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The African Imagination In Music



Synopsis

The world of Sub-Saharan African music is immensely rich and diverse, containing a plethora of repertoires and traditions. In *The African Imagination in Music*, renowned music scholar Kofi Agawu offers an introduction to the major dimensions of this music and the values upon which it rests. Agawu leads his readers through an exploration of the traditions, structural elements, instruments, and performative techniques that characterize the music. In sections that focus upon rhythm, melody, form, and harmony, the essential parts of African music come into relief. While traditional music, the backbone of Africa's musical thinking, receives the most attention, Agawu also supplies insights into popular and art music in order to demonstrate the breadth of the African musical imagination. Close readings of a variety of songs, including an Ewe dirge, an Aka children's song, and Fela's 'Suffering and Smiling' supplement the broader discussion. *The African Imagination in Music* foregrounds a hitherto under-reported legacy of recordings and insists on the necessity of experiencing music as sound in order to appreciate and understand it fully. Accordingly, a Companion Website features important examples of the music discussed in detail in the book. Accessibly and engagingly written for a general audience, *The African Imagination in Music* is poised to renew interest in Black African music and to engender discussion of its creative underpinnings by Africanists, ethnomusicologists, music theorists and musicologists.

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Customer Reviews

Kofi Agawu was born in Ghana, West Africa where he received his initial education before studying

in the UK and the US. He has taught and lectured at numerous universities in Africa, Europe and the United States. Agawu is a wide-ranging scholar and author of numerous articles and books on musical semiotics, the analysis of music, and West African music, which include *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton University Press, 1991), *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (Routledge, 2003) and *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Dr. Agawu is currently a professor of music at Princeton University.

Always a daunting task covering the widely diverse yet scarcely charted terrain that is Africa. However, in this seminal treatise, Dr. Agawu aptly updates the field of much needed literature relating to various performance practices and the emerging crop of African/neo-African composers. This is a must-have book for all students and scholars of modern musicology, composition, music education, etc., and lay readers...

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