

Chapter 6 : Case study 5.

NAKISA : OPERATION HIGHJACK.

Album Title : INSALLAH - IF GOD WILLS IT.

Whilst Linda Marr sings both in Blindman's Holiday and Nakisa, they have had quite different histories. Unlike any of the other bands so far discussed, Nakisa was formed by a migrant musician, Davood Tabrizzi. He formed it in 1983 to perform at Persian community functions. Tabrizzi left, according to Marr, as a consequence of acquiring a repetitive strain injury in his shoulder. In 1985, Marr along with Kim Sanders and Llew Kiek (who also plays in another multicultural band, Mara) joined. Marr recalls that when she joined it was still called the 'Persian Band', and there was still an Iranian musician involved:

"...but he didn't last very long because he was a B'Hai and couldn't play in pubs and things like that because of his religion." (Dunbar/Marr:1990).

The band then became, what Marr called a "working band", a shift from unpaid Persian community gigs to poorly paid pub gigs. A shift not only in line-up but also in audience and ambitions.

On their record, the quartet is augmented by the Turkish lute player Sabahattin Akdagcik. He joined Nakisa for a short while but has since left. Marr jokes:

"We had a real, live token ethnic."
(Dunbar/Marr:1990).

Sanders, like the musicians in Sirocco came from a rhythm & blues, jazz-rock background. He was attracted to this music after hearing Lindsey Pollock and Gary Dawson playing gaidas. He decided to learn. Pollock and Dawson were both early pioneers in the Anglo/Australian discovery of Balkan and Middle Eastern folk music. Both had travelled extensively through Greece and Bulgaria in the late 1970s, collecting instruments and learning dances and songs. Most of the Anglo/Australian musicians examined as apart of this paper have had some contact with one or both of these people. This is yet another example of how the attraction to multicultural music has not been via Australia's migrant communities, but largely as a result of Anglo/Australian tourism and/or ethnographic research.

In some ways Nakisa appears to have evolved a less formal version of Sirocco's band structure. In particular, Nakisa and Sirocco share the idea of a permanent, Anglo/Australian core membership that may be augmented by a fifth musician, sometimes from a migrant background. At the present time however, Nakisa's membership has reverted back to four. In contrast to Blindman's Holiday, Nakisa sees migrant musicians as a source for both repertoire and players. This perhaps reflects Sanders occasional contact with Sydney's Macedonian community. As Marr explains:

"Once you sort of draw those people out then you can go to them and get some information that they had in their heads but they didn't think anyone was interested in." (Dunbar/Marr:1990).

Nakisa's attitude to the music is not so imitative as Blindman's Holiday's:

"...of course we don't play it exactly traditionally because we're not from those cultures and will of course put our own interpretation, own feel to it...we do try and make sure we get a feel for the music before we start to try and play it, so that it doesn't sound like someone just picking up a piece of music and playing it any old way."
(Dunbar/Marr:1990).

Once again we notice that the interest is confined to the surface elements of this music. Its original cultural significance, or even its present significance for migrants now living in Australia is not important, and probably not even known.

Nakisa, like Southern Crossings, performs mainly for the Musica Viva schools program. Compared with the eclecticism of Blindman's Holiday, the music on Nakisa's record has a greater degree of stylistic coherence. This is partly due to the limited number of cultural areas explored. The music is predominantly drawn from the Balkans (Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia) Turkey and the Middle East. Yet this is still quite a number of distinctive music traditions. One track, entitled "Balkan Gypsy" is found on both Nakisa's and Blindman's Holiday's albums. This is not surprising given the cross-over of

musicians as well as repertoire in the Anglo/Australian, multicultural music scene.

In one important factor, the structure of Nakisa's music is not unlike that encountered on the Bombarde album. 'Traditional' sounding tracks are juxtaposed with more modern and eclectic arrangements of the material. This is largely facilitated through instrumentation. Some tracks feature traditional instruments from the above mentioned music cultures, while in others, the electric bass guitar, saxophone and electric guitar dominate the texture. There is a greater degree of improvisation than on the Bombarde album. A good example of this is how the Greek song, "Esen a ti se Meli", breaks into a jazz-like saxophone solo between the verses.

In my opinion, the most musically convincing tracks are the Turkish ones: 'Insallah', 'Deryor' and 'Basina Dondugum'. Perhaps this reflects the influence of the Turkish musician, Sabahattin. It could be that for a short while he influenced Nakisa as Minic is currently influencing Bombarde. Certainly the Turkish tracks are the least eclectic, and most 'authentic' sounding on the album. They seem to tap into a solid tradition rather than the often confused mixtures on the other tracks. They contain innovation but within a recognisable context. The Turkish musicians I played these tracks to were quite accepting of these arrangements, but they also keenly noted the breaks with the traditional.

In contrast, there are some real 'fusion' tracks on this album. One good example is the Bulgarian song, 'Kaval Sviri'. Despite the title, there is no kaval on this track. Instead this difficult end-blown flute is replaced by a western orchestral flute. Perhaps another example of a musical compromise brought about by the perceived need of Australian multicultural bands to play a variety of instruments. The most difficult instruments don't get learnt. There just isn't the time. Substituting the kaval, the flute plays a slow, blues-like melody, accompanied by sparse chords on the guitar. The song then moves into a traditional Bulgarian dance rhythm in 11/8 time. Soon after the voice enters. The vocalist, Linda Marr, uses the traditional open-throated singing tone that has been recently popularised by the women from Trio Bulgarka. It is a deep, full bodied tone, rich in harmonics. These traditional elements are combined with a 'swung' jazz accompaniment on the guitar. The verses are separated by flute solos which owe more to the jazz flautist, Ian Anderson from Jethro Tull, in articulation and tone than to the Bulgarian kaval.

There is one curiosity on the album cover that needs mentioning. Accompanying the listing of each track's title is their respective time signature. This information would only make sense to a trained musician. However, the information does demonstrate to musicians, or music teachers the bands ability to play the unusual additive dance rhythms of the Balkans. This perhaps indicates that this multicultural record, like the others so far examined, is not aimed at Australia's migrant communities, but for Anglo/Australians. The specialist information may have been included to help promote the band's work in schools.

Overall, Nakisa's music is typified by a wide variety of musical styles and influences. To my ears this often sounds confused. Like Sirocco, there seems to be a self-conscious effort to forge 'a new Australian musical style' by combining elements of contemporary jazz and popular music forms, with traditional Balkan and Middle Eastern folk styles. The band's knowledge of the latter forms is limited both musically and culturally. The fusion has a tendency to sound forced and unconvincing. Perhaps this stylistic incoherence had something to do with the departure of Sahabattin from Nakisa?

Chapter 7 : Case study 6.

LENKO : WHICH WAY WILL THEY GO ?

Album title : LENKO.

Discussing this album poses problems for me. I was intimately connected with its production, being one of the founding members of Lenko. It is not so much a problem of being objective. I agree with Dale Spender when she writes:

"The choice of what to believe or not to believe is not between 'biased' and 'objective' research: the issue is which set of biases takes more of the evidence into account." (Spender:1980:50.)

Too much musicology, and more unexpectedly recent ethnomusicology hides behind a wall of pseudo-objectivity. (See Dunbar:1989 for an elaboration of this point). This research analyses 'music', while choosing to ignore the very real political struggles of the people who produce the music. This calculated omission of the context in which music is produced demonstrates a bias, cloaked in 'objectivity'.

My problem is that I have much more information about the Lenko recording than all the others. Yet it is important to include this record not only for statistical integrity, as it was funded by the Australia Council during the same period as the others, but also because it has important similarities and differences in relation to the other discs.

Lenko was formed around 1984 by Irine Vela, Julia Boubis, Michael Kyriakakis, Micheal Skutenko and Mark Dunbar. It grew out of the choir and musical workshop of an organisation then called 'The Greek Progressive Youth of Australia'. Today it is called 'The Greek-Australian Progressive Youth' (GAPY). This youth organisation has strong links with the 'Greek Democritus League' and the 'Greek-Australian Women's Movement'. Its activities are political and cultural, aimed at addressing the problems and needs of young Greek-Australian migrants.

From the outset then, Lenko had strong connections with the Greek community. Three members were second generation Greek migrants, although Kiriakakis, who was American-born of Greek-Irish descent, could not speak Greek. Over a period of years prior to recording this album, there were several changes to the line-up. Chris Lesser replaced Skutenko as a percussionist/guitarist, and when Lesser was absent for a year, he was replaced by James Harper. Nonetheless, the Greek core of Lenko remained constant until 1986, when vocalist Boubis left.

Unlike the bands so far discussed, Lenko's leadership was not Anglo/Australian, but solidly second generation migrant. As a result, over the years of its existence, Lenko has continuously played for the Greek community, and other migrant communities. These gigs, more often than not unpaid, were considered apart of the band's political work and commitment. Concurrently, Lenko also sought to gain acceptance in the wider community. A move thought necessary if the band were to begin to provide an income for its members. A part of this process has been to seek government funding for specific projects. It has received support several times from the Australia Council, and once from the department of Foreign Affairs through an International Year of Peace grant. Lenko has also organised its own schools performances, and played at many festivals and community events. Today Lenko performs as a trio. The three members, Vela, Lesser and Dunbar all work professionally as musicians. Lenko thus forms a small and perhaps diminishing part of their respective musical careers.

The idea behind the record was two-fold. Firstly, it was to document, via a quality recording, some of the music Lenko had been playing live for a number of years. Secondly, it was to assist the band reach a wider audience. Most of the music is Greek or Balkan sounding, including the three original tracks, Vela's 'Futility of Feudalism' and the collectively composed 'Kaval' and '19/8'. Other tracks like 'The Old Bulgarian', 'To

Pasari', 'The New Bulgarian', 'Karagouna', and 'The Folk Set', are what the group described as "contemporary arrangements of traditional folk material". At the time the members of Lenko considered these arrangements quite innovative, in that they deviated rhythmically and harmonically from the traditional folk melodies on which they were based. In particular, some of the chordal constructions reflected Lesser's jazz background. The intricacies of additive rhythm are explored in many of Lenko's arrangements. For example contractions of 7/8 bars into 5/8 bars add excitement, as do other unusual rhythmic variations and sudden stops. These techniques also had the effect of changing the context of the music. Dance music became concert music. For example, with such rhythmic contractions it became difficult to dance to Lenko's version of the Greek 'Kalimatianos'. These alterations gained a mixed response from Greek audiences. However, compared with the eclecticism of the Nakisa or Bombarde recordings, Lenko's arrangements sound quite conservative! With hindsight it appears that these rhythmic alterations were incorporated to add flavour and humour to the music, and to demonstrate virtuosity. However, it is clear that only Greeks, or people intimate with Greek music would fully appreciate the humour in this. They were made for them.

There are two 'odd tracks out' on the Lenko album. The first, called 'Mock Baroque' is a parody of an eighteenth century fantasia for solo flute by Georg Telemann. It represents Dunbar's classical background, and facilitated a desire to demonstrate how western classical music has continuously plundered folk musics for musical material. In this instance, the process was reversed. The second piece, called 'Charagua' is a version of a Chilean melody by Victor Jara. The inclusion of this piece represented Lenko's political commitment to struggles for national liberation, as well as the band's ongoing association with many Latin American musicians in Melbourne. Once again with this track, Lenko considered the arrangement to be fresh and innovative, differing substantially from the Inti Illimani original. Yet compared with tracks from the Nakisa album, it sounds politely imitative, and very respectful!

The important point about Lenko is that it has been caught in a social contradiction not shared by the bands so far examined. On the one hand it has sought a broader audience to increase its ability to provide incomes for its members; on the other hand it maintained a strong desire to be apart of the Greek community. This was a contradiction members of Lenko were well aware of. Dunbar's Anglo/Australian background facilitated Lenko's access into mainstream culture. He knew the funding ropes, the things to say to raise Australia Council support. However the contradiction sharpened as the band

entered the area of work most Anglo/Australian multicultural bands pursue—schools shows. These shows require bands to play music from all over the world. This is their appeal to music teachers. Lenko rejected this idea after several attempts, because members were put off by the thought of learning a tune from here, there and everywhere. It was not the way the band worked, and never a part of its history and development. To focus merely on the surface elements of the music seemed wrong, some even thought deceitful, especially in a show designed for children. Lenko did do school shows, but they presented their existing repertoire of Greek/Balkan music.

As mentioned, members of Lenko considered the musical arrangements quite daring. In fact, many first generation Greeks found the experimentation puzzling, if not amusing. However, on a purely musical level, if you compare the Lenko record with other records in this study, produced by Anglo/Australian, multicultural bands, Lenko's innovations seem quite tame. I think this is only explicable through the bands often unconscious accountability to the Greek community. There is nothing mystical about this relationship. Lenko inherited a musical tradition that would accept innovation within that context. The band especially wanted to alter the music so that it was relevant to second generation Greek-Australians. However, there was no room to deface the music totally, especially as many of the band's most important gigs were within the Greek community.

The records so far examined have hovered between the slavish imitations (fetishism) shown by Blindman's Holiday toward traditional folk musics and the outlandish contortions of it in the name of creating a 'new music tradition' in Australia. Taken individually, tracks on the Lenko record have elements of both these tendencies. Overall, the record tends to sit somewhere in the middle. However, this musical middle-ground is not consistent. Different tracks represent, to a greater or lesser degree, the pull of Lenko's contradictory predicament. It is also the result of Lenko belonging to, and living the politics and life of Melbourne's Greek community. This is an important non-musical distinction between Lenko and the other groups of this study, which is nonetheless present in the music itself. This non-musical process, and how it actually affects music will be explored later in another context. In simple terms, Lenko is migrant and working class in orientation. The multicultural music so far examined has been Anglo/Australian and middle class. This is an important distinction. For those who may switch off as a result of the introduction of class into the discussion, I refer to Donald Horne, Chairperson of the Australia Council:

"If one is concerned with class as related to position in the social division of labor...then one is concerned with one of the most useful tools of analysis of modern industrial states. From this viewpoint, a concern with ethnicity will be a distraction from a realistic consideration of other social issues if it is not used in context of the division of labor." (Horne:1983:6.)

Chapter 8 : Case study 7.

TUNARI : HOW DID THEY DO IT ?

Cassette title : TUNARI.

Tunari presented this study with a puzzle. Here is a band I had seen on numerous occasions, usually busking on Melbourn's streets; a band made up of first generation, Latin American migrants from Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil; a band playing the folk music from their cultures, dressed in colorful ponchos, joking, singing, fooling, whistling, entertaining. A 'real' Latin band celebrating life spontaneous or cruel, in its own haphazard fashion. (ok, I'm a romantic!!). In some ways this is the last band you would expect to see on a list of successful recording grant applications from the Australia Council. That statement does not only represent my own ethnocentricity, but as I will show further on, real structural biases in Australian multiculturalism that mitigates against migrant, working class bands like Tunari even applying for funding.

Tunari is different to the other bands so far discussed. Lenko comprises second generation migrants, several from NESBs. Tunari's musicians are all first generation migrants from NESBs. Spanish is the language they converse and rehearse in. Nevertheless, Hohai, the band-member I interviewed, spoke good English, largely as

a result of living in Australia since 1973. He has been back to Bolivia several times. On each occasion he experienced the typical ambivalence, and 'lack of belonging' towards both his 'homes':

"I would like to be there three month, four month but at the end of the second week I feel like-homesick again, I want to go home-Melbourne...It is a shock to go back to that system, you need time to take it, then you feel ok...at the end of two month I feel like if I stay there two more months I won't come back here (Melbourne), you know?"
(Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

Tunari was formed in 1986, as Hohai explains because of:

"...the need to do something to keep me from going insane...to escape, (something) to hold on to."
(Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

In the first instance then, the motivation to form the band was not material ambition, musical ambition or even political. It was emotional. This emotional connection extends into Tunari's music:

"The energy what you put in is what makes a song good, gives it the sound. You can play every note in the book, but if you don't put energy into that, life into that, it sounds sort of pathetic...communication, in the end you know they are enjoying it, so that help you to do it, you do it better, incentive to play." (Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

While O'Toole from Sirocco speaks of 'creating a new style' and 'success', Hohai talks of 'communication', 'energy and enjoyment'. These words represent an important musical distinction. Much of the music so far examined is quite overtly searching for something 'new'. It combines disparate elements in a self-conscious desire to discover the 'new Australian music culture.' It is a process not unlike the way the commercial music industry manufactures the next hit. Both are conscious processes, connected with notions of profit or success. As Hohai says, Tunari plays 'Andean music'. It is the musical tradition of the members of the group. There is no searching for musical change, it occurs as a matter of course, usually unself-consciously as their music interacts with the Australian reality. It is an unpretentious notion that grows out of a simple desire to play and communicate through music.

On listening to their cassette (no discs were pressed just five hundred cassettes, of which only two remain in the band's possession!) you immediately notice a coherence and continuity of style. There are no 'odd tracks out', as on the Lenko album. Instead one melody flows into the next. Traditional Andean instruments for example zaponnas, charango, cha-chas and queenas interplay with the strong, clear vocal qualities that typify Latin folk music. If Australia has impacted at all on this music, successfully transported, it is not immediately obvious. Further specialist analysis might

uncover slight changes in rhythm and melody, but this detail is not the focus of this paper. In answering a question about Australia's effect on Tunari's music, Hohai replied:

"No...over there, (Bolivia) it will be more tight because the competition there is big, so to be good you have to put all effort into sound quality. Here we do that too but because you are more happy to express it to someone who don't know it, we do it more free, spontaneous. If you make a mistake no-one will shoot you...We'd feel more tense there, here you can go out a little bit...mentally it will give you that space."
(Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

Presently Tunari is playing once a week at a Melbourne night-spot, Babaloos. They undoubtedly play more than any other band in this study. Their music may be from one particular style, but as a group they are extremely versatile. Their gigs include parties, weddings, street-festivals, concerts, pubs, schools and night-clubs. In fact, the kind of gigs a reception, or cover band might play. They also play for Latin audiences, but as Hohai explains:

"Since the formation we've all been a bit hurt by the (Latin) community and we feel it is more interesting to expose our thing to people who don't know about that...they (the Latin community) use you, a party for this, a party for that...we don't have any money, can you do it?' They make money but they don't give it to you, we don't need that".
(Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

Tunari is one of the few bands in this study that regularly busks. It is while busking, and at other gigs that their cassette was sold. Like Lenko, they did not seek a distribution deal, but opted to sell as they played. For Hohai, busking is a valuable experience in itself:

"Playing alot means money...everything becomes a bit of a money maker. Busking, ok, you are there for the money, but a response from the people, in the end you don't care about the money. If you are in a concert you have to worry about the P.A. system, feedback, you are a bit tense, busking you don't have that, you are you...it's different because (it takes) no effort to be there, they are passing by, if they stop its because they enjoy it. It's more free, response is different...when we feel that, we can give more, communication goin' on there-two ways, it's very nice. I used to buy flowers for kids, that was joy, seeing people happy." (Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

Question: How did a group of first generation, Spanish speaking migrant musicians find out about, let alone apply for an Australia Council recording grant? After all, they are unique in this regard among all the bands in this study.

Answer: They didn't! Someone else applied on their behalf. Tunari's funding was raised by C'est Ca Recording Services, a recording studio owned by Norman James, who also plays with the Melbourne Anglo/Australian, multicultural band, Shenanigans. In effect, James talent-spotted Tunari, and raised the money to provide work for his studio. The arrangement gives him quite a bit of

control, which Tunari would not have forfeited had they raised the money themselves. In particular, Tunari is in dispute with C'est Ca over who owns the copyright for the cassette. Presently, James is holding the master-tape, and Hohai would like it returned to Tunari. He explains:

"The government pays him (James) so much for the recording through us, we pay him \$5.00 for each tape ok. I don't understand why he is holding the rights, should be our rights, we paid for that, we paid for everything..."
(Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

There was no written contract; and moreover the deal, according to Hohai, was never clearly explained by James. As Hohai comments:

"His interest is money isn't it...he sees the opportunity to use Tunari to get money from the government...if we don't get the master-tape back, we have been exploited." (Dunbar/Hohai:1990).

Finally, as if to rub salt into the wound, C'est Ca have, without first consulting Tunari, put in another application for another cassette! In all the other examples in this study, the band raised the money and hired the recording studio. Is it a coincidence that in the case of Tunari, the band with the least access to knowledge about Anglo/Australian institutions, the studio raised the money and hired the band? I doubt it.