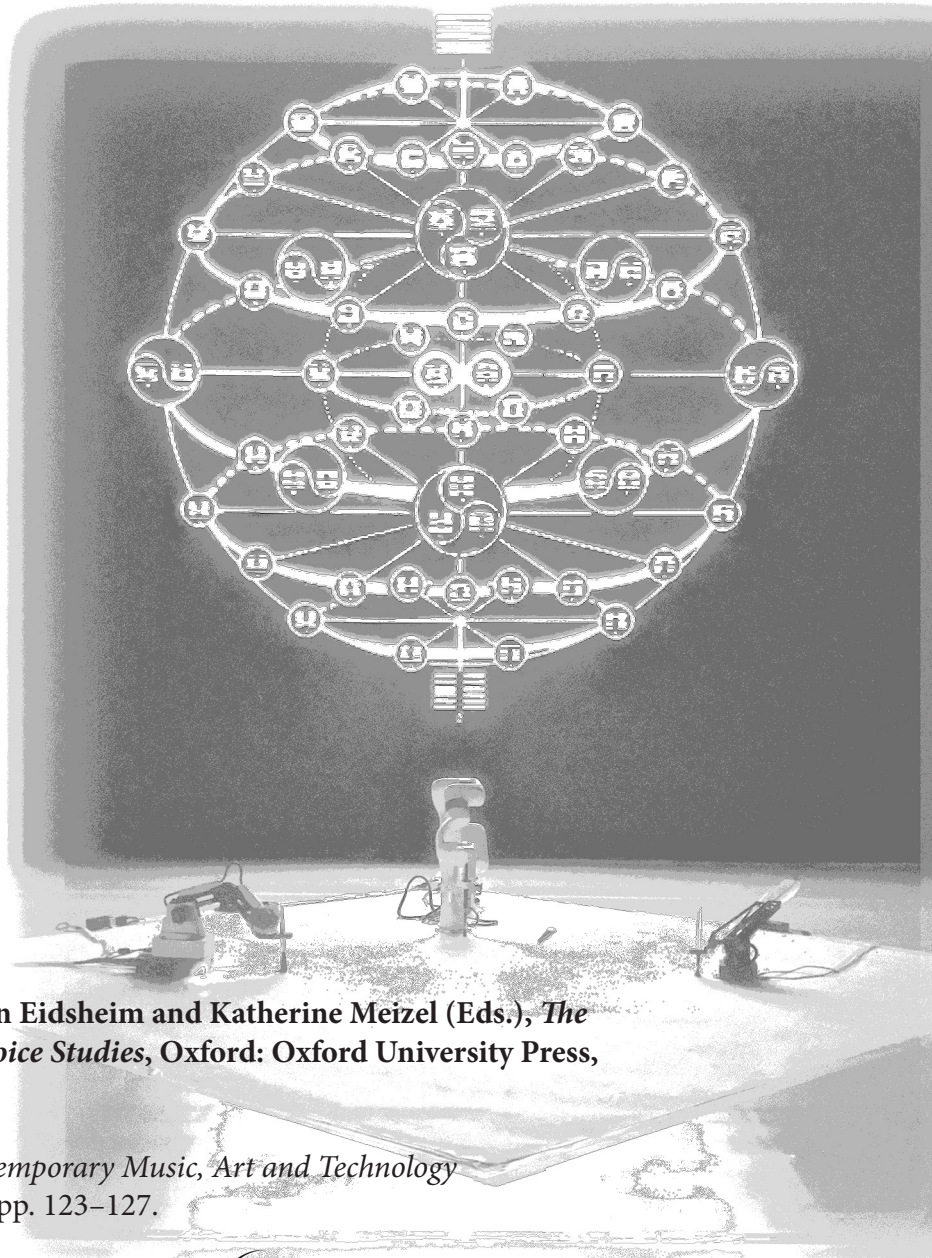


# I N S Δ M

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**Book Review: Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.**

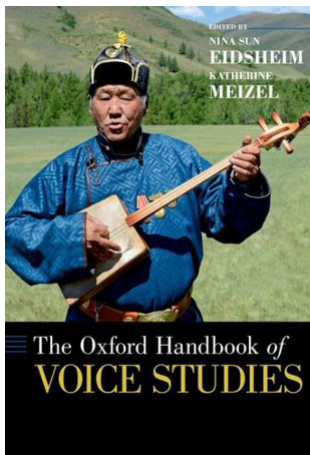
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**Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel (Eds.),**  
***The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies,***  
**Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.**  
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In 2019 the field of voice studies was greatly enriched by the publication of *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*, edited by Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel. This publication not only collected chapters written by some of the most active and influential scholars in the field, but also gave several important suggestions and guidelines for future academic work on voice.

As a voice scholar, every single piece in this collection is worthy of my attention. This stance aligns with the idea presented by the editors, and reiterated and masterfully underlined by Jody Kreiman in her concluding piece: the one who deals with voice, be it from the sciences or the humanities, should be

interested in all the ways voice ‘works’ and strive to be informed of new academic achievements from different disciplines.

Divided into six parts by the six “domains of inquiry” introduced by Eidsheim and Meizel, this collection contains 22 chapters, as well as the Introduction and the Epilogue. In the introduction, Eidsheim and Meizel give an overview of the history of voice studies, highlighting the most significant pieces of scholarship and discussing

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the associated issues surrounding voice. Likewise, by using the story of the three men and the elephant as a metaphor for the academic study of voice, the editors explain the need for “interactions, conversations, and transdisciplinary work” (xxiii) among voice scholars in order to tackle the voice, which – “as topic, object, and practice – is enormous as [an] elephant” (xxi). After establishing the domains in which the studies in this book are grouped, Eidsheim and Meizel conclude their piece with the following idea: “(s)ynthesizing voice research from humanities, performing arts, and social sciences to the sciences and medicine, we understand voice in the most general terms as the entanglement of six broad areas” (xxxiii).

The first of those broad areas translated into Part I of the book is titled *Framing Voice. Voice as a Carrier of Meaning*, and it consists of three chapters that “examine past and present meanings assigned to voice, and how they are intertwined with understandings of identity” (xxviii). In the first chapter, dubbed “What was the Voice?” (3–17), Shane Butler focuses on the “Ancient Voice”, and the “antiquity’s contribution to the idea of the voice”, having in mind both spoken and written language. In “Object, Person, Machine, or What: Practical Ontologies of Voice” (19–34), Matt Rahaim investigates five instances of the ontology of voice, or “five vocal situations”, and continues to discuss the practical, anthropological and ethnographical ontologies of voice, as well as their possible locations, indeterminacy and politics. The chapter “Singing High: Black Countertenors and Gendered Sound in Gospel Performance” (35–51) by Alisha Lola Jones brings us an informed and intriguing ethnomusicological investigation of African American countertenor sound, representation, and symbolism of male high-singing in music research, and explores social and theological issues through the case study of African American countertenor Patrick Dailey and an “ethnography of his live performance”.

The four studies in Part II, *Changing Voice: Voice as Barometer*, explores “voice (as) a useful barometer for broader movements within a given society” (xxix). In their chapter, “Medical Care of Voice Disorders” (55–75), Robert T. Sataloff and Mary J. Hawkshaw give an overview of the particular ways in which vocal medical care has improved since the early 1980s, pin-pointing the common diagnoses and treatments in the cases of vocal professionals and others. By joining competencies stemming from backgrounds in ethnomusicology, voice science, and vocal performance, in the chapter “Fluid Voices: Processes and Practices in Singing Impersonation” (77–95), Katherine Meizel and Ronald C. Scherer scrutinize singing impersonation from the standpoints of voice and body agency, and explore the acoustic insights of recordings of Véronic DiCaire’s show *50 Voices*. In “This American Voice: The Odd Timbre of a New Standard in Public Radio” (97–123) Tom McEnaney delves into the historical and contemporary (deviations from) standards in the sphere of famous radio/podcast voices. In the last chapter in Part II, “The Voice of Feeling: Liberal Subjects, Music, and the Cinematic Speech” (125–139), Dan Wang posits that there is “a relation between the concept of voice in the scene (...) and the picture of social relations that results” (127), and continues to analyze two crucial scenes centered

around the voice/speech from the films *Love Actually* (2003) and *The King's Speech* (2010).

Part III of the *Handbook*, named *Active Voice: Voice as Politics*, presents four studies dealing with voice as “an expression of active agency” (xxx). Ellias Krell’s chapter “Trans/forming white noise: Gender, Race, and Disability in the Music of Joe Stevens” (143–163) focuses on the singer-songwriter Joe Stevens, and the factor of *vocal noise* in exploring “intersectional vectors of gender, race, class, and ability” (144) of this white, middle-class, able-bodied trans-man that is present in the public sphere. In “Voice in Charismatic Leadership” (165–189) Rosario Signorello gives a theoretical background of the phenomenon of (vocal) charisma in leadership, and investigates this issue in different cultures and languages. With the idea that “(t)he throat, in [a] Marshallese sensorial approach, is the metaphorical seat of the emotions that prompt a feelingful care for others, human and nonhuman”. The chapter “Challenging Voices: Relistening to Marshallese Histories of the Present” (191–213) by Jessica A. Schwartz and April L. Brown deals with the vocal practices of those affected by nuclear testing in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, drawing from Eidsheims’ “*voice challenge* activity as a toll in critical voice studies” (192). In the chapter “Voice Dipped in Black: The Louisville Project and the Birth of Black Radical Argument in College Policy Debate”, Shanara R. Reid-Brinkley writes about the University of Louisville’s Malcolm X Debate Program, the development of the debate collective of mostly black students who managed to defy norms and refused to “performatively whiten” their appearance and voices/bodies in competitions.”

*Sensing Voice: Voice as (Multi)sensory Phenomenon*, the fourth part of the publication, gathers four studies around the idea of expansion of voice “beyond the textual and the sonorous”; as editors emphasize, “(i)t exemplifies inquiry into the extrasonorous voice and possible extravocal in the tactile, philosophical, scientific, biological, and evolutionary realms” (xxx). With this in mind, we read Cornelia Fales’ “Voiceness in Musical Instruments” (237–268), who, analogous to the phenomenon of faceness, investigates the principles and characteristics of instrumental voiceness in instruments such as the Bengali *gopiyantara*, the Mongolian *morin khuur*, and the violin and cello. In their chapter titled “The Evolution of Voice Perception” (269–300), Katarzyna Pisansky and Gregory A. Bryant discuss the factors of voice communicating and contributing to the perception of human body size and physical strength. Likewise, they deal with preferences for sexual dimorphism, especially giving space to the issue of vocal attractiveness and vocal communication of affection and intention. Nina Sun Eidsheim’s chapter “Acoustic Slits and Vocal Incongruences in Los Angeles Union Station” (301–313) is based on the underlying question “what kind of insight does voice afford us?”. As such, it delves into the peculiarities of the vocal and acoustical production of the site-specific opera *Invisible Cities* (2013). The chapter “Tuning a Throat Song in Inner Asia: On the Nature of Vocal Gifts with People’s Xöömeizhi of the Tyva Republic Valeriy Mongush (b. 1953)” (315–342) by Robert O. Beahrs gives voice to his teacher, Valeriy Kechilovich Mongush from the



Tyva Republic, giving us an insight into the three main vocal techniques of what we know as throat-singing: *xöömei*, *sygytm* and *kargyraa*.

Part V, *Producing Voice: Vocal Modalities*, also consists of four studies, this time dealing with “modulations of voice—alterations and additions in practice that create shifts in meaning” (xxxix). In that regard, in the chapter “The Echoing Palimpsest: Singing and the Experience of Time at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople” Alexander K. Khalil writes about the voice of an Orthodox Christian *psaltis* Stylianos Floikos, called Stelios, which “(f)or the Turks (...) is representative of their prehistory, being a member of the ethnicity who inhabited the city before Turks took it” (357). Nandhakumar Radhakrishnan, Ronald C. Schrer, and Santanu Bandyopadhyay’s piece “Laryngeal Dynamics of *Taan* Gestures in Indian Classical Singing” (365–401) discusses *taan*, a rapid pitch-changing gesture equivalent in its significance to “vibrato (...) in Western classical singing” (364). The authors do so by recording Santanu Bandyopadhyay, a male Hindustani singer and teacher, performing both pedagogical and performance *taan*, and then analyzing the findings. The following chapter, “Proximity/Infinity: The Mediated Voice in Mobile Music” (403–418) by Miriama Young, is dedicated to the voice that is mediated for the purpose of pod listening. Young shortly examines the history of technologically mediated voice, and then surveys vocal music from various genres by scrutinizing the aspects of composition, performance, recording, and production of said voice. Finally, in her chapter “When Robots Speak on Screen: Imagining the Cinemechanical Ideal” (419–436), Jennifer Fleegeer argues that the “audible signifiers of gender, class, and race in the voices that give life to Hollywood’s robots make audiences comfortable with the robot as worker, and, by extension, with the labor practices of an industry in which it is not always possible to distinguish images of and by real people from those generated by computer” (421).

The final part of the collection, *Negotiating Voice: Voice as Transaction*, begins with Eve McPherson’s chapter “Robot Imams! Standardizing, Centralizing, and Debating the Voice of Islam in Millennial Turkey” (439–355). Here, the author writes about the ideologies and politics that shape the contemporary call to prayer, striving to coexist and, possibly, guide “that which is democratic, modern, and progressive” (439). In “Singing and Praying among Korean Christian Converts (1896 – 1915): A Trans-Pacific Genealogy of the Modern Korean Voice” (457–474) Hyun Kyong Hannah Chang discusses the formation of the Trans-Pacific modern voice in Korea in the context of colonial pressures from United States and Japan at the beginning of the 20th century. The final chapter before the Epilogue, “Building the Broadway Voice” (475–491) by Jake Johnson, reveals the layers of the famous “Broadway voice”, known for “over-articulating, over-enunciating, and over-emoting” (476) and “belt” sound.

As a concluding argument for the *Handbook*, as mentioned above, Jody Kreiman’s “Epilogue: Defining and Studying Voice across Disciplinary Boundaries” (493–513) stands for a “broad understanding of voice, and hence for the need for

cross-disciplinary training” (494). Kreiman argues that all voice scholars can benefit from a transdisciplinary approach to the existing body of knowledge, and that there should be initiative for the inter-/trans- disciplinary Voice Studies Curriculum. The author then proceeds to build the curriculum, designing four courses that would enable scholars at the beginning of their paths to gain well-rounded knowledge on the issue.

The idea that “(d)iscussions of conflicts between the sciences and humanities are as old as the sciences and humanities, but it is past time to put aside these ‘false barriers to understanding’ (Gould 2003, 17), given that it is clear that neither scientific nor humanistic approaches in isolation are sufficient to truly understand voice (or any phenomenon; Gould 2003)” (508) also entirely aligns with the politics of this Journal. Not only is the *Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies* significant to voice scholars, it is also immensely important to other scientists dealing with music, art and technology (and not just because we can hardly imagine voice today without it being technologically transmitted and mediated) in a transdisciplinary fashion.

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