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Expanded inspiration: metric improvisation and compositional tools in contemporary modal music

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Summary

In this research project I investigated how metric improvisation practice can enhance inspiration in improvisation and creation of composed works. I employed a variety of methodological tools: intensive listening to recordings and videos of live and studio performances, music transcription and analysis, ethnographic research (interviews), participatory observation, improvising and composing. Through this research, and by focusing on the work of carefully chosen figures (Marko Melkon, Udi Hrant, John Berberian, Ara Dinkjian, Tamer Pınarbaşı and Kyriakos Tapakis), I have been able to enrich my melodic and rhythmic vocabulary, and substantially develop my skills in structuring metric improvisations and composed works.

The first step in this research was to choose the term that best suited the practice. In my Introduction, and after a brief historical account of the presence of the *oud* in the Ottoman Empire and its diasporic aftermath, I interrogate the terms ‘rhythmic’ and ‘metric’ improvisation and I set the practice in the continuum of music making. I set my own discourse apart from the traditional dichotomy between improvisation and composition.

Part A is dedicated to analysis of the artists’ improvisational styles and tools. Transcriptions, thorough analyses, and experimentation on each artist’s performance helped me deepen my knowledge of the subject and offer the reader a large amount of information on the rhythmic vocabulary, improvisational models and structural techniques of artists who worked throughout the course of the 20th century.

Part B is focused on my own creative path. Here I suggest ways of utilising the tools and material discovered in Part A, both in the creation of improvised and composed works and in pedagogical contexts.