

The characteristics and cultural links between traditional egyptian arabic music

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Introduction

In the paper below, the similarities and the cultural link between the traditional flamenco music and the Egyptian/ Arabic music has been discussed. Flamenco music is a category of Spanish music and dance, connected with the Andalusia region in southern Spain. It was first mentioned in the literature in 1774. Afterwards, the genre grew out of the Romain and Andalusian music and dance flairs. The flamenco music is most profoundly related to the gitanos i. e. Romani people - Spain. Moreover, the music was first recorded officially in the late eighteenth century, however, it underwent a historic development in late nineteenth century. On the other hand, the traditional Egyptian music was existed in the prehistoric times, however, the evidence went back up to the momentous times after 3100 BCE. The music molded a significant part of the Egyptian life with the musicians occupying various positions in the society. Also, the music made its path into many milieus in Egypt, including battlefields, temples, workshops, tomb, and the palaces. It became the integral part of the spiritual worship in ancient Egypt, and so, it isn't surprising that the Egyptians associated gods with music like Hathor and Bes.

Flamenco Music

'Flamenco' was the term first used in the eighteenth century to describe the cultural essence and traditions of Spain. (Malent, n. d.) The word originated from 'flamingo' that was used to refer the way the dancers moved while listening to flamenco music. It isn't just a musical term, but rather a dancing term as well, due to its description of 'Baile'. (Anon., n. d.)

The flamenco music emanated from the Andalusian and Romani region of Spain. The Romani people or 'Gypsies' originated from the Northern India, which later spread all over the Europe. These people, known as nomadic people, were renowned for trade and musicianship. They gained many influences because of their long distance travelings. (Anon., n. d.)

In addition, the flamenco music consisted of likewise characteristics in the vocals so as to express the working class/ common man's voice. Several mediums, including Cante, Toque and Baile (which means sing, play and dance), had been used in flamenco music for its expressionism. Usually, the mediums used were combined, however; these were separated during flamenco performances. The mediums of the music are of great importance as they appear to be the traditional aspect of the music, which interconnect the flamenco music and the Spanish culture.

An important characteristic of the flamenco music is its variation in the kinds of performances. The music isn't known only for its solo performances, but its further division involves Toque; a Flamenco Guitar, which is often used to delineate the flamenco sound. It is mainly sufficient to provide structure for the flamenco's song. In addition, it provides the flamenco cadence (VI, V, IV, III). The cadence entails the use of the Phrygian-dominant-scale and mode-variation. (Anon., n. d.)

Instruments Used in Flamenco Music

The characteristic flamenco instruments include the classic guitar, the flamenco guitar, (& some other percussion instruments), Palmas, Cajon and Palillos. 'Las Palmas' or 'Palms' is a technique of clapping for the dancers

and musicians. It is, in fact, an essential part of the flamenco music to formulate important rhythms. In addition ' Palillos' are made of carved wood/ stone or concave shells. These are the necessary aspect of the flamenco dance or ' baile' due to their input in the texture of the flamenco together with percussion instruments. (Anon., n. d.)

Flamenco Scale/ Harmony Theory

The most common mode of the flamenco music is the Phrygian scale. It is used in a large number of palos; including tangos, siguiriyas, bulerias and tientos. Palos are such forms of flamenco music which are characterized through their modes, chord structure, geography, and its rhythmic patterns. The melodies in the flamenco music comprise of the harmonic minor scale, or the natural scale exploited within Phrygian mode. It is to note that the tonic note of flamenco progression (or in other words, Andalusian Cadence) is E while playing in A minor or E Phrygian. The order within the Andalusian Cadence is Am, G, F, E. The dominant chord is ' F' in this progression because it pulls towards the E Phrygian. An appropriate scale to use is A-minor instead of E-Phrygian especially for those who are not accustomed to unusual modes except minor or major (Aeolian and Ionian). The minor tonality is restricted to the Palos milongas, farruca, and some tangos. In addition, of the flamenco progression through the tonic note ' E', the minor tonality use A minor or A harmonic-minor scale in this regard. For the major tonality, ' C' as the tonic note is used in the same chord structure. (Anon., n. d.)

Traditional Egyptian/ Arabic Music

Egyptian/ Arabic music originated from ancient Egypt, as according to the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians, music was created by their god, Harthos, which then, used by Osiris to humanize the planet. Another god, Bes, is also recognized for music, as the two were also the representative of the dance, childbirth and fertility. Irrespective of Romani or Gypsy people, the Egyptians, weren't travelers, so their music was self-influenced without the involvement of external influences. Music in the ancient Egypt wasn't properly recorded or documented before 3100 BCE. In the Egyptian society, the musicians had roles in the tombs, temple, palaces, battle and also as farmers. According to the Egyptian artwork and carvings, music was the entertainment for the royal rather than the common man (as the flamenco music concerns the common man). (Anon., n. d.)

Instruments Used in Egyptian/ Arabic Music

The instruments used in the ancient Egyptian/ Arabic music were varied. Percussion instruments included rattles, bells, drums, and a sistrum, which is a religiously important rattle. In addition, the Egyptians used harps (stringed instruments), flutes (with or without reeds), lyres and the trumpet (a primitive form of modern trumpets without valves or mouthpieces), while, playing their music.

As there is no existence of recorded musical notations of ancient Egypt, the historians have found the gestures or hand signals in Egyptian paintings or murals, which advocate a different tone or pitch. A typical form of musical notation based on hand gestures is 'chironomy' – whereby the particular

hand gesture signified the particular changes in the pitch. Remarkably, the technique still survives in the music of the present era in consort with some of the ancient Egyptian language.

Egyptian Scale Theory

The ancient Egyptian/ Arabic music also features the Phrygian scale in addition of many modes, which provide a piece having tension and dissonance. Similar to the Phrygian dominant scale, variations in modes are common along with Lydian dominant scale, Lydian and the double harmonic (Arabic-scale). The Egyptian scale is recognized as the exotic scales which are rarely used in the modern music except numerous types of metal.

However, the scale is interesting due to its intervals. The minor third provides with some minor tonality, whereas, the sharp-four pulls towards the perfect-fifth. The strange part of the scale is double flatted six. It is the perfect-fourth from the minor-third that provides the musician's fingers a complete different feel while playing in a particular scale. The major-seven in the Egyptian scale provides the scale a harmonic minor feel, while being a half-step below than the root note. (Anon., n. d.)

Correspondences between Traditional Egyptian/Arabic & Flamenco music

Characteristic link

The characteristic link between the two genres is the use of similar scales. The Phrygian scale, Phrygian dominant scale, and harmonic minor tonalities are common among the two genres. The major seventh in the harmonic-minor scale is the consistent sound on guitar (Toque) playing in flamenco.

Since flamenco is a genre, which uses improvisation, so the guitarist uses the scales to improvise over Andalusian cadence that features the chords determining to the relative Phrygian. Hence, to resolve the progression, all chords lead up to one note. Consequently, the scales, used to improvise in flamenco music result in the adding up the flavor to the sound. However, the major seventh in the Egyptian music is sometimes collaborated with the flatted second. It provides the scale with two notes, which are semitone from the root-note. There are few things to be understood about the cultural aspect of the country/ region that uses such scale with two-notes. The longing for resolution and tension of these notes is unlike other scales in the musical sphere. It is significant to Egyptian/ Arabic music as the tension is elaborated using solo instruments through long phrases resolving a repeated tonic or on a drone.

Moreover, in the Egyptian music, having a tonic center, which underlies the notes in a piece is quite popular. However, sometimes it is difficult to decipher the tonic due to the strange use of scales. The major seventh and flat second notes are considered to express the tension towards the resolution. Flamenco expresses a similar obligation for this tension through the use of Phrygian scale with a flatted second, and also using the harmonic - minor scale with a raised seventh. The comparison here, is the intervals that are frequently used to resolve the Andalusian cadences. The intervals made the chord structure of flamenco, the improvisations in Egyptian scale and the Phrygian dominant scales.

Similarities in Instruments Used

Another link between the flamenco music and the Egyptian music is the frequent usage of solo-string instruments for the purpose of improvisation. Flamenco is famous for a distinct guitar sound, which is passionate and intense with an intimidation of wild abandon by the rhythmic structure of the music. On the other hand, the Egyptian music is renowned due to the use of scales on harp or lyre. The improvisation done by the musician is based on the scales and motifs and is accountable for the totality of the music.

Cultural Orientation of both genres

The flamenco music first began to entice the international interest on a broad scale in the late eighteenth century. Since then, every flamenco artist had sung, played guitar and danced on the two customary musical events. The first most celebrated event was the semi-public gatherings of men in southern Spain, where passion, rhythm and poetry brought unison. Men used to gather in local taverns on a daily basis to discuss the events of the day, which lead to a late night festivity. The longer the event went, the more intense the reunion had become. The air became thick with smoke and scent of wine and began to reverberate with their passion. Ultimately, a flamenco singer produced a sound with texture that set teeth-on-edge, resulted in chills and goose bumps. It portrayed the signal moment in the knack of flamenco music. (Washabaugh, 1997) The second defining moment in the flamenco history was the female performances in fairs or carnivals. Women took leave of seclusions for a few days and sally out to the grounds far from the civilized city. They dressed to provoke, and they danced seductively in a

manner as to encounter the man's power of control lust and passions gone wild. (Corbin and Corbin 1987, cited in Washabaugh, 1997).

Comparatively, the Egyptian musicians are existent on various social levels in the ancient Egypt. The musicians held the highest status while belonged to the temple. The office of the musician to a particular goddess or god was set, as the position of high status and was frequently held by the women. Other musicians associated with the royal household were also apprehended in high esteem, so were certain exceptionally skillful harp players and singers. Slightly lower on the social scale were the musicians who performed as entertainers for festivals and parties, which were frequently accompanied by the dancers. Also, the informal singing was suggested by the scenes of workers-in-action; numerous such pictures had the captions as the words of songs. (Anon., n. d.)

Cultural Link; Concerning the two music genres

There exist two theories about the cultural link between the traditional flamenco music and the Egyptian/ Arabic music. One theory contends that the particular genre was brought with the banding together of Moors, Jews and Christian dissidents in the mountains with the purpose of escaping the vicious Spanish Inquisition. The banding resulted in the fusion of the Egyptian/ Arab music with the Spanish Jews ones.

The other possible and acknowledgeable link is the ' Gypsy contribution'. The gypsies, originally meant as ' Egyptians' with their strong belief of Egypt as their ancestral home, came from North India. The gypsies brought their music with them. Not only they inherit some instrument similarities from the

flamenco music, but they also gave away their cultural preferences to the Spanish society.

Conclusion

The paper above advocates the phenomenal characteristics linking between the traditional flamenco and the traditional Egyptian/ Arab music. The historic value of these two music genres predicts their significance in the cultural evolution of the two nations. Flamenco, on one hand, is certainly the most substantial musical-cultural marvel in Spain, and its huge appraisal in popularity resulted in its spread beyond the homeland limits. The flamenco music was initially spread and evolved through the Romani or Gypsy people who used to travel for the purpose of trading. On the other hand, the music and dance collectively have played a vibrant role in the nation's culture. Since, the Egyptian music wasn't acknowledged until the Graeco-Roman period due to the unavailability of any official record, hence, the reconstruction attempts of the Pharaonic music continue to be speculative.

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