

# On Contemporary Palestinian Music

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The multifaceted diversity of contemporary Palestinian art, literature, theater, and film is almost completely unknown outside of the Arab world. The Palestinian contemporary music scene, with its unmistakably extensive range of styles and various modes of expression has not yet been researched in a systematic manner. Scholars have not yet determined accepted premises for the study of this music, as in-depth research has yet to be undertaken. Generalizations about Palestinian music can often be misleading; they often prove to be false when one undertakes a closer investigation. At present, it would be premature to endeavor to formulate a comprehensive history of contemporary Palestinian music. Some of the composers presented in this essay are not even acquainted with the names of their fellow Palestinian composers. Many of these composers' works have only become known to a wider audience within the last few years. It is, however, high time to take note of this musical scene, to carefully document its structure and tendencies, and, above all, to examine the musical works of these contemporary Palestinian composers.

The Palestinian people are currently dispersed throughout the world. They reside in the Near East, Palestinians have lived in the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan, and other Arab countries to which they had fled, immigrated, or were exiled, since the late 1940s. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families have lived for decades in refugee camps. They have also constituted various-sized communities in the U.S., Canada, Latin American countries, Western and Eastern Europe, northern Africa, in the United Arab Emirates, in the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere.

Although these various Palestinian communities, many existing in exile, must deal with extremely complex social, political, and economic realities, the Palestinian people as a whole still share a collective culture that has survived geographical separation, dispossession, occupation, and exile.

The adjective "Palestinian" refers to those belonging to Arabs born in Palestine of various (mainly Islamic and Christian) religious denominations. Palestinians include those living in the Palestinian territories, in Israel and also those living in exile. The various Palestinian musical traditions have historically been influenced by the various religious denominations within Palestinian society. Traditional Islam has held a critical stance toward music, and music has traditionally served a limited function within Islamic religious rituals.<sup>1</sup> But as the social status of music and musicians was influenced by the

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<sup>1</sup> "There is no statement in the Holy Qur'an explicitly condemning music. Evidence in the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Ḥadīth) clearly demonstrates that on occasion he listened to music with pleasure, but these texts are open to many interpretations. From an early period, Islamic jurists felt concern about the perceived dangers of music and began to differentiate between admissible (*ḥalāl*) and inadmissible (*ḥarām*) music, both sacred and secular." Eckhard Neubauer and Veronica Doubleday, "Islamic religious music," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* [web page: University of Victoria] (<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/52787>), accessed June 28, 2011.

spiritual world of Islam, music has also traditionally been recognized as an important part of everyday life, and Palestinian folk music is often performed by Palestinian Muslims. Christians, who make up a minority within Palestinian society, have been traditionally integrated into the political, economic, and social realms within Palestinian society. The church, in turn, influenced the musical education of Christian Palestinians, who often enjoyed a degree of cosmopolitanism within Palestinian society and beyond.

The rise of Palestinian art music was preceded by various stages of historical musical development. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, an upper urban class was in charge of Arab music that was connected to governing courts. With the decline of these courts, music became more widely available and was increasingly influenced by Western art music. The influence of these historical and sociological issues will become clear in the following course of the article.

Augustine Lama is generally considered to be the father of contemporary Palestinian music. He was born on August 28, 1902 in Ramleh (some twenty kilometers southeast of Jaffa). His family was from Bethlehem and his original family name was Al'Ama. His parents immigrated to Latin America and changed their family name. During Lama's childhood his family moved to Jerusalem. He studied in the Terra Sancta Franciscan School. Already as a twelve-year-old he performed as a church organist. In 1922 he was appointed head organist of the Catholic Church of Palestine. He retired at age 83. Among his students were Salvador Arnita and Yousef Khasho.

Lama composed chorales (e.g., *Cognoverunt Discipuli* and *Velum Templi*), several chants for choir, numerous hymns, two masses, and many organ works, among other pieces. In November of 1948 he composed the organ piece *Postludio*, wherein he expressed his sadness and despair about his country being torn apart by war. Lama died on July 19, 1988 in Jerusalem.

Salvador Arnita was born in 1914 in Palestine, during the Turkish occupation. At age sixteen, he went to Egypt and played organ in the Cathedral of St. Catherine in Alexandria where, after about a year, he was appointed to the position of choir director. Thanks to a scholarship, he was able to relocate to Rome in 1932. In 1935, he completed his studies at the Academia Santa Cecilia in Rome (composition with Alfredo Casella, organ with Fernando Germani). He subsequently studied choral and orchestral conducting with Sir Landon Ronald at the Guildhall School of Music in London, where he simultaneously taught. In 1936, he returned to Palestine, where he was appointed Music Director of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Jerusalem. He held this post until 1948. From 1938 onwards, he was also active as a teacher: until 1941 at the Bir Zeit College near Ramallah and until 1947, at the Jerusalem Conservatory. In the years from 1941 to 1947, he served as conductor of the Jerusalem Radio Orchestra. In 1948, he fled to Beirut, Lebanon, where he taught at the Conservatory. Arnita then went to Amman, Jordan. From 1949, he was Associate Professor at the American University of Beirut. As conductor, he appeared with the Pittsburgh and Tanglewood Orchestras in 1956, and starting in 1966, with the Cairo Symphonic Orchestra, as well as with the symphonic orchestras of Alexandria, Turin, Halle, and Berlin. He appeared as an organ soloist in the 1930s, 1940s, and again in the 1970s. Arnita died on March 14, 1984 in Amman.

His list of works include *Seven Oriental Dances* for orchestra (1945), *Christmas Motet* for soloists, choir und orchestra (1949), *Fantasia* for piano und orchestra (1950),

Piano Concerto (1951), Symphony No.1 (1952), *The Visit of the Magi* for choir and orchestra (1954), Piano Trio No. 1 (1961), String Quartet (1962), *The Sixth Hour* for baritone and orchestra (1963), Piano Quintet (1964), *Allegretto Pastorale* for oboe and string orchestra (1965), *Andante Meditativo* for orchestra (1965), *Sonata Moderna* for two pianos (1965), and *Oriental Sketches*, Suite No.2 for orchestra (1966).

His work *Identity*, a *cantata drammatica* for baritone, choir, and orchestra, was composed in 1968-1969 and premiered on July 17, 1970 in Cairo. The text set to music is taken from a famous poem written in 1964 by Mahmoud Darwish, commonly considered the most prominent Palestinian national poet.

Write it down, write it down: I am an Arab.  
You have robbed the vineyard  
As well as lands that my sons and I  
Had always cultivated and grown...

Write it down—first write at the top of the page:  
From all people I do not hate any  
And certainly I steal from no one.

If I however go hungry, my flesh will be  
The flesh of those who stole from me.  
Take heed—not to let me hunger,  
Take heed—beware of my anger.<sup>2</sup>

The theme of national identity is central within the composition. One of its main themes is derived from a typical Arab mode (*Hiyaz Kar*). *Taksīm*,<sup>3</sup> a characteristic art of oriental instrumental improvisation on a solo instrument, presented on the traditional string instrument Kanun, introduces the final part of the cantata. The cantata's middle section presents Palestinian folk songs ("The Ice Seller," "The Coffee Giver," and "The Man with the Curly Hair"). One of these songs was introduced to the author of this article during his childhood as an Israeli folk song sung in Hebrew.

This is not the only study that allows one to note connections between the early development of Palestinian contemporary music and Israeli music at its beginning, as exemplified in works by Paul Ben Haim, Alexander U. Boskovich, and others. Ultimately, in the art music of both Christian-Palestinian composers (trained in the tradition of occidental music and forced to leave their homeland and to work in exile),

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<sup>2</sup> Text taken from the poem "Identity Card" in Mahmoud Darwish, *Selected Poems* (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1973), p. 24. The text is taken from an LP record that was produced in the 1970s by the Folklore Group and General Union of Palestinian Women. Translation by the author.

<sup>3</sup> "'Taksīm' indicates a 'division,' 'segmentation,' also used in its plural form *Taqsim*, a term of urban art music in the eastern Arab countries and Turkey. It refers to the improvising presentation of a maqām [q.v.], played on a melody instrument. The corresponding North African genre is called *istikhbār*. The *taksīm* serves generally as an introduction into a measured vocal or instrumental piece, but it has also developed into an independent solo piece." See E. Neubauer, "Taksīm" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs eds., *Brill Online* [web page] ([http://www.brillonline.nl.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_SIM-7349](http://www.brillonline.nl.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-7349)), accessed June 28, 2011.

and Jewish composers (trained in the Occident and, by necessity, emigrating "back" to a "country of origin"), "native" materials and modes are integrated. Whether part of a given composer's music of origin, or foreign and appropriated, these materials have been transformed by occidental compositional techniques and varied aesthetic approaches. Much of what Max Brod attributed to the Mediterranean style of Israeli composers<sup>4</sup> can easily be applied to the music of certain Palestinian composers of "the first generation," although it is necessary to note the important societal, political, and historical differences within these developments. Observing this situation, one sees that the question of the dialectic of the "self" and the "foreign" in the alleged "Global Village" continues to be pertinent and worthy of examination today.

Yousef Khasho was born in Jerusalem on May 24, 1927. After his father passed away when he was five, Khasho was educated at the Franciscan Terra Sancta Monastery in Jerusalem. Already as a nine-year-old he played organ for Augustine Lama, who gave him encouragement and endorsement. Since 1942 Khasho played organ in various churches in Jerusalem. In 1948, he began to work as a music teacher at the Terra Sancta Secondary School. During the 1950s, he spent several years in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Thereafter, he settled in Aleppo, Syria and later in Rome.

In 1966, Khasho was invited to Jordan by King Hussein in order to establish a National Conservatory of Jordan, to which he was appointed the position of director. Afterwards, he took part in developing a new music education curriculum in Libya. In 1972, he returned to Italy, where he remained until 1986. At this time, he established an institute for the intercultural study of Mediterranean and European music. In 1989, Khasho moved back to Jordan, taking part in the establishment of the Music Academy in Jordan. He taught at the Al-Albait University (near the northern city of Mafraq). Khasho died on March 8, 1997.

His catalogue includes twelve symphonies, an operetta for children, and numerous chamber music works for piano and one instrument or voice. Khasho was at home in various styles and genres and integrated oriental and occidental musical idioms within his compositions. In the first movement of his four-movement fourth symphony (entitled *Jerusalem*), Khasho combines a Gregorian *Kyrie* with a traditional Muslim call to prayer ("Allahu Akbar"). The second, slow movement depicts the atmosphere in the city in the turbulent years 1948-1967. The third, fast movement is a musical depiction of the fight for the city and its conquest by the Israeli military in the Six-Day War in 1967, while the final movement is an expression of resulting sadness of the Palestinian people after the war. In the course of the final movement, occasional sudden eruptions are heard and these serve to express the anger and uprising of the Palestinian people within the city during the occupation years.

Habib Hasan Touma was born in Nazareth on December 12, 1934. He graduated from the Tel Aviv Music Academy in 1961 where he studied composition with Alexander U. Boskovich. In 1963, he moved to Germany, where he dedicated himself primarily to the field of ethnomusicology. He died in 1998. Touma is the author of multiple books, among them *Maqām Bayati in the Arabian Taqsim*<sup>5</sup> and *The Music of the Arabs*.<sup>6</sup> His list of compositions include *Taksim* for piano, *Suite Arabe* for piano (ca.

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<sup>4</sup> Max Brod, *Die Musik Israels* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Habib Hasan Touma, *Maqām Bayati in the Arabian Taqsim* (Jerusalem: Israel Music Publications, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> Habib Hasan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996).

1961), *Samai* for oboe and piano (ca. 1961), *Rhapsodie Orientale* for two flutes and drum (ca. 1961), *Study No.1* for flute (ca. 1962), *Study No.2 (Combinations)* for flute (ca. 1965), and *Reflexus I* for twelve solo string instruments or string orchestra (ca. 1965).

François Nicodeme was born on August 15, 1935 in Jerusalem. As an eight-year-old, he won the piano prize of the Palestinian radio. After 1948, he left his home country. He was active as a musician in several clubs in Amman, Beirut, Damascus, and Kuwait. He later concertized as a virtuoso pianist in Bulgaria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Egypt, West Germany, and Russia. Earning his living in Europe, he was able to take lessons with the conductor Eduard van Beinum, who encouraged him to become a composer. He thereupon started to compose an orchestral overture and the first draft of a symphony.

After the 1967 war, François Nicodeme settled with his family in his hometown of Jerusalem. He composed, among other pieces, three symphonies, seven orchestral overtures, numerous works for violin and piano, and various compositions for piano (among them the *Nocturnes* and *Oriental Dances*, a cycle of fifteen pieces). His *Variations on a Theme by Abdul Wahab (Al Lil Lamma Khili)* for piano and orchestra is one of his best-known compositions. One could describe Nicodeme as belonging to the romantic school of Palestinian composers. François Nicodeme died at the age of forty-one in Jordan on February 14, 1976.

Amin Nasser was born in Ramleh in 1935 and grew up in Bir Zeit. His first attempts at composition were undertaken as a fourteen-year-old. He graduated from Bir Zeit College and went to Vienna to study piano and composition at the Imperial Academy of Music and Performing Arts. After receiving his degree, he continued his education in Germany. After his return to Bir Zeit, he was employed as an instructor for four years at Bir Zeit College. He then went to Amman, Jordan and participated in the establishment of the Jordanian Conservatory. Nasser became the successor of Yousef Khasho as director of the Conservatory and held this position for three years. He subsequently returned to Bir Zeit and was co-founder and first director of the National Conservatory, part of Bir Zeit University, retiring in 2002. A year later he immigrated to the USA, where he lives today. His composition, entitled *To My Mother*, is based on poetry written by his cousin Kamal; this poetry was written immediately after his aunt learned of the shooting of her son by Israeli soldiers in Beirut in 1973. Among his works are the Piano Sonata No. 2 and *Oriental Rhapsody*. Nasser's music effectively expresses the Palestinian national spirit.

Patrick Lama was born in 1940 to an Armenian mother. He was introduced to music by his Palestinian father, Augustine Lama, long-time organist of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and as composer of organ works and liturgical music. Patrick Lama taught music in Jerusalem and Amman and, from 1968 on, he studied further in Paris. He attended the École Normale de Musique, Paris, studying piano with Marcel Ciampi, conducting with Pierre Derveaux, and composition with Henri Dutilleux.

His list of works includes mainly piano compositions and songs, among them *Eclats*, *Evocation*, *Souvenirs I-II*, *Passé-Présent*, *Images d'Orient I-III*, *Huit variations sur un thème palestinien*, *Quatre préludes*, and *Bashraf*. He also composed *Le fleuve et la mort* for soprano, flute, oboe, clarinet und piano (text: Badr Shakeb As-Sayyab, 1992), *River's Words*, Cantata for soprano, two flutes, two oboes d'amore and three violoncellos (text: Chawki Abdelamir, 1997), and *The Doves Flew Away* for soprano and chamber ensemble (text: Mahmoud Darwish, 1999).

In October 1994 Lama was, for all intents and purposes, chosen to be the national Palestinian composer by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, as he was asked to present his piano music at the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony for Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat<sup>7</sup>. Patrick Lama lives in Paris.

Lama's music clearly exhibits issues of contemporary oriental music, existing between modernism, contemporary oriental music, and traditionalism, whose proponents strictly deny the possibility of such a contemporary oriental music. Patrick Lama's music ascribes itself neither to a strict traditionalist authenticity, nor to a naïve modernism. He rejects applying artificial elements to traditional structures, observing traditions as points of departure for contemporary composition. Patrick Lama strives to integrate the traditional and the modern by combining compositional craft with historical authenticity. For example, Lama, commissioned by the Palestinian Popular Art Center, spent many months in his hometown of Jerusalem to collect Palestinian folk songs, and he is author of the book *La Musique Populaire Palestinienne*.<sup>8</sup>

Patrick Lama's *Canaan*, the first widely acclaimed Palestinian piece of music theater, was composed in 1999 and was premiered in Recklinghausen, Germany in the summer of 2000. Translated from the ancient language of Ugaritic and sung in Arabic, the piece deals with the "Baal-Myth," the takeover of Baal, the God of weather and vegetation. The text of this myth, written in cuneiform, was discovered in 1928 on six clay tablets from the second century B.C.E. found in Ugarit, an ancient commercial metropolis located ten kilometers north of the Syrian seaport of Latakya. The opera was to have been shown in 2001 at the opening of a sixty-million-dollar conference and exhibition center, located south of Bethlehem at the water reservoir Salomonis (connected to Jerusalem's two-thousand-year-old aqueduct system). Unfortunately, the opportunity to present an opera in Arabic to an Arab audience remained unfulfilled owing to the complex political situation at the time of the second intifada.

William Nicodeme, the brother of composer François Nicodeme, was born in 1947 in Jerusalem. William Nicodeme studied music at the Terra Sancta School in Jerusalem, where he studied composition and piano with Augustine Lama. At the age of twelve, he won a gold medal for his singing ability from the Patriarch of Jerusalem. After graduating from secondary school he received two years of instruction from his brother. After the Six-Day War, William Nicodeme received a scholarship to study at the Rubin Academy in (West) Jerusalem, going on to study composition with Father Armando Perucci in the Franciscan Monastery of Jerusalem. Since 1972, he has concertized in Palestine and in several European countries.

His catalogue of works includes the piano suite *Carneval of Melancholy*, *Mother's Tears* and numerous other compositions for piano, four-part masses with organ accompaniment, as well as *Ave Maria*. Nicodeme's compositions can be described as incorporating a Romantic musical language and aesthetic.

Abdel-Hamid Hamam was born in 1943 in Lod. During the 1948 war, he fled with his family to Jordan. He received a scholarship enabled him to study at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. In 1968, he returned to Amman where, starting in 1974, he taught at the Conservatory. In the years 1974-1978, he served as director of the Conservatory and the Institute of Fine Arts. Hamam then received a scholarship to

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<sup>7</sup> On this occasion the internationally successful pop singer Ofra Haza represented Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Lama, *La Musique Populaire Palestinienne* (Paris: Editions du Temoignage Chretien, 1982).

study in Paris at the Sorbonne, where he received a Masters degree, going on to receive his doctorate from the University of Wales in 1982. Hamam has been employed at the Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan, where he has served as director of the Faculty of Fine Arts. His catalogue of works contains music for orchestra, vocal music, chamber music works, and compositions for piano (including his *Lento* in B-flat major).

For some members of the younger generation of contemporary Palestinian composers, many of whom were either born into or grew up in Western exile, or some who, for instance, were trained in Israeli music academies, questions of national identity in music become secondary in nature. These Palestinian composers, living in Paris, Berlin, and Nazareth, have developed their own individual contemporary musical languages and aesthetic orientations, engaging the spirit of the time in a manner not constitutively far removed from that of their colleagues in their countries of residence.

Mounir Anastas was born in Bethlehem in 1963, before the Six-Day War, when the city still belonged to the West Bank of Jordan. In the years 1973-1982, he took piano lessons, receiving his first diploma (B.Sc.) from the École des Frères Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in Bethlehem. He continued his studies in Paris at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and at the Université René Descartes, where he undertook research in the field of music cognition. In the year 1989 he received the Diplôme d'Étude Approfondie (DEA). Anastas studied harmony and music history in the years 1985-1987, and 1985-1989 he studied composition with Iannis Xenakis at the Université de Paris I St. Charles. From 1987-1991, he studied the cognitive psychology of music with Stephen McAdams at the Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques and IRCAM. Anastas participated in various composition courses and workshops with Pierre Boulez, Olivier Messiaen, Franco Donatoni, Luigi Nono, Toru Takemitsu, Elliott Carter, and Klaus Huber. He currently lives in Paris.

Anastas created in 1990-1993 the *classe de nouvelles technologies musicales* at the Conservatoire in Vanves. In the years 1991-1999 he was active as a lecturer in music education in Versailles and 1992-1997, he was professor of music history at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre. Twice, in 1997 and 2000, he spent several months in Bethlehem, as he was contracted by UNESCO to assist with the establishment of a music school with cultural initiatives. Since 2000, he has been an advisor to the Palestinian cultural delegation in Paris.

Recent works of Anastas include *Étude procédurale* for double bass and Yamaha TX802 (or live electronics, 1991-92), *Né du néant* for alto saxophone and UPIC (1993), *Maqām* for Flute and UPIC<sup>9</sup> (1993), *La mort du temps* for flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano, and percussion (1998-99), Anastas also composed several works for electronics, such as *Né du néant* (1995), *Maqām* (1995), and *Sentence Funèbre - Plédoirie musicale contre la peine de mort* (2002), pieces for solo instruments, including *Petite étude pour la paix* for piano (2000), *Glisse en do* for violin (2000), *Bis en Ré* for violin (2001), and *Les Routes de l'Olivier* for timpani (2003), and pedagogical works, such as *Exercices architectoniques* for piano (2001), *Bis en sol* for piano (2001), and *L'Amour en La* for piano (2001). He also composed two orchestral works, *Le cri du peuple* for flute, percussion, and fifteen string instruments (2003-2004) and *Break Down*

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<sup>9</sup> UPIC stands for *Unité Polyagogique Informatique de CEMAMu*, the *Centre d'Études Mathématique et Automatique Musicales*. Here he employed the system created by Iannis Xenakis in the 1970s, which allows one to translate graphic notation into sound and music.

*the Walls* (2005), dedicated to Yiftah Spector, former Brigadier General of the Israeli air force, who, in the words of the composer, "refused to bomb the civilians of Gaza."<sup>10</sup>

In his general comments about musical language, Anastas writes: "Almost all of [my] works are structured by perceptual processes and tendencies of hearing (based on studies by Albert S. Bregman, Jean-Claude Risset, Irène Deliège, Stephen McAdams and others). These mechanisms bring forth 'conditions' of perceptive duality and clarity. Because of these 'conditions,' the works bring forth the polarity of tension and release (much like 'dissonance and resolution' in tonal music)."<sup>11</sup> *Maqām* (pl. maqāmāt) is "the term used for the melodic modes of Arab music, covering both the ranking of pitches and the melodic patterns of a given mode." *Maqām* formulas develop in a linear fashion and employ microtonal inflections. These melodic formulas create melismatic entities that can combine with other melodic lines to form processes of variational heterophony. Anastas uses the concept of *maqām* as a point of departure to form a unique compositional vision. In his work *Maqām* (1996), the idea of *maqām* is found in a quasi-contemporary, continuous, linear expression, emancipated from tradition. This work combines quasi-traditional improvisation with modern sound technology to create a musical structuring of the large-scale form and of the smallest levels of detail.

Anastas' methods of working can be understood within the larger context of contemporary Palestinian music. Palestinian composers have often integrated conventional elements of traditional Arab music—for instance, the forms of improvisation *taksīm* and *bashraf*<sup>12</sup>—either consciously or unconsciously—into their compositional vocabulary. It is also not uncommon for Palestinian composers to employ Palestinian folk melodies and dance rhythms, as well as historical themes and texts in their works. A recent increased interest in Palestinian folklore has also led to new crystallizations in the Palestinian musical landscape. In the last years vocal and instrumental ensembles have come into existence, the members of which being active in reviving traditional Palestinian folksongs and in creating new songs (these often include politically motivated songs). One can refer to the bands El-Funoun, Sabreen und Sanaabel, and those active in Jerusalem and in the West Bank. The leading figures in this field are Suhail Y. Khoury (a composer and performer of *ney*, clarinet, saxophone and piano) and Said Murad (composer and *ud* player).

Some Palestinian composers have taken more conceptual approaches to composition. Ezzat Nashashibi, born in 1964, is of German-Palestinian origin. He lives in

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<sup>10</sup> Biographical information of composer Mounir Anastas presented in *Radio France* [web page] (<http://sites.radiofrance.fr/francemusique/bio/fiche.php?numero=35180632>), accessed June 28, 2011. Other works by Anastas include *Vision de la paix* for soloists and mixed choir (1999, instrumental version 2000), *Bethléem* for soprano, flute, violin, and piano (1999, instrumental version 2000), *Thème de Bethléem 2000* for piano (2000), *Némésis* for violin and pedalophone (live-electronics) (2001, revised 2003-2004), *Les Cinq Sens* for violin, piano, and percussion (2002), and *Sikour* for soprano, violin, and piano (2002-2003).

<sup>11</sup> Mounir Anastas in a letter to the author on January 8, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> "Musicians distinguish between pre-composed genres, whose melodic direction is unspecified, and performance-generated genres, notably the *taqsīm*, which ascend from the final in an overall arch-like shape, regardless of *maqām*." In the instrumental *bashraf* "each of the four sections (*hanes*; Arabic *khaānāt*) has a different *makam*, separated by a refrain (*teslīm*) in the nominal *makam*: AA' BA' CA' DA'." Harold S. Powers, et al., "Mode," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, [web page] (<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/43718pg5>), accessed June 28, 2011.



Bremen, Germany, and is active as composer, pianist, improviser, and lecturer in physiology. Nashashibi has composed, among other works, *Sprechen*, sound installation (1996), *Rete* for eight cellos (1997), *Trend* for six wind and string instruments (1998), *Diffusionen* for chamber ensemble (1998), *Guko* for speaking choir (1999), and *Liebe...Leise*, sound installation for flute, bass flute and electronics (2000).

He writes: "As a composer I am interested in open systems that leave room for surprise. Therefore I like to write pieces in which processes that are based on response-time as well as on models of self-organization play a role. For the performers, this leads to new possibilities for decision-making in a creative room-for-play. Countless prototypes for such open systems can be found in nature and I intend to remind listeners of such natural processes—and listeners often tell me that the works remind them of natural processes. Another point of focus in my work is the interconnectivity of music with other art forms. I believe that the forging of relationships between art forms can improve the ability for new music to be communicated."<sup>13</sup>

Other younger Palestinian composers have been influenced by the Western classical tradition. Bishara Khel was born 1968 in Nazareth as an Arab Christian citizen of Israel. His father is musical director of the Basilica Choir in Nazareth. In his childhood Bishara Khel learned violin and piano, going on to study composition at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem with Tzvi Avni and Menachem Zur. He has composed music for the stage and for television, and has been active as an arranger and recording technician. Khel is an employee of a computer firm in Haifa and lives in his hometown. His works include *Fantasie* for violin solo (1991), *The Volcano* for orchestra (1994), *Cycles* for string orchestra and harp (1995), *The Earth* for orchestra (1996), *A Glance to the Sky* for piano (1997), *Spiral* for vibraphone, violin and cello (1997), Quintet for double basses (1997), and Quintet for horns (1997). Influenced by music of the classical era, with its dependence on motivic development, Khel's music is characterized by its virtuosic spirit, and is not radically different from the music of many of his Jewish-Israeli colleagues.

The relationship between politics and music continues to be explored in new ways amongst the younger generation of Palestinian composers. Samir Odeh-Tamimi was born on January 5, 1970 in Jaljulias (fifteen kilometers northeast of Tel Aviv) as an Israeli citizen of Islamic faith. For many years, he was active as a performer in traditional Arab music ensembles. From 1992-1996, he studied musicology at the University of Kiel, Germany. He then went on to study with Younghi Pagh-Paan at the Hochschule für Künste in Bremen, Germany. She encouraged him not to ignore his cultural background, but on the contrary, to allow it to become a productive, driving force for his compositional expression. Currently living in Berlin, Odeh-Tamimi has recently undertaken serious study of the various traditions of *Qur'an* recitation as well as of Islamic Sufi rituals. He has employed poetry in his works, setting texts by two poets murdered in Auschwitz, Yitzchak Kazenelson and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. In this way, the composer shows a commitment to the call for justice and humanity, as he contextualizes the Middle East conflict and Palestinian national protest through a sensitive attention to European history.

Odeh-Tamimi has composed, among other pieces, *Challom Kattan* (Hebrew: *A little Dream*) for solo flute with large frame drum (2008), *Cihangir* (the name of a section

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<sup>13</sup> *Musikunterricht Bremen* [web page] (<http://www.musikunterricht-bremen.de/MusiklehrerIn-468.html>), accessed June 28, 2011.

of Istanbul, where the composer spent a month) for large ensemble (2008), *Rituale* (German: *Rituals*) for orchestra (2008), *Jabsurr* for cello and piano (2009), *Madjnnun* for recorder and string orchestra (2009), *Pohilaki* for seven instrumentalists (2009), *Madjnnun II* for recorder and men's choir (2010), *Leila and Madschnun*, music to a theatrical story by Willy Decker for countertenor, actor, chamber choir and large ensemble (2009-2010), and *Hinter der Mauer* (German: *Behind the Walls*), oratorio for four soloist, choir, and ensemble (2009-2010; text by Christian Lehnert).<sup>14</sup>

In the work *Anìn* (Arabic: *Inwardly, Crying From a Deep Pain*) for alto flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, percussion, violin, viola, cello, and double bass, composed in 1998-1999, gourd-shakers and Arab drums are employed, while pitch structures are heard in a microtonal framework. The work is based on a poem by the Syrian poet Nizar El-Qabbani. In this poem, the home country becomes personified through a pregnant woman who despises her embryo. Through such compositions, Odeh-Tamimi presents a music that is deeply affected by the contemporary political situation in the Middle East, alluding to the humane aspects of the conflict in a powerful but understated manner. His compositions, characterized by sections of energized transformations, often give way to subtle, contemplative moments.

The question can be posed as to whether all the participants in the discussed music scene actually have an interest in developing a characteristic, contemporary Palestinian music. From a historical perspective, composers in resurgent nations have often had aversions to taking part in broad musical or artistic movements. There have been many efforts in the past, within such nations, to synthesize foreign musical styles with elements of musical folklore to create a national music that serves to accompany the political aspirations of the people. The creation of such national schools most often necessitates a father figure as well as a chosen tradition, as is known from the history of the nineteenth century. National music is indeed, paradoxically, a universal phenomenon and one that is politically motivated.

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<sup>14</sup> Other works by Odeh-Tamimi include *Hutàf Al-Arwàh* (Arabic: *Scream of Spirits*) for clarinet/bass clarinet, percussion and two cellos with digital amplification (2000-2001), *Ahinnu* (Arabic: *I Long For*) for three amplified recorders (2001), *Hutàf Al-Arwàh II* for alto and bass flutes, clarinet/bass clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion, piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass with digital amplification (2001, dedicated to the children of Palestine), *Ahinnu II* for piccolo/alto flute, oboe, clarinet/bass clarinet, percussion, violin, viola, and cello (2002, based on a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, dedicated to the mothers of Palestine), *Ahinnu IV* for horn and two trombones (2002), *Sillsàl* (Arabic: *Earth Moving*) for accordion and percussion with digital amplification (2002), *Bukkà* for string orchestra (2003), *Ja-Nàri* for trumpet, horn, bass trombone, and percussion (2003), *Tamáni I* for solo cello (2003), *Zikkrá* for solo percussion (2003), *Hálatt-Hissár* for a narrator and 31 instrumentalists (2003-2004), *Li-Umm-Kámel* (*For Umm Kámel*) for flute, piano, and percussion (2004; dedicated to the memory of the composer's grandmother), *Námi* for soprano, bass flute, three violas, and harpsichord (2004), *Ratháa* for double bass and accordion (2004), *Shattila* for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (2004-2005), *Gaddrója* for three sopranos and 41 musicians (2004-2005), *Li-Sabbrá* for recorder and percussion (2005), *Rojagdád* for three sopranos, alto, and counter-tenor (2005), *Láma poím...* for orchestra with ud (2005-06), *Shira shir* for baritone and orchestra (2006; text by Yizchak Katzenelson), *Tslalim* for accordion (2006), *Madih* (Arabic: *Canticle*) for four Arab musicians (ney, ud, qanun, djoza) and chamber ensemble (2006), *Challomot* (Hebrew: *Dreams*) for voice, recorder, trombone, piano and percussion (2007-2008; text by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger), *Aufbruch* (German: *Departure*) for string orchestra (2008), *Tamáni II* for cello solo (2008). A full catalogue of Samir Odeh-Tamimi's works can be found at the Ricordi website: *G. Ricordi & Co.* [web page] (<http://www.ricordi.de/odeh-tamimi-werke.0.html?&L=1>), accessed June 28, 2011.

It is possible that, considering issues of cultural heritage and cultural politics, the respective future political authorities of a Palestinian state would welcome the possibility to speak of a contemporary Palestinian music. The organization—most likely a Ministry of Culture—that would oversee the cultural life of this future Palestinian state and hopefully show support for new music, thereby granting it a free realm of action, would also be able to significantly influence the development of this music. However, the musical spirit usually does not just wait for bureaucratic support, and it is crucial that Palestinian composers continue to create out of internal motivation, on their own terms, and by following their own intentions. While the general cultural situation of the Palestinian people is still to be determined, the question of an intrinsically contemporary Palestinian music must, for the time being, remain unanswered.

Translated by Dániel Péter Biró