



Research paper for the 27th Conference for Arabic Music in Cairo, November 2018, the third session.

Title:

**Arabic music in the shadow of 'World Music'
A critical survey**

Author:

Associate Professor, PhD

Søren Møller Sørensen

Department of Art and Cultural Studies

University of Copenhagen

sms@hum.ku.dk

Content:

Introduction

Part 1: World music – a critical genealogy

Part 2: Arabic music in the World Music perspective

Part 3: Alternatives – in practice

Introduction:

When we address the issue of the session today - the importance of the means of distributions, documentation and criticism for Arabic music's situation worldwide - we in my view necessarily must take into consideration the cultural discourses and practices that frame and condition the Arabic music's worldwide distribution and the chances for it to be heard, valued and appreciated in its own rights outside the region in which it originate.

The concept of *world music* is the keyword to one of these discourses and to a cultural practice with great influence on how music from non-Western societies – including music from the rich and diverse Arabic traditions – has been present internationally in the later decades.



This paper therefore offers, first a critical account of the genealogy of this concept and the practices to which it is wedded, and after that some analysis of its consequences for the way Arabic music is presented and interpreted in a couple of widespread Western academic textbooks for university use.

The paper is organized in three main sections.

The first part offers the mentioned critical genealogy and it draws to a wide extent on the work of the American ethnomusicologist Steven Feld.

The second part presents my analysis and critical comments the writing on Arabic music in two books that both carry the concept 'world music' on their title-page. They are "The Cambridge History of World Music", and Oxford University Press' "World Music. A Very Short Introduction".

In the third and last part, I draw on my own experiences with research, teaching and outreach in Copenhagen and propose a view on potential allies and collaborators that might be helpful in our attempts to find ways to make Arabic music in its diversity and cultural richness present for a Western public – and to escape the limitations that the world music discourse in my view impose.

Part 1

World music – a critical genealogy

Since the 1970s and 1980s Anglo-American ethnomusicology often uses 'world music' as the collective term for the disciplines' field of study', particularly where the discipline abandons its former focus on discrete and stable cultures of music in favor of the study of such processes of cultural exchange and hybridization to which concepts as 'globalization' and – indeed – 'world music' hint.

This is showcased in the titles of the above-mentioned comprehensive books. "The Cambridge History of World Music"¹ – is an anthology edited by the American scholar Philip V. Bohlman, and in - "World Music. A Very Short Introduction"² is the same scholar's very brief and very personally tinted account for much of the same issues that are treated in the anthology.

Books like these witness to the academic use of the concept of 'world music', they are a standard reading at Western departments of musicology, and with their particular theoretical perspectives they frame many Western students' first encounter with non-Western music, including Arabic. I shall return to the consequences of this in my paper's part 2.

But 'world music' is also a commercial category and a genre in the field of popular music. The landmark-year for this use is 1987, when a meeting in England of international record companies, broadcasters,

¹ Bohlmann, Philip V. ed. 2013. *The Cambridge History of World Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

² Bohlman, Philipp V. 2002. *World Music. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press



concert-promoters, and others involved with music from around the world coined the new term 'world music' for music from all over the world that had shown to be transformable to formats suitable for international popular music consumers and commercially attractive.

I will argue that in both cases – the academic as well as the commercial - the term world music is inseparable from a heavily biased dichotomy opposing Western art music with all other music of the world. And I will argue that despite the many rounds of self-critical scrutiny among Western ethnomusicologists, they still, when they enter a discourse governed by this concept, tend to apply a homogenizing view on non-Western music as Western art music's 'other'.

One of the most fervent critics of the concept and ideology is the American ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, and his critical account of the genealogy of this concept supports many of my critical observations.

According to Feld, the concept 'world music'

Circulated first by academics in the early 1960s to celebrate and promote the study of musical diversity, the phrase *world music* began largely as a benign and hopeful term. In those days, nostalgically remembered by many for their innocence and optimism, the phrase *world music* had a clear populist ring. It was a friendly phrase, a less cumbersome alternative to *ethnomusicology*, the more strikingly academic term that emerged in the mid 1950s to refer to the study of non-Western musics and musics of ethnic minorities. Like *ethnomusicology*, *world music* had an academically liberal mission, to oppose the dominant tendency of music institutions and publics to assume the synonymy of music with Western European art music. And in practical terms, the world music idea was meant to have a pluralizing effect on Western conservatories, by promoting the hiring of non-Western performers and the study of non-Western performance practices and repertoires.³

This description agrees well with my own experiences from Scandinavian Universities some decades later. The advent of world music as a trendy concept within academia was concomitant, not only with a highly needed broadening of the cultural view, but also with that criticism of traditional musicological practices that were linked with the youth revolt after 1968 and the general (and productive) turmoil at Western universities of these days. That is to say that the new interest for world music was only one aspect of this criticism and reorientation. Another aspect was that growing interest for Anglo-American pop music that led to the dominance of this music at many institutions - or at least did so in the mind of many students.

But, argues Feld, the advent of world music as a central field of study and as part of the destabilization of the Western art music as the core of the musicological study, resulted in a forceful re-installment of an all-too-well known dualism.

³ Feld, Steven. 2000. "A sweet lullaby for Word Music," *Public Culture* 12(1), 146-47.



Whatever the success of these aims, the terminological dualism that distinguished *world music* from music helped reproduce a tense division in the academy, where musics understood as non-Western or ethnically other continued to be routinely partitioned from those of the West. The binary reproduced by the *world music* concept thus participated in reinscribing the separation of musicology, constructed as the historical and analytic study of Western European art musics, from *ethnomusicology*, constructed by default as the cultural and contextual study of musics of non-Europeans, European peasants, and marginalized ethnic or racial minorities. The relationship of the colonizing and the colonized thus remained generally intact in distinguishing *music* from *world music*.

4

This separation of *music* from *world music* that both in Steven Feld's and my view is untenable unfortunately still seems to inform the discourse and it seems to trap even a highly reflective researcher as Philipp Bohlman, when he despite all attempts to deconstruct the binary unwillingly substantiates it by generalizations on both sides:

The complex aesthetic embeddedness of world music is one of the ways in which it radically from Western music. Aesthetic embeddedness is strikingly evident I sacred music, where music's meanings are so often dependent on its ability to do something, to effect change or to bring about transcendence. ⁵

Am I right when I assume that the very concept of world music here imposes a narrative haunted by very old prejudiced ideas? Will Bohlman rescue the impossible distinction between *music* and *world music* by confusing the existence of the regulative idea of aesthetic autonomy in the West with a Western music culture that is the full realization of this idea? – and will he rid the rest of the world of any separated cultural space for aesthetic enjoyment and acknowledgement? - and why?

Steven Feld asks the extreme relevant question:

In whose interests and in what kind of academy must ethno and world remain distinct from a discipline of music, a discipline where all practices, histories, and identities could assert equal claims to value, study, and performance?⁶

World music as a field of academic study developed in concordance with the development of world music as a genre of popular music that, epitomized by the decision taken by the above mentioned meeting in England in 1987. In the same decade popular music studies – read: the study of Anglo-American popular music genres pop, rock etc. – entered the academic curriculum, and one of the founding fathers of rock-studies as an academic discipline, Simon Frith, observed not only that “world music, the sounds of countries other than North America and Western Europe had begun to be recorded, packaged and sold as a

⁴ Feld, A sweet lullaby, 147

⁵ Bohlman, *World Music – A Very Short Introduction*, 13

⁶ Feld, A sweet lullaby, 147



successful new pop genre” but he also asked us to observe the link between the ideologies or theoretic orientation of the two emerging disciplines.

Feld elaborates this notion, stressing that the new dominant discipline of Western popular music studies so to speak enforced its ideological concerns on the discipline of ethnomusicology and thus was an important force behind its move in the ‘word music’-direction.

Even though much of the early emphasis was on studying Western popular musical forms, particularly rock music, popular music studies’ concern to theorize the global dominance of mediated musics in the twentieth century signaled to ethnomusicology that its uncritical naturalization of “authentic traditions” was in trouble. Increasingly, ethnomusicology incorporated insights from popular music studies to effect a shift from studying bounded and discrete musical worlds to ones created out of contact histories and colonial legacies, out of diaspora and hybridity, out of migration, urbanization, and mass media.⁷

This went well with what happened on the record-market where record sets aiming at documentation and representation of non-Western music gradually were replaced by ‘hybrid’ product in which Western stardom and exotic appeal wedded to create a commercial success. The best known examples of this are Paul Simon’s *Graceland* (1986) with South African musicians, and David Byrne’s *Rei Momo* (1989) with Latin American musicians.

I remember the heated discussion of this time about the ethics of Paul Simon’s South African adventure and about the aesthetic authenticity of the outcome. And I remember the gradual development of mixed sentiments that I reckon most of those engaged in the discussion of pros and cons concerning world music share today. As a product of modern communication- and information-technology and of global-market-forces, the concept of world music is inseparable from the concept of globalization. And both are double-faced. They are both linked with the hope for a free and open world with rich cultural encounters around the globe beyond traditional binaries such as east-west, north-south and beyond inherited patterns of domination, be they colonial, post-colonial or simply a matter of the lack of global economic justice. And they are linked with more pessimistic sentiments and concerns with regard to potential attrition – wearing down - of the far-away cultures to which we now have immediate access.

Philip Bohlman reflects on this in his preface to “The Cambridge History of World Music”:

World music can raise fears that we are losing much that is close to home. Its homogenizing effect threatens village practices as it privileges the global village. Its dissemination across the globe depends on the appropriation of transnational recording companies, whose primary interests are to exploit cultural resources. Fusion and border-crossing may enrich some world-music styles, but the

⁷ Feld, A sweet lullaby, 148



impoverish others. At the beginning of the 21st century, there is much about the rhetoric reality of globalization that has given world music a bad name.⁸

The particular qualities of music from, preferably, far-away places are threatened by the way they are made part of a music consumption framed by the ideologies and practices of world music. Or phrased slightly differently: the very cultural difference that the world music consumer demands is threatened by the mechanisms that satisfies this demand.

This paradox or dilemma of world music in a globalization perspective is met with different strategies. How are we to cope or to live with it? Some propose new speculative, critical theories informed by postmodern philosophies questioning of the very concept of 'difference'. So for instance Veit Erlman in his ambitious article "The Aesthetic of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s". While others, like Philipp Bohlman and I, recommend more pragmatically to seek a 'middle ground', and to look critically

... at the ways in which musicians and managers have turned to world music to appropriate and exploit musical traditions and to recognize how the abundance of world music today offers the opportunity to experience the diversity of human societies like never before.⁹

Part 2

Arabic music in the World Music perspective

I am sure that everybody present at the 27th Conference for Arabic Music in Cairo will understand that I am not comfortable with introducing a perspective that reduces the rich and diverse field of musical expression in the Arab world to 'a world music genre'. This perspective with its implications of otherness, distantness and unfamiliarity seem so obviously out of the place in this gathering of experts with the most intimate relations to Arabic music in all respects: aesthetically, historically, practically, theoretically. But I am sure that an analysis of the impacts of academically and commercially instituted world music perspective is a necessary part an adequate discussion of this session's issue.

World music - as a discursive construct and as hard fact in the international music business - is a factor that cannot be neglected in the analysis of those practices of distribution, documentation and criticism the role of which we are here to discuss today. It is to a great extent framing and determining the conditions of these practices.

⁸ Bohlman, *World Music – A Very Short Introduction*, preface II

⁹ Ibid. preface II



This leads us back to the World Music textbooks that I mentioned above. They are intended for use at Western universities and the introduction to Arabic music they offer will often be the students' first encounter with this music. That is, they have the potential of influencing the students' basic conception of Arabic music and determine what they bring with them in their future capacities of educators, music life organizers or music business executives.

The most striking about the representation of Arabic music in the comprehensive "The Cambridge History of World Music" is its sparseness. Stephen Blum's chapter "Foundation of musical knowledge in the Muslim World"¹⁰ offers a brief, but well written and well-informed survey over classical Arabic scholarship as found in the in the writing of old masters. Blum's account follows "three principal lines of inquiry: music as a branch of mathematics, music making as a topic of belles-lettres (*adab*), and the forms of listening that are legitimate from various religious perspectives"¹¹, and he succeeds in giving an overview that are sensitive to the intellectual dynamics of the intellectual edifices in question, to the musical issues linkage with broader intellectual concerns and to the intercultural aspect: among those the importance of Arabic interpretation of text from the Greek tradition. Later chapters in the book, which titles make us expect to learn more about more recent events in the history of music in the Arabic world, dissatisfy this expectation. The chapter "Music in the mirror of multiple nationalisms: sound archives and ideology in Israel and Palestine"¹² by Ruth F. Davis, shows to be an account of Jewish ethnomusicological documentation projects only scantily framed by the reference to a similar Palestinian enterprise. The chapter "Sufism and the globalization of sacred music"¹³ is written by a leading expert in Indian and South-Asian Sufism, Regula Burckhardt Qureshi. It contributes to the international research in the transformation of Sufi *samā'* to a world music genre by asking how this new spread of 'Sufi music' beyond its traditional regional and religious belonging links with the fact that Sufism for centuries has been a transnational phenomenon with syncretistic potentials. But the chapter focusses on Sufism in India and Pakistan, and we are left without accounts current Sufi praxis for instance in Egypt, where both present-day ritual praxis and staging of *samā'* and *ḥadra* for paying audiences deserve focused scholarly interest.

As part of the *Cambridge History of* –series the book present itself with the ambition of being a standard reference work in its field. But it leaves the reader without any introduction to the rich histories of Arabic music, be it old or new, be it detached from or be it linked with other big musics of the world. Could it be that Arabic music has disappeared in the abyss between '*music and world music*'?

¹⁰ Bohlmann, *The Cambridge History of World Music*, 103-24

¹¹ Ibid. 103-04

¹² Ibid. 498-521

¹³ Ibid. 584-605



Despite the very modest format, the Oxford University Press *A Very Brief Introduction*-series is not less prestigious. Its authors are picked from the very pantheon of the internationally dominating Anglo-American musicological milieu and the scholarly standard is beyond doubt. Despite this, I find Philipp Bohlman's introductions the Arabic music in this book problematic. Not so much because they are brief and written by a scholar who is not specialized in this field. My concerns are more about a certain tendency to generalization and binary thinking that I link with the ways that the world music discourse constructs the field and determines the perspective.

Bohlman addresses several topoi from the Western academic writing on Arabic music: the *samā'*-discussion – that is: theological considerations on the legitimacy of music and listening -, Sufism and Sufi-music, the first Conference for Arabic Music in Cairo 1932, and the stardom of Umm Kulthūm.

He connects these issues in a free essayistic way that you may call 'inviting to further consideration' or bluntly 'slippery'. And reading his text on these well-researched issues, I cannot escape the suspicion that his frequent reinterpretations of other scholars' research and arguments serve the purpose of supporting that unlucky distinction between '*music* and *world music*' to which I now have referred several times.

Not that everything is wrong. It is very far from being so. But for instance, when he presents the view on the holy Qur'an as basically a thing to be 'sung' and 'heard' – in wordings close to those of Kristina Nelson¹⁴, the leading American expert in koranic recitation – he seemingly does this, less to inform about a Muslim's view on this holy book and its use, but rather in order to assert a thesis that can be condensed to the banal binary: Western music is basically founded in aesthetic autonomy while 'the rest' (again: world music) is characterized by an "aesthetic embeddedness" that at the end of the day is a matter of 'sacredness'. This is nothing but a reduction ad absurdum that blinds the eyes to the complex negotiations of religious and secular interpretations of the meanings and powers of sound, listening and music.

The comments on the Cairo Conference, 1932, take the same bend. It starts by summarizing the arguments from Ali Jihad Racy's article "Historical Worldviews of Early Ethnomusicologists: An East-West Encounter in Cairo 1932"¹⁵. Racy observed that two competing views clashed in Cairo in 1932. The Western scholars and composers present were roughly speaking inclined to protect and preserve Arabic music, while the Arabs – and particularly the Egyptians – called for reform and modernization and for the extension of their music's technical and expressive means, and here Bohlman is right in stressing the 'orientalist' dimension of the Western position:

¹⁴ Nelson, Kristina. 2001. *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press

¹⁵ Racy, Ali Jihad. 1990. "Historical Worldviews of Early Ethnomusicologists: An East-West Encounter in Cairo 1932". I *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, edited by Stephen Blum, Philipp v. Bohlman og Daniel M. Neumann. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 68-94



The European position bore all the earmarks that of what Edward Said has called 'orientalism'. The orientalist 'East' was transformed by the European gaze into an object at which one might indeed marvel, but also an object that was helpless against the intervention of the West. The magnificence of Arab music, therefore, lay in its historical inertness, in the fact that its narrative had been closed.¹⁶

More doubtful is the assertion that East and West at the Cairo Conference were definitely unable to communicate due to the differences in terminology and in the mental mapping of music, song and other sound-practices. In order to support this argument, he asserts that the musical world that the Western guests met in Cairo 1932 was basically a Muslim musical world and that the mental mapping of the diverse vocal and instrumental phenomena in question was basically a mapping from inside Islam. If we had been flies on the walls at the at the Conference, we would have witnesses an endless series of clashes of ontologies and terminologies, Bohlman perpetuates, and continues

We were not flies at the walls at the Cairo Congress, of course, but we do know that the congress, the historical character of its encounter notwithstanding, produced little agreement on anything. In part such results are endemic to encounter. In part, they were inevitable in Cairo in 1932 because of the complex ways in which it is possible to talk about music within Islam – or more to the point, not to talk about music.¹⁷

Did the Arabs partaking in the Cairo Conference form a united front, talking about music from 'within Islam'? What would the Christian Arabs present think about that interpretation? And what would we? The reform and modernization inclination from the side of the organizers, the modern nationalist leaning of many of the delegates and the general level of Western-Style music education in the Middle east at that time taken into consideration, it would be more realistic to assume that an open-ended negotiation of religious and secular and Eastern and Western ontologies and terminologies. Am I unjust, when I suggest at that the unlucky discourse of world music traps the author in homogenizing binaries?

The same bias can be observed in the author's interpretation of the career of Umm Kulthum. Many academic Western readers will know Virginia Danielson's¹⁸ balanced and well-informed account of Umm Kulthum's deliberate navigation between traditional Islamic values and modernizing trends in twentieth-century Egypt. And like Danielson and many others Bohlman takes his point of departure in Umm Kulthum's childhood experiences with Qur'anic recitation and *inshad dini* in her village in the Delta. And yes, indeed, Umm Kulthum is *min al-mashaykh* and her upbringing in a traditional Muslim rural environment is of great

¹⁶ Bohlman, *World Music – A Very Short Introduction*, 49

¹⁷ Ibid. 56

¹⁸ Danielsson, Virginia. 1997. *The Voice of Egypt. Umm Kulthum, Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: Chicago University Press



importance both for her actual artistic trajectory and for her public image. But does this imply that Umm Kulthum *in toto* must be understood on the basis of an Islamic musical ontology as Bohlman suggests? “In the course of Arab music history musical increasingly framed the articulation of what was inside and outside Muslim society, and what was acceptable and questionable”, this we read and accept – as we ignore the disputable equation of Arab and Muslim – and we follow the author in his continuation:

Recitation of the Qur’an (*qirā’ah*) and the call to prayer (*adhān*) were not considered musical activities at all, but rather practices designated by ‘reading’, one of the literal meanings of *qirā’ah*. The role of music in the reading of religious texts is that of enhancing the meaning through clarification. It is this role that provided the basis of Umm Kulthūm’s ‘musical’ education.¹⁹

So far so good; the format of the publication taken into consideration, we must accept abbreviations of complex discussion. The problems occur when the author’s attempt to map a generalized Muslim view on ‘music’ is projected upon Umm Kulthūm.

In every respect traditional song provided the basis for Umm Kulthūm’s style and repertory for the rest of her life... The ways in which she employed mode, or *maqām*, were anchored in the recitation of the Qur’an. Prosody and poetic patterns owed their form and function to sacred texts. Even the relation of her voice to the ensembles accompanying her, small orchestras during the last decades of her life, revealed her unwillingness to abandon fundamental Muslim aesthetics.²⁰

I have no intention of questioning the great importance of Umm Kulthūm’s Muslim upbringing for her life and artistic career, nor the importance of values and references shared with a great international Muslim audience. But the level of generalization and the amount of unsupported allegations in the quoted passage are too big. It is more than doubtful if ‘fundamental Muslim aesthetics’ is the right key to all parts of Umm Kulthūm’s repertoire. It is more than obvious that they play different roles in different parts of this repertoire. They play a direct and obvious role in her religious songs and - at the best - a more distant and mediated in the romantic and nationalistic. And it is puzzling what actually is meant when it is alleged that “The ways in which she employed mode, or *maqām*, were anchored in the recitation of the Qur’an”. Umm Kulthūm’s songs were not products of her fancy. They were artworks composed and written by the leading composers and poets of her age. We know about Umm Kulthūm’s strong will and her great influence on the composers and poets that delivered her material. But this doesn’t make Umm Kulthūm the author to her songs. They were as we know the works of composer as Zakaria Ahmas, al-Qasabgi, al-Sunbati and others, and of poets as Ahmad Rami, Ahmad Shawqi, Beiram al-Tunisi and other – and their artistic skills and stylistic choices can from very obvious reasons not be derived from Umm Kulthūm’s biography.

¹⁹ Ibid.57

²⁰ Ibid. 54-55



Now one might say that I do not pay justice to Philip Bohlman and his “World Music. A Very Short Introduction”. And one is right in saying so. In many respects it is a good book. It is informative and thought-provoking, and even the passages that I have quoted a criticized you will find much correct information that is needed for the introduction that is the books *raison d’être*. What worries me is that its author – despite all talk about cultural dynamics and hybridization - hypostatizes cultural differences, apparently trapped in the unlucky dichotomizing thinking that follows of the world music discourse’s insistence of the existence of two kinds of music. Allow me to repeat Steven Feld question that echoes in all I have written:

In whose interests and in what kind of academy must ethno and world remain distinct from a discipline of music, a discipline where all practices, histories, and identities could assert equal claims to value, study, and performance?²¹

Part 3

Alternatives – in practice

To be more than a commodity on an international market for exotic excitement, to be more than shelf among other in the CD-shop’s world-music section, to be more than a show on an World Music-festival followed by Siberian Throat Song or Afro-Cuban Jazz, Arabic music needs to establish its own links with audiences and institutions outside the Arab world.

This, indeed, is no easy task, and it will not be a viable way without strong allies. So when we turn to the more practical side of our topic today, we might start by considering, where to find partners that have an honest interest in genuine dialogue and a willingness to allow music from the rich Arab traditions the time and space needed for a deeper appreciation in aesthetic as well as in cultural terms.

It is obvious that there will be participants present at this conference with richer and broader experience with international artistic cooperation than mine. My modest contribution to this discussion thus will be a brief survey of the possibilities as they show from my perspective as a professor in Copenhagen.

In my own attempts in Copenhagen to make Arabic music accessible to my fellow countrymen, I find allies in roughly speaking three groups.

One group is made up by experimental musicians and composers. The formation of this group has a long history, intimately connected to Western modernism and avant-garde. Since the advent of Western musical modernism in the early twentieth century music from non-Western traditions – among those the Arabic –

²¹ Feld, A sweet lullaby, 147



has been a source for inspiration for musicians and composers looking for alternatives to the Western tradition. So it is still, and we will find some of the most competent and curious ears and minds in this group, and some of the best interlocutors for Arab colleagues with shared interests in technical and aesthetic issues.

A second group consists of academics and students with a broader interest in Arabic culture. Some will be found at the sections for musicology or at the departments for Art and Cultural Studies that today is the usual umbrella for the traditional art disciplines at our universities. Others will be found at the departments for Middle East Studies. This last group is very important, as it is only here that we can expect to find adequate language competences. Much too much research, teaching and outreach work today is carried out by professional with none or very limited Arabic proficiency. In all this group of academic with the broader cultural view on the music is very important as 'bridge builders' to the public.

The last group is formed by the still growing number of Arab musicians, artist and other intellectuals present in the Western cities. It is imperative that the musical traditions incarnated by Arab musicians, for instance I Copenhagen, are channeled to musical audiences in this city. But it is equally important to counteract the tendency for these musicians to be isolated from their original cultural context; thus the importance of engaging Arab artists and intellectuals from other fields. It also importance to do our best to maintain or revitalize these musicians contacts with the musical and cultural environments in which they originate.

Right now in Copenhagen I am preparing a project, that through concerts and concert-lecture and through visits from by musicians from different Arabic countries will deepen and widen the public understanding of the richness and diversity of present day Arabic music, and thus counter-act any tendency to generalizing or homogenizing music culture that is much more worth than this.

For projects like this, as for the advantageous dialogue with the groups mentioned above, the first and foremost requisite is a trusting cooperation across the borders. Face to face cooperation – be it in terms of music or academically – is the best or maybe even the only way to minimize the impact of interests that are alien to our artistic and scholarly objectives.