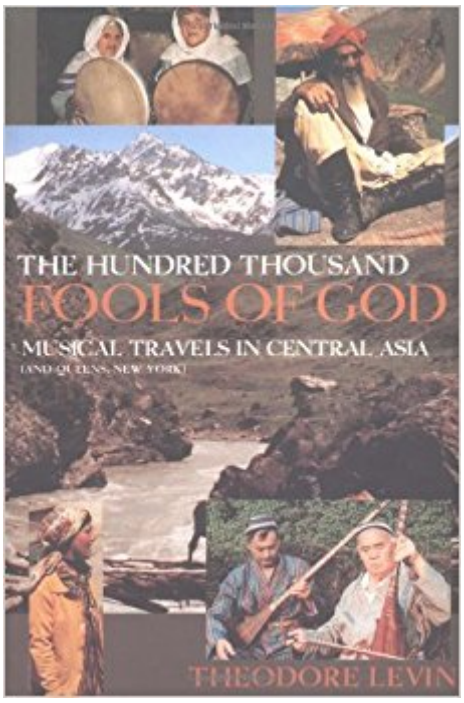
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Hundred Thousand Fools Of God, The: Musical Travels In Central Asia (and Queens, New York)



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Synopsis

"This erudite, absorbing volume chronicles the travels of ethnomusicologist Theodore Levin through urban and rural Transoxania... He writes in evocative, imaginative, personalized prose that vividly captures the flavor of his everyday experiences, providing plush visual detail, trenchant character profiles, attention to perplexing local hospitality codes and the shaping hand of gender, throughout." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Slavic Review"... extremely informative, using music as a platform for a much wider discussion of cultural and political issues." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Times Literary Supplement, London"The subject is music, but Levin uses it to cast a wider light, revealing places of considerable sorrow long hidden in the shadows of Soviet power, and to create a travelogue with wide potential appeal.... Candor about his own uncertainties and personal struggles helps make this a personal as well as a scholarly adventure." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Publishers Weekly (starred review)"Not to be missed by those interested in music and world culture... " Ã¢â ¬â ¢Library Journal"... may be destined to become the definitive work on the music of this newly accessed region." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Dirty LinenThe Hundred Thousand Fools of God assembles a living musical and ethnographic map by highlighting the fate of traditions, beliefs, and social relationships in Muslim and Jewish Central Asian cultures during and after seventy years of Soviet rule. Theodore Levin evokes the spectacular physical and human geography of the area and weaves a rich ethnography of the life styles, values, and art of the musical performers. Photographs, maps, and an accompanying CD (featuring 24 on-site recordings) make The Hundred Thousand Fools of God a unique reading and listening experience.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Indiana University Press; Pap/Com edition (March 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 025321310X

ISBN-13: 978-0253213105

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #730,640 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #127 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > International #154 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Ethnic #304 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International >

Customer Reviews

When a Princeton-trained ethnomusicologist returns to follow up his studies in the Central Asian nations east of China and north of Afghanistan, he stumbles into a cornucopia of music, history, and religion. With a trusty guide called OM, Theodore Levin travels back and forth through the newly liberated cities and countryside of an ancient land that is home to such exotic names as Tashkent and Samarkand. Levin writes not only about his successes in identifying and recording the musical traditions of the area but also of the experiences of the people under Soviet rule, the myths that are kept alive through music, and the healers that use music as therapy. Levin finds a complex and colorful mix of ethnic and religious traditions where music unites Jew, Muslim, and shaman. The Hundred Thousand Fools of God is more than just a travel diary: it is a snapshot of an evolving culture. And the accompanying CD is divine. --Brian Bruya --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dartmouth professor Levin ventures in search of "the 100,000 fools of god," those enlightened Central Asian musicians whose art conveys both moral and spiritual power. He’s interested in how musical life "reflects the... fluid boundaries and identities" of people in the rich cultural domain sometimes known as "Transoxania" now that Soviet domination of the region has ended. From Uzbekistan to Tvarkist, and through parts of Kyrghyzstan and Kazakhstan, Levin travels in an old Russian auto with a fellow ethnomusicologist and Sufi chauffeur as companions. The subject is music, but Levin uses it to cast a wider light, revealing places of considerable sorrow long hidden in the shadows of Soviet power, and to create a travelogue with wide potential appeal. Along the way he encounters men who entertain him lavishly without asking his name, brilliant forgotten composers, baxshis (healers) and a thoughtful Uzbeki pop star. Gracefully responsive to craft, Levin takes in architecture, food and cultural mores. He cannily appraises cultural issues in polyglot cultures where nationalism threatens indigenous musics?many practiced by both Muslims and Jews?as much as Soviet policy ever did. Candor about his own uncertainties and personal struggles helps make this a personal as well as a scholarly adventure. A superb accompanying 24-track CD with location recordings proves integral to Levin’s commentary. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a PhD student in ethnomusicology in the late 1970s, Theodore Levin traveled to Uzbekistan to

study the shash maqam, the classical music of Transoxania. At that time, Soviet bureaucracy prevented him from traveling freely and presented him with only a sanitized, Communist-friendly version of traditional music. But with the breakup of the USSR in the early 1990s, Levin got a chance to roam about the region and really take stock of the musical scene. THE HUNDRED THOUSAND FOOLS OF GOD is a record of these travels from 1991-1994, taken with the Tashkent-based musicologist Otanazar Matyakubov (usually referred to as "OM") who helps Levin navigate the cultural and linguistic challenges of Central Asia.Levin encounters an enormous variety of musical traditions within Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: classical court music, shamans who heal with song, bards who recite epic poetry, Muslim mystics, and composers who represent folksong in their otherwise Western music. Throughout, Levin's concern is the relationship between these musical styles and society. He investigates the role these musical traditions played in Central Asia before the Soviet era and globalization, and he gives a grim view of their future. In the final chapter, Levin and OM visit a Bukharan Jewish musician who has emigrated to Queens, New York only to discover that, instead of preserving their traditions in the relative freedom of the United States, Bukharan Jews there are losing themselves in the great Jewish diaspora.Though he is an academic, Levin knows how to write in a fun, engaging tone. He adds just enough of a travelogue element to satisfy the curiosity of Western readers on this still obscure part of the world. It has been nearly 15 years since Levin's book appeared, and there is still a dearth of information of Central Asian music, so THE HUNDRED THOUSAND FOOLS OF GOD certainly fills a void.However, I do wish that Levin had talked more about the music itself, not just the relationship between music and society. Readers might wonder if this region's music is microtonal, as in the Middle East, or whether it accepts certain intervals we consider dissonant, as e.g. Bulgarian traditional music does. There is an accompanying CD where one can hear Levin's recordings, but I've encountered the book in a few places without the CD.

Got this product as a Father's Day gift. He loves the product. For its price, it is excellent quality. A very good looking tool too. In addition, the customer service was excellent. I certainly would recommend it! delivery so quickly. great! a present , very recommend .

This book is a many faceted report on the state of music in the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union, especially Uzbekistan. The author did his Ph.D. research in ethnomusicology in Tashkent on traditional court music called Shash maqam in 1977-1978. At the time, Levin was not as interested in this music as he had expected, which he later attributed to the Soviet cultural

policies which extinguished the spark of vivacity from the Uzbek music. This book details many of the author's subsequent travels to Central Asia in search of traditional musicians who managed somehow to develop their unique talents within the stifling socialist milieu.Levin provides much information about the artists, their music, and their poetry, which can all be heard on the accompanying CD. In the text itself, he rarely describes the instruments played by the musicians, referring to them merely with their local names. However, descriptions of the instruments can be found in the glossary at the end of the book, which I unfortunately didn't notice until I had finished reading. Occasionally, Levin's musicology terms get a little too thick for the general reader, but on the whole, the book is quite accessible.The strongest aspect of the book is its description of the culture history of music in the Soviet Union. In my own brief travels to the Soviet Union, I was struck by how many people there were acquainted with classical music--how an appreciation of classical music stretched across the entire society. I never saw the dark side of this, however. In this book, Levin describes how centralized state policies governed even the field of music, changing and obliterating centuries' old traditions.

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