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Arabic Music Retreat, c. 2010.

Having come to *Amrīkā* (or *Amērikā*) from every Arabic-speaking society, Arab Americans have sought liberty and opportunity like their newfound compatriots hailing from elsewhere in the world. With roots stretching from Morocco to Iraq and from Syria to Yemen, they have brought a rich musical heritage that involves wide-ranging musical practices and that includes some of the oldest continuously performed art music in the world. They also have played formative roles in the development of American popular music and in the multilateral exchange of music culture between Arab and American societies.

§1: Diverse backgrounds and shared heritage

Arabs have immigrated to the United States from widespread geographical and socio-political environments. Motivations to leave home for a land halfway around the world have included fleeing political persecution, seeking greater economic prosperity, and following loved ones who preceded them. Immigrants typically have sent money "back home" in support of immediate and extended families while any hope of eventually returning themselves has often given way to an acceptance or an embrace of the United States as their new and permanent home.

Americans of Arab ancestry total at least 3.5 million in number and reside in every state, with about one third of the total living in California, New York, and Michigan. While Lebanese Americans represent the highest percentage of Arab Americans in most states, Egyptian Americans are the largest number in New Jersey, Iraqi Americans in Tennessee, and Palestinian Americans in Illinois. About 94% of Arab Americans live in metropolitan areas, with the highest concentrations in the vicinities of Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Washington DC. About one third of the population of Dearborn, Michigan, home to the Arab American National Museum, is of Arab ancestry. The proximity of Arab American musicians of different backgrounds to one another, and to a greater degree than normally found within their nations of origin, has led to collaboration in response to various combinations of necessity, convenience, opportunity, and desire.

Straddling the continents of Asia and Africa, the countries and attendant cultural milieus of origin are wide-ranging and are 22 in number, as measured by membership in the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The individual geographies, histories, politics, customs, and musical practices of these countries vary widely. Arabic-speaking inhabitants include adherents of many

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more generally, including Armenians, Bosnians, Kurds, Russians, and Roma (Gypsies).

Generally speaking, Arabs are those whose native language is Arabic. To this definition we may add that such people consider themselves to be Arab or Arabic, which may entail other aspects of heritage with which Arabs identify (including values, religion, music, literature, art, dress, food, and politics).

Relationships between Arab American music and the Arabic language can be quite complex due both to cultural diversity in general and to intricacies of the language itself. A linguistic complexity stems from the fact that Arabic is diglossic—two contrasting registers of the language regularly function together. On the one hand, fluent Arabic speakers understand formal Arabic (*fuṣḥā*). Even if a person does not speak the formal register well, it is unavoidably found in public speaking, broadcasting, publications, scriptures (whether originally in Arabic or translated), and other formal communications. Regardless of geographic and ethnic background, all Arabic speakers are generally able to comprehend formal Arabic and lyrics in this register.

On the other hand, Arabic speakers also use colloquial Arabic (*‘āmmiyya*), or a dialect rooted in their home region. These dialects can differ greatly. While each dialect can vary further in terms of accent from locality to locality, there are five general regions commonly identified with major corresponding dialects: the Maghreb (North Africa not including Egypt), Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan), and Iraq. While certain characteristics of music making generally follow a similar geo-linguistic pattern, the Levant and Egypt have a particularly closely shared tradition of art music.

The significance of the interconnection of distant social groups with the rise of Islam in the seventh century and the attendant establishment of Arabic as the lingua franca in Southwest Asia and North Africa continues to the present. The lasting impact on music and the arts more generally can be seen in a great way in the shared heritage (*turāth*) of music making across Arab society and in Arab America. A component of this heritage is *ṭarab*, which can refer both to the feeling of enchantment or ecstasy produced by captivating music and to such music itself. While *ṭarab* ties to musical experience, it is also mutually reinforced in an active performer–audience dynamic, where performers express themselves musically and audience members respond in affirming ways. Audience participation can be lively and include vocal acclamations of delight, such as “Allah!” (God!) and “Yā salām!” (Oh, peace!). Of course, the combination of music and language can be especially powerful for Arab Americans in relation to personal and social identity, and in processes of remembrance and nostalgia.

2. Musical features

The music of Arab Americans ranges from traditional Arab art music to modern American popular music. Historically in Arab societies, art, religious, folk, and popular music cultures have significantly influenced each other and have benefited from substantive contributions of interconnected social groups including men and women of diverse backgrounds. Arab musical culture also has connected historically to neighboring cultures of the larger region including those of Iranian (Persian) and Turkish (Ottoman) music. Like the larger region, musical features that are generally shared across Arab society and that have migrated to the United States include a special import attributed to the human voice, instrumentation, heterophonic and drone textures, melodic modes, neutral tones or quartertones, metric modes, improvisation, and suite form.

(i) Instrumental Configurations and Textures

Performance configurations range from a solo format to a chamber ensemble to a large orchestra, with a certain value placed on contrasting instrumental color in group formats. The multiple unique attributes of the voice, including its range of expressivity and ability to convey rich Arabic poetic texts, tend to accord it a special status when present, whether as soloist or in a

group. Correspondingly, the most endeared icons of Arab art and popular music over the last century both have been female vocalists, Umm Kulthum (c1904–1975) and Fairuz (b 1935). An utmost facility with the techniques of Arab art song and an uncanny capacity to bring poetic texts to life characterize both of their markedly different styles. Accordingly, the repertoire of these two performers has figured prominently in the music of Arab Americans, and their work has set a lofty standard for singers who have followed.

By the late 19th century, the instrumentation of the chamber ensemble (*takht*) typically included some three to five performers playing a combination of 'ūd, *qānūn*, *kamanja*, *nāy*, and *riqq* or *daff* in heterophonic textures with or without vocals. Often instrumentalists would also provide a drone for another's improvisation, and during improvised vocal passages in particular, an instrumentalist typically would shadow the underlying melody by following the vocalist in a relatively soft streamlined way. Traditionally a leading instrument in compositional and performance practice, the 'ūd is a short-necked, fretless, plucked lute that usually has five pairs of strings tuned in unisons and often has a single bass string below them for a total of six courses. A development in recent decades of Arab music making has been to eliminate the single bass string, shift the other five courses in position, and add another pair of strings in unison in the highest register. However, Arab American 'ūd players have largely eschewed this decrease in the lower range and extension of the upper range of the instrument, preferring traditional configurations to more modern ones. The *qānūn* is a trapezoidal plucked zither that usually has some 78 strings arranged in sets of three per course. Each course is tuned in unison and is fitted with multiple levers for changing modality. The *kamanja* (or *kamanjā* or *kamān*) is a violin, which Arabs assimilated from Europeans in the 19th century. Adaptation of the instrument included retuning the two highest strings (to produce *g-d'-g'-d'* from lowest to highest string) thereby better suiting the Arab melodic modal system. The *nāy* is the lone aerophone in the traditional *takht*. It is an end-blown reed flute that features a relatively breathy tone and has long evoked certain spiritual associations. The *riqq* or *daff* is a tambourine that typically has a head made of fish skin and ten pairs of finger cymbals that are arranged to play one pair against another at five evenly spaced locations around the rim.

Although the traditional configuration of the *takht* has been particularly prominent in the performance of Arab art music in the United States, the larger and differently configured *firqa* has played an important role as well. A development of the 20th century, the *firqa* includes the instruments of the *takht*, increases the number of violins to create a section, and typically adds cello, contrabass, and *darabukka* or *ṭabla*, a popular goblet-shaped hand drum. Depending on the ensemble, several other instruments might be present, including accordion, electric guitar, and electronic keyboard. To play the neutral tones of Arab music, the reeds of the accordion are modified to generate the notes necessary for the melodic modal system through performance techniques that involve a combined control of octave along with expansion and contraction of the bellows. Depending on design specifications, for example, a particular "B^b" on the keyboard might produce B^b with inward movement and B-half-^b with outward movement, whereas another "B^b" key might do the opposite or always produce B^b. The rise of the *firqa* also paralleled an increased use of adapted five-line-staff notation, which in part moved the traditionally aurally-based tradition closer to a literate one and also brought about increasingly monophonic textures in place of customarily heterophonic ones.

In their diasporic context, there has been some tendency among musicians to lean toward the older format of the *takht*. This may be a result of both a scarcity of performers to constitute a *firqa* in a given locale as well as a certain value placed on rooting musical performance in tradition rather than embracing modernization. While bringing new sounds to the New World, the instruments of Arab immigrants also helped them to maintain a sonic connection to their heritage. Even in relatively Americanized families, such instruments may be brought out on special occasions to invoke ancestry and for enjoyment. At Christmas or Ramadan celebrations, for example, musical instruments like the 'ūd or *darabukka* can articulate ethnic identity in ways that words cannot.

(ii) Melodic modes and neutral tones

Arab immigrants brought with them music that features deeply rooted systems of modality in terms of pitch and rhythm, and generally speaking each melodic and metric mode has its own particular character. The system of melodic modes or *maqāmāt* (singular: *maqām*) is traditionally realized in heterophonic textures that sometimes include passing or contrasting points of monophony, polyphony, or harmony. Ornamentation owing to an individual *maqām*, instrument, and performer can be valued highly and differ from performance to performance. Examples of the underlying scales associated with ten of the main *maqāmāt* are shown in ex.1. The C-based modes appear with the E-half-flat mode to show their interconnection based on the shared final of C and the ascending neutral third of C to E-half-♭ (containing seven quartertones) that links *Rāst* and *Sīkāh* in a “relative” type of relationship. Likewise, the D-based modes appear with the B♭ mode to show their interrelation via the shared final of D and the descending major third of D to B that connects *Bayyātī* to *ʿAjām*. Integral to the melodic modal system are four types of steps—half, three-quarter, whole, and augmented, the three-quarter step being a neutral second (or a quartertone larger than a minor second). While the scales show a tendency for B to be raised in ascent and lowered in descent, compositional and stylistic considerations as well as characteristics of particular *maqāmāt* can mitigate this and dictate otherwise. The systemic relationship between the two groups of modes can be seen in part by intervallic relationships between them. For example, with 2/4 representing a half step, 3/4 a three-quarter step, and 4/4 a whole step, the stepwise intervallic content of *Rāst* in ascent is 4/4–3/4–3/4–4/4–4/4–3/4–3/4. With *Bayyātī* based on the next note higher, the stepwise content in ascent is 3/4–3/4–4/4–4/4–3/4–3/4–4/4. In other words, the intervallic content of *Rāst* and *Bayyātī* as shown in the scales is equivalent except that the fundamental resting point of the two modes differs by the whole step C–D.

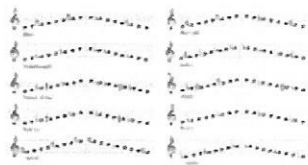


Figure 1. Examples of Scales of Maqāmāt

- a. Examples of scales for C and E-Half-♭ melodic modes
- b. Examples of scales for D and B♭ melodic modes

(iii) Metric modes and additive rhythms.

The system of metric modes or rhythmic modes—*īqāʿāt* (singular: *īqāʿ*), *awzān* (singular: *wazn*), or *ḍurūb* (singular: *ḍarb*)—is based on groupings of low- and high-sounding percussion strokes, the low sound called *dumm* and the high sound called *takk*. The *īqāʿāt* commonly range from short two-beat patterns to longer configurations of 10 to 14 beats, and less often, to 32 beats or more. The *dumm* and *takk* can occur on the beat or be syncopated in the pattern, and multiple *īqāʿāt* can comprise the same number of beats, as shown in ex.2, where a down stem indicates a *dumm* and an up stem indicates a *takk*. Further, *īqāʿāt* that vary dramatically in tempo and character can feature a certain equivalence of underlying rhythmic organization, as shown in the examples of *maḥfūf* and *waḥda*, and again in *maṣmūdī ṣaghīr* and *maṣmūdī kabīr*. There sometimes also can be closely related alternate patterns for the same *īqāʿ*, and in the case of *waḥda*, which conveys a meaning of being one or single, the mode can be realized in a number of ways, though the single *dumm*, on beat one, always maintains a prevailing metrical significance. The additive quality of the *īqāʿāt* yields internal organizations that form some combination of two

and/or three beats, as shown in both the shorter and increasingly longer examples in ex.2. Ornamentation of the main underlying patterns of the *īqā'āt* is a vital part of realizing them in performance and depends on the sensibilities and capabilities of the percussionist.

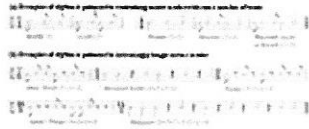


Figure 2. Examples of Rhythmic Patterns of Īqā'āt

- a. Examples of rhythmic patterns for contrasting metric modes with same number of beats
- b. Examples of rhythmic patterns for increasingly longer metric modes

(iv) Genres and suite form

The art music of Arab immigrants features many traditional formal genres both composed and improvised, and proficiency in both areas is expected of professionals. Improvisation, in particular, for singers as well as instrumentalists represents an opportunity to demonstrate depth and virtuosity as a serious performer. Attributes of great improvisers include their individual creativity, idiomatic expertise, and technical prowess. Some of the genre types that were brought by the first major wave of immigrants to the United States and that continue to be performed and composed among Arab Americans include:

- *Dūlāb*: A short composed instrumental genre that is introductory in nature.
- *Fāṣil* or *Waṣla*: A compound or suite form that generally includes a combination of compositions and improvisations that are unified by a particular melodic mode.
- *Layālī*: An improvised vocal genre that is non-metric and uses the words *yā layl* ("oh night") as vocables for melodic improvisation.
- *Mawwāl*: An improvised vocal genre that is non-metric and that typically interprets a poetic text in a stirring fashion.
- *Muwashshah*: A composed vocal genre that historically traces to medieval Andalusia and often features a vocal soloist and a chorus as well as lyrics in formal Arabic.
- *Qaṣīda*: A composed solo vocal genre based on a poem in formal Arabic.
- *Samā'ī*: A composed instrumental genre that features a refrain or *taslīm* alternating with contrasting episodes or *khānāt* (singular: *khāna*) and that typically modulates from the main metric mode of *samā'ī thaqīl* to a triple or compound mode in the final *khāna* before returning to the concluding *taslīm*.
- *Taqṣīm*: An improvised instrumental genre that can be rhythmically free, metered, or a combination of the two.

3. Immigration patterns

While the earliest recorded Arab American was a Moroccan slave who arrived in the United States in the 16th century, significant numbers of Arabic-speaking immigrants started coming to the United States in the middle 1870s with the first major wave of Arab American immigration beginning in the 1880s. Christians were more numerous than Muslims, Druze, and Jews in this migration, and while men outnumbered women at first, by 1919 the numbers of women and men

were about even. Fleeing persecution and seeking opportunity, these immigrants came especially from Greater Syria or the Levant. Making a living and learning English were priorities, street vending was common upon arrival, and Palestinian Americans and others from the region found an American market for crafts from the Holy Land and nearby places. While many immigrants came from the area of Mount Lebanon, they commonly described themselves by the broader appellation of Syrian. Coming from the Ottoman Empire, with its Turkish governance and with modern state borders in the region yet to be drawn, these immigrants might have been considered Turks or others as readily as Syrians or Arabs at the US border. Addressing their misidentification as Turks, the United States Bureau of Immigration added the classification of Syrian to its records in 1899.

The quota legislation that emerged from World War I quashed the flow of Arab immigrants to the United States, with the Immigration Act of 1924 marking the passing of the first wave of Arab immigration. Subsequent immigration patterns reflected prevailing political circumstances in both Arab and American societies. Fleeing the turmoil stemming from the rise of the Zionist movement in the British mandate of Palestine, Palestinian immigrants to the United States outnumbered Syrians and Lebanese for the first time in 1936. The second wave of Arab immigration to the United States came in the aftermath of World War II, with the establishment of Israel in 1948, the associated generation of over 700,000 Palestinian refugees, and ongoing regional distress. This group exhibited more balance in numbers between Muslims and Christians, a higher percentage of college students and educated professionals, and more equitable representation from countries of origin. With the ending of immigration restrictions based on national origins, the Immigration Act of 1965 led to the third wave of Arab immigration. This group has been the most diverse in terms of place of origin, religious background, and economic status, and has included many refugees and those fleeing socio-political problems.

4. Music making and cross-cultural exchange

The Arabic singing and musical instruments brought by first-wave immigrants quickly came to play in their home lives, worship services, and community activities. Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian American social clubs and cultural associations soon began emerging, such as *Zahrāt Lubnān* (The Flower of Lebanon), founded in 1890 in Allentown, New York, and the Palestinian Association and Syrian Club, both formed in Chicago in the wake of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, where Arab merchants came with others from around the world to sell their wares and in some cases remained to settle in the United States. Arabic-language newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals also quickly were established, such as *Kawkab Amērikā* ("The Star of America"), the newspaper that began weekly publication in New York in 1892, and by the time it became a daily in 1898, had a circulation of perhaps 10,000 in the United States, of some 5000 in Latin American countries, and among Arabic speakers who had not emigrated as well. These clubs, associations, and publications factored formatively in the lives of Arab Americans and, in turn, also influenced Arab society through personal, cultural, and professional ties.

The remarkable association of Arabic writers, *Al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamiyya* (the Pen League), was formed in New York in 1915, and then revived in 1920 by one of the most famous Arab Americans, Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931), along with his compatriot who also was from Mount Lebanon, Mikhail Naimy (1889–1988), and their colleagues. Keen on the interconnection of the arts and on the significance of the arts to spirituality and to life in general, Gibran penned his extended poem *Al-Mawākib* ("Processions") from which would be extracted *Aṭīnī al-Nāy* ("Give me the flute"), which would have an enduring impact on music. Gibran's continuing appeal in Lebanon led in the 1970s to the setting of *Aṭīnī al-Nāy* to music by Najib Hankash for arrangement by the Rahbani Brothers and vocals by Fairuz. In formal Arabic, it begins:

aṭīnī al-nāya wa ghanni	Give me the flute and sing
fa-al-ghinā siru al-khulūd	For singing is the secret of

eternity

wa anīnu al-nāyi yabqā And the lament of the flute
remains

ba'da an yafnā al-wujūd Even after existence passes
away

In a dynamic reciprocal flow of culture often characteristic of diasporic contexts, Gibran's poem gave rise to one of the most popular songs across Arab society, which by extension became greatly admired among Arab American musicians and audiences.

Traditions of musical expression that first-wave immigrants transplanted from Arab to American society and that continue to the present include the use of Arabic hymnody and language, often juxtaposed with English, in Arab American churches. Similarly, immigrants transferred the context of a traditional evening gathering (*sahra*) at the home of friends, which might produce music of exceptionally high quality in accordance with the caliber of the musicians and the artistic atmosphere, thereby enabling serious musicians to make music together, exchange ideas, and perhaps connect with important artists in other fields. The larger and more formal framework of a concert (*ḥalla*) often takes place at clubs and gathering halls, and has served as a vital performance context for professional musicians. Audience members may stay for hours enjoying dancing and elaborate presentations of Arabic food in addition to the music. The still larger setting of a festival (*mahrajān*) provides a professional performance venue in tandem with many other forms of artistic and cultural expression generally over the span of a full day or weekend. Festivals often serve as big events of cultural identification with some willing to travel a significant distance to a metropolitan center in order to attend. Likewise, artists of regional stature may perform in addition to local talent. Well established examples that draw especially large audiences and program artists ranging from traditional Arab music genres to Arab American hip hop include the Arab American Cultural Festival in Florida, the Arab American Day Festival in California, and the Arab International Festival in Michigan.

By the early 20th century Arab Americans were working with major record labels like Columbia, Victor, and His Master's Voice as the music industry grew increasingly interested in "ethnic" music at home and abroad. These musicians often brought their Arab musical sensibilities to bear on work in American idioms as well. Early examples include Syrian immigrant Naim Karakand, who was playing violin and recording in the United States by 1915 and continued performing into the 1960s, and Alexander Maloof, who emigrated from Greater Syria and became a successful pianist, composer, orchestra leader, publisher, and record producer during the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1920s Arab Americans began establishing their own small studios and tending to their own business needs with labels such as Abdel Ahad, Al-Chark/Orient, Arabphon, Cleopatra, Golden Angel, Macksoud, Maloof, Metrophon, Nilephon, and Star of the East. The engagement of technology brought an adaptation of tradition in both American and Arab societies as recordings could not really capture the live audience dynamic that was a vibrant part of Arab music making, and neither could the 78-rpm records accommodate the long performances. While much research remains to be conducted on the music of early Arab immigrants, the compilation of early recordings on compact disc, *The Music of Arab Americans: a Retrospective Collection* (Rasmussen 1997), provides an excellent look into Arab American music starting at about the second decade of the 20th century.

Arab immigrants who put their musical skills to work in the United States sometimes left or could not return to their homelands as a result of political strife. The war in Palestine caused Amer and Sana Khadaj, who sang together as children in Lebanon before performing regularly for the Near East Radio Station in Palestine, to remain in the United States after both their home and the radio station were destroyed while they were on tour in 1947. Palestinian 'ūd player, violinist, and composer Jalil Azouz also worked at the Near East Radio Station before traveling to the United States for a music tour and settling. Hanan Harouni, who began her singing career in Lebanon where she worked with the young Fairuz, also immigrated to the United States in the wake of World War II, as did Lebanese 'ūd player, composer, and actor Mohammed El Bakkar. Iraqi American singer, 'ūd player, and percussionist Saadoun Al-Bayati, who as a young man substituted for his neighborhood muezzin in Baghdad, immigrated in 1956 and continues to be a

leading proponent of Iraqi music in the United States. Following the 1967 War, Syrian American singer Youssef Kassab in 1970 moved to the United States from Syria, where he had performed as a vocalist with the Syrian Radio Orchestra. The social ravages of the Gulf War and attendant sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s caused 'ūd player and composer Rahim Alhaj to flee Baghdad and eventually relocate to the United States in 2000.

Immigrants who have played vital roles in music education at academic institutions include Lebanese American multi-instrumentalist and composer Ali Jihad Racy, who is a professor of ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). One of his roles at UCLA has been direction of the Near Eastern Music Ensemble through which he has taught the performance of Arab music to a generation of students. Although primarily known for his postcolonial scholarship and his long tenure as a Columbia University professor, Christian Palestinian American Edward Said also was a pianist and music critic. He worked with Jewish Israeli pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim in creating the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which brought together Israeli, Palestinian, and other Arab musicians of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish faiths.

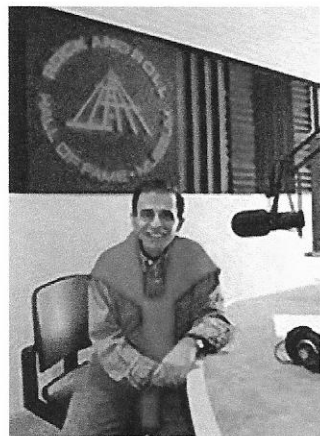
Immigrants involved with music education at the level of community ensembles include Jordanian American multi-instrumentalist Wael Kakish, who directs the Los Angeles based Kan Zaman Community Ensemble, formed in 1994. Palestinian American multi-instrumentalist and composer Nabil Azzam, trained in both Arab and Euro-American art music, similarly conducts the Los Angeles based Multi Ethnic Star Orchestra, established in 2001. Lebanese American multi-instrumentalist and composer Bassam Saba, also trained in Arab and Euro-American art music, has worked with a wide range of superstars including Fairuz, Marcel Khalife, Ziad Rahbani, Yo-Yo Ma, Simon Shaheen, Wadi Al-Safi, Paul Simon, Alicia Keys, Sting, Santana, Herbie Hancock, and Quincy Jones, and is the director of the New York Arabic Orchestra, which was founded in 2007.

These educators, along with many others of the best-known Arab American musicians, work together in various professional configurations from one project to another. A foremost talent on the 'ūd and violin, Palestinian American composer and conductor **SIMON SHAHEEN** focuses on traditional Arab music in his Near Eastern Music Ensemble and on Arab jazz in Qantara. He also directs the Annual Arabic Music Retreat (with Racy as Associate Director), which has set the standard for summer programs in Arab music. His brothers Najib and William Shaheen also are accomplished 'ūd players who teach at the retreat, as have Lebanese American Jamal Sinno on *qanūn* and violinist Georges Lammam, who is Lebanese American of Palestinian descent. Lammam similarly comes from a musical family and performs with his brothers Elias on accordion and Tony (Antoine) on percussion. Michel Merhej Baklouk, a Lebanese American *riqq* player of Palestinian origin who also has taught at the retreat, has worked with many of the greatest figures in Arab music including Muhammad 'Abd Al-Wahhab and 'Abd Al-Halim Hafez. He is best known as the main percussionist for Fairuz, with whom he worked since nearly the beginning of her career in the late 1940s. A student of Baklouk, Egyptian American percussionist Karim Nagi directs the Sharq Ensemble, which has featured Moroccan American multi-instrumentalists and singers Rachid Halihal and Boujemaa Razgui as well as Syrian American singer Aboud Agha and Syrian American 'ūd player, guitarist, and composer Kareem Roustom. Additional highly accomplished musicians include 'ūd player, singer, and composer Naser Musa, a Jordanian American of Palestinian descent, and Lebanese American percussionists Souhail Kaspar and Faisal Zedan.

Some of these performers manufacture instruments as well, such as *nāy* maker Boujemaa Razgui and 'ūd maker Najib Shaheen. In particular, Viken Najarian, who was born into the Armenian diaspora of Lebanon before moving to the United States, began playing the 'ūd in the tutelage of his grandfather, Dikran, himself a famous 'ūd maker. Najarian was an early designer of the electric 'ūd, and some of his largest customers for electric instruments are distributors in the Arabian Peninsula, though most Arab American musicians appear more interested in maintaining tradition with acoustic instruments than in taking up modern electric ones.

On the retail side of the music business, Albert Rashid emigrated from Syria in 1920 and became a forerunner in Arab music distribution in the United States. His groundbreaking company Rashid

Music Sales dates to 1934 in Detroit and became a major retailer of Arab records and musical products with his move to New York following World War II. Rashid's sons, Ray and Stan, took over management and further cultivated the establishment through several stages of technological development in music retailing, including the transition to online operation of the company, which began in 1995 and has continued since closing the storefront in 2010. Indicative of the times, Bashar Barazi is a third-generation Lebanese American who bypassed the opening of a store altogether and become a major retailer of Arab music through his online company, Maqam.



Casey Kasem, 2003.

Children of immigrants have frequently worked in some combination of Arab and American musical traditions, and shown attachment to their heritage in different ways and to differing degrees. While Syrian American Tony (Anton) Abdel Ahad enjoyed a successful career from the 1940s to the 1970s playing 'ūd and singing songs in formal and colloquial Arabic, he likely did not grow up studying formal Arabic or fully understand the lyrics that he sang in this register. At the same time, Lebanese American Philip Soloman enjoyed a reputation as a violinist performing traditional Arab music as well as Euro-American art music in the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra. Ensnared in American popular culture, Lebanese American Danny Thomas (Amos Yakhoub) was known primarily as a popular comedian and actor as well as the founder of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, though he also sang and recorded an album of Arabic folksongs. Becoming an icon of

American pop radio, Lebanese American voice actor and radio personality Casey (Kemal) Kasem hosted the nationally syndicated countdown show *American Top 40*, which he created with producer Don Bustany, who also was born in Detroit to Lebanese parents. Born in San Francisco to Lebanese and Palestinian parents, Dawn Elder became a concert promoter, artist and event manager, composer, producer, and director who has worked with artists in styles ranging from traditional Arab music to American popular music including Fairuz, Kazem Al-Sahir, Khaled, Simon Shaheen, Bassam Saba, Quincy Jones, Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney, the Beach Boys, Sting, Grover Washington, George Clinton, and Santana. Lebanese American **DICK DALE** (Richard Monsour) was born in Boston and pioneered instrumental surf rock in the early 1960s bringing to bear the influences of the Levantine and Mediterranean music that he grew up hearing and that would have an impact more generally within the genre. More recently, Arab American hip-hop artists whose politically conscious songs in English and in Arabic are informed by Arab American concerns include DJ Khaled (Palestinian American Khaled bin Abdul Khaled, born in New Orleans), Iron Sheik (Palestinian American Will Youmans, born in Dearborn), The Narcycyst (Iraqi American Yassin Alsalman, born in the United Arab Emirates), Omar Offendum (Syrian American Omar Chakaki, born in Saudi Arabia), and Ragtop (Palestinian American Nizar Wattad, born in Palestine).

Cross-cultural exchange between Arab and American cultures and across Arab nationalities has been a prominent part of Arab American musical life since its beginnings. The diasporic context of the United States further has led to collaboration among Arab American musicians of different national backgrounds in ways that would have been difficult or impossible from within the associated state borders of their respective homelands. In this sense, a kind of transnational exchange has taken place within American borders. At the same time, a certain nostalgia can be seen in preferences to maintain tradition rather than to innovate and readily depart from it. While some Arabs have immigrated to the United States as active musicians, others have learned Arab music in their diasporic context specifically because music and culture elicit ethnic identity. In either case, Arab American musicians have shared deeply rooted repositories of music culture among each other and with larger American society. Accordingly, they might echo the sentiment of Kahlil Gibran in his address to the next generation of Arab Americans in the first issue of *Syrian World Magazine* (1926): "I believe that you have inherited from your forefathers an ancient dream, a song, a prophecy, which you can proudly lay as a gift of gratitude upon the lap of America."

See also [DETROIT](#), [ISLAM](#).

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