

Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India



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SINGING THE CLASSICAL, VOICING THE MODERN: THE POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS OF MUSIC IN SOUTH INDIA




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Duke University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India, Amanda J. Weidman, While Karnatic music, a form of Indian music based on the melodic and rhythmic principles of raga and tala, is known today as South India's classical music, its status as "classical" is an early twentieth-century construct, one that emerged in the crucible of colonial modernity, nationalist ideology, and South Indian regional politics. As Amanda Weidman demonstrates, in order for Karnatic music to be considered classical, it needed to be modeled on Western classical music, with its system of notation, composers, compositions, conservatories, and concerts, but also to remain distinctively Indian. Weidman argues that these contradictory desires led to the emergence of a particular "politics of voice," in which the voice came to stand for authenticity and Indianness. Combining ethnographic observation derived from her experience as a student and performer of South Indian music and close readings of archival materials, Weidman traces the emergence of this politics of voice through compelling analyses of the relationship between vocal sound and instrumental imitation, conventions of performance and staging, the status of women as performers, debates about language and music, and the relationship between oral tradition and technologies of printing and sound reproduction. In this sustained exploration of the way "voice" is elaborated as a trope of modern subjectivity, national identity, and cultural authenticity, Weidman provides a model for thinking about the voice in anthropological and historical terms. At the same time, she makes a crucial contribution to the study of modernity, showing that modernity is characterized as much by particular ideas about orality, aurality, and the voice as it is by regimes of visibility.

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