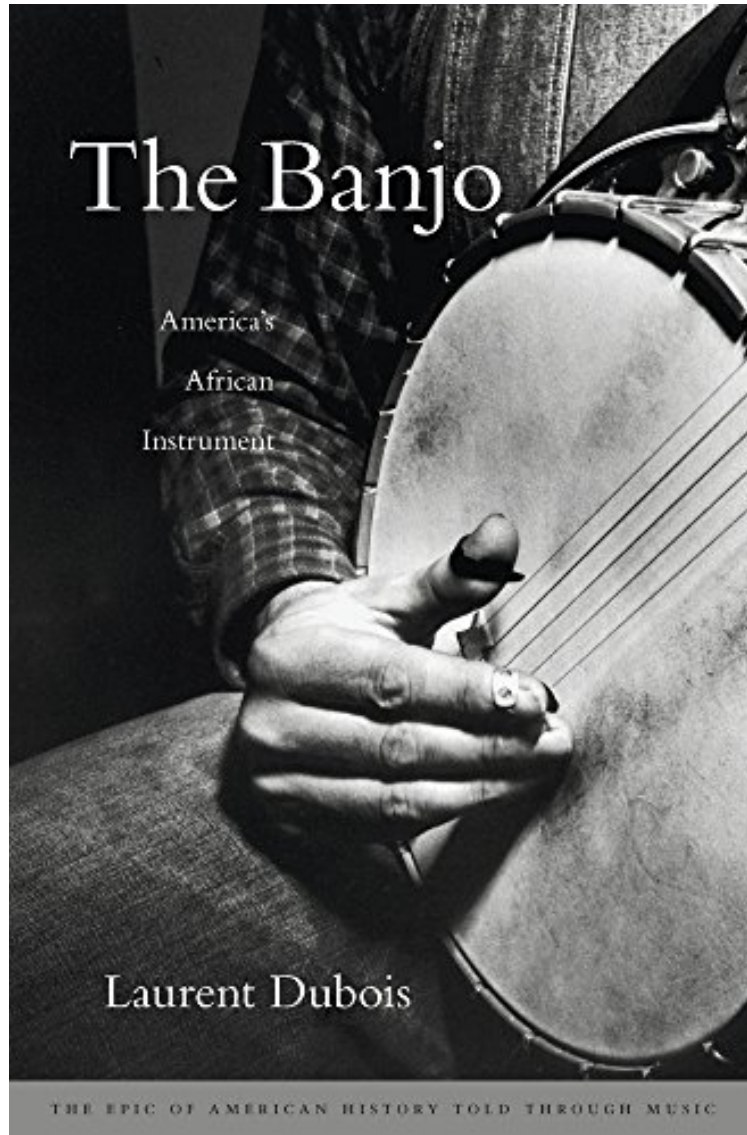


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## The Banjo: Americas African Instrument

*Laurent Dubois*

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**Laurent Dubois : The Banjo: Americas African Instrument** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Banjo: Americas African Instrument:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The cultural history that gave us the ?American BanjoBy Sue M.I just finished this book. It isn't your typical banjo book. There are many good books about the instrument, but none about the cultural context in which the banjo evolved, from a gourd instrument first made by African slaves on Caribbean sugar plantations to the fancy instrument of the bluegrass, old time and folk musicians of today. It's very

well written and researched. If you are interested in the history and cultures that gave us the banjo, this is the book you want to read. It covers early African origins, the banjo on the plantations and it's used by enslaved Africans, The Civil War, blackface minstrelsy, the bluegrass banjo, Pete Seeger and the folk revival, and the African American string bands. Good book! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A journey around the world, through the centuries, about the best instrument... ever. By Ryan I finished Laurent Dubois's "The Banjo - America's African Instrument" yesterday. I have to say, if you're a fan of the banjo, no matter the kind of music played on it or the number of strings, I think this is a must read. It's not heavy in the photo department, so if you like looking at books for the photos (there are some photos, and I think they're valuable), this may not be the book you'll enjoy to the ends of the earth. But if you enjoy some VERY interesting information, covering many centuries, about your favorite instrument. This book is for you. It's full of information, as we move around the world, through many years of history rarely associated with the banjo. I really enjoyed it. It had me thinking about things I don't usually reflect on, and has me respecting the banjo, on it's long long twisted path even more. I give this book five stars. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A great book on the history of the only all American ... By Richard D. Katz A great book on the history of the only all American instrument. A wonderful and insightful read. Recommended for all banjo players.

The banjo has been called by many names over its history, but they all refer to the same soundstrings humming over skin that has eased souls and electrified crowds for centuries. The Banjo invites us to hear that sound afresh in a biography of one of America's iconic folk instruments. Attuned to a rich heritage spanning continents and cultures, Laurent Dubois traces the banjo from humble origins, revealing how it became one of the great stars of American musical life. In the seventeenth century, enslaved people in the Caribbean and North America drew on their memories of varied African musical traditions to construct instruments from carved-out gourds covered with animal skin. Providing a much-needed sense of rootedness, solidarity, and consolation, banjo picking became an essential part of black plantation life. White musicians took up the banjo in the nineteenth century, when it became the foundation of the minstrel show and began to be produced industrially on a large scale. Even as this instrument found its way into rural white communities, however, the banjo remained central to African American musical performance. Twentieth-century musicians incorporated the instrument into styles ranging from ragtime and jazz to Dixieland, bluegrass, reggae, and pop. Versatile and enduring, the banjo combines rhythm and melody into a single unmistakable sound that resonates with strength and purpose. From the earliest days of American history, the banjo's sound has allowed folk musicians to create community and joy even while protesting oppression and injustice.

Dubois attempts to trace the evolution of the modern instrument from its African antecedents to the present day, prudently noting that a linear account is likely to be misleading. There is enough anecdote and lore to satisfy both the casual and the specialist reader. (Lou Glandfield *Times Literary Supplement* 2016-04-01) Dubois relates here a history of the instrument that is both learned and entertaining. His enthusiasm shines through every page. (John Check *Weekly Standard* 2016-03-14) [A] riveting history of the banjo. While the story Dubois tells is primarily historical and sociological, it is also musical, and he never lets us forget the magical hum that distinguishes the banjo from the guitar and other stringed instruments. Dubois combines erudition with obvious enjoyment. His limpid prose easily bears the weight of his impressive research. (Tom Gilling *The Australian* 2016-04-09) This is one of the very best books on the banjo published to date. It is also one with a grand scope of the life of the banjo. If you are interested enough in the banjo to understand the instrument and its uses more fully, you cannot do better than to read this lively, superb account. (Wayne Shrubbsall *Banjo Newsletter* 2016-06-01) A wonderful offering, and a fascinating and illuminating read. This is the most comprehensive book yet about the history of the banjo. The instrument's story is told here with such depth and detail that it comes alive. I loved reading this. (Bla Fleck, banjoist) Following the strings of the banjo from Africa across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and then to the United States, Laurent Dubois provides a new perspective on the African diaspora. *The Banjo: America's African Instrument* is a rich, original view of our sonic landscape. It is impossible to follow Dubois's trail without a smile and the satisfaction of hearing the world anew. (Ira Berlin, author of *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves*) Dubois reveals the banjo as a vital medium for the ideas and struggles of the people who make it, play it, and hear it. Combining storytelling and scholarship as seamlessly as the banjo condenses rhythm and melody, this special book is a melodious read by an extraordinary writer of Atlantic history. (Vincent Brown, author of *The Reapers Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*) Dubois illuminates the banjo's complicated cultural history. This lively account is not without surprises. (New Yorker 2016-05-23) About the Author Laurent Dubois is Marcello Lotti Professor of Romance Studies and History at Duke University.