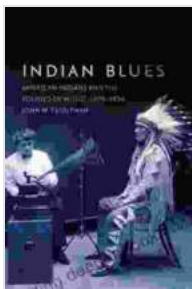


American Indians and the Politics of Music: 1879 - 1934 New Directions in Native American Music

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in North America, music played a central role in Native American life and society. Tribal communities utilized various musical forms for religious ceremonies, storytelling, and social gatherings. However, with the onset of colonization and assimilation policies, American Indian music faced significant challenges and transformations.

This article examines the complex relationship between American Indian music and the political landscape during the period of 1879 - 1934. We will explore the ways in which government policies, cultural assimilation efforts, and the rise of popular entertainment influenced the development and perception of Native American music.



Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879–1934 (New Directions in Native American Studies Series Book 3) by Dina Rifkin

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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File size : 10151 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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Print length : 342 pages

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Government Policies and Cultural Assimilation

Following the Indian Wars and the establishment of reservations, the United States government implemented various policies aimed at assimilating Native Americans into mainstream society. These policies, influenced by a dominant ideology of white supremacy, sought to suppress or eliminate traditional cultural practices, including music.

Government efforts at cultural assimilation included the banning of certain ceremonies and rituals, the establishment of boarding schools where Native children were taught to adopt Euro-American ways, and the suppression of native languages and oral traditions.

These policies had a significant impact on music, as many traditional songs and ceremonies were linked to specific cultural and religious beliefs. The loss of tribal lands and resources also disrupted the traditional ways of life that had nurtured musical practices for generations.

The Rise of Popular Entertainment

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the rise of popular entertainment, such as Wild West shows and vaudeville, created a demand for "authentic" Native American performances. These performances often presented stereotypical or romanticized versions of Native culture, exploiting the fascination that non-Native audiences had with "Indian" imagery.

While some Native musicians participated in these commercialized performances, they often faced exploitation and were paid meager wages. The popularity of such performances further diminished the authenticity and diversity of traditional Native American music.

New Directions in Native American Music

Despite the challenges and pressures facing American Indian music, this period also saw the emergence of new musical expressions that reflected the resilience and creativity of Native communities.

One significant development was the incorporation of Western instruments into traditional music, leading to the creation of hybrid styles that blended Native and non-Native elements. Native musicians began experimenting with guitars, drums, and other instruments, incorporating them into songs that spoke to their experiences of assimilation, displacement, and resistance.

Another important innovation was the development of new genres of music, such as powwow music. Powwows, which were originally social gatherings held at reservations, evolved into competitive events featuring singing, drumming, and dancing. Powwow music became a powerful expression of cultural continuity and community identity.

The Indian New Deal

In the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration's Indian New Deal brought about a shift in government policy towards Native Americans. This policy sought to promote tribal self-determination and cultural preservation.

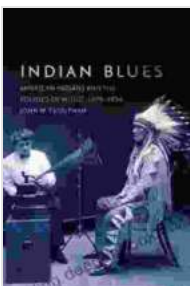
As part of the Indian New Deal, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) established a Music Division to support and promote Native American music. The Music Division collected and recorded traditional songs, provided music instruction on reservations, and sponsored performances by Native musicians.

The Indian New Deal also saw the establishment of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), an advocacy organization that worked to protect Native rights and promote cultural preservation. The NCAI played a significant role in supporting Native musicians and advocating for the inclusion of Native music in educational and cultural programs.

The period of 1879 - 1934 was a pivotal time for American Indian music, marked by both challenges and transformative developments. Government policies, cultural assimilation efforts, and the rise of popular entertainment presented significant obstacles to traditional musical practices.

However, this period also witnessed the emergence of new musical expressions that reflected the resilience and creativity of Native communities. The incorporation of Western instruments, the development of new genres, and the support provided by the Indian New Deal helped to revitalize and preserve Native American music.

Today, American Indian music continues to evolve and thrive, drawing on a rich legacy of traditional practices while incorporating contemporary influences. It remains a vibrant and essential part of Native communities, serving as a testament to their cultural resilience and a source of inspiration for generations to come.



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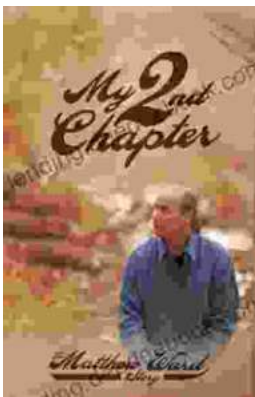
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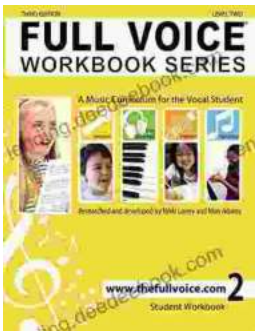
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