in Ecomusicology* might therefore serve as both a "state-of-the-field" volume as well as a "how-to" research guide.

In this sense, the book is an excellent resource for instructors wanting either to incorporate an ecomusicological aspect into a course, or to create an entire course centered on ecomusicology, music and place, or music and the environment. The relatively short length of most chapters (all fifteen pages or less) is well suited for reading assignments, while most undergraduate readers will require little prerequisite knowledge in order to fruitfully engage with these essays. The publisher has released a more affordable paperback version, yet in true environmentalist spirit, the editors encourage purchasing an electronic version.

These pedagogical aims are acknowledged goals of the volume (p. 4), yet the brevity they necessitate is perhaps the book's only major downside. Multiple times the authors seem to be merely scratching

the surface of issues and subjects that beg for a deeper analysis and further investigation. Thankfully, many of the essays, such as those by Pedelty, Von Glahn, Allen, and Anthony Seeger (to name a few), are offshoots or extensions of larger studies by the same authors, whose works are listed in the

extensive bibliographies following each chapter and on the website.

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### SOUND CULTURES: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

**Living Stereo: Histories and Cultures of Multichannel Sound.** Edited by Paul Théberge, Kyle Devine, and Tom Everrett. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. [viii, 289 p. ISBN 9781623565169 (hardcover), \$120; ISBN 9781623566654 (paperback), \$29.95; ISBN 9781623566876 (PDF e-book), \$25.99; ISBN 9781623565510 (EPUB e-book), \$25.99.] Figures, timeline, bibliographic references, index.

At a casual glance a reader might be tempted to ask, “is there really a need for an entire book on stereo?” Stereo and multichannel sound is so pervasive in our lives today, and the technology is so easily available, one might feel comfortable taking it for granted. But what does one really know about how, when, and why stereo was developed? How did it become the norm for the average listener? In my work with stage production and media room designers, I found that even professionals configure stereo setups as two speakers placed on the left and right of a projection screen fed from a single mono sound source, unaware that stereo actually requires two discrete audio channel outputs. Such situations demonstrate that there is an ongoing need for both a surface and deeper understanding of stereo. A book addressing this issue is well timed, as the generation of people involved in the evolution of stereo is aging and many students and young professionals did not grow up during an era when stereo was rare and not an expectation (whether it be mono LPs in the early 1960s or even mono TVs that were standard well into the 1980s).

In spring 2012, the Sound Studies Group at the Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art & Culture organized a conference, “Living Stereo: History, Culture, Multichannel Sound,” that challenged presenters to reflect on “the history and significance of stereo sound reproduction in aural culture.” The call for the conference presentations noted that although “the

whole culture and industry of music and sound became organized around the principle of stereo during the mid twentieth century . . . nothing about this—not the invention or acceptance or ubiquity of stereo—was inevitable. Nor did the aesthetic conventions, technological objects, and listening practices required to make sense of stereo emerge fully formed, out of the blue” (from <http://www.iaspm.net/living-stereo-history-culture-multichannel-sound/> [accessed February 20, 2017]). The original link to the conference call at <http://carleton.ca/icslac/livingstereo> is no longer active). Casting a wide net, the organizers solicited contributions from researchers in disciplines ranging from popular music, musicology, ethnomusicology, sound and media studies, sociology, gender studies, film theory, to science and technology studies.

A key result of this symposium was publication of *Living Stereo: Histories and Cultures of Multichannel Sound*, which consists of a substantial introductory chapter and eleven essays written by fifteen authors with expertise in a variety of disciplines. Starting from the common but broad theme of the history and significance of multichannel sound reproduction, the individual essays cover a range of topics and address aspects of the research, technical development, history, and culture of multichannel sound playback. In “Introduction: Living Stereo,” the editors note that “given the significance and even, perhaps, the centrality of stereophony in contemporary musical and