

IDIR'S ARTISTIC WORK : A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TWO SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**L'ŒUVRE ARTISTIQUE D'IDIR : UNE PASERELLE ENTRE LES DEUX RIVES DE LA MEDITERANEE****Fadhila ALIOUCHOUCHE**

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fadhila.aliouchouche@univ-bejaia.dz**Abstract**

Born in Ait Lahcen on October 25th, 1945 Idir, whose real name is Hamid Cheriet, began his artistic career with a title « A Vava Inouva » which propelled him to the forefront of the international scene. This masterpiece, translated into different languages, rocked generations and made the Kabyle song travel to the four corners of the world. Idir's artistic work advocates peace, freedom, identity and tolerance. Indeed, true ambassador of the Kabyle song and culture, he has contributed in establishing bridges between the two shores of the Mediterranean. For this universal artist, identity, tolerance, everything that goes in the direction of light and bringing people together should be respected.

Keywords: Idir, artistic work, identity, immigration, Mediteranean**Résumé**

Né à Ait Lahcen le 25 octobre 1945, Idir, de son vrai nom Hamid Cheriet, a commencé sa carrière artistique avec le titre « A Vava Inouva » qui l'a propulsé sur le devant de la scène internationale. Ce chef-d'œuvre, traduit en différentes langues, a bercé des générations et fait voyager la chanson kabyle aux quatre coins du monde. L'œuvre artistique d'Idir prône la paix, la liberté, l'identité et la tolérance. En effet, véritable ambassadeur de la chanson et de la culture kabyle, il a contribué à établir des ponts entre les deux rives de la Méditerranée. Pour cet artiste universel, " l'identité, la tolérance, tout ce qui va dans le sens de la lumière et du rapprochement des peuples " doivent être respectés.

Mots clés : Idir, œuvre artistique, identité, immigration, Méditerranéen

The beginning of Idir's artistic brilliant career started with his wellknown lullaby « avava inouva ». Indeed, the life of the young student of geology has taken an important direction and his interpretation of this artistic masterpiece on the radio marked his life for ever. In the seventies, Idir settled in France where he was considered as a unifying element who succeeded in making young generations of immigrants discover their origins through the melodies of the songs from his rich repertoire. To celebrate a multicultural France, in 2002, he invited a number of young artists to interpret the titles of his opus « La France des couleurs ». In addition to his commitment to the Beur movement ¹, Idir was interested in the world music

and advocated musical interbreeding. Thus, he multiplied collaborations with famous artists such as Francis Cabrel, Aznavour, Manu Chao, Maxime Le Forestier and many others.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on Idir's contribution in bridging the gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean through his artistic work.

This study is guided by the following research question :

To what extent has the artistic work of Idir contributed in bridging the gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean?

1. IDIR'S WORK AS A VEHICLE FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE KABYLE CULTURE AND VALUES

Song has always been an artistic form of expression that allows the transmission of culture, identity and its related values. Like many Berber artists, Idir, through his work, has made his culture known, notably with his world-famous song *Vava Inouva*, which earned him the title of ambassador of Kabyle song. In his rich repertoire, the recurring themes are :

The promotion of the mother tongue:

Enabling children to be competent in their first language allows them to better understand their cultural heritage and identity. In other terms, languages are the primary means of keeping our culture alive, for Idir it represents a link which connects people with their culture. Therefore, in his title "*mimmi*", Idir insists on the importance and the duty to preserve, maintain and transmit the mother language from generation to generation so as to ensure its continuity.

Mimmi mimmi d sser n dunnit

Mimmi ad imeslay s teqbaylit

Ad tt-icnu ad tt-icdeh Ad tt-yaru ad tt-icbeh

Lay lay la laaaa Lay lay la laaaa

My child is my joy of living

My child will speak in Kabyle

He will sing with it and dance to its rhythm

He will write it and embellish it

Fraternity as value anchored in our society : indeed, solidarity and mutual aid are aspects that we find in the Kabyle villages. Known as « *thiwizi* », this practice consists in activities where people participate in collective work in the villages such as picking olives or helping to build the first slab of houses. This element is reflected in Idir's song « *thiwizi* ». Furthermore, brotherhood is also an aspect of paramount importance in Kabyle families. Moreover, the strength of a family is measured by the number of its members who share common values and stand together when ever they face difficulties. This family solidarity is mentioned in Idir's words :

Twesad' iyi ghef gma

Ad bedegh ghurs ad yemghur

Idir's artistic work : a bridge between the two shores of the mediterranean

At afagh gher tuyat iwUr nesai tagmat me'hqur
You asked me to look after my little brother
To look after him until he is an adult
A brother I'll find by my side in hard times
For he who has no brother is alone,
and will eventually be trampled

Considered as the icon of Berber identity, Idir was one of its fervent defender. Thus, identity is a central component in his artistic work, and one of his albums is entitled Identities. In his songs, he evokes the names of emblematic figures of Berber history and expresses his pride in belonging to this people.

Muqly tamurt Umaziy
Yugurten walay udem-ik
Nnesma-nni n wanda lliy
Hulfey tcewwek s isem-iw
Tabrat-ik segmi i tt-yriy
Ferhey immi lliy d mmi-k
Ferhey immi lliy d mmi-k
I turn back to the Berber country
Jugurtha I glimpse your face
In the well being of where I was
Swearing to proclaim your
name loud and clear
Your message when I read it
I was proud to be your descendant

In addition to transmitting ancestral values, Idir is also committed to introducing the different musical styles of the Berber culture. In « Isfra », he invites us to discover the rhythm of songs known as « Thivogharine » which is a musical genre sung in ceremonies such as weddings or circumcision. These songs are in fact praises sung to the glory of the bride and groom, their families and relatives. The lullaby « assuzen » is another musical genre that we find in some of Idir's songs. This musical genre is known among Kabyle women who rock their little ones to sleep with their sweet voice. Examples include: Ay Alxir Inu; Ers-s ay ides, Ssendu

2. IDIR'S WORK AND THE BEURS GENERATION

Since the 1960s, hundreds of Algerian families have opted for the path of exile. Indeed, for decades, particularly in the 1940s, exile was characterized by the departure of the head of the family in search of resources to support the whole family in the country. From the 1960s onwards, and well after independence, we witnessed the emergence of a new form of emigration, with whole families leaving their native land to settle in France. The massive

arrival of these families gave rise to neighborhoods with a high concentration of immigrants, mainly from the Maghreb countries, thus creating a sort of ghetto. The differences between the French natives and the immigrants are quickly felt and the feeling of « rejection » and acts of racism are the daily lot of these families. The new generation that arrived in France at a young age or was born in France quickly realized their situation and the gap between them and the natives. The term Beurs or Rebeu appeared to name this generation of immigrants. Among these young Beurs, singers and artists mixing two cultures, that of their country of origin and that of the host country France, distinguished themselves by their songs through which they carry the voice of their community and denounced discrimination and racial segregation. Thus, groups such as Debza, "Carte de Séjour" in reference to the document issued by the French administration that allows immigrants to stay and work on French soil, have emerged. Idir, who settled in France in 1975, has been in contact with the Algerian community established in France in general and the Kabyle community in particular. He has fought for undocumented migrants, sung for Armenia, raised funds for SOS Racism. His album *La France des Couleurs* (Will Defend the Colours of France), produced in 2007, is a call for equality and fraternity.

Egalité, fraternité

On mérite mieux que ces cités

L'avenir c'est la mixité

In an interview on the occasion of the release of the record, Idir states that : « The concept of this title, as of this album, is a sort of ram's blow to say: there will be no other alternative than a France of colours, and the stars who accompany me to say it give weight to this idea ». The ideas, the lyrics, the music and everything on the album are linked to the mixing of colours, cultures, and musical styles and of course, people. In one of the tracks on this album, Idir, in a duet with the rapper Sinik, denounces racism and the amalgam between being Algerian, Muslim and foreigner. In other words, the stereotypes from which the Maghreb community in general suffers:

Allô, Alger ici Paris loin de mes rêves,

C'est la déche, ici bas il fait trop froid,

Hier encore j'ai vu la neige,

Mais comment te dire que je n'ai pas la rage,

A l'école mes camarades m'appellent

Bougnoule ou sale arabe, Pardonne moi d'être grossier,

Mais c'est tous des cons,

Pour eux si t'as la barbe un peu trop longue

C'est que tu poses des bombes,

Je voulais du taff mais j'en trouves pas,

Et j'en chiale car Momo et Mostapha

ne font pas le poids contre Jean-Charles,

3. RECIPROCITY AND SHARING IN IDIR'S WORK

As a universal artist, Idir has always advocated sharing and opening up to others. Thus, his opus « Ici et ailleurs » in 2017 is composed of duets with famous names of the French artistic world : Charles Aznavour, Francis Cabrel, Maxime Le Forestier, Patrick Bruel and Grand Corps Malade. According to him, « French song has amazed me and it was time to restore things. So I got involved in the French song scene and I asked them to do things together ». The choice of the titles of this album is not fortuitous, but responds to certain elements in common between him and these great artists.

In this perspective, the duet with Patrick Bruel entitled « Les larmes de mon père » (my father's tears), which describes the drama, injustice and reality of the Tunisian spring, also translates the drama experienced by young Algerians during the Berber spring in 2001.

Gérard Lenorman's 1974 song « Matins d'hiver » is revisited with oriental sounds. « Les matins d'hivers » becomes a song that describes both the French artist's memories and those of a young Kabyle man in the Djurdjura mountains.

His encounter with Francis Cabrel on the song « La Corrida » resulted in a song sung in both languages, Kabyle and French. It is about the sacrifice of an animal in the name of the Spanish tradition « corrida de toros » and Idir provides us with a Kabyle version. About the choice of this title he explains in an interview: « It was not difficult to find a link with the subject of the song, since, we Kabyle people also have our own intimate history with bullfighting ».

Idir has also collaborated with young artists such as Grand Corps Malade, in his album « Ici et ailleurs » where they sing a tribute to their origins. For Idir, proud of his Kabyle origins, it is everyone's duty to make this element a force for moving forward in life, wherever we are. In this context, he considers that Algeria is his first country and France his second one. Algeria provided him with an identity, an origin and he cannot forget that and France represents the country that gave him freedom of expression and which welcomed him.

*Nous savons que nos racines nous nous empêcheront
jamais d'avancer
Chacun connaît ses origines dans le sang et la chair elles sont tatoués
Si tu sais d'où tu viens tu sauras où tu vas, c'est certifié
Et si c'est ton destin de vivre ailleurs alors suit le sans hésité
Le départ c'est une douleur, c'est alors à toi de la transformer
En une force une couleur, et plus porte en toi à ton arrivée
Dans un nouveau pays, tu n'oublieras rien a de ton passé
Et comme tu sais très bien qui tu es, ça sera ton moteur pour avancer*

Idir, a precursor of modern Algerian song, has left an indelible mark on the universal artistic world through his rich and varied repertoire. The author of Vava Inouva, Assedu and many other masterpieces has won hearts « here and elsewhere », for Pierre Bourdieu Idir « is not a

singer like the others. He is a member of every family ». Idir's work is undoubtedly a bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean, creating links between generations from both continents and as he himself said: « I have always tried to create bridges between the two shores of the Mediterranean, where politics and social issues could fail, art could succeed ». In his book « Idir, un Kabyle du monde », Farid Alilat describes this artist as a brewer and a passer-by of culture. So to conclude with; we can say that the icon of Kabyle song has succeeded not only in preserving the Kabyle cultural heritage but also in making it known throughout the world while building bridges between people regardless of their religion, origins or skin colour.

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