

the natural and the foreign with the artificial, and gender the former as male and the latter as female? How can participants in a musical scene reshape the assumptions of normative and Otherness that guide interpersonal interactions within that scene? Can we write women, queer, and non-white musicians back into history not by foregrounding their exceptionalism but simply by documenting their presence?

Trad Nation will have broad appeal across the disciplines of ethnomusicology, musicology, and folklore for its subject matter, solid theoretical grounding, and rigorous historical and ethnographic research. Scholars of Irish traditional music will find new readings of well-known musicians and repertoire here, as well as some new faces and voices. Chapters from this book would work well as readings for both undergraduate and graduate courses. This monograph will also be of interest to a global audience of Irish traditional musicians, who will likely appreciate Slominski's critical insider perspective and learn from her research into overlooked histories.

Trad Nation is a well-written and arresting critique of the Irish traditional music scene. It addresses issues around gender, race, and sexuality that are rarely, if ever, discussed openly in that scene. Slominski is deeply embedded in this musical world and her first-hand experience coupled with her critical lens make this a deeply engaging book. 🍀

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ANNA STIRR

University of Hawai'i Mānoa

As “the first book-length comparative historical and comparative examination of women and popular music in Asia,” (4) *Vamping the Stage* adopts an Asia-centric approach to studying female entertainers from the early 20th century to the present. As a whole, this edited collection argues that modernity in Asia has been marked by female performers' movement “from the margins to the mainstream” and that this centrality of the female entertainer has strongly shaped Asian popular cultures. The connecting thread that makes this comparative approach work is the early 20th-century development of the cultural

industries around the new technologies of audiovisual recording and dissemination. Although the authors do not frame it this way, the book can be seen as a collection of investigations into this shift in mode of production, with a focus on what women and their audiences made of it, from making meaning to making a living.

In the introduction, the editors set out the themes the book addresses: interdisciplinary, critical approaches to culture emphasizing inter-Asian connections; localized genealogies of modernity centred on various places in Asia; women and the politics of gender in the performing arts; popular music in Asia; and popular music, technology, and the valences of “voice” regarding sonic individuality and positionality, gender ideologies, sociopolitical agency, and a category emphasized as central to modernity itself (3–4). The fourteen chapters each address many if not all of these themes. The chapters are arranged in the general chronological order of their subject matter, and divided into four thematic sections.

The first section, “Triumph and Tragedies of the Colonized Voice,” addresses how new technologies afforded new forms of visibility and audibility for women in the early 20th century, resulting in new kinds of female performers, professional singing stars, whose actions and significance were differently interpreted and differently circumscribed in various situations across Asia and in the relations between the (semi)colonized world and its metropolitan centres. Anna May Wong, Butterfly Wu, and Mei Lanfang stand for performed Chinese femininity in different ways, connecting Chinese and overseas Chinese through highly mediated productions of sentimentality and nation-

alism (Wang). As for these performers, the rise of cinema and dialog with Western cultural productions are central to Zhou Xuan’s transformation of the figure of the Chinese “sing-song girl” and her emergence as a new kind of star who, like Ibsen’s character Nora in *A Doll’s House*, “walks out” of her expected feminine role to create a new, modern one (Beus). Similarly, the female stars of colonial Malaya created a new way of life as professional singers, blurring the boundaries imposed by colonial and Muslim gender ideologies (Beng). Yet, to be a female performer was not necessarily to gain and enact new forms of agency or political voice: for the trafficked, the enslaved, the women who became performers out of conscription into the “comfort women” system of sex and entertainment, the voice of modernity becomes one of feminine suffering and collective woundedness, and this woundedness characterizes not just their experience of modernity but that of their nations as well (Pilzer).

These first four essays set the stage for the discussions of female performers and the dense nexus of signification their public personas embody, with slightly different emphasis in each section. The next section, “Modern Stars and Modern Lives,” contains essays on divas, gender politics, and national memory, including Misora Hibari in Japan (Yano), Titiék Puspa in Indonesia (Weintraub), and L. R. Eswari in India (Weidman). The third section, “Silenced Voices and Forbidden Modernities,” addresses more female stars whose personas were the sites of debates on national morality at home, among diasporic communities, and in neighbouring Asian nations: divas with opposite personas Lee Mi-ja and Patti Kim

in South Korea (Kim), Siti Nurhaliza and her changing personas in relation to Islam in Malaysia (Barendregt), and Googoosh as national icon in Iran and the Iranian diaspora, whose persona eclipses her person (Hemmasi). The fourth section, "Body Politics and Discourses of Femininity," emphasizes the embodied performance of femininity and feminine sexuality onstage and off, analyzing ideologies of femininity in character types, vocal styles, and dance styles in the Philippines (Trimillos) and South Korea (Kim), the Indonesian singer Waldjinah's choices about how to portray herself in the print media (Skelchy), and the implications of the Japanese virtual star Hatsune Mika's "disembodied voice" as the "ideal idol" in relation to ideologies of passive femininity, creative labour, and the idol system.

These essays discuss locally grounded ideas and experiences of modernity as voiced, performed, and presented by female stars throughout Asia. In addition to being something that is negotiated in local social relations and experienced with significant differences throughout Asia, "modernity" in this book is also associated with mass mediation. *Vamping The Stage* treats the rise of the culture industries as a mode-of-production shift that, like Benedict Anderson has famously argued for print capitalism in Europe in the 1500s, afforded new ways of imagining communities. Here imagined communities come together around women's voices and visually presented personas, female performers as divas and idols fulfilling the celebrity role of icon onto which national and regional dreams of modernity can be projected. Beyond serving as objects for such discursive projection, the female performers whose careers are analyzed here

have enacted their vocal agency within the strictures of colonial or national modernities, have struggled to change the material and ideological constraints on this agency, and also have been subjugated by those constraints and by exploitative practices to the extent that their suffering and exploitation become an important characteristic of modernity's dark side. The comparative project is successful in drawing out similarities and differences across Asia within an inter-Asia framework, and will no doubt inspire more work along similar lines of inquiry.

Lastly, with apologies to all who love a good bit of wordplay, the plays on the word "vamp" found in the title and in section headings are slightly misleading. As we have seen, the women discussed in these chapters do not all fit the category of "vamp," and the good girl/bad girl, heroine/vamp dichotomy is one of the things that the chapters critically analyze. Rather than the vamp role that the title suggests, this is a book that critically examines the multiple roles played by the female stars of Asia's mass-mediated music industries, along with some others on the peripheries of those industries. Potential readers can be assured that the wide variety of positionalities held by and afforded to female performers in Asian popular music throughout the past century is addressed with depth, breadth, sensitivity, and erudition. 🌸