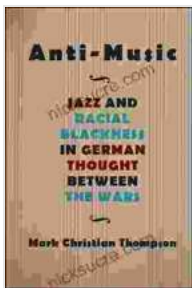


Jazz and Racial Blackness in German Thought Between the Wars: SUNY Philosophy

Jazz music has a long and complex history in Germany. It was first introduced to the country in the early 1900s, and quickly became popular with both the public and the music industry. However, jazz also became a source of controversy, with some people arguing that it was a degenerate form of music that was harmful to German culture. This debate intensified during the Weimar Republic, when jazz became increasingly associated with racial blackness.



Anti-Music: Jazz and Racial Blackness in German Thought between the Wars (SUNY series, Philosophy and Race) by Mark Christian Thompson

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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In this article, we will explore the relationship between jazz and racial blackness in German thought between the wars. We will begin by discussing the ways in which jazz was associated with blackness, both in the public discourse and in the music itself. We will then examine the different ways in which German thinkers responded to this association,

from those who embraced jazz as a symbol of black liberation to those who condemned it as a threat to German culture.

Jazz and Blackness in the Public Discourse

In the early 1900s, jazz was often associated with blackface minstrelsy, a form of entertainment that featured white performers wearing blackface and imitating the music and speech of African Americans. This association was reinforced by the fact that many of the early jazz musicians in Germany were black. As a result, jazz came to be seen as a "black" music, and was often associated with negative stereotypes about black people, such as laziness, promiscuity, and criminality.

This negative association was further reinforced by the fact that jazz was often played in nightclubs and other disreputable establishments. Jazz clubs were often seen as dens of vice, where people went to drink, dance, and gamble. This association with vice further damaged the reputation of jazz, and led many people to believe that it was a harmful influence on German culture.

Jazz and Blackness in the Music Itself

In addition to the ways in which jazz was associated with blackness in the public discourse, the music itself also contained elements that reinforced this association. For example, many jazz songs featured lyrics that dealt with themes of black life, such as slavery, racism, and poverty. Additionally, many jazz musicians used improvisation and other techniques that were seen as being characteristically African American.

These elements of jazz music further solidified the association between jazz and blackness, and made it difficult for many Germans to see jazz as a

legitimate form of music. For some, jazz was seen as a threatening force that represented the encroachment of American culture on German soil. Others saw jazz as a symbol of black liberation, and as a way to challenge the racism and discrimination that was prevalent in German society.

German Responses to Jazz

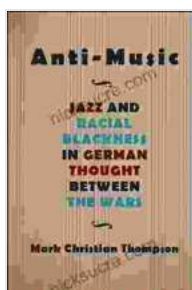
The debate over jazz in Germany between the wars reflected the broader tensions in German society at the time. On the one hand, there were those who embraced jazz as a symbol of modernism and progress. These people saw jazz as a way to break free from the traditional values that had dominated German culture for centuries. On the other hand, there were those who condemned jazz as a degenerate form of music that threatened German culture. These people saw jazz as a symbol of black primitivism and immorality.

The debate over jazz was particularly intense during the Weimar Republic, when Germany was struggling to come to terms with the defeat in World War I and the rise of the Nazi Party. The Nazis were particularly hostile to jazz, and they used the music as a way to attack their political opponents. In 1933, the Nazis banned jazz from being played in public, and they persecuted jazz musicians who continued to perform.

The debate over jazz in Germany between the wars was a complex and multifaceted one. It reflected the broader tensions in German society at the time, as well as the changing nature of German culture in the wake of World War I. While jazz was ultimately banned by the Nazis, it continued to have a significant impact on German culture, and it remains a popular form of music in Germany today.

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