UNIVERSITY OF LONDON - SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY
INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL RESEARCH

MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA MUSIC FORUM

Friday May 7th, 2010

Room G22-26 (ground floor), Senate House South Block.

PROGRAMME

Registration from 9.30am

9.45am - Welcome

Session 1: Composers' Panel
9.50am Seth Ayyaz (City University London)

10.40am Raimond Mirza (independent composer)

11.30am – 12noon tea/coffee

Session 2:
12noon Rachel Harris (SOAS)
The virtual life and transnational politics of the London Uyghur Ensemble

12.50pm – 2.20pm Lunch break

Session 3: Focus on Lebanon
2.20pm Marina de Giorgi (SOAS)
The Lebanese underground music scene: a gender arena

2.50pm Claire Launchbury (Royal Holloway, University of London)
Animating music and memory in the context of collective amnesia: Beirut 1982 revisited

3.40 – 4.10pm tea/coffee

Session 4:
4.10pm Saida Daukeyeva (SOAS)
Küi: Meaning and Memory in Dombra Performance among Mongolian Kazakhs

5pm BREAK

5.30pm – 7pm
Book launch: Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, ed. Laudan Nooshin (Ashgate Press)
Including speakers, refreshments and live music. the book will be on sale at 50% discount.

Abstracts

Rachel Harris (SOAS)
The virtual life and transnational politics of the London Uyghur Ensemble

For the past five years I have been playing Uyghur music (Central Asian music from the Xinjiang region of China) in London with a shifting group of Uyghur exile and British musicians. This experience has informed my research in many ways, not only in terms of the repertoire and performance practice but also in terms of identity politics in China. This paper takes as its starting point the riots and serious inter-ethnic violence which occurred in July 2009 in Urumchi (Xinjiang's regional capital). Such events bring government policy on ethnic minorities into sharp focus. The experiences of the London Uyghur ensemble in the lead-up to and the aftermath of the riots serve to highlight two interlinked themes: the role of the internet in linking transnational communities and China's extreme anxiety about this; Uyghur music and the politics of representation.

Marina de Giorgi (SOAS)

The Lebanese underground music scene: a gender arena

This paper seeks to add a view point of popular music in Beirut through the lens of music performances. The musical metaphor theorised by Rice (2003) allow us to capture the gender element of a music performance which constitutes one of the elements of the musical experience in its social mutable meaning. From the gender discourse this paper intends to add a modest contribution to Butler's feminist perspective in mirroring the different portraits of gender. The starting point of my exploration has been the "queer" scene of Beirut, where activists organise themselves to push daily gender boundaries and legalise diverse identities. From there I sought ''queer'' identities amongst Lebanese musicians. My finding drove me into a wide landscape of identities different from the legal ones allowed in the street of Lebanon. My argument is that the alternative music scene gives performers the space to express themselves in regards to their sexuality and gender roles, which they would otherwise have to oppress due to social constraints. Moreover I argue that this space of "resistance" is created through the mutual understanding of the (transnational) alternative musical metaphor by the audience and musicians.

Claire Launchbury (Royal Holloway, University of London)
Animating music and memory in the context of collective amnesia of war in Lebanon

Ravaged by civil war from 1975–1990 the state of Lebanon, which until 1943 had been under French mandate, was invaded by neighbouring Israel in 1982. The siege of Beirut, which following the assassination of president-elect Bashir Gemayel culminated in the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the camps of Sabra and Chatilla has been the subject of memoirs, poetry and film. However, the sheer diversity of factions, shifting loyalties and a subsequent amnesty (legislation passed in 1991) have worked to enforce a sort of stated forgetfulness of its recent traumatic history. While in the absence of the abundant state archives, it is through artistic projects that this memory is being traceably documented. This paper gives a preliminary survey of what might be the role and place of music in the animation of memory order to assess the presence (and absence) of the sonic archive in contemporary cultural discourses.

Saida Daukeyeva (SOAS)

Küi: Meaning and Memory in Dombra Performance among Mongolian Kazakhs

Küi, a major genre of performative art among Kazakhs, is an instrumental composition unfolding a legend or story, disclosed to listeners in an oral narration. Combining verbal and musical elements, it is conceived by the people as narrative in music, and has provided a vehicle for maintaining and passing on historical memories and oral lore. This paper will explore the construction of meaning and memories in küi, focusing on the repertory for the two-stringed long-necked lute, dombra, current among the diasporic community of Kazakhs in western Mongolia. Based on a study of discourse about küi among Mongolian Kazakh dombra-players and analysis of local repertory, I shall examine indigenous concepts of küi and the various dimensions of meaning inherent in performance context, narrative content and musical representation. I shall then discuss the structure of küi as a semantic and musical entity and its implications for processes of learning and variation in dombra performance, as well as the nature of listening experience as understood in indigenous milieu. The paper will also touch upon the issue of musical style in relation to küi meaning, juxtaposing the stylistic repertories of dombra küis among Mongolian Kazakhs and in Kazakhstan. The material presented derives from my fieldwork in the western Mongolian province of Bayan-Ölgiy and Kazakhstan between 2004 and 2006.