



The World of Music

Books Reviewed:

[The World of Music](#) [1]

Issue:

[92](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Ted Percy](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

Until recently music books seemed always tacitly to acknowledge that reading about it came a poor fourth to playing, hearing and discussing it. It still does, of course, but now music books have realised that they can become big, colourful, lively and, best of all, multi-disciplinary. And here's one: Messaien rubs shoulders with Scott Joplin, Debussy with Dylan and Frank Zappa with Dolly Parton (well, perhaps not shoulders) in a cheerful jumble of musical facts, ideas and listening leads. A variety of instruments as wide as the late Astor Piazzolla's accordion occupies one third of the book before we come to how music has developed, formally and folkwise. There follows a really helpful section on staves, dots, time signatures and other music anatomy. In the somewhat threadbare composer glossary (No Ellington?) it's good to see women well represented but the book's real coup is its devotion of considerable space to the theremin. This earliest and most difficult of electronic instruments with its hands-off technique and unearthly sound is currently staging an energetic revival at the cutting edge of contemporary pop and at the Science Museum. Definitely an informative stimulus to future interest.

Running Order:

12

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[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ted-percy>