

SESSION 4 (Papers)

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Whose Music is This? Arab Music as a Cultural Field of Negotiations in Israeli Cultural Arena

A significant part of ethnomusicological studies has dealt with the issue of musical cultures of minorities and their struggle to preserve their music within the societies where the majority has a different musical culture. In this paper, I present another cultural situation in which the majority group begins to perform the musical culture of the minority as part of its cultural arena.

The case discussed in this presentation is that of Arab music in Israel. In recent years there has been a phenomenon in which musical ensembles led by Jewish Israelis perform Arabic music as a large part of their repertoire. These ensembles perform Arabic music for a Jewish Israeli audience in various places in Israel.

The paper will present two ensembles that are central in staging Arab music as an integral part of their regular repertoire. The managers of both orchestras and their regular conductors are Israeli-Jews, relatively young people who come from families originating in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. These ensembles were initiated as part of an attempt to preserve and restore the traditional Jewish music of Jews from Islamic countries. In recent years their repertoire has changed and a significant part of it is Arab music especially from the 20th century.

The presentation describes and analyzes this phenomenon in relation to aspects of cultural heritage and the crossing of cultural borders between minorities and majorities.

Bio

Essica Marks is an Associate Professor at the Zefat Academic College. She is a senior researcher at the Jewish Research Music Centre at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Her research topics include the liturgy and paraliturgy of Jewish traditions, the history of Arab music, the liturgical music of Greek Orthodox churches in the Galilee and Arab Music in Israel.