Language, the Singer and the Song
The Sociolinguistics of Folk Performance

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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.