

ample, researchers of musical instruments might undertake a more detailed history of how the gender associations of the classical Uzbek two-stringed lute *dutar* associations originated and the ways in which they have shaped performance practice on the instrument. Similarly, scholars of Central Asian regional studies may expand on how the sedentary, more heavily Islamic nature of Uzbek civilisation throughout its history (particularly in the court cities of Bukhara, Khiva, and Xorazm) contributed to traditional conceptualisations of gender – especially when contrasted with nearby nomadic civilisations. Finally, gender scholars will likely wonder why the book addresses only traditional definitions of femininity among Uzbek female musicians, rather than exploring alternative or queer gender identities. Unfortunately, this is a topic that is still extremely difficult to study academically in much of post-Soviet Central Asia; in the same way that, as Merchant astutely notes, “[m]usic as resistance is a markedly absent metaphor in Tashkent” (p. 32), unconventional or resistant gender identities are similarly excluded from mainstream views and discourses. Investigating or questioning traditional conceptualisations of gender and gender roles in this particular fieldwork site would likely be met with confusion or dismissal by collaborators, and could very well jeopardise important working relationships in the field. Certainly, Merchant’s silence on this topic serves as a clear indication of the firm traditional beliefs about music and gender that currently shape women musician’s lives in Tashkent; perhaps it can also provide a basis for future research when the questioning of these traditional beliefs becomes easier to discuss openly.

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Lisa Urkevich, *Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar*. New York: Routledge, 2015. xiv, 356 pp., 150 black and white and 32 color photographs, 77 musical transcriptions, maps, glossary, bibliography, compact disc with 31 examples. ISBN 9780415888707 (Hardback) US\$ 160.00, 9780415888721 (Paperback) US\$ 63.95.

Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar by Lisa Urkevich is an encyclopedic account of the music and dance of one of the least documented and little understood regions of the world. Far from hyperbole, “encyclopedic” really is the best way to describe the intent, content, and usefulness of the volume. With nearly two hundred photos, plentiful musical transcriptions, an accompanying compact disc recording of thirty-one performances, and a glossary of over four hundred Arabic language terms, the volume with its compact disc is a reference work presented for checking and cross checking the names, descriptions, and sounds of 1) people, communities and regions, 2) styles of sung poetry, music,

and dance, and 3) instruments, rhythms, and melodies from a large part of the Arabian Peninsula. It should be noted that while the author does not include the music of the countries Oman, the United Arab Emirates, or Yemen in her study, many of the traditions of nomadic Bedouin, sedentary-tribal, and coastal and seafaring communities of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar extend to similar kinds of communities in those countries, situated on the Eastern and Southern edges of the Arabian Peninsula.

Urkevich answers many questions about music in the Gulf by outlining a detailed taxonomy of native categories. For example, Bedouin arts, comprised primarily of chanted verse, should be distinguished from the Hadari arts of sedentary peoples which incorporate drumming and, as a consequence, a rich discourse describing drums, frame drums, and rhythmic patterns. The author makes distinctions between types of *arda*, music for battle and warfare now recast for festivals and national holidays, and a wealth of love songs, the music of weddings, and music for trance and healing. As a woman living and working in the region for two decades, Urkevich has had special access to contexts for music making that are off limits to men. This enables her to highlight the abundance of women's music, which she depicts as even more *de rigueur* than that of men in certain social settings. The author also profiles sixteen professional musicians, both men, such as Mohammad 'Abdu and 'Abdul Majid 'Abdullah, and women, for example 'Itab, Tuha, and Ibtisam Lutfi, singers whose careers may have been eclipsed by contemporary conservatism but who often pursued music in spite of disapproving parents or other authorities. Even if these musicians are no longer actively performing, Urkevich identifies the importance of their musical legacy in recorded form. This musical legacy, the author suggests, can be accessed and should be archived (pp. 247–60).

Another musical realm introduced in the book is *al-funun al-wafida*, or “incoming arts,” referred to as such because of their “roots in outside cultures” (p. 138). In Urkevich's register, *Al-funun al-wafida*, comprises the distinct musical styles of peoples originally from East and Central Africa, and from Iran. African genres such as *laywa*, *tanbura*, and *zar*, although originally associated with healing, trance, and spirit possession in private contexts, are now often performed in public festivals where even audience participation is encouraged. Bagpipe music (*habban/jirba*), furthermore, is associated with communities of Persian descent. Now considered part of local heritage, the sounds of these unique traditions, once confined to particular communities and contexts, have even percolated into popular music recordings. Finally, musical traditions associated with seafaring and maritime trade, most notably pearl diving, surround the Gulf and comprise one of its most remarkable musical repertoires (cf. Olsen 2002). Describing the teams of workers on various vessels, the author writes, “the farther north the port of the fleet, the more likely the crew was Arab, Bedouin, or Persian, and the further south, the more likely there would be African, Indian or Baluchi” (p. 153). The author continues, “collective songs by the crew were enhanced by specialist singers and musicians who were key to the operation” (p.155).

In many ways, this book is a positivist work that labels, describes, defines, and redefines literally hundreds of terms related to expressive culture. If placed on the shelf along with other English language literature on music and dance of the Arabian Peninsula, the aim and style of the book falls somewhere between *Dictionary of Traditional Music in Oman*, by the Egyptian Ahmad al-Shawqi (1985), annotated and revised by the German and American scholar, Dieter Christensen (1994), and the vivid ethnographic studies by a number of ethnomusicologists of the region included in the 6th volume on the Middle East of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Danielson, Marcus, Reynolds 2004). The author explicates her goals for the volume:

(...) local heritage is disappearing rapidly and nationals urgently seek to archive data, preserve their customs, and teach their children about their traditions. (...) Even advanced scholars and ethnomusicologists concerned with an anthropological perspective cannot properly discuss or interpret relative values, changes, and social phenomena without a basic understanding of terms and characterizations. (p. x)

In addition to the number of questions it answers, Urkevich's work is also valuable for the number of questions it raises. For example, the book serves as a register of indigenous practices of the dominant culture of the Arabian Peninsula, yet it is well known that so-called locals represent just a minority of most national censuses in the Gulf. With large immigrant populations of ex-patriot workers making up the majority of communities in the nations studied, one must wonder how, exactly, to describe the music of a particular place whose native population is itself a minority. Given the relatively recent establishment of the modern nation state in the Arabian Peninsula and the power of oil wealth, something that has transformed Gulf countries and their inhabitants from every walk of life, it is in the interest of each Gulf nation to define, describe, and promote its musical heritage as an attribute of national culture. The author herself warns that "local heritage is disappearing rapidly" (p. x), and hence the volume can be read as an attempt to summarise previous work on performance culture in the region, to recuperate memories of musicians with experience of the past, and to preserve a snapshot of current practice where possible. Nevertheless, because the Gulf countries are among the most globalised in the world, a reader might wonder about the presence of people from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and especially other parts of the Arab world. These peoples, who have been part of the fabric of social and economic culture in the Gulf for decades and who have surely influenced the soundscape that Urkevich seeks to capture, remain curiously absent in the volume.

In a relatively understudied area of the world, Urkevich's position as a researcher is unparalleled: she has lived for nearly twenty years in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and has traveled extensively in the region, primarily as a researcher. As a professor at the American University in Kuwait for more than twelve years, she has benefitted from relationships with students and colleagues who have been "peer-reviewing" her lectures and handouts through constructive feedback, phone calls, "instagrams" and text messages. It is obviously to this readership that the book is appropriately dedicated (p. xii). Urkevich uses her extended residence in the Peninsula to legitimate an authoritative and normative voice, thereby bypassing the academic ritual of providing extensive ethnographic evidence for assumptions made. For example:

Dosari elders can never recall a time when they did not use the tar [frame drum]. Indeed, during the days of battle, it was standard for drummers, no older than fourteen, to ride alongside the warriors (...) To sing and inspire. If victorious, the song type would change: the rhythm would be altered and the tempo would increase. If a comrade were killed, his blood would be rubbed on the head of the drum and then later, when the instrument was played, it could remind all of retribution as well as honor the deceased. (p. 76)

While interviewees are listed in the bibliography, readers will surely be curious to know more about the particular contexts in which the author collected this and many other fascinating stories. Furthermore, given Urkevich's unique repertoire of experiences and perspective on her subject matter, I yearned for an overarching theme or set of issues. However, the author does not present a narrative framework constructed around historical trajectory, a theoretical apparatus, or a thematic focus, all features of ethnomusicological scholarship and

representation. Although based in part on ethnographic experience, there is little reference to the relationships between the researcher and her consultants, and few reflexive accounts of Urkevich's position in the field. When ethnographic sources for the author's assertions are provided, they are either implied or referenced parenthetically, by place, alphabetic letter, and date (i.e. (Riyad C 2010) (p. 78)), which the author suggests was done in order to protect the identities of her consultants. To legitimate this lack of alliance with ethnomusicological conventions, she writes the following caveat at the outset: "I did not see to write an academic study that focuses on processes and values with a western anthropological perspective. There was greater need to look toward regional objectives" (p. ix).

One innovative feature of the volume is the text boxes that are sprinkled throughout the book. Many of the text boxes include the author's accounts of particular experiences or the testimony of a musician (p. 70), while other text boxes reproduce historical accounts by other authors (p. 73). Yet, the text boxes, rather than consistently contextualising descriptive material, sometimes just include more descriptions of instruments or genres (i.e. pp. 95-6). In parsing out the vast nomenclature for musical genres, instruments, dances, rhythms, and contexts for musical performance, the author's charge is evident. The usefulness of the volume lies mainly in this encyclopedic nature, and in its constant definition and redefinition of musical terms. Not only are terms given in Arabic, but Urkevich often includes literal meanings as well as their root derivations, an aspect of the Arabic language that even non-Arabic speaking readers or students of the language can appreciate. Native readers and students and scholars of Arabic, however, will particularly value the lexical comprehensiveness of the publication. The publisher is to be congratulated for including Arabic terms in Arabic script and in transliteration throughout the text and in the extensive glossary of more than four hundred forty terms. Urkevich's work may be considered a definitive point of arrival for readers interested in a comprehensive introduction to or summary of the varied performance arts of the Gulf; for scholars of the region it can serve as a point of departure for comparative research.

While perhaps not explicitly pursued, there are several consistent threads that emerge from a thorough reading of the book. First, and this is something that the book explicitly celebrates, the Gulf is rife with music and social, calendrical, agricultural, vocational, industrial, religious, spiritual, and recreational rituals and events that seem to be associated with music. Second, certain musics, originally tied to contexts now extinct, for example battles between neighbouring tribes or long sea voyages on small sailing ships, have been recontextualised by nationally sponsored folklore troupes that nurture and enjoy these traditions in the context of clubs and festivals. This phenomenon is bolstered by various nation states and their ministries of culture and tourism that patronise traditional arts through institutional support, management of the media, and the production of festivals and holidays. One would imagine that such political entities will have a keen interest in Urkevich's work, which is dedicated in part to them (p. ix-xiv). A third theme inexplicitly woven throughout the volume is the interplay between the music of the tribal elite and communities of Africans, originally brought to the region as enslaved people. While the history of enslavement as a publicly acknowledged aspect of the national narrative in the Gulf can be a touchy subject (see for example, Al Harthy 2010), Urkevich provides many matter-of-fact observations of performance traditions by and among African communities and formerly enslaved people. In her description of wedding practices and songs, for example, the author writes of the *zaffa* procession: "At least since the twentieth century the standard *najdi* piece has been '*Habb as-sa'ad*' ('Happiness is coming like the wind...'). Historically, this was sung for free women, and if a bride were a slave, the text would be different and the song would start with '*Fah al bukhur wal ambar*' ('The smell

of incense fills the air')" (p. 128). Descriptions of African performance are enriched with the extensive quotes from the accounts of early scholars, strategists, and travellers to the region, for example, the nineteenth-century Swiss geographer and orientalist John Ludwig Burkhardt, whose *Travels in Arabia* was published in 1829, travel writer and explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, whose *Arabian Sands* was published in 1959, and British military strategist, extraordinary linguist, and eventual advisor to King Saud, H. St. John B. Philby (1885–1960). An extensive account from the 1880s of *tanbura*, an African derived spirit possession and healing ritual as described by the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), serves as an example here (p. 201). Urkevich goes on to report that the practice of *tanbura* as described in Hurgronje's account is now banned by the government (p. 202).

For me, the text really comes to life in the final section on Southwestern Saudi Arabia, which describes the Asir, Bisha, Baha, Jizan, and Najran regions. The author lived in Riyadh and then in the Asir region for four years from 1994 onward and her accounts are based on extensive travels to some of the most remote destinations in the mountainous, verdant microclimates of Asir and the inhospitable desert shared by Saudi Arabia and Oman known as the Empty Quarter. I was particularly fascinated by her descriptions of extremely localised practices that resonate with the contemporary Yemeni and Yemeni-influenced performing arts, which I have witnessed in Yemen and the Southwestern most province of Oman, Dhofar (Rasmussen 2012).

A recurrent fourth theme within the volume is a stigma surrounding music and dance, professional musicians, the playing of instruments, and public musical performance. Observed for centuries by travellers to the region, Urkevich notes that "this uneasy view towards public music making has been largely amplified especially in the past fifty years because of certain religious perspectives" (p. 6). Urkevich's frank description of the effects of this cause: the decline of traditional arts, the disappearance of public performance—particularly of notable women performers—, and the government ban of certain kinds of performance is thus daring. Rather than a critique of religious prohibition, nationalist sanction, or globalised consumerism as irreversible deterrents to the continent's musical infrastructure, however, this book is a celebration of the tenacity of myriad traditions in the Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain in spite of its deterrents. It serves as a register of progenitors, traditions, and the terms of musical discourse based on salvage ethnomusicology, direct observation and experience, and the commitment of an entire career. This record, which may well serve to stimulate the practice, patronage, and further research of music in the Gulf and among its citizenry, must be just a shadow of the ways in which this author has touched, inspired, and mentored her many students, colleagues, informants, and consultants over the past twenty years.

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