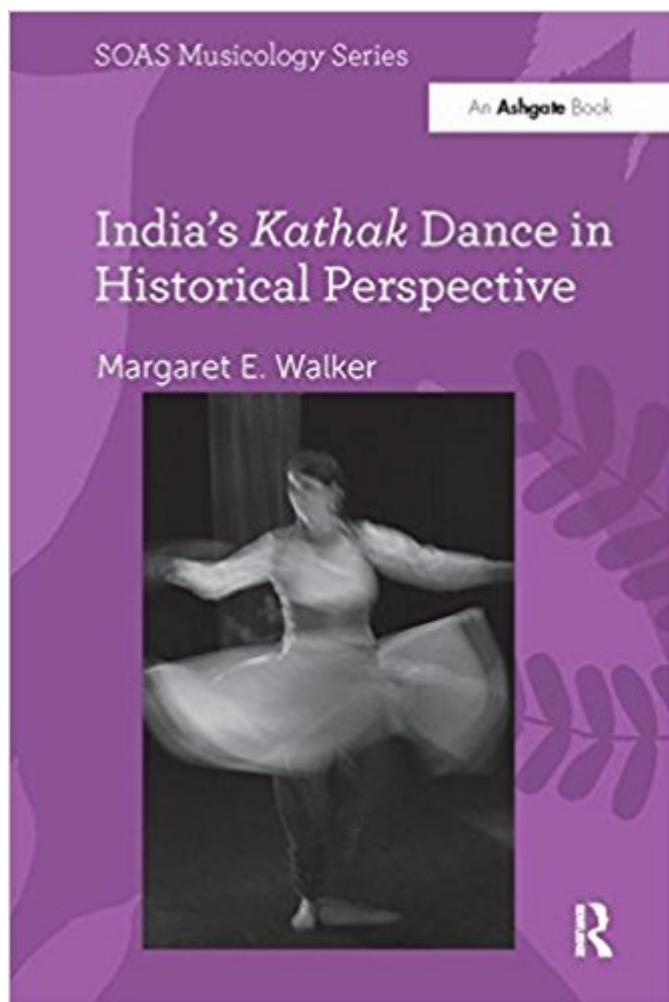


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India's Kathak Dance In Historical Perspective (SOAS Musicology Series)



Synopsis

Kathak, the classical dance of North India, combines virtuosic footwork and dazzling spins with subtle pantomime and soft gestures. As a global practice and one of India's cultural markers, kathak dance is often presented as heir to an ancient Hindu devotional tradition in which men called Kathakas danced and told stories in temples. The dance's repertoire and movement vocabulary, however, tell a different story of syncretic origins and hybrid history - it is a dance that is both Muslim and Hindu, both devotional and entertaining, and both male and female. Kathak's multiple roots can be found in rural theatre, embodied rhythmic repertoire, and courtesan performance practice, and its history is inextricable from the history of empire, colonialism, and independence in India. Through an analysis both broad and deep of primary and secondary sources, ethnography, iconography and current performance practice, Margaret Walker undertakes a critical approach to the history of kathak dance and presents new data about hereditary performing artists, gendered contexts and practices, and postcolonial cultural reclamation. The account that emerges places kathak and the Kathaks firmly into the living context of North Indian performing arts.

Book Information

Series: SOAS Musicology Series

Paperback: 174 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (April 29, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 113806257X

ISBN-13: 978-1138062573

Package Dimensions: 9.4 x 6.1 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Margaret E. Walker is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and Musicology at Queen's University, Kingston, where she is currently serving as Director of the School of Music. Her research focuses primarily on kathak dance and its historiography, but also includes work on gender, class,

diaspora, and colonialism.

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