

The Music of the Other

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We are surrounded by new musical encounters today as never before, and the experience of musics from elsewhere is progressively affecting all arenas of the human conscience. Yet, why is it that Western listeners expect a certain cultural and ethnic 'authenticity' or 'otherness' from visiting artists in world music, while contemporary musicians in Western music are no longer bound by such restraints? Should we feel uncomfortable when sacred rites from Asia or Africa are remade for Westerners as musical entertainment? As these thorny questions suggest, the great flood of world musics and of their agents into our most immediate cultural environment is not a simple matter of expanding global musical exchange. Instead, complex processes are at work involving the growth of intercontinental tourism, the development of new technologies of communication and our perceptions both of ourselves and of the new musical others now around us. Elegantly tracing the dimensions of these new musical encounters, Laurent Aubert considers the impact of world musics on our values, our habits and our cultural practices. His discussions of key questions about our contemporary music culture widen conventional ethnomusicological perspectives to consider not only the nature of Western society as a 'global village', but also the impact of current Western demands on the future of world musics and their practitioners.

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目录:

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