



*International
Presentations of
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Festival of the Nile

ABDEL EL RAHMAN EL SHAFIE

Director

MAGDA SALEH, *Consultant*

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1982, AT 8:00

POWER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Opening: Zeffa Wedding Procession

A colorful wedding procession embodying some of the special pageantry inherent to the Egyptian "Zeffa" — during which the bride is accompanied by joyous relatives, villagers and entertainers to her new home.

Zahret Luxor (The Flower of Luxor)

Led by the senior company member, virtuoso rabab player and poet Shamandi Metkal, the rabab ensemble celebrates on "Egypt's violin" the city of Luxor, the glorious "Thebes of the Hundred Gates" of Pharaonic Egypt, with instruments and melodies as ancient as the city of their birth.

Folk Song and Dance

Vocalist and dancer Gamalat Shiha, a renowned singer of traditional epic songs, gives an earthy rendition of a humorous Egyptian folk song, punctuated with dance.

Zar and Tannoura (Exorcism and Spinning)

A popular and complex ritual of presumed Ethiopian origin, the "Zar" may be regarded as a folk form of group therapy for the alleviation of certain types of neuroses. Dance is central to the ceremony, which purports to rid the body of the possessed from the Spirit inhabiting it, and restore the patient to her normal self. Accompanied by throbbing drumming and esoteric chanting, the possessed dances with violent energy escalating to a frenzy followed by crisis, collapse, and release. Following a meditative technique originated by the Mevlevi "whirling" dervishes of Turkey, the Tannoura dancers spin endlessly, manipulating their voluminous skirts and a number of "Duff" with spectacular and mesmerizing visual effect.

Oasis Tableau

The western Desert of Egypt is bisected by a crescent of oases, from the Nile to the Libyan border: Fayyoun, Kharga, Dakhla, Farafra, and Bahariya. Folk singer Ham-mouda El Sai'd renders a poignant love song (Wa'er Ya Ein El Hob Ga'fi) in the Arab tradition, while another senior member of the company, poet and dancer Imam Musal-lim, performs a traditional dance.

Tahtib (Stick Dance)

Accompanied by drum and mizmar, the dancers offer as a prelude to "Tahtib" a ceremonial demonstration of "Raks El Asa" (stick dancing) in three distinct rhythms, ranging from the stately "Juheina" to the catching and popular "Wahda Wa Nus," and culminating in the staccato "Arabi." During this processional, the dancers use the "Asa" as an extension of themselves and their gestures. They demonstrate through myriad variations in the manipulation of the stick a refined and subtle musicality.

The "Tahtib" is the stylization of a combat between two opponents armed with thick bamboo poles, potentially lethal weapons. It is one of the world's oldest surviving martial arts, involving offensive and defensive techniques. Illustrations of "Tahtib" appear on Egypt's ancient monuments, evidence of a form of art/sport that has remained intact for over thirty centuries.

Performance of "Tahtib" is a highly popular form of folk entertainment, and both "Rayyes" Hussein and "Rayyes" Mahmoud are considered outstanding exponents of the art, while drummer Mofaddel Khalil performs his own astonishing "tour de force."

Raqs Sharki (Oriental Dance)

The dance for which Egypt is most renowned is given a rousing performance by Mahassen Hilal, who alternates between feminine languor and erotic undulations, and a vibrant demonstration of the strenuous techniques of muscular control, improvisational talents, sense of rhythm, musicality, and coordination which are requisites of the art.

INTERMISSION

Tahmila (Language of the Instruments)

Borrowing term and form from the tradition of classical Arabic music, the ensemble of instrumentalists — string, wind and percussion — performs an orchestral work during which each musician steps forth to demonstrate his mastery and virtuosity on his archaic instrument.

Nubian Folk Song

The Nubians are the black people residing in the far south of Upper Egypt and the northern Sudan. Nubia has marked the natural southernmost boundaries of Egypt from antiquity. The lives of the Nubians, a Nilotic people, are intimately connected with the river upon whose banks they have lived for countless generations, in ritual and custom. These heirs to a rich, distinct and ancient culture contribute a unique flavor to the flourishing multi-faceted traditions of Egypt. Hassan Samara, an acclaimed monologist and singer, offers a warm and light-hearted song in the manner of his people.

Arab Folk Song and Dance

Singer Fatma Sarhan, widely acclaimed for her rich and powerful voice, engages Ali Kilani of Bahariya in a duet of song and dance in the fashion of the Arabs of the oasis.

Tableau from Luxor — Song and Dance

"Grandfather" Shamandi Metkal, already in his seventies, and mentor to 24 of his family members in the art of rabab-playing, leads the rabab instrumentalists and the musical ensemble in another evocative selection from the folk repertory, as a preamble to the performance of the Ghawazi sisters Hoda and Amani Farouk.

The Ghawazi, considered by some the "gypsies" of Egypt, are of mysterious origin. Their provenance and the time of their arrival in Egypt is still debated. It has been speculated that they may have traveled from as far as northern India, and entered Egypt in the wake of the Ottoman conquerors in 1512. They perform in a style peculiar unto themselves. Here they are joined by Mourad Megalli, who engages them in a "pas-de-trois" and rivals their display by playing his rabab on his head.

Egyptian Drums — Percussion and Cymbals

Gamatat Shiha playing the sagat engages the percussion ensemble in a lively exchange.

Shameddan (Candelabra Dance)

Mahassen Hilal returns to offer a rare display of virtuosity with her elegant rendition of the Candelabra dance, which has been traced back over 200 years. She is today one of the small and diminishing number of dancers capable of demonstrating with awesome mastery the equilibrium and strength necessary for the performance of this dance, over and above the requisites of the oriental dance.

Although the symbolic or ritual meaning attached to the lit candelabra borne throughout may have passed from memory, the reality of balancing a precarious superstructure weighing some 35 pounds on the head never ceases to amaze.

Finale

The company performs a traditional leave-taking song.

The **Festival of the Nile** presents for the first time to American audiences a selection of Egyptian folk music, song, and dance, accompanied by instruments as ancient as Egypt itself. Prior to this American debut tour, the ensemble has performed in festivals in Holland, France, Italy, England, and Tunisia.

During the lengthy course of one of the most conservative civilizations the world has ever known, and beyond its passing through a succession of diverse epochs, Egyptian culture has evolved and sustained a myriad of manifestations of time-honored social customs and traditions, the perpetuation of rich lore, and the practice of numerous arts and crafts of amazing beauty. The Egyptian nation embodies the expression of a wealth of variety, with distinct characteristics evident in the cultures of its people, the inhabitants of its fertile Nile valley and delta, its coastal regions on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, its interior great lakes, its arid deserts east and west, its Sinai and the Suez Canal zone, its crescent of lush oases, Nubia in the far south, its cities, and its rural communities. This venerable culture has crystallized throughout Egypt's history, during nearly fifty centuries that witnessed the Pharaonic kingdoms, the Coptic Christian period, and the era of Islam, absorbing and surviving in its course the multiple influences of ancient Hyksos, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Arabs, Ottomans, Mamelukes, up to the French and British of a more recent age.

The folk traditions, interpretations of human thought and feeling, expressions of the people's ethos, have evolved over the vast span of centuries into various forms and discrete groups determined by the contingencies of everyday life, in labor and leisure, in joy and sorrow, in secular celebration and religious rite. In Egyptian tradition, art and life intermingle inextricably.

Consultant Magda Saleh, who appeared in Ann Arbor in 1979 with dance critic Walter Terry, says of the performers: "Seemingly the incarnation of their ancestors, stepped down from the reliefs, paintings and statuary of monuments and tombs, this group of native entertainers, heirs to countless generations of folk tradition, are choice members of the Cairo-based "Samer" Theatre for the Folk Arts, an organization sponsored and supported by the Ministry of Culture of Egypt. Abdel Rahman El Shafie, one of Egypt's leading young theatre directors, is the "Samer's" dynamic producer. The artists insure survival of Egypt's ancient arts, in a society striving to adapt to an increasingly dizzying pace of change, and the inevitably resulting acculturation. Their appearance in the United States and Canada offers audiences the opportunity of viewing these arts rarely seen outside their native home."

Egyptian Folk Artists

Shamandi Metkal Fereiza Ahmed Mahassen Hilal

Egyptian Folk Singers

Fatma Sarhan Hammouda El Sai'd Gamalat Shiha

Tahtib: Martial Arts

Damel Mohammed Ahmed Mofaddel Khalil

Tannoura Dancers

Saadeyya Khalifa Rayyes Kamel

Rabab Ensemble

Mourad Megalli El Noubi Abdel Aziz

The Instruments

Excerpted from "The Folk Music of Egypt" — an anthology compiled by Tiberiu Alexandru and Emile Azer Wahba; translated and edited by Dr. Magda Saleh.

Wind

The *suffara* or *salamiya* is a tubular reed flute open at both ends and with six holes. The musician has a whole collection of these flutes tuned to various pitches. Each small flute has its large counterpart used to accompany the small ones.

The *arghul* is a double clarinet. The tube on which the melody is played has six holes. A longer drone, which may be lengthened by additional segments fitted into one another, is united to it. The full extension of the small *arghul* may reach 85 centimeters, that of the larger up to 250 centimeters.

The *mizmar* or *zamar* is a simple oboe made of wood whose tube ends in a conical bell. It has eight holes for the fingers, seven on the upper surface and one below. Three types of *mizmar* are in use, differing only in size. They range from the small *sibs* to the *shalabiya* or *mizmar sa'idi* and the *tilt* or *zamr baladi*. The smallest one plays the melody, while one of the others plays a 'basso sostenuto.' If the smallest is lacking, the middle one takes up the melody.

String

The *rabab* or *rababa* is the violin of Egypt. Its sounding box is made of coconut with the top removed and over which a skin of leather is stretched. It has two strings of horsehair and is held vertically, the lower part resting on the player's knee.

Percussion

The most widespread of these is the *darabukka*, also known as *tabla* or *duhla*. This is a drum made from a pottery funnel with a very wide neck whose mouth is covered with thin goat or fish skin. It is played resting across the knee and struck with the fingers of both hands. This is the basic percussion instrument of the folk orchestra.

The *riq* or *duff* is a tambourine of normal size. Very large ones are known as *mazhar*, *hinna*, or *bandir*.

The *tar* is a tambourine with one skin covering, like those above, but without any sounding accessory parts. It is used frequently to accompany folk songs and dances, particularly in Upper Egypt.

The *nakrazan* is a small kettledrum about 30 centimeters in diameter, which is carried hanging from the neck and resting on the player's chest. It is struck with two thin wooden sticks.

The *tabla baladi* is the big drum of folk music. It has two membranes, one of which is struck with a solid wooden stick, the other with a very slender one. It is the percussion instrument typically used in accompanying *mizmar* formations.

Dancers use two pairs of small copper cymbals approximately six centimeters in diameter, which are secured by elastic to the thumb and forefinger of each hand. They are called *sagat*.

As in other countries, the folk terminology, although quite rich, has little unity. The same instrument has different names in different parts of the country, while on the other hand, the same name may designate a different instrument in one place or another. The above descriptions use the terms frequently encountered. These instruments are genuinely folk instruments, and are different from those designed for classical Arab music, or even for urban music. At every stage, tradition and innovation are intermingled, testifying to the evolution of traditional folk music towards new forms, and to its adapting itself to new concepts in the people's way of life.

String Players: Shamandi Metkal, Mourad Megalli, El Noubi Abdel Aziz, Mohammed El Sawi

Wind Players: Azab Sayyed, Ahmed El Shebrawi, Moustapha Abdel Aziz, Magda Saleh, Rayyes Kamel, Fat'hi Hegazi, Rayyes Abdel Hamid

Percussionists: Mofaddel Khalil, Rif'at Mofaddel, Mos'ad Khalifa, Ismail Haggag, Yousri Diab, Moustapha Abdel Aziz

Dancers: Fereiza, Hoda Farouk, Amani Farouk, Mahassen Hilal, Rayyes Hussein, Rayyes Mahmoud, Rayyes Kamel, Saadeyya Khalifa, Imam Musallim

Vocalists: Fatma Sarham, Gamalat Shiha, Hammouda El Sai'd, Hassan Samara