



African Polyphony and Polyrhythm: Musical Structure and Methodology

By Simha Arom

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In this detailed study Simha Arom takes a new and original approach to the understanding of the complex and sophisticated patterns of polyphony and polyrhythm that characterise African music. Considering in particular the harp, sanza, xylophone and percussion music of Central Africa, Simha Arom develops a rigorous method for the analysis of the music and for the recording and deciphering of the many strands of polyphony and polyrhythm. Through a systematic breakdown of the many layers of apparently improvised rhythm he reveals the essential structure which underlies this rich and complex music. Inspired also by linguistic techniques, Professor Arom regards the music very much as a grammatical system.

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Review

In this detailed study Simha Arom takes a completely new and original approach to the understanding of the complex and sophisticated patterns of polyphony and polyrhythm that characterize African music. Considering in particular the harp, sanza, xylophone and percussion music of Central Africa, the book is both an examination of the fundamental musical principles in African music and a practical guide for those involved in the recording of oral polyphonic musics. The importance of Simha Arom's work lies in his development of a rigorous method for the analysis of the music and for the recording and deciphering of the many strands of polyphony and polyrhythm. Through a systematic breakdown of the many layers of apparently improvised rhythm he reveals the essential structure that underlies this rich and complex music. Inspired also by linguistic techniques, Professor Arom regards the music very much as a grammatical system. -- *Book Description*

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