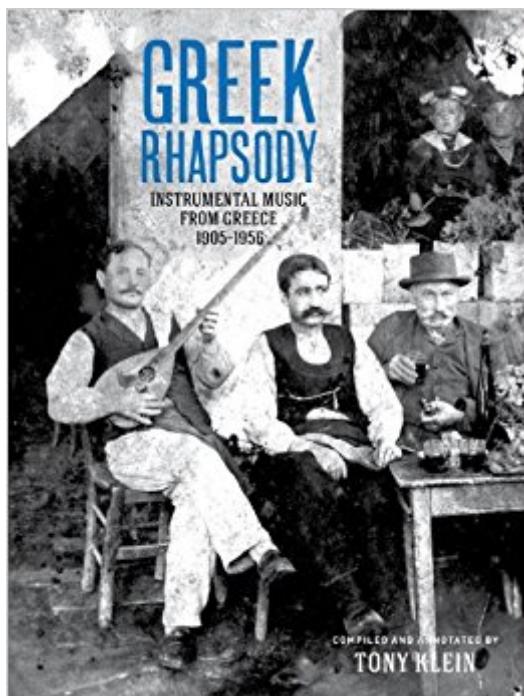


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Greek Rhapsody: Instrumental Music From Greece 1905-1956



Synopsis

Rembetika is a popular style of Greek folk music that deals with the sorrows and troubles of everyday life, much like the Blues in the United States. Originating from oral tradition, Rembetika merges traditional Turkish and Greek musical elements with lyrics that deal with more modern, urban issues. The Rembetika music collected for Greek Rhapsody was recorded from 1905–1956 in Greece, Istanbul, the United States and even a German prison camp during the First World War. The set is mostly, but not entirely, made up of instrumental music, steering clear of vocally dominated songs. The publication comes with two CDs that feature 42 meticulously remastered tracks from 78 rpm recordings of Greek instrumentals, including rare and never-before-issued tracks. Delving deep into the history of this period, this publication offers a unique panorama of the instruments and styles of Greek folk music.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In a labor of love, author Tony Klein gathered 42 old Greek instrumental recordings, originally on 78 rpm discs, and provided for each what would be considered today as package notes. Two CDs are included with the book. He delved into the biography of each musician, the recording details, the history of their instruments, and sometimes he found photographs of the musicians. While not discussing the musical structure of the tunes, he mentioned instrument tuning if atypical. One track is the first recording of the bouzouki; his extensive historical account is a tale of Greek World War I prisoners-of-war and Prussian academic ethnographers. There are other recordings of a gut-strung bouzouki (instead of the normal metallic courses) and the hand-cranked barrel piano, the laterna, which operated much like a music box with cylinder pins. The music (rebetika or Greek-Oriental) is

chiefly of the Greeks living, or once residing, in Turkey; the recordings came from Istanbul or Athens or New York between 1905 and 1956. All the musicians here are men, as women were limited to vocals. We hear the metal-string guitar, the Hawai'ian guitar, the harp guitar, mandolin and mandola, baglama and bouzouki, hammered dulcimers (santuri and cimbalom), Turkish lyra, outi (oud) and laouto, clarinet, piano, and latera. Photographs of the instruments and descriptions are included, as well as a brief glossary, and commentaries on the audio technology of the eras, with the merits or problems of hearing recordings today on period playback systems or more modern analog and digital units. Other features are scholarly notes, an alphabetical list of the musicians, a comment of the often recorded Spyros Peristeris, his musical strengths and limitations; a discussion on caring for 78 rpm disk archives and the compromises in electronic removing of hiss, pops, and other artificial flaws; and collector and collection credits of those who provided the recordings.

Listening to the albums, I was struck how clean and clear their sound. For those who enjoy Greek music and history, this book and CD package offers much pleasure.

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