

REVIEWS

Sing and Sing On: Sentinel Musicians and the Making of the Ethiopian American Diaspora. Kay Kaufman Shelemay, 2022. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 57 b/w illustrations, bibliography, index, 432 pages.

Sing and Sing On is the result of over four decades of research by the renowned Ethnomusicologist, Kay Kaufman Shelemay. I had hoped to learn more about the Ethiopian American Diaspora and songs because of the book's title. Instead, I found the book interesting

for its development of theory about mobility and the roles of musicians in their communities. Many biographical interviews with Ethiopian musicians counterbalance the theory. The book traces the history and political changes in Ethiopia from the 1970s until the present and musicians' experiences of migration and resettlement in the United States, mainly Washington, D. C.

The book consists of three sections. The total number of chapters is ten. Kaufman Shelemay defines the "Sentinel musician" as someone who assumes social responsibility and emerges as an agent of both deeply desired continuities and innovative changes under conditions in which societies experience conflict and through adverse circumstances in which people are forced to move and re-establish themselves elsewhere (3). She broadens the term by using examples from musicians in other parts of the world who also serve as social commentators within their communities.

Kaufman Shelemay traces the origins of "sentinel" musicians as praise singers who have incited revolt through political and social commentary. As the book develops, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognise the "sentinel" musician until she returns to it in the conclusion.

In *Sing and Sing On*, Kaufman Shelemay devotes a considerable portion of the book to tracing the political situation in Ethiopia from the 1970s until the present. Ethnic identities are very important in Ethiopia, among, for example, the Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Somali as well as some smaller groups. While Kaufman Shelemay presents detailed information about political change and these groups in Ethiopia, the book lacks information about these groups and their politics in the diaspora.

She also mentions motivations of many Ethiopian musicians in the diaspora to return home: for example, to contribute to their culture because of harsh U. S. A. immigration policies, or to devote themselves entirely to music. However, Kaufman Shelemay spends less time on this subject and briefly hints at the experiences of Ethiopian musicians and political engagement when they are in the U.S.A.

The author presents many interviews with Ethiopian diaspora members in the U.S.A. and some with musicians who have remained in or returned to Ethiopia. Most of the interviews are biographical. The book provides rich ethnographic data from interview transcripts of individual musicians and translated lyrics of songs. Still, it

neglects rhythmical, melodic transcription, and there is little, if any, musical analysis throughout the entire book.

The photographs are clear and well-annotated in the book. The photographs were taken at different locations and with individuals in their home and host countries. Most photographs are of individual musicians, restaurants, orchestras, and places in Ethiopia and Washington, D. C. However, as a reader, I would have liked to have seen some images of Ethiopian musical instruments.

The detailed description of the interviews and the structural organisation of the book are fascinating. Kaufman Shelemay uses several methodologies and orientations within the book. For example, each chapter uses cognitive anthropology to understand Ethiopian society and music, beginning with defining specific Amharic terms in their general and musical sense. Kaufman Shelemay successfully shows how each concept underpins Ethiopian culture and is used as a metaphor to describe music and musicians. I would have liked the publisher to use a different format for the bibliographic information and endnotes. Taking up substantial time and looking for the references at the end of the book was distracting, and I would have appreciated in-text citations and footnotes.

Sing and Sing On is well-organised. It provides a detailed overview of many famous Ethiopian musicians and the Ethiopian revolution of 1974 to recent political changes in Ethiopia. This book should be a good resource for undergraduate and graduate students in Ethnomusicology and those interested in an account of Ethiopian music in the diaspora. I recommend that the book is used as a textbook and that instructors emphasise that they consult the endnotes to understand important information about Ethiopian music that has been left out of the larger narrative.

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