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whilst Oriental musicians study and appreciate Western music, Western musicians are still rather in the dark about Oriental music. The aim of the Festival was to begin to redress this imbalance.

I believe there is a hope at Durham for there to be an Oriental Music Department. Universities are feeling the pinch these days, but I hope the idea materialises. The extensive videotaping that went on during the Festival would provide an invaluable basis for teaching, and it seems, for a university that has both thriving Oriental and music departments, an opportunity not to be missed. The study of non-European music is very slight in this country and is very rarely treated as music rather than an aspect of specific cultures; Durham has aroused our hopes.

There follows a review of the Festival, but of course this must be highly selective, and the selection is personal.

Dr. Hormoz Farhat of Farabi University in Tehran gave a useful introductory lecture on the classical music of Iran, discussing both its history and theory. Classical music in Iran has had a considerable revival since the 1920s, but from the 16th century until the present century musical scholarship virtually disappeared, and musicianship became a private domestic affair, this because the prevailing Islamic sect disapproved of music. Before the 16th century there had been a rich culture of musicianship and musicology, associated with the prodigious Islamic scholarship of Iran. Since the musical revival music has again been studied and researched, and it is played well and often by groups associated with radio and television. There has been one innovation: the practice of several instruments playing a composition together in heterophony, as well as solo improvisation, which remains the heart of the music. Dr. Farhat did not discuss folk music which, unlike classical music, is highly diverse and regional, nor pop music which he said was not worthy of our attention.

Two concerts of Iranian music were given by musicians from the National Iranian Radio and Television Centre for the Preservation and Propagation of Tradition Iranian Music. Very few of us had ever heard Iranian music before, and we were most impressed. I think the performances that aroused most interest were those of the Ney (the Iranian flute) and the human voice. I have never seen music performed with such quiet seriousness and intensity. The music is purely melodic, rather than harmonic, and depends for its expression and invention upon very elaborate ornamentation. It is largely improvised, resting on a tradition of about 300 aurally transmitted 'pieces' that are not actually compositions at all but something hard to define - each is something for which an infinite number of performances can be correct representations or realisations.

Professor Tran Van Khe, of the Institute of Musicology in Paris, gave a lecture and two concerts of Vietnamese music, performing with his family. His lecture, which was one of the most entertaining of the festival, concerned the combined influences of China and India upon Vietnamese art and music, and the purely indigenous Vietnamese elements that occur. For example, most instruments used are Chinese but the drum is of Indian origin, and its playing involves a system of rhythmic cycles, with echoic names for strokes, which is analogous to the Indian system and has no parallel in China. On the other hand such instruments as the clappers or the one-stringed zither are purely Vietnamese. The music uses a system of modes. These are not just scales, as in China, but scales with specific ornamentations on specific pitches. Probably because of this subtlety I found the music very hard to follow; I think one would need to be more familiar with it.

There were no concerts of Indonesian music, but there were three lectures on Javanese music that aroused great interest in those unfamiliar with it. Dr. Ernst Heins, of the Jaap Kunst Centre of Ethnomusicology in Amsterdam, gave two lectures. In the first he gave a clear and simple account of the nature of the gamelan, the part each instrument plays in the music, the processes of elaboration used and so on. In his second lecture he gave an account of the contexts in which the gamelan takes part, and the culture, aesthetics and mysticism that surrounds it. We were told, for example, that gamelan is always 'in the air' so to speak, and the musicians merely make it audible. This, together with the veneration paid to the gamelan itself, means stardom, at least traditionally, is unknown - it is the gamelan who speaks, not the musicians. And the audience does not listen in concert fashion and clap afterwards, but talks and drinks and so on; not because the music is background music, but because it is all-encompassing. Dr. Heins concluded his lecture by playing examples of some new developments, especially the work of Ki Nartosabho, who uses many innovations (for example triple time, instead of the usual duple time; elements imported from Bali; two nuclear melodies at once and so on). Ki Nartosabho has de-mystified the gamelan, playing short virtuosic pieces in concert contexts and using short understandable texts instead of the long obscure epics. His music is rooted on the earth instead of looking upwards to the Gods, and sounds rather pop; no doubt the Western influence is to blame.

Miss Jeune Scott-Kemball's lecture on the gamelan itself, as a collection of instruments, was one of the high points of the festival. We were told more about the mysticism of the gamelan and given an account of the making of a Great Gong, a rare event, which Miss Scott-Kemball had recorded on slide and tape. For a while Java came to Durham, such was Miss Scott-Kemball's power of enchantment.

In some ways, the most important inclusions of the festival

DURHAM ORIENTAL MUSIC FESTIVAL AUGUST 7-20, 1976

LYNDON REYNOLDS

The Oriental Festival, held at Durham in August this year, was an entirely unique event for this country: two weeks of music from the Orient, including music from China, Iran, Vietnam, Iraq, Korea, Japan, India and Thailand, together with lectures, both scholarly and unscholarly, on music of these and other cultures.

When we first heard rumours about the Festival some of us were a little incredulous: it seemed too good to be true. In the event it really was splendid. How soon it will be before there is another, one cannot dare guess; it must have cost a great deal in effort and headache. The Festival was conceived by Mr. Keith Pratt (Spalding Lecturer in Chinese at Durham) and Mr. Philip Rawson (Curator of the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art. Mr. Pratt points out that

concerned the music of Korea, for whilst Korean music is virtually unknown in the West, it is rich, vital and approachable. Mr. Jonathan Condit, of Cambridge University, gave two lectures, the first being a very clear and pithy account of the instruments and genres of Korean music, and the second presenting his own research and conclusions concerning the evolution of Korean music over the centuries by extensive elaboration upon simple Chinese tunes, until the original tunes are lost to the ear and forgotten; for example *each crotchet* of a Chinese tune ending up as *four bars* of music in 5/4 time. For scholarly lucidity Mr. Condit's lecture must take the festival prize. I am sure his research could leave 'spin-offs' for contemporary composers.

Members of the National Classical Music Institute of Seoul gave two concerts which included music from all the major traditions – Court music, Aristocratic and Folk. The latter is not folk in our sense, but is named in contrast to the Court and Aristocratic traditions. Court music and, to a lesser extent, Aristocratic music, are austere and often dispassionate, striving to create that calm of mind required by Confucian ideals, whilst not disrupting the noble thoughts of the listeners. Folk music, on the other hand, is highly passionate and often fast and syncopated. We heard examples in this genre of Sanjo, involving a solo instrument with a drum, and of P'ansori, or Korean opera, for one singer and drum, the singer accomplishing all the roles and narration (for as long as eight hours for a full performance).

Most Korean music depends upon extreme ornamentation of individual notes: so much so that 'ornamentation' is a poor description since the 'melody' itself is merely a skeletal entity, not a tune that is embellished by ornament, as in, say, baroque music. Moreover, the Korean sense of pitch is highly fluid so that glissandi, especially the characteristic wide vibrato effects, become the heart of the music, not an ornamental device. Korean music, because of its richness and complexity, and because in it are found together aesthetic attitudes normally found apart, must be an invaluable tradition for Westerners to study. It combines typically Chinese musical ideas with an emotional warmth as great as in Indian music: even the Court music, for all its austerity, conveys a sense of sheer well-being. And whilst its techniques are often the epitome of being non-Western, the music is approachable and easy to enjoy.

There was much more in the festival, but it would take too long to give a full account. But I should mention the performance by Mr. Tong Kinwoon of Hong Kong, upon the Chinese Ch'in. It was a pity we could not have heard something about the involved technique of this instrument and its association with the high culture of the Chinese literati. I hope Mr. Tong, who is a charming man and an

excellent scholar, will return to this country to instruct as well as to play.

Not every event in the Festival was successful, of course, but the majority of events were. The only sour note was caused by the television cameramen, who tended to intrude too much into the performances and aroused much bad feeling. Sometimes an audience can be made to feel like screen extras, a necessary complication in putting on a television show. It was after all our (the audience's) festival, a live event.

It is a strange experience to be bombarded with music from such diverse cultures for two weeks; we often covered, by concerts and lectures, three cultures in a day. Some people got intellectual indigestion, and some found the confusion exhilarating. Several people were quite convinced that the noise in fact produced by one of the canteen toasters was somebody rehearsing something somewhere. It is certainly a freak culture that submits itself to this sort of polycultural bombardment, but I think we should rejoice in it, not erect barriers and limits or build walls against experience.

On the other hand, what does such a festival achieve, since one can only glimpse each culture? For to appreciate a music requires continued exposure and familiarity. One rational justification is that the Festival provided a sampler (a sort of global village bazaar), so that an audience can hear what there is and choose what to follow up afterwards. (But following-up may be impossible if the music one chooses is under-recorded, or, more subtly, is the kind of medium that does not record well.)

Then again, is 'Oriental music' a coherent category at all? Is it not an assorted bag of disparate entities, linked only by a very broad geographical coincidence? Whatever unity there is in the concept is really not because *they* (the Orientals) collectively do something similar, but because *we* (the Westerners) have gone off on a curious tack of our own by elaborating a system of harmonic progression and perhaps, above all, attaching music to notation. Thus, the further we go back in our own development and the closer we get to our own folk traditions, the less we diverge from the Orient.

Is Oriental music a useful area of study for Western musicians? After all, Oriental music often suffers from contact with the West. And it is ironic that most Eastern traditions have a very strong role of teacher and tradition, whereas in the West it is often the tear-aways and tradition-deserters who turn to the East for creative inspiration.

However, our present intellectual climate tends to be mixed and cosmopolitan, and there is no situation of *isolated purity* to protect. We may as well look into the East carefully and profoundly, and we

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may thereby re-discover elements of our own culture that we have lost (as has happened to some extent with Eastern religion and philosophy), and I am sure that our interest will be useful and encouraging to the East where its own traditions are fading, as is often the case. I hope those ministerial representatives who attended the festival took note of the enthusiastic responses given to their countries' music. And we should remember that, contrary to what the National Front might think, many, perhaps most, of the world's great cultural, artistic and spiritual achievements have come about as a result of social and cultural exchange.

Dr. Farhat, during an open discussion on East-West influences, said that Western music had reached an impasse and that Eastern influence could take us forward. He pointed out that Persian poetry and miniature painting both became stale after reaching their zeniths and that it was Western influence, used creatively and selectively, that revived them. Whether or not one believes that Western music as a whole has reached an impasse is irrelevant. Dr. Farhat's point is that in an impasse (which situation can occur at any time) an outside influence can be a new inspiration. The effect of such an influence cannot be predicted, or restricted by doctrine; artists will take from the foreign influence just what *they* require. (Steve Reich's experience of African music is a good example of this.)

The discussion session as a whole was rather disappointing, but really only because the issues involved are too weighty for a session of this sort. Speakers tended to dwell upon distinctions such as that Eastern music is static, whilst Western music is dynamic; or that Eastern music is pentatonic and Western music is diatonic. There is truth in these ideas, but they are too sweepingly and simply expressed. But that is inevitable in a brief discussion where anything as diverse as 'Eastern music' is to be discussed.

There was also a feeling expressed that Eastern music is hard for us to understand. The idea of a great barrier between East and West is a false one. Anything unfamiliar is hard to understand, and anything coming from an unfamiliar culture may be hard to understand as well, but this is not a barrier but a difficulty that can be overcome. Some Oriental music, of course, just *is* hard to understand, by anybody, just as some Western music is. Sometimes a musical form may lose its strength when removed from some context, for example, social, ritual or theatrical contexts, and this problem is more frequently met in Eastern music than Western. But this again is a difficulty, not a barrier.

The British tradition of Oriental study is perhaps too timid and tentative. We should be more prepared to plunge into other cultures and really come to appreciate them. Perhaps this Festival was the first step in the right direction.

John Casken

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