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Author

Garfias, Robert

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Review

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ative introduction to Hindustani, Karnatak, and Bollywood music, with particular emphasis on South Asian music as a tradition boasting ancient roots while feeding on continuous exchanges and innovations. The organizers of the Amsterdam festival and the CDs' editor and authors openly embrace this complexity, which is probably best epitomized by the inclusion in the anthology of an excerpt from a performance of *Bairagi Todi* by Dutch cellist Saskia Rao-de Haas (CD 2, tr. 14). The second part of the booklet complements the introductory section with further details on specific genres and forms, providing notes that contextualize and explain each track, alongside biographic and stylistic information on performers.

The booklet significantly contributes to making the CD box-set something more than just a short-lived piece of merchandise celebrating the Amsterdam festival: on the contrary, this compilation provides a good example of research dissemination beyond academia through a productive reflection on a rich event.

LAURA LEANTE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Birmanie: Musique du théâtre classique / Burma: Classical Theatre Music.

2010. Archives internationales de musique populaire AIMP 96–97. Disques VDE-Gallo VDE CD-1317/1318. Recorded by Philip Yampolsky. Annotated by Ward Keelor. Edited by Renaud Millet-Lacombe. 44-pp. booklet with notes in French and English. English translation by Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff. 2 colour photographs. 2 compact discs: 13 tracks (66:16), 10 tracks (63:04). Recorded in 2005.

The release of a new recording of music from Burma is always good news. True, a few recordings have been making their way out since the self-imposed isolation of the country in 1962, and in spite of the continued control exercised by a tyrannical military dictatorship. There have been recordings of the neo-pop music played on Burmese radio. There have also been a number of releases produced by Rick Heizman, all beautifully recorded and excellently performed. In the latter, however, unorthodox vocal-instrumental combinations, not usually heard in Burmese music, sometimes give an odd impression of the music for first-time listeners.

The 2003 Smithsonian recording, *Mahagita* (also produced by Heizman), featuring the late U Myint Maung on the harp (*saung gauk*), gives a much more accurate picture of the traditional music of the country. Yet few might know that virtuoso harpists such as U Myint Maung, and before him the great U Ba Than, tended to perform in a very didactic style on recordings because by doing so they demonstrated their knowledge and mastery of the Mahagita (the Royal Song or Great Song): the vast repertoire of Burmese classical music. One has only to listen to U Ba Than's harp solo on the 1953 Folkways recording, *Burmese Folk and Traditional Music* (side A, tr. 6), to get an idea of the virtuosity possible on that instrument.

The complex variations on the traditional songs of the Mahagita devised by harpists, while not often heard in recordings, in fact greatly influenced the perform-

ance style used by the Burmese gong orchestra, the *hsaing* ensemble. This group of double reeds, gongs, and drums traditionally provided the music for most outdoor festivals in Burma, and in particular for the theatre with live actors as well as the puppet theatre. Since the aforementioned Folkways recording, *hsaing* music has been but little heard outside of Burma, which is why this new recording, *Burma: Classical Theatre Music*, is so welcome.

Not only is this an excellently documented and well-recorded pair of CDs but it provides very clear demonstration of the manner in which Burmese musicians employ thematic ideas to supplement and enhance action on the stage. Songs from the Mahagita repertoire, enhanced and amplified by special *hsaing* festival and ceremonial music, provide a rich and colourful support and definition to stage action and mood. Although it is impossible to know precisely when the *hsaing* orchestra began to use this technique of borrowing festival and ritual music as well as “mood” pieces from the repertoire, it must certainly have been in place by the last days of the monarchy. Through contact with the British, the piano was introduced and *hsaing* players, even today, can play on the piano as well as the drum circle. The piano was used to accompany silent films, employing the same repertoire as in the classical theatre because the audience already knew these themes and their associations: the chase, action by stealth, love scene.

Thematic association is sometimes used cleverly. I once saw a play in Rangoon in which the future king tests the loyalty of his people by pretending to be mad. He appeared riding a wooden hobby horse, and the *hsaing* started playing snatches of the *myin gin*, the music that was used in royal times to make the horses dance. In the same vein, oftentimes when I would enter the studio of the late U Ko Ko, he would suddenly start playing the Yegin, the old royal barge music; this was the equivalent of playing the “President’s March” or “God Save the Queen.”

The notes are well written and the project carefully prepared and documented by the knowledgeable Ward Keeler. The recordings are excellently executed by Philip Yampolsky, well-known for his fine recordings of music of Indonesia on Smithsonian Folkways. This is a long-needed addition to our knowledge of the music of Burma.

ROBERT GARFIAS

Indonésie: Chants des îles de Flores et Solor / Indonesia: Songs from the Islands of Flores and Solor. 2010. Archives internationales de musique populaire AIMP 95. Disques VDE-Gallo VDE CD-1304. Recorded by Joséphine Simonnot (1992) and Dana Rappoport (1992, 2006–7). Annotated by Dana Rappoport. 32-pp. booklet with notes in French and English. English translation by Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff. 2 colour, 5 b/w photographs, 2 maps. 1 compact disc: 22 tracks (65:36).

This CD is a valuable contribution to the neglected ethnomusicology of parts of two islands in eastern Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara region. It contains valuable recordings of some remarkable east Florinese vocal duets, featuring narrow ver-