

The Musicians of the Nile Egypt

Tanoura dance and Mizmar baladi ensemble from Luxor



The shrill intonations of the oboe of the Said (Upper Egypt) – the mizmar – recall the Moroccan ghaita. Built on a modal universe of a great richness, it accompanies various dances, including Sufi dance, known as Tanoura.

In fact, the mizmar oboe carries a multitude of names throughout the Orient and the Balkans, Asia and the Maghreb: zurna, zurla, zummar, mizmar, shehnai, ghaita...The ancient traditional zurna and double-membrane drum ensembles came primarily from Turkey. Imported into the Balkans, they are very often made by the Roma. The tapan, a large cylindrical double-membrane drum common to every Balkan country, accompanies these ensembles.

The Tanoura Dance

The dance originally belonged to the order of the Mevlevi or Mawlawija (in Arabic) and harks back to the whirling dervishes of Konya or of Syria. The circular Tanoura dance represents the universe and the sun. The dancer, ecstatically whirling, successively takes off his four multicoloured skirts representing the four seasons. The right arm raised towards the sky and the left arm firmly towards the earth symbolise the meeting between the two elements.