

**Platt: Tell me about your piece “Aphorism” —and also a little about yourself**

Yazdani: I am fascinated by sound! The main field of my work as composer is dealing with acoustics and psychoacoustics on the creation of artistic context and with personal implications on myself. A comprehensive research on the instruments for which I'm composing (in terms of mechanical and acoustical capabilities and features) as well as an overview of how the right blend of certain acoustical phenomena (with instruments) would lead to known and unknown results; is my approach of composing. The ecstasy of sound is my aim for final product of music!

Aphorism, is a piece I wrote for the Swiss ensemble Lemniscate as the winner of their composition competition, whose subject was speech. The following text is from my submission material for the said competition:

In a personal level and as a composer the ability of transmitting thoughts through speaking (and writing), the outer layers of any given language, are surprisingly remarkable as well. For speaking, we transmit the ideas via acoustical means, and decode the ideas firstly via psychoacoustical means.

Speech involves sound. And different languages use widely different intonations, frequency regions, rhythms and or metric structures. The ability of human beings to modify the most delicate acoustical pertinent of their voice on command, in order to transmit the most subtle of thoughts is breath taking. These changes include very delicate shifts on dynamic, envelope, intonation, frequency region and even subtle shifts on spectral arrangement of their voice; all intuitively and equally among all humans. Moreover such subtle alterations greatly differ the connotation and meaning of the speech without actually changing any of its context.

The relationship between the inner core of a language and the outer layer of it (written or spoken) is very complicated. Yet one's language mysteriously affects one's view of the world.

**Q- could tell me about the place of music in the Islamic world?**

A- In my view religions, Islam or other, are rather belief systems and not necessarily and independently culture. Moreover much like Christianity Islam includes many different branches and fractions, sometimes extremely different from each other, so to imagine a concept of Islamic world as a cultural unity is as inaccurate as that of Christian world which is stretched across 5 continents. A Jewish Iranian has much more in common with his muslim neighbour than with an American jew, as the neighbours are more likely to belong to a similar socio-economic subculture. With that logic maybe a New Yorker has more in common with a Berliner than with an American small-town folk. However, certain elements and practices of religion could directly influence the culture or at least incorporate and create a common recurring theme.

My first encounters with religion was funeral, when I'd go to mosque and graveyard with my parents, and of course frequent daily (3 times per day, everyday except Fridays) call for prayers (Adhan or Azan as we pronounce in Iran). And what I can immediately associate with religion, even to this day, is singing. Later I realized those chants and singings were within Persian music systems and traditions. And yet later I learned there are extensive similarities between the customs and traditions of religious practices among middle eastern cultures, and even greater resemblances between the musical systems in the region.

**Q- How do you balance your Islamic heritage with your European education and experience?**

A- I don't! Or at least I'm not aware of it. Every decision that any person makes, on any given subject/issue of life, has something to do with every single aspect of that person's entire life up to that point. My cultural background is sedimented on every aspect of my life too. I know that one of my biggest interests in my music is to create a musical experience, and not tunes to be heard or listened to. Yet in retrospect this is probably the very similar to what I experience(d) when listening to a religious mourning chant or an Azan recitation.

The truth is that music is a man-made/artificial but ecstatic craft, and even though it may have theorised and advanced within European academic culture, similar to medicine or astronomy or other sciences, any human can appreciate, enjoy and/or react to it.