

# Arabic music history and more assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Jason Mubaslat Music 110 Mr. Noel Arabic Music History and More The tradition of Arabic music has been cultivated throughout Arab regions for thousands of years. Although it has undergone many changes over the centuries, it has retained certain distinctive traits. The Arabic music tradition developed in the courts of dynasties in the Islamic empire from the 5th century to the 7th century. It flourished during the Umayyad dynasty in the 7th century and 8th century in Syria. This era was known as the Jahilliyyah period which actually means the “ period of ignorance” because society believed music and poetry was for magicians and exorcists.

They believed “ Jinn’s” who could be related to present day genies would reveal poems & magicians as a way of them worshipping the devil. Those magicians and exorcists were known as “ Jahilli Poets” back in the ancient times. But the Arabic music tradition is not only known for their crazy old school philosophy but they are also awarded major credit for inventing the Arabic Maqam system. Maqam is a framework model that defines the pitches, patterns, and development of a piece of music. There is not only a couple different maqams but dozens which all differ dependent upon which culture one is from.

Most often used in Egypt and the Levant cultures. Sometimes people often mistake the maqam being the same thing as a scale but they differ in four distinct areas. First a maqam may include microtonal variations such that tones, half tones and quarter tones. Each model has a different character which conveys a certain mood. Each model also includes rules that define its melodic development. These rules describe which notes should be emphasized, how often and in what order. Also it includes rules that define

the starting and ending note of a certain music piece. When melodies draw from a vast array of models of maqam's it is known as maqamat.

Another interesting trait about Arabic music is that it is characterized by an emphasis on melody and rhythm as opposed to harmony. There are some genres of Arabic music that are polyphonic, but typically Arabic music is homophonic. The main reason why harmony is rarely used is that chords don't sound very pleasant when they include quarter tones. Also, rhythmic structure of Arabic music is similarly complex. Rhythmic patterns can have up to 48 beats and typically include several downbeats (called dums) as well as upbeats (called taks) including silences, or rests.

To grasp a rhythmic mode, the listener must hear a relatively long pattern. Moreover, the performers do not simply play the pattern; they elaborate upon and ornament it. Often the pattern is recognizable by the arrangement of downbeats. Arabic performers are also known for putting on very good performances. In Arab tradition, good musicians offer something new in each performance by varying and improvising on known pieces or models in a fashion similar to that of jazz musicians. The inventions of musicians can be lengthy, extending ten-minute compositions into hour-long performances that allow only a thin resemblance to the models.

The inventions of the musician traditionally depend upon the response of the audience. Listeners are expected to react during the performance, either verbally or with applause. Quiet is interpreted as disinterest or dislike. The audience members, especially in this tradition, are active participants in determining the length of the performance and in shaping the piece of music

by encouraging musicians to either repeat a section of the piece or to move to the next section. Born of the cultures of the Arab World stretching from Morocco in the west to Iraq in the east, Arabic music is becoming popular world-wide.

It is made up of an interesting variety of folk, classical, and popular musical traditions. Many of these have survived for centuries, reflecting the musical feelings of the ancient world as well as the Middle Ages. While each region within the Arab World has their own distinctive, modal structure, rhythmic patterns, performance techniques, and lyric content across the area. This helps to form a fascinating performance of artistic tradition that changes and evolves while remaining true to its ancient heritage and country. In the last decade a growing global audience has come to appreciate the richness of this music.