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***Umm Kulthum: Artistic Agency and the Shaping of an Arab Legend, 1967-2007.***

Laura Lohman. 2010. Middle Town, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 229 pp.

Much has been written about Umm Kulthum (1904-1975), one of the most acclaimed singers in the Arabic world. Laura Lohman offers specific views on the last period of Umm Kulthum's life, from 1969 to 1975 and how this period shaped the way she is remembered after death. During this time, the great singer became not only an artistic legacy internationally but a model persona to the Arab world through her social actions supporting the Egyptian government and pan-Arabism. This book is based on Kulthum's agency as a representation of her national pride in her culture and political ideology. Lohman explains in detail the changes and decisions in Umm Kulthum's repertoire transition from romantic songs to more patriotic and religious songs. Previous musical periods never exposed her artistic legacy in the form of national pride. According to the author, the beginning of this period is marked by Umm Kulthum's reaction to the Six-Day War between Egypt and Israel in 1967 (3). This event incited Umm Kulthum to support the Egyptian president Nasser and the emerging pan-Arab world. Lohman emphasises that the inevitable idolisation of Umm Kulthum as an icon of the Arab world also led to certain misunderstandings and contradictions in the international press during her social activist period. As a case in point, one of the most significant events of national pride was when the Egyptian singer went to play in Paris. She was not only determined to promote Egyptian culture but also to make clear her stance against the government of Israel (32).

In general terms, the negotiation and construction of Kulthum's artistic agency is determined by social and political events in her country rather than musical innovations. Nevertheless, this book contains musical transcriptions of the political songs that brought Umm Kulthum international recognition during the late 1960s. Musical analysis is provided in the form of Western musical notation. Musicological

study of certain songs demonstrates the importance of Kulthum's compositional structure in contrast to the deep examination of her social context presented in this book. However, Lohman's book examines Kulthum's social agency through her music in this period rather than presenting an in-depth musicological study. For instance, in Chapter Two the reader is given a deep understanding of the concept of pan-Arab culture during 1968. This chapter provides insight into all the attributes that made Umm Kulthum a legend through her solidarity behaviour in public spaces. It shows that she did not perform in order to gain fame but for a political purpose based on Arabic unity. Chapter Three is based on the image of Umm Kulthum as a devoted Muslim, a humanitarian woman and mother of the poor. The construction of these attributes was established through her charitable concerts in countries like Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco. Chapters Four, Five and Six talk of views of the Arabic singer after her death, from 1975 to 2007, presenting a continuity of how she was represented through the media and the use of her life in order to construct other types of agency promoting attributes that were ignored while she was alive; for instance, the idealisation of Umm Kulthum as a dignified peasant woman in the modern socialist-Arab world. Even the construction of museums and coffee shops in her name in Cairo made her the image of unity and nationalism in Egypt. Lohman considers all these places constructed after Kulthum's death as "physical memorial" (112). The writer also talks about sonic memorialisation achieved through radio and other global types of media from the time of her death up to the present (137). Kulthum's artistic agency after her death in 1975 provides new forms of studying the representation of music agency magnified by similar present issues in Egypt and the Arab world nowadays. As a case in point, Lohman's book starts making reference to Kulthum's song "Baghdad" composed five decades ago. In 2003, this song was more present than ever in Cairo during the fall of Hussayn's statue in Iraq (1).

One can conclude by saying that Lohman's book on Umm Kulthum is a book with reference to contemporary topics in ethnomusicology such as agency, social memory and globalisation. Lohman presents constructive criticism of the idolisation of the icon Umm Kulthum through her tracing of how the idolisation occurred in her last years and after death. A lack of musical analysis may produce certain discrepancies to readers interested in the music itself within Kulthum's period examined in this book. This imbalance between the study of music and its social context may give rise to the question of whether this book falls into the discipline of cultural studies, anthropology or ethnomusicology. In any case, Lohman's contribution to Kulthum's music—specifically to her last musical period—is relevant and important to the academic world.

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***Sounding the Depths: Tradition and the Voices of History***. 2011. Victor Grauer. Self-published via CreateSpace. Illustrations at <http://soundingthedepths.blogspot.com/>. 294pp.

It started with Alan Lomax—the author is a former student of his and a colleague in the development of Cantometrics. While comparative cultural studies were going out of fashion several decades ago, Cantometrics was scornfully passed over by the ethnomusicological world because of the impressionism of the evaluators and lack of in-depth analysis of individual musics. Grauer has found a way to take some of its data and concepts, and to re-establish that there are world-wide traces and trails in music. He enlarges on this with newly observed data – tellingly on Pygmy and Bushman music – and synthesises them with the revealing new facts on early man now tumbling out of genetics to create a better picture of the spread of early mankind, worldwide human inter-relatedness and migration routes out of Africa.

Grauer asks the enduring question in Pygmy and Bushman music studies: do they or do they not share the same root? Grauer comes down strongly that they do, and that this musical style was the music of the first modern humans who left Africa. Particularly interesting are the refinements in the route followed by the first out-of-Africa humans, both around and splitting off from the shores of the Indian Ocean. The major factor one learns here is what is called the 'bottleneck', the discontinuity in genetic evidence between India and the East, supposedly caused by the vast ash cloud from the explosion of Mt. Toba in Sumatra in c. 74,000 BC, which must have wiped out all humans living to the NW of Sumatra. Grauer adds musical evidence to support the theory.