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Music, Language, and Human Evolution

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Why do human beings make music? No human society has ever existed without music, and people all around the world commit considerable resources, including time, effort, and ingenuity, to musical participation and consumption. Yet until recently archaeology has had little to say about the possible role of music in human evolution. This book examines the potential role of musicality in human evolution and its consequences for human culture. Drawing on a growing body of research in archaeology, anthropology, psychology, and musicology, it illustrates the inter-disciplinary necessity of accounting for the phenomenon of human music-making.

Through twelve articles, the contributors to his volume build on Charles Darwin's speculation that human language may have had its origins in forms of vocal communication closer to the condition of music. Music and language are both acquired by individuals, and thus transmitted over the generations as a consequence of an evolved biology specially adapted for these purposes. The authors of this book seek to illuminate the debate surrounding the precedence of musicality over language in research influenced by Darwin's proposal, critically examining the controversial philosophical, developmental, and inter-cultural issues implied.

The accompanying CD provides some glimpses of the practice of music in a variety of cultures and illustrates ways of listening to the human voice that reveal its intrinsic musicality.

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