and means what it means because of who is present, acting, speaking, and hearing. At the Lewis Fishery, storytelling intersperses with decisions and instructions regarding the work” (p. 130). The fluidity of discourse forms and meanings in context provide an instructive lesson in the ways in which narrative forms, even discrete and self-contained stories, “have ragged edges not tolerable in staged storytelling” (p. 127). In addition to supporting her thesis about narrative stewardship, this point offers a trenchant critique of the privilege folk narrative scholarship has attributed to narrative form and especially the stability of discrete or self-contained texts.

Another Haul makes an important contribution to the study of narrative’s role in the deliberations of community and sustainability, even as it focuses narrowly on cultural issues as distinct from environmental issues and refrains from challenging normative senses of sustainability. One of the Big Stories of environmental sustainability, however, is discussed in her conclusion and references the early lobbying efforts of Bill Lewis, Sr., the original owner of the fishery, to focus on the problem of shad population decline as a pivotal moment that “entwined environmental and cultural preservation” on Lewis Island. It established environmental sustainability as the “Lewis Fishery’s ticket to economic viability, although not profitability” (p. 201; emphasis in original). This moment in the fishery’s history represents a turning point in managing the fishery for sustainability and transforming an economic model into an ecological one to protect an environmental resource, in part, as an economic and cultural good.

Linking her ethnography of narrative stewardship to cultural sustainability, Groth concludes with a broad-ranging discussion about the sufficiency of ethnography. This final chapter, “Fishing in the Mainstream: Anomie, Sustainability, and Narrative Stewardship,” gently interrogates the value of ethnography without advocacy. While her range of sources is primarily academic, her discussions are refreshingly absorbing in relating themes and approaches from folklore (story, festival, performance), sociology (anomie), cultural geography (sense of place), and sustainability (economic, environmental, and cultural). Ultimately, she argues that “we can also go further to see how narrative stewardship and the anatomy of sense of place and belonging can apply to the ongoing challenges that come with our historical moment” (p. 194). In recent years, environmental issues have rapidly gained a new urgency and concern for the sustainability of global fisheries and marine habitats and environments. The Lewis Fishery may once again be one of the frontline communities in the wake of these challenges, with something to offer from its history and culture about sustainability and resilience.


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“Like marriage, immigration is messy, challenging, at times disturbing, and sometimes unsuccessful, but it also engenders loyalty, pride, and hope” (p. 2). With this bifurcated parallel, Inna Naroditskaya begins a multifaceted, interdisciplinary study of music in weddings within diasporic communities. As rituals already laden with complexities and idiosyncrasies—whose two main actors cross thresholds literal and symbolic, participating in what Victor Turner has notably described as a “moment in and out of time”—weddings become only further fraught within the diasporic context, in which imagined homelands, shifting allegiances, and emergent identities are constantly in dialogue. In this, Music in the American Diasporic Wedding presents fruitful terrain for exploring the concepts of migration, community, ritual, and music’s pivotal role in navigating these social arenas.

At first blush, the idea of “diasporic wedding” is one that easily aligns with notions of continuity. From Fiddler on the Roof (“Tradition”) to My Big Fat Greek Wedding (“lambs in the kitchen . . . tigers in the bedroom”), ethnic
weddings have been positioned in the popular imagination as sites seminal for enabling continuity—from the literal perpetuation of family to the more abstract reproduction of culture. Yet these strings of preservation quickly begin to fray under the inevitable tension, negotiation of difference, and fundamental play permeating this particular rite of passage. It is around this give-and-take between preservation and transformation that *Music in the American Diasporic Wedding* is organized. Indeed, if there is one overarching theme in this volume, it is the paradoxical nature of the wedding as simultaneously generating continuity and change within diasporic communities.

Oriented around a holistic intersection between “wedding,” “diaspora,” and “music,” the volume engages a triangulated analysis, with, as Naroditskaya writes in the introduction, “each element illuminating and illuminated by the other two” (p. 14). This relational approach is a distinct strength of the volume and points to the nuance required in analyzing a diasporic wedding. In the book’s inaugural chapter (“Theoretical Perspectives on Weddings, Locally and Beyond”), A. J. Racy stresses the importance and challenge facing the researcher in disentangling the various layers of meaning inherent in diasporic weddings, noting, in particular, the dynamic relationship between these multi-layered rituals and the ever-slippery notion of “homeland.” Are diasporic wedding traditions acts of “homage” or mere “inertia” (p. 39)? Echoing Clifford Geertz’ iconic wink, Racy asks whether the inclusion of such “traditions” is “to affirm one’s ethnic roots, or to express nostalgia for the past, or to momentarily parody bygone practices, or all of these?” (p. 39)—or, I would add, “none of these”—thereby reminding the reader of the ways the concept and lived reality of “diaspora” only complicates a ritual already rife with layers of signification.

The book’s layout mirrors the often ludic collage of weddings themselves. Divided into three sections (focusing on specific diasporic communities, individual weddings, and accounts of wedding musicians, respectively), the volume is composed of case studies ranging from Croatian American weddings in the Midwest to one of New York City’s first gay marriages in the early 2010s. Echoing its breadth of topics, the book’s authors and methodologies too are broad-ranging, from autoethnographies written by “bride-ethnomusicologists” (p. 15) to survey-based work, to accounts closer to the hermeneutic than the ethnographic, with contributors ranging from senior scholars to burgeoning graduate student-musicians. This variety contributes to the strength of the volume as a whole, if also reflecting the sometimes uneven quality of the scholarship therein, and to its potential interest to scholars from a multitude of disciplines (including Ethnic and Music Studies, Anthropology, and the History of Emotion). In particular, *Music in the American Diasporic Wedding* presents a long-overdue, extensive study (both in terms of theory and content) of weddings and diaspora in the field of Ethnomusicology and would be a welcomed compendium for courses ranging from Music to Cultural Studies.

At the heart of *Music in the American Diasporic Wedding* lies an analysis of music and its role in navigating the polarities of unity and difference. Situated as a powerful analytic in exploring what Alejandro L. Madrid describes as the “intersection of the emotional and the political” (p. xi), music is approached throughout the book as a potent force in mitigating conflicts arising in diasporic weddings (whether intergenerational, familial, or interpersonal) while simultaneously providing the often requisite marker of difference. Here, we see music presented as a celebratory force—an undercurrent that runs through much of the volume. In Meredith Schweig’s autoethnographic account of her interethnic Jewish/Taiwanese American wedding, the author turns to music as a means to engage, showcase, and mediate the “intertwined diasporic lives” (p. 115) existing between herself and her fiancé after more immediate interventions (in this case, food) were deemed logistically impossible. In Schweig’s wedding, as in many others presented in the volume, there emerges a clear pattern of song curation—typically, a combination of iconic repertoire as well as musical selections that fit the specific tastes (and reflect the individual lives) of the wedding couple—made to appease,
inspire, and engage various constituencies of wedding guests and hosts.

This last point suggests an important idea that weaves throughout the volume: namely, a challenge to an easy alignment between national identity and a particular musical repertoire. Whether the Punk, Funk, and New Wave selections played at Schweig’s wedding, or the House and Alternative Rock played at the Latinx receptions examined by Lorena Alvarado and Frances R. Aparicio (chapter 3: “Dissonant Love”), we find that diasporic wedding music is often informed as much by individual inclination as it is by recognized sonic markers of a diasporic community at large. Moreover, these sonic markers themselves are often mutable—a point vividly illustrated by Naroditskaya in her description of an Azerbaijani wedding taking place in Houston, in which a Beatles cover band provides the requisite evocation of “home” for the father of the bride. As Naroditskaya writes, “for him, as for many of us, ‘home’ may thus be associated not as much with any ethnic music as with the urban musical tastes of Baku’s rebellious intelligentsia” (p. 6), thus pointing to the situational and intersectional dimensions constituting “homeland” and the sonic manifestations of this fluid concept.

As such, even in the book’s more harmonious examples, we see diasporic weddings as sites that simultaneously reinforce and rupture traditional practices. In one of the most illuminating chapters of the collection (“Negotiating Gender, Community, and Ethnicity: Balkan Romani Transnational Weddings”), Carol Silverman explores this seminal dynamic through a vibrant look at Macedonian Roma weddings in New York. Silverman structures her analysis around a concept she terms “performative creativity,” or the ways in which Roma “select and reconfigure ritual . . . to produce meaningful expressions that address changing societal conditions while upholding traditional cultural values” (p. 44). In this, Silverman presents a useful framework for exploring the paradoxical role of weddings as at once solidifying and eroding diasporic custom. Most notably, this cultural ebb and flow within the Macedonian Roma community reveals a shift in gender roles, with an increase in education of second-generation women that, in turn, corresponds to greater agency among women in identifying and vetting potential marriage partners. These rather recent nuptial developments belong to a broader trend among second-generation Macedonian Roma, whose seemingly comfortable reconciliation between Romani identity and US American life has translated into a number of amendments to wedding traditions, from shorter marriage celebrations to a preference for “dabs” of henna in the bride’s hair and hands rather than the traditional elaborate designs. Drawing on nearly 30 years of fieldwork with this particular community, Silverman weaves compelling examples from her research throughout the chapter, including a nuanced look at the still customary bridal virginity test.

Importantly, these celebratory accounts are balanced by a more prosaic look at music in diasporic weddings. Through a candid examination of her wedding, Tanya Merchant notes her decision to have a small and modest ceremony (countering the typical Bosnian celebrations in the San Francisco Bay area), a choice that in part contributed to the increasing decline of the Bosnian American community in San Francisco. In this, Merchant’s account offers an example in which a diasporic wedding can run counter to the preservationist impulses of the broader diaspora as well as moving us away from the sometimes easy trappings of a universal panacea of music (the music at Merchant’s marriage ceremony was “barely audible . . . and hardly remarkable” [p. 141]). Merchant is also notably one of the few authors in the volume who considers the range of listener subjectivities with regard to individual experience of diasporic weddings, a point powerfully illustrated when Merchant compares her response to a song from her wedding reception (which generated within her feelings of inclusion as well as literal movement from her unborn son) to that of her husband, who experienced discomfort because of his concern regarding the inability of non-Bosnian guests to comprehend the song’s lyrics. Further echoing this line of inquiry, the chapter by Timothy J. Cooley (“Mountain Weddings in Chicago”), which documents Polish Górale weddings taking place in Chicago today, includes an exploration of the role played by lo-
cal infrastructures—such as the rather recently established horse farms and cheese makers—in enabling the production of goods and services required for the execution of “tradition.”

This quotidian look at the praxis of diasporic weddings reaches its apex in the last section of the book, which focuses on the perspective of wedding musicians themselves. While up to this point, the majority of authors in the volume explore such abstractions as music’s role in generating “unity” or “difference,” the last part details the specific and tangible ways that these concepts are made manifest by living, breathing, singing individuals. Here, as elsewhere, a more robust examination of the corporeal dimension of the diasporic wedding—the body as a site of knowledge production and experience—would have been a welcomed augmentation of the existing analyses, thereby positioning this volume alongside the growing ethnomusicological work relating to embodiment. From the epistemological approach taken by Michael Allemana as he asks, “How do musicians know what to do and when to do it?” (p. 171), to Hankus Netsky’s lively account of how Jewish musicians have navigated cultural shifts that have taken place within the Jewish American diaspora, to Kaley Mason and Ameera Nimjee’s look at the affective labor involved in creating a “sound union” (p. 208) among South Asians in Chicago, what becomes clear is that musicians are active and paramount agents in creating successful diasporic weddings. By choosing or rejecting repertoire (thereby serving as a kind of cultural gatekeeper), maintaining the energy of the dance floor, or making on-the-spot stylistic decisions, musicians “help materialize emotion and feeling through the embodied experience of everyone present” (p. 226). The chapter by Mason and Nimjee (“Sound Unions: The Work of Music Specialists in Chicago’s South Asian Wedding Scene”) is of further significance as it documents the demands placed on musicians within what the authors describe as a growing market for and commodification of intimacy. Situated as both symptomatic of and antidote for the increasingly depersonalized business model of weddings, musicians must constantly navigate the demands of their clients with regard to their own professional and aesthetic standards as well as manage the energy required for generating that most important yet elusive of qualities: communitas.

And here we return to Victor Turner, for even within this pragmatic look at diasporic weddings lies an underlying affinity for hope and a desire for transcendence—a sentiment expressed throughout the volume and perhaps described most eloquently by A. J. Racy as the “effervescence” (p. 24) permeating wedding events. Indeed, a constant draw of a wedding, diasporic or otherwise, is its possibility for elation and unity—the communitas posited by Turner nearly half a century ago, which seems so acutely needed today. For all of its undoubtedly potent sonic marking of difference, music likewise offers a common entry point into an effervescent collectivity—however fleeting. Music in the American Diasporic Wedding presents a vibrant testament to this enduring power of music and its potential to heal, unite, and transform.