

Men med tanke på den store interesse, som især har omgærdet Mahlers musik i de seneste årtier, tyder meget på at emnet også i dag har relevans. I forbindelsen med en gennemgang af barnlige himmelvisioner i Mahlers 3. og 8. Symfoni, hvor engle spiller en central rolle, tillader Eva Maria Jensen sig dog at trække perspektiver frem til i dag. Ligesom på Mahlers tid indgår engle i dag i populærkulturen, og med udgangspunkt i en jungiansk tolkning advokeres der for at engle dengang som nu kan ses som en søgen efter det indre barn, og i videre forstand som en drøm om verden som et problemløst sted. Det kan naturligvis diskuteres hvorvidt dette er tilfældet i dag, men i Mahlers tilfælde lader det tydeligvis til, at barnets naive tro på engle kan bruges som et afsæt til at skabe en i ordets bedste forstand naiv glædesfyldt himmelsk musik.

*Esben Tange*



Laura Lohman

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

Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2010

229 pp., illus.

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Umm Kulthum (?1904–1975) was a highly celebrated Egyptian singer, and still today many listeners in the Arab world consider her art the epitome of genuine Arabic musical expression. Her particular way of negotiating the relation between Arabic history and modernity and her iconic status in modern Arab culture have attracted a great part of interest both in Arabic and Western scholarship.

Laura Lohman's book takes issue with the later part of Umm Kulthum's career and with her rich and diverse posthumous reception. Lohman argues against the widespread notion that the final years of this great Egyptian artist – from the Six Day War in 1967 to her death in 1975 – should be a period of decline after the peak was reached in the 1940s with the artistically advanced neo-classical *qasa'id*. However, this period in Lohman's life was intensively productive and offered Umm Kulthum 'a valuable opportunity for her to redefine herself as an artist and to shape the way she would be remembered after her death' (p. 3). Lohman is obviously fascinated by Umm Kulthum as a strong-willed female artist with the intention of – and the powers to – influence decidedly on her star-imago and her posthumous reception. Thus she discerns in Umm Kulthum 'a remarkable degree of individual agency', and interprets much of what Umm Kulthum was doing during the particular political and cultural climate after Egypt's defeat in the Six Day War as 'a performance of "self" in the public eye, as a "performed autobiography" encompassing a vast collection of carefully rendered autobiographical acts that were perceived as self-representations' (p. 8).

The first three chapters of the book account for Umm Kulthum's late career viewed from this perspective and focus particularly on the political aspects: her strong support to the Egyptian government after the defeat in the Six Days War (comprising 'charity' concerts in favour of the Egyptian army), her concerts throughout the Arab world in support of the pan-Arabic movement, and her support for the Palestinian liberation movement. The remaining chapters four through six examine Umm Kulthum's reception after her death led by the question: 'why and how she remained so important?' To this end Lohman scrutinizes a rich and diverse source-material: books, articles, and films which take issue with her life and contributes to the shaping and reshaping of her iconographic status. Particular attention is

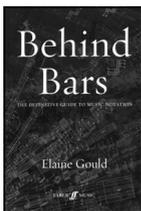
devoted to issues of idealization, to ‘strategies ... used to reconcile her unconventional life choices as an Egyptian woman with cultural expectations and perceptions of gender and sexuality’ (p. 15), and to the processes that lead to the inclusion of the songs of Umm Kulthum in the repertoire of the Arab cultural heritage (*al-Turath*). For the analysis of this last aspect Lohman considers ‘sonic memorialization achieved through radio programming, cover songs and remixes’ (p. 15) as well as physical memorials such as the Umm Kulthum museum in Cairo and ‘Umm Kulthum Cafes’ in Arab and Western cities.

Laura Lohman’s *Umm Kulthum. Artistic Agency and the Shaping of an Arab Legend, 1967-2007* is a well-written, well-researched, and well-documented account of an interesting and highly relevant topic. It locates itself in a productive field between music history, popular music studies, music anthropology, and area studies and utilizes skillfully the research potentials thus activated. The book offers a very welcome glimpse into the huge bulk of written sources to Umm Kulthum’s life and afterlife; it interrogates wisely from the perspective of recent research in stardom and in the constructed nature of star images, and still it bears the marks of respect for the particular cultural context. Obviously this book fills in a lacuna in the Western literature on Umm Kulthum and represents – as I read it – a much needed supplement to Virginia Danielsen’s great book, *The Voice of Egypt. Umm Kulthum, Arabic song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (1997).

My reservations are few and pertain primarily to the interpretative practice. It is not evident to me that Lohman’s interpretation of Umm Kulthum’s self-enactment in her later years as deliberate acts to control her posthumous reception really contributes to our understanding of ‘artistic agency’ in a deeper sense including the agencies of the artistic forms and practices in question. And on a broader level I miss a style of writing that invites to partaking in the interpretative process. Even if the author is quoting a great number of her source texts, her book leaves the impression of being basically ‘monologic’. The quotations are always strategic and fully covered by the interpretation. The voice of the book is the voice of the author, as far as no other voices with the right to contradict are heard. Maybe it is a matter of style, maybe it is a matter of economical writing? But it is as if the author considers her source materials as transparent for the (wished for) meanings. Even when she admits to the fluidity of their significance (p. 55), she does not take the consequence and quotes to an extent that enables the reader to look over her shoulder and take part in the precarious interpretations. Thus a dialogical use of this book is only possible for readers with access to the original Arabic sources.

Criticism of this kind, however, could be directed against a great part of our academic writing. Here it is triggered by desire to get even closer to the subject of a well-done and deserving scholarly work. The book is warmly recommended for research and study.

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Elaine Gould  
*Behind Bars. The Definitive Guide to Music Notation*  
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With the publication of *Behind Bars* the scanty literature on music notation and music processing has become enriched with what is now the most comprehensive presentation on