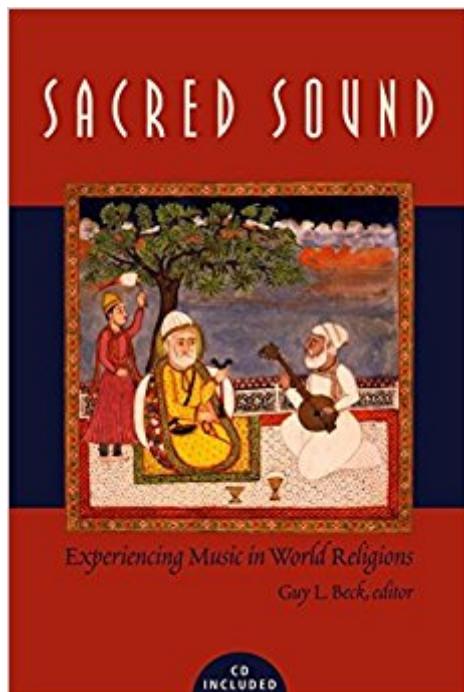


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Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music In World Religions



Synopsis

Includes CD with 40 selections of music and chants. See Table of Contents for CD track playlist.

This innovative book explores religion through music, one of the most universally recognized forms of human experience. The only art form named after a divinity, music has been documented from prehistory to the present age in virtually all known cultures. For many, music is a vehicle for spiritual growth and community empowerment, whether it's understood as a gift of the gods or simply a practice for achieving mental states conducive to enlightenment. Traditionally, when religious scholars talk about music, it's as a kind of aesthetic supplement to the important spiritual content of a religion, analogous to stained-glass windows or temple paintings. In contrast, *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* acknowledges the critical role of musical activity in religious life. Music, including chant and vocal utterance, is not incidental in religious practice but a sacred treasure that is central to the growth and sustenance of religions throughout the world. Musical sound is sacred in most religions because it embodies the divine and can be shared by all participants, enduring among diverse communities of people despite theological differences.

Covering six of the major world religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism—the book is accompanied by a CD of forty selections of music and chant. Contributors are respected scholars in religious studies and musicology and provide insight from both disciplines. The first book of its kind, *Sacred Sound* is a milestone in the growing cross-disciplinary study of religion and music.

Book Information

Paperback: 232 pages

Publisher: Wilfrid Laurier University Press; PAP/COM edition (July 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0889204217

ISBN-13: 978-0889204218

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #744,091 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Eastern Religions & Sacred Texts > Sikhism #184 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Religious & Sacred Music > Chorale #229 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Forms & Genres > Religious & Church Music

Customer Reviews

This introductory survey on the historical liturgies, hymns, and devotional music of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism helps fill a niche in the classroom study of religious anthropology and ethnomusicology. While a fair number of detailed accounts on each religion's music and liturgy are available, rare is the text that discusses them all. The 40 examples in the accompanying CD, many sung by the authors of the essays, are discussed in addition to the origins, technical development, and purposes of each religion's recitation and music. Of course, each essay varies in quality with the scholar, but they all follow a set organization and length, about 30 pages. Guy L. Beck, the editor, provides a comparatively elaborate discussion of Hindu music. The emphasis on the spiritual or yogic quality of sound in Hinduism contrasts with the verbal power of recitations and poems in Islam. I found Joseph A. Levine's discussion on Judaic music strong on historical aspects. His vocal examples are particularly fine, indeed cantorial. We are well familiar with Gregorian chant, classical masses, and Protestant hymns, but the historical aspects and Martin Luther's musical edict are worthwhile insights. I knew little about the musical traditions of Sikhs; while that essay was useful, indeed thorough, I found little distinction of music from that of Hindus. Although the three divisions of Buddhism do have certain liturgical chants in common, their musical style varies widely with each Asian land, more so than suggested by the examples. Indeed, one of the minor problems I find with this book is the emphasis on the Indian subcontinent. Of course, Hinduism and Sikhism are centered there.

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