

Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s

Krystyn R. Moon

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Music and performance provide a unique window into the ways that cultural information is circulated and perceptions are constructed. Because they both require listening, are inherently ephemeral, and most often involve collaboration between disparate groups, they inform cultural perceptions differently from literary or visual art forms, which tend to be more tangible and stable.

In *Yellowface*, Krystyn R. Moon explores the contributions of writers, performers, producers, and consumers in order to demonstrate how popular music and performance has played an important role in constructing Chinese and Chinese American stereotypes. The book brings to life the rich musical period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, Chinese and Chinese American musicians and performers appeared in a variety of venues, including museums, community theaters, and world's fairs, where they displayed their cultural heritage and contested anti-Chinese attitudes. A smaller number crossed over into vaudeville and performed non-Chinese materials. Moon shows how these performers carefully navigated between racist attitudes and their own artistic desires.

While many scholars have studied both African American music and blackface minstrelsy, little attention has been given to Chinese and Chinese American music. This book provides a rare look at the way that immigrants actively participated in the creation, circulation, and, at times, subversion of Chinese stereotypes through their musical and performance work.



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