

# What's On

High note

Cezary's Picks

All that traffic jazz

## Music of cities

By Cezary Owerkowicz  
Special to the Arab Times

When I was listening (or playing) George Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' I heard and even imagined New York, its different melodies and harmonies of various places at different time – Broadway, Bronx or Harlem; first of all countless varieties of rhythms dominating on that Moloch insatiable demon and moving it like engines, the whole monster as well as millions of cogs running in different directions for different purposes but harmonized in constant, uninterrupted, motion, sometimes only, according to time – slowing, bit never stopping; the rhythms and melodies orgiastic and melancholic, working, dancing and singing, happy and sad, finally – triumphal. Triumph of greatness.

When I am

thinking of Paris, I hear chansons on the streets, singing with accompaniment of accordion at the rhythm of sentimental waltzes walking in 'three-steps' rhythm through historical streets to the bank of Seine or brilliantly sparkling joyful can-can, jumping in the Casino de Paris, Black Cat or the opposite – in open squares and gardens with laughter among friends ... Sometimes it's a kind of music, sometimes a certain song. In St Petersburg it is Alexander Vertinsky's romance (White Nights) or Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto Theme, in Venice, of course, it is the Gondolier's Barcarole ... Really sorry, maybe became too simple, banal ...

However it would mean that soul of the place would be explained, signaled and symbolized by – music.

### Recognized

In 2004 UNESCO launched the Creative Cities Network. The importance of that project was the nomination for Cities of Music. In 2006 the first such City was the Spanish Seville. I suppose that the famous 'Barber from Seville' was a clever supporter, along with Flamenco, which has in that city widely recognized 'legendary scene'.

The Italian Bologna joined the podium approximately two months later. Italy as a 'country of music' really doesn't need any explanation. From the other side of the globe the exclusive society included the Japanese Hamamatsu – the founding city of musical instruments companies, as Yamaha, Kawai and Roland. In my country, Poland, the first member became the Silesian capital, Katowice. (Its National Symphonic Orchestra visited Kuwait in 2010.)

Nowadays the prestigious titles are held by two hundred of Cities of Music in all continents. They have fulfilled several criteria as to be recognized as centers of music creation and activities, to have experience in hosting international and national music festivals and events, promote the music industry, to be a location of professional music schools and academies, professional and amateurs ensembles such as choirs, orchestras, theatres (operas and so on), domestic and int'l platforms to particular genres of music and/or music from other countries and spaces suited for doing music like open-air auditoriums, of course, all of them higher than elementary (or imaginary) level.

### Symphony

One of elements composing 'symphony of the city' were sounds of city transport. All vehicles participate in performing such score, long before it was done by all horse-drawn carts and rapidly cars, motors, trams, underground (and 'overland railways) took over. However, the cars undisputable soon dominated that orchestra.

Whirring of engines became a constant background of that symphony, thickly encrusted with horn sounds. Horn sounds soon got the upper hand so much that the city symphony was turned into a tremendous cacophony. Such situation exists until now in some places around the globe. Somewhere else it was reduced by strict regulations. Thank God, I never was in favor to accept the opinion that the power of roaring engines and horns howling describe my prestige and position, (especially strength of beats from loud-speakers).

Jeremy Clarkson described the sound of new Lamborghini Huracan Performante (5.2 liter ten-cylinder engine, 2.9 seconds to 100 km, top speed 325 km) in his 'Top

Gear' on TV: 'Its sound resembles the creation of the Universe, the head sticks into the headrest, but you still feel pleasant gust on your hands. This is a car that roars and murmurs at the same time.' A delightful revelation ... ? Fortunately its price limits its availability. Even few such engines on the road make the noise unbearable, isn't it? Maybe you know it?

(NB: However nowadays we have learned that it is also the music element as well as any other sound. It was used in some compositions and presented at the concert halls or aired.)

At last I noticed that the ecology started the influence in every field of our contemporary life, also modern music and traffic. Electric cars don't leave smog but also no sound. Its presence on the road signals just the humming of tires. The vision of the future silent city is becoming more and more tempting. Silence is also music. In Britain a number of accidents with electric and hybrid cars grow proportionally with the number of such cars. It is most dangerous for deaf and those suffering from hearing impaired hearing.

The fact is that the cars without sound have lost their soul. The sound is emotion and the cars are selling thanks to the way they look, drive but also sound. However, first of all the lack of sound is a danger.

The vision of silent cities full of electric cars passed away last July. The European Union issued the new directive, Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System (AVAS). It is a system warning of an approaching vehicle. It is obligatory and applied also to cars produced before July 1, 2019. The directive doesn't describe exactly how it should sound. It is a field to cars producers and agencies. For the time being only the Japanese forbid sounds of the wind, water and animals.

Except for the car companies a lot of agencies are working on new opener field. More that first attempts of producers were too much futuristic, reminding science fiction movies: space vehicles, UFO and so on. A pedestrian will look at the sky and blindly pass the car trajectory. Agencies want to create a sound suitable not only for certain car brands but also for their owners.

### Sound

Can the sound be a kind of driver's signature? Today quite often the car is an extension of our ego and a symbol of our status. It shows who we are and who we aspire to be. We want to be exceptional before we leave the car. The pattern and inspiration exist already since experience with mobile phones and their successors. People have started choosing (and paying) for phone ringtones.

The sound will be the tool of personalization for the driver. One of the ideas is that the sound will depend on the emotional state of the drivers. The car will produce the sound reflecting the mood of the driver, in real time by analyzing the driving style just like it is with mechanism that calculates the average gasoline consumption on an ongoing base. Wow! It is really, sometimes Lullaby, sometimes Appassionata? My question is what repertoire will be available?

The other idea is based on the sound created by professional musicians. One of leaders from an agency talks about cooperation in this regard with a few artists. We experiment with rather lower level of sounds, building impression of an approaching vehicle. The car sounds can be as many as human voices, he added.

Great, it's the new version of street music ... ? Isn't it. Maybe, but can you imagine the Tower of Babel on every road. (NB: Tower of Babel is a biblical story about the place where the Almighty mixed up all languages. As I understand, it was rather a punishment ... all styles, instruments, ensembles, voices (than languages too), époques at once at one crossroad? The only alternative seems to be bicycles.

I love music but not all at once and in one place: Bach, Jackson, Penderecki, Motorhead, Chopin, Armstrong, Kanye West, folk, country, jazz ... all of them together playing at the same time?

I really love people, but not all at one time in one place ...

**Editor's Note:** Cezary Owerkowicz is the chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Philharmonia and talented pianist. He regularly organizes concerts by well-known musicians for the benefit of music lovers and to widen the knowledge of music in Kuwait. His yahoo address is: cowerkowicz@yahoo.com and cowerkowicz@hotmail.com



Photos from the event.

## Orange Kuwait joins global voice for gender equality

# Soroptimist Kuwait: Women empower 'women'

By Chaitali B. Roy  
Special to the Arab Times

To live in safety is everyone's right. To be treated with dignity and respect, to be free from harm, whether physical, psychological or sexual – these are targets of the United Nations Sustainable Goals 2030 vision. Nov 25 is observed as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and it marks the beginning of sixteen days of activism culminating in the celebration of Human Rights Day on Dec 10. Throughout the world, events are held to strengthen the fight against gender discrimination. During this period, Soroptimist Kuwait, a local NGO in keeping with the Soroptimist International campaign for gender equality organises events that raise awareness against gender-based violence. Soroptimist Kuwait is a made up of a group of highly motivated and committed Kuwaiti and expatriate professional and businesswomen who organise activities and raise awareness.

### Vision

In keeping with the vision of peaceful communities of Soroptimist International, Soroptimist Kuwait, the local chapter of the global volunteer movement organised campaigns throughout the sixteen days under the hashtag #OrangeQ8 and #NotOK. Introducing the core area of activity of Soroptimist Kuwait, Dr Amar Behbehani, President of the organization, said, "Soroptimist Kuwait is a society of women to support women! We stand up for women rights in 5 focus areas: education, environment, economy, health, and most importantly eliminating violence against women. We are part of a global voice for women. Our role in the Orange Kuwait Campaign is to raise awareness, challenge discrimination and violence against women and girls in Kuwait and advocate for the repeal of discriminatory laws that directly affect us. As an inclusive society, women of different generations, backgrounds, nationalities, and professions attended the event and were fully engaged in the discussions."

To mark the beginning of 16 days of activism, a discussion titled 'How Women's Rights Progressed in Kuwait?' was held at the Sanctuary Club, Symphony Hotel Kuwait. Orange is the representative colour of this campaign, and it is used as a strong visual motif worldwide to eliminate violence against women. Explaining the Orange Kuwait movement, and the significance of the colour as a symbol of resistance, Zahra AL Qattan, Secretary-General of Soroptimist Kuwait and Campaign Coordinator shared, "Orange Kuwait is a campaign that calls for safeguarding women and girls in Kuwait against discrimination and violence."

This local campaign is launched under Soroptimist Kuwait, and it comes in parallel with the UN's worldwide campaign, Orange The World, that takes place every year for 16 days from Nov 25 to Dec 10. Our campaign works for raising awareness challenging discrimination and violence against women and girls in Kuwait, advocating for the repeal of discriminatory laws and regulations, and demanding the implementation of adequate protection measures.

The colour orange has been designated by the United Nations to symbolise a brighter future for women and girls free from violence and discrimination." The transgenerational discussion that took place to shed light on the history of



One of the speakers at the event.

women's rights in Kuwait, and the achievements of the activists in this field so far and its specific impact on women with special reference to discrimination and violence. "The team intended it to be transgenerational, as we felt that there is a generational gap that needs to be addressed, and that this type of discourse is lacking," explains Zahra.

### Discussion

One of the segments of the discussion addressed the efforts of the previous generation in obtaining their rights. In this segment, the group talked about the primary objectives the activists had set to achieve and analysed if they have achieved what they sought. The discussion concluded that the first generation of activists have succeeded in sowing the seed, but have neglected paving the way for the generation that came after them. In this context, it becomes imperative to take stock of the present situation of the movement. "During the circle, education has been repeatedly mentioned, as a key factor that influences the situation of women at present," says Zahra.

"The National Curricula has to shed light on the history of women's rights and make the new generations aware that their lives are directly influenced by it. At present, we have reached a paradoxical situation where we have a constitution that guarantees women's rights, yet many practices in daily life violate it." The young generation of Kuwait has a high sense of awareness of the movement, which accounted for the high percentage of the audience at the circle event.

Last year, Soroptimist Kuwait adopted the hashtag #NotOK where they targeted the normalisation of violence in general in the community, and against women in particular. This year the group chose #NotEnough to state that whatever protection women and girls have now, is still not enough as discrimination and violence continues unabated and the lives of some women in Kuwait is severely affected by it.

The team that coordinates the

Orange Discussion Circle is made up of aspirational and empowered women who are involved in constant awareness, advocacy and action. "I thought the Nov 25th circle was a very productive and inspiring event," said Elizabeth Bretz, an Orange Kuwait team member. "It brought together old and new generations to talk about what we can do for future generations of women in Kuwait. It also seemed to make everyone more motivated to get involved and work towards more changes for women and girls." Zainab Al Meselekh, another team member, pointed out that the participants in the circle were made up of diverse women all united in their belief that women need more representation in positions of power.

### Representation

"The circle succeeded in attracting women and men of different age groups and nationalities, and from various political, religious, and spiritual beliefs. Everybody agreed on the need to have more representation of women in power and leading positions and this can be achieved if women unite and believe in themselves and what they are capable of achieving," said Zainab.

Hind Al Enezi saw the event as a demonstration of woman power. "It was a beautiful demonstration of women supporting women," said Hind. "This is not our first circle and definitely won't be our last!" she said. To Raihanah Al Sayegh, the discussion was an eye-opener with a bridge or a conduit of sorts growing among women of different age groups.

"I have come to appreciate that women were not only fighting for but working to pave the way for other women in order to eventually secure their political rights," observed Raihanah. "It was inspirational to listen to the older generation, motivational to learn about how far the present generation has come, and promising to meet and listen to what the younger generation plan to continue building up."