

KINNERET SUISSA
SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

Daniel Barenboim and The West Eastern Divan Orchestra

Music holds a key place in the “intangible cultural heritage” of humanity, as inventoried by UNESCO since its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Greaff, 2014). Music is a political cultural field and is a field of symbolic social interaction in which contested visions, memories, and cultural heritage are displayed. Social tensions around the content, transmission and consumption of music are inherent to the Ideological apparatuses of any multicultural modern state. Music creates, frames, and preserves sonic boundaries of class, gender, ethnicity and nationality. Shared music affirms our sense of identity, sense of place, and our past while marking territories with non-verbal sound. The ways music is conceived, performed, transmitted, received, preserved and forgotten reflect our needs as individuals and as collectivities, from the level of the family to the level of the nation-state.

In the context of Shared Heritage and music we will focus on a case study:

West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

For 20 years, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has been a significant presence in the international music world. In 1999, Daniel Barenboim and the late Palestinian literary scholar Edward W. Said created a workshop for young musicians to promote coexistence and intercultural dialogue. They named the orchestra and workshop after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s collection of poems West-Eastern Divan, a central work for the development of the concept of world culture. The orchestra’s first rehearsal sessions took place in Weimar and Chicago. An equal number of Israeli and Arab musicians form the base of the ensemble, together with members from Turkey, Iran, and Spain. They meet each summer for rehearsals, followed by an international concert tour.”¹

The research question:

¹(<https://west-eastern-divan.org/divan-orchestra>)

In what way does a common / opposing legacy exist in the orchestra, with reference to the instruments, music, and the ensemble of the orchestra members?

Theoretical framework and Key concepts

- **Cultural (Intangible) Heritage and Music**

(Broclain, Haug, and Patrix 2019; Graeff 2014; Waterman 2010; Seroussi, 2018)

- **Re-constructed cultural heritage**

Curricula of state-sponsored musical educational systems are part and of power relations. Seroussi (2018)

- **The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra \ The Jerusalem Orchestra East & West**

(Beckles Willson 2009a, 2009b;)

To understand these music phenomena which is focusing on musical heritage and to expose a range of competing visions and traditions that sustain it, one can use Clifford's concept of 'contact zone' to examine orchestra that challenge the model of traditional imperial repositories. The other concept is a "utopian republic" with which Daniel Barenboim described the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and the singularity of the orchestra's utopian projection (harmonious collaboration between Arabs and Jews) (Beckles Willson 2009a, 2009b).

Methodology

Interpretive research

In a first step we would like to analyze the site of the orchestra, and to analyze the orchestra repertoire.

- Are these musical works referring to a shared heritage itself?

Interviews

In the second step, we want to take a closer look at the orchestra members.

- What are the member's shared narratives and through that, what is their shared heritage ?
- What does it feel like to be part of such an outstanding, intercultural project?

- Do the musicians feel connected to the origin of the music they are playing?
- What makes it interesting to perform this music with this specific orchestra?

To find out about these questions, we are going to interview member of the orchestra (and maybe co-workers of the orchestra or the Daniel Barenboim foundation).

Below, we started to prepare a guideline with questions for the interview. We already have a connection to one of the orchestras members. Through him, maybe we can get in contact with more musicians of the west-eastern divan orchestra to get a multi-perspective view on the topic. Therefore it is important to have diverse interview partners, Israelis, Arabs, Spanish and Turkish people or anybody else who is involved in the orchestra, to find out what the shared or contradictory heritage is, that comes together in the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra.

Finding suitable questions for the interview will be challenging, because the interview partners might be unfamiliar with the term and concept of ‘shared heritage’. Therefore, it might be useful not to use this term in the questions, or to ask what their understanding of the term is.

Possible Interview questions:

- First, can you introduce yourself? What is your name, where are you from and what role does music play in your life? which instrument do you play?
- How did you become a member of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra?
- What is special about playing in this (the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra) orchestra?
- What do you think, unites you as an orchestra?
- What are the problems and challenges to play in this (the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra) orchestra?
- What do you think you and other musicians in the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra have in common?

References

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The West—Eastern Divan Orchestra

<https://west-eastern-divan.org/divan-orchestra>

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