

BEATE KUTSCHKE AND BARLEY NORTON (EDS), *MUSIC AND PROTEST IN 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). ISBN 978-1-107-00732-1, xiv+327pp, £70.

The subject of protest song has experienced an upsurge in academic interest in the past few years with the appearance of volumes such as Ian Peddie's *Music and Protest* and Jonathan C. Friedman's *The Routledge History of Social Protest in Popular Music*.<sup>1</sup> 1968, in particular, has always been viewed as a pivotal year for political folk and rock song in Western Europe and on the American continent. This volume edited by Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton, however, is the first of its kind to focus on musical protest in 1968 as a world-wide phenomenon. This is highly useful in several respects. While serving as a reminder of the great diversity of political musical culture in 1968 in the West—there are chapters on the US, the UK, France, Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Italy, Latin America and South Africa—the book also examines what the revolutionary year of 1968 meant for the Eastern Bloc countries of Europe as well as the Far East (Japan, China and Vietnam).

The volume begins with definitions. Because the concept of '1968' is a somewhat loose one, generally symbolizing the high point of revolutionary cultural activity of the 1960s, the editors opt for the expression 'the long 1968', which encompasses the years building up to 1968 and those thereafter. This makes sense: although one tends to associate the year in question with the student revolts in Paris and Berlin, the anti-Vietnam war protests in the US and the Prague Spring, the 1968 movement in fact started in different years in different countries, and its effects were felt for differing periods of time.

In terms of the symbolic significance of 1968, such is the diversity of interpretations which have accumulated over the years that Eric Drott, in his chapter 'Music and May 1968 in France: practices, roles, representations', refers to it as a "'floating" signifier'. This is not intended, however, to 'diminish ... its relevance or impact' but rather to ensure 'its continuing use-value' (258). This is quite apt when one considers the diverse manifestations of 1968 which the book reveals: whereas in West Germany music was used as a vehicle for mobilizing political consciousness, for example at the Burg Waldeck and Essen festivals of 1968, other countries show a less ideological orientation that favoured aesthetics over politics. The UK is a prime example of this, where 1968 is understood more as a protest in style than as an oppositional movement. In the UK experimental-music scene, for instance, Virginia Anderson sees politics and ideology as a means of revolutionizing musical practice itself (171–87). For Allan F.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Peddie (ed.), *Music and Protest* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Jonathan C. Friedman (ed.), *The Routledge History of Social Protest in Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Moore, the idealism of the 1960s paved the way for the utopian visions of the progressive rock bands of the 1970s (158). In Scandinavia, too, the emphasis is more on aesthetics and artistic practice itself. As Alf Björnberg writes, government cultural policy combined with the countercultural spirit of the times to encourage a non-commercial, more 'serious' indigenous music (144–51).

Set alongside the studies of countercultural music in the Western democracies, the volume also includes chapters about countries which had already undergone political transformation to socialism such as China, North Vietnam, Cuba, Chile and the states of the Eastern Bloc. Jan Fairley's chapter, for example, documents the rise of the so-called 'New Song' movements in Central and South America. These movements were interconnected due to the Spanish language as well as their revolutionary aspirations. Interestingly, the New Song movement of Latin America distanced itself entirely from the term 'protest song'. This was because in countries such as Cuba and Chile, which had established socialist governments in 1959 and 1970 respectively, revolutionary culture was already perceived to be at an advanced stage; the songs were no longer protesting, but were rather perceived as 'a social force' for helping individuals to bond in a new collective society (120).

Times of crisis in communist countries, however, resulted in the propagation of traditional agitprop battle songs. In Cuba, before the New Song movement (embodied by singers such as Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés) became tolerated in the early 1970s, the music scene had gone through a repressive 'grey period' in which only socialist realist songs praising the achievements of the state had been allowed. This mirrored the situation in war-torn North Vietnam where, as Norton writes, music was used as mass propaganda (100). We learn how, from the beginning of the US raids in 1965, political songs were used directly to help the soldiers and general population psychologically to withstand the US bombing. The Vietnamese Youth Song Movement carried the slogan 'Song Drowns Out the Sound of Bombs' (103), which was also the title of a book published in 1968. This contrasted with capitalist South Vietnam where a different type of song was propagated: the sentimental traditional song genre known as 'ca khúc', popularized by the singer Trịnh Công Sơn, which was subsequently repressed by the communists after their ultimate victory in 1975. In the GDR (East Germany) too, only certain singers, groups and types of songs were officially permitted. As Kutschke observes, many of those who were inspired by the spirit of freedom of 1968 struggled to gain official acceptance. The group Renft and the 'Liedermacher' Wolf Biermann were notable examples of musicians who were banned and ultimately forced to emigrate to West Germany.

Another interesting point of commonality linking various countries in 1968 is how revolutionary culture did not completely break with the past, but rather often

combined with traditions of indigenous cultures. In Chile, for example, Victor Jara was an exponent of the new political folk song which 'spoke clearly to the times yet was rooted in rural tradition' (131). In Japan, as Tôru Mitsui explains, the tradition of 'enka' folk song from the early twentieth century was revived as a new protest form using musical influences from American singer-songwriters such as Woody Guthrie (91–2). In the People's Republic of China, which was undergoing its Cultural Revolution under Mao, a contradictory dynamic emerged. Composers were given the task of creating model works (operas, ballets and symphonies) which should break with traditions of the past in depicting the qualities and behavioural attitudes of model socialist citizens. In reality, however, the complete rupture with the past did not happen. As Hon-Lun Yang states: 'It would be mistaken ... to presume that Chinese traditional values and patriarchy gave way to the new era overnight. In fact negotiation between tradition and modernity ... was evident in the 1960s and has continued ever since' (232).

The book is impressive in how it encompasses a wide variety of musical genres on the spectrum between high and popular culture. For example, in her chapter 'Anti-authoritarian revolt by musical means on both sides of the Berlin Wall', Kutschke addresses the new electronic 'Krautrock' groups alongside the new generation of political singer-songwriters in the East and West. She then follows the rebellious current of 1968 into the world of avant-garde music where an irreverent practice of ironic quotations from Germany's classical music canon was employed by new composers. There is a strong musicological approach, particularly in the chapters on Germany, Britain, Vietnam and China, which forms an excellent complement to the socio-political, literary and historical examinations in the book.

All in all, this is an excellent volume, wide in scope in terms of both its international perspective and the variety of the musical genres it considers. From today's viewpoint—two generations after 1968, and twenty-five years since the end of the Cold War—it also functions as a reassessment, enabling a cohesive overview of political song and the music cultures of that time. While revealing commonalities as well as differences in styles, approaches and motivations, it succeeds in its portrayal of 1968 as a world-wide political phenomenon in which music had a considerable role to play.

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