

Middle East PhoNographic Mornings #14/15

Each Morning of the World #10

Champoleon Street ~ **Cairo** ~ Egypt

"**Aragoz**"

Stéphane Montavon

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### **The Puppets Player / Aragoz (Cairo, 26.03.2007)**

translation Hoda Farah & Ashraf Ibrahim, SM – 08.06.2021

*One morning in this small alley called Champoleon Street in Downtown Cairo, which is by the way a very baroque contraction of Champollion and Napoleon, kids were running behind this guy who throws them ritornellos, even the big ones follow him, and when he finds the audience big enough, he stops, leans against an iron curtain, he lifts his djellaba to the top of his head, between his fingers: wooden rods. And then emerge from the pleated white pan two sheaves of rag puppets, very similar to those Klee brought back from Morocco. The Puppets Player first distributes a thousand tricks to onlookers to sharpen his palette of voices, then he begins a show whose main protagonist is Aragoz, the average but skillful plebeian, and the interactions with members of his audience start. At first a certain bigot in the audience will seek him quarrel but in the end he is the one who has been beaten by his lover.*

#### Transcription

**Aragoz**, singing a classic song by Abdel Halim Hafez

I'm dreaming of you

and I'm longing, waiting for you

but if you don't care about me

so it's enough for me that I'm dreaming of you

I'm dreaming of you...

**First Man** Peace be upon you, please Aragoz... **Aragoz** Go to hell, you!

**First Man** Hello, hello, hello! **Aragoz** Hello!

**First Man** I was telling you... **Aragoz** What?

**First Man** What are you going to bring us tonight for dinner?

**Aragoz** What do you want to eat?

**Audience** laughs

**First Man** What I wanna eat? **Aragoz** Yes!

**First Man** Pray for the prophet... **Aragoz** God bless him!

**First Man** I want fried shrimps... **Aragoz** Yes!

**First Man** and Bolty fish... **Aragoz** Yes!

**First Man** and rice... **Aragoz** Here you are, the rice!... What else?

**First Man** Rice with milk...

**Aragoz** Sure, rice with milk!... What else?

**First Man** Tea **Aragoz** A tea? **First Man** Yes! **Aragoz** Ok... Come on, mister!

*singing the same song like before*

I dream of you my love... You made my days full of happiness...

Do you know since when I'm dreaming of you?...

**Second Man**, *calling himself "uncle Othman"*

No God but Allah, Mohamed is his prophet...

You boy! **Aragoz** Yes? **Second Man** God bless you...

Your uncle Othman is coming from Sudan to work with you!

Say: no god but Allah!

**Aragoz** No God but Allah... Our master Mohamed is his prophet!

**Second Man** I want to work with you as a doorman...

**Aragoz** Ok, sure! Come after me, take this (*a stick*), mister !

**Second Man** What is this? **Aragoz** This is for the taxman!

**Second Man** What if a thief would show up?... **Aragoz** Hit him with your stick!

**Second Man** and what if he is wearing a weakling? *a special long hat like the one Aragoz is wearing, called Tartur*

**Aragoz** Break him!

**Audience**, *laughs*

**Aragoz** What is happening here?

**Second Man** Go back to your house, master... Uncle Othman wants to sleep!

Say: no god but Allah!

**Third Man**, *singing*

Mostafa, oh Mostafa... I love you Mostafa!... – Peace be upon you...

**Aragoz** May Allah save me, this time...

*singing a classic song by Mohamed Roshdy: One night, my love came to me and knocked at the door... I smiled as usual and I said: you door are telling lies to me... and then my love calls me through this door...*

**Forth Man** What is this? **Aragoz**, *pretending to pray*: Allah is the greatest!

Allah is the greatest!

**Third Man** Let him pray, boy... Pray when you hear the Azan (*pray call*)...

Pray for the prophet to win, boy... – Haaa!

**Aragoz** Allahhhh is the greatest

**Second Man** A thief... *he beats the puppet player*

**Aragoz** Please, God, help me!

**Second Man** Son of thieves!

**Audience**, *laughs*

**Second Man** Whoever prays upon the prophet must win!

**Aragoz** For the sake of the prophet, protect us, God!... God, protect us!

*Now Aragoz is knocking at Othman's door*

**Second Man** *playing the doorman*

Who is knocking at the doorman's door?

**Aragoz** Come out of the door and look at me... Hahahah!

**Third Man** *singing*

Oh boy, Hadokka... Hadokka, oh Hadokka...

As long as I am with you, we can eat *dokka (very poor food)*

Hadokka, oh boy, Hadokka...

*seeing Othman through his door – oh God!*

Mister Othman, great doorman! Who has beaten you that way?

**Aragoz** The one who has beaten him, will beat you!

**Third Man** Oh, really?

**Aragoz** Wow, the body's place his lover has hit is now swelling!

**Third Man** Do you want to kiss me?

**Aragoz** Yes!

**Third Man** I won't kiss you

**Aragoz** why not?

**Third Man** I swear by the prophet that I will not lean down to kiss you...

**Aragoz** *singing*

Ya salam, salem – I am satisfied and happy!

As many times I suffer and shout my “Ahs!”, please say “Hi!” and “salam!”

**Third Man** *singing*

I'm waiting for someone precious full of luck...

come on, stranger, let our lovers listen to Abdel Wahab

**Aragoz** *singing*

Oh my heart's eyes, the sweetest eyes...

Let's live, enough sadness...

Lololololoyyyyyyy !

*(a traditional scream that ladies used to scream*

*through wedding parties or after exams success or at any happy event,*

*this scream is called Zaghrotah)*

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Stéphane Montavon

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Swiss (1977) writer and field recordist, his main focus are the participants' voices and everyday aurality, he realises docu-fictional pieces based on interviews, archives and soundscapes. He has been collaborating mainly with film-maker Gilles Lepore and with saxophonist and soundartist Antoine Chessex on performances and art videos like *Bolidage*, a tuning cars meeting with an organ, or *Trahir la place / The Betrayed Square*, a quadriphonic dive into the Egyptian revolution.

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