

---

📖 **Volume 10 Issue 1 – 2016**

---

**Bithell, Caroline & Hill Juniper (Eds) - *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*,  
Oxford University Press, New York 2016 ISBN: 978-0-19-976503-4**

Reviewed by Joseph Williams - Western Sydney University

---

The literature on music revivals, which are defined by Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* as 'effort[s] to perform and promote music that is valued as old or historical and is usually perceived to be threatened or moribund' (3) has not benefitted from a large-scale, collaborative edition since the mid-1990s. *The Oxford Handbook* thus succeeds such seminal works in this field as *Transforming Tradition* (Rosenberg ed., 1993) and 'Folk Music Revival in Europe' (*World of Music*, special issue, Linda Fujie ed., 1996). It expands the scope of music revival theory considerably from these editions, which focus on music revival in North America and Europe, respectively.

As well as aiming to provide trans-global perspectives on music revival, the *Handbook* revisits general theories in light of recent ethnographic scholarship. The volume also explores new territories for revival theory through its consideration of revivals in the aftermath of war, natural/cultural disaster, and colonialism, and through its investigation of post-revival legacies – new subcultures, performance practices, institutions, and value systems. The *Handbook* resonates with the long tradition of revival literature in its emphasis on music revivals' dual function of creating new musical futures as they appropriate and re-imagine the musical past.

The 30 chapters of this epic tome are organised into eight different sections, the first section offering a general theoretical foundation for the case studies which comprise the following eight sections. Each chapter has its own bibliography, and the book includes an index as well as links throughout the text to musical examples and other online material at [www.oup.com/us/ohmr](http://www.oup.com/us/ohmr). This latter innovation is extremely helpful in illuminating discussions of specific musical traditions.

The first section, 'Towards Multiple Theories of Revival', begins with an introduction by the editors who situate the book amid 60 years of academic literature. Through a discussion of six key themes – activism, historical selection, de/re-contextualisation, authenticity, transmission, and 'post-revival' legacies – they provide an outline of music

revival that will be accessible for beginner students and a handy reference for researchers. Owe Ronström offers a number of useful concepts for dealing with music revival, creating a dialogue between Scandinavian and Anglophone theory. He suggests that a conceptual shift from 'traditional' to 'heritage' music signals a new mode of cultural production and historical subject. Tamara Livingston offers a revision of her 1999 model for a general theory of music revivals, broadening some of her original terms in response to recent case studies.

Part II comprises three chapters under the heading of 'Scholars and Collectors as Revival Agents'. John Haines offers a fascinating retort to popular notions that revivals first appeared in the 19th century. He does so by examining the work of antiquarians and intellectuals as far back as the 15th century in reviving 'ancient' music and folk music alike. Neil Rosenberg takes an auto-ethnographic approach in chronicling the relationship between folklore studies and revivals. He cautions that while 'revival' is a useful metaphor for many situations, it can also be misleading and ambiguous. Another personal account is given by Alan Jabbour, who discusses his involvements in the '[North] American Instrumental Folk Music Revival'. He reminds readers that scholars and commentators do not simply study revivals but, in doing so, impact upon their development.

The three studies in Part III deal with 'Intangible Cultural Heritage, Preservation, and Policy'. Keith Howard observes different strands of revival in South Korea, including state and UNESCO policies, as well as community efforts. Refuting concerns that intangible cultural heritage preservation might stifle living traditions, he argues that revivals of Korean cultural heritage help to maintain local identities and fuel further creative production. Barley Norton offers an opposing view. Discussing Vietnamese *ca trù*, he suggests that various revival influences, such as being listed on UNESCO's Urgent Safeguarding list, threaten to homogenise the practice's social meanings. Colin Quigley examines the Hungarian 'dance house' revival of the 1960s and 1970s arguing that despite exhibiting many of the contradictions which plague revival movements in general, its development contributed to the continued practice of Transylvanian string-band music.

Part IV brings together four chapters on 'National Renaissance and Postcolonial Futures.' Margaret Walker focuses on the revival of *kathak* dancing in North India following independence. She shows that despite the oppositional roots of revivals, post-revival cultures often become new centres of social normativity. Hélène Neveu Kringelbach maps the developments of choreographic revival in Senegal from French rule to post-independence. She points to the role of music and dance in constructing idealised historical narratives as well as in maintaining special ties for increasingly mobile populations. Tanya Merchant writes about music revival in the context of post-Soviet Uzbekistani nationalism, examining both 'arranged folk music' and 'traditional music' (p. 252). A question that is pertinent throughout the former Soviet Union, she suggests, concerns the fate of state-revived music following a change in government. Laudin Nooshin moves the focus onto Iranian classical music, identifying two contrasting stages in its revival before and after the revolution in 1979. Given the 'Janus-like nature' of revivals, which look to both the past and the future, she questions the applicability of the concept of 'post-revival' stages (p. 295). Victoria Levine studies the revival of Native American culture through organisations such as the Chocktaw-Chicksaw Heritage Committee. She describes two different strategies employed in reclaiming Chocktaw and Chicksaw cultural identities, respectively: with more surviving materials available in the former case, the need for outside influences was minimal,

while in the latter case many elements were imported from closely related tribes.

The studies in Part V focus on music revivals in the context of 'Recovery from War, Disaster, and Cultural Devastation'. Naila Ceribašić recounts how national and ethnic identities were articulated through traditional music after the Homeland War in Croatia. She points out disjunctures between the usage of 'revival' in Anglophone contexts and in Croatia, which complicate efforts to approach revival as a global concept. Annemarie Gallagher offers a case study of Garifuna music revival in the survival and resurgence of African-descended populations in Nicaragua. She draws attention to the role of music in the complex relationship between Garifunas and *costeño* Afro-Creoles, as it reveals points of tension and disagreement as well as allowing for confrontation between the groups in musical terms. Margaret Kartomi compares case studies in which music has served multiple purposes towards cultural recovery following war, natural disaster, censorship, or neglect. She focuses on two main contexts: post-tsunami, post-conflict Aceh; and post-Taliban Afghanistan. She draws the implications of her case studies together into a proposed methodology for further studies on revivals as recovery from trauma.

Part VI deals with 'Innovations and Transformations'. Juniper Hill investigates music revival as a vehicle for social activism in Finland. She works through three distinct historical eras in which Finnish revivalists have respectively: tailored narrative folk songs to bolster Romantic Nationalist efforts; promoted 'elite' *pelimanni* music to broad audiences in the 1960s and 1970s; and emphasised processual criteria of authenticity as a foundation for contemporary 'avant-garde' folk styles (p. 413). Denise Milstein illuminates connections between discourses of authenticity, activism, and innovation in the context of Brazilian protest bossa and tropicalia musics. Her historical narrative reveals how particular social conditions drew together musicians with different cultural backgrounds and aims, which led to dramatic musical transformations. Paula Conlon gives a chronological account of developments in the Native American flute tradition from pre-1880 to the present. She relays the tensions and ironies that arise from varying emphases of traditionality and innovation. Britta Sweers borrows from contemporary globalisation theory to outline three perspectives on the transformations enacted by European folk-rock movements: the sceptic, the hyperglobal, and the transformationalist. She suggests that a combination of the three approaches permits an understanding of folk rock as a medium for creative change, rather than a homogenising force.

'Festivals, Marketing, and Media' form the subject matter of Part VII. In an account of contemporary English folk festivals, Simon Keegan-Phipps and Trish Winter explore apparently conflicting ethics of professionalism and anti-commercialism. They argue that recent trends towards industrialisation are reconciled to a striking extent with the amateur and philanthropic roots of the English folk revival. Adriana Helbig discusses gendered identities in the post-Soviet revival of the Ivana Kupala midsummer festival in Ukraine. The flexibility that these gatherings lend to interpretations of the past enables specific rituals to be adapted for contemporary purposes, such as the idealised portrayal of female purity and motherhood. Jane Freeman Moulin analyses the cultural branding functions of a particular film trailer which is aired '[a]lmost 500 times every day across the state of Hawai'i' (p. 530). Employing imagery associated with the Hawaiian Renaissance of the late 20th century, the trailer portrays Hawaiians as a powerful and historically continuous culture that endures into the present. Richard Blaustein focuses on the growth of virtual communities around North American and European fiddling traditions. Enabled by the growth of Web 2.0, these communities are built around

experiential authenticity, rather than historical authenticity, meeting the personal and social needs of their participants.

The final section examines 'Diaspora and the Global Village.' Caroline Bithell contributes a study of Georgian vocal polyphony, accounting for its history of revivals from the nineteenth century to the post-Soviet era. She argues that Georgian polyphony currently exists in a post-revival form, linking transnational communities and no longer struggling for survival. Sean Williams deconstructs the imagined Ireland with which a global diaspora attempts to connect via traditional music, suggesting that Ireland might be considered as 'a location on land *and* in the mind' (p. 615). Anthony Shay compares the revival of Iranian dance in Iran and among the American diaspora from the 1930s to the present. Responding to the need for identity in modern national and diasporic contexts, the revival of Iranian dance gained prestige and formed parallel traditions as it adapted to a variety of functions as art, representation, resistance, and celebration. Carol Muller discusses the strategies employed by displaced South African jazz musicians during apartheid to revive their music and identity in the absence of retrievable records. The ways in which exiled musicians inserted the sounds of home into jazz compositions reveal a number of contradictions to established paradigms of music revival.

Finally, Mark Slobin's afterword addresses the implications of the 're-' prefix, suggesting that it may have replaced the 'post-' of late 20th century academia. He proposes that revival scholars might increasingly look towards 'parallel musics' as well as to related disciplines, such as language revitalisation, for insight.

Both the advantages and the drawbacks of 'revival' as an analytical category are evident in the *Handbook*. In addition to being a handy concept for comparing the differences and commonalities of musical/cultural phenomena that share certain salient features, it potentially offers mainstream musicology a powerful and well-theorised concept for thinking through non-linear musical histories. However, as certain studies included in the *Handbook* reveal, the attempt to think of revival globally throws up difficulties in translation when applying the concept in contexts not easily comparable to its origins in Anglo/American folklore. Additionally the concept becomes unwieldy as it expands to cover an increasingly diverse range of movements. Perhaps, as Livingston suggests, revival theory is best employed as a 'preliminary framework' for discussing related phenomena, upon which more detailed work can be built (p. 63).