



(LYRCD 7339)

AFRICAN RHYTHMS AND INSTRUMENTS
Morocco - Algeria - Tunisia - Libya
Vol. 3

INTRODUCTION

The First Pan-African Cultural Festival (Algiers, July 21 - August 1, 1969) was not only a grandiose cultural meeting, but also a vital occasion for political confrontation. The purpose for this manifestation was, in fact, primarily political, especially within the complex game of relationships between the various African states and their relative regimes and within the prospective of the various modalities by which the transitional process from colonialization to autonomy is taking effect - or struggling to take effect.

The resounding, spectacular addition of music, dance, theatre and cinema performances, which the Festival organizers created around the specifically political symposium, the central nucleus of the Algiers meeting, was not for promotional or advertising purposes. On the contrary, they were the necessary complement to the political debates, insofar as these artistic events underlined the idea of unity, which exists between culture and politics, and that the way towards autonomy from the residual colonial yoke must necessarily experience the decisive and conclusive moment of cultural freedom-following that of political and economic independence. From the point of view of the Algiers Symposium the process of African independence must tend toward the complete conquest (or better still, re-conquest) of cultural identity, without which political and economic autonomy cannot, in reality, have any real significance.

In order to confront this ponderous subject, and verifying it in the specifically artistic and cultural manifestations, during the summer of 1969 there came to Algiers not only representatives of independent African states (with the obvious exception of the Colonial states, such as

South Africa and Rhodesia), but also those representing freedom movements of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Capo Verde, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, Palestine (Al Fatah) and a delegation of Afro-Americans (Black Panthers).

The Algiers Festival also offered an obvious reference to two other important politico-cultural manifestations of the so-called Third World: the Cultural Conference of Havana and the Dakar Festival of Negro Arts. In its relationship with the Havana Conference the Algerian Symposium revealed, to a large degree, a rapport of continuity, while towards the Dakar Festival Algiers could be considered outwardly polemic in its position. If one takes into consideration the fact that at the origin of the Algiers Festival there was the acknowledgement of the validity of Franz Fanon's thesis, it is then possible to understand both the positive rapport with the Havana Conference and the negative stance towards the Dakar Festival. The Dakar event, in fact, had been, in 1966, an extreme attempt to relaunch the position of "negritude" - a thesis refused at the Algiers Symposium as an instrument of neo-colonialism - after its being the ideology of de-colonialization.

The political and cultural documents of the Algiers Symposium are available in Italian, in an interesting volume which is also useful as a complete listening guide to the contents of these albums (*Dalla negritudine all'africanismo*, edited by Letizia Paolozzi, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1970).

What one hears in the recordings made in the El-Anasser Stadium and in the city squares of Algiers is not "ethnic" material, but rather, the testimony of what the African nations are doing, beyond the ravages of colonialism, to redeem their cultural identity within a thoroughly political prospective. Certainly many selections are also living ethnophonic material, but it would be incorrect to consider them only in this light. For the Algiers Festival was meant to be something absolutely different from a "folk" festival thus the listener must here extricate himself from the narrow and at times mystifying dimensions of folklore.

The various African nations were represented in Algiers by groups of dancers, singers and musicians whose intention was not to demonstrate that which "remained" of black culture, but that part of black culture, which seeks rebirth. An extremely significant fact is that with few exceptions all the African countries at Algiers offered performances stemming from profound ethnic roots, also in those cases in which there was evidence of adaptations and sophistication. Not bad imitations of exotic western dances, but authentic African performances, more or less revised by directors, choreographers and musicians. There was also an apparent difference between the various performing levels of the different groups, and there were also instances during which one witnessed an excessive manipulation or the transparent ingenuity of imitation of European "Ballets" - but on the

whole the various performances were ample proof of the maturity and awareness of autonomy on the part of the participating countries.

From a total of more than forty hours of recording time it was of course imperative to make a drastic selection of material which was not at all an easy task. In the first place there was a need to eliminate those takes, which were not technically perfect. It is very difficult to make technically good recordings under the circumstances in which we were forced to operate in Algiers, whether in the Stadium or in the city squares, in the midst of huge, enthusiastic crowds, radio and television crews and movie cameramen, who had come for the four corners of the world. For the Stadium performances, which took place on an immense platform which had been built in the center of the playing field, it was almost impossible to place the microphones properly for the individual groups, each of which varied in number and took different positions on the huge stage; nor was it possible to eliminate the interference of the loud-speakers which filled the Stadium with their enormous amplified sound. Despite these handicaps, however, we do feel that the examples we have selected offer more than just a musical documentation, for they are, above all, the testimony of the infectious and exciting atmosphere in which the entire Festival took place.

Another important criterion, which guided us in the final selection of the pieces, was that of variety, particularly in consideration of the time limit imposed by the dimensions of the phonograph record.

Certainly no recording what so ever can substitute the emotions offered by actual participation at the Festival, deprived as a recorded document is of the inevitable fusion of movement, costumes, gestures, colours, and the crowd itself. Without the visual aspect the extraordinary performances we can hear on these discs do, in fact, lose much of their communicative force. It is our conviction, though, that their testimonial value justifies their publication.

In these three albums dedicated to the First Pan-African Cultural Festival of Algiers are included the participation of the following African nations:

Volume 1 - Mali, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Senegal, Liberia.

Volume 2 - Congo (Brazzaville), Ciad, Cameroon, Sudan, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Zapu (Zimbabwe Liberation Movement)

Volume 3 - Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya.

AFRICA - Volume 3

The third volume of this anthology of African music comprises the final group of documents recorded during the Algiers Cultural Festival and is part of three albums dedicated to the musical expression of various African nations who were present there. Volume 3 is dedicated to four countries of North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. These four countries, and especially the first three, represent a close cultural,

religious and linguistic unity, while Libya represents a transition from the Maghreb culture to that of northeast Africa.

Berber influence, which antecedes the Arab invasion, is strong in the Maghreb desert region and particularly in Morocco and Algeria, despite difficulty in distinguishing between the two cultures, except perhaps as far as language is concerned.

The predominant instruments in this area are the oboe (the flute is less important), and among the percussion instruments, the bandir and the derbuka, which exist in various models.

Particularly interesting is the music for bagpipe (in Tunisia and Libya), and the Tuaregh examples, which document the Sahara culture, which is completely unique from both Berber and Arab influences.

Particularly significant is the enthusiastic participation of the Algerian public during all of the performances of music and dance presented by the north-African countries. There is, in this participation (which is so well documented in the recordings) the obvious identification of the Algerians with their traditional music and dance forms.

A. MOROCCO

Morocco became an independent monarchy on March 2, 1956 following an agreement with France and Spain to end their protectorate. It covers an area of 172,834 sq. mi., and has a population of 15 million people. Its capital is Rabat (500,000 inhabitants).

A cultural melting pot which includes Berbers, Arabs, Sudanese and Jew, Morocco offers and extraordinary wealth of musical culture, on both the "art" music level and popular, or folk music.

The first piece is an example of music of the Gnaua, groups of Sudanese musicians and dancers who usually perform in the local marketplaces or during Moroccan celebrative occasions. The dancers (acrobats) are accompanied by large metal castanets, and one or two drums, which are hung around the neck and played with two curved sticks.

The second piece is for the oboe (fhīta) accompanied by a derbuka (a terracotta drum).

The third example is music for flute (nira) and is accompanied by the bandir (tambourines) and derbuka as well as hand-clapping.

B. ALGERIA

And independent republic since 1962 following a long struggle against French colonial domination, Algeria covers an area of 919,591 sq. mi. and has a population of 14,000,000. Its capital is Algiers with 900,000 inhabitants.

Algerian music bears the influence of the three cultures, which exist within its borders: Arab, Berber and Tuaregh (of the Sahara).

The first piece is again performed by the oboe (rhīta), an instrument of Arab origin, which predominates in all the music of North Africa. It is accompanied by the bandir.

The second example is Tuaregh music from the extreme south of Algiers in the Sahara desert area. The Tuareghs are a nomad, desert people who probably represent one of the most archaic ethnic groups of North Africa. The participation of the audience was especially enthusiastic during the Tuaregh performances.

The third piece, which was recorded in one of the Algiers city squares, is an example of the music of Oranese (west Algeria), support is given by long derbukes, and the occasional voice which can be heard is a greeting to the participants of the Festival.

C. TUNISIA

Tunisia is a former French protectorate, which became independent on March 20, 1956. It is on the Mediterranean coast of Africa wedged between Algeria and Libya. It covers an area of 63,378 sq. mi. and has a population of 6,000,000. Its capital is Tunis (500,000 inhabitants). The people are mostly Arabs and Berbers, and its music; despite being predominately Arabic still bears traces of Berber culture.

The oboe is the main instrument in the first piece, accompanied by the derbuka and the bandir, in typical north-African (Arab-Berber) style. In the second piece, however, despite the usual rhythmic background of the derbuka and bandir, we have voices and a bagpipe. This is a rather small bagpipe, with double reeds, and can be also heard on band n. 11 (Libya). This bagpipe can also be found in the eastern Mediterranean area as far as Istria in the northern Adriatic.

The third piece is still another example of music for oboe and percussion.

D. LIBYA

Libya, the first country to receive independence fully under United Nations auspices in 1951, is an Arab republic comprising ten provinces in the former states of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, and a former Italian colony. It covers an area of 679,358 sq. mi and has a population of Benghazi (140,000 inhabitants) and Tripoli (250,000). At the Algiers Festival Libya participated with its "Troupe Folkloristica Popolare Libica", a rather sophisticated but musically interesting ensemble.

The first piece (Dance of the Drums) is connected with the rituals of the Sufi sect and symbolizes the essential points of the religious (Islamic) doctrines of this group. Its rhythm is set by a group of bandirs.

The second piece is a fragment of the final performance of the Libyan group in one of the Algiers squares; the entire group marches among the throng guided by the sound of the bagpipe (see band n. 8 Tunisia).

The third and final example is connected with the hunting rites of the nomad Tuareghs who live in the extreme south of Libya. For another example of Tuaregh culture refer to band n. 5.

CREDITS

Recorded live by Roberto Leydi

Originally produced for Albatross Recordings, Italy



Lyrichord Discs Inc.

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.