

Music in Middle Eastern Cinema Conference

Tuesday 17th May and Wednesday 18th May

Programme

Tuesday 17th May

Venue: Stewart House, Room ST274/5 (next to Senate House)

Registration from 9.15am

Welcome and Session 1: 9.45am-11.30am

Chair: Carolyn Landau (King's College, London)

Kay Dickinson (Goldsmiths College, University of London)

'Our Contemporary Cultural Crisis': The Composer as Nationalist, the Composer as Cultural Labourer

Tony Langlois (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

Listening to Roots: The Musical Construction of the Authentic in Legzouli's Tenja.

11.30am Tea/coffee

11.45pm

Screening of 'Tenja', (1hr 20 mins, Hassan Legzouli, France 2005)

1 – 2pm Lunch

Session 2: 2pm– 2.50pm

Chair: Laudan Nooshin (City University London)

Nacim Pak (University of Edinburgh)

Exploring the Overlooked Diversity of Bahram Beyzai's Filmmaking Styles

Short break

Session 3: 3pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Katherine Brown (King's College, London)

Film screening: Zurkhaneh (105 mins) by Federico Spinetti (University of Alberta).

4.45 – 5pm Tea/coffee

Followed by Q&A session with Federico Spinetti.

Session 4: 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Chair: Veronica Doubleday (Brighton)

Film screening: Afghan Star (87 mins, 2009) by Havana Marking, followed by Q&A session with the filmmaker.

Wednesday May 18th

Venue: Chancellor's Hall, Senate House South Block.

Registration from 9.15am

Welcome and Session 1: 9.45am-11.30am

Chair: Bronwen Robertson

Kamran Rastegar (Tufts University)

Scoring the Checkpoint: Reflections on the Practice of Composing Music for Palestinian Films

Followed by film screening.

11.30am Tea/coffee

Session 2: 12noon– 12.50pm

Chair: John Baily (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Martin Stokes (University of Oxford)

Music in Turkish Popular Cinema: From Zeki Muren to Orhan Gencebay

12.50pm – 2pm Lunch break

Session 3: 2pm – 4.30pm

Due to unforeseen travel problems, Peyman Yazdanian has had to postpone his trip to the UK.

Replacement session:

Screening of Bashu, Little Stranger (Bashu, Gharibeh-ye Koochak) by Bahram Beyzai (120 mins. Iran, 1985)

Followed by:

Laudan Nooshin (City University London)

‘Music and the Negotiation of ‘Otherness’ in Iranian Cinema: Bashu, Little Stranger’

4.30 Tea/coffee

Session 4: 5pm -7pm

Chair: Stephen Cottrell (City University London)

John Baily (Goldsmiths, University of London) talks about 30 years of documentary film-making.

Followed by a screening of John’s latest film, ‘Across the Border: Afghan Musicians

Exiled in Peshawar’ (55 mins).

Advance booking is requested via Valerie James at music@sas.ac.uk; a contribution to costs of £10 per day is requested on the door. Attendance for students and the unwaged is free.

www.music.sas.ac.uk Tel: 020 7664 4865

London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange (LCACE) is a university initiative promoting the exchange of knowledge and expertise with the capital's arts and cultural sectors. The nine institutions involved are: University of the Arts London; Birkbeck, University of London; City University; the Courtauld Institute of Art; Goldsmiths, University of London; Guildhall School of Music & Drama; King's College London; Queen Mary, University of London; and Royal Holloway, University of London. www.lcace.org.uk

The Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum is open to researchers, students and anyone interested in the music and culture of the region. In the spirit of fostering dialogue and interdisciplinarity, we hope that the issues discussed at the forum will be of interest to a broad audience, including musicologists, ethnomusicologists and other researchers in the arts, humanities and social sciences. In addition, we welcome those working on other aspects of Middle Eastern and Central Asian culture broadly speaking (dance, visual arts, media, film, literature, etc.)

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Iran Heritage Foundation.

Abstracts

Kay Dickinson (Goldsmiths, University of London)

'Our Contemporary Cultural Crisis': The Composer as Nationalist, the Composer as Cultural Labourer

The Events of the Coming Year (Samir Zikra, 1986) picks up its narrative as Munir, a budding Syrian composer, returns to Damascus from his prolonged study sojourns in Moscow, Paris and Rome. In near-fruitlessly pursuing his endeavour to galvanize a "contemporary Arabic music", Munir bears the weight of what the film's director labels "our contemporary cultural crisis". This is a two-fold problem. Firstly, it encompasses the difficulty of assimilating competing values drawn from home as well as overseas. Secondly, it weathers the disadvantages of infrastructural provision that is inadequate to aiding such scholars in successfully pursue creative careers once back home. Like Munir, and countless other cultural workers, Samir Zikra was trained at government expense in the then Soviet Union. As such, the movie opens up a number of debates about the geo-politics of international educational exchange and influence, the kind that instigated not-for-profit state-run artistic organizations in Syria that are, perhaps paradoxically, primarily nationalist in flavour. That these can now no longer rely on second world support is a pressing concern for all those working in such sectors, yet socialist-inclined working conditions still prevail. Films like The Events of the Coming Year, of which there are a fair few from Syria, contribute to and prompt urgent debates on the nature of post-colonial nationalist culture, how, practically, this can be achieved and the means by which they might (or might not) be disseminated, both within the country and further afield.

Nacim Pak (University of Edinburgh)

Exploring the Overlooked Diversity of Beyzai's Filmmaking Styles

Beyzai has often been stereotyped as producing a particular type of film, one that is rooted in the cultural traditions of Iran. This has usually led to the conclusion that his films are inaccessible to viewers unfamiliar with these cultural aspects. However, this is limited to a very restricted reading of Beyzai's works, one that reflects the scope of the study more than Beyzai's style of filmmaking.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first section, I will study Beyzai's use of the traditional performing arts in film. I will particularly look at how his films provide a new medium of expression for the dying traditional arts, particularly in the face of increased pressures on many of the popular practices in the Islamic Republic. As such, I will demonstrate how some of Beyzai's film can be regarded as a reservoir of the Iranian cultural memory. In the second section I will study a few of Beyzai's pre-Revolutionary films as examples to demonstrate how his films present the quotidian details of Iranian society.

Kamran Rastegar (Tufts University)

Scoring the Checkpoint: Reflections on the Practice of Composing Music for Palestinian Films

This presentation draws upon personal experiences of soundtrack composition for Palestinian fictional and documentary films, by reflecting on choices made and strategies employed in scoring these cinema works. By focusing on a paradigmatic and often traumatic setting for much of Palestinian cinema – the checkpoint – this presentation explores not only my own final choices in setting music to scenes set at checkpoints or the separation wall, but also comparing my choices to those made by filmmakers/soundtrack composers for other Palestinian films.

Martin Stokes (University of Oxford)

Music in Turkish Popular Cinema: From Zeki Muren to Orhan Gencebay

This talk will explore Zeki Müren's 'Son Beste' (1955) and Orhan Gencebay's 'Batsın Bu Dünya' (1975). Two 'classics', these represent, respectively, early and late examples of the Turkish popular film musical - a ubiquitous but largely unremarked genre in the cultural study of modern Turkey. The talk will consider their music as a key to some broader interpretative questions in the study of the region's popular cinema.

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Lila (2005) *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
Armbrust, Walter (1996) *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge:

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Gordon, Joel (2002) *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt*. Chicago: MEDOC.

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