

The Essentials: Music Selections for Cultural Learning

By

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Introduction

The Essential Musical Selections for Cultural Learning is a songbook of select musical pieces from cultures around the world. The choices represent a standard canon of music from the regions of their origin. These common standards are well known to many generations of listeners and have come to symbolize multiple aspects of their cultures. The selections have been assembled by way of research, interviews, and my own personal experience as a musician immersed in performing global music traditions. This specific book serves as a sample for a more comprehensive future series entitled “10 Essentials: Music from World Traditions.”

In this songbook, the reader will find sheet music and an explanation for each song. Accompanying each piece will be an audio file, description of music theory, and anecdotal reference to the history and cultural meaning of the musical selection. The songs are arranged in a way to be accessible to all levels of musicians as well as non-musicians. The transcriptions encompass the melodic elements and arrangements of the songs. However, they are not exact arrangements of the attached audio recordings. Rather the sheet music is meant to serve as a guide to learn the songs and melodies to fit any arrangement.

Most importantly, these select musical pieces are meant to be a musical introduction to learn about different cultures. While some people rightfully consider it to be a universal language, music can also have specific meaning and symbolism serving as a reflection of people’s beliefs, emotions, and ideas. Even where language may stand as a barrier, music and songs can often serve as instruments of accessibility and cultural understanding.

Of course, a musical selection claimed to be representative of a culture can be quite a subjective matter. Many people may agree or disagree with the selections made in this book. However, I ask the reader to view these selections as a beginning to what I hope will be an ongoing conversation about the importance of music to a culture and society at large. Additionally, I invite all suggestions and recommendations for significant musical selections to be included in future volumes of this songbook series.

It is my sincere hope that the reader will gain as much insight about cultures and global musical traditions from these selections as I have over the years. These songs have served as conversation starters, prompted sing-alongs, and invoked tears, joy, and nostalgia for those who are familiar with their melodies and lyrics. I also hope they can help you, the reader and fellow global citizen, do the same in learning more about the world, each other, and oneself.

Sincerely,
Ronnie Malley

Bint El Shalabiya
(Pretty Girl)

“Bint El Shalabiya” is best known from the version sung by the Lebanese icon Fairouz (1935 – present). The song is also known as a folk melody from the Greater Syrian region before the area had split into autonomous countries. Composer Assi Rahbani, also Fairouz’s husband, arranged the song in the late 1950s adding a bridge section to it. The most popular version before Fairouz is known as “Il ‘azoubia” (*Bachelorhood*), which speaks of a young groom asking his mother to find him a bride. “Il ‘azoubia” comes from an extensive Syrian repertoire called *qudud*. Songs from *qudud*, sometimes called *qudud Halabia* (Aleppo *qudud*), are a collection of religious, folk, old urban, and Andalusian music. The renowned Syrian singer Sabah Fakhri is well known for his rendition of “Il ‘azoubia”¹ featuring multiple passages of Arabic lyrics different from Fairouz’s version.

The word *shalabiya* (f) or *shalabi* (m) is often used in the Levantine Arabic dialect to denote something or someone of refinement, quality, or beauty. The word *shalabia* in the song is also purported to be representative of an old city in Andalusia. In the Arabic speaking world, the former claim is more widely accepted.

Fairouz is an internationally recognized artist and a household name in the Middle East and North Africa. Many of her songs represent a vast spectrum of Middle Eastern culture and heritage. Fairouz’s style spans multiple genres including popular, folk, classical, and political music, as well as religious hymns for the Christian church. “Bint El Shalabia” is considered one of her popular songs.

Though the lyrics are originally in Arabic, the song has had cross-cultural appeal being sung in other languages. There is a popular Turkish version called “Böyle Gelmiş Böyle Geçer”² (*Comes and Goes Like This...the World*) sung by Gönül Akkor. There is an equally popular Iranian version called “Kamtar Zan Shaneh”³ (*Brush Your Hair Less...I’m Trapped in the Curls*) sung by duet Vigen and Pooran. The melody has also appeared in Hindi, Greek, and Spanish versions making it even more compelling for its nostalgic appeal to people of multiple cultures.

The composition uses *maqam*⁴, the traditional music theory of the Middle East. The melody is in *maqam Nahawand*, commonly known as the harmonic minor scale in Western music theory. The sheet music indicates where instruments should respond to the vocal melody, a common practice in modal music. The instrumental response is called a *lazma* in Arabic music, and often marked as *saz* in Turkish music. Fairouz’s version and most other modern renditions feature Western instrumentation including guitar, drums, piano, and accordion as well as non-traditional rhythms. The Arabic folk version is also in *maqam Nahawand* with the traditional rhythms *Malfouf* or *Ayoub*. Traditional instrumentation often features the oud, qanoun (plucked zither), violin, and Mid Eastern percussion (e.g. *darbuka*, *riq*, and *tar*).

Bint El Shalabiya

Maqam: Nahawand
Iqa': Malfouf or Ayoub

Traditional Melody
As sung by Fairouz and
Arranged by Rahbani Brothers



7 **§** (Inst. Response) (Inst.

1. Bint e' shala bi ya 'ayun ha law zia
2. Hod al a na ter mah bu bi na ter
3. Taht al rum a ni hob i ha ka ni

11 **Resp.)** (Inst.

hob ek min al - bi ya al - bi wan ti ay na ya
kasr el kha - wa - ter ya wel fi ma han a la ya
sam 'a ni ghena-ni ya 'ayu - ni wa t'gha zel fi ya

15 **Resp.)**

— hob ek min al bi ya al bi wan ti ay na ya bit
— kasr el kha wa ter ya wel fi ma han a la ya
— sam 'a ni ghena-ni ya 'ayu - ni wa t'gha zel fi ya

20

tel wat looh wal alb maj rooh a

24

yam 'al baal bit 'an wat rooh a

28 **(Inst. Resp.) §**

yam 'al baal bit 'an wat rooh *D.S. al Coda*

32

Fine

Bint El Shalabiya
(Pretty Girl)

As sung by: Fairouz

Arrangement and lyrics:
Assi and Mansour Rahbani

بنت الشلبية عيونها لوزية
حبك من قلبي يا قلبي انت عينا

Transliteration:
Bint e'shalabiya 'ayunha lawzia
Hobek men 'albi ya 'albi wanti 'aynaya x2

حد القناطر محبوبي ناظر
كسر الخواطر يا ولفي ما هان عليا

Hod al anater mahbubi nater
Kasral khawater ya welfi ma han 'alaya x2

بتطل بتلوح و القلب مجروح
و ايام عالبال بتعن و تروح

Bit tel wa tlooh wal alb majrooh
Ayam 'albal bit 'an watrooh x2

تحت الرمانة حبي حاكاني
و سمعني غناني يا عيوني و أتغزل فيا

Taht el rumani hobi hakani
wa sam'ani ghenani ya 'ayooni watghazel fia

Translation:

The pretty girl with almond eyes
I love you from my heart, oh, my heart, you're my eyes

Near the bridge my love awaits
To break your thoughts, my child, was not my intention

You appear and gesture, but the heart is wounded
Days are on my mind, and the memories come and go

Under the pomegranate tree, my love spoke to me
He sang to me songs, oh my eyes, as he wooed me

Tal'at Ya Mahla Noorha
(She Came Out, Oh, How Beautiful Is Her Light)

“Tal'at Ya Mahla Noorha” (She Came Out, Oh, How Beautiful is Her Light) is a popular song by the legendary Egyptian composer Sayyed Darwish (1892 -1923). The song lyrics are a metaphor for a peasant girl’s radiance as she works the fields and is sought by many suitors for marriage. It is considered a classic song spanning across generations and multiple cultures invoking nostalgia and uplifting sentiment in Egypt and throughout the Middle East. Darwish’s canon of music has long been regarded as the defining point of modern Egyptian and Arabic music. He is known as the father of modern Arabic music and his compositions are common standards performed regularly by past and current celebrated artists throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the world.

Composer and writer Ousama Afifi, a renowned authority on Egyptian music, describes Darwish as one of the most influential folk singers of Egypt and the Middle East, singing for the people and for the sake of creating better music.⁵ Darwish was known for listening to environments and the sounds of various occasions. For example, he would travel to a town square and listen to the date or fruit peddler singing improvised catchy melodies to sell their products. Darwish would then compile and reinterpret many of these melodies and words to compose songs reflective of the common people. Not only was Darwish a prolific composer, writing music for plays and working with top orchestras and playwrights in Cairo, he also wrote articles about music culture in Egypt. Incredibly devoted to his art, Darwish would famously sign off his articles as, “Servant of music, Sayyed Darwish.”⁶

The Lebanese singer Fairouz sang one of the most famous versions of this song. While her rendition was very close to that of the original, the Rahbani brothers rearranged the music and Arabic lyrics to reflect the Lebanese dialect and musical style. Numerous versions stemming from Fairouz’s rendition also exist. The song has been performed and recorded by Marcel Khalifa, a renowned *oud* player and Lebanese singer of patriotic music. The popular Syrian folk singer Sabah Fakhri and many other artists from the Middle East and North Africa have also covered the song. There is even an interpretation by the famous Tunisian singer Saber Rbaa’i performing the song as a duet with international recording artist Shontelle. The video highlights Shontelle combining the song with the famous Bobby Hebb song, “Sunny.”⁷

The joyous melody employs maqam *Ajam*, comparable to the Western major scale, and is often performed with the rhythms *Maqsoum* or *Masmudi*. Instrumentation for the piece ranges from traditional Middle Eastern instruments such as the oud, qanoun, ney (reed flute), and hand percussion to Western instruments including the violin, horns, guitar, bass, piano, and drums. The following music transcription features the melody along with chords for guitar, bass, or piano. Both Darwish and Fairouz’s lyrics have been included. This song is a favorite to teach Arabic language students young and old.

Tal'at Ya Mahla Noorha

Maqam: Ajam
Iqa': Maqsoum

Composer: Sayyed Darwish
Lyrics: Badee Khairy

Chorus

Tal - 'at ya mah - la__ noor ha shams e' sham u_____ see

ya-llah bi na__ nem la_____ wa nah leb la - ban al gam - u_____ see *Fine*

Verse

1. ga_____ 'ad_____ 'a_____ sa - gi - a ya khe - ly
2. gul_____ tel_____ u ya Mo - ha - med_____ hob - ek
3. ga_____ ya_____ mel_____ tar_____ 'a_____ sem 'aou
4. na - za roo_____ ni ya khou_____ ya ou ra - hoo

as - mar_____ wa ha lay_____ wi
lakh - fen_____ li_____ 'aa_____ li
ren - et_____ khul_____ kha_____ li
wag - 'aen_____ fi ga - ma_____ li

'a - wag al_____ ta_____ gi_____ ya ou ga - lee
me - ta na_____ ri_____ yeb - rood wa 'a_____ raf
lih_____ gu_____ ni_____ seb_____ 'a gid 'aan_____ ri
ga - da moo_____ la_____ bu_____ ya_____ mah_____ ri

ghan_____ i_____ li ghan ay_____ wi *D.C. al Fine*
ra_____ see_____ men_____ reg_____ li
tal - been_____ wi - sa_____ li
mi - tain_____ kha - ya_____ li

Tal'at Ya Mahla Noorha
(She Came Out, Oh How Beautiful Her Light)

Composed by: Sayyed Darwish
Lyrics: Badee Khairy

طلعت يا محلا نورها شمس الشموسه
ياالله بنا نملا و نحلب لبن الجاموسه

قاعد ع الساقية خللي اسمر و حليوة
عوج الطاقية وقاللي غنيلي غنيوة
قلت له يا محمد حبك لخفن لي عقلي
ميتي النار تبرد واعرف راسي من رجلي

جاية من الترة سمعوا رنة خلخالي
لحقوني سبع جدعان طالبين وصالي
نظروني يا خويا و راوحا واقعني في جمالي
قدموا لأبويا مهري ميتين خيالي

Transliteration:

Tal'at ya mahla noorha shams a'shamusee
Yallah bina nemla wa nahleb laban al gamusee

Ga'ad 'a sagia khely asmar wa halaywi
Awag al tagia ou gal-lee ghanili ghanaywi
Gultelu ya Mohamed hobek lakhfenli aa'li
Meta e' nar tebrood wa 'araf rasee men regli

Gaya mel tar'a sem'aou renet khulkhali
Lihguni sab'a gid'aan talbeen wisali
Nazarooni ya khuya ou rahoo wag'aen fi gamali
Gadamoo labuya mahri mitain khayali

Translation:

She came out, oh beautiful her light, the sunny sun
Let's go gather and milk the buffalo

Sitting on the watering station the dark and sweet one
He tilted his cap and asked me to sing a song
I told him Mohamed your love has taken my mind
When will my flame cool and I know my head from my feet

I was coming from the canal, they heard my ankle bracelet ringing
Following me were seven suitors asking for my hand
Seeing me, oh brother, they left falling for my beauty
To offer my father a dowry of two hundred horses

As sung by Fairouz:

طلعت يا محلا نورها شمس الشموسه
ياالله بنا نملا و نحلل لابن الجاموسه

قاعد ع الساقية يا خللي اسمر و حليوة
عوج الطاقية وقاللي غني لي غنيوة
قلتلو في قلبي يا خللي يا اسمر يا حليوة
قدم لي وردة و قاللي حلوة يا عروسة

Transliteration:

Tal'at ya mahla noorha shams a'shamusee
Yallah bina nemla wa nahleb laban il jamusee

Ga'ad 'a sagia khely asmar wa halaywi
Awaj al tagia ou gal-lee ghanili ghanaywi
Gultelu bigalbi ya khaly ya asmar wa halaywi
Gadamli wardi ou gal-lee helwi ya 'aroosi

Translation:

She came out, oh beautiful her light, the sunny sun
Let's go gather and milk the buffalo

Sitting on the watering station the dark and sweet one
He tilted his cap and asked me to sing a song
I told him what was in my heart oh dark and sweet one
He presented me a flower and said you are beautiful, oh bride

Ya Bint Bladi
(Oh Daughter of My Country)

“Ya Bint Bladi” (Oh Daughter of My Country) is common standard and arguably one of the most popular music pieces of Arabo-Andalusian and folk repertoire from North Africa. The original and most well known recording was by the celebrated Moroccan musician Abdessadeq Cheqara (1931 – 1998) in 1979. Cheqara and his musical family lineage come from the northern Moroccan city of Tétouan. After the fall of Granada and Islamic rule in 15th century Spain, many Andalusian Moors resettled in Tétouan, and all throughout the countries known today as Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. They brought with them a rich culture steeped in musical and poetic traditions. A great deal of the Arabo-Andalusian musical repertoire and traditions are maintained in Tétouan.

Cheqara is credited with having brought Andalusian music (also known as *a’la*) back into the mainstream. Genres of Andalusian music are also known as *muwashahat*, *malouf*, *nuba*, *malhoun*, and *qudud* throughout the Middle East and North Africa. “Ya Bint Bladi” became a huge hit throughout Morocco and North Africa and came to represent a new wave of the Andalusian sound and culture of Morocco. Cheqara also created cross-cultural appeal for the song by collaborating with artists from Spain and combining it with Arabic and Spanish lyrics and instrumentation.

Abdessadeq’s nephew Jelal Cheqara, with whom I have had the privilege of performing at the Chicago Cultural Center and Cervantes Institute, carries on the family tradition and continues to collaborate with Spanish Andalusian artists as well. Jelal Cheqara has a modern version of “Ya Bint Bladi” in collaboration with the Spanish music group Granada Ensemble. Jalal’s rendition reprises the famous Flamenco song “La Tarara” within the Moroccan classic.⁸

There are some claims that Abdessadeq Cheqara may have learned the song, and many other songs, from female Andalusian singers living in Tétouan at the time.⁹ Women played a large role in the revolutions and independence movements of colonial Morocco and throughout North Africa in the early to mid-twentieth century. However, it was not common for them to perform or record music in the male-dominated society of that era.

While not exclusively a revolutionary song, the lyrics of “Ya Bint Bladi” celebrate the pride and merit of women in Moroccan and North African culture. Lyrics from the song, in particular, “Young, beautiful, educated, and an artist is how I love her,” highlight the value of women’s roles in former Andalusian societies as independent and influential citizens. Hence, there is controversy over whether Cheqara was the first to sing the song.

In Alison Baker’s book *Voices of Resistance*, which recounts oral histories of Moroccan women, it is noted how songs were greatly preserved among the female population, especially in Tétouan.¹⁰ Songs also played a large role in the Rif War of the 1920s and well through the independence movements into the 1950s. During this time, men and women would use songs to communicate about the status of a battle or whether an enemy was coming from a certain direction, or even to reflect unity of genders in the war effort.¹¹

It is also important to note that “Ya Bint Bladi” is a common Arabic phrase used throughout the Middle East and North Africa. There are many songs by the same name or a slight variation of the phrase. The terms “bint bladi” (f) or “ibn bladi” (m) (daughter or son of my country) refer to a model person or citizen of a nation, region, or even a village. The phrase connotes a nostalgic, and sometimes patriotic or political, reverence for such a person or citizen.

The lyrics are sung in the Moroccan Arabic dialect often referred to as *darija*. The song is in maqam *Nahawand* with a traditional Moroccan 6/8 *Shaabi* (folk) rhythm. Oud, qanoun, nay, violin, and hand percussion are the traditional instruments found on Cheqara’s recordings. Though as a result of collaboration between Spanish, Sephardic, and Moroccan artists, there have been many incarnations of this piece. Different versions feature instruments such as guitar, piano, mandolin, horns, and drums as well as Spanish, Ladino, and Hebrew lyrics.¹²

Ya Bint Bladi

Maqam: Nahawand
Iqa': Shaabi Maghrabi

Moroccan/Andalusian Folk

Cm Eb G7 Cm Cm Eb

7 G7 Cm G7 Cm G7 Cm

13 G7 Cm G7 Cm

Chorus 19

Cm Eb G7 Cm Cm Eb

Ya bint - i bla di sel bou ni__ 'ay nayk ya bint i bla di

25 G7 Cm G7 Cm *tr* G7 Cm

sel bou ni__ 'ay nayk wal zayn il ly__ feek qal bi__ ta yeb gheek

31 G Cm *tr* G Cm

wal zayn il ly__ feek qal bi__ ta yeb gheek ah ya ya ya binti - bla di

Melody

37 Cm Ab Cm Ab

41 Cm Ab G Cm

Ya Bint Bladi

Verse

45 C m A^b C m A^b

1. el a rad wal joud qab tat el ho doud
 2. es gheera ou miz yana qarya ou fi na na
 3. sha 'ar ha mat louq at - weel ou gha louq

49 C m A^b C m A^b

el a rad wal joud qab tat el ho doud
 es gheera ou miz yana qarya ou fi na na
 sha 'ar ha mat louq at - weel ou gha louq

53 G C m C m

wal wa rad bayn al kho doud doud ah ya
 hek dek ha bayt ha a na na ah ya
 qal bi 'a ley ha mah rooq rooq ah ya

56

ya ya bint bladi
 ya ya bint bladi
 ya ya bint bladi

D.S.

Ya Bint Bladi
(Oh, Daughter of my Country)

As performed by: Abdessadeq Cheqara
Lyrics: Abdel Rahman El Alami

يا بنت بلادي سلبوني عينيك
والزين اللي فيك قلبي كيبيغيك
أيا يا بنت بلادي

العرض والجود قابطة الحدود
والورد بين الخدود
أيا يا بنت بلادي

اصغيرة ومزيانة قارية وفنانة
هاكداك حبيتها أنا
أيا يا بنت بلادي

شعرها مطلوق أطويل و مغلوق
قلبي عليها محروق
أيا يا بنت بلادي

Transliteration:

Ya bint bladi selbouni 'aynayk
Walzayn illy feek qalbi ka yebgheek
Ah ya ya bint bladi

El arad wal joud qabtat el hodoud
Wal wared bein el khodoud
Ah ya ya bint bladi

Es-gheera ou mizyena qaria ou fenana
Hekdek habeytha ana
Ah ya ya bint blade

Sha'arha matlouq atweel ou ghalouq
Qalbi 'aleyha mahrooq
Ah ya ya bint bladi

Translation:

Daughter of my country, your eyes entrance me
And with your beauty my heart loves you
Oh daughter of my country

Pageantry and presence beyond compare
With a flower between your cheeks
Oh daughter of my country

Young and beautiful, educated and an artist
This is how I love her
Oh daughter of my country

Her hair flows with locks, long and curly
My heart burns for her
Oh girl from my country

“Oso Varoun Ta Sidera”
(As Heavy As The Irons)

“Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” (As Heavy As The Irons) is a traditional lament folk song from Crete. Though Crete is considered the largest Greek island, it has ancient historical ties to the Minoan civilization. Crete maintains musical and poetic traditions all its own, and also shares similar Byzantine cultural influences with Greece. Music from Crete is often referred to as *Kritika*. Many genres of music also exist throughout both Greece and Crete.

Rembetika (also called *rembetiko*) is a genre of urban folk music akin to the *blues*, which was prevalent in the 1930s among the Greek population living in Smyrna, or present day Izmir, Turkey. *Tabachaniotika* is a similar urban folk genre from Crete. Another folk genre from Crete is *mantinades*, which features poetic verse often accompanied by the Cretan national instrument called the *lyra* (bowed spike fiddle). In the late 50s, the *rembetika* tradition made a comeback and gave way to *laïko*, a mainstream genre of Greek music. “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” has often been found in repertoire from *rembetika*, *tabachaniotika*, and *laïko* genres.

Many versions exist of “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” featuring traditional Cretan instrumentation such as the *lyra*, *laouto* (fretted lute similar to the *oud*), and *boulgari* (long-necked lute). One of the earliest recordings of the song was by legendary Cretan singer Stelios Foustalieris (1911 – 1992) featuring the *boulgari*.¹³ In 1975, the famous Cretan singer and *lyra* player Nikos Xylouris (1936 – 1980) recorded a folk version of the song, which also includes *laouto*.¹⁴ A popular and recent rendition of the song was recorded in 2004 by legendary Greek singer Giorgos Dalares (1949 - present) performing it on *oud* (*outi* in Greek) and accompanied by a large ensemble.¹⁵ A prominent figure in the *rembetiko* and *laïko* musical genres, Dalares delivers a soulful rendition displaying the fiery passion and lament commonly found in both Greek and Cretan music.

A closer examination of music throughout Greece and Crete shows frequent use of theory and instrumentation from the Middle East and Balkans. In much of Greek and Cretan music, there is use of *dromos* (*dromoi pl.*) music modal system, which is similar to *maqam* music traditions. Ironically, *maqam* is a theoretical music system also influenced by Greek and Persian music philosophies that were studied by early 8th century Islamic scholars. The use of quartertones (also called semi- or microtones) found in modal music, especially *maqam*, often varies from region to region.

A major distinguishing factor of modal systems is the capability of instruments to produce quartertones, as well as pitch qualities attributed to singing styles in different cultures. Greek and Cretan instruments such as the *lyra*, *laouto*, and *boulgari* have similar counterparts of other quarter tone producing instruments like the Turkish *baglama* and *kemenche*, as well as the Arabic *oud* and *rebaba*. However, the Greek *bouzouki*, which is to Greece what the guitar is to Spain, is equal tempered tuning and does not produce quartertones often found in *maqam*. Despite the tuning, a great deal of Greek music and *dromos* still often employs the common structures of modes and improvisation found in *maqam*.

Notwithstanding music theory, politics and nationalism also played a large role in the mid-twentieth century to distinguish the musical identity of Greece and Crete from its neighbors. *Laiiko* grew from the desire to create an exclusive national Greek music genre devoid of outside influences, especially any influence stemming from Ottoman rule. The motive to nationalize the genre gained even greater traction in the late 60s and 70s during the Greek military junta.

Yet, despite political boundaries separating Greece from nearby countries like Albania, Macedonia, and Turkey, similarities in musical styles and instrumentation often blur those lines. In the *laiiko* genre alone, one can find an abundance of counterpart songs in Greek with the same melodies, and *maqamat* (pl. for *maqam*) from other countries including the Middle East, especially Turkey, Egypt, and Lebanon. Some examples include the songs “Miserlou,” “Opa Nina Nai,” “Sala Sala,” and “Mia Fotia,” all of which have versions in languages spoken throughout the Balkans and the Middle East.

Depending on the instrumentation and ability to play microtones, the mode or *maqam* of “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” can be considered either *Nahawand* (minor) or *Uşşak* (i.e. quartertones on the 2nd and 6th degrees; mode revolves around the subdominant degree). The rhythm for this piece varies from version to version. Dalares’ rendition uses a rhythm comparable to *Maqsoum*. Other versions use *Syrto*, a similar 4/4 Greek rhythm. Dalares also offers a *taqsim* (improvisation; *taxim* in Greek) at the opening of the piece in *Uşşak* and *Nahawand* on the *outi*. This selection is part of the class repertoire in the Near East Ensemble at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. A Greek student who plays bouzouki suggested it.

Minor Scale:
 (Played similar to makam Uşşak)
 Rhythm: Syrto or Iqa' Maqsoum

Oso Varoun Ta Sidera

Cretan Traditional

Chorus/Verse

Gm Dm C Dm

1. O - so _____ va - roun _____ ta si - de - ra a - man a - man _____
 2. Gia - ti _____ ta pho _____ re sa ki e go kos me pse - ti _____

5 Gm (Instr.) Gm Dm C Dm

va - roun _____ ta ma - vra rou - cha _____
 gia mi-a _____ a - ga _____ api pou cha _____

Melody

10 Gm Dm C Dm

14 Gm Dm C Dm

Verse

18 Dm (Instr. Response) Gm Dm C

a - man _____ ei - cha _____ kai y _____ stere - theka

23 Dm Gm (Instr. Response) Gm Dm C

_____ to mo-ro mou _____ thy - mou _____ mai kai _____ es-te-na _____

28 Dm Gm (Instr. Resp.) Dm C Dm

zo _____ a - noi _____ xe ges _____ me - sa _____ na mpo kos-me pse ti

33 Gm Dm C Dm Cm Dm

kos mo _____ na men koi ta _____ zo

rit.

Oso Varoun Ta Sidera
(As Heavy As The Irons)

Music and Lyrics: Cretan Folk

Όσο βαρούν τα σίδερα αμάν αμάν
βαρούν τα μαύρα ρούχα
γιατί τα φόρεσα κι εγώ κόσμε ψεύτη
για μια αγάπη που 'χα

Αμάν είχα και υστερήθηκα το μωρό μου
θυμούμαι και εστενάζω
άνοιξε γης μέσα να μπω κόσμε ψεύτη
κόσμο να μην κοιτάζω

Transliteration:

Oso varoun ta sidera aman aman
Varoun ta mavra roucha
Giati ta phoresa ki egō kosme pseti
Gía mia agapē pou 'cha

Aman eicha kai ysterēthēka to mōro mou
Thymoumai kai estenazō
Anoixe gēs mesa na mpō kosme pseti
Kosmo na mēn koitazō

Translation:

As heavy as the irons, aman aman
So the black garments weigh me down
Because I wore them too - world of lies! -
For a love I used to have

Aman, I once had and then I lost my baby
I remember and I moan
Split open, earth! Let me inside - world of lies! -
That I may never see any people again

Üsküdar'a Gideriken
(While Going to Üsküdar)

If there were ever a song that stirred controversy about its origin, it would be “Üsküdar'a Gideriken”. This is the name of the popular folk song in Turkey where it is hailed almost as an unofficial national anthem. The song is named for the historic Üsküdar neighborhood on the Asian side of Istanbul, Turkey. It tells a story of an anonymous beloved scribe making his way to Üsküdar. The song and tale were immortalized in the Turkish film *Katip* (1968) starring the legendary Turkish singer and actor Zeki Müren. There are also numerous multilingual versions of the song from other countries. In this book, the Turkish version was chosen for its popularity and also because it happened to be the first version I learned.

Despite many claims, the melody remains anonymous in origin and is found with different titles and lyrics in other cultures predominantly from Middle Eastern and Balkan regions. In Egypt and Lebanon, it is known as “Banat Eskenderiya” (Girls of Alexandria) and is attributed to the singer Mohammed El Bakkar¹⁶ (1913-1959). In Greece, it is a folk song called “Apo Xenon Topo”¹⁷ (From a remote and foreign place...I found a girl). In Bosnia, it is known as a popular folk song called “Ruse Kose” (Lustrous hair...girl you have) including the lyrics, “Anatolian girl be mine,” which pays tribute to its possible Ottoman origins. The Bulgarian version is the popular folk song “Cherni Ochi Imash Libe” (Your eyes are dark my dear). In Macedonia, it is the folk song “Oj Devočka” (Oh, Girl). The Iraqi version is called, “Lughat el Arab udhkurina” (Language of the Arabs, Remember Us), which attributes its composition to Mulla Othman Mawsili (1854 -1923).

Bulgarian filmmaker Adela Peeva traces the lineage of the song to some of these various regions in her documentary film, *Whose is This Song?* The song quickly evokes reactions of nationalism, cynicism, pride, and prejudice when she poses the question of its origin to people of different ethnic backgrounds. Yet, despite her attempts, there was no conclusive proof for where the melody may have ultimately originated.

On May 28, 2009, my music group Lamajamal performed at an event for the Greek Archdiocese in Chicago commemorating the Fall of Constantinople, which occurred on May 29, 1453AD. Our task was to research and present works by Greek (Byzantine) composers who remained in the Ottoman courts after the fall of the Byzantine capital. The day after the Greek event, the group was also scheduled to perform at the Chicago Turkish Festival, which coincidentally had Istanbul (the Ottoman name for Constantinople) as its theme that year.

In an ironic twist, representatives of both the Greek Archdiocese and the Turkish festival requested we make sure to include “Üsküdar'a Gideriken” in our performances. Perhaps it was historic fate that my group would perform at events both commemorating and celebrating the ancient city on the dates of its fall and rise. It certainly felt to us that history was repeating itself. We wondered if musicians and people from 1453AD encountered similar situations in the transition from Byzantine to Ottoman cultures.

The song is in the harmonic minor scale or maqam *Nahawand*. The rhythm also varies from being a standard folk 2/4 or 4/4 meter; *Maqsoum* in Egypt and Iraq, *Sofyan* or *Düyek* in Turkey, and *Syrto* in Greece. Instrumentation has varied from traditional to modern depending on the rendition and era in which a version of the song was released. The song has featured oud, qanoun, kemanche, bouzouki, guitar, accordion, hand percussion, and western drums to name a few instruments. No matter how you choose to play it, or to where you attribute this wandering melody, it will always remain a meaningful song that transcends boundaries and cultures.

Üsküdar'a Gideriken (Katibim)

Maqam: Nahawand (Nihavend)
Iqa' (Usul): Ayoub (Sofyan)

Balkan/Turkish Traditional

Melody



5



Verse/Chorus



Üs kü da ra gi der i ken al dı da bir yağ mur mur
Ka tip uy ku dan u yan mış göz le ri mah mur
Us kü da ra gi der i ken bir men dil bul dum dum

14



Ka ti bi min set resi u zun e te ği ça mur
Ka tip be nim ben ka ti bin el ne ka ri şır
Ka ti bi me ko la lı da göm lek ne gü zel ya kı şır
Ka ti bi mi ar ar i ken ya nım da bul dum

18



e te ği ça mur
el ne ka ri şır
ne gü zel ya kı şır
ya nım da bul dum

D.C.

Üsküdar'a Gideriken
(While Going to Üsküdar)

Music and lyrics:
Balkan/Turkish Traditional

Üsküdar'a gideriken aldı da bir yağmur
Kâtibimin setresi uzun eteği çamur

Kâtip uykudan uyanmış gözleri mahmur
Kâtip benim ben kâtibin el ne karışır
Kâtibime kolalı da gömlek ne güzel yaraşır

Üsküdar'a gider iken bir mendil buldum
Mendilimin içine lokum doldurdum

Kâtibimi arar iken yanımda buldum
Kâtip benim ben kâtibin el ne karışır
Kâtibime kolalı da gömlek ne güzel yaraşır.

Translation:

While going to Üsküdar it began to rain
My scribe's coat is long, his skirt is muddy

The scribe has woken from sleep, his eyes are cloudy
The scribe is mine, I am his, strangers can't interfere
Starched shirts suit my scribe

While going to Üsküdar, I found a handkerchief
I put lokum in my handkerchief

As I search for my scribe, I find him at my side
The scribe is mine, I am his, strangers can't interfere
Starched shirts suit my scribe

NOTES ON MUSIC TERMINOLOGY

Iqa' is the word for musical rhythms in Arabic. **Usul** is the word used in Turkish. Both *iqa'* and *usul* are comprised of the following syllables, which have been shortened by single letters in this book:

(D) is for *doum* (bass tone)

(–) is for *es* (rest)

(T) is for *tak* (high or slap tone)

(k) is for *ka* (alternate high tone)


(tk) is for *taka* (tak and ka together as in two eighth or sixteenth notes)

Ex.1 Malfouf (2/4) and Wahda Baseeta (4/4) can both be played similarly:

Var. 1: (D – – T – – T –) or (Doum Es Es Tak Es Es Tak Es)

Var. 2: (D tk tk T tk tk T k)

The following is another common way to write *iqa'* using standard notation. The stem down indicates *doum*, stem up indicates *tek* or *ka*, and the rest indicates *es*.

Ex.2 Maqsoum (4/4) can be spelled: D T – T D – T – or 

Below are more examples of *iqa'*:

Shaabi Maghrabi (6/8): T T – T D –

Ayoub (2/4 or 4/4): D – D T

Samai Thaqeel (10/8): D – – T – D D T – –

Maqam examples can be found below.¹⁸

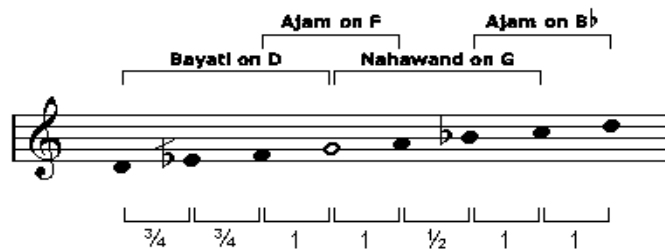


Fig. 1 Intervals for *maqam* Bayati, which contains the same ajnas as *makam* Uşşak.

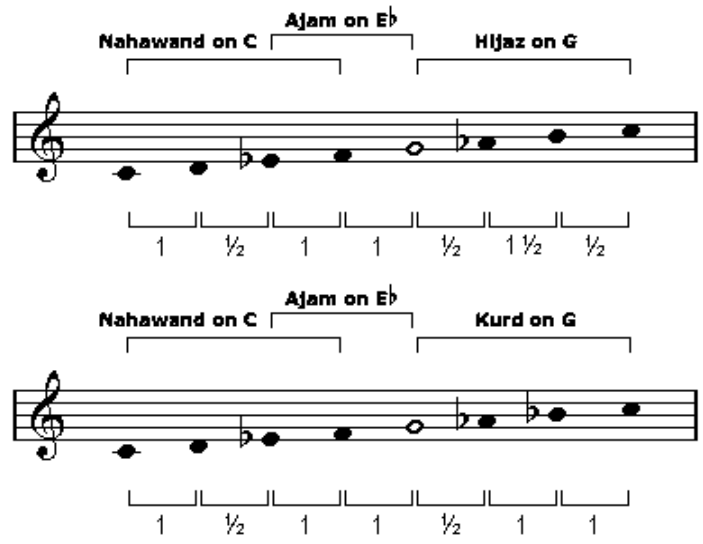


Fig. 2 Intervals and *ajnas* for *maqam* Nahawand.

Quartertones are often found in *maqam* music theory. The most common symbols used to indicate quartertones in Arabic music are a flat (or b-moll) symbol with a line through the stem (e.g., Bayati *maqam* in Fig.1) or with one of the vertical lines omitted when using sharps.

The following symbol represents a flat quartertone note (approximately 50 cents lower pitch), also sometimes referred to as a half flat:



The following symbol represents a sharp quartertone note, (approximately 50 cents higher pitch):



Depending on the culture from where a transcription originates, or the available notation software, many other symbols can be used to denote semi-, micro-, and quartertones. The Turkish *makam* system employs varying degrees (also called *koma* or *commas*) of microtones with different symbols for specific intervals.

The following are just a few examples of additional microtone symbols:

	Sharp	Flat
1 comma	#	♭
4 commas	#	♭
5 commas	#	♭
8 commas	#	♭

Fig. 3 Microtone symbols and *koma* degrees often used in Turkish *makam*.

Similar to *maqam*, Persian *dastgah* also applies modal theory using quartertones. Below are symbols found in some transcriptions of Persian and Western classical music.








Size in cent	-150	-100	-50	0	50	100	150
Accidental							
Alteration	3/4 Down	1/2 Down	1/4 Down		1/4 Up	1/2 Up	3/4 Up
	Flat koron	Flat	Koron	Natural	Sori	Sharp	Sori sharp

Fig. 4 Microtone symbols often used to transcribe Persian *dastgah* or *mugam*.

Notated on the following page are eight of the most common *maqam* modes used in Arabic and Middle Eastern music.

8 Most Common Maqams

Ajam
(Major Scale)
Key: C



Nahawand
(Minor Scale)
Key: C



Kord
(Phrygian Mode)
Key: D



Hijaz
(Harmonic Minor)
Key: D



Rast
Key: C



Bayat
Key: D



Saba
Key: D



Sikah
Key: E 1/2 flat



GLOSSARY

A'la – common name for the genre of Arabo-Andalusian in Morocco

Ajam – musical mode or scale used in maqam theory similar to the Western major scale (e.g. C D E F G A B C)

Ajnas – (genders or origins in Arabic; *jins* [sing.]) tri-, tetra-, and pentachord families that comprise a maqam

Andalusia (Spanish: *Andalucía*; Arabic: *Al Andalus*) – Southern region of Spain consisting of eight provinces: Almeria, Cadiz, Cordoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaen, Malaga, and Seville; the region was named after the Vandals by its subsequent Moorish rulers

Arabo-Andalusian – a term used to denote Arab influenced Andalusian styles, especially in the arts (e.g. music, poetry, architecture)

Ayoub – a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 2/4 or 4/4 meter; similar to the Turkish rhythm *sofyan*; beat cycle is: D – D T

Baglama – a plucked string instrument found in Turkey and throughout the Balkans and Central Asia similar to a long-necked lute; also commonly referred to as *saz*

Bakkar, Mohammed (1913 – 1959) – popular Middle Eastern musician, composer, and actor from Lebanon; settled in the US in 1952 and is well known for his album of Middle Eastern dance classics *Port Said*.

Bougari – a plucked string instrument similar to a long-necked lute found on the Greek island of Crete; similar instrument to the Turkish *saz* or *baglama* and Middle Eastern *buzuq*

Bouzouki – commonly found in Greece, a fretted, plucked string instrument similar to the guitar; a similar version exists in Ireland called the Irish bouzouki

Cheqara, Abdessadeq (1931 – 1998) – popular Moroccan singer known for singing Arabo-Andalusian and Moroccan folk music

Darbuka – goblet shaped drum made of clay and a goat or fish skin membrane found in the Middle East, North Africa, Greece, and the Balkans; depending on the region it is also known as *doumbek*, *derbecki*, *tabla*, or *toumperlecki*

Darija – colloquial Arabic dialect spoken in Morocco

Darwish, Sayyed (1892 – 1923) – Egyptian singer and composer known for his early twentieth century popular and folk songs; he is commonly known as the father of modern Arabic music

Dweik (also called *diyyek* in Turkish) – a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 4/4 or 8/4 meter; similar to the rhythm *maqsoum*; beat cycle is: D T – T D – T –

Fairouz (1935 – present) – iconic female singer from Lebanon known for her alto voice; her songs range from popular to religious to patriotic and are well known throughout the Arabic speaking world and beyond

Fakhri, Sabah (1933 – present) – popular Syrian singer known for singing *qudud Halabia* (Andalusian folk songs) and classical Arabic repertoire

Iqa' – rhythms from the Middle Eastern; also used as a general term to describe percussion instruments; known as *üsul* in Turkey

Kemenche – traditional spike fiddle found throughout Turkey, Persia, and parts of Central Asia; similar to the Bulgarian *gadoulka* and Cretan *lyra*.

Kritika – a term used to describe music from Crete

Laïko - a popular genre of music in Greece from the 1950s to the present

Lauto – fretted string instrument similar to the lute and oud found in Crete, Greece, and Turkey

Lyra – traditional Cretan spike fiddle

Malhoun – a genre of Andalusian music found in Morocco and parts of North Africa similar to Nuba

Malfouf – a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 2/4 meter; similar to the *iqa' wahda baseeta*; beat cycle is: D – – T – – T –

Malouf – a genre of Andalusian music found in Tunisia and other parts of North Africa

Mantinades – a genre of Cretan folk music and poetry with an emphasis on vocal improvisation accompanied by traditional instruments, especially *lyra* or *lauto*

Maqam (*maqam* in Arabic; *makam* in Turkish; also *mukam* in Central Asia and *mugam* in Iran) – modal music theory system found in music from the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Central, West, and South Asia

Maqsoum – a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 4/4 or 8/4 meter; similar to the *iqa'* or rhythm *dweik*; beat cycle is: D T – T D – T –

Masmudi – a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 4/4 or 8/4 meter; similar to the *iqa'* or rhythm *maqsoum*; sometimes called *baladi*; beat cycle is: D D – T D – T –

Mawsili, Mulla Othman (1854 - 1923) – an Iraqi singer, musician, and composer who wrote popular, theatrical, and spiritual music; he was also an Islamic religious cleric

Muwashahat - classical and folk music and poetry genre from Andalusia sung in classical Arabic with specific poetic meters

Nahawand – maqam mode similar to the Western harmonic minor scale

Nuba – a genre of early Andalusian music; a suite of early Andalusian music theory composed by Ziryab (789 – 857 AD)

Oud (also *el-oud*) – (*ud* in Turkish; *outi* in Greek; *barbat* in Farsi) pear-shaped, wooden, plucked string instrument found in the Middle East; predecessor to the medieval lute, which derives its name (*l'ute*) from *el-oud* or *l'oud* with *l* being a definitive article

Qanoun – trapezoid-shaped, plucked multi-stringed zither or harp-like instrument played on the lap; means “the law” in Arabic and is considered a principle instrument in Middle Eastern music

Qudud (Halabia) – a repertoire of music that contains Syrian folk (from *Halab* or Aleppo) and Andalusian music and poetry

Rahbani, Assi (1923 – 1986) – was a notable twentieth century composer from Lebanon and brother of poet Mansour Rahbani, together known as the Rahbani brothers; also husband of Fairouz

Rebaba – bowed, horsehair, spike fiddle common to the Middle East and North Africa; similar to the Greek, Turkish, and Balkan *kemanche* and the East Asian *erhu*

Rembetiko (also called *Rembetika*) – genre of urban folk music from the 1920s made popular in Izmir, Turkey and throughout Greece

Riq – traditional Middle Eastern tambourine usually with a fish, goat, or synthetic skin; also called *deff* in some regions of the Middle East and North Africa

Saz – long-necked lute instrument predominantly found in Turkey; also called *baglama*; most commonly used instrument for *Türkü* (Turkish folk music)

Shaabi – the Arabic word for folk; also a common 6/8 Moroccan rhythm with the beat cycle: T T – T D –

Sofyan – rhythm in 2/4 meter often used in Turkish folk and Sufi music; similar to *malfouf*; beat cycle is: D tk D T

Syrto – rhythm in 2/4 or 4/4 meter often used in Greek folk and popular music; also used to describe a genre of music and dance style; beat cycle is similar to *sofyan*

Tabachaniotika – urban folk music from Crete similar to Rembetiko

Taksim (*taksim* in Turkish; *taxim* in Greek) – improvisational solo on an instrument using maqam theory system

Tar – frame-drum with goat or synthetic skin; also known as *dof*, *daf*, *mazhar*, or *bendir*

Uşşak – Turkish *makam* similar to *Bayati* and *Husseini*, which places emphasis on the subdominant note

Wahda baseeta – (lit. trans. “one simple”) a common Middle Eastern rhythm in 4/4 meter; beat cycle is: D – T – or D – – T – – T – ; another common variation is: D tk tk T tk tk Tk

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- ¹⁶ “Banat Eskenderiya” is found on Mohamed El Bakkar’s popular album *Port Said* released in 1957 on Audio Fidelity Records.
- ¹⁷ “Apo Xenon Topo”. The Greek version on the accompanying CD is sung by the popular singer Glykeria from her early 80s release *Ta Smyrneika*.
- ¹⁸ Examples of maqam and iqa’ can be found at www.maqamworld.com

AUDIO TRACKS: Click [here](#) to download or stream audio tracks. Full URL provided below.

*Tracks 1-4 correspond with “Bint El Shalabiya”

- Track 1: “Bint El Shalabiya” (Fairouz)
- Track 2: “Böyle Gelmiş Böyle Geçer” (Gönül Akkor)
- Track 3: “Il Azoubia” (Sabah Fakhri)
- Track 4: “Kamtar Zen Shaneh” (Vigen & Pooran)

*Tracks 5-6 correspond with “Tal’at Ya Mahla Noorha”

- Track 5: “Tal’at Ya Mahla Noorha” (Fairouz)
- Track 6: “Tal’ar Ya Mahla Noorha” (Sabah Fakhri)

*Tracks 7-8 correspond with “Ya Bint Bladi”

- Track 7: “Ya Bint Bladi” (Abdessadeq Cheqara)
- Track 8: “Ya Bint Bladi/La Tarara” (Jalal Cheqara and Granada Group)

*Tracks 9-11 correspond with “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera”

- Track 9: “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera (Live 2004)” (Giorgos Dalares)
- Track 10: “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” (Nikos Xylouris)
- Track 11: “Oso Varoun Ta Sidera” (Stelios Foustalieris)

*Tracks 12-14 correspond with “Üsküdar’a Gideriken”

- Track 12: “Üsküdar’a Gideriken” (TRT)
- Track 13: “Apo Xenon Topo” (Glykeria)
- Track 14: “Banat Iskandaria” (Mohammed El-Bakkar)

URL to stream or download audio tracks:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7eh35dgaba8v5p6/AACN30kc86JQICQAK2esRtuia?dl=0>