

# Introduction. Women's Modes, Legacies and Futures in Music

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So far, women's participation in global music history has been explored by various disciplines that study music and culture, especially after the expansion of feminist music research in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The gender turn in ethnomusicology and related disciplines, often coupled with feminist theory and practice, initially shed light on gender-exclusive music practices, thus adding insights into the less known domains of female music-related activity to the broader map of the knowledge centered on global sonic cultures (Koskoff 2014). A long line of scholars, musicians and activists put their efforts into correcting the negligent consideration of women's activities in maintaining and creating music cultures by critically discussing the conditions and roles of womanhood in music and society. More specifically, they have highlighted the contributions by female performers, authors and cultural workers, but also pinpointed the constraints and hardship that women face while making music (Herndon and Ziegler 1990; Koskoff 1989; Magrini 2003; Moisala and Diamond 2000; Solie 1993). However, the specific topic of female cultural leadership in relation to music has not been widely examined cross-culturally in contemporary scholarship, especially regarding a conceptual background that avoids the tropes of exceptionality and difference, bringing forth the issues of agency, resistance, collaboration and networking instead. Several locally oriented ethnographic studies (Coe 2021; Downing 2010; Sunardi 2015; Tsitsishvili 2006), as well as more general, cross-cultural edited collections (Mathias 2022), have recently opened up the issues of leadership and gender in music, thus expanding the conventional approaches focused on the figure of a bandleader in music practices (Waterman 1982), the issue of leading roles within ensembles (Clayton and Leante 2015; Dueck 2011) and the intersection between religious and cultural leadership (Gidal 2013), to name a few common research directions. While exceptional female performers were indeed praised and androcentric research perspectives were criticized and corrected within academia, the very idea of leadership-through-sound, which stipulates that women perform from/through their gendered position, remains to be further explored outside the confinement of business-oriented leadership studies and similar fields that promote the corporate models of efficacy and do not investigate cultural leadership related to different communities at stake. As an alternative

and a revision, the concepts of leadership in a wider theoretical sense and in relation to the cultural, economic and political context have been explored through models of transformational leadership (Bass 1985) and situational leadership (Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer 1979) and by analyzing women's leadership in different social domains (Klenke 2016), among other approaches.

More recently, in ethnomusicology, female musicianship has been observed and documented through rich ethnographic accounts highlighting the issue of invisibility in academic and everyday discourses. Moreover, it has identified and analyzed the obstacles encountered by women in relation to ethnicity, race, gender and professionalization (Doubleday 1999; Downing 2019; Hellier 2013; Scharfenberger 2011; Weiss 2019). However, less attention has been paid to the shared structural conditions caused by the ever-changing, but persistent patriarchal ideologies, whose broader analysis could reveal more substantial challenges, struggles and identification processes that women in music currently experience. A critical topic to be investigated is continuity and/or disruption in legacies formed by intergenerational and transnational female networks in a contemporary world where local belonging and global proximity work together in specific manners, influenced by sweeping waves of crises and new alliances informed by feminism and other progressive social movements.

By asking what can today be considered leadership in culture from women's points of view and through a comparative perspective, this volume thus explores various modes of contemporary female cultural, social and political leadership by the means of music and as shaped through their different histories and cultural and political contexts. Another important aim of this book is to deconstruct the very notion of leadership by demonstrating that female agency and negotiations of ideas on gender, intersectionality and power, as well as wider social and political issues through music, should be considered a distinct form of cultural leadership, in contrast to their marginalization common in contemporary societies. As the chapters in this volume show, women doing (things with) music help improve visibility, stimulate empowerment and embody role models in music scenes both within local communities and in the contemporary global music arena. What is more, they also often tackle the "hard" subjects of inequality, misogyny, social justice and conservatism as they are open to discussing those problems because of their own experience of oppression in various renditions of patriarchy still present worldwide. Although the presented case studies mostly adhere to gender models based on the equation female-woman, our approach to gender and femininity rejects sexual determinism and acknowledges them as experiential self-concepts and embodied social constructs marked by fluidity, contingency and relationality with their multiple and complex personal and social renderings both in the historical and contemporary sense. Starting from this multilayered and flexible conception of femininity and womanhood, we endeavor to explore modes, experiences and notions of leadership with a fresh look.

In addition to culture-specific or genre-centered observations in individual chapters, the book offers a transdisciplinary outlook on the issue of leadership, ranging from ethnomusicology, musicology and cultural management to sociology and anthropology and specific sub-fields such as heritage and disability studies. The complex of chapters presents various female collectives and individuals from a cross-cultural perspective, approached through the conceptualization of female musical leadership, agency and trans-

gression. The topics range from artistic or popular music critique performed by women to the proactive role of female musicians, the emancipation of women in music, the position of female amateur musicians in carrying a music legacy, women as cultural mediators in world music venues, female music aesthetics, contemporary networking of female musicians, combating sexism and racism by music performance, the role of women in contemporary music industries, and more.

The chapters are organized into five sections. The first section presents the stories and voices of female musicians working across cultures and genres, often taking the role of a leader, activist and mediator in that process. The book opens with a study by Iva Nenić about the very concept of female music leadership, regarded as a possibility for the betterment of the female music labor and creativity, but also as a living and palpable practice facing numerous social pressures and stereotypes. These issues are observed through the work, struggles and goals of female neotraditional and popular music performers in Serbia. It is followed by the chapter by Linda Cimardi that presents the artistic and personal itinerary of Sarah Ndagire, a Ugandan-UK female singer, and her strategies for negotiating between the rules of the international world music system and the music scene “at home”, while embedding her musical work across various genres and socio-cultural contexts. The third chapter in this section, by Ying-Hsien Chen, discusses how the Finnish instrument *kantele* is appropriated by female musicians in Japan and “reimagined” in connection with the cultural tropes of creativity and freedom evoked by the image of the Other.

The second part of the book highlights the intersectional character of the oppression that female musicians often face, as well as their strategies to acquire freedom of creativity and give voices to marginalized communities, by disclosing their fascinating and complex biographies and histories. Carol Silverman introduces three female Romani singers from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia and discusses how they faced and challenged the stereotypes tied to their gender and ethnicity within their professional careers, along with the negotiation over their roles as Romani women within their respective communities and in the wider society. Diane Kolin's chapter also comprises three case studies discussing the experience of women musicians with disability in the USA and Scotland and, focusing on their activism, appeals for inclusion and role modeling. The third chapter in this section, by Talieh Wartner-Attarzadeh, explores how women in Iran take an important part in Iranian-Arab Shi'a rituals as *umlāli* music leaders, yet they remain silenced because of the official politics of restriction of female public activities. The fourth chapter, by Blanche Lacoste, documents the music activities of Eastern European migrant female household workers in Italy (*badanti*), who take a leading role in Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Christian liturgical practices within their communities in Rome, which not only contrasts the usual discursive depiction of their labor and social position, but also challenges the religious mores regarding the role of women in music.

The third part of the book examines the challenges and changes of the institutionalized, formal and organizational aspects of female music-making through the lens of leadership and feminism. Clementina Casula writes about the gender-related stereotypes faced by Italian female woodwind and brass players in the field of European classical music, but also in jazz and other music domains. She considers the gender seg-

regation pushed by the institutional educational context, as well as how female musicians challenge the tropes and acts of discrimination both in their organizing sound and claiming leadership roles. The following chapter, by Laura Hamer and Helen Julia Minors, presents the case of WMLON – The Women’s Musical Leadership Online Network, a supporting initiative based in the UK aiming at improving the position of women in music education and industries, as well as the headline of performance practices, through the application of feminist knowledge and strategies. The concluding chapter of this section, by Tatjana Nikolić and Katarina Mitić Minić, draws on the research on the effect of cultural policies on young female musicians in Serbia and other parts of Southeastern Europe and presents the case study of the application of feminist cultural management concepts to a concert by female musicians organized in Belgrade. Based on their analysis, the authors argue for the further implementation of feminist cultural policies focused on young women in music.

The fourth thematic section of the book is dedicated to the sustainability and change in traditional music cultures, as observed through the activities and interventions of female musicians. The chapter by Sanja Ranković interprets the historical and present role of female *tambura* players in the Serbian region of Vojvodina. They have remained relatively invisible in the local and regional research of *tambura* music practice, yet often occupy multiple roles simultaneously, being acclaimed music teachers and excellent leaders of the ensembles. The following study by Bahar Gjuka concentrates on a traditional Turkish song about the suffering caused by an early (child) marriage and traces its path from local traditional music to the intercultural context of her artistic and personal research and presentation performed abroad. Mirjana Zakić writes about the young women who take part in *kaval* playing in Serbia, observing their role in the current preservation efforts and within the revivalist practice of *kaval*, as well as in new, neotraditional and world music settings.

In the fifth, concluding section of this volume, the thematic frame encompasses the transgression of gender-coded music domains by powerful acts of claiming agency, voice and loudness. The chapter by Bojana Radovanović presents the participation and significance of female performers in Serbian metal music, with a special focus on the technical, affective and symbolic aspects of the female voice in metal, the history of the local metal scene and frontwomanship. It is followed by the study by Nasim Ahmadian that investigates the relation between all-female music ensembles in Iran, gendered domains of music making and aesthetics of sorrow by presenting the struggles of female musicians in the male-dominated realm of Iranian classical music and through the author’s autoethnographic insights. Articulated in the work of Serbian hip-hop/trap artist Mimi Mercedes who operates in several “modes” of leadership within the post-socialist Serbian music industry, the empowerment mixed with the appropriation and ambiguous and ironic overturning of social stereotypes related to womanhood is the focus of the concluding chapter of the book by Adriana Sabo.

Although the music scenes, genres, forms and modes of female participation in various cultural, ideological, ethnic and racialized contexts presented within this book by all means vary, we hope that the readers will find a common thread, in addition to learning about sometimes hard, but also fascinating, inspiring and remarkable endeavors of female musicians worldwide. While no universal and transhistorical feature could “cover”

all the trajectories of female musicians in various localities around the globe in gaining visibility, voice and power, their passion to push over the borders persists and wins more freedom in a right and ripe moment of change, a *kairos* of female musicians' self-awareness and claiming agency. We believe that this process needs to be fully supported and understood if it is to withstand the opposing trend of conservative backlashes, disastrous patriarchy and various crises within eroding capitalism and blossom further, taking women as performers and creators, as well as music scenes, industries and communities in boundless promising directions.

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