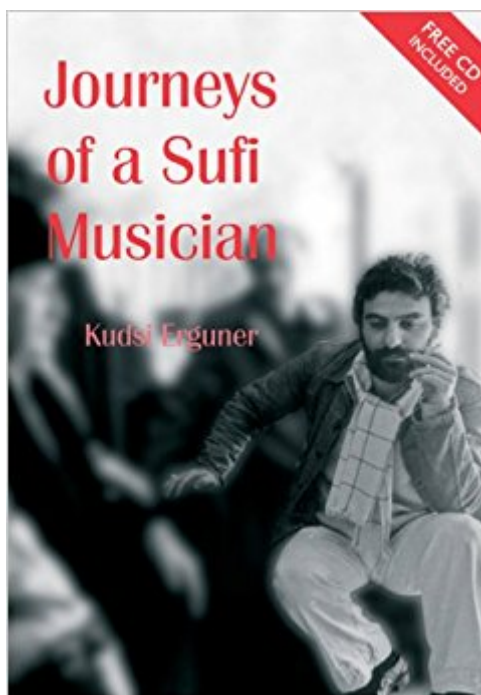


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Journeys Of A Sufi Musician



Synopsis

Kudsi Erguner's memoir sets out to share not only the final moments of a vanished community, but also to relate the encounter of traditional Sufi culture with the Western world. He raises issues relating to the transmission of a teaching both musical and spiritual, and the role of a "traditional" musician.

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Customer Reviews

'A story of our time, of the search for eroding values, a living tradition.' -from foreword by Peter Brook 'Superb book ...' Outside Books Best Books of 2005 'Erguner is the real thing, and this is an invaluable production.' fRoots 'I much enjoyed Kudsi Erguner's autobiography ... which gives a wonderful picture of the trials of being a Sufi devotee in the early years of the Turkish republic after the banning of the Sufi orders.' William Dalrymple, Sunday Herald 'Whatever revival [of Sufi music] there is will be largely thanks to Erguner and his colleagues. He's excellent at bridging the gap between the East and West and the ironies it throws up.' Songlines 'Offers a surprisingly complex social and political history of Istanbul, a moving account of the relationship between father and son (Erguner's late father Ulvi was considered the last great ney master), [and] a nuanced essay on religion and modernity ...' Daily Star

Scion of a grand family of musicians, Kudsi Erguner was brought up at the heart of Istanbul's Sufi community. In the tekke, the traditional meeting-places for dervishes, he grew close to the last great

representatives of this community and was inspired by their words and music. In the West, Erguner met with other adepts of Eastern spirituality, including disciples of G. I. Gurdjieff and adherents of traditional music. Erguner's memoir shares the final moments of a vanished community, and relates the encounter of traditional Sufi culture with the Western world. He raises issues relating to the transmission of a teaching, both musical and spiritual, and the role of a "traditional" musician. Erguner also recounts his own collaborations with director Peter Brook, musician Peter Gabriel and other major Western artists. Includes a complementary shrinkwrapped CD--Tekke Music from Istanbul--a collection of vintage recordings of Sufi dervish songs.

I wish I read this book before my visit to Turkey and witnessing, as a guest, the sema and zikr rites of the Mevlevi and Rifai Sufi orders, for it would have enhanced my appreciation of their music and the various stages of the practice. Moreover, this book would have debunked the European Orientalist interpretations of costumes and turning postures and movements of the dervishes, which are so often repeated that they have become common, but false, facts. Far more than this, the author musician, Kudsi Erguner, offers a first-hand account of how Sufism survived under the national edicts following Ataturk's creation of the modern state of Turkey. Besides the outright banning of Sufi lodges and practices, traditional classical music and its instruments were shunned in favor of Western orchestral compositions and instrumentation. The Turkish Tourist Agency later sponsored exhibits of "whirling dervishes" by non-Sufi dancers as folkloric and devoid of any Sufi spirituality. His childhood experiences, his educational quandries, his poverty and travels to Paris and London, and his training in the ney flute from his father in the tradition of his grandfather are richly documented. Erguner's amazement with European interest in traditional music and Sufism, largely through Gurdjieff followers, contrasted with the dark situation in Istanbul. The sometimes serendipitous encounters led to his decision to become a professional musician, which in turn allowed him to participate with film projects of Peter Brook and world music opportunities through Peter Gabriel and others. This fascinating account is told in but 142 pages supplemented with photographs and a CD of ney performances by him, his father, his younger brother, and others. The appendix on the role and spirituality of the ney in Turkish and Persian Sufism is poetic and emphasized by Rumi himself. The book may be appreciated by students of religion, ethnomusicologists, historians, and world music fans.

If you're interested in Sufi music and how the founding of the modern Turkish Republic repressed Sufi, the effects it had on the music and culture, etc., this is the book for you! I was reading this book

while I was on a 2 week tour of Turkey and I really enjoyed it! I have enjoyed the Kudsi Erguner Ensemble for years, so it was interesting to read about Kudsi's childhood, his family, and their culture going to Sufi meetings in secret, etc. The modern Turkish Republic suppressed any non-modern music for quite some time, thus Sufi's had to play their music in secret. Eventually, Kudsi and some friends end up leaving to go to France where they find that their music is more welcomed and appreciated than it is in their own home country. Of course, there's always the pull of the family and an aging father, pulling him back to Turkey. Very interesting and enjoyable read!

I got the tip to read this book from a friend. I learned yesterday that another friend of mine had bought it the same day. Is this a coincidence? The book is an autobiography over the life of Kudsi Erguner, who was born into a Sufi music family. There is a CD attached to inside the back cover of the book containing many historic performances of this music, mainly performed by the father and grandfather of the writer, but also by himself and some others. I became quite sad (this sadness is a form of self-pity and should not be taken too seriously) when I saw that Kudsi Erguner had made his first trip to London in 1971, the year I left London back to Finland - I missed the performances he made then with his father and other Turkish musicians. What impressed me particularly in the book were:- the history of the Mevlevi organisation in Konya- the contact with the Gurdjieff organisations and- the article on the reed flute, ney, in the Mevlevi tradition.

The History of the Mevlevi Organisation in Konya

Quote, as a taster: "Celaledin Celebi, thirty-second descendant of Rumi, was called upon, as it was thought that he could save the situation: his lineage justified his holiness." and "Celebi tried to make Rumi known again not as a Sufi but, as he called himself, a humanist." I have only once seen a Celebi family member, in a Sema in Zürich a couple of years ago - he certainly did not make an impression that he would have been a Sufi master. It starts to look like the old story: do not believe anything, you must verify it, as Mr. Gurdjieff used to say. This brings up another subject about Sufism in particular in the Middle East (other areas are a different case). Kudsi Erguner writes about the first visits to Paris and London where the Turkish musicians came in contact with the Institut Gurdjieff in Paris and the Gurdjieff Society in London.

Quote: "We were welcomed with open arms by members of the Gurdjieff groups, as well as by another group originating with P. D. Ouspensky, which met in a large building called Colet House. Their leader was a Dr. Roles." Colet House was where Ouspensky had many of his meetings; Dr. Roles was his secretary.

What I mean by "my excitement" about what Kudsi writes is connected with "another co-incidence": that Mr. Gurdjieff arrived in Europe and started teaching here at a time when the Sufis in Turkey were heading for the hard times. Mr. Gurdjieff brought to the West the oral teachings of the Sufis and also

the tradition of the Startzi of the Orthodox Church at a time when both of these had to go underground in the countries where they were active; Turkey and Russia from the actions of their respective governments. I can well understand Kudsi Erguner when he tells how surprised he was to see that the tradition of his own country was denied and hardly existing and he found this tradition, or at least a very similar one, in Paris and London in the Gurdjieff groups. This book is a must for all serious students of both Sufism and the teachings of Mr. Gurdjieff.

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