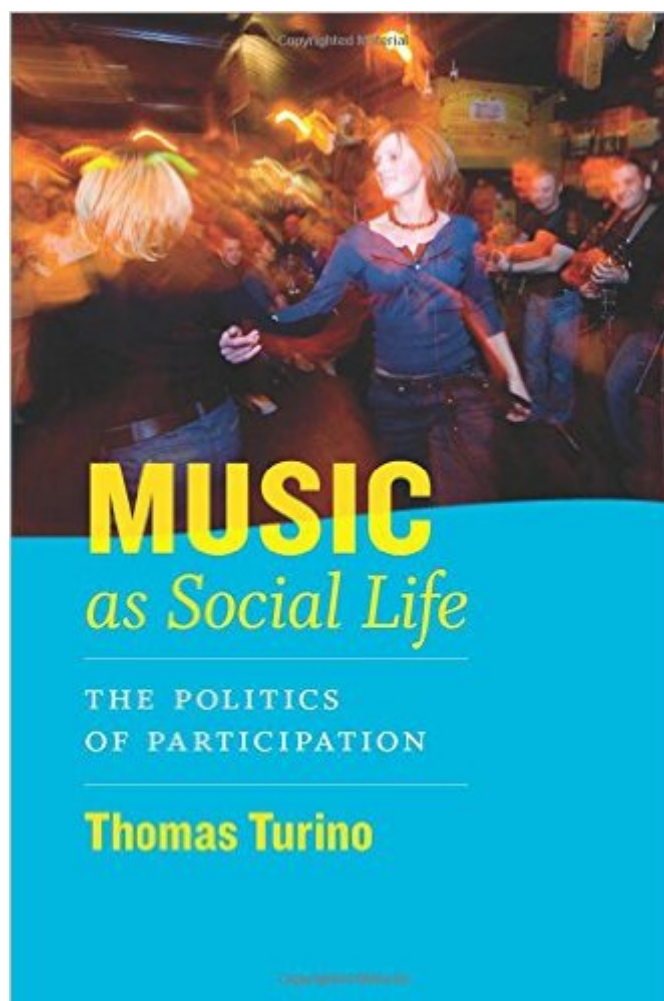


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Music As Social Life: The Politics Of Participation (Chicago Studies In Ethnomusicology)



Synopsis

People around the world and throughout history have used music to express their inner emotions, reach out to the divine, woo lovers, celebrate weddings, inspire political movements, and lull babies to sleep. In *Music as Social Life*, Thomas Turino explores why it is that music and dance are so often at the center of our most profound personal and social experiences. Turino begins by developing tools to think about the special properties of music and dance that make them fundamental resources for connecting with our own lives, our communities, and the environment. These concepts are then put into practice as he analyzes various musical examples among indigenous Peruvians, rural and urban Zimbabweans, and American old-time musicians and dancers. To examine the divergent ways that music can fuel social and political movements, Turino looks at its use by the Nazi Party and by the American civil rights movement. Wide-ranging, accessible to anyone with an interest in music's role in society, and accompanied by a compact disc, *Music as Social Life* is an illuminating initiation into the power of music.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Turino explores various facets of music and our relationship with it. I read this book in a Freshman-level Ethno-musicology class and was inspired to continue reading and studying in that field, but the book stands just as easily on its own as a thought-provoking look at the way music can shape the way we think, live, and relate to one another.

I was a little hesitant when I was assigned this book for my Music of the World course, but I was really satisfied with it. Turino provides some really great tools for thinking about music's function in the world, why we love it so much, and how it is experienced in different cultures. Some explanations are a little extensive, but Turino makes some really good points that have changed the way I perceive music and the potential music has to affect our daily lives. He also brings all of his small, specific points together and makes broader conclusions and applications about the larger implications of these points, and makes it really relevant to our lives. The book wasn't solely about music; he often strayed away from music and talked about other social processes and change, so don't worry if you're not particularly interested in music. That being said, if you are interested in music, the other pieces are important for everyone to consider, so don't despair. Also, the accompanying CD was great; it was really useful to have musical examples to refer to! It included some really cool tracks from several countries and made it a lot easier to really understand what he was talking about.

This book has clarified my thinking and direction in playing music. If you play popular music, or music you would like to be popular, 'Music as Social Life' by Thomas Turino will do the same for you. It allowed me to understand why I enjoy jamming, dancing teaching and rehearsing more than performing for a nice quiet audience. Yet why, at the same time, I still have an ambivalent desire to make a CD and play for that nice quiet audience. He breaks out of defining music by genres and defines it by function. He notes that we live in a culture that values 'presentational' music over 'participatory' music. Americans especially, literally buy into the idea of music as something that is 'consumed' like any other commodity. So musicians who want feel valued, groom themselves for presentations, live or recorded - instead of seeking participatory musical experiences by, for and of the people around them. I admit the book is tedious in some ways but consciousness raising. I say tedious because it would seem that Prof. Turino attempted to write a book for both the general public and academics. It certainly deserves the respect of both but it veers between what seems like arcane disputation to pedestrian descriptions. Wade through whichever puts you off - there is great wisdom here for pickers, crooners, rockers and other music makers. If you read this book and free yourself from only valuing presentational music, know that there are: jams all over the United States and Canada (Folkjam.org); a website for participatory music making (Community Music Circles); and that most of the world still values being part of the music more than being a mere consumer of it. -JGW, amateur musician

This is a good book.

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