



# Women Musicians of Uzbekistan: From Courtyard to Conservatory (New Perspectives on Gender in Music)

*Tanya Merchant*

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Fascinated by women's distinct influence on Uzbekistan's music, Tanya Merchant ventures into Tashkent's post-Soviet music scene to place women musicians within the nation's evolving artistic and political arenas. Drawing on fieldwork and music study carried out between 2001 and 2014, Merchant challenges the Western idea of Central Asian women as sequestered and oppressed. Instead, she notes, Uzbekistan's women stand at the forefront of four prominent genres: maqom, folk music, Western art music, and popular music. Merchant's recounting of the women's experiences, stories, and memories underscores the complex role that these musicians and vocalists play in educational institutions and concert halls, street kiosks and the culturally essential sphere of wedding music. Throughout the book, Merchant ties nationalism and femininity to performances and reveals how the music of these women is linked to a burgeoning national identity. Important and revelatory, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan* looks into music's part in constructing gendered national identity and the complicated role of femininity in a former Soviet republic's national project.

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