
Thinking about art in the context of political culture of the 14th century Central Asia brings to mind a new cultural movement with the Turkish and Persian cultures between the 11th and 15th centuries. The cooperation between originally nomadic Turkish rulers and sedentary Persian elites, led to the beginning of a new acculturation process. This process brought with it a new concept of artistic production under many states in the Turco-Persian world.

This research examines an aspect of the above-mentioned art production, introducing the story of Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, the master musician of the courts of Jalayirids and Timurids. Maraghi continued the tradition of theoretical music treatises, especially those regarding the “Systematist School”. However, beyond the theory, by dint of his treatises, Maraghi offers many clues about the relationship of musicians with courts and executive class or relations of various tribes to music that is unprecedented in any other music treatises written in that period. After the death of Maraghi, he began to be remembered as a legendary character called "Hodja" or "Musikar" in the Ottoman texts.

The most important question of this presentation will be what Maraghi’s story and treatises offer about a picture of overall musical life of the period, in terms of political culture, music patronage, music circles and interaction between various cultures. This lecture will also elaborate on Maraghi’s legendary character in the Ottoman music circles by referring to texts. In this way, the cultural identity of the Ottoman intellectual life, inherited from the previous Turco-Persian world, will be evaluated through Maraghi’s legacy.

Extending a tradition and the challenge of ‘becoming minoritarian’. Rachel Beckles Wilson (RHUL)

My paper will engage with challenges encountered in composing music with Ottoman makam, and preparing this music for ensemble performance. My compositional process began with practice-based study of the ‘language’ of makam, and composing to extend the Ottoman tradition nurtured in the circle of Labyrinth Musical Seminars (pioneered by Ross Daly). Learning this tradition from the inside, and thus setting aside my sense of western musical logics, was part of a broader ethical interest in self-displacement and deterritorialization (Deleuze’s ‘becoming minoritarian’ (1987)): to compose in this language was to set aside a dominant (majority) musical language. Subsequently, however, as a composer I needed to open makam into an expressive world that could speak more widely, and began to treat the tradition in a less orthodox manner.

When I came to prepare the music for performance, working with musicians whose primary language was Ottoman makam, we encountered a series of challenges that hinged on the nature of makam, the figure of the composer, and the question of musical authority. The work on which I will base my discussion is entitled Sing no Songs for Me, one extract of which can be heard here: https://soundcloud.com/rachel-beckles-willson/fata-morgana-from-sing-no-sad-songs-for-me
Songs Composed by Saleh al-Kuwaity: Innovations in Iraqi Music 1930-1950

Dafna Dori (Uppsala University)

Saleh al-Kuwaity (1908-1986) was a composer, violinist and musical director of the Iraqi Radio ensemble. The songs he composed - mostly in the Muslim Baghdadi dialect of Arabic - are still popular today. Many who praise Ṣaleḥ al-Kuwaity’s songs talk about musical innovations, alongside “the true Iraqi spirit”, captured and conveyed by the composer. Al-Kuwaity immigrated to Israel in 1951. A Jew, his name was erased from the national archives and from reprints of old books during the Baath regime. His songs were printed as “Iraqi heritage” with no credit to him as the composer.

My research focuses on the songs, rather than instrumental works by Al-Kuwaity. I ask what musical, technological and social factors contributed to the long lasting popularity and appreciation of these songs. In this paper I suggest that one of the answers is that the songs are innovative on the one hand, but rooted in tradition on the other hand, and this combination appealed to local audiences. I present preliminary conclusions regarding the distribution of angham (melodic modes in Iraqi music) and iqa’at (rhythm cycles) within the repertoire; duet singing; accompaniment; improvisational sections and the “Iraqization” of sawt (a vocal genre from Kuwait). I examine these compositional choices against the backdrop of contemporary Iraqi songs, mostly pastat (songs to end an Iraqi Maqam performance) and Egyptian music, with which Al-Kuwaity was familiar.

Īqā’: a Canon to Respect or Break? Rhythm-making strategies in composition and improvisation in the Arab Mashriq - Saeid Kordmafi (SOAS)

In the “maqām” music traditions, īqā’āt or usūl (metric cycles) are persistent ostinatos, embodied in the designation of percussion strokes. Metric cycles provide melody with its rhythmic schema in composition. They also guide performers in improvisation or performance of a pre-composed piece. Among its counterparts in the maqām realm, the urban-art tradition of the Mediterranean Eastern Arab region (mashriq) is the only musical culture in the modern era giving a crucial role to metric improvisation whether instrumental or vocal. A number of metric cycles in this tradition are widely employed both for improvisation and composition. However, and interestingly, the functions that they fulfill in these two procedures of music-making are completely different. While they provide pre-composed pieces with their melodic mapping (the internal division and articulation of melody), the art of improviser lies in breaking the rhythmic framework given by the metric cycle and returning to it in the final cadence.

Adopting an analytical approach informed by ethnographic data gathered during the fieldwork in Lebanon and Dubai (2016-18), this paper proposes a descriptive theory of how differently metric cycles may be treated in the courses of composition and improvisation in the given tradition. The paper also provides a case study of how the different methodological strands in ethnomusicology—namely music analysis, participant observation and dialogical interaction with informants—may be productively brought together in our research.
Call and Response: Iraqi Jewish Musical Responses to the British Raj in Twentieth-Century Bombay.

Sara Manasseh (London)

The Iraqi Jewish community in Bombay maintained the Babylonian Jewish religious tradition. The three Sassoon synagogues, in Bombay and sister city, Poona, were a communal focus, and included Central Asian settlers, who also followed the Babylonian tradition, and Cochin Jews in Bombay. Cosmopolitan Bombay sported British and Euro-American lifestyles – fashion, cinema, music, dance, language.

Diasporic religious life at home and synagogue, retained Babylonian melodies and Hebrew pronunciation. Musicians continued playing and singing Iraqi and popular Arabic song, and Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic song at life-cycle celebrations. At the Magen David Synagogue, a unison male voice choir, was established, mid-1930s; dressed in gowns and mortar boards – a nod to the British establishment – it existed until the mid-1950s comprising Iraq, Cochin and Bene Israel members. At the Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue, a mixed voice choir, established late-1940s, performed at weddings, sometimes singing in harmony.

The main colonial influence, musically, was communal and social. The youth group, *Habonim*, established 1935 as a religious organisation, expanded to Calcutta, Cochin and Poona. Based on South African and British models, *Habonim* introduced songs from British Mandate Palestine in modern Hebrew. Euro-American classical and popular music influenced secular life. Jewish children at Christian missionary schools sang hymns, British folk-songs and choral works. Professional Jewish musicians performed in hotel bands, and Indian cinema music, a mirror of Euro-American popular music was enjoyed.

Metrical Intermezzo - Owen Wright (SOAS)

Situated precariously somewhere between the presentations on Timurid musical culture (Zeynep Abbasoğlu) and on the melodic-rhythmic interface in modern Arab art-music (Said Kordmafi), this paper attempts to sketch in certain salient features of text-setting in the Ottoman vocal repertoire by reviewing the relationships between prosodic and rhythmic structures in a specific area, that of compositions (*beste* and *kar*) in some of the longer rhythmic cycles from *devr-i kebir* (of 28 time units) up to *zarb-i fetih* (of 88).