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Language, the Singer and the Song

The Sociolinguistics of Folk Performance

Richard J. Watts

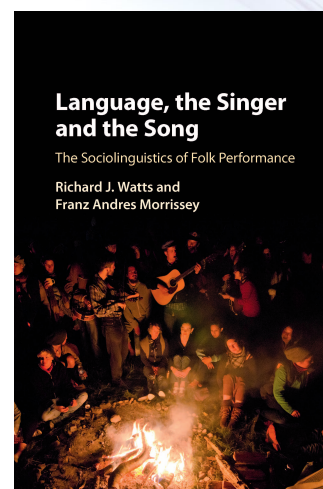
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The relationship between language and music has much in common - rhythm, structure, sound, metaphor. Exploring the phenomena of song and performance, this book presents a sociolinguistic model for analysing them. Based on ethnomusicologist John Blacking's contention that any song performed communally is a 'folk song' regardless of its generic origins, it argues that folk song to a far greater extent than other song genres displays 'communal' or 'inclusive' types of performance. The defining feature of folk song as a multi-modal instantiation of music and language is its participatory nature, making it ideal for sociolinguistic analysis. In this sense, a folk song is the product of specific types of developing social interaction whose major purpose is the construction of a temporally and locally based community. Through repeated instantiations, this can lead to disparate communities of practice, which, over time, develop sociocultural registers and a communal stance towards aspects of meaningful events in everyday lives that become typical of a discourse community.

Introduction; Prologue; Part I. Creating Community and Identity through Song: 1. Language and music; 2. 'Breaking through' into performance'; 3. The communality of folk song; 4. Answering back: rebels with and without a cause; Part II. Variation in Language and Folk Song: 5. 'The times they are a-changing'; 6. Ideologies, authenticities and traditions; 7. 'Insects caught in amber'; Part III. Folk Song Performance and Linguistics: 8. Voices in the folk song; 9. The song: text and entextualisation in performance; 10. Going out there and doing your thing; 11. Enregisterment through song; Epilogue; 12. Whither folk song, whither sociolinguistics?; Appendix: overview of musical concepts.



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Advance praise:

'*Language, the Singer and the Song* offers a thorough and convincing sociolinguistic exploration of folk songs. The book refreshes and enlarges our understanding of language and music as communication systems.'

Massimo Sturiale,
University of Catania-Ragusa,
Italy



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