MAINTAINING A MUSICAL TRADITION IN ARAB-AMERICA: AN ORAL HISTORY OF ABDEL KARIM BADER

By

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ABSTRACT

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Abdel Karim Bader, a cosmopolitan *oud* performer and teacher, was born in the Arab world in the early 1920s and immigrated to the United States of America in the early nineteen seventies. This thesis is an oral history that explores Bader as a carrier of an Arabic musical tradition, *tarab*, through three topics: biography, pedagogy, and improvisation. Bader's biography unveils a rich social and musical persona which is understood through the lens of *tarab* musicianship and values. He favors a pragmatic apprenticeship method, common to *tarab* musicians, that heavily relies on oral methods to transmit ideas, repertoire, and stylistic subtleties. Finally, Bader's improvisatory thought is influenced by both his knowledge of Arabic music theory and his performance experience, and it is exposed through examples from my lessons and an analysis of a solo improvisation. I have been Bader's apprentice since January 2010 and view this study as a contribution to a little-known facet of Arab-American identity and cultural practice.

To Abdel Karim Bader

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The date was Monday, September 10, 2010, the location Abdel Karim Bader's house in a suburb of Detroit. We were both in his office, he behind his desk and me in front of it, busy looking through a collection of tapes stacked in half a dozen or so shoeboxes under his desk and on the bookcase tightly ensconced between the desk and a sofa. I climbed the sofa, carefully avoiding the *oud*s resting on its arm, and it teetered slightly as I reached towards the bookcase. I grabbed at the first box I could reach. Then I turned around on all fours, very slowly, and hopped down, hoping I would miss the *oud*s (while fantasizing doing a high-wire act). The desk was cluttered with piles of papers, files, music scores, and stationary, so I set the box on my lap and started looking for that one tape.

I had come to enjoy those long searches for elusive tapes. Their cover photos, mostly glamorous star-singer shots highlighted by out-of-date hairdos and clothes and uneven lighting, brought back pleasant memories. Even the sensory experiences - the light "clickety-clack" of tape boxes hitting against each other, the hinge's whine as I opened a box – evoked a whiff of nostalgia. We'd both look through the boxes, one of us occasionally breaking the silence when on a hot trail or when discovering an interesting, though irrelevant artist, until we had found our desired tape. This time, the search was taking longer than usual.

I accidentally found a tape with Bader's name written on the cover. I handed it to him across the desk. He took a glance at it and told me he had been looking for that one for a while now. It was a private jam session he and some musician friends had recorded "about ten years ago" in a friend's basement in Montreal, Canada. As Bader reached to insert the tape in the player behind his desk, I grew excited. This was the first time I would hear a recording from his

younger days, and I had never heard him play the violin before.

The first sounds to come out of the speakers were a q*anun* improvisation, a lengthy one as we found out. Bader fast-forwarded; the q*anun* player was still improvising. Bader fast-forwarded some more; again, the q*anun*. After a couple more attempts, we finally heard the entire ensemble – violin, *qanun*, *tableh*, and *riqq* – play an instrumental *Sama'i*. When the piece ended, the *qanun* and violin traded improvisations, sometimes joined by a percussionist's steady rhythms, at others left to their own caprices.

As I write this introduction, I remember what I felt as I first heard Bader's violin. I overwhelmed by a wall of sound. The tone was smooth as butter, and the technique was assured. There was a constant undertone of passion and energy, sometimes bubbling under a whispering surface and often bordering on the dramatic. His phrases were fresh and full of emotion: the long and plaintive, the short and rhythmic dance-like bursts, the whimsical staccato figures. He navigated easily among different musical styles: Arabic instrumental improvisation, dance, Iraqi, popular Lebanese, Greek-influenced and others I couldn't recognize. And he played with authority.

It was obvious the other musicians respected him. When the ensemble faltered, Bader made the appropriate comment and restarted the music. And towards the end of the recording, he introduced the musicians. When his turn came, one of his colleagues introduced him as the violinist and added that he was "director of the musical department of the Baghdad radio."

By the time the tape came to an end, I was alone in Bader's house. He had left for a restaurant gig with his accompanist and had asked me to stay and record the whole tape on my Zoom digital recorder I almost always brought with me. I sat for a while, astonished. Then, I spoke into my recorder: "I don't believe what I just heard on that cassette, he's one of the best

Arab musicians I've ever heard. I didn't know… I've been visiting him once a week…"

The excerpt is a window into my relationship with Abdel Karim Bader as his *oud* apprentice. I had been studying with him for seven months when this event occurred. The setting, his cluttered office, is where we have mostly interacted. His teaching style prioritizes listening to recording. His personality is respectful, modest, prideful, caring, and trusting.

The excerpt's jam session recording is also a testament to Bader's breadth of musical knowledge. His approach to the *Sama'i* pieces demonstrates a mastery of phrasing, ornamentation, and expression. Bader performs Arabic song repertory from his collaboration with the Lebanese singer, Toni Hanna. His improvisations sample a wide range of musical influences accrued throughout a long career that has taken him to the Middle East, Europe, and the United States of America, including the wedding and nightclub scene and various collaborations with other gifted Arabic artists.

Ultimately, the ethnographic excerpt above reveals Bader as an unrecognized musician. He has lived in the USA for about forty years now, yet the younger Arab-American generation does not know him. He is unknown in the Middle East, as he left forty years ago. He is now ninety years old and spends most of his time at home. I probably would have never known about the violin recording had I not fortuitously found it. It is somewhat ironic that he has received a Michigan Heritage Award from an American institution in recognition of his musicianship.

The following document is an oral history account of Bader. I have heard colorful stories from his past during lessons or while we ate or drank tea during our leisure time. I have experienced his pedagogical approach over a year now. He has taught me Arabic musical theory and instrumental improvisation. Ultimately, I argue that Abdel Karim Bader is a carrier of the tradition of *tarab* in the United States, and I demonstrate how he has transmitted me his

knowledge.

My Path to Abdel Karim Bader

I am a Lebanese-Brazilian dual citizen having lived most of my life in Lebanon, which is where I started playing the classical saxophone when I was eleven years old. At eighteen, I decided to learn and play Arabic music along with my classical saxophone studies and took Arabic theory and solfege lessons with Andre Hajj, a *oud* player and teacher at various educational institutions, including the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory. At the same time, two friends and I formed a trio we called "Oriental Colors." We labeled our music "oriental jazz," to denote a repertoire of Lebanese and Ottoman instrumental music over which we improvised. Over the course of two years, we played in various concerts, festivals, music schools, restaurants, and a music bar. We eventually disbanded the group, and shortly after, I graduated with my classical saxophone degree and travelled to Paris, where I continued my music studies for three years.

After that, I moved to the United States to work on a Masters degree in saxophone performance at Michigan State University and to try my luck in a new country. When I had to finally pick my graduate recital repertoire, my teacher, Professor Joseph Lulloff, suggested I commission a piece from State's composition department. I had not played Arabic music for five or six years at that point, and I missed it, so I contacted some composer and performer friends with the idea of creating an experience in the spirit of "Oriental Colors." Five months later, we presented our co-creation: a twenty-minute Arabic-Western fusion and improvisatory work based on the very first piece I had played with my trio back in Lebanon.

In August 2009, some months after my graduate recital, I attended the annual weeklong

Arabic Music Retreat at Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts hosted by Kay Campbell and Simon Shaheen, the latter one of the most famous contemporary Arab *oud* and violin virtuosi. The Retreat curriculum focused on traditional Arabic instrumental music taught through private lessons, chamber music and large orchestra rehearsals, and solfege and theory group classes. We were guided by a host of talented performers and lecturers such as Ali Jihad Racy, Bassam Saba, Michel Merhej, Rima Kcheich, and William Shaheen, among others.

In the fall of 2009, I started another Masters degree at Michigan State University, this time in Ethnomusicology. I had maintained contact with Simon Shaheen and met him in Metropolitan Detroit in December 2009 for a follow-up lesson. I told him I had grown to love the sound of the *oud*, but I was holding back from learning it because I thought I was too old. He brushed my doubts away and encouraged me to start as soon as I could. When I went to Lebanon for the winter break, I bought a good instrument from a local instrument maker. After returning to the US, I emailed Shaheen to tell him I was ready to start. He wrote back: "I suggest that you take *oud* lessons with Abdel Karim Bader, who lives in the suburbs of Detroit. He is an older amazing musician and *oud* player and you should be lucky to have him around."

I met Abdel Karim Bader at the end of January 2010 and started taking lessons with him. By March of 2010, I had heard enough music and anecdotes to deduce there was a story in there for me to document. Joanna Bosse, my thesis advisor, encouraged me to ask him for permission to write an oral history. He accepted with a simple, "yes," and, after a brief pause, added that maybe he would be remembered when he passes away.

Methodology

Fieldwork took place between March 2010 and December 2010. The bulk of my

ethnographic data came from my weekly lessons with Bader, many of which I have recorded. I have also recorded him playing in public at restaurant gigs in Detroit and at one percussion workshop he assisted with in Lansing. In July 2010, I recorded our only formal interview, when he told me his life story up to his arrival to the US. I also conducted telephone and in-person interviews during the fall and winter of 2010 with ethnomusicologists, musicians, and music connoisseurs, whether Arab, Arab-American and other mainstream American.

I complemented my recordings and observations with field notes I saved in a Google document. I did not want to lug my recorder around his house, especially when we ate or socialized, as I also wanted to enjoy my time and to respect his personal space. I decided instead to memorize 5 to 7 pertinent ideas each lesson, and I added those to my field notes the same evening or the following day. The field notes became a vital pool of information, rife with vignettes from our lessons, recreations of Bader's stories and, increasingly as time went by, my personal reflections. Organizing and coding these notes allowed me to identify this document's main themes (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995: 142-144).

During fall of 2010, I sought out additional testimonies to support my observations and to attempt to contextualize Bader within the Arab and Arab-American musical cultures. I conducted phone interviews with ethnomusicologists Anne Rassmussen and Ali Jihad Racy, and I interviewed local Michigan musicians such as Nadeem Dlaikan, one of Bader's close friends and colleagues, and Lore Zwiernikowski, a Polish American music educator who has accompanied him on percussion over the last decade. I also interviewed members of the local Arab-American community and Americans who were close to that community.

I have found little documentation on Bader. His archive is small. He has not recorded much, and he owns a few newspaper clippings and photographs. The Arab Community Center

for Economic and Social Services and the Arab American National Museum, both in Dearborn, Metropolitan Detroit, have documented their collaborations with Bader and his colleagues, yet they only found one document when I inquired about this matter. Only one photograph. Either the rest of the information has been destroyed, or it has been lost. I did find some information about Bader's Michigan Heritage Award application in addition to a student paper about Arab-American music, focusing on Bader, at the Michigan State University Museum with the help of Lynne Swanson and Pearl Wong, but these documents did not tell me much I did not know.

Finally, I'm extremely grateful to my colleagues in the "Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology" class I took during the fall semester of 2010. We all had to share our work and critique each others' assignments, which included a project proposal, field notes, and an interview transcript. We came to know each other and our projects very intimately, and their critiques and suggestions pertaining to methodology, theory, and even writing issues, revealed new research possibilities and gave me the belief I could complete this document.

Literature Review and Setting the Context

Ali Jihad Racy's "Making Music in the Arab World – The Culture and Artistry of *Tarab*" is a seminal work on musical culture from the Near Eastern Arab cities. "[*Tarab*] denotes the theoretically based, modally structured and professionally oriented tradition of music making, a domain that Western scholars sometimes refer to as 'art music'." Racy also defines *tarab* as "a musically induced state of ecstasy" and a "transformative state...connected with intoxication, empowerment, inspiration, and creativity" (Racy 2003: 6). Throughout his book, he discusses *tarab's* cultural context through such ideas as "professional jargon, musical training, and music related codes of behavior," its performance context, its "musical substance" which includes

lyrics, and the sense of ecstasy produced by the music.

Tarab culture includes shared musical and social values and attitudes among professional musicians, amateurs, and audiences. It contextualizes most of the instrumental and vocal material Bader has taught me, which has been popular in varying degrees to circles of musicians and, in some cases, to the general Arab public, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Throughout this document, I view Bader's musical and social personas throughout this lens. With that said, Bader has also taught me some folk and popular idioms from non-*tarab* cultures, and even then, some have been influenced by it.

Anne Rasmussen's work creates another context in which the reader understands Bader's American episode. Her doctoral dissertation, "Individuality and Social Change in the Music of Arab-Americans" provides an excellent backdrop on the development of music in Arab-America from 1930 and 1970, which involved the interplay of musician preferences, increasing performance professionalism, changing Arab-American social needs, immigration waves from the Middle East, changing musical patronage systems, and influences from mainstream America. Rasmussen notes that musicians' roles in their communities slowly shifted from "cultural leader to popular servant" (Rasmussen 1991: 315). That trend has been accompanied with a gradual change from Syrian urban repertoire to lighter Lebanese rural folk styles[1].

Although I have spent very limited time in Detroit's music scene, I am confident that Rasmussen's research has not aged much. Music opportunities in modern day Arab-Detroit are mostly located in the wedding industry. Folk dancing and pop songs are popular. Local performers have to cater to the ethnically varied diasporas in order to survive in the market. In other words, much of the art music that I learned from Bader is not as popular anymore in the

[1] The recent influx of Iraqi refugees has also influenced the music scene.

Arab Diaspora, and in some cases never was. Thus, Rasmussen's work helps us understand Bader's likes and dislikes throughout this document. Still, my approach differs from Rasmussen's in that my intensive and prolonged experience as Bader's apprentice contrasts with her more large-scale research in the wider Arab-American musical community.

Rosina Hassoun's, "Arab Americans in Michigan" is a good source of historical and statistical data about Arab immigration to the Midwestern state. The majority of Arabs in the Dearborn area come from Lebanon, Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Yemen, and North Africa (Hassoun 2005: 17). The Arab-American population in Michigan is mostly concentrated in Dearborn and the Detroit metro area, where Bader has mostly resided in the United States (Hassoun 2005: 11). In this thesis, "Arab-American" denotes the Detroit population except for a few general cases which will be obvious to the reader.

To my knowledge, there are no in-depth oral history accounts about Arab-American musicians, yet I have relied on some other oral history sources for inspiration. Judith Vander's "Songprints," helped structure my information into the current biography-pedagogy-improvisation format. Virginia Danielson's "The Voice of Egypt," is a seminal English work on Oum Kalthoum, the Egyptian diva and one of my teacher's favorite singers, and her work contextualizes some of Bader's stories about Oum Kalthoum and the Egyptian musical culture in general. Nevertheless, I do not faithfully adhere to any oral history or biographical model, and instead opted for the "Nonmodel Approach," as articulated by Beaudry:

> By being as receptive as possible, I leave it to informants to choose the manner in wish they wish to instruct me and to decide in which directions they will channel me. (Beaudry 1997: 69)

My relationship with Bader is primarily master-apprentice. Although I sometimes made musical or theoretical requests that satisfied my curiosities, and although Bader sometimes pandered to my interests, I did not consciously "channel" the lessons towards my ethnographic aims. On the other hand, we had much in common – nationality, language, a history of travel and expatriation, a love of *tarab* culture – that smoothed out many cultural or age differences, facilitated Bader's choice of pedagogical direction, and fueled my enthusiasm to learn.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 is a biographical sketch of Abdel Karim Bader. The first section relates Bader's life story as he told it to me. In order to fill some gaps in his account, especially after his arrival to the US, I have relied on information from my consultants and from a clip from the Golden *Oud* Award ceremony in which Simon Shaheen reads Bader's biography. The rest of the chapter focuses on elements of his musicianship I think were advantageous to his musical career. Chapter 3 relates Bader's pedagogy. It begins with an account of our pre-lesson ritual, and then it articulates Bader's teaching method and identifies his signals of progress. At the end of the chapter, I document some of the repertoire he has taught me. Chapter 4 analyzes Bader's improvisational thought and pedagogy. It begins with an introduction to pertinent elements to solo non-metric Arabic improvisation. Then, I examine Bader's pedagogy of improvisation through the lens of Jeff Pressing's standard expertise theory model. Following that, I analyze one of Bader's improvisations, and finally, I take a look at Bader's aesthetic improvisational preferences.

A Note on Translation

All of my interactions with Abdel Karim Bader were in Arabic. Some of my interviews with musicians, scholars, and members of the Arab-American community, and some of my literary sources, were also in Arabic. I have translated all these sources into English. Otherwise the rest of the information is in English. Throughout this document, all Arabic terms and phrases, except for names, are italicized. I employ Arabic plural and singular noun forms except in one case: I use the anglophonized plural "*ouds*" instead of the Arabic "*a'wad*" for the sake of the English speaker's facility, as I often use that term throughout the text.

CHAPTER 2: A Biographical Sketch

The first section of this chapter is a sketch of Bader's biography as he recounted it during an interview which took place on July 16, 2010. I have relied on other consultants, most notably Nadeem Dlaikan, a long-time friend and colleague of Bader's, to reconstruct Bader's American episode, as he hasn't told me much about it. Some of the dates throughout the biography are not precise, but these do not affect the larger picture. I do not know some of the people Bader mentions, but I included their names out of respect for his narrative.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on four attributes I believe helped Bader throughout his musical career, which are his apprenticeship, his knowledge of the *oud* and of Arabic music theory, his performing experience, and his reading skills. Again, I often rely on Dlaikan's comments to clarify Bader's ideas and practices. I justify my method with the knowledge that both musicians have worked closely for years and hold similar views about music performance, audience, and reading skills, among others.

Bader's Biography

Abdel Karim Bader was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in the year 1920 or 21, to a Lebanese mother and a Syrian father. At the time, World War I had ended recently, and the Ottoman Empire was being dissolved. "Abdel Karim" means "servant of the generous," a reference to God. His family name, "Bader" means "full moon." Concerning his age, Bader remembers that his father once took him to the *mukhtar* (the mayor), and when the *mukhtar* asked his father how old Bader was, his father put his hand on his son's head and said, "Write down, nine."

Bader's father was a clarinet performer who established, directed, and arranged music for

a brass ensemble in the Ottoman Army. He also used to love the *oud* and played it beautifully. Bader started learning the *oud,* a popular domestic instrument at the time, from his father around the age of five or six. During his youth, Bader used to play at women's gatherings for weddings, because grown men or even women were not allowed to play. Apparently Jamal Basha the Little, an Ottoman official (not to be confused with the notorious Jamal Basha the Butcher), took a liking to Bader's father and asked him to teach his daughters the *oud*. It was fashionable for young girls to learn the instrument, and only old men and young kids were allowed to teach them. This situation benefited him as Jamal Basha eventually appointed him as director of the Ministry or Secretariat of the army provisions responsible to feed the soldiers, a position of good standing. Jamal Basha granted Bader senior the position as he had good Turkish writing and reading skills. When World War I ended, his dad travelled between Aleppo, in modern-day Syria, and Moussel, in modern-day Iraq. He served as a liaison for traders, and during that period, Bader and his sister lived in Aleppo.

The family moved to Lebanon when Bader was nine years old, and he stayed there until he was around fourteen or fifteen years old. Bader senior had a musician friend of Turkish descent who lived in Lyon, France, who asked that Bader study music with him. Bader took a boat to France in 1936 to study the cello, an instrument he liked a lot. Yet, Hitler was starting to cause trouble in Europe, and Bader's mother urged that he return to Lebanon. He obliged and returned in 1938 or 1939, right before the start of World War II. Back in Lebanon, he taught music and also formed "The Near East Radio Ensemble," at the Lebanese Radio. Although Bader studied at the Lebanese conservatory, he only remained there for two or three months:

> Because my teachers, god grant their souls rest, and it's bad to bring this up, but I used to read music better than they did. Imagine that Najah Salam's (the

> singer) father, Muhieddin Salam, played the *oud* well, but he did not read music. Najah's father used to teach *oud*" (Bader *Interview*, 2010)

Bader said that many musicians did not read because music was not their primary profession, yet they needed jobs. And after hearing Bader play the *oud* during some event, Wadi' Sabra, the director of the Lebanese conservatory and composer of the Lebanese national anthem, asked Bader why in the world was he still studying at the conservatory? So Bader left[2].

Bader wanted to perform on the cello. He explained that there usually was one *oud* player per ensemble, and, being a good *oud* player himself, he avoided competing with other performers to avoid a clash of egos. In contrast, there were usually multiple cello players per ensemble, a less problematic situation which netted him many performances throughout his career.

According to Bader, there was only one other proficient cellist in Lebanon, Toufic El-Basha, and both he and Basha were the only people who could read music at the time[3]. El-Basha asked Bader to perform with him on the violin and the *oud* (I'm not sure when Bader started learning the violin, but he was proficient at it by his late teens), and they worked with the singer Sou'ad Muhammad, who rose to prominence during that period. El Basha was apparently a talented composer and wrote Muhammad songs, but nobody would pay attention if he claimed ownership of the compositions. Instead, the group would credit a new song to Riyad Al-Sunbati, a famous Egyptian composer and *oud* player, in order to grab audiences' attention. Bader says

[2] It is unclear whether he studied at the Lebanese conservatory between 1938 and 1940 or between 1944 and 1948. I suspect it must be the first stint as he was working as a radio musician and accompanist in the second stint.

[3] Throughout this document, any reference to notation refers to Western music notation. In this case, it would be safe to assume that not many could read music notation in Lebanon back then.

that this group worked together throughout the Mediterranean[4].

In the early forties, Bader moved to Jaffa and Jerusalem in Palestine, where he stayed for four years. He worked at the Radio station "Al-Sharq Al-Adna," formed a radio ensemble, and worked in the nightclub scene[5]. Bader returned once again to Lebanon. He worked at the Lebanese radio station and collaborated with Assi Al-Rahbani, a talented musician, composer, and the husband of the famous Lebanese singer, Fairuz. They'd often create music together. "What would ['Assi] tell me? Karam, Karam (*a nickname*), get the violin! Let's do a tango together" (Bader *Interview*, 2010). Assi would then accompany Bader on the piano; sometimes Assi would play the *buzuq* or the violin. Bader also knew Assi's brother, Mansour, the more literary inclined of the two brothers, and still a policeman during those days. The Rahbani family also included a sister, Najwa, who sometimes sang with her brothers. While at the Lebanese Radio, Bader met Zakariyya Hamdan, an excellent singer in his opinion, and started working with her. He used to earn a salary of 200 liras (Lebanese pounds) at the radio station, while he made the same amount in "two gigs" with Hamdan, so he left his radio job.

Bader found out in a newspaper that the Iraqi Royal Government was looking for music teachers, so he applied for a job. He got a letter from the Iraqi embassy inviting him for an interview. Bader recounts that he took the tramway (Manara line) to his destination, where he met the ambassador, a man called Abd El-Jabbar Al-Kdeiri, the singer Afifa Iskandar, whom the ambassador described as the "Oum Kalthoum" of Iraq and who eventually became like a sister to

[4] He did not specify when and where.

[5] Bader says that there are no recordings from his days at the radio because of the lack of technology. Yet "Al Sharq Al Adna" archives exist at the BBC in London according to Victor Sahhab, in a conversation I had with him during December 2010. I'm not sure whether there would be any music recordings from Bader's days.

Bader, and Mumtaz 'Omari, the director of the media in Iraq that Bader eventually worked with. The ambassador asked Bader to bring his *oud* to a gathering that evening that both Iskandar and 'Omari would attend and added that he would get the job if they approved of him. He also Did Bader have a car, the ambassador asked? No, Bader said ("Did I have a car? I didn't have a bicycle!"). The embassy arranged a car, flags and all, to pick up Bader from his grandfather's house in Ras Beirut, a neighborhood in the Lebanese capital.

Bader landed the job and moved to Iraq. That was the year 1948, which in the larger context of the Middle East, coincides with the creation of the State of Israel. Sou'ad Muhammad, whom he had previously worked with, and Najah Salam, whose father was the good yet illiterate *oud* player mentioned above, also went to Iraq and he performed radio gigs with both singers.

Although Bader's job was music teacher, he was asked to work at the Baghdad radio station by its director. Bader's explains that many of the *mussawiyyin* (Jews), who had grown afraid of their fate in an Arab country, wanted to leave for their homeland in Israel. Apparently, they were among the best musicians in Iraq, and they were also the best audience, and their absence created a need for performers[6]. To Bader, the Jewish people were, "artists, and a loving people, and I didn't see anything but goodness from them. Up till now, whoever asks them about me, those who are still alive say, '*habibna Karim*' (our love, Karim [Bader])" (Bader *Interview*, 2010)[7].

Bader describes his Iraq phase as his Golden Age. He was music teacher, performer**,**

[6] Bader commented that during his time in Iraq, there were no tensions among the Jews, Christians, and Muslims; people were perceived as Iraqis. Some of the Iraqi Jews took an interest in Bader because he spoke some Hebrew, a language they seem to have ignored as they lived among the Arabs.

[7] During one of my lessons, Bader got a call from a Rabbi living in Texas who asked him to recruit some musicians for an event in Detroit. Bader spoke some words of what I assume is Hebrew.

composer, and ensemble director at the radio station in Baghdad. He also worked with renowned singers, such as Nazem Al-Ghazali from Iraq and Wadi' El-Safi from Lebanon, and with *oud* players such as Munir Bashir and Ahmad Khalil. In the mid-fifties, he started working at the Iraqi TV station, directing and performing with ensembles. He also had a TV program called "Layali Al-Andalus" (The Nights of Andalusia) where performers, including Bader, sang *muwashshahat* (a vocal genre), including some of his own composition[8].

During that period, he travelled to Greece yearly for periods of two or three months to give workshop-style lessons at a local conservatory. In his view, the Greeks used to love Turkish music, despite the political problems between the two peoples. He eventually married the director of the conservatory's daughter and they have two sons from that marriage. Eventually, times got tougher in Iraq towards the late sixties and early seventies.

> And Iraq, when it wasn't a kingdom anymore *[1958 – military coup]*, Abdel Karim Qassim came to power. It deteriorated and then improved. When it improved and the times were prosperous and good and blessed, [Qassim] left power. Other people came to power [*a series of coups and leader changes in the 60s that let to the Baath party's accession to power in 1968]*. I adapted to them and I managed to survive. A human being had no more value in Iraq after that. Meaning, "put him in jail... kill him..." It had no more value. (Italics added by author) (Bader 2010)

In 1970, Bader met Hikmat Jabro, who invited him to perform in the USA. Bader brought along an ensemble that included Lami'a Taoufiq, an Iraqi singer, and Fou'ad Al Awad, most probably the Lebanese *oud* player. Bader felt that the US was a good country, and it was different from Iraq. He also met Nadeem Dlaikan in Detroit, and they began what has become a

[8] In his Farmington Hills office, there is a picture of a young Bader in costume, from the TV show.

forty-year-old friendship and collaboration[9]. Dlaikan and another local musician played with that group during its stay in the US. Dlaikan remembers that Bader was the group leader, that the singer was top-notch, and that the songs were hits in the Arab World at the time (Dlaikan 2010).

Back in Iraq, Bader decided to emigrate to the USA. He asked his wife to prepare to take his family to Greece, as he still had a home and family there. He met a person by the name of Andy Khoury and told him he wanted to leave Iraq for good. The Bader family hastily exited, and Bader only took his violin with him. In a matter of months, he lost his home, most of his music library, and all the rest of his possessions that he had built up over twenty-two years. Khoury and Bader took an ensemble with them along with two singers, Maida Nazhat and Saheb Sharrad, and they performed for the immigrant communities.

He had to obtain a green card, and some friends advised him to go somewhere where there were few of his countrymen, as that would speed up the process. He went to Texas, where he lived for a year and a half. There was a very small Arab community, including a few Lebanese. He played the cello at a local symphony orchestra, and through that gig, met Jimmy Simon, who helped him with his immigration papers. Within two to three months, Bader obtained his green card.

Bader then went to Michigan, where he has been living since then. His family had remained in Greece, and he married an Arab-American, Evelyn, a Chaldean Christian of Iraqi and Iranian decent, and they currently reside in Farmington Hills. His Greek ex-wife and their two sons eventually came to the United States, and they also live in Michigan.

After settling down, Bader played with Dlaikan and other local musicians. He was “hot”

[9] Nadeem Dlaikan, a proficient Lebanese musician, 20 years Bader's junior, plays the *nay*, the *mizmar*, and the *mijwiz*, which are three traditional and folk wind instruments. Dlaikan had emigrated from Lebanon to the United States in 1969 and he eventually settled down in Detroit.

back then (David, *Interview* 2010), and he and his colleagues played many parties and weddings, the bread and butter of many Detroit Arab American musicians up till today (Rasmussen 2010). They also played the nightclub scene, back when it was strong in the 70s and 80s, and venues included the "Tigress," "Casablanca," and the "Cedars Club"[10]. The group also played some clubs in Chicago and Toronto and went as far as Cincinnati to play festivals and parties.

When Toni Hanna, the Lebanese singer, came to Detroit around 1976 or 1977, some of these musicians formed an ensemble around him. The other local musicians in the ensemble included Johnny Sarweh on the *qanun*, Mustapha Al-Atat on the *tableh*, Ibrahim Al-Saghir on the *riqq*, and Hisham Mishmoush on the *violin*. Bader speaks very highly of Hanna, who was back then an Arab star, and it is obvious that he regards their collaboration, which went up till the end of the 90s, as one of the highlights of his musical life in the United States[11]. They toured New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary; they also went to Australia and Brazil, among other international destinations (Dliakan 2010).

Bader and his colleagues eventually performed educational gigs and festivals (in addition to weddings) as the local night club scene declined and the music industry moved in a different direction (Rasmussen 2005: 195-199). In the early seventies, Dlaikan had been active with the then-nascent Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Detroit, now one of the premier Arab American non-profit organizations, and he eventually collaborated with Sally Howell in the late eighties and early nineties on musical and educational projects that

[10] Bader said that the "Cedars" was a respectable club in that a customer had to wear a tie in order to enter the establishment; ties were provided at the door to those not wearing them.

[11] Encouraged by Bader, I met Toni Hanna in Lebanon in December 2010. Hanna reciprocates Bader's feelings of respect. I also saw Hanna perform at his restaurant in Jbeil, my adopted hometown. Although he has lost some of his stamina, his voice is incredibly powerful, his performance entertaining, and his intonation impeccable. He packed the house on a weekday (easily 150 people).

involved some of the musicians from the Hanna ensemble (Howell 2010). They went to schools, colleges, and universities to play and talk about Arabic music and instruments (Dlaikan 2010). They played at Michigan State University and University of Michigan, and they also performed at the Lincoln Center and at the Kennedy Center, the latter in celebration of Dlaikan's National Heritage Award. They recorded a collection of children's songs that was distributed across the United States[12]. During that stage, the group also performed with Arab artists as Sabah, Karem Mahmoud, and Simon Shaheen.

Bader scaled down his performing schedule towards the end of the nineties as he was entering his tenth decade and as Toni Hanna left Detroit. He met an American music educator, Lorelei Zwiernikowski, who was interested in learning Arabic music. He taught her a few Arabic music fundamentals, and they have played at weddings, private parties, and restaurants over the last ten years (Zwiernikowski interview, 2010). Bader has won some awards over the last 6 years. In 2005, he mentored an Iraqi *oud* student through a Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Award. During that same year, he was awarded the Golden *Oud* Award by the Arab American Arts Institute. In 2006, he was awarded a Michigan Heritage Award.

Since I have met him, Bader does not perform or teach much anymore[13]. He used to perform regularly with Zwiernikowski at two restaurants in the Detroit region, La Sheesh and Palm Palace. La Sheesh has closed down, but he still performs at Palm Palace. He also plays on occasion with Dlaikan, Sarweh, and Al-Atat under the name of the "Dearborn Traditional Ensemble." For the most part, he spends most of his time in his home at Farmington Hills.

Bader is still a vibrant man with a sharp mind, even though he has been recently slowed

[12] I could not find any copies of said recording.

[13] He says he does not have the will or the patience to teach the basics to new students. He feels comfortable with me because I have a musical background.

by an ankle sprain. He is a seemingly light-hearted person, always ready for a joke or a pun, and his deadpan humor has often caught me off guard[14]. Bader is a god-fearing man, but I am not sure about his religious affiliation. He once told me a story that explained his reluctance to share that information: Two people started a business together, and they eventually became rich and successful. One day, as they were reflecting on their accomplishments, one of them inquired about the other's religion. The second answered and then added he was ending their partnership. The first person assured the other that they were both of the same faith. Yet that was not the issue, the second said. Now that religion was involved in their relationship, it was better to stop the collaboration altogether[15].

Bader mainly speaks in Arabic around me, a mixture of Lebanese, Syrian, and Iraqi dialects, all at once. We sometimes speak some words or phrases of French, a language he has not spoken for a long time, since his episode in Lyon. As for English, although he does seem to understand it very well (he is comfortable watching TV and participating in conversations), he often has a difficult time expressing himself in that language. He is fluent in Greek and understands Farsi, which his wife speaks. He also knows snippets of other languages he has encountered throughout his travels, such as Hebrew.

Some of Bader's friends and colleagues have commented on how "karim" he is, a play on his name alluding to his "generous" spirit. Indeed, he has been very generous and trusting towards me. I spend between 3 to 5 hours with him once a week, sometimes more. I eat one or

[14] I once received a call from him asking me why I had caused so much destruction. I almost never get calls from him, and I was worried because I thought I might have broken something at his house. It turned out that he was watching the news and had heard about "Hurricane Igor" that had pounded the Caribbean, which led him to think about me and make the call. I would have never guessed the joke from his tone!

[15] Bader's attitude is partially explained by his experiences of religious conflict in the Middle East.

two meals, we often drink tea together and eat sweets, and he teaches me for a large portion of that time. He only charges me $25 dollars per lesson! When first meeting strangers, he does not hesitate to put them at ease. When I first called him to inquire about lessons, he invited me to have tea with him on a Saturday morning. I was caught by surprise, being used to a music conservatory mindset, with a fixed schedule of weekly one-hour-or-so lessons. In fact, this first visit, which was a very relaxed affair, was his excuse to evaluate me as a potential student, without framing it as such. During gigs, he has often stopped playing to accomodate a musical request, accept a compliment, or answer a question about the music or his instrument.

Bader is proud of his musical abilities and achievements. He is full of stories of musical exploits and often plays me recordings of his performances to reinforce that point. And although he will criticize other musicians for technical and musical issues or philosophical differences, he does not slight them in public. As I am a student of his, his criticism or adulation of other musicians in my presence is a pedagogical tool to communicate ideas and reveal or reinforce his musical preferences.

Some of Bader's favorite musicians and artists are Muhammad Abd El-Wahhab, Sayed Darwish, Oum Kalthoum, and Riyad Al-Sunbati. He has high regard for Abd El-Wahhab, an Egyptian singer, *oud* player, and composer active throughout the twentieth century. Bader has often told me that Abd El-Wahhab reinvigorated Arabic music "for another fifty years," referring to the fact that Abd El-Wahhab's songs and pieces are still well known by many Arabs in the Middle East and the diaspora, long after they have been composed. Although Oum Kalthoum is one of his favorite singers, he has expressed his affinity for artists such as Nazem Al-Ghazali, Abd El-Halim Hafez, Warda Al-Jaza'eriya, Wadi' El-Safi, Sabah Fakhri, and Toni Hanna. In general, even though he appreciates some contemporary singers, he has a lower opinion of more

recent songs, observing that they are short-lived in the market.

For the remainder of this chapter, I focus on five ideas I think have helped gain colleagues' and audiences' respect throughout his career: his apprenticeship, his knowledge of the *oud*, his knowledge of music theory, his performing experience, and his reading skills.

Apprenticeship

Bader learned the *oud* mainly through an apprenticeship with his father that started when he was five or six. The two were close, and his father's love of the instrument was infectious, both factors which deeply influenced Bader's playing style and pedagogy. His father's teaching method, as Bader has related, is similar to his own, as I have experienced it. What follows are a few examples and vignettes Bader told me about his father.

Bader's father encouraged him to listen to records repeatedly before notating the music. Sometimes it was a challenging process as the recordings were of Turkish musicians. Turkish classical musicians usually tune their instruments a whole step higher than their Arabic counterparts, and Bader, who did not know any better, worked with the "Arabic" intonation. Nevertheless, that difficulty turned into an advantage later on as it is one reason he managed to learn left-hand position-shifting and developed a facility for *taswir*, the art of transposing to different, sometimes uncommon pitch levels.

Bader also learned such ideas as the "pick-up," or "syncopation" through his notation exercises. While transcribing one of the first pieces he learned (a Turkish march that he remembered and hummed to me in his kitchen) he picked the wrong time signature as he confused the pick-up with the first beat of the first measure of that piece. His father asked him to sing the music and compare it with the notated part in order to find out the mistake. In yet

another story, Bader would walk about the streets with his father, who would point out the "music" in people's walking cadences, such as a march: "1,2,1,2,1...".

His father was quite *hanoun* ("loving"), as Bader was his only son. In one story, Bader's mother caught him doing something bad, and when his father came home, she told him about it. He promised that he would punish Bader, took him into a room and locked it. Then he asked Bader to make fake cries, as if he were being beat, while he mimicked beating sounds by clapping his hands loudly. The commotion so concerned Bader's mother that she knocked on the door hysterically, asking his father to stop. And when Bader finally came out, he was crying and told her in response to her worried query that he was hurt.

Bader has told me that he teaches his favorite students the same way his father taught him. In fact, during my lessons, Bader has often pointed out learning situations that reminded him of that relationship, such as when we listened to a recording or played or sang along with it. As I will show in the next chapter on Bader's pedagogy, he retains some of those ideas, such as creating a general relaxed attitude throughout the lesson, in addition to the singing, listening, and reading of music already mentioned in the previous vignettes.

Knowledge of the *Oud* and of Music Theory

The *oud* is a pear-shaped lute with a fretless fingerboard. The sound is produced by a pick, also known as *risha* in Arabic, which means "feather," in reference to older picks which were made of eagle feathers (modern picks are mostly made of plastic). The usual method of *oud* playing is melodic, and chords are rarely used. Modern Arabic *oud*s can have anywhere between five to seven, and in some cases, eight string courses. Except for the lowest, each course is double-stringed. Each course consists of a pair of strings. A course is identified by its pitch

letters, capital letters describing lower pitches, small letters higher pitches. For example, a "C" usually refers to the lowest course. A "cc" refers to the c-double-string course tuned two octaves above the "C" course. Although there are many *oud* tuning systems according to region and to individual preference, Bader uses a six-course *oud* with a common tuning of "C, FF, AA, dd, gg, cc."

Bader prefers the darker sounds of older *oud*s over the brighter, newer models that sound like "mandolins" to him. He has a preference for Egyptian, Syrian, and, his favorite, Iraqi *oud*s[16]. Bader has said more than once that the *oud*'s role in Arabic music is analogous to the cello's in Western Classical Music; in other words, the instrument's beauty lies in its middle and low registers.

Regarding *oud* performers, Bader likes those who are n*daf* ("clean", meaning that they have a good technique) and *darsin* (have studied music, educated). His favorite *oud* player is Riyad Al-Sunbati, the Egyptian *oud* player and composer mostly remembered for his compositions for Oum Kalthoum[17]. Another influence is Mouhammad Al-Qasabji, another Egyptian heavyweight whose improvisations served as a model for Bader early on during his career. Bader is also fond of older players such as George Michel, Fareed Al-Atrash, and Fou'ad Al-'Awad. As for modern players, Bader admires Simon Shaheen, Naseer Shamma, and Charbel Rouhana, among others. Although he thinks there are proficient players in all Arab countries, he prefers those players from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Palestine, or in other words those countries that once formed the Greater Syria.

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[16] On a related note, Ali Jihad Racy told me that Bader's sound, dark and mellow, reminded him of the older mainstream players he grew up listening to (Racy 2010).

[17] Al-Sunbati shared a room with Bader in Palestine for a period of two or three months, which influenced Bader's musicianship.

Concerning Bader's technique, he has left-hand position-shifting facility, even at his current age, which in his view communicates technical strength to audiences. For example, Bader announced during one of his public performances that he would play "Toota," an already challenging Fareed Al-Atrash piece, on one string only. To add to the drama and ensure there would be no cheating, Dlaikan cut off all the strings with a razor, except for the high "cc" - of course, Bader added, Dlaikan cut them close to the bridge so they were long enough to be strung again later. Bader once recreated that performance for me, one which required rapid position shifts and large leaps across the fingerboard to compensate for the instrument's new range.

The *risha* (the pick), an important *oud* accessory, should allow for both sound projection and flexibility for virtuosic passages. Many players buy precut picks or material and customize them to their needs. Bader seems nonchalant about his choice of picks, and one of his past times is to cut slabs of plastic out of milk jugs and water bottles to be made into picks. Yet, he has some good-quality, manufactured picks that he takes with him to gigs. His sound production varies from a thin whisper to loud and projecting, the latter quality described by Dlaikan "as if he's hitting the instrument with a hammer. His hand on the instrument is like a rock" (Dlaikan 2010). Simon Shaheen, an exceptional *oud* player himself, commented that Bader's string-crossing technique was flawless, as was his *risha ma'loube* ("upside down" pick), the technique of moving the pick in upwards and downwards motion.

Bader is also well-versed in Arabic music theory and has often stopped lessons to discuss or test me on *maqam* theory, rhythmic cycle names, and forms and genres from various idioms, including the classical Arabic/Ottoman, and Arabic popular and folk. Some Detroit musicians I encountered noted that they and some others have learned the theoretical rudiments through him. On a related note, Bader is familiar with the subtle microtonal variations within the *maqam*

system. Although Western notation has been adapted to Arabic music, with its system of sharps, flats, naturals, quarter-flats and quarter-sharps, it does not account for all the intonation variations within the *maqamat*. That art is gradually being lost, especially with the proliferation of technological devices that standardize intonation based on exact half-steps, such as the piano, the keyboard, or the synthesizer. Some Arab musicians and listeners, including Bader, lament the loss of beauty, subtlety, and individuality of the modes for the sake of practicality and convenience[18].

Performing Experience

Extensive performing experience has developed Bader's command of the instrument and knowledge of various musical repertoires. Throughout his career, Bader has performed alongside a host of musicians, some who have been icons or trend setters in the Arab world, such as Munir Bashir, the Rahbani brothers, Nazem Al-Ghazali, Toni Hanna, Sabah Fakhri, Simon Shaheen, and his Detroit colleagues, to name a few. He has also benefited from playing for various types of audiences: nightclubs, weddings, concert halls, festivals, radio and television, and private parties. Dlaikan repeatedly said during our talk that musicians looked up to him because of his *khibra* (experience, or performing experience).

> N: It's experience. Experience**.** Because he's lived it. Now, you, let's say you're doing engineering. Heating, or cooling, or something like that. You're learning at school, but he who is actually working in it is seeing things that you don't see at school. That's experience. Experience**.** Now, he who is on stage is different from he who is in school. He who is on stage is going through stages,

[18] Keep in mind that Arabic music intonation "allows for much discussion and individual interpretation" (Marcus 1993: 40). For more information on the digital keyboard in Arabic music, see: Anne K Rasmussen, "Theory and Practice at the 'Arabic Org': Digital Technology in Contemporary Arab Music Performance, *Popular Music* 15.3 (1996).

> things that he did not see at school. They don't teach you everything at school. They point you towards the path, but there are things that happen that you say you haven't seen before. You learn it. (Dlaikan 2010)

Later on during that same interview with Dlaikan, the experience factor additionally explains how Bader helped an ensemble adapt to a singer's tessitura – while other musicians didn't know how to do so – how he developed virtuosic technique, or why audiences sometimes went wild when he performed. Thus, Bader has the advantage of having been a schooled musician who complemented his education with extensive performance experience from a young age.

Bader's choice of *repertoire* is geared towards target audiences[19]; the audience in mind can include laypeople, musicians, or it can even be distinguished by race. For example, he identifies songs that have remained popular to Arab-American and Arab audiences throughout the twentieth century with the phrase, "*hol 'aghani ma bi mouto*" ("These songs don't die"). In my experience, these pieces have included selections from the Classical instrumental repertoire and others from the Egyptian sung repertoire, such as Oum Kalthoum, Abd El-Halim Hafez, and Abd El-Wahhab. In another example, he recommends picking pieces in *maqamat* that resemble major or minor scales for American audiences, lest they perceive the quarter-tones as being out-of-tune pitches (Bader December 6, 2010). In another case where the intended audience is another musician, Bader has taught me pieces from Simon Shaheen's repertoire, as he knows that Shaheen and I are acquainted and that I might play for him someday. On the other hand, Bader most often has not taught me songs that are unknown or unpopular to audiences and musicians, regardless of his preferences or his ideas about their quality.

[19] Indeed, Bader has often instructed me to cater to the audience.

> Take "Al-Rabi'." It's one of Fareed (Al-Atrash's) most beautiful melodies. It's one of the most beautiful melodies that *succeeded*. [Yet], he has produced more beautiful work. But people responded to this one… It came at an appropriate time… When a lay person asks, "Play us something by Fareed." [I respond,] "What song would you like?" [He/she requests]"'Al-Rabi'." Because he's memorized [the song title.] If you play [any other song], he won't recognize it. 'Al Rabi', because he has heard it before…
> There are successful songs; you have to learn them… Some songs don't succeed. Want to know why? The musical interludes are difficult. If a singer comes and [makes a request for one of those difficult songs, the musician would suggest another choice, claiming the first song is not popular enough.] We (musicians) want to rest! (*Italics added by the author*) (Bader November 22, 2010)

Further speculating on the reasons some songs have not succeeded (and why he won't play or teach them unless requested), Bader comments that some pieces require large instrumental forces that musicians are either unable or unwilling to recreate. He also says that the media has played a large role in determining audience tastes in recent times. In summary, Bader is aware that repertoire standardizes through an often unpredictable and complex interplay of value judgments specific to musicians, audiences, and the media and which vary with time and geographical location[20].

It is safe to assume that Bader's travels around the Middle East, Greece, the United States, and other countries he visited on tour obliged him to adapt to new audiences and to learn new repertoire. In the following quote, Dlaikan explains how he also learned pieces through gigging experience in Arab-Detroit:

[20] For example, I once had dinner with Bader, Dlaikan, and Al-Atat where they commented that Arab-American audiences in New York (and by extension the East Coast) are more open to *tarab* music than Detroit Arab-Americans in general.

I: What was your repertoire?
N: Mostly Lebanese stuff. *Dabkeh*[21] If there was a singer, he'd sing. If there were a Jordanian audience, he'd sing Jordanian, if there were Iraqis, Iraqi.

I: How did you learn those?

N: How'd we learn them? That's *experience*! Now, when I go to an Arab country, they are amazed that I'm a Lebanese that can play Egyptian, Iraqi, Yemeni. *The diaspora here is big, and it is diverse, so I'm forced to memorize their songs.*
(Italics added by author) (Dlaikan 2010)

Dlaikan's comment reveals the Detroit musician's need to learn various styles and songs in order to survive in the market. The audience is of course the densely concentrated Arab diaspora, which includes diverse nationalities and religions such as Iraqi, Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, and Palestinian, and Muslim and Christian. Such diversity is rare in the Arab world, which explains why those Arab musicians in the above quote are surprised by Dlaikan's knowledge. By extension, Dlaikan's comments help explain Bader's position about the need for repertoire to meet audience demand.

Reading Skills

Arabic musicians widely adopted Western notation probably during the middle of the twentieth century, maybe earlier, as radio employees and composers became increasingly important. Nevertheless, even though musicians and composers such as Riyad Al-Sunbati and Zakaria Ahmad and others probably used notation, interpretation still depended on the performers' intimate emotional and personal knowledge of the piece (Racy 2010). For example, Danielson notes how Oum Kalthoum discouraged the use of notation so musicians relied on their

[21] A popular Lebanese circle dance

ears and memories to create a vivid connection with the music (Danielson 1997: 130).

Bader has benefited from notation to learn, memorize, physically store, remember, and teach music. He learns pieces through published scores and his own transcriptions. Uncomfortable with cd technology, Bader transcribes with cassettes, and uses the *oud* as an aural aid throughout the process. Dlaikan, who also relies on transcription, explained that this method helped both him and Bader learn various musical styles and pieces such as those mentioned in the previous section:

> N: We write them. When I write down a song, I memorize it. Abdel Karim too. When Abdel Karim writes it, he memorizes it. All of us, who have studied and read music, when such a person writes the song, he learns it. You wrote it! All the songs, between us, are alike. (Dlaikan 2010)

Bader recommends transcribing from an "appropriate" recording, if available, to learn the "right" version (Bader's words). Such a recording is preferably by the composer or the artist for whom the composition was intended, or by an artist who respects the stylistic idiom, who plays the "right" notes, and who does not modify the musical form. Bader's use of the expression "right," is a complex and sometimes inaccurate stand whose implications extend beyond the issue of reading skill.

Reading music has conjured respect among the Arab-American musicians I have met, regardless of whether they could read or not. El-Mallah writes that the ability to read music is a "symbol of status" in Arab music (El-Mallah 1997: 247). The desire to be "right" is thus a source of pride and status among colleagues: the musician claims the ability to read music, notate what he hears, and perform without mistakes. That attitude implies that other musicians play "wrong." To illustrate that point, Dlaikan relates how some Arab Detroit musicians memorize pieces with

wrong notes and perform them as such:

> I: How'd they memorize [the pieces] wrong? Aren't they listening to them?
>
> N: He'd hear it, but he'd learn it incorrectly. He'd learn two or three wrong notes. If you try to correct him, he's upset! That's how he learned it, wrong. When you learn something wrong, it's hard to fix it. When I ask Abdel Karim to transcribe a song, it will prove that the person is playing it wrong. The transcription shows what is right. You have to fix it, or else… (Dlaikan 2010)

In another story from Dlaikan's early days in the United States, a singer modified a portion of a Abd El-Halim Hafez song during a gig by adding four extra beats of rest where there originally was half a beat. He even counted out these extra beats loudly in order to create some ambience within the audience and show himself off. The singer's decision took Dlaikan by surprise, as he had not been informed of the change beforehand, which led to a short but tense stand-off between the two (Dlaikan 2010).

Being "right" also is an attitude through which Bader and his colleagues identify themselves as talented and academically-trained musicians[22]. Bader has often told me that he respects such or such musician because he or she has studied music formally under a competent teacher[23]. In one instance, he praised such a virtuoso musician because he always aimed to play the music "right," and he added that the musician in question was wrong only if he were taught wrong (Bader November 22, 2010). In the context of Arab-Detroit, his attitude extends beyond the issue of correct rendition of repertoire. Some of Detroit's Arab-American musicians,

[22] Bader also believes in the importance natural talent, commenting that a lack of talent cannot be compensated with education (Bader November 22, 2010).

[23] In one instance, he defended a famous contemporary *oud* player on that basis when I complained his style was too ornate for my taste. The musician in question studied at an Iraqi conservatory.

especially those born in the Middle East, were not conservatory-trained, and many did not fathom that they would perform professionally before they arrived in the US:

> But the wedding industry is huge... You know, there're videographers, there are caterers, there are these various halls. In the summer, you can go to six weddings in a weekend if you're doing fieldwork, right? This is a marrying community, and so you need musicians... [Music is] a labor market, so it's not always about the art. (Rasmussen 2010)

It should also be remembered that Arab-Detroit has witnessed various waves of immigration from the Arab world throughout the twentieth century that have influenced the changes in the musical scene. Rasmussen's comment additionally implies that Arabic art music, an idiom Bader specializes in, is not as appreciated or performed by these populations to the extent folk or popular idioms are. Even though Bader's repertoire is geared towards the audience, as I mentioned above, he has to delicately balance his tastes with that of his listeners, which is sometimes difficult for him. Rasmussen also suggests it was challenging for Bader to leave a supported career at the national radio in Iraq to become a free-lancer in the United States (Rasmussen 2010), an insight that also explains Bader's slightly defiant tone when he uses the word "right." On a softer note, although Bader once said that serious musicians should be motivated to better themselves, he added that, "[Life is tough!] Igor, our problem in the Middle East is that the musician is [downtrodden.] I have been a musician for my entire life… and we are still poor." In other words, he could not blame musicians, including himself, for prioritizing survival matters over "serious" artistic endeavors (Bader November 22, 2010).

Being "right" is further complicated when contextualized in the largely oral nature of repertoire transmission, a fact to which Bader admits. It is common to find multiple versions of

pieces, and the variations among those may range anywhere between a few notes up to modifications across several measures, which further problematizes the concept of authentic performance in Arabic music (ex: *Longa Shahnaz* by Adham Afandi, from the Classical Ottoman style) (El-Mallah 1997: 256; Rasmussen 2004: 223). Moreover, notation in Arabic music serves as a melodic skeleton, does not include ornamentations, and allows for considerable personal interpretation. In a recorded example, Muhammad ʻAbd El-Wahhab, both the composer and the featured singer, sings the opening phrase to "Al-Rawabi Al-Khodor" differently after the da capo; the published version in Bader's library shows only one of these (ʻAbd El-Wahhab 1954). Thus, poor documentation and lack of repertoire standardization, compounded with flexible interpretations produce multiple and often conflicting claims of authenticity. As Donnelly writes, "It is not surprising that authenticity is a flexible concept; it is a constantly changing idea that is affected by the societal dialogue surrounding it" (Donnelly 2010: 48).

With all that said, Bader regards notation as a memory aid. It does not transmit *ihsas* ("the music's feeling"), which includes elements of phrasing, intonation, and ornamentations. He implicitly agrees that performance depends on intimate and personal knowledge of a piece, as mentioned above. Thus his attitude towards non-conservatory-trained musicians or musicians who cannot read can be unfair, as aural skill is not dependant on reading skill.

Concluding this chapter, Bader's story is one of a cosmopolitan Arab artist who learned and played, although not exclusively, in various *tarab* culture contexts. I have also discussed certain attributes – apprenticeship, knowledge, performing experience, and notation – I believe benefitted him, musically and socially. An old-fashioned apprenticeship developed his understanding of musical elements best taught in person, and it also influenced his teaching style. His instrumental virtuosity and theoretical knowledge earned audiences' and colleagues' respect,

while his long performance career, spanning a multitude of countries, venues, and collaborations built up his experiential knowledge of performance. Finally, music reading skill, a symbol of status, imbued him with respect and authority. As a practical tool, notation helped him expand, remember, and transmit his store of repertoire. Now that the reader has a good picture of Bader's musical and social personas, I next turn to discuss his pedagogical philosophies and methods.

CHAPTER 3: Pedagogy

I was learning a *Sama'i Rast* composed by Bader, and he was emotional when talking about this piece that only he and a friend from his past knew. It seemed special that he was teaching it to me. I got stuck in one *khana* (a section of a *Sama'i*). The phrases were too simple, and it was obvious to me that I had to reinterpret the score, but I did not understand what the notes were hinting at in the absence of score directions. Bader suggested I play in a *buzuq* tremolo fashion, but even then nothing on the page seemed to suggest that style. So he took a *oud* to demonstrate. I suddenly heard what he meant, and he asked me to try again. At first, I could not emulate him. I felt too heavy on the strings and got stuck. I tried some approaches and, a couple of minutes later, it suddenly felt right: my performance sounded like his. I could feel what I had to modify in my *risha* technique to recreate that sound he had just shown me. In fact, at that moment, Bader perked up and said I got it, confirming my hunch. Later, when I went back home, I experimented with that passage again to recreate the technique which produced the breakthrough.

Within a couple of minutes, I had experienced the essence of Abdel Karim Bader's pedagogy. His method is heavily dependent on oral transmission. His long-term pedagogical vision revolves around pieces that are usable in performance situations, and I believe many of his teaching ideas stem from that approach. Although Bader's methods were sometimes novel to me, as I was used to a Western academic education, they are part of an apprenticeship model that has been commonly used to transmit traditional Arabic music.

The following chapter delves deeper into Bader's teaching philosophy. It begins with an ethnographic account that describes our weekly ritual before we actually start playing music, as

our relationship is an apprenticeship, and the learning process happens as much during the actual lesson as well as outside of it. The rest of the chapter reveals his teaching methods and signals of progress, followed by a brief documentation of repertoire I either learned or heard from him.

Every week, usually on Mondays or Saturdays, I give Abdel Karim Bader a call around noon to make sure he is at home. He is usually there, as he does not go out much anymore. The first thing I usually hear when he picks up is an immediate and emphatic *ahlan* (welcome) or *ahlan ‘ammo* (welcome, uncle) or some similar greeting, before I can say anything (he has caller I.D). Sometimes Evelyn, his wife, answers the phone, and I exchange some pleasantries with her before talking to my teacher. We go through the same ritual every week. The phone call is short. I ask him how he is doing, and he is usually upbeat. Then I ask him whether I could come over for a lesson. He then says yes using expressions such as *yalla ta’* (come over!) or *yalla natrak* (I'm waiting for you). There are times where he'll crack a joke in his trademark deadpan style. He once told me that I could only come if I had the right VISA, an appropriate joke for the both of us, as he was once a non-American citizen and as I am currently a resident alien on a student VISA. Sometimes he will tell me he has prepared some scores for me to study, or that there is some food waiting for me. The whole exchange usually takes around half a minute.

I then make the one-hour drive from Lansing, where I live to Farmington Hills, a suburb of Detroit. I pull into the Baders’ driveway and park under a tree, taking care not to block the garage door as Evelyn might need to leave or park her car. From my vantage point, I can see the road wind up a hill and disappear behind a curve that takes it to a dead end. A dozen or so houses

loom over the driveway, while lawns, bushes, a few trees, and opulent front porches dominate the scenery. The one-story houses are very similar in build to my eyes, with cream-colored painting on the outside and dark-tiled, pointed roofs. As I get out of the car, I bring my music and my Zoom recorder; I walk the narrow pathway lining the house. Two lefts and I face the front entrance.

At first, I would ring the bell and peer through a small glass pane adjacent to the door that opens my view to the dimly lit living room. I would direct my gaze to the couch Bader likes to sit on. If he were there, he would be watching television or just sitting in silence. Occasionally, he kept a *oud* by his side in case he wanted to play it. When he showed up, he would open the door and start moving in a sprightly manner – surprisingly agile for a man his age – towards the next place he wanted to go to, whether the kitchen, the office, or even his bedroom so he could change his clothes. Eventually, Bader told me he would keep the front door unlocked so I could let myself in. When I do that now, I am sometimes greeted by his voice, "*Igor, hayda inta?*" (Igor, is that you?).

One of the first things he'll often ask me is whether I am hungry. I usually am. He'll say, "s*houf shou baddak* (see what you want; pick what you want to eat)." I have come to know my way around the kitchen. It is a large space, very clean; Evelyn Bader likes to keep things in order. There is a small table to the right where we sit to eat. It is cluttered with newspapers, boxes of Arabic or Persian sweets, some medicine for Bader, napkins, mail, and who knows what else. Evelyn often prepares some food for Bader, usually an Arabic or Persian dish, and leaves it in the fridge before going to work. I usually go for the meat, thyme, or cheese pies that the Baders buy from a local bakery. Sometimes, he will have a pie with me and we might have yoghurt on the side. We usually drink some tea or lemonade with our meal. Bader asks for *shai*

ahmar (red tea) or *shai akhdar* (green tea). He sometimes asks for, and asks me whether I'd like to have, *limonada* (lemonade). That indicates the tart “Minute Maid” light lemonade that comes in cans. The Baders store boxes of the drink in a hallway by the kitchen and often keep two or three cans in the fridge. Bader likes his lemonade in a glass, filled to the brim with ice.

We usually eat in the kitchen. When we speak, Bader talks about health issues or complains about the economy, or sometimes shares some sensitive personal matters. If he is in a talkative mood, he tells stories from his past, about his dad, or about some musicians he used to know. If the television is on, he usually watches on FOX news, Jeopardy or some Arabic satellite channel. At other times, we have also played Arabic newspaper crossword puzzles together.

When we are done eating and chatting, I wait for Bader to signal the beginning of the lesson. It will usually be something on the lines of, “*khallina nrouh nishtighil* (let's go to work).” We move to the office. Bader's large desk is located at the far end. We sit opposite to each other, the desk in between us. There is a music stand right by me. Around me, there is a host of instruments, sound equipment, and other items on the floor, on a table, or on the couch by his desk. A friend imports the instruments from the Middle East, and Bader tests and picks some specimens to sell to musicians, to give to friends, or in the case of low-quality instruments, to sell at cheap prices to establishments, restaurants, or anyone interested in them. Other acquaintances leave the sound equipment and other items in the office in the hope he will sell them. The landscape changes frequently, sometimes every week. I have seen Egyptian and Syrian *oud*s, some in their cases, *buzuq*, violins, percussion instruments such as various *tableh* and *riqq*, foot pedals, cassette decks, ornate backgammon boards, and a box of miniature decorative *oud*s for decoration that has sat in a corner for months.

To the left of the office entrance, there is a large mirror that covers a large portion of the

wall. That is where Bader displays some valued personal items: family portraits, a Golden *Oud* Award plaque, a Michigan Heritage Award Certificate, a Best Grandpa certificate, an old picture of his in a traditional garb from the Iraqi television show, "Layali Al-Andalus" (Andalusian Nights). There is a photocopy machine a friend gave him.

We are ready. I am seated opposite to my teacher. He is in his chair, thinking about what we should do. Did I prepare any music? What did we do last time? And the lesson begins.

Bader's Teaching Method

Bader's method relies on *notation, singing, listening, and playing and imitation*. He scantily relies on technical directions and instead uses vivid imagery and story-telling as his verbal teaching tools. Although he is familiar with method books that slowly build up ones technique through repetitive drills, and there are some of those lying around his office, he has not used these texts or drill methods with me.

BEGINNINGS

One of the first questions Bader asked me during our first encounter was whether I read music. When I said yes, he took out a blank piece of paper and drew staves within which he wrote down the notes corresponding to the *oud's* open strings. He then wrote additional notes, in increments of half steps, to indicate the pitch changes produced by fingerings, each of which I consequently played on the instrument I had brought with me[24]. Satisfied that I could easily read and play music, he wrote down a few measures from three traditional and popular Lebanese

[24] He did not identify which left-hand position he taught me. I later bought Charbel Rouhana's excellent *oud* method book, and it turns out the position I learned is the ½ position. For more information, refer to Rouhana, 1995.

songs[25]. We played through the excerpts, which also were my homework.

Bader once told me that he starts off students comfortably by teaching them excerpts from their musical cultures, as he believes students are prone to practice music familiar to their ears. In fact, another one of the first questions Bader asks is where the student is from. If that person is an Iraqi Chaldean Christian, he first teaches him/her a Chaldean song (Bader sang a snippet of a song). If the person is a Palestinian, there are other songs (he hummed something else), if the person is Lebanese, "An-Nadda", and so on. This method's other advantage, Bader added, is that new students practicing away from his supervision, in addition to any friends or relatives listening in, know when a piece is played correctly or not, thus learning autonomy from the start. Bader thus starts off the "curriculum" on a foundation of love for a specific musical idiom, and he avoids expanding technique for its own sake through method books and technical drills.

During the first months of my apprenticeship, Bader taught me a lot of repertoire when he confirmed that I had good reading and learning skills so that we could eventually play together as I became more comfortable with the instrument. Every lesson, he gave me one or few new pieces to work on. Before we tried a new piece, we reviewed pieces from previous lessons, and he occasionally stopped me to correct me, to demonstrate on the *oud*, or to make sure the scores were correct.

SCORES, SOLFEGE, AND RECORDINGS

When we first look at a new piece, Bader asks me to avoid the *oud*. We first read or sing through the piece, using the fixed-do system. In very rare cases, I've played a piece before

[25] The ones I could identify were "'An-Nadda" and Ziad Rahbani's "Al-Bosta."

reading through it. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Bader values solfege, with the reservation that a score does not teach the "feeling" of a piece.

After reading, and maybe playing a bit, we listen to a recording of the piece, if available. We have used this method most often with the famous songs by Oum Kalthoum, Abd El-Wahhab, Abd El-Halim Hafez and others, and we have also listened to many instrumental pieces. We follow along with the score while listening to the recording and Bader makes occasional comments about the mode or the rhythmic cycle, or he points out his favorite parts.

Listening matters, as it infuses me with the performance's spirit, teaches me instrumental introductions and interludes, and in the case of sung sections, helps me identify the correct musical interjections. In his study of jazz pedagogy through the eyes of David Baker (a jazz musician, composer, and pedagogue), Prouty reaffirms the importance of listening in a different cultural context:

> Listening, whether it involves practicing with an aid such as [a play-a-long], or to a recording by Miles Davis, is a requisite skill that all musicians must refine. Recordings provide the opportunity for repeated analytical exposure. As Baker says, "You can hear Beethoven's Fifth Symphony more times in an afternoon than Beethoven heard it in his entire life." Play-a-longs serve this larger purpose of listening. (Prouty 2000: 60)

Recordings also complement published transcriptions that either contain mistakes or do not include vocal parts. Dar Al-Sharq, from Syria and Lebanon, publishes most of the songbooks he owns, and not all songs in his library are published in entirety. Many are laid out in the following manner: the first pages contain the lyric while the remainder contain the instrumental introductions, the musical interludes interspersed between the sung verses, and the ensemble interjections that occur during a sung part. There is a phrase or word placed above each musical

interjection to identify when it is played. A dash separates consecutive interjections, yet it does not identify the distance between the two musical events. The vocal part is often left out. For such editions, it is impossible to learn songs without listening to or knowing them beforehand.

When I finally pick up the *oud*, Bader sings or plays along with me, as I discuss in the following sections. Sometimes I play with a recording, and at others I play while he observes me silently. When he *sings* as I play, he instills confidence in my performance through his participation and highlights phrasing and ornamental ideas, while, sometimes, he does it to keep up with the score. When he *plays* the *oud* along with me, especially when we do so for long stretches of time, he is creating an artificial live performance setting to foster individual expression and partner sensitivity. When he just *observes* me, I have noticed him glancing at either of my hands, probably to judge my technique, in addition to the obvious, to listen to my performance.

SINGING

Early on, my playing would be more assertive and relaxed when Bader sang along with me. Often, when he stopped, I suddenly grew timid without the reference point, especially when I was unfamiliar with a piece or a *maqam*, or even when I was simply not "feeling it" at the moment. It is already hard enough to play music in front of a master when *feeling*, without necessarily *knowing*, that the person knows the music intimately. Ali Barada, a Lebanese singer and *oud* player who has studied with Bader and is currently a singer of some renown in the Detroit area, shared the same impression when commenting that he feels similarly, even though he has played the *oud* for years (Barada 2010). It is unclear whether Bader's sudden stops are a pedagogical trick. I have observed, though, that he sometimes stops because of fatigue. At other

times, he wants to listen to me play. But what matters is whether or not I carry on the energy and maintain correct technique; the results reveal my strengths and weaknesses while they indicate to what extent I have or have not internalized a piece or a *maqam*[26].

His singing also imparts phrasing and ornamentation information. He never sings strictly what is on the page[27]. He adds glissandi, neighboring notes, accents, and other ornaments. He sometimes beats a fist or palm on the table to stress the rhythmic cycle or a strong beat. He hums or sings fixed-Do solfege syllables for instrumental pieces, and he sings lyrics from memory for vocal ones. Instrumental and vocal ornamentations vary slightly due to the different technical possibilities and limitations inherent to each medium (Sopata 2005). Yet, Bader believes the *oud* performer should employ Arabic vocal ornamentation ideas as much as possible. He illustrates with a story: Once, Bader was playing a song on the *oud* during some event (he wasn't singing). A singer tried to join in but was hushed by some of the audience members so that Bader could continue by himself. Since he adapted the ornamentations and phrasing from the original singer's recording, Bader rationalized, he captivated the audience's attention.

Bader also sings to keep track of the music, if he is not very familiar with a piece, or if he has forgotten a section. Singing with a score as I play along creates a rapid aural connection to the written part. Most Arab melodies are primarily constructed through conjunct motion (intervals of 2nds), thus facilitating the audiation process.

MIMICKING LIVE PERFORMANCE

[26] Sometimes, when I am technically sure of a piece and mentally comfortable, I'll pick a song and play it while he sings along. It's all in good fun. In those cases where the flow of music is not broken, I feel that I am learning how to accompany a singer, a different art in itself.

[27] Towards the end of the previous chapter, in the "notation" section, I discussed how the music score is a melodic skeleton filled by the performer's ornamental imagination.

In my apprenticeship's earlier stages, Bader occasionally played the *oud* by himself to demonstrate musical ideas, as mentioned above. Although he still employs this method, we've increasingly played together more often as my technique has solidified and my repertoire grown, and we thus mimic live performance situations in a private and relaxed setting. This is another common transmission method in the Arab world, as El-Mallah describes in the following quote: "A popular way of learning the old music involves not just sitting passively while someone plays, but rather joining from the beginning" (El-Mallah 1997: 69).

By creating these situations, Bader also encourages me to develop my own voice. He always asks me to assume my own creative direction by phrasing clearly and ornamenting to my taste, regardless of whomever is playing alongside me. I have often found myself retreating in my shell to listen to him or out of fear of making a mistake. He almost always stops playing in those situations and severely tells me that he wants to listen to "Igor" playing. A friend witnessed one of those moments where Bader asked me to be "myself"; he commented later that even though Bader is proud of his own playing, he wanted to be challenged (I would use "stimulated") by his co-performers. Indeed, Bader's playing is more assertive when we play together in this mock-performance mode, and he expects the same from me. We try again. He'll usually smile if I infuse my personality in the performance while maintaining technical and stylistic standards.

Another benefit I derive from this method is to learn how to play in a heterophonic textural context, heterophony being the dominant texture in *tarab* music. Even though there is one written melodic line, each musician interprets it differently by ornamenting, sitting out, delaying entrances, and so on. Spontaneity is encouraged, and musicians feed off each other's energy and phrasings. As a traditional Arabic ensemble may range from two or three musicians to large orchestras, spontaneity must be balanced with careful and active listening to maintain

clarity and interest.

Coming from a Western background, I had little experience performing within the confines of this texture, so I was forced to find solutions to keep up with and also feed Bader's energy. And in those rare cases where I crossed over to a superior level, he stopped playing. I like to imagine that, by playing together, he had nudged me into that next level.

Signals of Progress

Bader's pedagogical style as I have described it so far avoids verbal technical guidance. Not accustomed to this teaching style, I slowly discovered certain progress markers, even though they were not as explicit as those in an academic music curriculum. The following discussion on incremental signals of progress is mostly my creation. In rare cases, Bader explicitly told me that he was withholding information until I was ready, but I have deduced most of the layers from my observations. On the other hand, the reader should keep in mind that these markers or ideas were ubiquitous at all stages, yet in varying degrees of importance. Take intonation as an example: it was important that I produce the right pitches at first, but I was only taught *maqam* intonation subtleties when I had developed my fingering technique and had learned a sizeable body of repertoire.

At first, Bader taught me basic fingerings and a lot of repertoire, and most of his comments at that stage were about fingerings and correct pitch. He discouraged me from experimenting with new fingerings and position-shifting and insisted that I stick to his way; later, he said, I would do as I wished. In case the music required position-shifting, he experimented with various fingerings and positions on the *oud* and picked one or two options for me to practice. If I still struggled with his choices weeks later, he taught me one or two new ones.

Eventually, he backed off his fingering comments as long as the intonation was right and the musical flow continuous.

In what I consider my next level of learning, Bader concentrated on ornaments, an organic, vital, and spontaneous aspect of Arabic music. Ornaments are not fully written out in the score, yet they are always expected in performance, and a musician is expected to ornament imaginatively while maintaining the substance of the written melody (El-Mallah 1997: 334). Bailey touches on a parallel idea: “anything which can be considered as decoration, for instance is not in some way subservient to that which it decorates. The most powerful expression of the identity of a piece might be in the smallest details.” (Bailey 1980: 12) An appropriately placed ornament can elevate performers and audiences into a state of *tarab*, while on the other hand, it is easy to abuse ornaments or perform them incorrectly, thus ruining the listening experience.

Bader told me in response to my impatient queries that I had to be ready before I could learn this art. When I accumulated an appropriate body of repertoire – a dozen and a half or so pieces – we started playing more often together. Bader would often stop the music and ask me to listen to him replay a passage so I noticed his ornamental additions. He would demonstrate one or two possibilities and ask me to repeat after him. The ornaments usually included pedal tones, neighboring notes and figures, tremolo effects, glissando effects, and scalar fillers. Bader was conscious not to overload me with information, so he worked on few spots every lesson.

He did not teach me a preset of ornaments or ornamentation general guidelines (at least not verbally). Bader’s primary guidelines are *ihsas* (feeling) and *dhawq* (taste), and his ornamental ideas are transferable to other musical phrases or pieces. Yet, he has rarely required that I play like him, except when my playing was mechanical, and he has rarely written in ornamentations in my scores. I have had to imitate him, perform with others, listen to recordings,

and experiment at home in order to develop my "ornamental" language.

The next level was intonation. M*aqam* guidelines include micro-intonation variations that are too difficult to express through Western music notation, and Bader taught them through various methods. He sometimes stopped me in mid-performance to explain and demonstrate the *maqam* intonation and fix my wrong notes, or he played a note repeatedly or sang it loudly until I matched his pitch. At other times, he asked me to play the mode as if I were practicing a scale. Often, he asked me to play another piece in the same *maqam* so that I entered the *maqam's* emotional soundscape. On a related note, Bader sometimes asked me to *salten* on a certain mode, or in other words, achieve the right modal feel before I actually performed a piece. As Racy describes, "In a *saltanah* state, the performer becomes musically self-absorbed... and experiences well-focused and intense musical sensations... *saltanah* is most often a temporary state generated before and during the performance proper" (Racy 2003: 120). In my case, I played short improvisatory phrases, five to ten seconds' worth of material, to accommodate my inner ear to the *maqam* in question.

More Milestones: *Oud*s and Gigs

The choice of *oud* at my disposal was another progress marker. During my first lesson, Bader asked me to keep my *oud* at home so that it would not wear out from my weekly trips, as the instrument is very sensitive to humidity and temperature extremes common to Michigan. As a result, I played on different *oud*s every week during the early stages of my apprenticeship.

Bader has a host of Egyptian and Syrian *oud*s in his office. A colleague of his imports instruments from the Middle East, and Bader tests them and keeps the better ones for sale, but they are usually of moderate quality. At first, I would randomly pick a *oud*, and since each week

presented a shifting landscape of instruments in his office, I had to constantly adjust to new instruments. Bader used this situation to his advantage, as he encouraged me to train myself to adapt to different makes, sizes, timbres, and feelings. The instruments at my disposal were of higher quality as my skill progressed. Bader had some good *oud*s stored in his basement, and he kept one on the side for me. I eventually bought it, a beautiful Egyptian *oud,* slightly large for my build, but with a big, reverberating sound. It was the most beautiful *oud* I had played at the time, and I "deserved" to own it[28]. That was my first satisfying milestone.

Bader's favorite *oud* is stored in a leather case (most of the others in his office are usually left out in the open) and kept apart from all the others, behind a couch in the living room, where it is not visible to anyone. This Egyptian *oud* is a strikingly beautiful instrument. Its sound is small, but its timbre is focused and clear unlike any of the other instruments in his office. I never saw this *oud* during our lessons at first, and he only got it out for gigs. One day, he had me play a whole lesson on his *oud* as the others were giving us intonation troubles. This moment felt like a symbolic rite-of-passage; I had finally enough skill to play on his instrument.

Another related milestone of progress was my accompanying him to gigs. At first, he did not mention when or where he performed, but he eventually asked me to accompany him and Lore to his restaurant gigs so that I heard him perform in different contexts. Shortly after, he allowed me to play whenever he took breaks. I remember being very nervous the first time, because I knew he valued live performance experience, but these situations became relaxed affairs for me. I worked up to a point where he'd let me play up to twenty or thirty minutes out of a total of two or three hours of music. I remember a warm moment where I am playing a song on the *oud*; Lore is accompanying me on the *tableh,* while Bader is sitting across from the both of

[28] It was a bit difficult for Bader to part with it. He joked that if he ever needed it for a gig, he'd bring the *oud* and I along with it!

us, singing along in a loud, raucous voice and occasionally joined by Lore. The restaurant manager joins us, sitting by Bader and even singing for a while.

Three Vignettes

The following three vignettes partially reveal why there is little talk about technical matters throughout the lessons. The first two occurred when I was experiencing technical and musical difficulties Bader had to address. While the first situation engendered a general response, my inquisitiveness about a specific technique in the second required a more nuanced answer. The third vignette shows how Bader uses story-telling in his method.

1) Last fall, I told Bader that I wanted to stabilize my technique but did not know how to achieve that. He asked me that same day to drive him to a couple of gigs as his accompanist was out of town. First, he said, I could observe how he adapted his performing style to the restaurant clientele[29]. Second, and in response to my inquiry about technical stability, he asked me to record the gig in order to memorize and copy his style. He implied that I would learn phrasing ideas, ornamentation, and intonation through this method.

2) I decided to press Bader for technical guidance, which was unusual for me. I usually ask a question twice, and if he does not answer, I let it go. Not that time. Following is an adapted excerpt from my fieldnotes:

> I asked him whether I use too much vibrato. I had heard the gig recording we both played, and my sound was a bit shaky. I think the vibrato caused it. I told him I had Marcel Khalife and Andre Hajj's sound in my mind. He answered,

[29] His playing was comparatively quiet and his repertoire was "lighter" than what we usually studied during lessons. One of my consultants even lamented the lack of "heavier" traditional repertoire when she heard him at a restaurant years earlier (Lockwood 2010). Bader assumes that "heavier" stuff is not suitable for a restaurant venue because most clients would not recognize it.

> "Do you think they match up with Riyad Al Sunbati?" I think they are good musicians but their style is different. But I just said out loud that they are also good players. He responded by fetching an Al-Sunbati recording, one I had given him before, the *Taqasim* (*improvisations)* cd. It is true: he *(Al-Sunbati)* is expressive through minimal use of vibrato.
> (Italics added by author)

Some comments: The gig recording is one where I played during one of his breaks at a restaurant gig. The two musicians I mentioned, Khalife and Hajj, are Lebanese *oud* players whose styles incorporate more vibrato than Bader's. Al-Sunbati's *Taqasim* cd is a remarkable collection of solo, non-metric modal improvisations on the *oud*. It is notable that Bader avoids talking and resorts to a recorded source to respond to my query, which is typical of his method. I pressed Bader for more information:

> Anyway, he said.... my use of vibrato is ok, but that *everything had its place at the right time*. When I pressed him, he said that he doesn't overwhelm me with technical details.... He has told me before I'll learn the style just by frequenting him.
> (Italics added by author)

He did not want to overwhelm me with details, which again is consistent with his teaching method. He added that I would gradually develop my own ideas the more I frequented him, similarly to his recommendation in the previous vignette. There is actually more to his silence than the excerpt reveals. It bothered me at first, because I could not gauge any progress from his stoic expressions. I found out later that another student of his had asked him about this matter. Victor Ghannam, born in America to Palestinian immigrants, is a very capable self-taught *oud* and *qanun* player who has been involved with music since he was four years old. Ghannam took a few lessons with Bader when he was in his mid teens, and Bader did not give him much

encouragement either. The silence bothered him to the point he had to ask about it. Bader responded that he withheld praise so that Ghannam remained motivated to improve (Ghannam 2011).

Back to the excerpt above, the first phrase was a veiled criticism of my playing. *"Everything had its place at the right time"* meant that I either used too much vibrato and/or I was employing this expressive tool rather aimlessly. Moments later during that same lesson he exclaimed a rare musical comment:

> I was playing... It was in free time. At one point, I played a long-held tremolo note. He exclaimed, "Now that could use vibrato!"

3) We take a lot of breaks during lessons to drink tea, eat, and sometimes watch television. Bader peppers these moments with stories from his past, about some musician he met or some event related to a piece I am learning. He might even interrupt a lesson to tell a story. He explained once that he used storytelling so we could both rest our minds and bodies. He added that coming back to the *oud* would be a fresh start, as if I were playing for the first time that day.

Pedagogical "Songprints"

The following list is a representative list of repertoire that I learned or heard from Bader. He taught me clusters of pieces according to genre, and we usually spent a long time, up to months, on one genre. . I decided to include repertoire in this chapter because the chronological progression of genres learned further illuminates his pedagogical approach. Keep in mind that most of the genres are from or have been influenced by *tarab* culture, the Arab urban tradition at the center of this document. I have loosely borrowed the term "Songprint" from Judith Vander's

book, *Songprints: the Musical Experience of Five Shoshone Women*. Songprint is a metaphor for the five women's repertoire of memorized music. Vander stresses that her book is not primarily about song genres (Vander 1988: xviii), yet, for my purposes, I structure the following section according to that category

Even though I am not aware of how much music Bader knows, I am confident that the following section does not document Bader's complete songprint by far. He also knows Iraqi, Palestinian, Syrian, and maybe even some Gulf State musical styles we have never discussed at depth during. He has a large knowledge of Arabic classical, belly dance, popular, folk dance and *muwashshah* repertoires. He also is familiar with various non-Arab idioms such as the Western Classical canon in addition to some folk or popular pieces from Turkey, Israel, and Spain, to name a few countries.

After he started off my first lesson with those measures from three Lebanese popular songs, he concentrated on instrumental music, most notably classical Arabic and Ottoman pieces. Bader taught me various pieces in different *maqamat* from the *Sama'i* and *Bashraf* genres. Ajjan (Ajjan 1990) and Marcus (Marcus 1992: 173) analyze the typical modal modulation patterns as they occur in these genres, thus imparting the emotional content within the *maqamat* and providing guidelines for improvisational contexts. Additionally, these forms teach important rhythmic information, such as the *Sama'i* 'i*qa* (rhythmic cycle) used in the *Sama'i* pieces. The pieces I learned include "Sama'i Muhayyar Jamil Bey," "Sama'i Shat 'Araban Tanburi Jamil Bey," "Sama'i Kurd Tatyus Afandi," "Sama'i Huzam 'Abd El-Wahhab", "Sama'i Bayati Al-'Aryan," Sama'i Nahawand Racy," and "Bashraf Farahfaza Isma'il Haqqi Bey."

Bader also taught me some pieces from the *longa* (pl. *longat*) genre, whose form is akin to the rondo in Western classical music. Pieces include "Longa Riyad (Farahfaza)," "Longa

Sultani Yakah Jamil Bey," and "Longa Shahnaz Adham Afandi." *Longat* are usually livelier than the Sama'i and Bashraf pieces due to faster performance tempi and their simpler time signatures, such as 2/4 or 4/4.

Bader taught me many of Muhammad 'Abd El-Wahhab's instrumental pieces such as "Layali Lubnan, "Bint Al-Balad," Balad Al-Mahbub," "Ghazl El-Banat," "Khatwit Habibi," and the popular dance tune, "'Aziza." He also taught me some instrumental music by Fareed Al-Atrash, the most difficult being "Toota." The version I learned requires a lot of position shifting and rapid playing on the highest string course, the "cc." According to Bader, when I finally master that piece, I will earn my "diploma" and "graduate" from his "school".

At that point, I was ready to play with him for the first time at a restaurant gig. I had mostly memorized some of the *Sama'i* pieces, so I performed those. Bader told me the following week that I was now comfortable with the "academic stuff", as he called it, and I now needed to learn some shorter, folk songs that I would enjoy and that I could please a crowd with. Following Bader's logic, since I was Lebanese, it was natural then that I learn Lebanese folk songs. So I learned some Wadi' El-Safi songs such as "Al-Laylu ya Layla." I also was given a lot of sheet music of Rahbani songs popularized by Fairuz, such as, "Ya 'Ana, Ya 'Ana," "Sa'alouni Al-Nas," and "Dara Douri Fina." Once my technique stabilized, he taught me some song introductions, such as those by 'Abd El-Wahhab, Oum Kalthoum, and 'Abd El-Halim Al-Hafez. Some of the pieces were "Fakkarouni," "Ya Msaherni," and "Alf Leila Wa Leila."

Eventually we started learning entire songs by Oum Kalthoum and 'Abd El-Wahhab, and this is our current stage. These are the pieces that have required long listening sessions as I describe above. We did not focus on memorizing the words, but directed our attention mostly towards the vocal melodies and the instrumental introductions, interludes, and interjections.

These pieces include such classics as “Fat Al-Mi'ad” (which finally made me fall in love with Oum Kalthoum's voice!), “Sirat Al-Hub,” “'Amal Hayati,” “'Aghadan Alqak,” “Al-Rawabi Al-Khodor,” “Fatat Ganbena,” and “Lailat Hub.”

As a significant sidenote, Abdel Karim Bader has composed a piece called “Around the World” which he has played for audiences in the US. I have never learned that piece, and I have not heard it in its entirety, so I don't know how long it is or how it is structured. Bader and Dlaikan have said that it is quite long, going up to fifteen minutes, and it includes excerpts of popular pieces from Spanish, Hebrew, Palestinian, Lebanese, American, and other musical cultures.

In conclusion to this chapter, Bader’s pedagogical method favors the apprenticeship. It heavily relies on imitation of the teacher or of the recording, and while he focuses on singing and playing, in addition to reading music, he is scant on verbal technical instruction. His is a common approach as Mallah and Touma discuss:

> This method of teaching permits the pupil to later reveal his own musical personality while becoming the first link of a new “chain”, or a part of the long chain of musical tradition. H.H. Touma adds in this respect: ‘The musician’s education renounces any teaching material in the form of books or written music, as the pupil’s music lessons are based on the teacher’s spoken instructions, whereby the pupil, assisted by his well-trained memory, initially imitates his master, but later leaves his teacher’s example behind, finally developing his own style within the framework of the musical tradition.” (El-Mallah 1997: 66)

Bader's apprenticeship method works best with those who are initiated to the music and/or who are willing to do research by themselves. Matter of fact, I would not have improved had I not supplemented my lessons with records, method books, YouTube clips of prominent *oud*

players, and countless hours spent experimenting on the instrument and gigging with my Arabic fusion ensemble. Yet, Bader's approach has enriched me in ways I could not have experienced otherwise: Through long term access to an older, master musician who was once an active mainstream performer, I have had the luxury to learn, internalize, and choose elements from Bader's musicianship in order to develop my style. I have also experienced his philosophy, his personality, and his preferences, in other words, his musical essence.

CHAPTER 4: Improvisation

Early on during my apprenticeship, Bader played me some of his recorded improvisations, and he was particularly proud of two of these, played in live settings. In the first, I heard familiar clichés and licks Arabic improvisers have used for decades now, such as Fareed Al-Atrash's Spanish influenced playing. The second improvisation, on the other hand, was less familiar. I intuited a large-scale structure, and I recognized some of Bader's favorite licks. I recognized the modes for the most part, and the instrument was obviously the same. But I could not understand or feel the improvisation as a totality. What confused me even more was that the crowd went wild when he concluded each section. Months later, I have listened to this improvisation multiple times, transcribed it and better understood the structure; I now recognize the modes; yet it sometimes feels elusive to me.

The following chapter reveals Bader's traditional yet personal approach to improvisation through further observation of his improvisational pedagogy and through an analysis of a complete improvisation he performed in public (the second one mentioned in the previous paragraph). Although improvisation incorporates Arabic musical elements such as the modal system and ornamentation, it is regarded as the pinnacle of performing skill, theoretical knowledge, and expressive capability. Musicians, including Bader, regard it as a special, almost separate art, and some even elevate it to the realm of the mystical by claiming it cannot be taught. Again, Prouty muses on improvisational pedagogy from another culture:

> Perhaps the most far-reaching statement that can be made concerning the processes involved with learning jazz improvisation is that there is no single method for accomplishing this task. There are, quite literally, as many different ways of learning the improviser's art as there are individual musicians

involved in its practice. (Prouty 2000, 22)

This chapter begins with a short introduction to the musical elements pertinent to the art of improvisation, *taqasim*. Following that, I employ Jeff Pressing's adaptation of standard expertise theory to reveal Bader's improvisational thought and how he expressed it to me. I then analyze one of his improvisations and then conlude the chapter with a short discussion on Bader's aesthetics.

Some Improvisation Elements

Taqasim (sing. *taqsim*) is one of the major instrumental forms in the *tarab* tradition. Nettl, paraphrasing Touma, writes that, "it is an improvised representation of a *maqam* with an organization that is rigorous in the tonal parameters and free in the temporal ones, the latter including rhythm and length..." (Nettl and Riddle 1998: 370)[30]. Thus, *Taqasim* is regarded as the pinnacle of an instrumentalist's aspirations, "a highly sophisticated art, an affective expression that requires extraordinary skill, talent, and inspiration" (Racy 2003: 93).

A m*aqam* (pl. *maqamat*), is the Arabic counterpart of Western scales. Western scales, though, are abstract structures replete with inherent hierarchies and ideas within a larger theoretical tonal framework. The Arab modes or the "modal substance" as Racy calls them, contain distinct structural and emotive qualities (Racy 2003: 96-97).

Structurally, a *maqam* is made of tones at a distance of a second, much like a musical scale, with the exception that some *maqamat* include microtones and so-called quarter tones, the latter notated as half flats and half sharps. Consult Appendix C for examples of modes. *Maqamat*

[30] There is another metric genre of *taqsim* I do not discuss, *taqsim 'ala al-wahda*.

are partitioned in trichords, tetrachords, and pentachords, or in other words, groupings of three, four, or five notes. Each grouping is called a *jins* (pl. *ajnas*). A *maqam* is usually made of a lower *jins* and an upper *jins*, and some *maqamat* include one or many secondary *ajnas*. Within one *maqam*, the *ajnas* either intersect at a common note, are adjacent, or are overlapping. Then, a *maqam* is better understood as a collection of *ajnas* rather than a collection of seven or so pitches. Consult Figure 23 in Appendix C for an illustration of the concepts above.

Modes, much like Western scales, contain pivot notes. The tonic, known in Arabic as the *qarar*, is the first note of the lower *jins*. In the case of *Nahawand*, the *qarar* is C, and in *Bayati*, it is D (see Appendix C). Each *maqam* also includes a *ghammaz*, which is analogous to the dominant scale-step in a Western scale. The *ghammaz* can be the third, fourth, or fifth scale-step, and usually is the first note of the upper *jins* ("Maqam World" website).

Beyond structure, each *maqam* implies a distinct, culturally accepted emotional quality. Although musicians and audiences do not agree on specific wordings to describe *maqam* emotional content, they do agree on gross, abstractly articulated ideas. Touma documents a case where Arabs and non-Arabs listened to the same tape recording of a performance in the *maqam Saba*. While the Arabs generally thought it was sad, only forty-eight percent of the non-Arabs agreed with that view, some even perceiving the music as "happy" and "very lively" (Touma 1996: 44)[31].

Each *maqam* has a general guideline known as *sayr* (path), which Racy defines as "a brief written sketch describing how each mode unfolds" (Racy 2003: 97). In other words, the *sayr* governs melodic creation. For example, one of the simplest models in Arabic improvisation is to start on lower *jins*, work slowly up the scale steps, focus on the upper *jins*, transpose once or

[31] Touma does not mention any other parameters that might have influenced the listeners' perceptions.

multiple times, and climax in the high ranges before returning to the *qarar*. As this example illustrates, the *sayr* is a general idea of a *maqam's* structural and emotive unfolding, and it allows the imagination ample room to fill the gaps with ornaments, transitional phrases, cadences, repetitions, and other melodic and rhythmic devices.

An Arabic melody, whether improvised or composed, is constructed primarily through conjunct motion, and intervals beyond the third are less common. Melodic motion tends to constellate around a *maqam's* pivotal notes either to move among the ajnas, or transpose to other *maqamat*. During an improvisation or within a precomposed piece, the *qarar* is usually a resting place and a point of return, while the *ghammaz* and the upper *jins* are common vehicles for transposition.

Cadential devices, known as *qaflat*, (sing. *qaflah*, literally "ending") are musical and temporal landmarks that play a role in shaping large-scale improvisatory structures. *Qaflat*, "are recognizable motivic structures that mark the endings of major musical phrases and are typically followed by short pauses...*qaflat* tend to be highly patterned, or cliché-like" (Racy 2003: 104). Thus, they create a feeling of familiarity and a sense of direction towards a resting point.

There is large rhythmic freedom in Arabic improvisation, especially in its non-metric form, with the absence of time signatures and specific rules on note durations. A single *taqsim* may alternate between rhythmically simple sections punctuated by long silences and rhythmically dense material in other sections. In other instances, moments without musical pulse are immediately followed by dance-like metered phrases.

All these rules and guidelines, very briefly outlined above, help the performer structure an improvisation and the audience understand the structure as it unfolds. Ultimately, the improviser carves the modal composition in time which plays with the audience's expectations.

The improviser negotiates the tension between the *familiar*: navigating the *sayr*, fulfilling a *maqam*'s emotional potential, and using the occasional predictable pattern, phrase, or *qaflah*, and the *surprising*: accidentals, shifting rhythmic patterns, and unexpected modulations. The ultimate goal is to evoke *tarab*, musical ecstasy.

"Expertise" Pedagogy

Improvisation can be learned (Nettl and Russell 1998: 15), and my experience over the last year, in which I have slowly built up the beginnings of an improvisational language, supports my conviction. With that said, pedagogical methods and technical drills are not enough to create a comprehensive and flexible improvisatory language. For example, musicians commonly practice their scales daily in various western musical traditions, building up speed, playing through various intervals, and so on. Although it is obviously useful technical practice, it can become pointless in Arabic music when taken to the extremes of a Czerny etude book, because the modal emotional content and the *sayr* may contradict the methodical nature of scale practice

In his article, "*Psychological Constraints on Improvisational Expertise and Communication*," Jeff Pressing employs standard expertise theory to argue that improvisational expertise is acquired through specifically developed skills that allow musicians to circumvent any psychological or cultural constraints faced in performance.

> Improvisation is critically shaped by often rather severe constraints on human information-processing and action. For the improviser must effect real-time sensory and perceptual coding... event interpretation, decision-making, prediction (of the actions of others), memory storage and recall, error corrections, and movement control, and further, must integrate these processes into an optimally seamless set of musical statements that reflect both a personal perspective on musical organization and a capacity to affect listeners... To circumvent these limitations, certain tools are used, representing

the results of deliberate practice. (Pressing 1998: 51)

"Domain-specific subskills," targeted towards specific goals and thoroughly practiced, solve improvisational problems. Pressing adds that, "highly expert performance typically reflects extreme adaptations, achieved through decades of effort, to a quite specific constellation of task requirements" (Pressing 1998: 50). In other words, the master improviser has been prepared for years when he/she takes to the stage.

Pressing's model is a valuable tool to explain Bader's improvisational knowledge and pedagogy. It is also abstract enough to serve as a comparative tool with other improvisational traditions; although Pressing supports his theory with various jazz examples, it is transferrable to the Arabic and to other traditions[32]. In the following section, I discuss all but three of Pressing's theory components, explain how they relate to Arabic music, and when suitable, describe how Bader transmitted his expertise. The components are: "The Referent," "Knowledge Base," "Cultural Constraints", "Improvisation and Emotion," and "The Notational Coding of Referents."

"The Referent" is a "set of cognitive, perceptual, or emotional structures (constraints) that guide and aid in the production of musical materials." In jazz, the referent could be a song form, a flexible tool which allows for melodic variation and is available for analysis before a performance, and the jazz musician can practice melodic variations within the form that are usable during performance. Furthermore, the Referent information can be shared among musicians and audiences. For example, one needs only a limited set of cues to identify a location

[32] It most certainly applies to the Turkish tradition, which is related to the Arabic tradition. Although I have limited knowledge of other traditions, such as the Indian or the Baroque, I suspect they fit the model.

within the song form. Finally, referent information is transmittable to students (Pressing 1998: 52).

The referent in Arabic music, namely the non-metric improvisational form, is the *maqam* system[33]. A *maqam* is available before performance, and it can be experimented with in the practice room. *Maqam* theory is shared among musicians and with audiences; skillful improvisation thus creates modal expectations that the musician might decide to delay, fulfill, or even frustrate.

Bader used notation as one method of teaching me the rudiments of *maqam* theory. Early on during my studies, he gave me one sheet of *maqamat* commonly used in Arabic music nowadays, but did not say much about it. Once in a while, he asked me to identify a *maqam* of a piece I was working on. Months later, when I arrived for a lesson, I found that he had photocopied a number of sheets of *maqamat* both common and uncommon. We went through most of them, and for each mode, Bader read the name, I played the *ajnas* separately, and we both identified the pivotal notes.

Even though Bader is knowledgeable of the Arabic modal system, he is critical of the abundance of *maqamat* when variations among them are often minute (the difference between two differently named *maqams* can be one accidental, or a different *sayr*). Nevertheless, he has said he is not the one to deny those distinctions and turn his back on the tradition. Marcus has documented how *maqam* theory has progressively grown simpler throughout the twentieth century, to the point that the *maqam* is now akin to a one-octave scale and is written in Western musical notation (Marcus 1989). El-Mallah adds, through a quote from Idelsohn, that this meeting between Arabic music and Western notation makes many people uneasy as it potentially

[33] One can argue that '*iqa'at* (rhythm cycles), musical forms, even lyrics are also Referent components, but they are not relevant to the non-metric improvisational form.

destroys the *maqamat's* emotional characters (El-Mallah 1997: 157). Thus, Bader's view embodies the tension between the theorist who values a rich heritage and who will not deface it, and that of the practical musician who has to adapt to the realities of the market[34].

The *maqamats'* abstract emotional qualities and *sayr* are often taught through descriptive feelings and imagery. Bailey notes that many improvisers around the world avoid technical discussions to describe the improvisational process probably because the use of abstract imagery is the best method at their disposal so far (Bailey 1980: 25). In his case, Bader talks about *ihsas* (feeling): “If you love something, it turns out beautiful... A human being has to feel something” (Bader November 22, 2010).

With that said, when asked to identify the elements of a successful improvisation, Bader, or any other Arab musician or listener I have met, cannot give a final answer. From a technical point of view, one is required to respect the *maqamat*, play in tune and have a good sense of timing, yet these elements do not necessarily account for an emotionally satisfying improvisation. From an emotional point of view, the right mood is fragile to build and maintain and is easily lost for a multitude of reasons, such as faulty technique, an out-of-tune string, or fatigue (Racy 2003: 144-145). As a result, I have only been able to elicit Bader’s feedback on improvisation on a case-to-case basis by listening to recordings, and even then, he mostly restricts his comments to whether or not he likes what he hears.

“The Knowledge Base” is “another tool for improvisational fluence [arising] from the creation, maintenance and enrichment of an associated knowledge-base, built into long-term memory.” The “knowledge base” includes “musical materials and excerpts, repertoire

[34] In practice, comparably few *maqamat* are in use nowadays, although there is no agreement on a number. Also, musicians now opt for the Western pitch names instead of their Arabic/Persian counterparts.

subskills...generalized motor programs." Pressing adds that experts have a more refined knowledge base that is readily available in time of need (Pressing 1998: 53). Accordingly, Bader gives considerable attention to "knowledge base" when teaching improvisation.

One of Bader's stated strengths - and he is very proud of this - is his inability to repeat an improvisation once it is performed. He emphasizes that he never knows in advance what he will play, an idea echoed by many jazz musicians (Berliner 1994: 2). According to Pressing's theory, this ability develops through countless hours of practice and repertoire memorization, or in other words, one cannot simply improvise "off the top of one's head." In fact, many of my consultants pointed out Bader's large storehouse of memorized music, as the "Songprints" section in the previous chapter partly reveals. With that said, I disagree to an extent with Bader's claim that he does not repeat improvisations. Even though none of them sound exactly the same, he has a tendency to repeat certain musical phrases and modal paths. On the other hand Bader is explicitly critical of musicians who memorize complete "improvisations" before playing them in public, a practice he rejects. Although he has not said it, I believe he regards this last method of "improvising" closer to composition.

One of Bader's obvious pedagogical tools to build a knowledge base is to teach me tunes. Bader suggests that I look within musical pieces for beautiful phrases that I could add to my "knowledge base." He also encourages me to copy other musicians' styles, including elements such as ornamentation, sound quality, and simply those phrases which appeal to me, but never full improvisations, note for note. He once gave me this illustration: If I (Igor) admired somebody's suit or hairstyle, I could go to a tailor or a barber to copy the style, yet I would still remain my own self[35].

[35] In his words, one of his favorite composers, Muhammad Abd-El Wahhab, is one of the

During a lesson that took place on September 18, 2010, Bader's revealed an abundance of "knowledge base" examples. He said I could build an improvisation out of any piece I could think of, and then he played various improvisation-like phrases based on excerpts from pieces by Abd El-Wahhab and Sayed Darwish from the Arabic tradition, and Beethoven and Liszt from the Western classical tradition. In the examples that follow, the rhythmic values are rough approximations of the temporal relationships among the pitches, as non-metric improvisation – implied here through the absence of barlines – is rhythmically fluid and impossible to notate precisely. I complement some of the examples with recorded samples.

In this first example, he criticizes a cliché-like approach to opening phrases. He announces he will perform an improvisatory opening phrase in the *maqam Bayati* and plays this figure:

Figure 1

The use of the repeated note, in an almost pedal-like or drone-like fashion, is one of the most used (even over-used) devices in Arabic music improvisation. He then plays this figure:

Figure 2 *(Audio track # 1: Figs. 1 and 2)*

He says, "*That* is a *Bayati* opening." Bader has economically announced the *maqam Bayati* in D. He outlines the lower *jins* (D; E half-flat; F; G), plays the first note of the upper *jins*

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biggest musical thieves. That is more of a compliment in this context.

(A), and ends with a short *qaflah* (the last three notes) to emphasize the D as *qarar*. The phrase is also quite expressively and confidently performed.

In this second example, the context is still a *Bayati* improvisation. He plays an excerpt from Sit El-Habayeb, a song by Abd El-Wahhab, also in the *Bayati* mode.

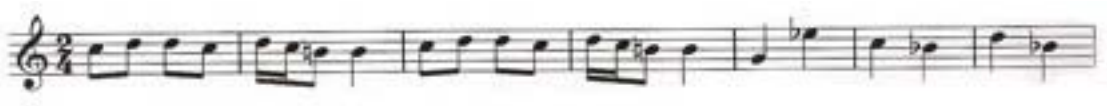


Figure 3

This excerpt includes accidental notes in the upper reaches of the mode for variety's sake, before returning to the original lower *jins* (three measures after the end of this excerpt). In figure 4, Bader borrows the beginning of the Abd El-Wahhab excerpt to carve out his own phrase:

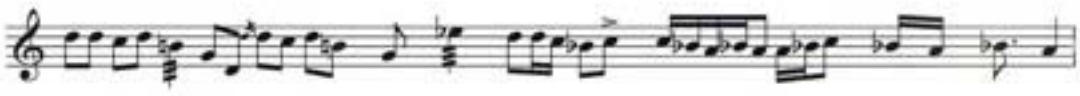


Figure 4 *(Audio track #2)*

In the following excerpts, Bader plays four melodically, and, in this context, emotionally similar ideas – all of them in *maqam Nahawand* – from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony's opening, a piece by Bader, an improvised phrase, and Abd El-Wahhab's "Al-Rawabi Al Khodor's" vocal opening. The Beethoven symphony opening is the following (Bader does not play the excerpt as he assumes we both know it):

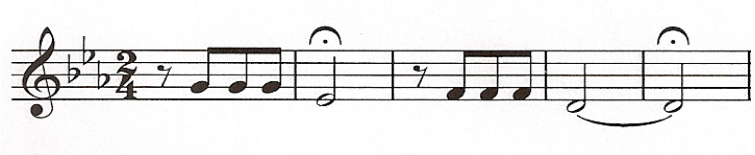


Figure 5

Bader plays a section from his own composition, "Around the World":

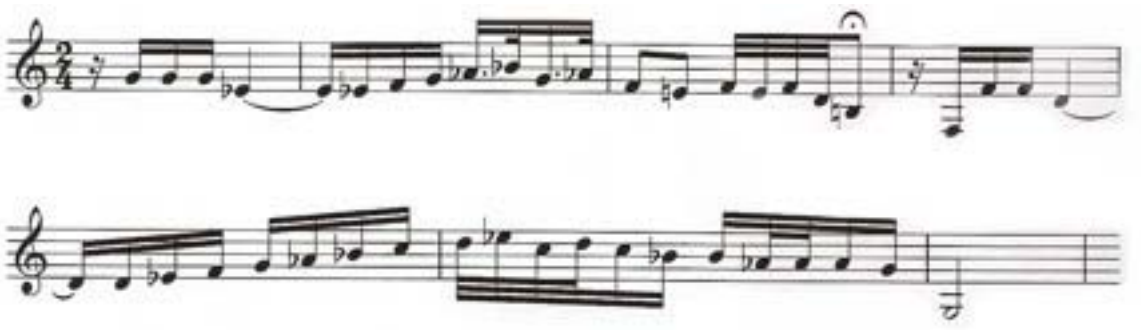


Figure 6

He says, “This is Arabic!” A Beethoven motif has been adapted to a new context. In a similar vein, Nettl has documented how Western musical elements crop up in a recording of Persian music. The performer, while allowing for Western influences, “makes sure that important practices of the Iranian tradition are preserved... It is as if the performer were saying to his listeners, 'You see, our Iranian system can be expanded to accommodate even pieces with totally Western content, and still remain intact’” (Nettl 1985: 138). In Bader’s case, the symphony motif becomes a vehicle for *maqam Nahawand*, “the referent,” and Beethoven’s motifs are melodically extended and ornamented in an “Arabic” fashion[36].

He then improvises on the excerpt from “Around the World.” The melody is almost the same, although there are some fanciful changes. The rhythmic durations are less regular as the context is now a non-metric improvisation:

[36] Bader was also trained in the Western classical tradition and has played some of the symphonic repertoire, so in Pressing’s terms, this repertoire is also part of his “knowledge base.”

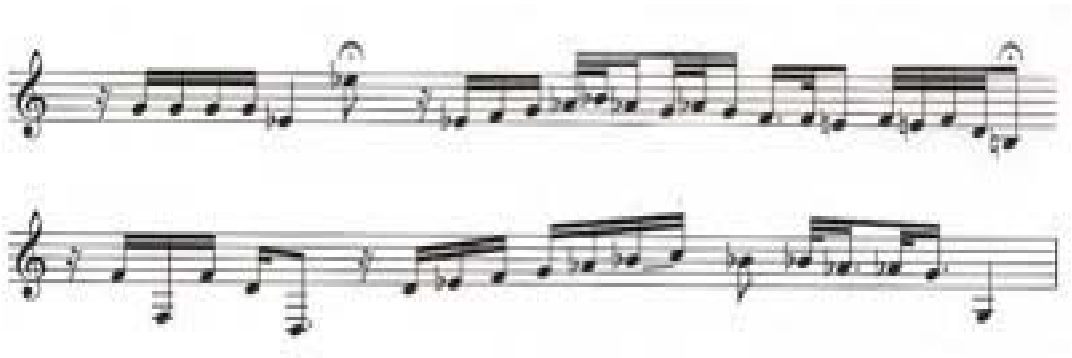


Figure 7

Without a break, Bader sings the beginning of "Al-Rawabi Al-Khodor," with some modifications, such as the E natural in the fourth measure (while ʻAbd El-Wahhab sings an E-flat. I have notated the version as sung by ʻAbd El-Wahhab):

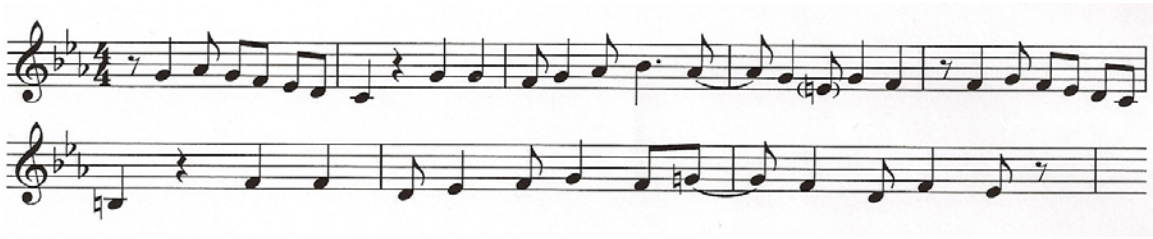


Figure 8 *(Audio track # 3: Figs. 6, 7, and 8)*

In this next example, Bader employs a phrase from a Sayed Darwish *dawr* in two modal contexts (the *dawr* is a vocal genre). I could not identify the *dawr* in order to correctly notate Bader's sung version, but the example's richness warranted its inclusion. Here is the excerpt as sung by Bader:

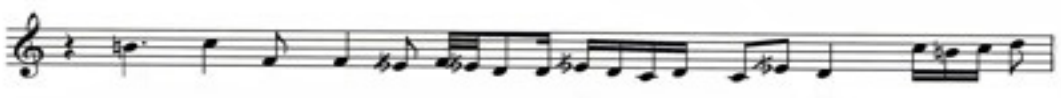


Figure 9 *(Audio track #4)*

He then plays his version of that phrase in an improvisatory fashion:

Figure 10 *(Audio track #5)*

Notice how the beginning of Figure 10 mimics the end of Figure 9. The melodic line in both excerpts descends from the upper D (also known as the *jawab*) to the *qarar*, D. Bader also explains that both of these excerpts are in *Bayati Shouri* (D; E half-flat; F; G; A flat: B natural; C; D)

He plays another *Bayati Shouri* phrase, again inspired by the *dawr* phrase:

Figure 11

He follows that with a phrase in *maqam Suznak* (C; D; E half-flat; F; G; A flat; B natural; C), thus implying a different improvisational context, maybe another section in the same improvisation or another improvisation altogether. Since both *maqam Bayati Shouri* and *maqam Suznak* differ only in starting pitch, they are not usually played side-by-side, or else one of them would remain unexpressed.

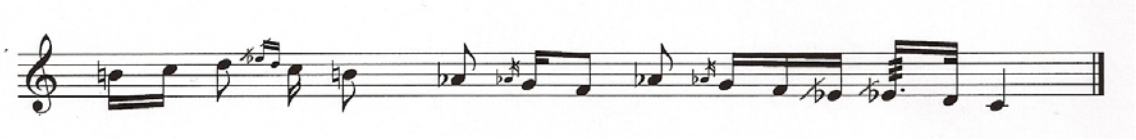


Figure 12 *(Audio track #6: Figs. 11 and 12)*

Although I have discussed short excerpts above, Bader played longer swaths of improvisational material during this session, including openings, transpositions, and *qaflat*, to demonstrate how is thought functions in a larger context.

In the examples above, Bader draws on music by famous composers from both the Arabic and Western classical traditions which has been disseminated through published scores and repeated performances in live-settings or through the media. Many in Bader's audience, Arab or non-Arab, will probably recognize Beethoven's fifth symphony's opening. The same applies to Arabic giants such as Abd El-Wahhab or Oum Kalthoum. Pressing calls this "Cultural Constraints:" "The constraints of the culture on improvisational expertise are in many ways shared by the traditions of composed music, and include such things as musical styles, repertoire, effects of media..." (Pressing 1998: 57). Earlier on in this chapter, I wrote that the improviser has to strike a delicate balance between the expected and the surprising. An audience might not be culturally prepared to appreciate an improvisation that falls far outside of their expectations, yet if a musical culture moves on to adapt new ideas, once-common practices become clichés or are forgotten.

"Improvisation and Emotion" is the idea that emotion "is based on the creation of expectation. Such expectations can only be created in listeners if they are engaged by the music and if they understand enough of the musical language" (Pressing 1998: 57) I once asked Bader what he thinks when improvising, and he said that everything comes out during the moment depending on the audience. He and most musicians describe the audience's atmosphere with the word, jaw ("atmosphere"). As Racy articulates, Arabic improvisation, and performance in general, thrives on a feedback loop connecting the artists and the audience (Racy 1998: 108). Bader once played me a recording of a live performance he had recently played for an Iraqi crowd. He shortened one of the pieces because it was not appropriate for the audience or the occasion:

AKB: I played it ("Around the World," his composition), but they did not understand it… I could not finish it.

I: Why?

AKB: The *jaw*… they were drunk. I played some pieces, and I played one Iraqi piece for them. Most of them were Iraqi. (Bader, October 26, 2010)

The final component in Pressing's theory is "The Notational Coding of Referents." In addition to memory, notation is yet another method to codify "the referents" and "create a knowledge base." For example, Pressing writes, jazz chord symbols simplify the twelve notes into two categories: chord tones and non-chord tones (Pressing 1998: 58). Although there is no direct equivalent of "Notational Coding" in Arabic music, except perhaps the *sayr*, notation is still used as a learning device. I have seen transcriptions of improvisations by Fareed Al-Atrash in Bader's handwriting. He has never told me what he might have learned from those transcriptions, but I can confidently suggest, following Dlaikan's logic in chapter 2, that they serve as a "knowledge base" building tool[37].

The Golden *Oud* Award Improvisation

In 2005, the Arab American Arts Institute awarded Bader with a Golden *Oud* Award. Simon Shaheen handed it to him during the annual Arabic Music Retreat's final concert for an audience of Arab, Arab American, and American audience members, music students, and professional musicians. In the following section, I analyze Bader's non-metric improvisation for solo *oud* he played for that event. He likes it. Although I tried to elicit Bader's analysis, he did not say much, so most of the analysis is mine. The following discussion highlights *maqam*

[37] As Dlaikan pointed out in Chapter 2, both he and Bader are sure they know a piece well after transcribing it.

manipulation, openings and *qaflat*, and it will briefly touch on motivic development. I briefly refer to Pressing's theoretical components as they relate to this live-performance.

I transcribed this improvisation by hand. The format is proportional notation, as suggested by Touma (El-Mallah 1997: 188). The "measures" are all of equal size and equidistant; each "measure" corresponds to one second (there is no time signature). The numbers above each "barline" indicate the time in seconds and minutes. The pitch attacks and durations are plotted on the score as they occur in time. Rhythmic values suggest relationships of pitches to their immediate surroundings; pitches grouped under one beam were perceived as being a phrase or motivic unit. In no case do rhythmic values correspond to fixed and constant durations throughout the entire score, such as the case in music with time signatures. Although this transcription focuses mostly on the melodic line, it lightly touches on *risha* technique, specifically tremolos. It does not focus on attacks or nuances, which are both instrumental elements in this improvisation[38].

A transcription is always an approximation of an actual performance, as it cannot showcase the performer's expressiveness or his relationship to the audience. In fact, the transcription does not capture the *tarab* spirit Bader invoked to an appreciative audience. I recommend the reader to listen to the complete performance before reading the transcription (*Audio track # 7– the improvisation ends at 4:58*). Figure 22, located in Appendix B, contains the entire transcription.

MODAL OUTLINE

The improvisation is partitioned in three large sections, each concluding with a long

[38] Bader's use of nuances through gradations of crescendos and decrescendos and sudden nuance changes, is quite remarkable and worthy of a separate analysis.

qaflah. The first section goes from the beginning till 1:15, the second section from 1: 24 seconds to 3:25, and the third section from 3:32 seconds till the end.

Although the improvisation starts on *maqam Rast*, it ends on *maqam Nahawand* (See Appendix C). Usually, an improvisation ends on the same mode it starts with, yet Bader's practice is not unheard of. Moreover, *Rast* and *Nahawand* share many of the same pitches, which facilitate transposition among those two modes.

The modal outline is the following: the first section concentrates on *Rast* although there is some interplay with *Nahawand.* The second section transposes to *Bayati Nawa* (in G). It then transposes to *Lami* on A, followed by a short section in various, rapidly transposing *maqamat Hijaz*, before concluding on *Nahawand.* The third section starts by expressing three modes sharing the same tonic (C): *Rast*, *Suznak*, and *Nahawand.* Bader touches on *Rast* on F, takes us back to *Rast* on C before modulating suddenly to *Nahawand* towards the end of the improvisation.

SECTION 1

The opening phrase announces *maqam Rast*. It highlights the main pitches of the lower *jins* and upper *jins*, economically establishing the modal feel.

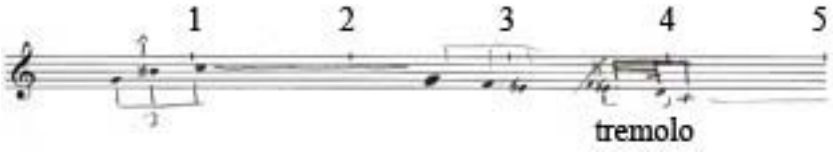


Figure 13

He has played this beginning many times during lessons to tell me no one has thought up this opening phrase before. What he implies is that many Arabic improvisations start off with the repeated, drone-like pitch to establish the *qarar*, much like in Figure 1. On the other hand, Bader

avoids the use of the repeated, drone-like pitch here, and for that matter, throughout most of the improvisation. After focusing on the lower *jins,* Bader ornaments around the second step, the D, between the 0:35 and 0:44. The D serves as a common note to introduce *Nahawand* through the use of the E-flat at 0:44:

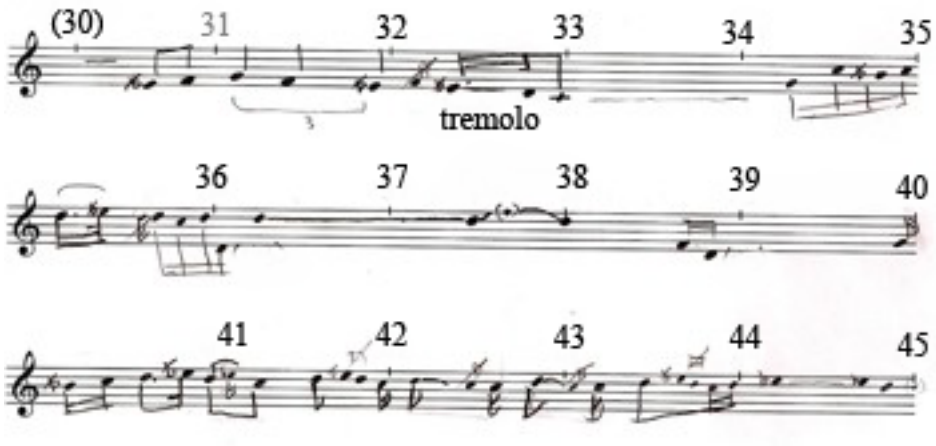


Figure 14 *(Audio track #8)*

Nahawand does not last long, and he returns to *Rast*, playing some short phrases around the third scale step, E-half flat. The following ornamental motif,  commonly used in Arabic music, anchors that third scale step and prepares the ensuing *qaflah* in Figure 15 which brings the first section to a close:

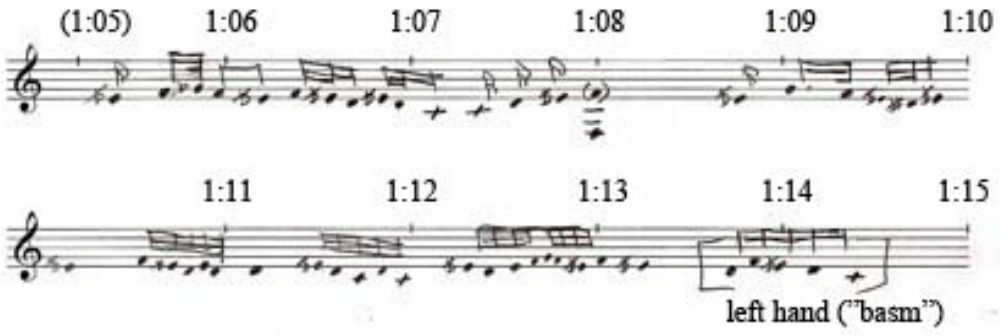
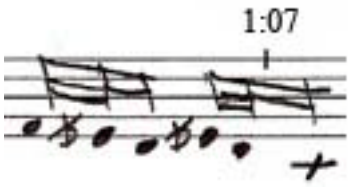
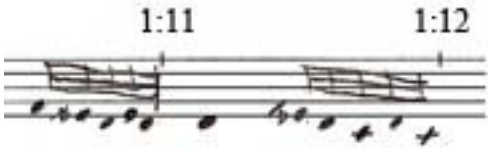


Figure 15 *(Audio track # 9)*

The *qaflah* is played in the *oud*'s middle range and is focused on *Rast* lower *jins*. Bader employs descending melodic sequences such as 

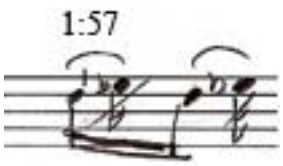
and 

before ending with a short flurry, articulated on the fingerboard without the aid of the pick (refer to Figure 15). This technique is known as *basm* in Arabic and is associated with older *oud* styles (Shaheen 2010).

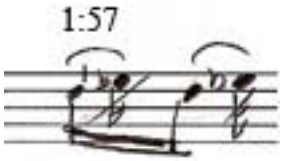
SECTION 2

The crowd goes wild, and Bader does not wait long before he launches into the second section, within which he showcases his theoretical and instrumental capacities through a kaleidoscope of modal transpositions supported by solid *oud* technique, while managing to maintain a high level of emotional intensity. He starts again in the high range, focusing on the third-scale step. The  motif makes another appearance before Bader launches into an exploration of *Rast's* upper *jins*. He establishes the ghammaz, G, by repeating it in a drone-like fashion and moves into *Bayati Nawa* at 1:41. This transposition is very common in *Rast* improvisations, but Bader doesn't linger.

Beginning at 1:51, Bader ornaments around the D and employs the following motif



repeatedly and sequentially. He has already used this motif before (0:08; 0:41; 1:27), but not as obsessively as here. Bader thus creates a feeling of emotional and modal ambiguity before settling on the A at 2:14. That tells us that he was preparing *maqam Lami* (similar in intervallic construction to *Kurd* in A) all along, a *maqam* unique to the Iraqi tradition.



What follows is a development of the motif. Bader's music is consistently loud and rhythmically active at this point in the improvisation. He employs different techniques and ornamentations to maintain the energy, such as the repeated drone-like pitches at the 2:16 section, percussive chords at 2:27, and an abundance of fast tremolo passages. Towards the end of that climactic section, he plays a run (2:42) that leads to a focus on two pitches, A and C (2:44). Bader is transitioning from *Lami,* which is centered on the A back to a yet-undefined mode around C, as shown in Figure 16:

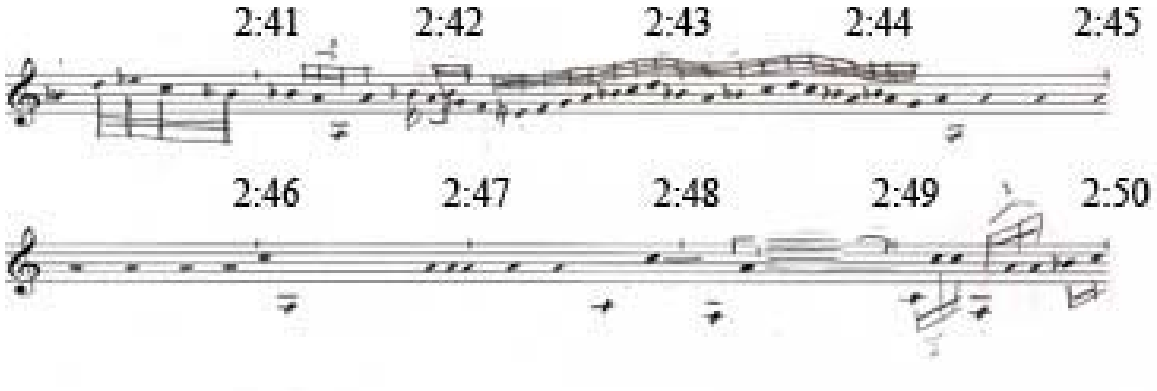
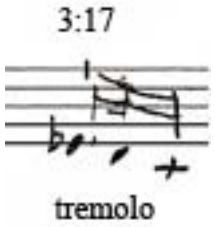


Figure 16 *(Audio track #10)*

The next 35 (after 2:50) seconds display mastery of modal transposition, *oud* technique, and *qaflah*. At 2:55, Bader transposes to *Hijaz Kar-Kurd*, based on C. He still is playing loudly, employing tremolo and chords to maintain the music's high intensity, and suddenly at 3:07, he brings down the dynamic level and shifts dramatically to a *Hijaz* in B-flat. At 3:12, he focuses slightly on the E-flat, suggesting that he might be playing the second *jins* of the *Hijaz* B-flat. The E-flat turns out to be a common note with which he transposes back to *Nahawand* in C, before



launching into the section's *qaflah*, starting at 3:15. He uses the melodic motif repeatedly as he descends the *Nahawand* mode before ending the *qaflah* quietly and abruptly.

This motif is used multiple times throughout the improvisation, usually at the end of phrases (ex: 0:03 – Fig.13), but this is the only location he uses it in sequential fashion to structure the *qaflah*, as shown in Figure 17:

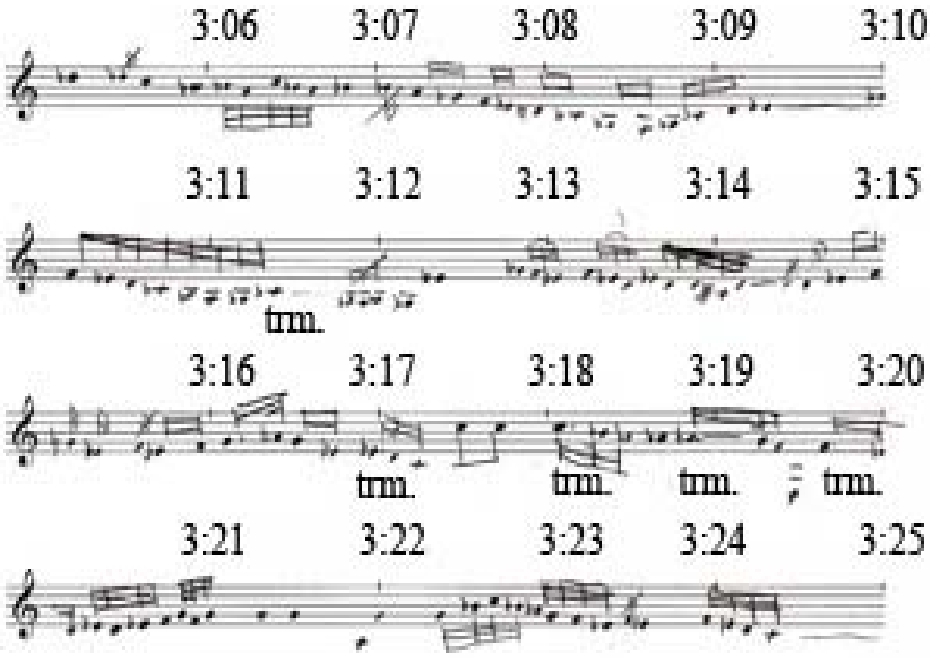


Figure 17 *(Audio track #11)*

The section illustrated in Figure 17 (and to a lesser extent, the whole of the second section) demonstrates Bader's deft manipulation of *maqamat* ("The Referent"). Fast transpositions create a heightened feeling of modal instability, yet they must be well timed. In other words, Bader fulfills a minimum of a *maqam's* expressive and structural identity before transposing, while at the same time, he keeps track of the overarching melodic line which leads him into *Nahawand*.

In Figure 17, Bader plays on *Hijaz Kar-Kurd*, which has only two common pitches with *Hijaz* in B-flat, one of which is the B-flat that Bader uses as a fulcrum for the transposition (3:07). *Hijaz* in B-flat is not a commonly used mode and slightly awkward to perform. Bader does not linger much on it. Its fourth scale-step, E-flat (3:13), is a common tone with *Nahawand*. The transposition is brought on subtly through the use of the C# (3:14), which highlights D, the second pitch in *Nahawand*. The following upward motion (3:14) reintroduces the G-natural (3:15), *Nahawand*'s *ghammaz* (dominant scale-step). Bader confirms the transposition in the

ensuing *qaflah*.

As Bader explained before, he tailors his improvisations to his audience (Pressing's "Improvisation and Emotion" idea), and he obviously knows the crowd he is playing for. They cheer warmly again. I have attended the Arabic Music Retreat in the past, and the final concert's audience was a mix of Arabs and Arab-American listeners who had driven from remote places, and a group of Arab, Arab-American, and American music students who had spent hours learning, listening, discussing, practicing, and performing traditional music during the preceding week. This type of audience would be evidently prepared for Bader's ideas. Although the *qaflah* is ten seconds long, it sounds abrupt in the context of the preceding modal instability and could have easily lost an inattentive audience. For comparison's worth, the first section's final *qaflah* is of similar length but is more predictable and as a result feels more relaxed[39].

SECTION 3

The last section is less adventuresome than the previous one, as if Bader has to calm things down. He starts calmly and softly on *Nahawand*. The second phrase shifts us back to the improvisation's original mode, *Rast*. He gives the mode enough time to stabilize before he transposes yet again. The following transpositions are less eclectic than those in the second section, and in some cases have already been employed in previous sections. He first goes to *Suznak* (4:02) which, a derivative of *Rast*:

[39] I have not heard him employ dramatic modulations in restaurant gigs; in fact, I have rarely heard him improvise during a restaurant environment, as most of the customers seem to be non-Arab and to a lesser extent non-Arab-American. During one of those gigs, I was playing around with some non-metric improvisatory material, and Bader urged me to play "something rhythmic," meaning that I should avoid non-metric forms.

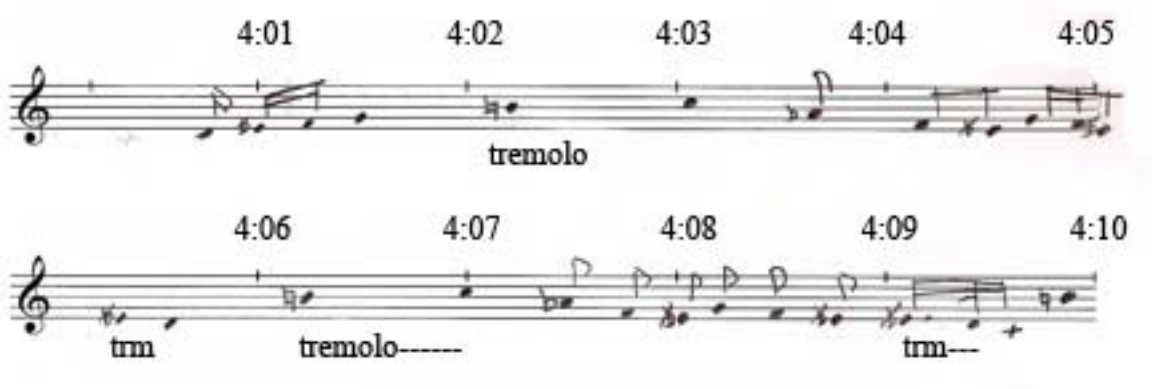


Figure 18

Then he goes back to *Nahawand*:

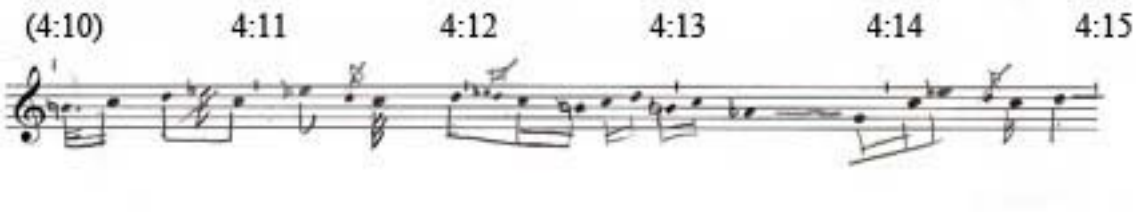


Figure 19 *(Audio track #12: Figs 18 and 19)*

What follows (4:16) is a significant lick, the only musical material I can surely identify from Bader's "Knowledge Base":

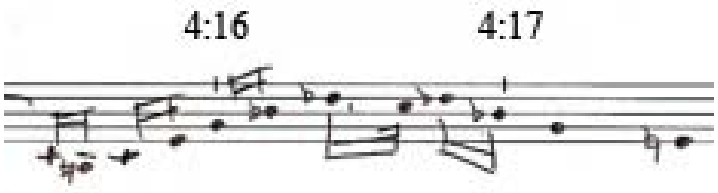


Figure 20

He has often used this arpeggio in our lessons, while warming up on the *oud* or demonstrating an improvisation, as he has used it in other live-performance improvisations. This motif sometimes plays the role of "filler," for example, to start an improvisation before inspiration kicks in. In other cases, such as this one, the lick connects two ideas: it facilitates a

transposition from *Rast* in C to *Rast* in F (or Jiharkah)[40].

The music transposes again a few seconds later into *Kurd* in G (4:26). Although Bader hints he is going to *Nahawand* with the E-flat at 4:33, he shifts back to *Rast* at 4:34:

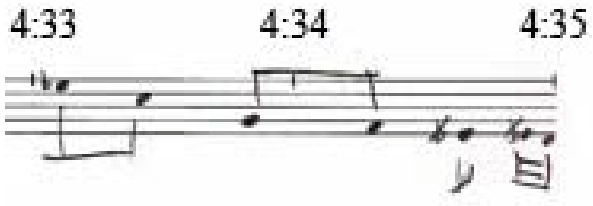


Figure 21

The last seconds are another case of modal instability Bader somehow pulls off. He signals the ending is approaching by playing the mode in an ascending

scale: , a motif often used for *qaflat*. Bader reinforces modal stability by playing the C in a repeated and drone-like fashion. Instead of remaining on *Rast* and ending the improvisation on the same mode he started it off with, he ushers *Nahawand* back in for a final flurry which lasts a mere six seconds.

In the larger context of the performance, the transposition makes sense and the hushed ending is not anticlimactic: he directly launches into a section of Oum-Kalthoum's song, “Wa Darat Al-Ayyam” (included in track #7) which is in *maqam Nahawand.* Interestingly enough, the song excerpt eventually transposes to and ends on *Rast*, thus expressing the two modes Bader mostly focused on throughout the preceding improvisation.

[40] This arpeggio can be thought of as a dominant chord, which appropriately connects C to F.

Bader's Aesthetics

There are consistent stylistic traits in Bader's improvisation pedagogy and the Golden *Oud* Award improvisation. He admires simpler, spontaneous and singing melodic lines, much like the *layali* vocal genre, and he tends to avoid excessive technical bravura during improvisation. He always likes to tell the following story to make his point: Riyad Al-Sunbati who shared a room with Bader for two or three months in Palestine, asked him to perform an improvisation. Bader, who was young, launched into a virtuosic performance that prompted Al-Sunbati to interrupt and ask him whether he had ever heard a singer leap around when performing a *layali*. When Bader said he had not, Al-Sunbati added that he wanted Bader to make him feel the music through a more reserved performance.

Bader is aware of audience when improvising, as I discussed at the end of *section 2* in the improvisation above. In the Golden *Oud* Award, he generally opts for a modally complex and, in some sections, dramatic performance, yet he tends to scale back his intensity when in a restaurant setting. On a related note, Bader is aware of certain clichés in Arabic improvisatory tradition, such as repeated, drone-like playing of pitches, Fareed Al-Atrash's Spanish-influenced playing, common opening or cadential phrases, and common modulations. I have heard him employ some of these ideas, yet in general, he has avoided them during our lessons because he considers some of them mere gimmicks.

Musically, Bader values a deep theoretical knowledge of the *maqam* system. He is capable of economically establishing the *maqamat* (ex: Fig. 2), which facilitates rapid and sometimes uncommon modal transpositions such as those found in *section 2* of the improvisation. Bader often develops his improvisations through motivic sequences and

purposeful motif repetition. His phrases are often punctuated by silences or sustained notes that seem to break the music's flow; nevertheless, through subtle melodic connections, dynamic contrasts, and *risha* articulations, they coalesce into larger units. (Figure 7 is an illustration, although not very subtle due to the melody's familiarity.) This trend was not obvious to me when I first heard him improvise; it was "hidden in plain sight," as a martial arts teacher of mine says. When I finally "saw" the overarching lines, Bader's musical logic made sense. His style is very much mainstream after all, but he has managed to make the music his own.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

My thesis demonstrates that Abdel Karim Bader is a carrier of an Arabic musical tradition living in the diaspora. I have identified "tradition" (and "heritage," wherever I use the term) as *tarab* culture, which includes musical and social values and attitudes, musical jargon, repertoire and theoretical knowledge shared among professional musicians, amateurs, and audiences. I have perceived *tarab* as the mediator between Bader and I, the middle ground where we discussed musical content and values. Yet, the reader should keep in mind that the *tarab* lens tells only one part of Bader's story. I have mentioned throughout the document that his experiences as a cosmopolitan and diaspora musician have influenced his musical proclivities, and it is possible that these influences have permeated his approach to *tarab*.

Bader's **biography** is an account of a traditional apprenticeship with his father and a lifetime of musical experiences worldwide. His musical and social personas can be understood within the context of *tarab* culture. As performer and pedagogue, he is well-mannered, polite, generous, and "self-negating," as found in the examples where he accommodates audience requests or the fact he has taught me for a nominal fee. As a performer, he enjoys a "good rapport with the audience" and is charismatic (Racy 2003: 33-37) as the Golden *Oud* Award recording demonstrates (*Audio track #7*). His musical jargon, peppered throughout this thesis, is part of a larger dialect among Arab musicians that, "[presents] music as a type of manual labor" (Racy 2003: 31). For example, *shughl* ("work") describes musical performance, "'*ala*" ("tool"), the *oud*, while *ndif* ("clean") refers to a faultless performance.

Through an *apprenticeship*, Bader's father taught him musical ideas, values and pedagogical techniques that he still uses nowadays. Bader's instrumental virtuosity and

theoretical *knowledge* are respected by some significant Arab and Arab-American musicians I have interviewed throughout my fieldwork. Bader's *performing experience*, spanning decades of performances around the world with respected Arab artists, further developed his technique, expanded his repertoire beyond the *tarab* standards[41], and further molded his teaching philosophy. His *reading skill* allowed him to memorize, physically store, remember and transmit his body of knowledge, and it has imbued him with an aura of respect and authenticity within a culture that has come to value musical literacy.

Bader's **pedagogical** approach is pragmatic and loosely constructed, as it has focused on the general audience as target listener, an aspect of musical culture usually ignored by the conservatory model (Weintraub 1993: 37). Nevertheless, he has transmitted parts of the *tarab* canon to me that are rarely played in public anymore, either because he thinks they are beautiful pieces of music, or because he valued the musical lessons within. He has also taught me pieces from other popular and folk Arabic genres which are known by musicians and audiences both in the Arab world and in the United States. As for his transmission methods, although Bader uses notation, he heavily relies on oral techniques, such as listening to records, singing, and playing for or along with me, but he is scant on verbal directions. He also employs symbolic markers of progress, including upgrades in *ouds* at my disposal, or asking me to accompany him to gigs.

His teaching techniques are similar to those I have experienced with other Arab instrumentalists. On the other hand, this approach differs in certain aspects with modern Arabic conservatory curricula, as described by Racy:

> "Inspired by the European pedagogical model, the conservatory format tends to formalize, as well as limit the contact between the student and the teacher, or

[41] In some cases, non-*tarab* repertoire was adapted to *tarab* needs such as found in Figs 5-8.

> teachers. Furthermore, using European notation as a basis of instruction, the Arab musical curriculum may incorporate Western theory, Arab and Western solfege, and in some cases, courses in keyboard technique, in polyphony, and in "the harmonization of the Arab *maqamat*."(Racy 2003: 29)

Racy found that to be the case in Cairo in 1970. I have found that to be the case in Beirut since 1994. In the absence of Arabic music institutions in the United States, the apprenticeship, whether through private lessons and, to a lesser extent, music camps, is the primary pedagogical model, with the exception of a few ethnomusicology departments around the country, of course.

Improvisation is the culmination of a *tarab* musician's skills by featuring his/her sense of structure, instrumental virtuosity, and knowledge of the *maqam* system's theoretical and emotional content. Thus, Arab musicians highly value this art, yet they have tended to mystify its processes[42]. I have shown how Bader taught me elements of improvisation through the lens of Jeff Pressing's model, based on standard expertise theory, which argues that musicians develop specific skills - including motor skills, repertoire excerpts, theoretical knowledge, performance experience – through long periods of practice to develop an improvisational language. I also hope to have demonstrated in my short analysis of the Golden *Oud* Award performance that Bader remains within the confines of the Arabic theoretical *maqam* tradition.

This document takes a unique place in the English-language ethnomusicological literature. What little research on the larger trends within Arab-American musical culture has been conducted by the ethnomusicologist Anne Rasmussen, and to my knowledge, there exists no documentation on such a personal scale as I have presented. I consider myself lucky to have had constant access to Bader for a long period of time, yet I recognize that he is not an exception

[42] I have observed that, some musicians lack the appropriate knowledge while others guard their knowledge, or lack of it, behind that veil of mysticism.

within the Arab-American community: there are other such undocumented musicians who carry fascinating stories and stores of knowledge, whether historical, social, or musical.

I additionally view this study within the framework of action research and hope that it contributes to the academic and public knowledge of diasporic Arab-American identity and musical practice (Stringer 1999: 9-10). Arab-Americans (and Arabs alike) need to articulate and assert their cultural identities in the United States, especially in the face of much ignorance and prejudice in the media and mainstream culture, which mainly understands Arabic culture through food, belly-dancing, and, unfortunately, images of terrorism. Yet, these images conceal vibrant and expressive cultural manifestations of language, poetry, calligraphy, and, of course, music.

Moreover, Arab historical memory has limited itself to the few big names that have graced the stages; people remember Oum Kalthoum, Abd El-Halim, Abd El-Wahhab, and Al-Atrash. Other musicians have been mostly forgotten or remain unknown, regardless of whether or not they have played a role in preserving and developing the musical culture. This trend is acutely present in the Arab-American diaspora:

> You know, he's an immigrant performer that came here, and I think that he didn't really get what he deserves. I think he's much bigger than what people know, but he's never been marketed. He's almost like a hidden gem or something. Yeah, he's a hidden gem. Karim Bader is a hidden gem. (David, *Interview* 2010)

I hope that this document does Abdel Karim Bader some justice in that regard.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Glossary

This glossary contains Arabic terms and phrases, both colloquial and classical, that have been used throughout this document.

Abdel Karim: servant of the generous (God).

ahel: parents.

ahlan: welcome.

ahlan '***ammo*** (literally, "welcome uncle"): is a way of addressing younger people.

'ala (literally, "tool"): musical instrument, the *oud*.

Bader: full moon.

bashraf (pl. ***basharef***): a classical music form.

basm: *oud* technique using only the left-hand.

buzuq: a type of chordophone.

dabkeh: a popular Lebanese circle dance.

darsin: they have studied music.

dawr: a vocal genre.

dhawq: good taste.

falsafa (literally, "philosophizing"): making nonsensical or vacuous statements.

habibna Karim: our loved one, Karim.

hanoun: loving.

hol 'aghani ma bi mouto: these songs don't die.

Igor, hayda inta?: Igor, is that you?

ihsas: feeling.

'iqa': rhythmic cycle, rhythm.

jawab: a note an octave higher.

jaw: atmosphere.

jins (pl. ***ajnas***): grouping of notes in trichords, tetrachords, or pentachords.

khallina nrouh nishtighil (literally, "let's go to work"): let's play music.

khana: a section of a *Sama'i* or *Longa*.

khareq: brilliant.

khibra: experience; performing experience.

limonada: lemonade.

layali: vocal improvised performances.

longa (pl. ***longat***): a classical music form.

ma fi jaw (literally, "there is no atmosphere"): there is no positive audience vibe.

mahdoume: cute, likeable.

maqam (*pl. *maqamat): mode (similar to the Western scale).

mijwiz: a type of aerophone.

mizmar: a type of aerophone.

mukhif (literally, "scary"): very good (musician).

mukhtar: the mayor.

mussawiyyin: Jews.

muwashshahat: an old vocal genre.

nashaz: out of tune.

nay: a type of reed flute.

ndaf (singl. ***ndif***; literally, "clean"): referring to good instrumental technique.

oud (Anglophonized pl. ***ouds*** – Arabic pl. ***‘a’wad***): a fretless Arabic lute.

qarar: tonic.

qaflat (sing. ***qaflah***, literally "ending"): musical cadences used in improvisations.

qanun: a type of zither-like chordophone.

risha (literally, "feather"): *oud* pick.

risha ma’loube: **“**upside down pick”, the technique of moving the pick in upwards and downwards motion.

riqq: a tambourine-like percussion instrument.

saltanah: (verb, ***salten***): related to reaching a focused state of musical intensity.

sama’i (pl. ***sama’iat***): a particular rhythmic cycle; also, a classical music form.

sayr: brief sketch of a *maqam*'s path.

shai ahmar: red tea.

shai akhdar: green tea.

shouf shou baddak (literally, "see what you want"): pick what you want to eat.

shughl (literally, "work"): playing music.

tableh: percussion instrument.

tarab: traditional urban music; also, relating to musical ecstasy.

taswir: the art of transposing to another pitch level.

taqsim (pl. ***taqasim***): instrumental improvisation.

taqsim 'ala al-wahda: improvisation on a rhythmic cycle.

yalla natrak: I'm waiting for you.

yalla ta': come over!

APPENDIX B

Transcription of the Improvisation from the Golden *Oud* Award

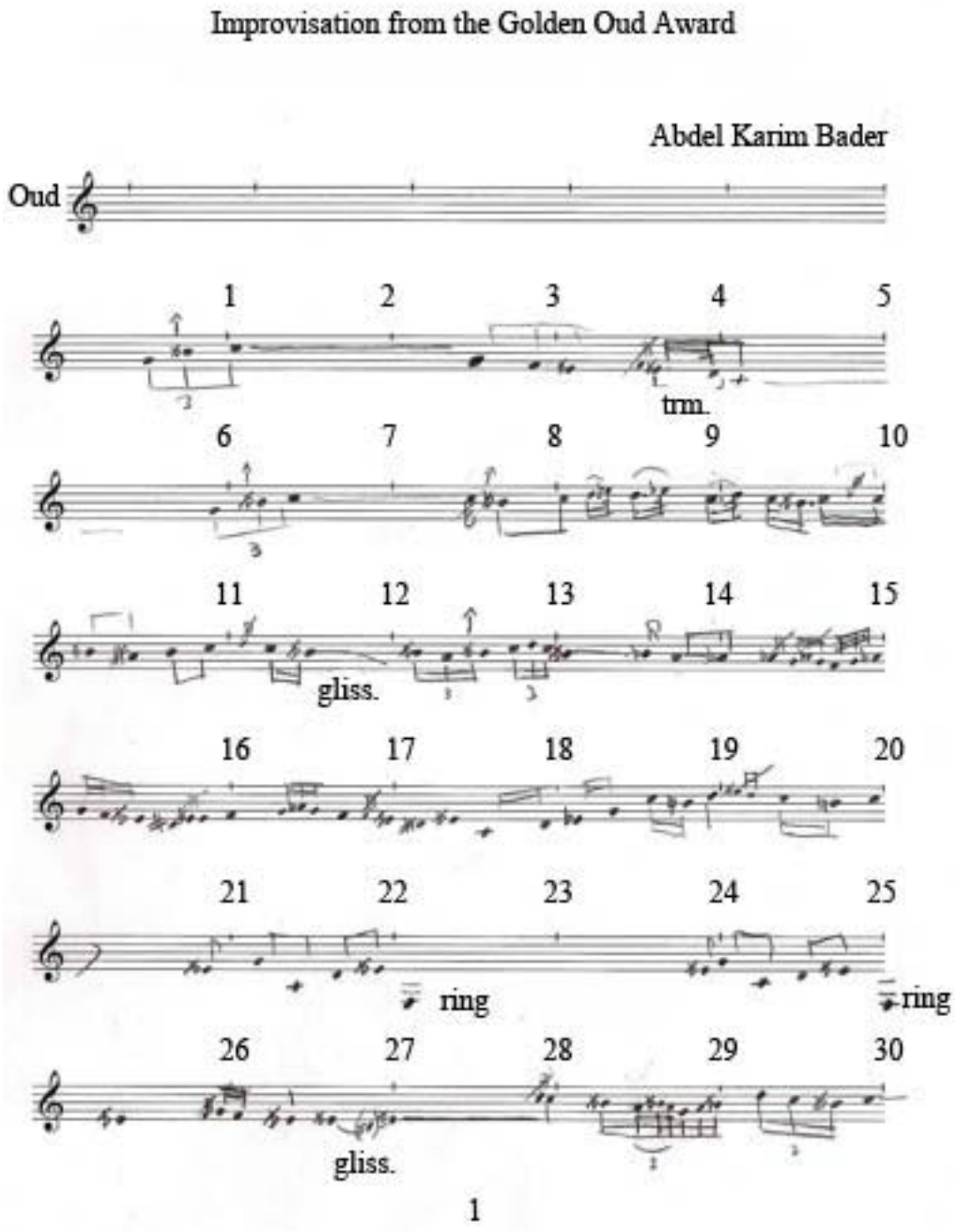


Figure 22

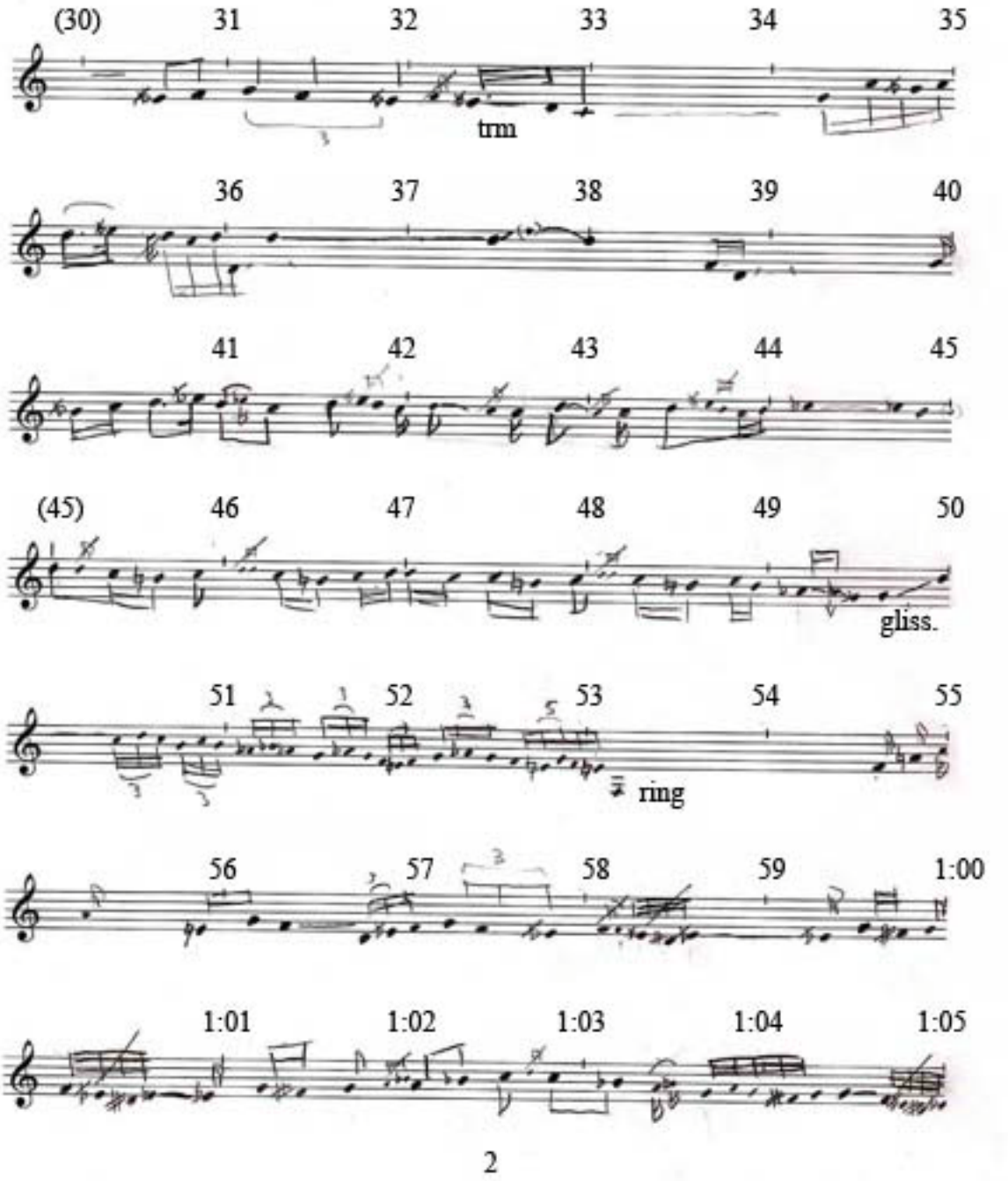


Figure 22 (cont'd)

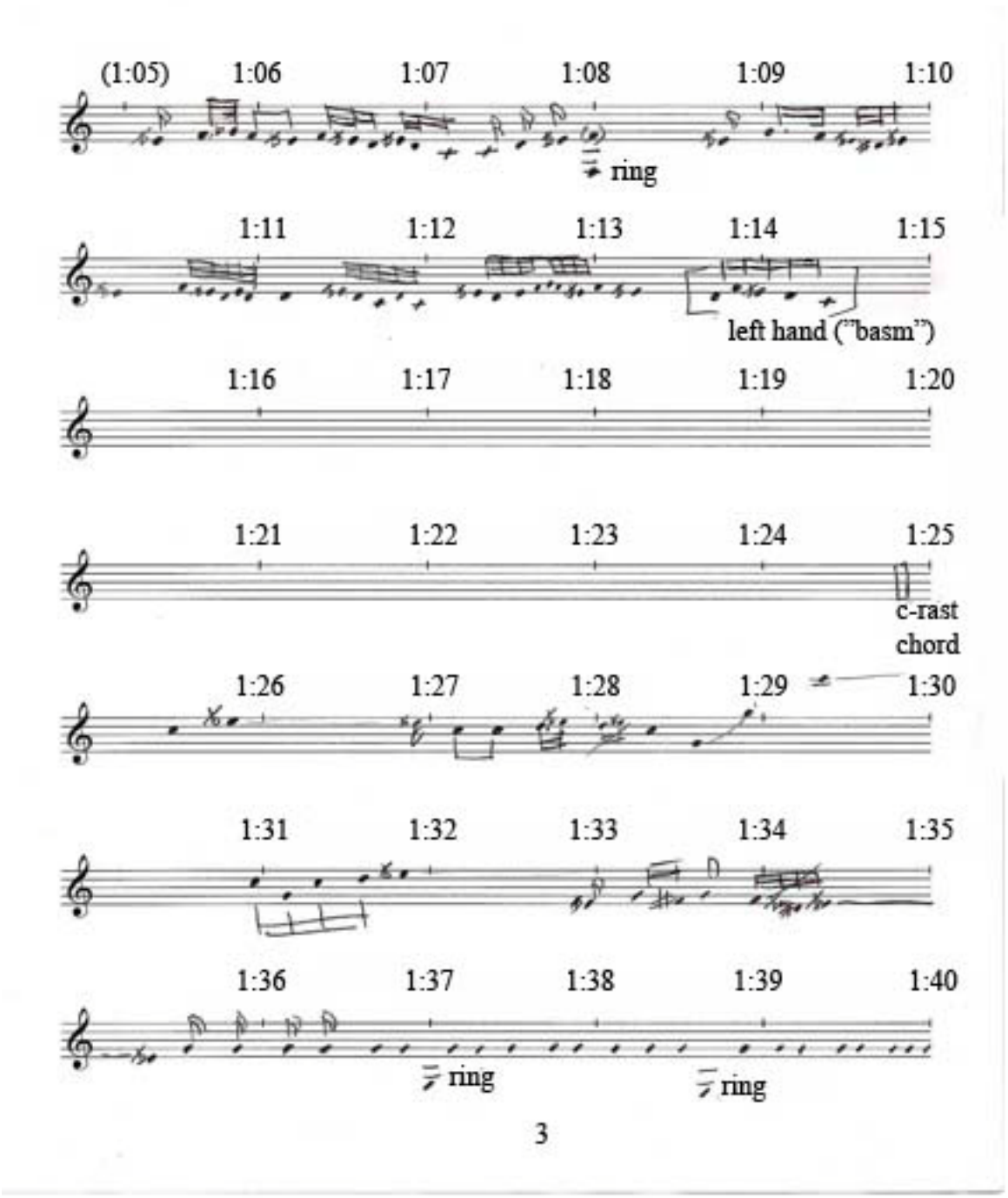


Figure 22 (cont'd)

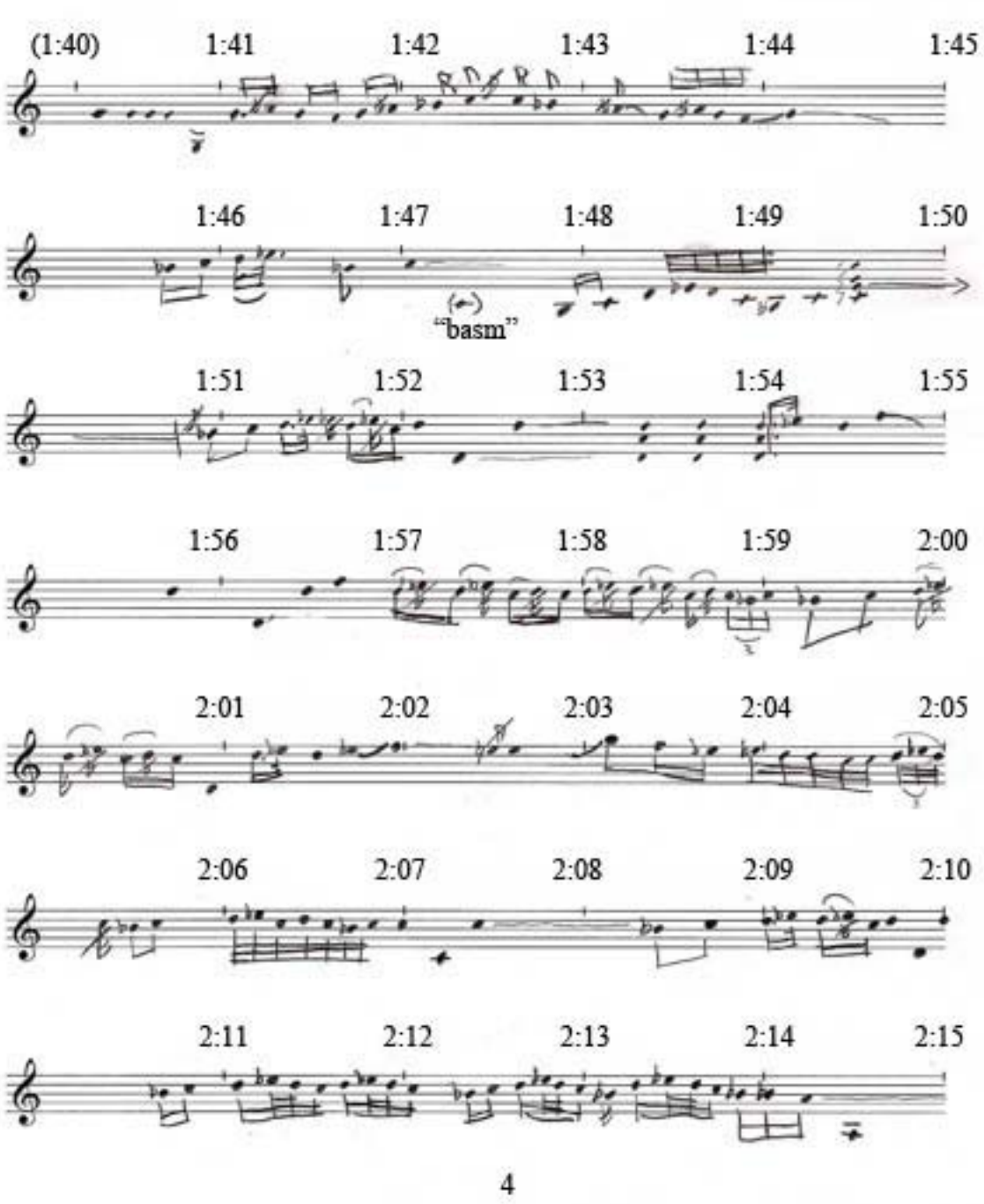


Figure 22 (cont'd)

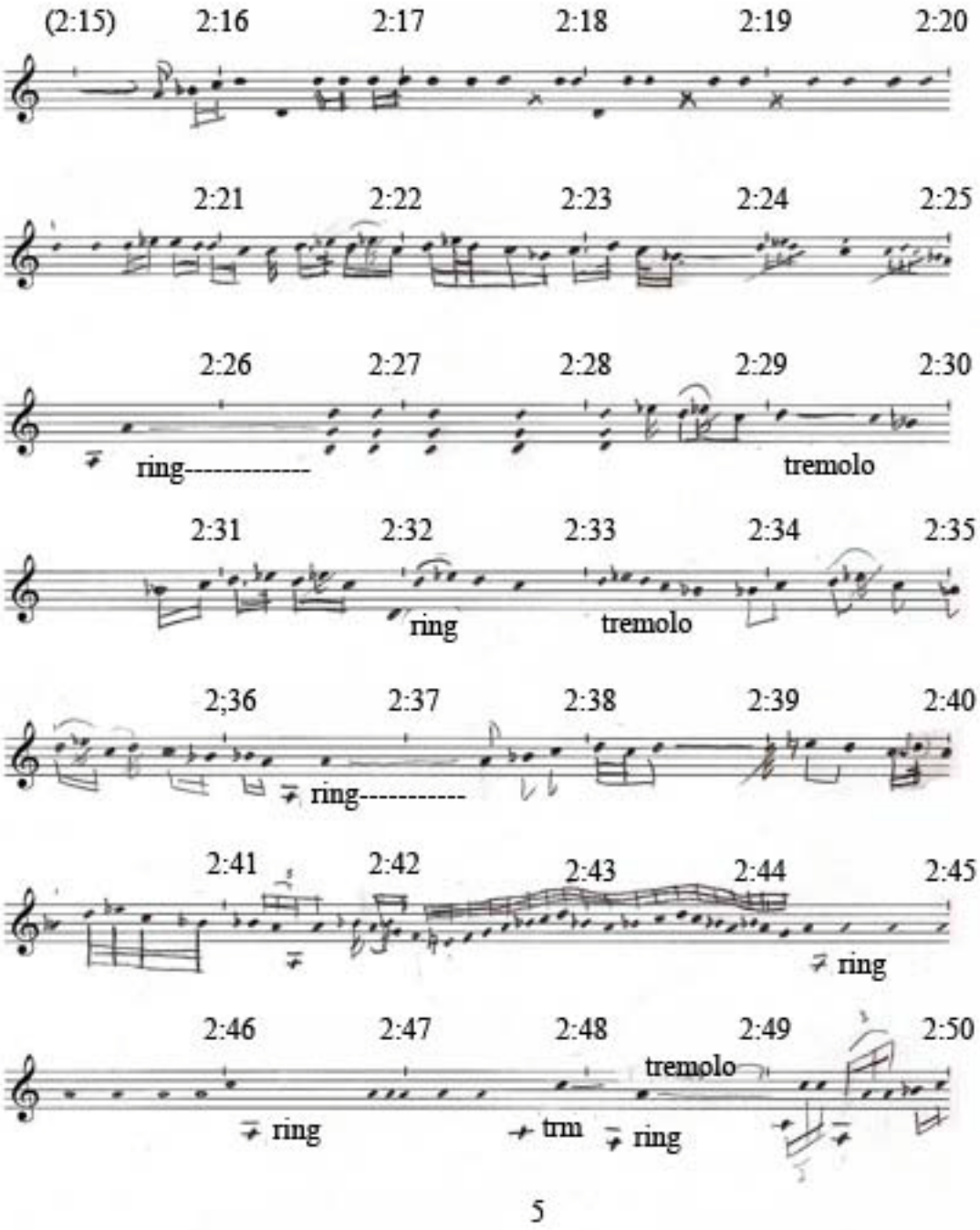


Figure 22 (cont'd)

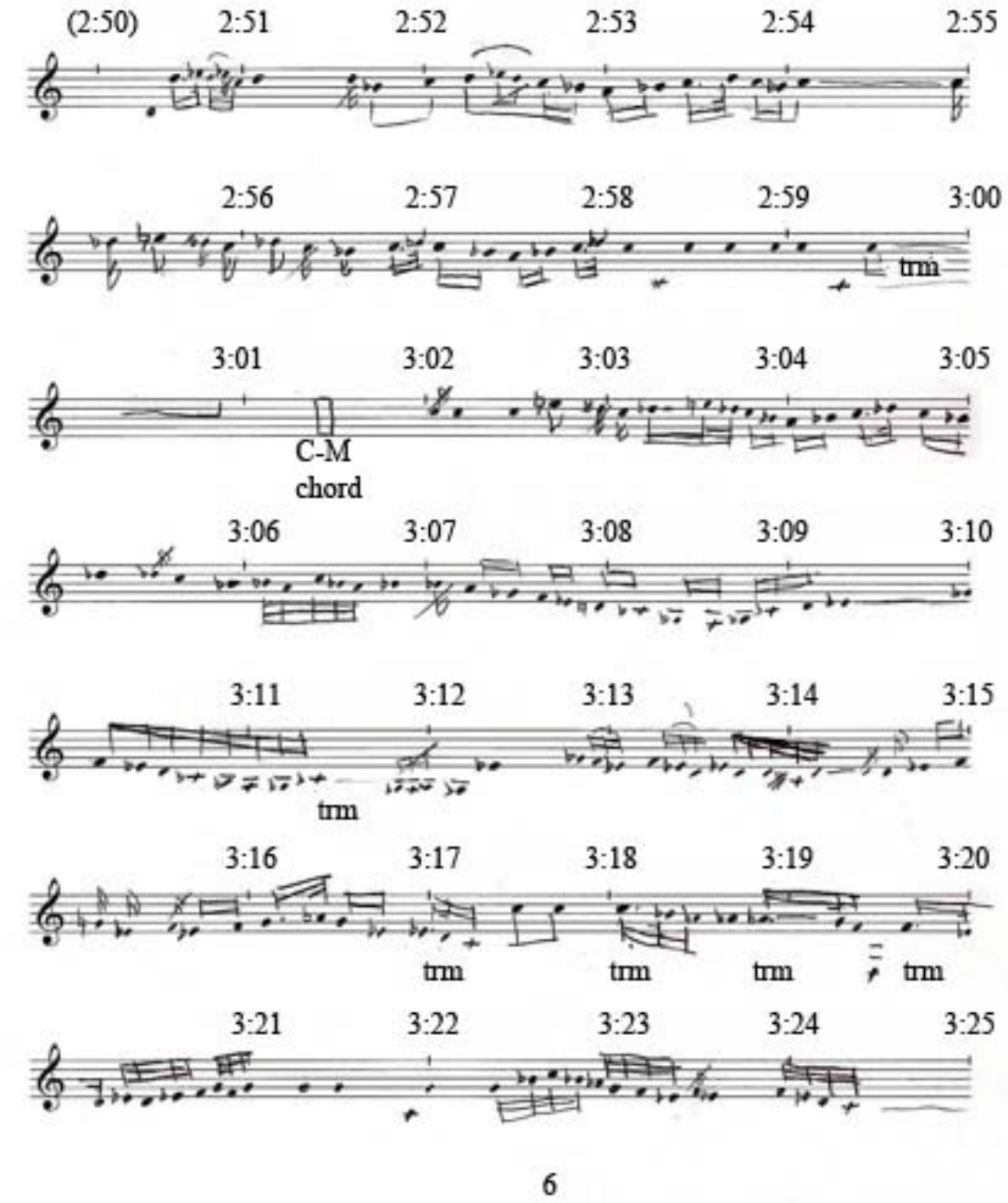


Figure 22 (cont'd)

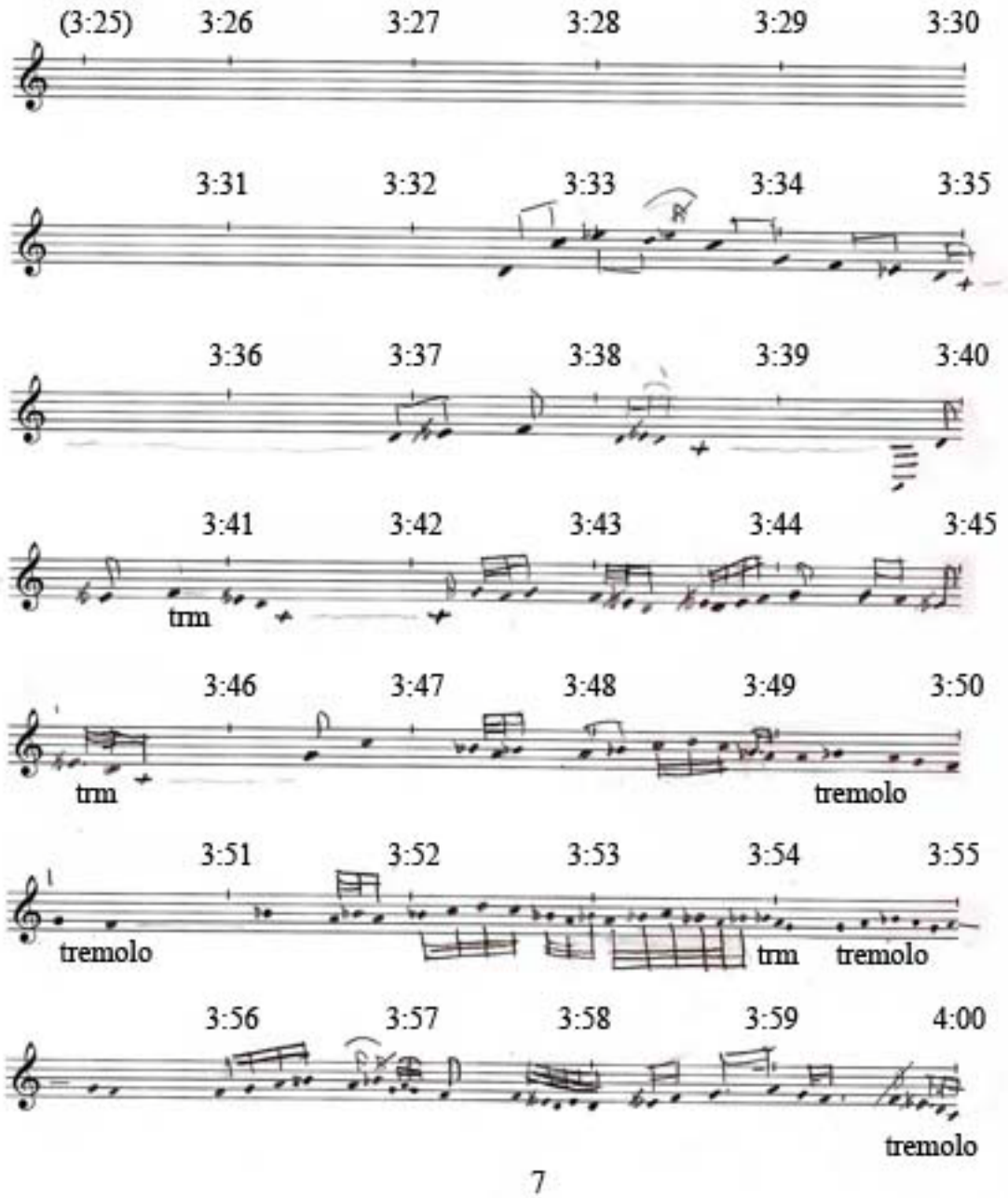


Figure 22 (cont'd)

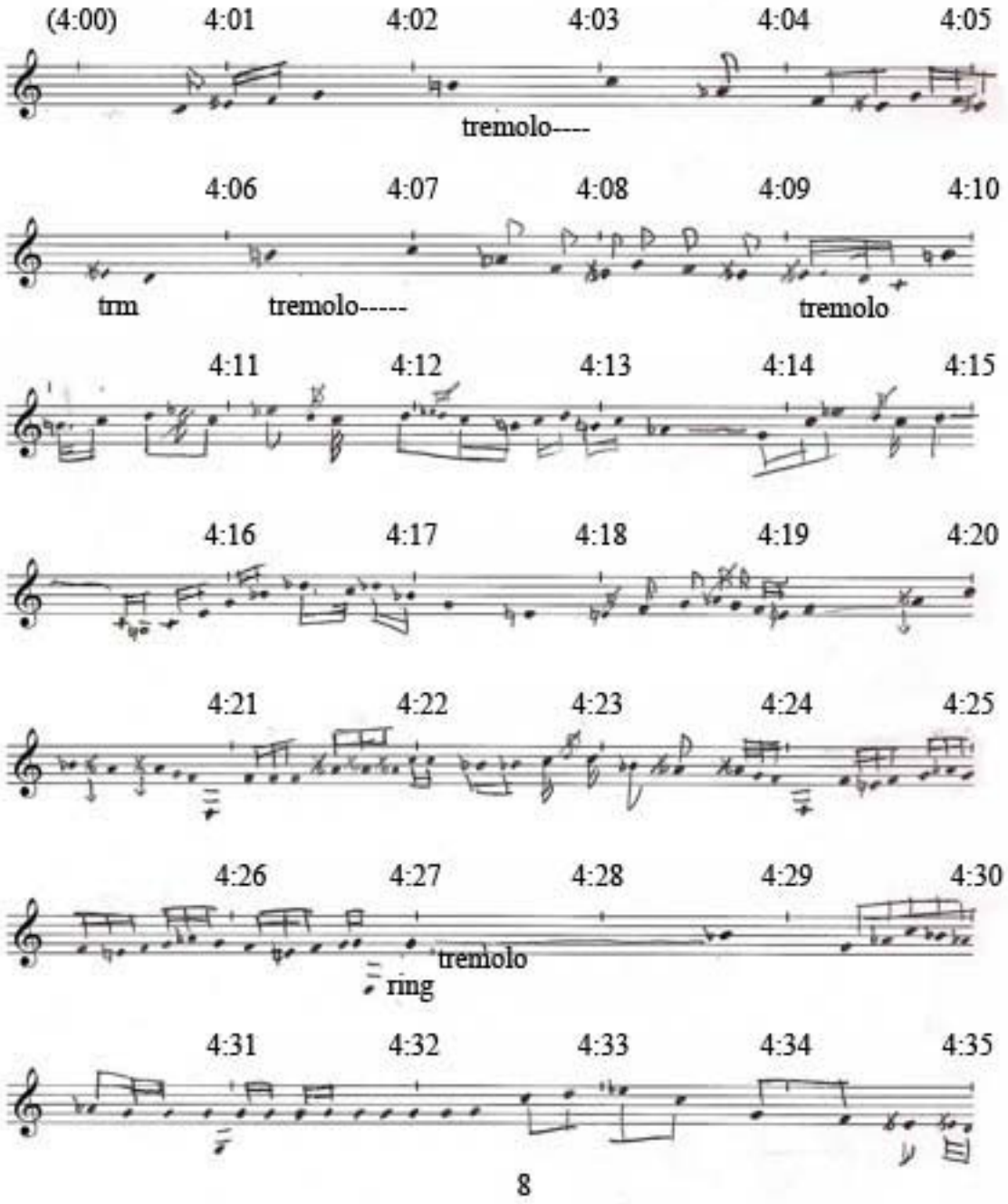


Figure 22 (cont'd)

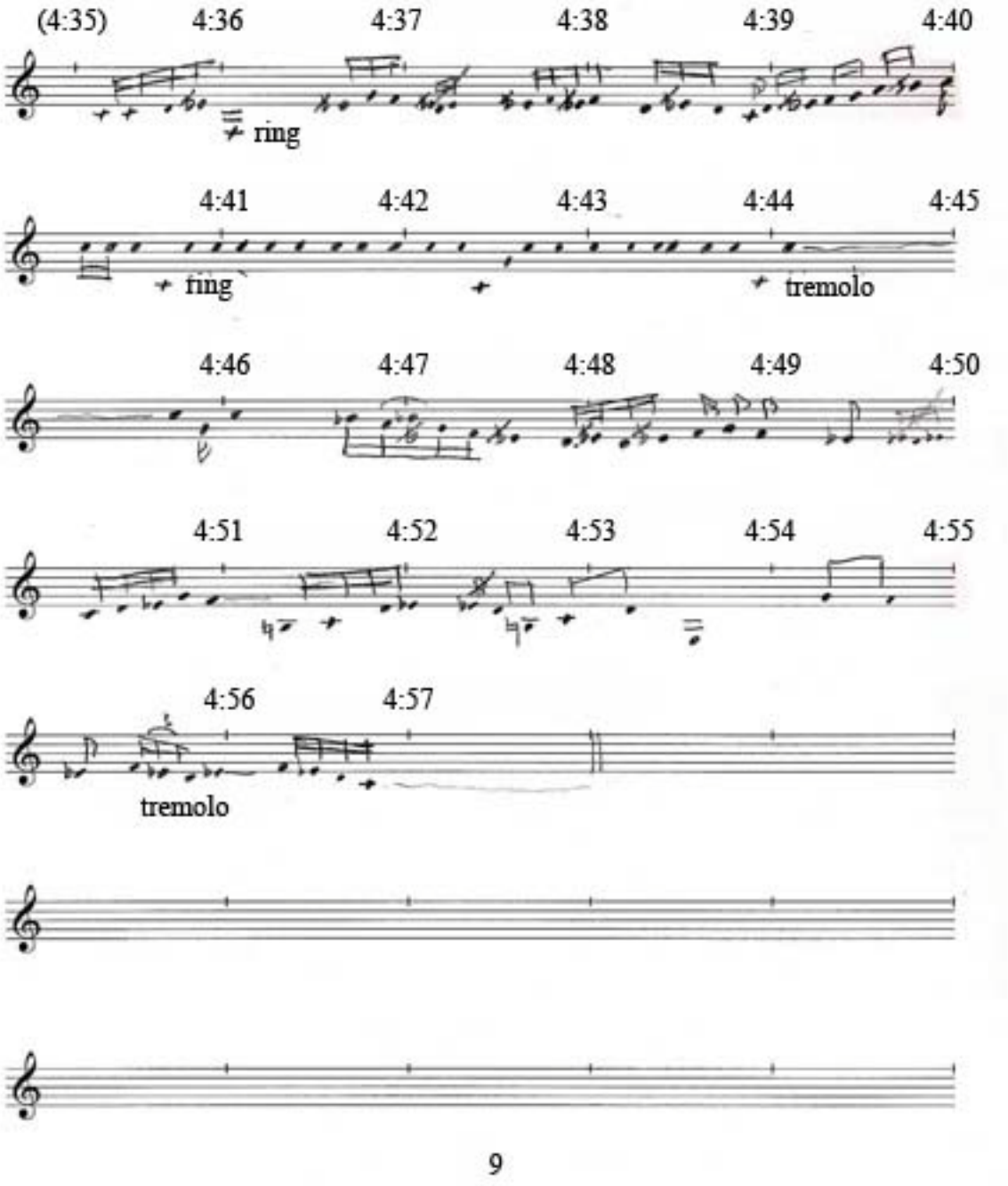


Figure 22 (cont'd)

APPENDIX C

Maqam Structure Example

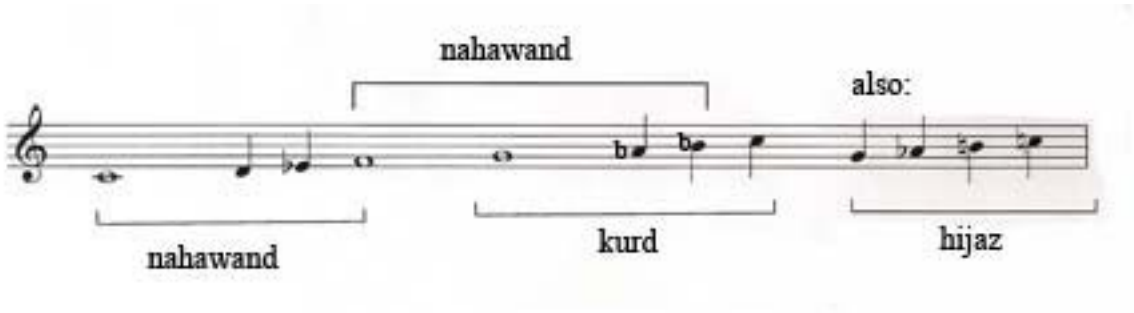


Figure 23

Figure 23 illustrates the concept of “ajnas.”

Each whole note is the first note of a “*jins*.” Each “*jins*” is identified by a bracket accompanied and its corresponding name.

In this case, *Maqam Nahawand* is primarily identified by the lower *jins* that carries the same name. The upper *jins* is flexible. Although *Jins Kurd* is the upper *jins* Hijaz can replace it without changing the *maqam*. *Jins Nahawand* on F is a secondary *jins* useful for modulations and modal variety.

APPENDIX D

Audio Track Index

Improvisation lesson examples:

Track 1: Figures 1 and 2 (*Bayati*)

Track 2: Figure 4 (*Bayati*)

Track 3: Figures 6, 7, and 8 (*Nahawand*)

Track 4: Figure 9 (Sayed Darwish *dawr* excerpt)

Track 5: Figure 10 *(Bayati Shouri* based on Sayed Darwish *dawr* excerpt*)*

Track 6: Figures 11 and 12 (*Bayati Shouri* and *Suznak* based on Sayed Darwish *dawr* excerpt)

Golden *Oud* Award Performance (complete)

Track 7: 8:12 (Improvisation ends at 4:58)

Golden *Oud* Award Improvisation excerpts:

Track 8: Figure 14 (from 0:30 to 0:45)

Track 9: Figure 15 (from 1:05 to 1:15)

Track 10: Figure 16 (from 2:40 to 2:50)

Track 11: Figure 17 (from 3:05 to 3:25)

Track 12: Figures 18 and 19 (from 4:00 to 4:15)

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REFERENCES

(Note: A few references do not appear in the thesis. I include them below either because they were crucial to my field work, or they influenced my writing style, or they reflected my philosophical tendencies)

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