

Monday August 13, 2007  
17:00 - 19:00

## **BUILDING THE FIELD OF ETHNOMUSICOLOGY IN THE ARAB WORLD AND IN THE WORLD OF ISLAM**

Discussion introduced and moderated by  
Prof. Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco & Prof. John Baily

### **Intervention by Najwa Adra\* (New York, USA)**

I hope that musicologists of the region will continue to include dancing when archiving folk traditions or in other projects. After all, the Arabic *ghina'* refers to music, song and dancing. As we have seen, the three genres - dancing, music and poetry - are closely linked and cannot be fully understood separately from each other.

Not only would separating dance from music be artificial but, as I argued on Friday and others have suggested during this conference, dancing provides an important corrective (or counterpoint) to what would otherwise be overly restrictive cultural tendencies. (Especially for women, dancing is an important form of self-expression.) Finally, cultural pride derives from admiring the complex linkages of one's traditions - folk even more than classical traditions.

Therefore, I hope to see:

1. Research on traditional, indigenous dances encouraged and supported.
2. Increased efforts to document indigenous dances.
3. When local dances are adapted to the stage or for the media, the choreography should represent their complexity and work with indigenous materials ("bottom up choreography", to paraphrase John Baily), instead of the current tendencies to simplify them or replace them with unrelated imported forms of dancing. Improvisation should always be retained, even with choreographed forms.
4. If we talk about dancing, we are also talking about preserving folk and not only classical traditions. So, although it is difficult to work with bureaucrats, we need to convince those in power of the importance of folk traditions, as well as classical forms. Here I mean, ministers of culture, directors of centers of traditional music and dance, and media producers. Without their cooperation, our efforts are not likely to succeed.

---

\* Cultural anthropologist specialized in the links between dancing and culture and on the integration of intangible heritage with development.