

Musical Reverberations

From the encounter of Local & Global Belief Systems

The world of music

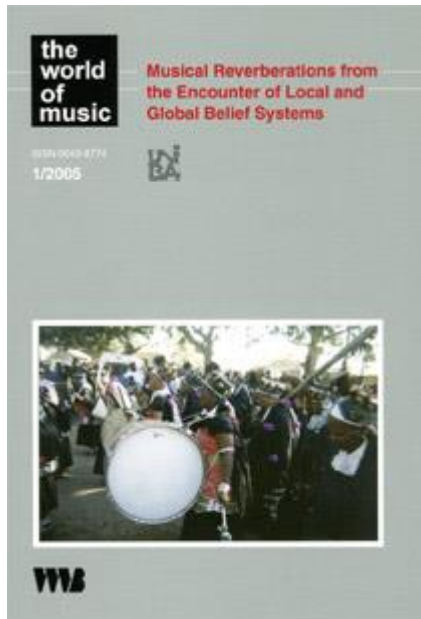
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Soundscapes of Disaffection and Spirituality in Tanzanian Kwaya Music

Gregory Barz

Soundscapes of Disaffection and Spirituality in Tanzanian Kwaya Music

This article introduces a redefinition of texts and musical repertoires employed by contemporary choirs in post-independence Tanzania (East Africa). The case studies present everyday soundscapes, suggesting an ongoing cultural and religious exchange that has long thrived within various forms of African Christianity. Tanzanian kwayas (Kiswahili, “choirs”) provide the article’s primary source for what Steven Kaplan refers to as indigenous responses to Western Christianity. A primary focus of the article is on the everyday performances of kwaya communities as they confront religious discontent and alienation, and openly question authority of church governance. In addition, the article addresses dichotomous constructions—Western vs. African, indigenous vs. non-indigenous, old vs. new, evangelical vs. mainstream—suggesting that within such relationships there is a denial of a kwaya’s contributions to everyday spirituality and a lack of understanding of the development, change, and adaptation experienced by many musical traditions within African contexts.

“Reading” the Book, Performing the Words of izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha

Carol Muller

In this paper I examine izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha, the collection of liturgy, prayers, and spiritual songs composed by South African prophet-healer Isaiah Shembe and his son, Galilee, in KwaZulu Natal in the early twentieth century. The hymns exist in the community in both written and orally transmitted forms allowing for a certain tension between the two modes of transmission. I argue that this tension reflects on the nature of belief as the verbal versus written utterance: between the “Word of God” as carried by the human voice and experienced within the bounds of the body, and the object-ified “Word” of the scriptural economy that stressed belief divorced from the body. I write a parallel narrative to my earlier work (1999a), which stressed issues of political economy, musical performance, and ritual practice, to focus on the largely American Christian mission context

in which Isaiah Shembe operated in the early twentieth century.

The Arab Musical Aesthetic in Indonesian Islam

Anne K. Rasmussen

Islamic musical arts in Indonesia both reflect and project contemporary identity politics in the world's most populous Muslim country. The recited Qur'ān is the major vehicle for Arab musical aesthetics in Indonesia. Related to this very musical, ritual performance a range of Indonesian sacred musics may be identified including Arabic-language tawashih, a popular Islamic Malay song genre, the qasidah, the Western-influenced akapela, and gamelan dakwah. As Indonesia negotiates its way through the process of democratic reform and development (pembangunan), expressions of religious and cultural identity, whether global or local, traditional or modern are played out and performed through Islamic musical arts, or, what Indonesians refer to as “seni musik Islam.”

(Re)Indigenization?: Post-Vatican II Catholic Ritual and “Folk Masses” in Nicaragua

T. M. Scruggs

This article considers the move to reconstitute the Catholic mass after the mid 1960s with the use of vernacular expression, i.e., local language and music. The concept of “indigenizing” Christianity is critiqued within a context where adherence to the religion is long-standing but the cultural expression is reworked to “re-indigenize” the liturgy. I suggest that the turn to the vernacular within the mass, the most stylistically conservative part of Catholic worship, divides into two types: “translation” and “socially committed” masses. I analyze the two masses created in Nicaragua to illustrate the historical trajectory of post-Vatican II masses in Latin America and the problematic of “indigenizing” Catholic ritual within already established parameters of Christian worship. The article locates these masses in relation to others in Latin America to consider imperatives of regionalism and nationalism, and their relation to the process of indigenization with later global circulation.

The Indigenization of Tamil Christian Music: Musical Style and Liberation Theology

Zoe Sherinian

Historical and ethnographic analysis of the cultural exchange of religion in the context of colonialism reveals that local indigenizers have agency and the adoptive process cannot simply be attributed to cultural imposition that resulted in the destruction of the indigenous culture. Moreover, generations after adoption in the post-colonial period, it has been observed that oppressed groups can continue to re-indigenize or reform the adopted religion by drawing on local liberating cultural forms that continue to make it contextually meaningful.

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