
Shelemay, Kay Kaufman (Harvard University)

Current Institution

Harvard University (G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and African and African American Studies) Areas of Expertise

Musical ethnography; historical ethnomusicology; Ethiopian musics at home and in their American diaspora; Jewish music traditions; American urban music traditions. Biography

Kay Kaufman Shelemay is the G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Shelemay, a former Chair of the Department of Music, is an ethnomusicologist who has carried out fieldwork in Africa (Ethiopia and Ghana), the Middle East (Israel), and the United States. She received her Ph.D. in Musicology in 1977 from the University of Michigan.

The author of numerous articles and reviews, Shelemay's book *Music, Ritual, and Falasha History* (1986), won both the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award in 1987 and the Prize of the International Musicological Society in 1988. Other major books and editions include *A Song of Longing. An Ethiopian Journey* (1991); *Ethiopian Christian Chant. An Anthology* (3 vols. with CD, 1993-97), co-authored with Peter Jeffery; and *Let Jasmine Rain Down. Song and Remembrance Among Syrian Jews*, University of Chicago Press, 1998 (finalist for the National Jewish Book Award). Shelemay edited the seven-volume *Garland Library of Readings in Ethnomusicology*, issued by Garland Publishing (1990); and *Studies in Jewish Musical Traditions* (2001) Her textbook, *Soundscape. Exploring Music in a Changing World*, was first published by W.W. Norton in 2001 and appeared in a revised second edition in 2006. She co-edited *Pain and its Transformations: The Interface of Biology and Culture* (with Sarah Coakley), published by Harvard University Press in 2007. Her current research and book-in-progress is on Ethiopian music and musicians in the United States.

Shelemay was named a Woodrow Wilson Fellow (1970) and has been awarded a number of major postdoctoral fellowships, including individual and collaborative grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Radcliffe Institute, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Republic New York Corporation. Shelemay has held residential fellowships at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center, at the Liguria Center for the Arts and Humanities, and at the Civitella Ranieri Center. During 2007-2008, was named the Chair for Modern Culture at the John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress.

Past-President of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Shelemay is a Congressional appointee to and former Chair of the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Shelemay was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000. She was named a Walter Channing Cabot Fellow for 2001-2002 at Harvard and was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Jewish Research in 2004.

Before joining the Harvard faculty in 1992, Shelemay taught at Columbia University, where she received an award for distinguished teaching (1982), at New York University, and at Wesleyan University. In 2006, she received both the Joseph R. Levenson Memorial Teaching Prize and the Phi Beta Kappa Teaching Prize at Harvard University. http://aaas.fas.harvard.edu/faculty/kay_k_shelemay/index.html Contact Information

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