This book was first published in German in 1911. The text sets out a path-breaking hypothesis on the earliest musical sounds in human culture. Alongside research in such diverse fields as classical philosophy, acoustics, and mathematics, Stumpf became one of the most influential psychologists of the late 19th century. He was the founding father of Gestalt psychology, and collaborated with William James, Edmund Husserl, and Wolfgang Köhler. This book was the culmination of more than twenty-five years of empirical and theoretical research in the field of music. The first part of the book discusses the origin and forms of musical activities as well as various existing theories on the origin of music, including those of Darwin, Rousseau, Herder, and Spencer. The second part summarizes his works on the historical development of instruments and music, and studies a putatively global range of music from non-European cultures to demonstrate the psychological principles of tonal organization, as well as providing a range of cross-cultural musical transcriptions and analyses. This became a foundation document for comparative musicology, the elder sibling to modern Ethnomusicology, and the book provides access to the original recordings Stumpf used in this process. This book is available for the first time in the English language.

Part I: The origin and archetypes of music making

Carl Stumpf

in The Origins of Music
This chapter presents Part I of Carl Stumpf's The Origins of Music, which explores the topic of music's origination. It discusses the recent hypotheses concerning the origins of music; the origin and archetypes of singing; primitive instruments and their influence; polyphony, rhythm, and intoned speech; and paths of development.

Carl Stumpf: Impulses towards a cognitive theory of musical evolution
Helga de la Motte-Haber
in The Origins of Music
Published in print: 2012 Published Online: September 2012
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199695737.003.0001
Item type: chapter

The translation of a text from 1911 in the year 2011 is indicative of the historical significance that befits the author who, for his part, made his mark with seminal writings on music psychology, even if he is not really the founder of the discipline of psychology. Can we still regard Stumpf's consideration of The Origins of Music as timely, or is this merely an interesting historical document? A review of differing theoretical concepts answers these questions and clarifies the significance of Stumpf's text within the framework of an intensive, fifteen-year discussion on the evolutionary origins of music. This chapter discusses the self-contradictory concepts of the evolution of music; a brief summary of significant aspects of the 1911 text; and the psychology of tone instead of psychophysics.