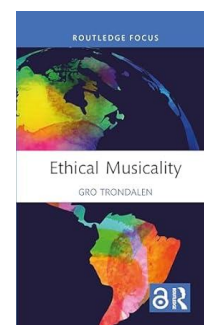


BOOK REVIEW

Ethical musicality (Trondalen)

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Title: Ethical musicality **Author:** Gro Trondalen **Publication year:** 2023 **Publisher:** Routledge **Pages:** 106 **ISBN:** 978-1032111261

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Taru-Anneli Koivisto is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of the Arts Helsinki, where she focuses on cross-cutting educational and social development in the fields of arts, music education, culture, sustainability, and well-being. Her expertise also includes research methodology, ethics, and music therapy. She is currently working on the project *Performing the political: Public Pedagogy in Higher Music Education* (2023–2027, Research Council of Finland). [taru.koivisto@uniarts.fi]

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Music and Change: Ecological Perspectives is a cross-disciplinary Routledge Focus Series for scholars and practitioners, exploring the dynamic processes of music as change and its ecological perspectives in action. *Ethical Musicality* is the seventh book in the series, edited by Gary Ansdell and Tia DeNora. In this work, Gro Trondalen—a distinguished scholar, educator, music practitioner, and expert in multi-level ethical work in both institutional and individual music therapy—undertakes an in-depth ethical reflection on music. She also draws upon her engagement with national and international music students, whose diverse perspectives have provided a rich source of ethical debate and continuous reflection that inform this book.

Structured into three interconnected chapters, the book aims to (1) provide an overview of selected Western scholars' perspectives on music and ethics, (2) explore and illustrate how ethics emerge from real-life musical experiences, and (3) propose a framework for ethical musicality that understands music and ethics as lived, intertwined phenomena (Trondalen, 2023, p. 4). The book opens with the assertion that "Ethical problems, dilemmas and unpleasant experiences arise in real-life settings" (p. 1), immediately establishing a compelling foundation for the exploration of musical ethics. Trondalen's approach does not offer simple or absolute answers but instead presents a highly relational understanding of ethics across different interpretative levels and discourses. Ethics, she argues, can be understood as a discipline, method, or practice grounded in morality, values, norms, attitudes, and rules. Similarly, she views music and its meanings as highly contextual and perspective-dependent, requiring reflexive and ontological considerations.

By explicitly acknowledging her own positionality and privilege at the outset, Trondalen invites readers to reflect on their own advantages, vulnerabilities, and ethical dilemmas within their lived experiences and professional contexts. Her academic background within the Western music education system, combined with the freedom to work across international and national contexts as a Nordic citizen, provide a lens where democracy, equality, and critical reflection are expected values. This perspective situates the book's ethical inquiry within an ecologically and socially responsible framework, addressing intriguing ethico-onto-epistemological questions. Trondalen's approach resonates with Barad's (2008) postmodern conceptualisation that ethics, ontology, and epistemology are fundamentally intertwined. Given the political dimensions of musical ethics, further exploration of the ethico-political aspects could enrich the discourse, especially in today's turbulent and contradictory political landscape.

Beyond offering timely insights into ethical reflection in music, the book serves as an educational resource for a wide range of audiences, including students, researchers, and practitioners in music therapy and related fields. Chapter 1, *Ethics as a Discipline: A Musical-Philosophical Discourse*, provides a well-structured introduction into ethical inquiry in relation to Western philosophical perspectives on musical aesthetics and the notion of a "good life." Chapter 2, *Ethics as Practice: Music in Real-Life Encounters*, presents ethical negotiations in everyday musical practice through vignettes from the perspectives of performing musicians, educators, therapists, musicologists, and researchers. While these perspectives are valuable, the book could further explore how these professional domains increasingly intersect and engage with broader societal concerns. The discussion remains somewhat confined within distinct professional boundaries, raising important future questions about how to build a more integrated and collaborative field of interrelated musical professions.

Notably, the professional perspectives of, for example, musicians and music educators have been widening in recent years, at least in Nordic countries. The boundaries between artistic, pedagogical, and social dimensions of music are becoming more fluid, reflecting a broader professional scope. However, articulating this expansion can be challenging, particularly for those coming from a music therapy background, where the frameworks and discourses often differ. It would be valuable for future discussions to build upon and extend the articulations presented in this book, allowing for a deeper and more inclusive dialogue that acknowledges these evolving professional landscapes.

Chapter 3, *Reflexivity: Music and Ethics*, takes the book's theorising further by synthesising a conceptual framework of ethical musicality with existential implications. It explores "the relationship between music and ethics, people and culture, individuality and sociality, and ecology" (Trondalen, 2023, p. 59). By situating these discussions within the fundamental existential dimensions of body, relationship, time, and space—alongside considerations of context, involvement, power, responsibility, sustainability, and hope—the book invites the reader into a process of becoming. Rather than viewing life as a fixed state of being, this perspective underscores a continuous, transformative journey of evolving, learning, and changing together. Theoretically, it encourages professionals to move beyond anthropocentric perspectives, advocating for a more holistic, interconnected worldview that acknowledges the entanglement of human and non-human elements in ethical decision-making.

REFERENCES

- Barad, K. (2008). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. In S. H. Stacy Alaimo (Ed.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 120–154). Indiana University Press.