
Composing Apartheid: Music for and against Apartheid, Edited by Grant Olwage, Wits University Press: Johannesburg. 2008, 311 pages.

The more one studies music the more one realises the serious and perhaps overwhelming complexity of that which is generally understood as music. Its diversity, which is growing amidst fears of loss, its meanings in aesthetics and relations of power, and its applications in various contexts good or bad, have become the stock of our trade and paradoxically fuel either stasis or innovation in research. In South Africa, much research has been undertaken on the music cultures and musical practices of those who bore the brunt of race, gender and class oppression during the apartheid era. This body of research more often offers representations of the voices and lived experiences of the marginalised and oppressed. Rarely, however, do we hear actual voices from the other side. There is the risk of generalising or reinforcing the simplistic apartheid binary of white oppressor and black oppressed, but with this publication, we are introduced to the musical and obvious ideological posturing of musicians in the apartheid era. As far as content is concerned, there are exceptions, but the book reveals how the musical practices and political choices of leading white musicians and composers in the apartheid era either enabled apartheid or offered radical alternatives to racial oppression.

To this end, Olwage observes that the book explores facets of the musical make-up of apartheid and how apartheid was “variously made” through cultural composition. Using Derrida’s interpretation of apartheid there is a vigorous discussion of what the term apartheid connotes and the implication of this term for music, but I wondered if there were no South African scholars worth citing. Nonetheless, the discursiveness and heterogeneity of political struggle and personal choice, through musical practices, is a dominant theme which reveals that music scholarship in South Africa is edging closer towards developments in the rest of the Humanities.

The book is the outcome of a conference held as a precursor to a New Music Festival within the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 2004. Olwage states that the ten years following the first democratic election in 1994 has provided enough time to reflect on the relationship between music and state or apartheid ideology. It has thirteen chapters authored by among others, leading scholars such as Lucia, Muller, Allen and Coplan. There are plenty of photographs, graphics and music analyses. The styles of music under investigation include European art music such as Handel’s *Messiah*, South African art music of which Arnold van Wyk is a leading exponent, the jazz music of former exiled Sathima Benjamin, popular music such as kwela, and there is a focus on album covers in the apartheid era. Chapters range between the analytical (Allen, Lucia, Coplan and Jules-Rosette, Scherzinger), the reflexive and somewhat poignant (Byerly, Muller, C and Muller, S), to social criticism (Baines, Drewett, Olwage), through descriptive (Allen, Cockburn).

The scholarly underpinning of the book, almost in similar vein to Lucia’s introduction in *The World of South African Music*, is a courageous attempt at advancing ways of

understanding music within the context of a South African reality. On the other hand it takes cognisance of the relationship between music and other disciplines, and music scholarship in South Africa in dialogue with music scholarship in more progressive institutions elsewhere. But the book is also a proposal, again, much like Lucia's, which requires validation through further research and wider interrogation – and here I wonder too about Byerly's 'revolution' – for while the book makes the right noises, there are yet many silences in South African music scholarship.

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In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre, David B. Coplan, University Of Chicago Press; 2nd edition. 2008, 455 pages, Paperback: ISBN-10: 0226115674, ISBN-13: 978-0226115672.

Coplan's second edition of *In Township Tonight* is a fascinating account of the relationship between city life and the performing arts in South Africa. It covers the vast and various terrain of black music, from slave orchestras at the Cape in the 17th century, to current day Afro Pop groups like *Mafikizolo*. Considering that the first edition was published in 1985, the new revisions and additions do not merely serve as updates, rather they have completely reshaped Coplan's narrative so that it is no longer only concerned with how the performing arts facilitated urbanization and continue to sustain urban life, but more importantly, how black city music and theatre have contributed to the imagination and achievement of freedom.

Coplan locates the articulation of this ideology through three lenses: colonialism, apartheid, and democracy; whilst his cultural framework is that of mobility and hybridity. These frames illustrate important moments in which new understandings about the relationship between racial and specifically musical identities were conceived in South Africa; however, his concern with collective social experience detracts from this primary objective. I have read the book more as a commentary on black society and the role of the performing arts within certain communities, as opposed to examining these mediums as stepping-stones to freedom and democracy.

Having said that, Coplan's rooting of the book's narrative in issues of race and racism resonates in interesting ways the complexity and diversity of South African society; and although I do not find his racial, ethnic and social tags to be inappropriate, perhaps more desirable would have been a better explanation or preparation of the reader for the rather complicated use of the designators "African", "black", "coloured". Implicit in this terminology, are connotations of power, class and most importantly, difference; and they do not mean the same things in South Africa as they do elsewhere in the world. Granted, Coplan does include a preface note on his use of terminology and an extensive glossary of definitions, though these merely serve as explanations of inclusion and exclusion amongst various ethno-racial groups. As a young coloured man growing