

WORLD

PRINCES AMONGST MEN: JOURNEYS WITH GYPSY MUSICIANS

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AS THE soundtrack to the book, this couldn't be bettered: when it appeared last year, Garth Cartwright's *Princes Amongst Men* (published by Serpent's Tail) was instantly acclaimed as the best book yet on Balkan Gypsy music. Chronicling his wanderings across four states in 2003, and written with beautiful precision, it vividly evokes scenes and characters from this world, with its resilient but perennially endangered culture. Cartwright's compilation on this CD draws on the very best music on offer, and includes those old favourites Kocani Orkestar, Taraf de Haidouks, and Fanfare Ciocarlia. But he casts his net wide to bring in lovely and less-familiar stuff: my favourite tracks include Romica Puceanu's haunting vocal artistry, the dizzy speed and accuracy of Ferus Mustafov and his band, Saban Bajramovic's brand of Balkan flamenco, and Sofi Marinova's extraordinary vocal ornamentation in interplay with a clarinet. What is the future for Balkan Gypsy music? This brilliant CD suggests a bright one.

Michael Church, The Scotsman, 3 October 2008