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Journal Aim and Scope

The Journal of Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka (JOVPA-SL) is a biannual research publication issued by the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo. The journal seeks to capture a broad spectrum of scholarly work in the fields of visual and performing arts, while also promoting multidisciplinary approaches within the humanities and social sciences. JOVPA-SL welcomes contributions from both academics and practitioner-researchers engaged in arts-based research, fostering critical dialogue and innovative perspectives on creative practice and inquiry. It serves as a platform for critical engagement, experimental methodologies, and creative pedagogy, addressing themes that are either discipline-specific such as dance, drama, performance studies, music, or visual arts or situated at the intersection of multiple disciplines. The journal invites original, rigorous, and meaningful research in creative arts and performance studies, both within and across academic boundaries. It encourages critical debate and cross-disciplinary exchange through diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to: theatre studies, performance studies, dance studies, ethnomusicology, music education, popular culture, dance and movement analysis, art history, art theory, visual and cultural studies, crafts, digital arts and design, film studies, and fine arts.

Cover Photo: Final Year Dance Production, 'Oracle' performed in 2018 at Panibharatha Theatre. Dept. of Theatre, and Oriental Ballet and Modern Dance.

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BOOK REVIEW

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Book Review: *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*

The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies

Bull, Michael (ed.). 2024. *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*. London and New York: Routledge. 536 pp. Hb.: £190.00. ISBN: 978-0-415-78594-8. Pb.: £48.99. ISBN: 978-0-415-78595-5.

Sound has emerged as one of the most compelling analytical frameworks for understanding contemporary life's technological, political, and sensorial transformations. Michael Bull's *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies* captures this intellectual moment with remarkable breadth and sophistication, assembling an extraordinary array of scholars, artists, and practitioners to both consolidate sound studies as a vital interdisciplinary field and chart bold new directions for sonic inquiry.

This ambitious volume spans over 40 chapters organised around the key themes that define contemporary sound studies: sonic media and technologies, listening practices, spatial acoustics, embodiment, social justice, and the politics of audibility. The scope is deliberately expansive and intellectually invigorating, inviting readers on a journey from the sonic weaponisation of urban environments to Indigenous cosmologies of sound, from acoustic

ecology and field recording to algorithmic listening under platform capitalism.

The collection's central provocation is both elegantly simple and profoundly challenging: sound is never neutral. Rather, as the contributors consistently demonstrate, sound remains deeply embedded in social relations, politically consequential, and intimately connected to structures of power, exclusion, and resistance. Contributors including Jonathan Sterne, Jennifer Lynn Stoever, and Steve Goodman reveal how listening always involves positioning oneself in relation to race, gender, class, coloniality, and state power. Stoever's contribution proves particularly illuminating, powerfully foregrounding the racialised dimensions of listening and demonstrating how Black sonic practices have been simultaneously policed, appropriated, and erased whilst forming the foundation of dominant cultural soundscapes.

Perhaps the volume's greatest strength lies in its decisive move beyond Western and Eurocentric frameworks. Several essays challenge the field's earlier tendency to universalise sonic experience, incorporating decolonial, Indigenous, and non-Western epistemologies that fundamentally expand our understanding of sonic possibility. This shift towards what might be termed a pluriversal sound studies offers readers fresh vocabularies for understanding listening, resonance, and relationality. Contributions examining Afro sonic imaginaries, diasporic listening practices, and Global South urban soundscapes underscore how context, history, and positionality shape sonic analysis in ways that resist easy generalisation.

Methodologically, the Companion demonstrates an impressive commitment to both innovation and rigorous interdisciplinarity. Chapters seamlessly blend critical theory, media studies, anthropology, cultural history, musicology, and science and technology studies, often productively destabilising traditional disciplinary boundaries. The volume particularly excels in highlighting experimental forms of sonic research—audio walks, sound installations, digital archives, and participatory fieldwork—illustrating how listening itself becomes a mode of knowledge production that extends far beyond conventional academic methodologies.

One of this collection's defining achievements is its successful bal-

ance between theoretical sophistication and genuine accessibility. The essays maintain conceptual richness whilst adopting an inviting tone that engages readers across different levels of expertise, from advanced undergraduates to established scholars. Bull's editorial framing provides helpful navigation through the breadth of contributions, though the volume's impressive scale inevitably means some thematic crosscurrents remain underexplored. However, this diversity of voices, topics, and approaches constitutes precisely what makes the book valuable—not as a fixed canon, but as a dynamic, ongoing conversation that reflects the field's vitality and continued evolution.

The Companion's significance extends through its clear future orientation. Many chapters grapple seriously with emerging issues around surveillance, algorithmic mediation, climate crisis, and post-human ecologies, highlighting sound's complex entanglement with contemporary infrastructures and global uncertainties. The volume makes abundantly clear that sound studies is not a niche academic subfield but rather a critical lens for examining how we inhabit, resist, and actively remake our worlds through sonic engagement and awareness.

For educators working across multiple disciplines—media studies, cultural studies, anthropology, musicology, and design—this book will serve as an invaluable foundational text. For researchers, it opens exciting pathways into the affective, political, and material dimensions of sonic experience that have too often remained undertheorised. For practitioners working as sound artists, curators, and archivists, it offers essential tools for reimagining their practices in productive dialogue with cutting-edge critical scholarship.

The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies stands as a landmark publication that definitively affirms sound's relevance as both object and method of scholarly inquiry. It offers a genuinely polyphonic, politically engaged, and richly layered intellectual resource that energises rather than simply codifies the field. The collection remains carefully attuned to history's reverberations, present urgencies, and the speculative futures of listening that continue to emerge in our increasingly complex sonic landscape.

This is not merely a comprehensive reference work—it represents

a compelling invitation to listen differently, think relationally, and engage politically with the worlds that sound makes possible. For anyone seeking to understand how sonic experience shapes contemporary life, this collection provides both essential grounding and inspiration for future inquiry. A vital, expansive, and thoroughly necessary contribution to the evolving sound studies canon.