

To the memory of my grandmother, Helene Begleiter

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-89579-776-6
ISSN 0147-0086

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

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Program 1

*“On first hearing a genuine piece of Oriental music”
18 November 1936*

On first hearing a genuine piece of Oriental music, Europeans are invariably struck by the enormous difference which exists between this music and their own. Unfortunately, they generally interpret their first impression to the disadvantage of what they have heard. They often deny that it deserves to be called music at all or they claim that, at any rate, it must be music of an inferior kind, music on a low stage of development as against European.

These statements form a strange contrast with the Orientals' own ideas about their music. Music and song, with them, takes a high place as with Europeans or, perhaps, an even more elevated one. This is true with regard to all the civilized nations of the East. Can we suppose that all of them, the Japanese, the Hindus, the Arabs, and so on, should deceive themselves as to the value of their music? Shall we believe that the same nations who have so wonderfully succeeded in art, in literature, in architecture, should have sadly failed in music,—failed just where they imagine they have succeeded best?¹

1. Lachmann's remarks on European attitudes toward Eastern music resonate with earlier firsthand accounts. In an account based on five years in Egypt between 1825 and 1835, the Englishman Edward William Lane confesses that the delight he experienced in listening to the “more refined types of music,” which increased with familiarity, was rarely shared by other Europeans he met. He goes on to describe the rapturous responses displayed by “natives of Egypt” to performances of both vocal and instrumental musicians (Lane [1836] 1986, 369). And nearly a century before Lane, Charles Fonton (1725–93), a French *drogman* (interpreter) in the Levant, opened his pioneering study of Turkish music (1751) with a scathing attack on European prejudice, which he claimed was based on ignorance, a false sense of ethnic superiority, and a failure to appreciate that beauty exists only “within the context of the genius of each nation” (Shiloah 1991, 187). Fonton's study, which survives in manuscript form (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, n.a. 4023), is reproduced in Neubauer 1985, with commentary and indices in Neubauer 1986.

Lachmann frequently began his public lectures on the defensive, preempting the expected negative reactions. Addressing the Geographical-Ethnological Society in Basel in May 1935, he warned his audience that:

On the other hand, it seems strange that Europeans, while they readily and even enthusiastically admit the high value of other manifestations of the Eastern mind, should, on the whole, be unanimous in rejecting Eastern music. Music, as is commonly believed, has a more direct and spontaneous appeal than art and literature. One should, therefore, expect that foreign music should be appreciated more spontaneously than foreign art and literature. As this is obviously not the case as regards European hearers of Eastern music it seems logical to infer that something must be wrong with Eastern music.

But you can easily imagine that I refuse to draw this conclusion. I shall rather try and start from the other end. Let us suppose for the moment that the Eastern nations are justified in exalting their music. This would mean that Europeans when they disparage it simply have not understood it. Now, one of our popular notions about music is, as I said before, that music comes to us naturally and that we need not make any effort in order to understand it. We shall have to overthrow this cherished belief; we shall have to abandon the idea that music is an international language, clearly expressing grief and joy to every listener irrespective of race and country. We shall

Im allgemeinen trifft orientalische Musik bei europäischen Hörern auf Ablehnung. Die Musik des Vorderen Orients bildet hiervon keine Ausnahme; im Gegenteil, sie stösst erfahrungsgemäss auf grössere Ablehnung als die Musik von Völkern, die Europa an sich ferner liegen (Lachmann 1974, 46).

[In general Oriental music is received with rejection by European listeners. Music of the Near East is no exception to that rule; the opposite is true: experience tells us it is even more rejected than the music of peoples farther away from Europe.]

It is precisely for that reason, he suggested, that instead of focusing on its aesthetic qualities, they approach it “for its historical value: for its relationship with the past” (*ibid.*). See also footnote 9 below.

In his lecture “National und International in der orientalischen Musik,” addressed to a primarily Jewish audience at the College of Music “Bet Levi'im” in Tel Aviv, Lachmann defended his interest in non-Jewish music by insisting that only thus was it possible fully to understand “the essence of Jewish music” (Lachmann 1936c).

Recitation 6.1: Shirat ha-yam (Song of the Sea, excerpt, Exod. 15:1)

Original recording numbers: D536–D537 (Exod. 15:13–16)

Substitute recording number: D529 (3 February 1937)

Performer: Ibrahim Kohen (on both original and substitute recordings)

Note: Following the through transcription of recitation 6.1, a tabular transcription shows the cyclic melodic structure that begins at 0:28 and rises progressively in pitch with each repetition. In both transcriptions, roman numerals I–III indicate the beginning of each melodic cycle. Slurs in the tabular transcription indicate melodic phrases.

A. THROUGH TRANSCRIPTION

a- ze ya- šar- u- wa- nu- wa- a- re mu- nu- u-

-ši we- ba- wa- nu- wa- a- ni-

I (0:28)

i- yin- wi i- ši- ra'- e-

-nwe- e- u- we- e- li it a- wa- nu-

-wa- a- ši- nwi- i- ra-

-wa- nu- wa a- ze- we- nu- we- e'- ot

II (1:08)

a- nu- wa- ale- še- ma

wa- a- u- wa- wi- ya- a- a- 'u-

-wu- nu- wu- u- me- nu- nwe- e- ru

li- i- wi- nwi- li-

more or less immaterial in this class of song. Here it is not the melody which carries the text, but, on the contrary, the text simply helps to keep the tune and its pendular movement going, and is often replaced by mere senseless syllables. The regular movement inherent in this kind of melody may or may not serve to accompany an actual bodily occupation. Some of these songs accompany the rocking of the cradle, the turning of the hand-mill, or games and dances. But even when this is not the case the singers can hardly help swaying their bodies.

This description holds good of practically all the different forms of women's songs in the Near East, and so applies also to their wedding songs. There is one curious exception for which I cannot account, but which I would mention for the sake of completeness. Berber women of Algeria sing one song, in the middle of their Henna ceremony which entirely deviates from the usual type both in its melody and by being in free rhythm. I never came up against any song of this kind either in Arab or in Jewish surroundings.

Arab and Jewish women's songs are closely related to each other and this relation is stressed by the fact that Jewish women, as well, sing in Arabic without exception. Shall we suppose that this approximation to the Arab style has narrowed down the range of Ancient Jewish women's songs? Certainly, if you have fed your expectations of what Jewish women's songs might be, on Miriam's or on Deborah's song, you will be disappointed in the modest little tunes that you are going to hear. But then it is unfair to conjure up musical feats which mark climaxes in Scriptural history, as models for everyday use. And, on the whole, what we hear of women's music in biblical times does not contradict the observations that we can make with regard to their Oriental descendants. Miriam, in Exodus, after all, only takes up the men's words and her companions accompany her song with percussion, just as is done to-day.⁸

8. While it is true that the brief Song of Miriam (Exod. 15:20–21) takes its cue from the Song of Moses (Exod. 15:1–19), echo-

Parallel to the men's wedding songs that you heard last time, the women, too, have songs peculiar to the Henna ceremony and the other stages of the wedding. First you will hear one of the songs sung while the henna is applied to the bride's hand and feet.⁹ (Recitation 8.1, CD 1, tracks 21–22)

The second song is performed during the act of cutting the bride's front locks. This is on the day preceding the night on which the marriage contract is read and the blessing pronounced. (Recitation 8.2)

Apart from songs like those that you have just heard and which have their definite place in the respective ceremonies there is another group including songs which may be sung at any time of the wedding, and serve to entertain the bride and her companions during the long hours which separate the various ceremonies. These songs, in contrast to those of the first group, accompany dances. They are also distinguished from the first group musically. Instead of slow beats at equal distances, the drum here accompanies the tunes with vivid patterned figures. You will now, in conclusion, hear a series of such songs. (Recitations 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5, CD 1, tracks 23–24, 25–26, 27–28)

ing its opening words, it is hardly representative of biblical women's songs "on the whole." The Songs of both Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10) and Deborah (Judg. 5:1–31) are lengthy poems with their own words. Deborah's song, which occupies almost the entire fifth chapter of Judges, celebrates the victory of the Israelites over the Canaanite army, making special mention of the death of the Canaanite general Sisera at the hands of Jael (Yael), the wife of Heber (Judg. 5:24–27). Lachmann includes a performance of the opening verses of Deborah's Song in Program 4 (recitation 4.2).

9. For a slightly different version of the song text in transliteration and English translation, see Caspi 1985, 85–86. Gerson-Kiwi gives a musical transcription of the first two lines of the song taken from her own recording in Gerson-Kiwi 1965, 101.

Recitation 8.1: "Sā'at 'r-rahmān dalhīn"

Original recording number: D604

Substitute recording number: D596 (23 February 1937)

Performers: Two Yemenite Jewish women with percussion. In his diary entry for the Yemenite Jewish women's songs recorded on D596–D609, Lachmann specifies, "die eine mit daff (mittel-grosse Handtrommel ohne Schellen), die andere mit Metallteller" (one with daff [medium-sized frame drum without jingles], the other with cymbals).

Voices

♩ = ca. 57

Solo

sā-'at haw-wa r-rah- mān aw-wa ne

Percussion

da- w- wa- lhīn uw- wi wa- sh-sha-

-yā- wa- tīn ghā- w- wa- lhīn

Second voice enters etc.
ḥaj- je- bu yah- lī uw- wi

sā'at *hawwa* r-rahmān *awwa* ne da-*wwa*-lhīn *uwwi*
wa-sh-shayāwaṭīn ghā-*wwa*-lhīn

ḥajjebu yahli *uwwi* 'alayya *awwa*
wa-shterū lī bi-l-ḥijāb

al-ḥijāb qad ḥa-*wwa*-jabaw lī-*uwwi*
wa-th-thirayya sāyera

'iḥira li yya-*wwa* khawātī *uwwi*
ya jamī'a l-ḥaḍāra
[zaghrūda]

It is the hour of mercy,
and the devils are not here.

My family, screen me
and cover me with many veils.

The veils have veiled me,
and the lights are lit.

Hail me, my sister,
all you who are present.
[zaghrūda]

Transcribed by Avi Shvitiel

Translated by Avi Shvitiel

Recitation 8.2: "Alā na 'īm yā beda"

Recording number: D605 (=D597)

Performers: Same as recitation 8.1

Recitation 8.3: "Allāh yā Allāh, yā 'ālem bi-ḥālī"

Original recording number: D606

Substitute recording number: D599 (23 February 1937)

Performers: Same as recitation 8.1

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 62-66$

Solo

Voices

Al- lāh yā Al- lāh yā 'ā- lem bi-

Percussion