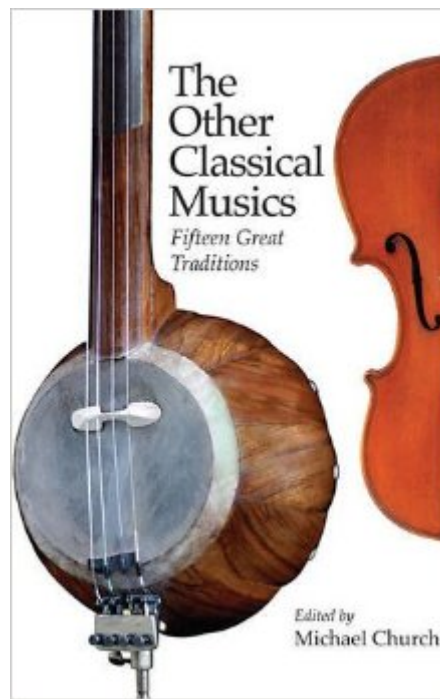


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The Other Classical Musics



Synopsis

What is classical music? This book answers the question in a manner never before attempted, by presenting the history of fifteen parallel traditions, of which Western classical music is just one. Each music is analysed in terms of its modes, scales, and theory; its instruments, forms, and aesthetic goals; its historical development, golden age, and condition today; and the conventions governing its performance. The writers are leading ethnomusicologists, and their approach is based on the belief that music is best understood in the context of the culture which gave rise to it. By including Mande and Uzbek-Tajik music - plus North American jazz - in addition to the better-known styles of the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, the Far East, and South-East Asia, this book offers challenging new perspectives on the word 'classical'. It shows the extent to which most classical traditions are underpinned by improvisation, and reveals the cognate origins of seemingly unrelated musics; it reflects the multifarious ways in which colonialism, migration, and new technology have affected musical development, and continue to do today. With specialist language kept to a minimum, it's designed to help both students and general readers to appreciate musical traditions which may be unfamiliar to them, and to encounter the reality which lies behind that lazy adjective 'exotic'. MICHAEL CHURCH has spent much of his career in newspapers as a literary and arts editor; since 2010 he has been the music and opera critic of The Independent. From 1992 to 2005 he reported on traditional musics all over the world for the BBC World Service; in 2004, Topic Records released a CD of his Kazakh field recordings and, in 2007, two further CDs of his recordings in Georgia and Chechnya. Contributors: Michael Church, Scott DeVeaux, Ivan Hewett, David W. Hughes, Jonathan Katz, Roderic Knight, Frank Kouwenhoven, Robert Labaree, Scott Marcus, Terry E. Miller, Dwight F. Reynolds, Neil Sorrell, Will Sumits, Richard Widdess, Ameneh Youssefzadeh

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Customer Reviews

Designed for the musically literate, this representational survey of sophisticated classical world music (jazz included) has 15 chapters written by expert American and European ethnomusicologists, but it is far from the usual arid academic textbook. Indeed, the editor Michael Church ensured a standard structure and stylistic approach. Moreover, his introduction is strikingly lucid yet rich, wide-ranging, and profound in insights. The evolutionary onslaught of Western scales and tuning, instruments, and homogenizing fusion with its influences of African, Latin, and Asian music bring world classical music in peril toward being museum relics. A quick thumb-through will evidence the excellent selection of illustrative photographs, both historical and contemporary. The chapters, minimally, have sections on national and regional history, musical forms and influences, instrumentation, performance and social applications, modes and rhythms, and contemporary status, with recommended readings and discography. The detailed book is highly useful and a joy, even for this well-versed and experienced world music aficionada. First up is Southeast Asia, with emphasis on Thailand and its ensemble form, fixed compositions, oral transmission, and instrumentation of xylophone metallophones, drum percussion, reed flute, and fiddle, and use of seven core pitches. Vietnam is differentiated by its Chinese and later French musical influence, its modes and improvisations, and also solo or chamber approach. Lutes, zither, transverse flute, and monochord are also distinctive, though Chinese parallels are obvious.

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