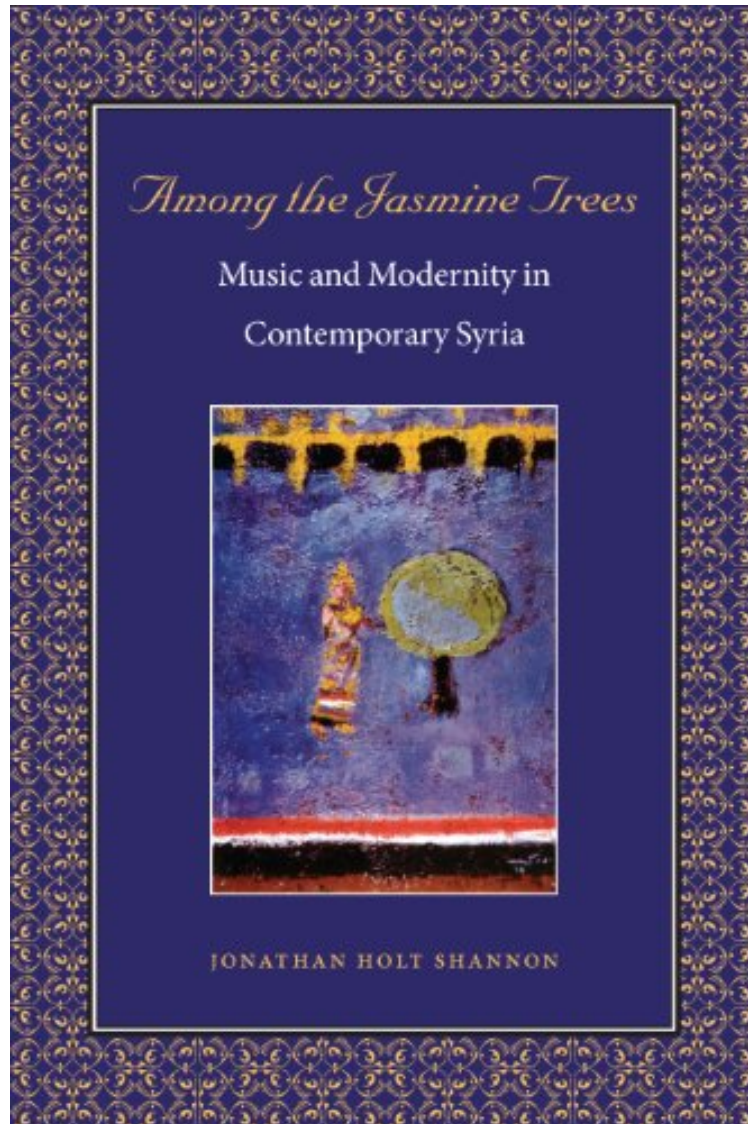



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Jonathan Holt Shannon

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Jonathan Holt Shannon : Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria (Music Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria (Music Culture):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Culture Wars? Music within National Self-ImageBy Dr. Debra Jan BibelJonathan Holt Shannon, author of this book, is an anthropologist whose research uses the performance, forms, and religious, political, and social aspects of music as the focus to examine the roles of traditions or heritage versus

and modernity in Syria specifically, and also among Levantine Arabs. The conservative forces of authenticity are in conflict with the often liberal elite views of incorporating modern, i.e., European or Western classical and popular, structures in music. The problem arises from the very existence of Syria as a relatively new nation (1946) carved out of the centuries old Ottoman Empire. For a Mediterranean area at the crossroads of empires, East and West, authenticity is a highly moot matter among indigenous scholars, critics, and musicians. Aside some agrarian folk tunes and dances, perhaps, how much of Arabian music is truly Arabian when Turkish, Persian, Byzantine, Kurdish, Andalusian, and Syriac Christian influences are found? Even the oud is closely related to the Chinese pipa, lutes having developed, shared, and adopted along the length of the Silk Road. This book seems to present more questions than answers: a very good thing, since Orientalism and stereotypes have influenced Arabs and Western scholars alike. Even the number, names, and origins of maqam modes are debated. Scholarly but highly readable, *Among the Jasmin Trees* is a perfect follow-up book to Racy's *Making Music in the Arab World*, Waugh's *Memory, Music, and Religion*, and Marcus's survey and documentary CD, *Music in Egypt*. The scholar-musician tells delightful anecdotes, and interviews with many Syrian experts send him, and us, on a grand tour of the complex musical and cultural issues confronting this people. If these questions seem esoteric and not germane to our own contemporary life, consider when and how the United States developed its own unique American (not including Native American) music after 1776. This surprising, worthwhile book has lessons for us as well. After reading it, Arabic music is no longer a simple category.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria (Music Culture)* By Linda Shannon This is a beautifully written, comprehensive study of music culture in the Arab world, in Syria. One walks with the author as he explores this ancient country and how music is intertwined in its contemporary culture.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A treat to read. By Brian This book on music and people deals with authenticity and its construction in a place where music is much more than just music. Scholarly in its orientation, it is written so clearly that one needn't be an ethnomusicologist or anthropologist to read it. It has important implications for the way that we all approach the aesthetics of our identity.

The first ethnographic study of music-making in modern Syria

"Shannon provides an evocative and highly readable discussion of how music and discourse about music factor in processes of identity-formation in modern Syria."--Anne Elise Thomas, *Ethnomusicology*

"Both intellectually stimulating and delightfully engaging, the book stands out for its scholarly rigor and rich documentation. Shannon approaches his subject matter with keen musical sensibility and remarkable affinity for the community that he has studied." (A.J. Racy, author of *Making Music in the Arab World*)

"Throughout the 20th century, societies in the Middle East have labored to produce their own modernities which are often manifest in expressive culture. Shannon's nuanced and expert text should motivate thought about Middle Eastern societies for years to come." (Virginia Danielson, Loeb Music Library, Harvard University)

About the Author Jonathan H. Shannon is an assistant professor in the department of anthropology at Hunter College of the City University of New York.