
Based on the author's award-winning dissertation field work (1996-98), this is the first ethnographic study of music-making in modern Syria. The book offers a rare glimpse into emotive aspects of Syrian culture and its ongoing negotiation with modern technology and Western modernity. Guided by a critical theory and post-modernist perspective, Shannon (Hunter College, CUNY), an anthropologist involved in the production of music, examines the debates surrounding modernity, tradition, authority, heritage, and authenticity in Syrian arts, especially music. The author introduces readers to the role of spirituality, sentiment, performance, temporality, memory, and body language/movement in Syrian aspects of Arabic music. Consequently, the book is less about the history, evolution, continuity, and change in Arabic music than it is an interpretative examination of its contemporary dynamics in relation to critical issues of Syrian culture, society, and politics. While ethnographic in its methodology, the work is highly theoretical, going far beyond the nature of music and music-making by intimating their role in Syrian responses to the challenges of Western modernity. This fascinating book, a first in English, offers Western readers the opportunity to learn about music-making practices as well as to experience the views of the most acclaimed Syrian artists and intellectuals. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.

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