

## BOOK REVIEW

INGALLS, Monique and Amos YONG (eds), *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015. 312pp. Hbk. ISBN: 9780271066622. US\$79.95.

Reviewed by: Pauline Muir, London South Bank University, UK. Email: [muirpe@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:muirpe@lsbu.ac.uk)

It is often said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. This bon mot may in part explain why, despite the persistence and centrality of the oral and music to the Pentecostal experience, to date there has been a paucity of sustained academic discussion on the topic. Music and the songs that are sung in Pentecostal settings are a key semiotic resource in confirming and countering theologies and cultural practices, building personal and corporate identities and perhaps of greater significance revealing insights not available elsewhere. The contributors to this volume, drawing on a range of theoretical positions and methodological stances, successfully demonstrate this interplay between “musicking” (Small) and theology across five continents, raising important questions relevant to practitioners and scholars working in this area. Readers will identify the commonality in Pentecostal vibrant performativity whilst being enriched and intrigued by the many diversities and differing perspectives occurring in twenty-first-century global religious practice. This book is a rich and timely contribution to work in this field.

The first section, entitled “Healing, Renewal and Revitalisation”, draws attention to the meaning making potential that music holds for emotional healing, restoration and social position in a variety of congregations. McCoy’s chapter on responding to worship when alleviation of suffering is not realized, is an important aspect in the debate on praise and worship in Pentecostal settings, particularly in contexts where good health and extreme wealth are deemed to be the norm. His call for Pentecostals to find a place for lament in their worship raises critical questions that need detailed interrogation.

The second section on “Negotiating Traditions in Transition” focuses on how music is a site that can transcend national boundaries and connect worshippers to global networks. Pentecostalism is often cited as being simultaneously global and local. Contributors in this section demonstrate that this is most vividly illustrated through song selections, style and genre of the worship practice. The Pentecostal sense of the presence of God is often mediated through global networks; and how churches renegotiate and renegotiate their cultural practice

according to these networks engenders a re-imagining of the limits and the possible extensions of their theological positions. Marshall, using a theoretical framing of resonance, analyses how one Navajo song has maintained popularity amongst Pentecostal believers despite the rest of the repertoire, due to its relationship to traditional religion, being deemed as demonic. The dominance of the Hillsong brand is a recurring theme, with Evans discussing its adoption in South Africa and Scandinavia. Mindful of the difficulties of translation and access to global networks, both of these essays highlight the challenges Pentecostal communities face in interpretation with regard to language and nuance of speech.

The third section looks at “Media, Culture and the Marketplace”, providing a detailed analysis of the complexities, contradictions and convergence engendered by engagement with products from the commercial arenas. A number of competing arguments reveal the complexities inherent in this area. Two differing responses from the Latin American region show the polarization of opinions. Gladwin is critical of the successful adaptation of Latin American Charismatic music to the markets and its failure to engage with issues of injustice and socio-economic concerns. Oosterbaan on the other hand, in his analysis of gospel funk in Rio de Janeiro, argues that it is overly simplistic to reduce these elements merely to the commercial imperative of the market. He focuses instead on the proselytizing ambitions of the singers interviewed in these mass markets. Boone in a similar manner argues for a more multi-faceted and nuanced response to the market place. In his moving account of an African American congregation’s response to the death of their minister within a theological context of “wealth and health” he vividly elucidates how music and dance are used to communicate the unspeakable. The non-linguistic and extra linguistic elements of the dance provide a space for these “church mothers” to communicate their sorrow. This chapter not only focuses on the interplay between music and dance as a creative expression in many Pentecostal settings, (another area given scant academic attention), but his “insider” approach does not negate the “church mothers” dance as inauthentic, but sees this as a legitimate means of expressing their sorrow. Bonne acknowledges the role played by commercial products in engendering a freedom of expression. He notes that charges of consumerism are complex, particularly in contexts where African Americans are battling issues of discrimination and have not accumulated wealth.

The text could be further enriched by material from the UK context, since there is a multiplicity of musical practice and diversity of Pentecostal artistic expression to be mined within this setting. Also, while I was pleased to see that ethnographic methods were the primary means of data collection, I was disappointed that many contributors did not engage more fully with attempting a description of the “music itself” – that is the sounds and the rhythms. Music is a language in its own right which needs analysis aside from the lyrics. Scholars working in this field must endeavour to find appropriate methods to communicate this significant perimeter of the music.

Nonetheless, this text is a rich amalgam of multidisciplinary approaches highlighting ethnomusicological, theological, historical and sociological perspectives,

demonstrating the different disciplinary angles that can be adopted in the study of music. Such an approach underlines its value to scholars and practitioners alike who are unafraid of embracing difficult questions and keen to interrogate and evaluate this all-important perimeter of the Pentecostal experience globally in the twenty-first century.