Islamic Music — Class Handout and Worksheet

Islamic music includes music made by Muslims. It exists geographically from Morocco to Egypt, France to Germany, Syria to Turkey, across Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and beyond. Islamic music theory dates back to the 7th century CE and influenced Western music theory, instrument production and musical taste. Although some Islamic scholars forbid the singing or performing of what in the West is called "music", today they are in the minority. Most Muslims accept music as an everyday part of their lives and religion.

Islamic music includes Quranic cantillation (singing of sacred texts, which is permitted (halal) throughout Muslim communities,) the exhuberant musical celebrations of the Sufis, Janissary band music, and much more. Today we will hear the beginning of a piece for Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Muslims introduced to Europeans during their rule of Oud (Oud), and instrument that Oud (Oud) and Oud (Oud

The performance is by Munir Bashir (1930 – 1997), a master of the instrument who represents the Baghdad style of *Oud* playing. It is called simply "maqam Râst". What does this mean? Islamic music generally employs scales called *maqamat*. Here is a simple explanation of *maqam* by Johnny Farraj, from his web site www.maqamworld.com:

The Arabic Maqam (plural Maqamat) is a system of scales, habitual melodic phrases, modulation possibilities, ornamentation techniques and aesthetic conventions that together form a rich melodic framework and artistic tradition. The maqam's melodic course (in both composed or improvised music) within that framework is called sayr in Arabic.

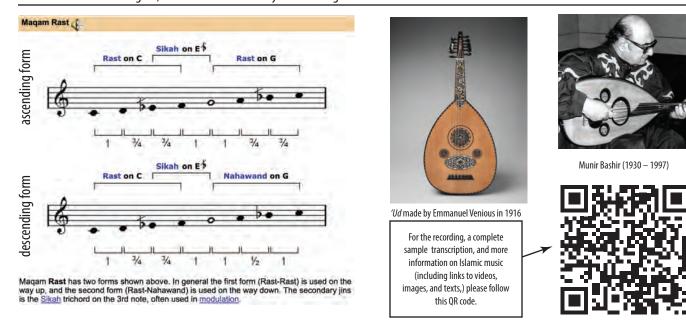
Each maqam scale can be built by chaining together two (or in some cases, three) scale fragments or building blocks called jins (pl. ajnas). The maqam gets its intervals, melodic behavior and overall mood from these constituent ajnas. The first jins always starts the maqam scale with its tonic at the 1st degree, and the second jins starts at the ghammaz (modulation point) of the first jins (usually its last note). If a third jins is used, its tonic coincides with the second jins' qhammaz, and so on. The note immediately below the tonic is called the leading tone.

Traditionally, each *maqam* is based on a scale. The first note in the scale is called the tonic. *Maqam* scales are usually made of 7 notes that repeat at the octave, although a few *maqam* scales may extend beyond 8 notes. In addition, a few *maqam* scales do not achieve octave equivalence at the 8th note.

According to tradition, maqamat are classified into families based on sharing the same first (root) jins. The root jins plays the largest role in defining the maqams' character. The most common maqam in the branch usually shares its name with the root jins. Remaining maqamat in the same family are called branch maqamat, and are based on the use of a different second (upper) jins.

We will work together to try and transcribe – in whatever way you choose – the opening. There are several clues already given to you on the back of this handout. Note that Bashir's performance transposes the *magam* to F. Some questions you might want to discuss:

- 1. How is the *magam* expressed in this music?
- 2. How can we notate the microtonal intervals? Try to sing the *magam* scale (up and down) with whatever solfège works for you.
- 3. What ornaments are used? How can we identify the main notes, and notate the ornaments?
- 4. To what degree is the concept of time signature useful in this music?
- 5. What about key signature? Is this a useful concept?
- 6. Are there repeated segments (beginning,) cadential segments, or internal patterns?
- 7. What do we gain, and what do we lose by transcribing this music into Western notation?



Maquam Râst

Munir Bashir

