



Modernity, Complex Societies, and the Alphorn

Charlotte Vignau

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Modernity, Complex Societies, and the Alphorn provides a fascinating examination of the musical instrument the alphorn, alphorn music and its performance. Indeed, it is the first book about this extraordinary instrument to appear in English. It analyses the alphorn phenomenon as a symbol of the Swiss nation, going back to the Swiss nation building process in the nineteenth century and the “invention of tradition” which began in the second half of the nineteenth century, before arriving at important issues of contemporary alphorn practice such as: what is tradition? How is it being negotiated? The insightful and valuable comments from key Swiss alphorn players add to the extensive ethnographic and archival material. Departing from this analysis, the case studies of Bavaria, the Netherlands, and Japan shed a light on the issues of worldwide migration of alphorn practice in the modern world, as well as on the diverse concepts of a Swiss imagery. Intellectually sophisticated yet easily accessible, the book ends with an exploration of how to use video and film for musical ethnography, considering the practical issues of filmmaking as well as the theoretical implications of shooting and editing for an ethnomusicological film. Drawing from the alphorn film as a sample, this book covers the entire filmmaking process, from the conception of the film to the feedback-sessions with the protagonists, providing fundamental insights into this technique for ethnomusicologists. Based on solid, careful, and complete research, this work will especially appeal to scholars of musicology, Swiss history, and filmography.

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