Arabian Delight!

Monitor presents music from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco

ABDU-EL-HANID and his Orchestra
ARABIAN DELIGHT
MUSIC FROM EGYPT, LIBYA, TUNISIA, ALGERIA, MOROCCO
WITH ABDU-EL-HANID AND HIS ORCHESTRA

This collection of songs and dances comes from the Arabic North African countries that border on the south shores of the Mediterranean: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

With the exception of Egypt the above countries are known as the Near Eastern countries. Egypt is considered part of the Middle Eastern countries. All these Arabian countries use the same instrumentation in their music. To the native Arab his music gives him a most satisfying feeling even to the point of intoxication. That is why, upon hearing an exciting melody the Arab will yell "Allah", a sign of approval and contentment.

Abdu-El-Hanid and his orchestra give you an exhilarating performance of 12 authentic native selections, some as old as the Islamic civilization and some of a more contemporary nature.

The ensemble in this recording is typical for Arabic music: Oud (Arabic lute), Kanon (Oriental zither), Nay (flute), Violin, Derbeke (Arabic Drum), and Tambourine.

The violin is the same as the standard violin we know; however, it is tuned differently (in fourths instead of fifths) to facilitate playing of the many Arabic scales that require quarter tones. It is also more practical, for the range of the music is limited, generally about two octaves. Usually it is tuned G—D—G—C. At many occasions instead of playing a song in a different key the instrument is tuned higher or lower a half tone, a whole tone or even a tone and a half, according to the range of the vocalist.

The Oud is an Arabian lute known as the father of the guitar, and it is the most popular instrument for accompanying singers, as it is the easiest Arabic instrument to play. It has a short-necked fingerboard and the instrument is about the size of the guitar with a pear-shaped back. It has five pairs of strings G, A, D, G, C, and each pair is tuned in unison. Sometimes it has a sixth string usually F below middle C or C octave below middle C. It is played by plucking the strings with an eagle's feather and has a deep mellow tone.

The Kanon (Arabic zither) has a flat soundboard over which a number of strings are stretched (about 70 strings). The range is about four octaves and the strings are plucked by means of small whale bones or quills fastened by rings to the first and middle fingers of each hand. Many performers use rings made of gold. Playing in octaves is most characteristic in kanon playing.

The Nay is the Arabic flute made of bamboo wood and usually the flutist has a set of six flutes differing in length in order to allow the playing of all the possible Arabic scales in different registers. The Derbeke is the Arabic drum and it has a cone or cylinder shape and a dried fish's skin is stretched across the top. In North Africa they use a derbeke made of clay. In the Middle East they also use drums made out of copper. The tamborine is the same as we know it although different sizes (especially the larger ones) are used.

In general the range of all the Arabic music is limited. As in all folklore, the melody itself is simple and has very few skips. This is true in both vocal and instrumental music. The music is not played exactly as written because the performers always add their own embellishments and improvisations. That is why sometimes we hear something like polyrhythm or polyphony despite the fact that all the musicians are playing in unison or in octaves.

Notes by HESKEL OBADIA