

Music and Change
Ecological Perspectives



MUSIC AND MOURNING



EDITED BY

JANE W. DAVIDSON AND SANDRA GARRIDO

An **Ashgate** Book

Music and Mourning

While grief is suffered in all cultures, it is expressed differently all over the world in accordance with local customs and beliefs. Music has been associated with the healing of grief for many centuries, with Homer prescribing music as an antidote to sorrow as early as the 7th Century BC. The changing role of music in expressions of grief and mourning throughout history and in different cultures reflects the changing attitudes of society towards life and death itself. This volume investigates the role of music in mourning rituals across time and culture, discussing the subject from the multiple perspectives of music history, music psychology, ethnomusicology and music therapy.

Jane W. Davidson is a singer and stage director with research interests in performance and expression, voice, musical development and wellbeing. She was Editor of *Psychology of Music* (1997–2001), Vice-President of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (2003–2006) and President of the Musicological Society of Australia (2010–2011). She is currently Professor of Creative and Performing Arts (Music) at The University of Melbourne and Deputy Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. She has published over 100 scholarly contributions and secured a range of grants and awards in both Australia and overseas.

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**Dedicated to the memory of Philippa Maddern
(24 August 1952 – 16 June 2014)**

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1 On Music and Mourning

Jane W. Davidson and Sandra Garrido

This book investigates the role of music in mourning rituals across time and culture. As an inter-disciplinary volume, cultural history, ethnomusicology, psychology and music therapy form the basis of the studies presented.

Regulation of emotion is clearly important, and music can provide a powerful tool for the 're-ritualization' of grief and a re-discovery of personal expressions of grief. Rituals are an important part of the grieving process and these have been extensively documented by cultural anthropologists (Reeves & Boersma, 1989–1990). According to archaeologist Brian Hayden (1987), rituals have been performed by humans for over 100,000 years. Music often has an important role to play within such rituals of mourning (Schechter, 1994).

Music has been associated with the 'healing' of grief for many centuries, with Homer recommending music as an antidote to sorrow around the seventh or eighth century BC (Nelson and Weathers, 1998). Recent studies have also shown the benefits of music-therapy in dealing with grief (Dalton & Krout, 2005; Hilliard, 2001; McFerran, Roberts, & O'Grady, 2010). The anthropological literature reveals that in many cultures specialised music within the funeral ritual allows the externalisation of feelings and a social medium in which grief can be acceptably expressed (Castle & Philips, 2003; Goss & Klass, 1997).

Regionally, specific religious traditions have been strongly associated with rituals of mourning, particularly funerals. The music used in such rituals would, in the past, also have been based primarily on local religious customs. However, more recent decades have seen the secularisation of funerals and a stripping away of traditional religious practices in many parts of the world (Emke, 2002). Scholars note that grief rituals are not as available for use in American culture as they were prior to the twentieth century (Klass, Silverman & Nickman, 1996). Similarly, in Australia after the First World War a deep cultural shift occurred lasting until the 1980s in which thoughts and feelings about death were often avoided, rituals and expressions of grief were minimised and sorrow became a private matter (Jalland, 2006). This deterioration in the role of traditional rituals has often led to insufficient grieving and inadequate grief resolution (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998).

A second major shift in cultural responses and attitudes to death and grief has occurred since then in many parts of the world (Jalland, 2006). This has been stimulated by globalisation as waves of migration have encouraged diversity

in attitudes and approaches to grief. Psychologists have also contributed to the change, by encouraging the view that open emotional expressions of grief can be healing. Kubler-Ross (1969) for example, popularised theories about 'stages' of grieving and emphasised the individuality of people's responses to grief.

Despite the increased secularisation of funerals, rituals are therefore progressively becoming a part of the grieving process once again. New rituals, often spontaneously created, have emerged that reflect modern perspectives on grief and mourning even when conducted in traditional contexts such as churches (Cook & Walter, 2005). This is illustrated by the widely broadcast funeral of Princess Diana at Westminster Abbey in 1997 in which tradition was accompanied by the spontaneous expression of grief by thousands of people around the world and by personal tributes from those who were close to her (Garces-Foley & Holcomb, 2005). These new and more personal manifestations of grief often focus on celebrating the life of the deceased even more than they do on loss and death.

Music has a large role to play in this re-ritualisation of mourning. Music played at contemporary funerals may be pieces of special significance to the deceased rather than traditional music for funeral services (Wouters, 2002). As Saynor (2001) puts it: 'many are discovering new music, new words and new rituals that are helping them express their spirituality' (p. 22). Even where music choices may seem bizarre or even irreverent to some attendees, these personalised expressions allow the bereaved to celebrate and memorialise the life of the deceased in a very individual way.

Thus, contemporary music choices for funerals have become life interpreting, reflecting important changes in cultural approaches to questions of life and death. Beyond the funeral, therapists are making use of music to help mourners create other forms of rituals for coping with their loss. Castle and Philips (2003) thus express the hope that these new rituals will enable many to 'make room in their lives for a relationship with grief, to learn and grow from that relationship' (p. 62). The function of music within modern-day grief rituals is thus an important area warranting further investigation in future research.

The chapters included in this volume look at such questions as how music is used to modify our thoughts and feelings about loss in various cultural settings, how this was done in the past, current trends, and future projections. The authors consider the use of music in a variety of ceremonial and formal contexts as well as more family-oriented and personal contexts that surround mourning. The discussions include historical investigations that explore the use and function of music for mourning across different periods and places. The volume also includes work drawing out the relevance of music to mourning in contemporary Western societies such as Australia and considers some experimental approaches based on psychology research paradigms.

The chapters deal first with music used in formal contexts such as funerals and second with music used in dealing with grief in settings outside the funeral. In Chapters 2 and 3, the results of three empirical studies by Sandra Garrido and Jane Davidson are explored that investigate contemporary choices for funeral music