

same qualities will make it of great interest to the scholar of festivals or of Mexican folklore in general.

---

Jane C. Sugarman. **Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997. Pp. xix + 345, glossary, notes, bibliography, discography, index, and compact disc. \$65.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Joan Zaretti

Indiana University, Bloomington

*Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings* is a vibrant musical ethnography of the singing practices of Prespa Albanians living in Macedonia and Toronto. Ethnomusicologist Jane Sugarman explores the “dialectic between singing and subjectivity” (3) as revealed in wedding celebrations of Prespa Albanians living in two separate locales, but who consider themselves part of one diasporic community. During Prespa Albanian wedding festivities participants communicate largely through singing, and these musical performances have the capacity to actively engender the discourses and practices of Prespa song.

Each chapter begins with an ethnographic anecdote of one event from a wedding celebration. The vivid descriptions of specific events, such as adorning the bride, or bathing and shaving the groom provide a diverse sampling of the singing practices of Prespa Albanian wedding celebrations. Sugarman uses the rich ethnographic descriptions to channel the discussion into chapter themes such as singing as a social and gendered activity, as part of the Prespa system, as a discourse of honor, and as an emergent form of subjectivity, or as a practice that is gradually being changed and reconstructed.

Along with the highlights of specific events and individuals, Sugarman’s account addresses more theoretical concerns. She effectively weaves song text, singing style, and technique with contextual issues in order to emphasize a “two-way interaction between social and aesthetic considerations that occurs at any event” (22). The description of wedding celebrations in different circumstances shows how social

pressures affect individual performances. In one example, a distant cousin of the bride began a song that complimented the bride on her beauty and was cut off by another woman, most likely because a closer relative should sing before she did. A second part of the analysis demonstrates how aesthetic techniques of singing contribute to a continued shaping of community notions of society and morality.

Sugarman's ethnographic approach employs terms used by Prespa Albanians to describe their singing. Singing is used "as an expressive medium that conveys the emotional state of the singer and evokes emotional response from others" (61). This heightened state, referred to as *qeif*, is an important part of a desired state of openness and affection, *muabet*, which can be achieved through singing at wedding celebrations. Along with expressive descriptions, the terminology for song styles, repertoire, and techniques renders the discussion from an emic as well as an etic perspective.

The combination of photographs, song texts, transcriptions, recordings, and diagrams add valuable insight to the description and analyses of singing as part of wedding events. Within the discussion of singing, broader issues of gender, kinship, means of production and division of labor, and relations between families emerge. Sugarman's emphasis on the "intricate interplay between discourse and practice in the sphere of performance" (30) conveys the "engendering" capacities of Prespa song. *Engendering Song* is a strong theoretical and ethnographic contribution to scholarly work in ethnomusicology, anthropology, folklore, music, European studies, gender studies, and other disciplines.

---

Shelly Romalis. **Pistol Packin' Mama: Aunt Molly Jackson and the Politics of Folksong.** Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. Pp. xi + 239, bibliography, index, photos. \$39.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

John Fenn  
Indiana University, Bloomington

Written for the dual purpose of telling Aunt Molly Jackson's life story and examining her involvement with the American folk music