



Seize the Dance!: BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance

Michelle Kisliuk

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"Pygmy music" has captivated students and scholars of anthropology and music for decades if not centuries, but until now this aspect of their culture has never been described in a work that is at once vividly engaging, intellectually rigorous, and self-consciously aware of the ironies of representation. *Seize the Dance!* is an ethnomusical study focused on the music and dance of BaAka forest people, who live in the Lobaye region of the Central African Republic. Based on ethnographic research that Michelle Kisliuk conducted from 1986 through 1995, this book describes BaAka songs, drum rhythms, and dance movements--along with their contexts of social interaction--in an elegant narrative that is enhanced by many photographs, musical illustrations, and field recordings on two compact discs.

We begin with an introduction to the music and culture of African forest people as understood in both the popular and ethnographic imagination. Kisliuk then locates her own research methodologically and geographically, introduces the main characters, and establishes the circumstances of her participatory fieldwork. Subsequent chapters profile various aspects of BaAka life and performance, concentrating on details of music and dance, while also tracing the development of Kisliuk's experience in the community. The book's "ethnography of performance" approach--a narrative style that supports a multifaceted socioesthetic ethnography--considers theoretical issues by way of form and content, including the aesthetics of performance, the politics of identity, gender relations, missionization, and modernity, all of which inform, and are informed by, BaAka musical life.

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