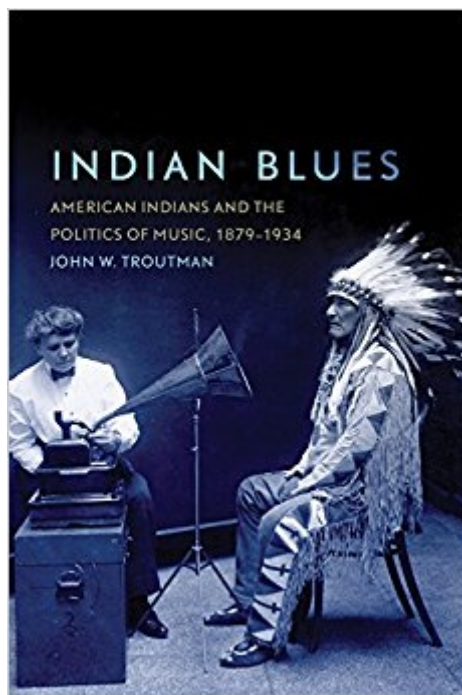




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# Indian Blues: American Indians And The Politics Of Music, 1879-1934 (New Directions In Native American Studies Series)



## Synopsis

From the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, the U.S. government sought to control practices of music on reservations and in Indian boarding schools. At the same time, Native singers, dancers, and musicians created new opportunities through musical performance to resist and manipulate those same policy initiatives. Why did the practice of music generate fear among government officials and opportunity for Native peoples? In this innovative study, John W. Troutman explores the politics of music at the turn of the twentieth century in three spheres: reservations, off-reservation boarding schools, and public venues such as concert halls and Chautauqua circuits. On their reservations, the Lakotas manipulated concepts of U.S. citizenship and patriotism to reinvigorate and adapt social dances, even while the federal government stepped up efforts to suppress them. At Carlisle Indian School, teachers and bandmasters taught music in hopes of imposing their “civilization” agenda, but students made their own meaning of their music. Finally, many former students, armed with saxophones, violins, or operatic vocal training, formed their own “all-Indian” and tribal bands and quartets and traversed the country, engaging the market economy and federal Indian policy initiatives on their own terms. While recent scholarship has offered new insights into the experiences of “show Indians” and evolving powwow traditions, *Indian Blues* is the first book to explore the polyphony of Native musical practices and their relationship to federal Indian policy in this important period of American Indian history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While it is incredibly rare for an author's first published work to be of great significance, Troutman (Univ. of Louisiana, Lafayette) has done exactly that with this most imaginative and intellectually original book...[Troutman] enlightens and engages readers with great storytelling buttressed by a masterful command of subject... [He] delivers a riveting analysis of the interplay between the complex politics of powwows and the powerful forms of performance art that are the centerpieces of the gatherings...Summing Up: Highly recommended.

•ChoiceJohn Troutman's *Indian Blues* is a thoroughly engaging and masterfully researched book that considers the myriad ways in which music and dance operate as expressions of resistance...It opens a new window onto how music practice tied into the politics of race, citizenship, and cultural agency in a period when Native Americans were being written out of history by politicians, composers and historians. *Indian Blues* attests to the moral and logical failure of that narrative, and sets a high standard for future scholarship on the historical study of Native American music in the early twentieth century.

•NotesJohn W. Troutman argues in *Indian Blues* that historians have traditionally . . . ignored the relationship of music to change over time. Troutman ably challenges this deficiency with a well-researched, accessible book that "explores how the deployment of musical practice, by American Indians, OIA officials, and the non-Indian public alike, shaped the implementation of federal Indian policy" ...*Indian Blues* is a key work for readers interested in Native American history and the complex relationship between politics and culture.

•Western Historical QuarterlyFor Troutman, music is more than sound; it is contested cultural terrain, the discursive product of a cacophony of voices that encompasses not only singers, dancers, and musicians but audience members, including the policymakers who attempt to regulate performances...[W]hat Troutman offers is a way to reconceive U.S. politics. Despite being largely excluded from congress, the courts, or the media, Native Americans were and are a part of U.S. political discourse and fully capable of steering this discourse in their favor.

•American QuarterlyJohn W. Troutman's *Indian Blues* is an in-depth exploration of a period too often neglected in Native American histories: from the beginnings of the reservation system through the early twentieth century and the 1934 Wheeler-Howard Act (often known as the Indian Reorganization Act or the Indian New Deal). It also focuses on a form of cultural expression that is too often unexamined by historians who feel they lack the technical expertise to engage in a sophisticated discussion: musical and choreographic expression. The

result is a lovely volume that adds important insights about the new forms of community building and intercultural communication that emerged under the bureaucracy of administrative regimentation.

• *The Journal of American History* Many historians have tackled the question of American Indian relations with the federal government and the associated issues of ethnic identity and educational policies but John Troutman has the distinction of being the first to do so from the perspective of music. His study is at once innovative, informative, and significant for offering a new way of assessing old problems with a fresh eye. While it is well understood that music and dance were (and still are) important in American Indian cultures, they are usually relegated to insignificance in reconstructing history. This volume therefore rectifies an important oversight.

• *Journal of Folklore Research* The major contribution of this text is that, by bringing together in a single narrative all of the different elements of federal and Euro-American cultural control and repression and then juxtaposing them with Native actions of resistance, accommodation, creativity, and agency, Troutman has illuminated how disparate aspects of governmental, political, and social influence over Native musical lives actually interconnected over a period of fifty-five years. And in doing this, he has brought a unified historical vision to the subject matter, allowing it to be conceptualized and theorized in new ways. Troutman also has created an engaging account accessible to non-specialists, which fulfills one of the primary aims of Applied Native Studies in making this history available to the larger indigenous American community.

• *American Historical Review* John Troutman provides much-needed illumination into an area of Native American studies that has been largely under-researched. In tracing the historical trajectory of how and why Native peoples utilized music and dance, both traditional and contemporary, Troutman gives us insight into the ways American Indians resist oppression and hold fast to their heritage, even as traditions evolve. In concentrating on the most-forced assimilative reservation period, Troutman shows us that music and dance became, for many groups and individuals, a mode of survivance.

• *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*

"John Troutman brilliantly explores the emergence of a new world of Native music and dance in the early 1900s. Long awaited and well worth the wait, this book makes a major contribution to the literature on twentieth-century politics and culture." PHILIP J. DELORIA, author of *Playing Indian*

"Dramatically deepening what we know about the role of music as a form of resistance, this imaginatively conceived and carefully researched book will change the way we think about music, Indian, and identity. *Indian Blues* is first-rate scholarship." CLYDE ELLIS, author of *A Dancing*

People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains "By expanding our understanding of the politics in American Indian powwows, and pageants, John Troutman-like George Moses, Clyde Ellis, and Philip Deloria-asks us to think more deeply about expressive culture. Indian Blues is a comprehensive, sensitive, and probing portrayal of Native adaption and resistance." BRIAN HOSMER, author of American Indians in the Marketplace "Listen to Indian Blues for an unexpected history of Native identity, modernity, agency, and resistance. Troutman persuades us all that, indeed, `music matters.'" RAYNA GREEN, National Museum of American History --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A very original and innovative contribution to Native American Studies, ethnomusicology, and American music history. Troutman writes vividly and very clearly. This book is fine for undergraduate classes, yet exceptional scholarship on a fascinating subject about which almost no one else has written in anywhere near this depth. Bravo, read it!

INDIAN BLUES: AMERICAN INDIANS AND THE POLITICS OF MUSIC, 1879-1934 tells of how the U.S. government tried to control music on reservations through the 1920s, sparking a resistance on the parts of Native singers and dancers who decided to manipulate these policies. Both music history libraries and those at the college level specializing in Native history will find this an impressive exploration of the politics of music and Native American issues.

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