

Terms a Middle Eastern Musician Persona Should Know:

Types of Musicians/ Singers/ Poets:

- **Qayna (Qiyān)** – ‘singing slave girl’, earliest performers of Arabic music in the Islamic era, song, and poetry (Wright 2). It is important to note here that dance was not held in the same esteem and high art as song and poetry were.
- **Mukhannath** – effeminate male singers like qaynah
- **Rawi** – reciter of poetry

Musical Terms:

Maqam (Maqamat) “situation” - melodic mode, hundreds of maqamat have been documented in the Near East, in period the term used to refer to modes is “Asabi”

- **Jins (Ajnas)** – the building blocks of the maqamat also used to change the feel of the maqam from one to the other
- **Darb (Durub)** – literally measure, the rhythmic pattern
- **Iqa (Iqaat)** – rhythm
- **Wazn** – rhythm cycle
- **Mawwali** – vocal improvisation
- **Taqsim** – instrumental improvisation

Song Forms:

- **Muwwashah** – a strophic poem written in classical Arabic (Touma 70) can be religious, language is formal Arabic. Zajal refers to this type of poetry used in colloquial Arabic.
- **Dulab** – short instrumental piece usually followed by a muwashah
- **Qasida** – a form of Arabic poetry with up to 100 lines. The qasidas of pre-Islamic times had these elements: (Hourani 12 – 15)
 - Evocation of a place where the poet had once been
 - Journey – as to recover strength
 - Over all the qasida was a poetry of praise
- **Nawbah** - an Andalusian form of music created by the virtuoso Ziryab (‘blackbird’), referred to as ‘nawbah or nouba al-andalusi’. “There used to be twenty-four Nawbah linked to each hour of the day, but only four Nawbah have survived in their entirety, and seven in fragmentary form. An entire Nawbah can

last six or seven hours and are divided into five parts called *mizan*, each with a corresponding rhythm.” (Dubsahara.com)

Cultural Context Of Music:

- **Tarab “enchantment”** – the elation of enchantment an audience member feels when listening to music
- **Samaii (Samaii’ah) “listeners”** – the audience looking for Tarab
- **Majilis “Place of sitting”** – a social gathering in the Abbasid period, could be for literature, music, general social gatherings. Music performance was common. **There were** two types of Majlis formal and informal, designated by the presence of the patron or another ranking person without the Caliph (Sawa 112)
- **Jelsah** – “sitting” a session for musicians to play for themselves and each other; audiences welcome but not the focus of the session.
- **Hafla “party”** – a celebration where musicians specifically play for an audience, we use this term a lot in the SCA, however, the term majilis is more period.
- **Tahkt “platform”** – a small group of musicians usually consisting of an ‘ud, qanun, kamanche (violin), ney (flute-ish), and percussion (usually a riqq). The idea of the tahkt was not initially period, but the large orchestras seen today in Middle Eastern classical music is a new idea. Drum circles, or large groups of drummers normally were associated with the military and war.

Important Period Treatises and Schools of Music for Middle Eastern Music

- ***Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*** – “The Great Book of Music” Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Aqzalah **al-Farabi**, Abbasid Era 900’s
- ***Kitab al-Aghani*** – “The Book of Songs” Abu al-Faraj Ali ibn al-Husayn **al-Isbahani**, Abbasid Era 900’s, uses the placement of fingers on the oud to denote notes and music.
- ***Kitab al-Adwar*** – “Book of Modes” Safi ad-Din **al-Urmawi** 1200’s
- **The Early Arabian Classical School** – a school dedicated to the ‘ghina al-muqtan’, or perfect singing. This school of thought is very important in that it differentiates Arabian singing from that of their Turkish, Byzantine, and Persian neighbors for over 100 years before a blend of cultures began

in the Abbasid Era. (Touma)

- Andalusí Music – Style attributed to Ziryab, student of Eastern classical master **Ibrahim Al-Mahdi** (Touma 11)

Period Instruments:

- **Qanun** – 10th century, grandfather of the zither
- **Oud** – 8th century, grandfather of the European lute and arguably the oldest melody instrument in the region – documents as early as Ancient Egypt's 18th dynasty. The fretless version of the oud appeared in the 12th century. Farabi's *Kitab al-Aghani* used the oud to denote music.
- **Daff** – 8th century, frame drum, used mostly to accompany singing and poetry
- **Riqq** – 8th century, frame drum with cymbals on the edge
- **Davul/ Tabl** – 13th century, large, two headed drum played with two sticks played more in a military setting, gathering for war, etc
- **Saffaqatan** – 10th century metal castanets. Castanets have origins in antiquity, and have developed into different iterations like the Spanish wooden variety and the Middle Eastern finger cymbal variety.
- **Ney** – meaning 'reed' another one of those instruments seen in Ancient Egypt and grandfather to the flute.
- **Saz** – antiquity, meaning 'musical instrument' in Persian is a long-necked fretted string instrument.
- **Santur** – The Santur was invented around 1800 years ago in what is now Iran. The original santur was made with tree bark, stones and strung with goat intestines. It is a zither-type instrument that is similar to the hammered dulcimer.

3 of the 5 Periods of Middle Eastern Music (SCA Period)

1. Pre-Islamic to Early Abbasid (600 – 900)
 - a. Pre-Islamic (before 622)
 - b. The Early Islamic Period and the Umayyad Caliphate (622 – 750)
 - c. The Early Abbasids and Baghdad (750 – 900)
2. Later Abbasid (900-1258)
3. Monguls + Mamluks (1258 – 1517)
4. Ottoman Empire (1518 - 1918)
5. Modern (1918 - present day)

Bibliography:

Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples*. MJF Books, 1991

Racy, A.J. *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Tarab*. Cambridge: 2003

Sawa, George, *Music Performance Practice in the Early Abbasid Era 750-932 AD*. The Insitute of Medieval Music: 2004

Touma, Habib Hassan, *The Music of the Arabs*. Amadeus Press: 1996

Wright, Owen, *Arab Music: Music Traditions in the Arab Speaking World*. "I. Art Music" Grove Music Dictionary: Oxford University: Online.

Al-Andalus <http://dubsahara.com/oriental/music/history/al-andalus> Online.