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'Amfialos'

A curation of a festival, which aims to explore the Mediterranean culture with the sound of traditional folk music.

In the following assignment I am intending to curate a traditional folk music festival, that will include music and artists from the Mediterranean countries, in order to explore the Mediterranean Sea as a means not only for economical transactions, but also for intercultural dialogue to achieve collaboration in a region, where countless diversities are identified.

I entitled it 'amfialos' and it will be held in one of the most picturesque villages of Cyprus, Lefkara in August 2020. Explanations will be given regarding my choices for the title, theme, time and space by a theoretical historical and social perspective.

To start with, I chose the ancient Greek word 'amfialos', because despite of its debates and transmission, 'amfialos' describes the Mediterranean sea. The word is exclusively used in poetic and it was taken to mean sea girt. It is written in Odyssey when Homer wanted to describe Ithaca, the home of Odysseus. However, taken literally defines something surrounded by two seas. It is also construed as 'having the sea all around it' or 'which is by the sea'. In the same way, Mediterranean Sea is an intercontinental sea that stretches from Atlantic Ocean to Asia and separates Europe from Africa. For this reason, is known as the ancient 'sea between lands'. In other words, the word 'amfialos' could be the primitive definition of the Mediterranean sea.

I choose to focus on the Mediterranean area not only because of my origin, but also because of the immediate efforts that should be made for the development of the region.

According to Bradford 1971 and Braudel 1972, Mediterranean is a place of the mind as much as a physical location, often idealized as unified area. Unfortunately, there is an obvious separation between the northern Mediterranean countries from the Arab and Balkan countries. The labels of 'developed' and 'developing' countries in the Mediterranean is raising the alarm for lack of homogeneity; not on the plain economic aspects, but mostly on the cultural. The progress in this region seems to be fragile and uneven.

Mediterranean is the main tourism area in the world with almost 400 million tourists annually both domestics and internationals. The current

COVID-19 situation is not only a universal health crisis, but it also causes social, economic and political crises. It is a limited factor to the financial development of the Mediterranean countries, since tourism is being affected because of the lockdown policies. According to General Coordinator of ASCAME, (Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry) in order to mitigate the impact of the crises and contribute in overall recovery, Mediterranean countries should invest in the sustainable development of tourism, promoting the cultural diversity and the historical importance of the area.

‘Amfialos’ festival it is a practical effort to minimize the economical and cultural gap between neighboring countries and establish coherency; festivals are increasingly being used as instruments for promoting tourism and boosting the regional economy (Chang, 2006). Not to mention the fact that, traditional folk music is inspired by the ‘spirit of the people’, reaching across ideological and national barriers.

Traditional music is still quite more prevailed to the Mediterranean countries than the art music; and the eastern ones move in the Mediterranean area the one will hear more folk songs on older church modes.

However, even from music perspective since the end of Middle Ages Mediterranean was separated. One part, it is the north, which is completely projected towards continental Europe through the interaction between the music of Mediterranean Europe with Flanders, Germany, England and northern France. The other part, the south, is spread out horizontally from Maghreb (region of North Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea) to Turkey and bears a wealth of continuities with the musical world of Iran and India.

Despite of their separation, they have in common six thousand years of history during which they came into contact with one another (e.g. Davis 1993); they fought against and dominated each other, traded goods, encountered the art of their neighbours, spread religions, and considerably influence each other even the extremely distant countries. This fact according to Braudel is the ‘widened Mediterranean’ on musical element. The key feature of the ‘widened Mediterranean’ is the common

history of the past and the development of traditional folk music as a means for understanding man and society of their time; such an event it is just a brief travel in time to remind Mediterranean ethics the similarities of their roots through traditional folk music.

Cyprus is the ideal exemplar for understanding ‘amfialos’ to its all elements, since it combines the geographical, historical and cultural variations of Mediterranean characteristics. Cyprus is situated at the cross point between Europe, Asia and Africa and through the centuries has being visited, inhabited, colonized and conquered by several different ethnics. Because of its essential geographical place, the island fell under Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Frank, Venetian, Ottoman, English, Greek and Roman domination. Each group brought to Cyprus its own tradition and habits, which blended with the Greek dominant language and culture. For this reason, the history of Cyprus demonstrates the meeting of East and West civilizations.

Although, considering the existing situation of the pandemic, according to a study of Singapore University, Cyprus is predicted to be virus-free on the 24th of May, so the island will be more than prepared to host such an event in August.

The festival will be hosted in Lefkara, a small mountainous village that has no more than a thousand inhabitants. The meaning of the name of the village is white mountains (lefka oroi) because of the lime stone rock that decorates the narrow, picturesque, winding streets and is combined with the traditional architecture of the buildings. There is a sense of a mythical element in the village because of the local legends. The one is saying that Leonardo da Vinci visited Lefkara and he was so impressed from the Lefkara laces- which are declared as a heritage item by UNESCO- that he took one embroidery with him and it had been the inspiration for his painting ‘ The last Supper’. According to the other one, the local church Timios Stavros (Holy Cross), it contains a piece of the Holy Cross of the Jesus Christ.

Lefkara is only 30km from the airport; this will benefit the artists and the attendants of the festival, as they will have easy and fast transfer. It is also worth mentioning, that despite the fact that it is a mountainous village,

Lefkara is not far from the sea and instead of the warm summer climate of the island the climate of the village is cool.

The duration of the festival will be three days, where domestic and international tourists will be able to enjoy traditional folk music concerts from artists all over Mediterranean. The festival will be advertised through social media, where short videos of the village and the artists will be uploaded so people will be familiarized with the philosophy of 'amfialos'. Furthermore, young artists will be mostly included, who tries alternative experimental ways to produce traditional folk music, because one the aims of the festival is to support young art workers.

The fundamental purpose of 'amfialos' though, is to denounce the complex play of economical and cultural power and manifest music as a cultural hearth and as a communication channel. I hope that people will embrace that effort and it will be established it as a custom.

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