Khalid Al-Barwani

Discourse 300

Steven Holland

March 21, 2019

Musical Middle Eastern Woman

I’m missing the moments when I was a young child when my father used to drop me at school every morning and we were listening to Sherine songs on our way to there, who is a famous Egyptian singer that struggled to become a famous singer due to the social restrictions, regulations, and opposition from her family. The musical middle eastern women faced many difficulties in achieving their goals and living a life equally to men. There are many aspects that the musical middle eastern women related to and the most important are the middle eastern music, the most famous musical middle eastern women, and the major problems that the middle eastern women faced in the past.

Middle Eastern music consists of Arabic and non-Arabic music that contains some African, European, and Asian countries. It has many types of music such as, the north African music which is Arab republican of Egypt that consider as the only middle eastern country in Africa. When you see the pyramids, temples, tombs of Egypt will come to your mind that Egypt has genesis of art and music, and since the ancient Egypt until now it considers as one of the most important music in the middle east. However, there is a huge difference of the musical Egyptian women between 20 century and 21st century, because the women in the past of Egypt were oppressed and underestimated, but not elite women or the women of the ruling family because she has all the rights and she is an independent women that treated as equal as men, but the other women who are not from the ruling family even if she is talented, she still has no chance and power to prove and show her ability of music. Moreover, the Iranian music is another type of middle eastern music that date back to the third millennium before century which influenced many culture in Asia such as the Arabic and the Turkish music. “In the decades preceding Iran's 1979 revolution, the country underwent rapid cultural change, implemented in part by a monarchic regime seeking to ‘modernize’ the nation” (Nooshin, 2017). Before the Iranian revolution, the musical Iranian women faced many problems and the major problem was the limitation in the Iranian music because she permitted to perform for female audiences and not to perform for male audiences, but the Iranian women was so courage and she went outside Iran to perform and show her ability of music to the world. She was so successful in the Iranian music and as an example, Hayidah who is immigrated and stayed in United Kingdom for three years before the Iranian revolution “Since most people did not anticipate that girls would have jobs in the future, but would be wives and homemakers, little value was placed on education for women by the majority of villagers” (Hegland, 1983). Then she moved out in 1982 to the United States of America to continue her career as a singer. In addition, the Gulf countries music or the Khaliji which is an old music and it started to be more known and famous in the middle of 20 century. The Khaliji women faced many difficulties and the major difficult was the people who were taking religion and traditions strictly, therefore, they didn’t allow their kids to learn about music and they planted wrong thoughts in their mind that music is not a part of our religion and traditions, then our society started to circulate these thoughts from generation to another. Nowadays, Gulf countries people are more aware and educated, thus, we have many famous musical Khaliji women and as an example, Shamma Hamdan who is from United Arab Emirates and she is the first finalist women in Arabs Got Talent which is a reality television talent show.

Middle Eastern music has created many famous women such as Najwa Karam who is a Lebanese singer, songwriter, fashion icon, ”Karam was a teacher who became a pop star. In 1985, she joined another American Idol–like show supporting young talent. She was an instant success and won the gold medal for that competition. Since then, she has enjoyed a thriving solo career, (Reynolds, 2008). She sold more than 60 million albums worldwide. In 2011, Karam deputed as a judge on the reality television talent show called Arabs Got Talent and she participated in all of its six seasons. Moreover, she holds the records for the highest selling Arabic language albums during the years of 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2008. Then In 2017, Forbes which is an American business magazine ranked Najwa number five on the list of the top one hundred Arab celebrities with 26.58 million social media followers. In 2018, Cosmopolitan ranked Najwa on their list of the 15 most inspiring women in middle east and Forbes ranked her on their list of the top 10 Arab stars on the global stage. Another famous woman is Sherine who is an Egyptian singer, actress, TV host and a former judge on the voice which is an Arabic singing competition. Sherine was born into middle class family where her father was a decorator and her mother were a housewife. She released her first album in September 2002 and sold more than 20 million copies all across the Arab world. In addition, she starred in a series called my path or my road that depicts her as a young lady that struggles in achieving her lifelong dream of becoming a famous singer due to social restrictions, regulations, and opposition from her family. Lastly, Googoosh who is an Iranian singer and actress that using the [Iranian pop music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_pop_music), “the reigning diva of Persian popular music, through an evaluation of diasporic Iranian discourse and artistic productions linking the vocalist to a feminized nation, its ‘victimization’ in the revolution, and an attendant ‘nostalgia for the modern” (Hemmasi, 2017). but also, she participated in many [Iranian movies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Film). According to the Iranian revolution, she is known for staying in Tehran until 2000 and not performing again because of the ban on female singers. But then she came back again to perform but this time she went outside Iran to perform and she caught the attention of European, American and African media and press.

Lastly, and from my opinion, the close-minded or the limited thinking in some parts of the Middle East is the major problem that Middle Eastern women are facing. Where people are not willing to consider different ideas or opinions, but they live with ideas that planted in their minds such as some traditions we had in the past that it doesn’t make sense for example, prevent the woman to go to school and she must stay at home as a housewife. Therefore, they didn’t consider that the woman is a part of life and she has goals to achieve as same as men. Another example, of Saudi Arabia education, “Women’s schooling at all levels – elementary, secondary, high school and university – remained under the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002, while the education of boys was overseen by the Ministry of Education. This was to ensure that women’s education did not deviate from the original purpose of female education, which was to make women good wives and mothers, and to prepare them for ‘acceptable’ jobs such as teaching and nursing that were believed to suit their nature” (Hamdan, 2005).

References

Hamdan, Amani. (2005). Women and education in Saudi Arabia: *International Education Journal,* 6(1), 42-64.

Hegland, Mary E. (1983). Aliabad Women: Revolution as Religious Activity. *Scholar Commons,* ,174, 171–194.

Hemmasi, F. (2017). Iran's daughter and mother Iran: Googoosh and diasporic nostalgia for the Pahlavi modern. *Popular Music, 36*(2), 157-177. doi:10.1017/S0261143017000113

Nooshin, Laudan. (2017) Whose liberation? Iranian popular music and the fetishization of resistance. *Popular Communication 15*(3), 163-191.

Reynolds, G. A. (2008). American Idol, Arabic Idol: Popular Arabic Songs in the Classroom. *General Music Today, 21*(3), 5–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371308317088