AFIF BULOS SINGS SONGS OF
LEBANON, SYRIA & JORDAN
Syria & Jordan
Songs of Lebanon
Afif Bulos Sings

The Sword is Easy
Hayvin Darb-Is-Sali (The Reed of Hayvin)
Taras Hindi (Indian Taras)
Yamhi Adaaya (Maghdan Beautful)
Ar-Razaana (The Razaana)
Bint-e-Shalabya (The Pretty Lass)
Mashal

Lamman Badh Yarahma (When My

Desgin: Bob McCann

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Songs of LEBANON, SYRIA and JORDAN
sung by Afif Bulos

Notes on Afif A. Bulos

Afif Alvares Bulos whose home is Beirut, Lebanon is a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University where he has spent the last three years before getting his Ph.D. in Linguistics in June 1961. An Associate of the Royal College of Music in London, he is called to London and Venice, and though he has given up the idea of an operatic career, he has continued to give vocal recitals in this country, in England and in the Near East. He has sung at the B.B.C. and appeared on other T.V. and radio stations. He has published a monograph on Arabic music as well as piano and voice arrangements of Lebanese Folk Songs. He has also lectured in three continents on Arabic music, with the help of a tape recorder and a harpsichord. Next year he hopes to continue residing at Harvard to conduct post-doctoral research.

Arabic Folk songs

The folk songs of a nation or a people are part of its cultural heritage and every effort should be made to preserve them -- particularly in this era of swift adaptations to other cultures and art forms. Songs, particularly, are a mirror of the souls of people and a spontaneous expression of their true feelings and attitudes. Considerable effort has been expended in Europe and more recently in the United States to compile and publish the folk songs of their various regions. Simplified editions have appeared for use in schools and more elaborate editions for the professional musician or musicologist. Thus the songs have not only been preserved for posterity but they have been made available to everyone who wishes to sing them. The great composers owe their inspiration ultimately to the folk songs on which they have been reared.

The Arab countries of the Fertile Crescent -- Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq -- have an amazingly rich fund of folk songs which are threatened with total extinction or corruption by indiscriminate and artistic borrowings from the West. Under the impact of Hollywood films, young Arabs are turning away from their own songs, to sing the latest jazz balladaries. This, coupled with the attitude that Arabic folk songs belong to a motley and useless past, is alienating the youth from a vital and useful inspiration and enrichment.

The songs arranged and recorded by Afif Bulos in this album are mainly Lebanese, though they are popular all over the Fertile Crescent, that is Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. The strictly Lebanese songs are:

Ar-Rizaam
Tafta Hind
Al-Tabebel
Ya-Chaabee
Al-Yadil
Ab'-l-Izzayin

The last two are played on the 'shibboleth' and niwia for the Dabkah, the national folk dance in these countries, since since their rhythm is adapted to the various steps and figures involved in it.

Bint-lah-Shalabiya, is an old tune, which has had a variety of texts. In the First World War it had a different text. The present text is about seven years old.

Yamwil 'Abaya (Maiden Beautiful) is a song of Iraqi

Bedouins. It is known everywhere in the countries mentioned. Hayyin Darb-ul-Dayr (The Fall of the Sword) came out of Jordan and has a definite Bedouin character.

Ala-Dal'um is so widely popular that it is difficult to say precisely where in the Fertile Crescent it originated. But one can rule out Iraq; Egypt, of course, is not part of the Fertile Crescent. Ah Ya Amur-il-larn (The Brunette), however, is known in Egypt. (Incidentally some of the folk songs of Egypt are charming; unfortunately there was no room for them here.)

To Lebanon goes the credit for the folk song revival, and the International Festival at Baalbek has given it tremendous impetus. Under the auspices and active guidance of Madame Camille Chamoun, the first Folklore Festival was held at Baalbek in 1957. Noises, the well-known Russian choreographer and ballet master, came to Lebanon at the invitation of the then Lebanese Government, studied the varieties of the Dabkah and trained instructors to teach it to a group of 150 men and women, many of whom were society girls who were eager to learn properly their national folk dance. The Folklore Festival was a tremendous success and has since become an established feature of the Baalbek Festival.

In the musical field, while one lauds all the magnificent efforts that have been expended for reviving the folk song, one fears the tendency to incorporate more and more Western elements, which in the end, will lose its national individuality.

These songs, however, avoid any suggestion of Westernization, even in the two songs with the English text.

Most of the English translations are metrical translations which make up for their loss of fidelity to the original texts -- which, as is always the case, are not very translatable -- by the fact that they can be sung to the same tunes.
Band 1: Tafta Hindi -- Indian Taffeta

into a deep well
my true love has thrown me
long for some one
To come here and lift me
I pray for patience
so I'll bear his absence.
I am still waiting
Don't leave me, my darling
Where is the balsam,
on my wounds do place it
Long to take thee
Far beyond the mountain.

when I behold your house
my eyes shed tears
I weep, for some one
who left me behind him.
behind Mash'âl
On the roof is standing,
his cheeks are glowing,
roses in the garden.
if I could catch thee
no one can release thee
but God almighty,
master of the heavens.

Band 2: Mash'âl

With me, I was a maiden
like a rosebud
Surrounded with love,
I was safe.
From all around,
I was the pride of heaven.
But now, I am a widow,
My heart is torn.

Metrical Translation by Afif Bulos

Indian taffeta, Indian taffeta
Silks and muslins, every kind.
Open for me, lovely maiden
From me all the ladies buy.

Called she for me, o you vendor
Vendor of the crimson lace
So I went into her palace
And beheld her dusky face.

Taffeta, taffeta, shooting arrows
From her eyes did pierce my soul
All my silks I offered to her
But she laughed and let them fall.

Band 3: Al-Dal'oma -- The Solitary One

On Derawne

metrical translation by Afif Bulos

slaying fountain close beside me
In my heart I sing a lay;
Though unworthy of my longing
In her heart she'll always stay.

You from Sidon, you from Tyre
Let me tell you of her eyes
Dark like pools within a forest
But she will not heed my sighs.

North winds are blowing
I'm pale and weary
Dal'oma has gone and left me
Without coming to see me.

You who departed two days ago
My love for you dooms me
No one else but you can dwell
In the labyrinths of my heart.

You who left me two years ago
My love for you festers within me
Never will I the dakhah dance
So long as you're away from here.

O where, o where is my love
You have placed the vast sea between us
Yet will I part the waters to join him
Despite his parents and all his family.

'Al Tadi -- The Valley

metrical translation by Afif Bulos

Mash'âl is leaving
with peace, my darling
I will be waiting
Don't leave me, my darling
Translation by Afif Bulos

There lies the valley
There lies the village
And she's very fond of me.
I walk up to the mountain top
And look down upon the vale
Welcome o breeze
Wafted from my homeland
O wondrous sight to see her
Baking bread on the Saj
Her hands are jasmine white
Her movements are beguiling
If only the moon would set
I would surrender myself to you
In the sweetness of the night
When all the lights have been extinguished
Behold her in the field
With languorous steps approaching,
A cambric dress her waist,
A slant shawl on her shoulders.

Bint Ilyas -- The Pretty Lass

Metrical Translation by Afif Bulos

When you see the blue-eyed girl
With her fair skin and blond hair
Will you give her thy regards
Then return with her regards
Wherever I do turn
Tears of woe flow down my face (cheeks)
Ever counting stars at night
With my lids I fold the days
Branded am I with your love
In an abyss I do lie,
Yet you have avoided me
Without reason without cause.

Band 3: Ya Ghasayel -- O Gazelle

Metrical Translation by Afif Bulos

Behold the lassie
The pretty lassie
I love her blue eyes, I love
Her tender glances
In yonder orchard
She sleeps so gently
I gaze and gaze but do not dare
To lift her to me.
Under the arches
My love is waiting
Cease to torment me, o my love;
My heart is breaking.
By yonder myrtle
My soul did meet me
Now I sing joyous songs of love
Praising her beauty.
Band 1: Ar-Rosana -- The Rosana

English Text by Afif Bulos

The rosana the rosana
She is my paradise
She is the maiden for me,
You must all realize;
She is the maiden on whom
I like to feast my eyes
Oh when will she come to me
The dark eyed rosana.

For Aleppo you are bound
With figs, apples and vine
Taking my loved one with you,
I long to make her mine.
To each one his heart's delight,
O let my arms entwine
The waist of my dearest one,
The lovely rosana.

In Beirut I cannot live,
Beirut is much too warm
I long for fair Damascus
Her orchards and her charm
For there lives my beloved
Away from every harm;
Oh, for a breeze to waft me
Close to my rosana.

Band 2: Haynin Darb-is-Seif -- The pall of the Sword

Chin of the bird

English Text by Afif Bulos

Heavenly beauty,
Glistening with a thousand lights,
Adorned with pearls,
Worn on the forehead.

You would have come,
But I have been deceived.
On the road of the ageless
I have mistaken you.

Love the one who
Is not to be found.

Band 3: Yazil 'Abaya -- Maiden Beautiful

English Text by Afif Bulos

Maiden beautiful wearing the 'aba,
Lovely is your face, full of glowing grace.

A thousand welcomes, O Syrian gazelle
My heart is burning, for your returning.

Beloved cousin, for you I languish
Love me tenderly, abate my anguish.

Won't you put a smile on those ruby lips,
Let it be the last of my fading bliss!

Band 4: Lamun Barda Yatatanna -- When My Love Languished

INSTRUMENTAL

Band 5: Al-Luma

INSTRUMENTAL