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'Ūd Taqsīm as a Model of Pre-Composition

Rohana, N.

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Summary

In this dissertation I investigate the *taqsīm* practice of two leading figures of *‘ūd* playing in-depth, namely, the Egyptians Muḥammad al-Qaṣabjī and Riyāḍ al-Sunbātī. I have decoded their most significant traits in order to enrich and develop my own melodic-rhythmic vocabulary, and deepen my understanding of the genre's structural, melodic, and rhythmic processes. Most importantly, al-Qaṣabjī and al-Sunbātī's practices form a reference and are a source of inspiration for me to design a model for pre-composing *taqsīm*-like pieces of music.

In the research project I have explored how a *taqsīm* or an improvisation could become a pre-composition, and which composition techniques might be helpful in order to achieve variety in the character of each composition. My methodological approach is multifaceted and includes intensive listening to recordings, music transcribing, music analysis, bibliographical research, copying or memorizing recordings, improvising, and composing.

An elementary step to achieve my goal was developing a terminology that would guide the writing of the dissertation. The terminology is introduced in Chapter 2 and divided into two parts: *maqām* terminology which provides the reader with a basic understanding of Arabic music theory, and terminology associated with *taqsīm* based on the literature of the genre, standard terms among musicians, and several new terms that I propose based on my thorough analysis.

Chapter 3 discusses and analyzes al-Qaṣabjī's recordings made in the phonograph era, particularly in the 1920s. With the durational limitation imposed by recording technology, al-Qaṣabjī's model is compact and shows a clear and sharp arch shape. It moves towards a single structural climax located at the last *fāṣilah*, and is characterized by dense melodic activity. Usually an elaborate closure process follows the climax. Al-Qaṣabjī's musical language is characterized by the *tarjī‘āt* technique, the *iqāma* with metric character, and rhythmic patterns that resemble essential elements of Arabic prosody. In addition, in some recordings it is possible to trace a motivic process based on very short melodic figures.

In Chapter 4 I mainly focus on al-Sunbātī's recordings made during the 1970s. His model is variable in structure, and usually each *taqsīm* revolves around one or two climaxes. Some climaxes incorporate a tension-suspense effect primarily generated through atypical intervallic behavior, modulation, and a significant change in the rhythmic-temporal layer. Sequential melodic organization, significant scalar passages, occasional flexible pulse, and distinctive metric segments based on duple and triple meters are among the most prominent features of al-Sunbātī's musical language. In many sections, al-Sunbātī emphasizes a *resolution* process displaying distinctive melodic-rhythmic materials. Motivic processes form an integral part of al-Sunbātī's *taqsīm* practice.

Chapter 5 presents a model of pre-composition which I have used for creating five *taqsīm*-like pieces of music. When creating this model, I elaborate on and elevate some features of al-Qaṣabjī and al-Sunbāṭī's practices. I use several techniques to transform improvisations into pre-compositions. The structure is designed around a single dense climax, and every piece shows proliferation and a sense of directionality towards the climax. The directionality is created by carefully treating the proportions of music materials in each section and cautiously treating the closure processes throughout the composition. Every piece displays an elaborate motivic process, creating melodic coherency among the piece's different *fawāṣil* and sections. Some pieces achieve intricate 'forms' through repeating large melodic segments or phrases.