

MUSIC IN ME

PILOT PROJETS WHY THOSE?

by Frans Wolfkamp

I MUSIC AND MUSIC EDUCATION

1 Beirut. Instrumental lessons for students from 13-16 years

The Galilee Secondary School is one of the very few secondary schools in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The students can include lessons in the arts in their curriculum. Until now no music program was available, due to a lack of teachers and of instruments.

Of the circa 300 students at least a quarter would choose music as an option. Music in ME will assist in sending teachers from elsewhere for a beginners course and in training teachers for permanent posts and in acquiring instruments. The project is implemented in close co-operation with the UNRWA and the Conservatory for Music in Beirut.

2 Beirut. Instrumental lessons for youngsters from 18-25 years

The Social Community Center is one of the Palestinian centers in Beirut offering computer lessons, summer camps courses, social gatherings, etc. The idea is to establish a music center for young adults between 18 and 25 years inside the community center. Until now this was not possible due to a lack of teachers and of instruments.

Music in ME will assist in hiring and training professionals and acquiring the equipment for music lessons. The project it is carried out in co-operation with the Conservatory for Music in Beirut.

3 Damascus. Arab instrumental lessons for talented young children from Palestinian refugee camps

This project is specially developed for children between 7 and 9 years. About fifty children will be selected out of twenty schools in refugee camps in Damascus. They will be trained in instrumental Arab music. The project will be carried out in close co-operation with the UNWRA, the Conservatory and the Arab Music School for Children in Damascus

4 Amman. Educational project for youngsters and young adults from Palestinian refugee camps

A similar project as in Beirut will be started for Palestinian camps in Amman. The idea is again to support music education at schools and music facilities in the cultural centers of refugee camps.

Music in ME will assist in hiring and training professionals and acquiring the equipment for music lessons. The project is carried out in close co-operation with the UNRWA

5 Amman and Damascus. Master Classes and concerts by professors and master-students

Widening the musical horizon is important for students and professors all over the world. During the Master period students in the West are stimulated to concentrate for their final exam on at least one non-Western musical subject. To develop exchange possibilities between conservatories in the Middle East and the Western world, a start can be made by presenting four times a year a professor from the Amsterdam Conservatory or other European conservatories, together with one or two Master students at the Conservatory and at the Performing Arts Center in Damascus and in Amman. The result will be a combined series of master-classes by the professor and lecture-recitals by the student. During the first year the project will be analyzed so that the results can play a role in presenting professors and students from the Middle East in the Western world.

6 Amman. Professional Music Education for young Palestinians in Refugee Camps in Jordan

The National Music Conservatory of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation in Amman wishes to create a Youth String Orchestra for young Palestinians refugees. Every year a group of talented young Palestinians should get the possibility to join this orchestra, as a part of their training to become professional musicians. The conservatory in Amman considers it as very important that the young musicians play Arab music and Western music as well. The creation of a 'classical' string orchestra will enlarge the possibilities for those students enormously.

7 Baghdad. Setting up music education facilities in Iraq

Iraq's music education system always was one of the most outstanding conservatories in the Middle East. After the recent years of boycott turmoil the whole system has declined. The objective of this project is to assist in setting up a basic music education system, with the assistance of the staff of the Baghdad conservatory and members of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra.

II MUSIC THERAPY

8 Khan Younis, Gaza Strip. Music-therapy project

The idea is to provide music therapy as a relief for children and young adolescents, many of them being traumatized by the ongoing events. Here music more than in any of the other projects is used as a social means, to restore some of the sense for beauty and meaningfulness. Similar projects in visual arts have already proved extremely useful. Music is one of the most rewarding and accessible means for relief therapy. The Gaza strip project is carried out in close co-operation with the Saxion Conservatory (Enschede, the Netherlands), where methods in this field are being developed, and with the Red Crescent

9 Bethlehem, West Bank. Music-therapy project

The demand for music-therapy is enormous. Therefore it is necessary to combine the music-therapy itself with training music-therapy assistants. Under the auspices of the UNRWA a project will be carried out in three refugee-camps in Bethlehem, in which professional music-therapists work closely together with Arab social workers, teachers etc. to built up a team. In the meantime it is important to investigate in what way a professional education music-therapy can be developed at one of the conservatories at the West Bank.

10 Jerusalem. Music-therapy project

Although the media attention mostly is focused on the misery in the Palestinian refugee-camps, one should not forget that many people in Israel are traumatized by the loss of beloved relatives and friends, and under the pressure of fear for self-bombing attacks. Music-therapy therefore is needed in Israel as well. Together with the Trauma Center of Israel two projects will be developed in which direct help will be combined with scientific research. During this project the Saxion Conservatory will work closely together with the Trauma Center of Israel and the music-therapy departments of two or three other European conservatories.

11 Tel Aviv. Music-therapy project

The music-therapy project in Tel Aviv will be developed on a multi-discipline base, parallel with the Jerusalem project. The idea is to work in this project together with different art forms, such as drama, fine art, dance and photography. In this project the Saxion Conservatory will work

closely together with the Trauma Center of Israel and the music-therapy departments of two or three other European conservatories.

III PERFORMANCES

12 Aleppo, Amman and Damascus. Concerts by international young talents

Concerts at the Performing Arts Center by classical and jazz soloists and ensembles.

The idea is to perform at the brand new Performing Arts Center in Damascus, and then to take the opportunity to perform in Aleppo and Amman (National Music Conservatory, King Hussein Center, Royal Cultural Center), about three hours traveling from Damascus.

Performances and workshops in Baghdad and Beirut can be added later.

13 Israel. Performances and facilities for the Arab-Jewish Youth Orchestra

The Arab-Jewish Youth Orchestra is an interesting forum for young musicians and a possibility through music to breed intercultural and international contacts. The repertoire of this orchestra is influenced by European and Arabic composers. During the project special attention will be given to strengthen the communication between Jewish and Arab musicians, inside and outside Israel. In that perspective it is important that in future it must be possible to recruit young Arab musicians from the West Bank and Gaza areas and possibly in the future members from further areas as well. Promotion and enlarging the concert-possibilities in and outside the Middle East is an other important goal.

14 Middle East. Setting up an annual international young musicians camp.

This project sees at setting up an international youth music camp for practicing Middle-Eastern and Western music, aiming at young aspiring musicians, but with an ensemble/community building aspect as well.

During the camp there will be ensemble practice in music. There are two role models. For the traditional music the project follows the model of the Arab music practice camp in Massachusetts, USA, under the guidance of the Simon Shaheen, Jihad Racy and Georges Sawa. Meanwhile the Western classical music practice will adopt the model of the Mediterranean youth orchestra developed at Weimar by Daniel Barenboim, the late Edward Said, Selim Sednaoui and Yo Yo Ma. For the first camp Jordan would be a suitable venue, as participants from all countries involved have access.

IV INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

15 Jerusalem. Supporting the Al-Urmawi Center for Middle-Eastern Music

In order to make the classical Arab music accessible to a wide audience in Palestine and in the region, a music-library is one first, but essential step. A second step will focus on music production that features classical Arabic music in a sophisticated and at the same time accessible way, including a vast range of styles and interpretations. In connection with this concerts will be presented in the West Bank and Gaza, in and outside the Arab world. Each concert includes 4 to 5 different artists and groups, under the auspices of Urmawi. The Al-Urmawi Center plans a new concert season every two months.

16 Damascus. Technical training of performing arts center staff

Training of staff member in Europe in cooperation with the European Association of Opera Directors. The Vienna Volksoper will be the first partner to assist the Center. The new performing arts center includes an opera hall. It can only be properly run with an apt professional staff, which however until now lacks training.

17 Gaza Strip. Setting up a Music School

Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world and it is secluded from the rest of the world. Currently, apart from many other things, some much more basic, in our field a music school is lacking. Music in ME has plans to assist in founding a music school here. In the beginning of 2004 a start will be made with a part-time team of a manager/coordinator who will work together with 8 teachers for the following instruments: ud, percussion, keyboard and singing. This project will be carried out with the help of the Palestinian National Music Committee and the UNWRA.

V DOCUMENTATION AND PRESERVATION

Understanding the cultural diversity of the past can be a blueprint for a future in which understanding diversity is crucial.

The musical cultural heritage of the Middle-East is extremely diverse, reflecting the indigenous cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the region. The position of women in the music-industry of the Middle-East has always been strong: Umm Kulthumm, Feiruz, Asmahan, Naima Al Masriyya, Selima Murad, Leyla Murad, Ofra Haza for instance. In current classical Arabic music Farida Mohammed Ali and in current pop music Assala, Noa and Latifa. Radio, television, museums, libraries, cassette- and CD-players help keeping the music of the past accessible and to keep the knowledge and awareness of that rich past alive. So it is important to carefully preserve the recorded historical musical past. In this field Music in ME will support some crucial projects in Egypt and Iraq. Though the recording industry has focused on the urban musical culture, the musical cultures of the countryside and the seaside are no less rich. Music in ME will support several projects to record and register musical traditions from the less urbanized regions.

18 Middle East. Setting up a solid music notation system for traditional and for Middle-Eastern contemporary classical music

Performing musicians and composers would very strongly benefit from a standardized method for notation, in line the latest computerized music notation systems and electronic storage techniques. Egypt is currently developing the first modern Arabic music archive at the Cairo Opera House. Meanwhile contemporary Arabic composers writing for Western ensemble are regularly performed in Cairo and there is a lively contemporary composers world in Cairo. So Cairo is the venue of choice for the notation project. The Cairo Music Conservatory in co-operation with the Gaudeamus Foundation and the MuziekGroep Nederland in Amsterdam will carry out the project.

Two monographic archive projects tying in with the Cairo Opera House

19 Sayed Darwish,

Egypt for decades has been the foremost music centre of the Arabic world, thanks to its pivotal position in the film and recording industry since the earliest days of the gramophone and cinema.

Many artists from abroad came to Cairo as well, and still do. Currently the famous Cairo Opera House is carrying out several projects on

individual artists, like Mohammed Abdelwahab, Zakariya Ahmad and in the near future.

Thorough research on an individual artist with close connections to the whole cultural field of his time gives an impression of a whole era. An initial research project on the life of Zakariya Ahmed is already being launched with the support of the Dutch embassy and Music in ME will adopt the follow up to that project and continue with a next project on another individual artist, Sayed Darwish. This will include restoration and archiving of recorded material and interviewing family members and the last surviving testimonies of Sayed Darwish' era, including covering his musical research journeys into the rest of the Arabic world.

20 Naima Al Masriyya

Parallel to the efforts at the Cairo Opera House, a specific research project is being carried out has on the singer Naima Al Masriyya, one of the most famous Egyptian singers of the twenties and thirties. Due to family circumstances Naima was obliged to retire from her singing career and even to actively withdraw her recordings from the radio and the record market. Her great-granddaughter Heba Farid is now undertaking a project to recover all this. This project again has all the ingredients, which make it still relevant for today. A fantastic singer, fantastic music, and a life, indicative of the possibilities artists and women had in the developing dynamic society of that time. In a next phase all these separate projects will be interconnected to form a full picture.

21 Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Fishermen's song collecting project

Collecting songs from the fishermen's musical heritage along the East Mediterranean coast. There is a striking amount of continuity in the music of the fishermen's communities in the region. Musicologist Elie Kisrwan has already done research among Lebanese communities, the Egyptian music group Al Tanbura from Port Said has turned songs which had gone near to extinction into a vibrant repertoire for a music group which performs internationally.

If the whole East-Mediterranean coast might open up politically in the future, this project might add to establish ties through the cultural field and to help regard the Middle-Eastern culture as a diversified entity.

22 Jordan and surrounding region. Collecting and indexing Bedouin songs.

In the past the more arid areas of the Fertile Crescent were the herding fields of the Bedouins. Now impregnable borders, separating Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria, and Iraq from each other, and urbanised areas

cross the former paths of the Bedouins and Bedouin culture is under threat. The Bedouin tribes used to carry with them a complete legacy of songs and epics. Music in ME will support a project to preserve the musical heritage of the Bedouins, starting at the center of the region in question, Jordan.

23 Baghdad. Set up for an Iraqi National Music Archive

The Iraqi music tradition is of extraordinary cultural value, as it reflects thousands of years of cultural development in the region between current Arabia and Persia and has always been nurtured by rulers from every background.

Until the beginning of the nineties there were ample interest and support for musical heritage preservation in Iraq. Now it is important to rescue the archives of radio and television and of the recording companies. Part of the original recordings might be found outside in Lebanon, London, Berlin and Holland, where the international record companies resided. It is crucial to include the musical knowledge gathered among the Iraqi diaspora into this project, notably among the tremendous amount of Iraqi Jews gathered in Israel and throughout the West. For this among other matters co-operation with the Iraqi Jewish Heritage Centre in Or Yehuda near Tel Aviv will be important.

Apart from the musicological and wider cultural importance, awareness of this rich and diverse musical legacy of the past can help create role models for a future society and it is essential for all parties sincerely interested in rebuilding Iraq and continuing its cultural life to keep the knowledge of the musical and cultural past alive.

24 Symposium on music creation and modernity in the Middle-East

In co-operation with the Amsterdam Gaudeamus organisation for contemporary music, a symposium "Composing in The Middle East" will be organised, during May 2004. Themes of the conference are observing tradition and modernity in the Arabic cultural tradition, both in the traditional music, the Arabic pop music and the Western influenced modern classical composing style, and how (and if) it principally relate or can relate to Western tendencies in modernism and postmodernism. Does traditional classical Arabic music have a chance to evolve, like it has done in the past? In how far is the Western interest for traditional classical and folkloric music a factor which fixates the development, into an illusionary past? This conference will be followed - possible to coincide with the Gaudeamus week - in September 2005 in Paradiso and the new Muziekcentrum, the successor to the IJsbreker centre for contemporary music in Amsterdam by a second session, symposium and performances with Middle East music.