



## Music of Morocco

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### **A Brief History of Morocco**

The Kingdom of Morocco is an African nation of over 31 million inhabitants covering over 172,000 square miles, approximately the size of California. Bordering the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Morocco is located just nine miles south of Spain, separated by the Strait of Gibraltar. The Atlas Mountains cover much of the country, although the world's largest dessert, the Sahara, nearly the size of the United States, lies to the south and east of these mountains (Nelson, 2012, 6-13). The country is prosperous owing to its fishing resources and fertile agricultural soil and to it being the world's largest exporter of phosphate (Sater, 2016, 112). The country's capital is Rabat, and its largest city is Casablanca. The official language is Arabic, although the Moroccan dialect is Darija, and the official religion is Islam. Although Morocco was a French colony, its practice of Islam and use of the Arabic language have given it a significant cultural orientation toward the East (Sater, 2016, 152).

Morocco was among the first to recognize the U.S. Declaration of Independence and has the longest, uninterrupted friendship agreement with the United States that dates back to 1787 (Sater, 2016, 170). During World War II, America supported Morocco's independence, and through the Manifest of Independence issued in 1944 by the Istiqlal Party, Moroccan nationalists pushed for independence (Miller, 2013, 142-45). At the time of its independence from France in March of 1956, over 70 percent of its people were living in rural areas, representing feudalism and backwardness with a political field marked by regional, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural rivalries (Sater, 2016, 30, 34). The



average income in 2013 in Morocco was around \$3,000, along with high illiteracy, a low quality of mass education, and high unemployment (Sater, 2016, 144). Morocco's traditional ruling class, Shurfa, claims ancestry to the Prophet Mohamed, and the Istiqlal Party reflects a strong sense of nationalism. Morocco has external links to Europe and the United States that help it achieve economic, military, and diplomatic support, including U.S. Fulbright scholarships for U.S. and Moroccan citizens and Peace Corps activities (Sater, 2016, 155-56).

Morocco consists primarily of two ethnic groups--the Berbers, mostly farmers and herders who have lived in or near the mountains for more than 4,000 years, and the Arabs. The name, "Berbers," or "Barbarians," was given to them by the Romans who found them unconquerable—the Berbers, however, call themselves, "imazighen," or "free men." They date back to the Neanderthal, of whom "Rabat man" was found in a cave at Temara Beach near the capital (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 6). The first known inhabitants of Africa's northwestern corner, the Berbers held a monopoly over the trade of salt, gold, and slaves and spread culture throughout the region. The Berber language, Tamazirt, is divided into three dialects (Lecomte, 1993, 12).

The Moors live in the extreme south of Morocco along the Dra River and speak Arabic intermixed with Berber words (Songs and Rhythms of Morocco, 3). The first Muslims arrived in 684 in Tangier, resulting in battles between the Arabs and the Berbers. In 711, a Berber army of converted Muslims invaded Andalusian Spain (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 6).

With the arrival of U.S. soldiers in World War II, the introduction of American and French films, Egyptian cinema in the early 1950s, the proliferation of newspaper advertising, women's magazines, radio, and television, the role, dress, and comportment of women began to change in Morocco. Feminism blossomed after 1989 with increased education, employment, a rise in the age of marriage, and the emergence of "individual" identity as opposed to a family-oriented, male-controlled one (Miller, 2013, 192-93).

There has been a rise in political Islam since the 1980s in addition to large numbers of people living in the countryside, the zuwaya, migrating to the cities



(Sater, 2016, 37); only the elite, those who are fluent in French, have had access to promising majors, study abroad, and expensive, tuition-based universities (Sater, 2016, 67). The rural zuwaya, however, are the ones who have determined the outcomes of power struggles throughout Moroccan history (Sater, 2016, 52). It has been the disenfranchised and excluded people, primarily the younger and relatively well-educated people who were unable to achieve social mobility, and failed economic development that have turned people to radical Islamic discourse, according to James Sater, Professor of Political Science at American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (Sater, 2016, 62). Concurrently, though, has been the campaign for Berber cultural rights and the preservation of their language and heritage—40 to 45 percent of Moroccan society are Berber speakers (Miller, 2013, 194-95).

The 1990s experienced an emphasis on reform and modernity (Sater, 2016, 78), and Morocco has undergone considerable political and economic reform since 1999 under the leadership of Mohamed VI, a member of the Alawis family who claims lineage to the Prophet Mohamed (Sater, 2016, 1). The Arab Spring of 2011 saw the populace striving to have a greater voice in government, resulting in Muhammed V instituting a new constitution that enhanced the legislative powers of the parliament and increased the independence of the judiciary (Miller, 2013, 235). The constitution enshrined democratic principles and promoted greater gender equality (Sater, 2016, 98). The 2000s were marked by a duality of reform and continuing authoritarianism (Sater, 2016, 102). Under Muhammed V, the government built barriers against religious extremists, launched a war on poverty, supported human rights, and strengthened ties with Europe and the United States (Miller, 2013, 222). Morocco is considered to be more accessible than other Arab countries owing to the prevalence of the French language in both oral and written conversation and also more open to the West owing to tourism and migration as a source of revenue (Sater, 2016, x).

Morocco is a country rich in traditions influenced historically by French law owing to the post-colonial link between the two countries. As stated by Ammar Naji, assistant professor in the race, ethnicity, and migration studies program at



Colorado College, “Islam became a collective voice for people of different backgrounds and further functioned as a mechanism of revolt against secularism and European materialist thinking.” (Naji, 2015, 258). Although a Muslim country with its official state religion being Islam, Morocco bans the wearing of the hijab and any other Islamic dress in banks, military and paramilitary institutions, and many private companies (Bijdiguen, 2015, 138). Wearing the hijab, however, as stated by author and Islamic feminist Loubna Bijdiguen, serves as Islamic marketing that “transfers religion beyond private space and into public space” among political ideals that otherwise “promote a ‘modern Islam’ based on the implementation of ideals such as democracy, equality, and progress within the framework of modernity . . . The veil is not only associated with Islamism and extremism but also with the act of promoting it as a product for public consumption and transformation . . . paradoxically to be associated with the absence of women from social life and public function . . . And contrary to various claims, women in Morocco are increasingly aware of the importance of getting involved in political life.” Both hijab and the beard reflect the division between those promoting political Islam and those endorsing a secular ideology with separation of religion and politics (Bijdiguen, 2015, 138-42).

### **Music of Morocco**

Islamic music was transmitted by ear, not written down, opening the music up to interpretation based on a particular region, the influences of religions and cultures, and other permutations over time (Shiloah, 1997, 2). Folk music stems from the importance and profound esteem of poetry in Islamic society (Shiloah, 1997, 4). Musical training in Morocco, as in early European instruction in Classical music, was individual, based on a master-pupil relationship that begins on a formal basis but that eventually turns into an almost paternal relationship (Shiloah, 1997, 5). In performance, the musician is free to demonstrate his or her creativity and imagination, using ornamentation and variation (Shiloah, 1997, 5). The scale is divided into 17 intervals, including roughly three steps for each pitch, far more subtle than in Western music (Shiloah, 1997, 6).



The instruments of Morocco include the oboe (rhaita), the frame drum (bendir), the goblet-shaped drum (darboka), the double-headed drum (tabbal), iron cymbals shaped like dumbbells sliced in half (qarqaba), small cylindrical pottery drums (tarija), small flutes (awad), a small piece of metal struck with a metal rod (naqus), the banjo, the small tambourine (tar), the two- or three-stringed, pear-shaped lute (guimbri), the violin (kamenjas), bagpipes (ghaita), a string instrument (outar), the viola (kemenja), the cylindrical, wooden drum that hangs from the neck (tbel), the drum of the Moors (guedra), and metal castanets (querqbat). The voice is produced from the upper part of the throat and the upper areas of the mask up to the eyebrows (Maroc, 1998, 12).

The music, instruments, and traditions are described below, beginning with those of the indigenous Berbers, the Andalous, the Gnawa, and the Sephardim followed by Sufi music, dance music, modern music, popular music, rap, rock, and fusion.

### **Berber Music**

Living in the Atlas Mountains, the Berbers incorporate music and poetry into their everyday lives, including bread songs, weaving songs, and roofing or plowing songs (Maroc, 1993, 11). Their music is divided into three categories: village, ritual, and professional. In village music, an entire community may come together in the open air to sing and dance in a large ring around an ensemble of drums and flutes. The best known dances are the ahouache and the shidus. In ritual music, sometimes involving the rites of the agricultural calendar, marriage, or evil spirits, drums and rhythmic handclapping are common. In the summer, professional troupes of traveling musicians, called Indyazn, perform in village squares, with the leader improvising on poems telling of current affairs. Drum, rehab, and clarinet accompany the singer, and the clarinet acts as the ensemble's clown (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 1).

#### **Example 1: Berber Music**

This is Berber music featuring the 'awwade, a short flute played obliquely (Lecomte, 1993, 13).



Rwals are Berber musicians from the Sous Valley who perform ancient musical theatre involving poetry, fine clothes, and jewels. The ensemble consists of the single-string rehab, one or two lotars (pear-shaped lutes), sometimes nakous (cymbals), and many singers. They perform their own repertoire, usually improvisations and on current affairs, and perform at every celebration. The all-women ensembles are called raysal (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 1).

The Ait Bou Guemmez is a Chleuh, or Berber, group who lives in the highest valley of the High Atlas Mountains and performs a whirling dance called A'hidous, led by the double clarinet of the boughanim, an emblematic figure associated with pre-Islam, who also plays the 'awwada, a short flute held obliquely. The vocal music ranges from solo improvisations celebrating the beauty of nature to work songs by female ensembles. Dances are accompanied by a mixed chorus playing large frame drums.

#### Example 2: Whirling Dance

A'hidous is a restrained dance from the Middle Atlas Mountains based on two- and three-beat rhythms; the whirling, extroverted dance is called A'whach and is based on two- and six-beat rhythms. The double clarinet is played by the boughanim, the man who plays the reed and leads the dance by playing in the middle of the circle. The singers also play bendir, or frame drums, while dancing themselves in a counterclockwise direction with the dancers (Lecomte, 1993, 13).

The Berbers from the Middle Atlas Mountains sing in a powerful voice, sometimes alternating between dialectical Arabic and the Berber language. The music is always accompanied by drums, a reed pipe, the ghaita (oboe, played using circular breathing), and a three- or four-stringed lute, the lotar (Maroc, 1998, 3).

Haouzia music, sung in Arabic, is from the Marrakesh region, the plain to the north of the Grand Atlas Mountains, and uses a violin that is not a Berber instrument (Wanklyn, 1966, 2). Aissawa is a religious sect that originated in the



17<sup>th</sup> century in Meknes and whose music is heard throughout northern Morocco. Their patron, Sidi Aissa, renders them immune from physical danger; thus, all of the snake charmers in Marrakesh are Aissawa (Wanklyn, 1966, 2).

#### Example 3: Aissawa Music

This is music for an 'amara, a pilgrimage and festival lasting from a day to a week in honor of a saint. Comprised of the Aissawa religious sect of northern Morocco, the festival includes musicians and dancers performing day and night to achieve a trance-like state (Wanklyn, 1966, 2).

### **Andalous Music**

Arab-Andalusian music, with its classical tradition dating back 1000 years ago to Moorish Spain, can be heard in the Moroccan centers of Rabat and Oujda. It was created by Zyriab (789-857), an Iraqi-born singer, composer, and scholar, who lived in northern Morocco and whose greatest invention was the nûbâ, a classical suite, that forms the basis of Andalous music. Islam was expelled from Andalusia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; thereafter, the school of music of Valencia moved to the Moroccan city of Fez, and the school of music in Granada moved to the Moroccan cities of Tetouan and Chaouen (Waugh, 2005, 131). The cities in Morocco with the strongest Andalusian heritage today include Tangier, Tetouan, Chefchaoun, Fez, Rabat, and Oujda (Simour, 2016, 103).

The most famous Andalous orchestras are in Fex, Rabat, and Tetouan. The typical Andalous orchestra uses rehab (fiddle), oud (lute), kamenjah (violin-type instrument played vertically on the knee), qanum (zither), darbuka (metal or pottery goblet drums), and taarja (tambourine). Wind instruments, such as the ghitâ (oboe), can be found in certain Sufi circles (Waugh 2005, p. 131), and clarinet, flute, banjo, and piano have also been used. Andalous music, unlike Moroccan popular music that is viewed as being low class (Simour, 2016, 105), is considered to be elite, of old and noble families (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 2), performed on television, and closely connected to old centers of learning, trade, government, and urbanity (Glasser, 2016, 35).



A nûbâ is a vocal and instrumental suite of songs originally composed for every hour of the day--most have been lost. There are thought to have been 24 modes and nuba corresponding to the hours of the day, and each mode is thought to embody or express a certain emotion (Glasser, 2016, 93-94). There are currently only four full nûbat, each of which can last up to seven hours and over several days, and seven partial nûbat that make up the current repertoire (Waugh, 2005, 128). There are 16 nûbat, of which four are unfinished, from Algeria that have been approved by Moroccan Gharnati musicians to sing (Bois and Aydoun, 1990, 7). Complete nûbat have five main parts—mizan and meter—and are named after the principle musical mode of which they are comprised. The istikhbâr, within the metered structure of the nûbâ, is a contrasting moment in the music when the singer may break from the rest of the ensemble to display his musical prowess, sounding like improvisation back and forth between the instrumentalists and the vocalist (Glasser, 2016, 25). Each mizan starts with an instrumental prelude followed by up to 20 sana'a, or songs, with subjects ranging from the religious to the taboo.

Milhun is semi-classical, sung poetry that is associated with artisans and traders.

It uses the same modes as the al-ala orchestra but is more lively and danceable. The Milhun consists of two parts—the non-metric taqusin played on the oud or violin which introduces the mode and the qassida, sung poems with words of folk or mystical poets or nonsense lines. Qassida have three parts—al aqsam (verses that are sung solo), al harba (choral refrains), and al-dridka (a chorus with an accelerating tempo). The accompanying orchestra usually consists of oud, kamenjah, swisen (a small, high-pitched folk lute), the hadjouj (bass swisen), taarja, darbuka, handwa (small brass cymbals), and singers. CITE Glasser?

Since the 1800s, the cities of Rabat and Oujda have cultivated another type of Arab-Andalusian repertory, at-tarab al-Gharnâtî, as a tribute to the city of Grenada that was the last Arab bastion of Andalusia. This Arab-Andalusian music can still be heard in the Moroccan centers of Rabat and Oujda, but it is played primarily in Algeria as part of the Tiemcen tradition, spread by Moroccan



Jews who, until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were fleeing Spain (Bois and Aydoun, 1990, 6). This music consists of ouds and kamenjahs with banjo, mandolin, and kwitra (Algerian lute) and is arranged in suites (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 3).

The Gharnati nūbat, or suites, have a succession of rhythmic phases or movements linked together by unmeasured instrumental preludes. Each movement has a varying number of sung poems by soloists, choirs, and/or instrumentalists, and each poem is usually divided into three parts. The first part consists of two or three lines interspersed with instrumental ritornels. The second part is one or two lines sung to a different melody, and the third part is a return to the melody of the first part (Bois and Aydoun, 1990, 6).

#### EXAMPLE 6: Gharnati nuba

“Msaddar” is the first song in this nūbâ, or instrumental and vocal suite, that sings of birds, budding roses, drinking, and love. This first movement of the suite blends the two tetrachords from two different modes to form its melody (Bois and Aydoun, 1990, 8).

Andalusian music requires memory of poetry and song, providing Moroccans with images with which to play (Waugh, 2005, 76). In the performance of this music, the musical authority is called a shaykh, and a mūlū’ is a devotee of the repertoire. They serve in a master-apprentice relationship that consists only of men (Glasser, 2016, 57-58). The repertoire requires knowledge of particular works and modes, educated audiences to understand the music, and musicians capable of performing this complex repertoire (Glasser, 2016, 64).

### **Gnawa Music**

The Gnawa are the descendents of West African slaves who were brought across the Sahara by the Arabs, and this Africanist history places the Gnawa outside of Sufism (Witulski, 2018, 156). As part of a healing ritual based on Muslim piety and African heritage, Gnawa music is heard in the streets, festivals, cafes, and nightclubs (Witulski, 2018, 2). The Gnawa claim their spiritual descent from Sidi Bilal al-Habashi, an Ethiopian who was the Prophet Mohammed’s first muezzin, or caller to prayer. Their musical rites consist of a leader who plays the



gimibrisenir (long-necked lute) and sings, accompanied by garagb (metal castanets), all night for the purpose of spiritual and physical healing, cleansing a person of bad spirits. The music consists of pentatonic melodies with a propulsive drive of syncopated rhythms (Schuyler, 1989, 1995, 3). Songs, sets, and sections, however, can differ according to region, performer, or context (Witulski, 2018, 120).

The lila, or derdba, extends from the night into the next morning, but the ashiyya begins earlier in the evening and concludes soon after midnight, costing the host less in paying for the time of the musicians, space rental, and food (Witulski, 2018, 1). In Jmaa el-Fna, a Medieval entertainment center in Marrakesh with storytellers, snake charmers, acrobats, animal trainers, magicians, and musicians, Gnawa can be seen leaping high in the air with frenetic head movements and twirling tassel to the accompaniment of metal castanets (qaraqeb) and large drums (tbel) worn over the shoulder. A shuwafa, or healer, along with musicians performing songs on the sintir, a three-stringed, skin-faced Gnawi lute, and percussion, lead people into a state of trance for spiritual healing (Schuyler, 1989, 1995, 2). The ritual, or derdeba, has seven stages (Morocco: Traditional Songs, 2010, 2). With colorful clothes and incense that identify each group of spirits, the participants gather outside the house in which the ceremony is to be held, and the drums and qaraqub announce to the neighbors and spirits that the ritual is about to begin (Witulski, 2018, 23). The participants go back into the house in a candlelight procession lead by the m'allam, or lead musician, and the ensemble, or drari. The m'allam takes up the sintir and plays a series of songs with the group to bless the robes that are to be worn while the rest of the participants share dates and milk. The drari musicians begin their development as singers as early as the age of 10 and then progress to the qaraqib (castanets) and finally to the hajhuj (Gnawa lute) (Witulski, 2018, 64). The music is organized around a small number of pentatonic sets within an instrument's octave range, such as the three-stringed ngoni, or banjo, and the rest of the ensemble plays castanets, or qaraqib, as the song increases in tempo (Witulski, 2018, 24). The saints and spirits each have their own tune, and the



music summons them. Spices, incense, and dance also help to hasten a state of trance. Dances can include cutting one's arm, drinking boiling water, covering oneself with dripping candle wax, eating raw eggs or meat, or holding a Qur'an using prayer beads and chanting (Witulski, 2018, 24). The complete ceremony can last from 9 or 10 p.m. until well past dawn, at which time the musicians play lighter music to return the participants to the everyday world (Schuyler, 1989, 4). This music can be blended with jazz, rock, funk, reggae, hip-hop, blues, and drum'n'bass to make it more accessible to various cultures (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 3), blurring the lines between sacred and secular and traditional and popular music (Witulski, 2018, 80). Originating around the Casablanca area, Marsawiyya is a Gnawa style of popular music with upbeat dance songs (Witulski, 2018, 99). Although this music was considered rare, austere, and secretive, festivals today are loud, public, celebratory, and expensive. They demonstrate tolerance, cooperation, diversity, and fusion while also invoking a sense of nostalgia, and Gnawa musicians can now make a living from their talent and experience (Witulski, 2018, 145, 148-49).

#### EXAMPLE 7: Gnawa Music

“Laafou” was performed by the group, Nour Eddine Fatty, that was founded in 1997 and won first prize at the folk festival in Vejano, Italy. Nour Eddine is a musician, choreographer, and singer born of Berber origins in Morocco whose music can also be heard on several film soundtracks. Eddine also plays oud, percussion, guitar, and bagpipes, is a strong supporter of UNICEF, and collaborates with artists of different disciplines and cultures to improve the living conditions of African peoples. The song, “Laafou,” was inspired by the beginning of a Gnawa ritual. It is meant to represent the cleansing of the space in preparing for a ritual. Gnawa belief is that all space and air are unclean with bad spirits, making them necessary to be cleansed. This song represents only one of the seven stages of the Gnawa ritual—the moment of Bahja, the color red, and the spirit of the same name. The spirit is one of a person who existed in the past, usually a Sufi and spiritual person (Eddine, 2010, 2).



## **Sephardim Music**

In 1492, the Jews of Spain (Sephardim) who refused to renounce their religion, as required by the Inquisition, were expelled and migrated to Portugal, the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Europe, bringing with them five centuries of musical traditions (Wachs, 1990, 3). Sultan Muhammad V refused to round up Morocco's quarter of a million Jews as demanded by the French government when it was under Nazi occupation, although the Jews lost social standing during this period (Sater, 2016, 150). After 1947, Morocco's Jews began a large exodus to Israel and the West. The Six-Day War of 1967 drew away most of the remaining Jews, ending the history of Morocco being the most tolerant of Muslim societies (Miller, 2013, 160).

### **Examples 8: Sephardim Music**

"Diego León" is an example of a romance whose text dates back from pre-exile times to songs of present day. This song belongs in the category of "the faithful love," with a young man, raised in Toledo and Granada, whose love for Dona Juana overcomes many obstacles. This romance is well known in the oral tradition of the Moroccan Sephardim, and its melody is often used for contrafacta, the use of secular music with a sacred text (Wachs, 1990, 19).

### **Example 9: Sephardim Music**

"Achir Bemecharin" is an example of Jewish music that was vocal without instruments—the instrumental interludes were imitated by the soloists and chorus. The music was performed in a synagogue in the Jewish quarter of Meknes. Passages are sung in Hebrew and Arabic, including those by the lead singer of the service, the Hazan. There is a Spanish influence, including the flamenco singer, and folk melodies (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 27-28).



## **Sufism Music**

Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam that highlights the interaction of music and movement or dance that brings one into the spiritual world and makes present the spiritually powerful ancestors (Waugh, 2005, 145). An integral part of daily life in Morocco, Sufi music is liturgical music (Waugh, 2005, 121) and is played in all celebrations, including birth, circumcision, weddings, and religious feasts (Damoussi, 2019, 4). It embraces the thought that life is an engagement with the forces of evil and that how one comes out of this has ramifications on one's future (Waugh, 2005, 112). The Sufi brotherhoods, called *tarikas*, use the *hadra* (a private ritual of music and dance) as a means of getting closer to Allah. The music can also be heard at *mousssem* (festivals devoted to the memory of a holy man), and brotherhoods may play for donations from households wanting to get closer to this patron saint (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 3). Chanting is a transformative, integrative act. The chanter is the master of the ritual process (Waugh, 2005, 45), and there is a clear preference for the male voice to deliver the spiritual message (Waugh, 2005, 141). The *zuhd* (ascetic) strain of Sufi music consists of deliberate weeping and overt, personal condemnation that remembers the soul, the situation of the individual, and his or her awareness of the distance from God (Waugh, 2005, 147). For ordinary worshippers, the classical tradition links the high literary and cultural traditions of the past to the religious experience of the present (Waugh, 2005, 65). The *munshidün*, the Sufi masters, base their religious life on the notion of return—returning to God and their covenant with God and reality—and call on their memory to do so (Waugh, 2005, 186). The text in Sufi music is always text of the past (Waugh, 2005, 50), and the *munshid* must have committed all the words to memory and is expected to express the emotions of these words (Waugh, 2005, 169). As the music of the *munshid* increases in tempo and rises in pitch, he is believed to be going, and to be taking the group, into the words and music of the spiritual world (Waugh, 2005, 160). Wine is an icon of the Sufis' spiritual endeavor, and wines are ranked according to the stages of the mystical experience (Waugh, 2005, 97). Ghiwani



music contains the mystical and Sufist elements where past experiences can be erased, and new, mystic ones can take their place (Simour, 2016, 96).

#### Example 4: Sufi Music

“Ana Dene Den Allah” is a happy Moroccan Sufi song by the master Shakkara from the small town of Tit’wan in northern Morocco. It is in 6/8 meter and uses the maqam G-ajam. It is performed by Rachid Halihal, a native Moroccan who now lives in Denver and New York City, on his CD, *Arabian Music from Morocco*.

Diwan repertoire is devotional music, based on poems, that is performed during a ceremony or meeting. In the Islamic Sufi tradition, the diwan is usually a philosophical or musical symposium that can be sacred or secular and allows for the performers to add their regional style to make the performance unique (Diwan, 2003).

#### Example 5: Diwan Music

“Mawal,” a song form of Egyptian origin that is slow and sentimental, is performed by Rabia Andalusia, an ensemble composed of soloists from the Larache Conservatory in northern Morocco.

### **Dance Music**

Guedra, or bowl, comes from the tradition of passing around a large milk bowl, the center of Saharan social gatherings. The bowl is turned over and used as a percussion instrument, representing hospitality and sharing. Women dress in dark, often indigo, robes and are known for their intricate hand dances and upper forearm motions to portray stories, customs, and daily life (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 28-29).

#### Example 15: Guedra (Dance Ceremony) Music

“Teremida” is music of religious healing that includes the phrase “Ahey,” a Sufi-style religious chant that means, “God is alive.” “Teremida” is in reference to rolling around in ashes, an action taken by those in a trance



who roll around in the ashes of incense or charcoal (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 28-29).

Aachora, of the Haha Tribe, is an Islamic festival celebrating the Muslim New Year and commemorates the final reconciliation of the warring tribes, the Haha and the Chiadma (Wanklyn, 1966, 3).

Jebala music comes from the Jebala Mountains. The toqtoqa Jebalia is a popular form of Jebala music and consists of a song as a prelude and finishes with a dance that accelerates to the end and changes key. The words are improvised, like scat singing (Wanklyn, 1966, 3).

#### Example 16: Bellydance Music

“Tzawaj Magalhalia” was composed by Moroccan composer Chalf Hassan. With a fascination for string instruments, he began performing at age 15 in theatre companies all over Morocco and with bands and professional orchestras. He attended the Moroccan Conservatory to learn music theory and immigrated in 1984 to the United Kingdom as a soloist and an accompanying multi-instrumentalist (Best of Bellydance, 1995, 3).

### **L’Asri Music**

L’Asri, or modern music, gained popular acceptance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was heard in films and on the radio. It does not fit into the category of classical or folk song, for composers borrow music from the classical and folk repertoires and instruments and from other Middle Eastern countries or the West, although there is still a heavy reliance on traditional modes and non-tempered intervals, including quarter tones (Schuyler, 1988, 3). Songs, fairly free in form, usually begin with an unmeasured, instrumental or vocal prelude, called a taqsim. The taqsim allows the musician to tune and connect with the audience (Maroc, 1998, 12). It gradually moves away from the opening tetrachord with the song’s melody and an expanded vocal range before returning back to the initial mode, or maqam, at the end of the song. The main theme acts as a refrain (Morocco, 4).



#### Example 10: L'Asri Music

“Al-Warda As-sghira” (The Young Rose)

#### **Sha’abi Music**

Popular music, called sha’abi, can have a variety of forms and does not belong to a particular group of people. As with modern music, popular music uses modes, quarter tones, and poetry in Moroccan Arabic dialect but is usually strophic, lighter, and uses language of the streets (Schuyler, 1988, 5-6). The oldest form of sha’abi is al’aita, the music of rural communities on the Atlantic coast. With topics of love, loss, lust, and daily life, sha’abi is performed during private and public celebrations and is usually sung in Darja (Moroccan colloquial Arabic). Sha’abi never enjoyed mass appeal with youth, as did raï, and is associated with the same urban centers as nûbâ (Glasser, 2016, 105). The al’aita has two parts. The lafrash is a slow, instrumental prelude, usually on violin, followed by several verses sung in free time. This is followed by the lansab, a syncopated dance that lasts as long as the audience desires. The music usually uses a male or female lead singer, violin, percussion, and backup vocals. More recently, keyboards, electric guitars, and drum machines have been added (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 4).

#### Example 11: Sha’abi Music

“Afak Gul Li Ghur Iyyeh” (Please Just Say Yes)

#### **Rai, Rap, Rock, and Festivals**

Rai began in Algeria in the 1920s and focused on social issues such as disease and colonial occupation. There is a strong Algerian Rai scene in Morocco that can be heard also in some folk music. Typical instruments used are electric guitars, drums, and keyboard instruments (Nelson, 2012, 41). Hip-hop and heavy metal have also become popular as have Moroccan rap groups. Rap groups and their hits include Lbenj (*Anti*), Tari (*Amigos*), 7liwa feat 3robi (*NARI*), Amill Leonardo feat Toto (*Marocchino*), and Shayfeen (*For The Love*). Popular music festivals in Morocco include Oasis Festival (Marrakesh), Beat Hotel



(Marrakesh), Mawazine (Rabat), MOGA Festival (Essaouira), MORE Festival (Marrakesh), Jazzablanca (Casablanca), Gnaoua (Essaouira), and Atlas Electronic (Marrakesh) (Kilpin, 2018, 1-14).

#### Example 14: Rap

According to this video, these were the top five Moroccan rap songs of 2018.

### **Fusion Music**

Moroccan music has been the starting point for all types of fusion, influencing Brian Jones, Ornette Coleman, and the European electronic group Dissidenten. Moroccan sounds have recently been blended with reggae, funk, hip-hop, house, and drum'n'bass by a wide range of international artists (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 4). A more sophisticated style of sha'abi emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the commercial music of Egyptian and Lebanese music that dominated the music scene. Groups usually featured hadjuj, lute, and percussion and occasionally bouzoukis, banjos, congas, and electric guitars. The style combined Berber music with elements of Arab milhun, Sufi ritual, Gnawa rhythms, Western pop, rock, reggae, and rap and, occasionally, with political lyrics (The Music of Morocco, 2011, 4).

#### Example 12: Fusion Music

“Just Tell Me the Truth,” by Najat Aatabu, combines Berber rhythms and singing styles with elements of an Arab orchestra and singing in Arabic. It deals with dating and restaurants, showing that Moroccan men and women experience the same headaches and heartaches as everyone else. The opening words are, “Hi, hi, hi,” or, “Tell me another one” (Lawrence and Barnwell, 1995, 35-36).

The band that defined the hopes and thoughts of the Moroccan people after their independence from France in 1956 was Nass el-Ghiwane and its most celebrated founder and song composer, Larbi Batma. Formed in the 1960s by four young men from a working-class shanty area of Casablanca, Nass el-Ghiwane represented a part of Moroccan society that supported trade unions and



political parties and demonstrated strong resistance against colonialism, rising up against authority, oppression, and manipulation (Simour, 2016, 114). Nass el-Ghiwane and Jil Jilālā became the most successful of all groups in Morocco, singing traditional songs by mystical poets and performing at festivals, a reflection of the public's acceptance of this traditional music and its role in Moroccan identity (Waugh, 2005, 159). Batma knew that darkness and light in literature represented two conflicting forces—good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, love and hate, and happiness and despair (Simour, 2016, 87). The band revived the musical styles of Morocco, including Malhūn, Al'ayta, and Sufist poetry, the use of Gnāwa folk instruments, including Hajhūj or Sentir, Bendir, ta'rija, snitra, Tbilāt, and Tbel, tam-tam, Harrāz, and the more common language, Dārija, instead of Arabic (Simour, 2016, 109). Nass el-Ghiwane arranged older popular and traditional Moroccan rhythms from various parts of the country while focusing on current social and political issues (Simour, 2016, 125), beginning a new tradition of Nāyda, or “fusion music,” spread through the use of radio and the interviewing of artists back stage during large music festivals (Simour, 2016, 170). The group was influenced by artists such as Jimi Hendrix, Santana, Dire Straits, and Bob Marley, giving Moroccan music the Western touch (Simour, 2016, 171) when singing of issues of society and politics (Simour, 2016, 173). Of course, it is this Western influence that led some to believe that Fusion would lead to the weakening of cultural identity by producing music with a more global appeal (Simour, 2016, 175). Nass el-Ghiwane, however, embraced Sufism, a spiritual, Muslim tradition from the 9<sup>th</sup> century that claims a mystical and close connection to the divine (Simour, 2016, 119).

#### Example 13: Nass el-Ghiwane

This is a video of a performance by Nass el-Ghiwane at Mawazine, the international music festival held each year in the Moroccan capital of Rabat, that draws millions of visitors and musical artists from around the world.



## Summary

The Kingdom of Morocco, an independent country only since 1956, is a close ally of the United States and relies on tourism, fishing, agriculture, and the production of phosphate as its primary sources of income. Although steeped in Islamic religion and culture, Morocco is also a land of varying lifestyles and histories, including those of the native Berbers, the Moors and Jews driven out of Spain, those who follow the pious Sufi culture of Islamic spiritualism, and the Gnawa slaves who were brought into southern Morocco by Arabs. The music, customs, values, and everyday lives of these disparate peoples continue to not only blend with each other's but also to fuse Moroccan music and culture with those of Europe, Africa, and America. The influence of Moroccan music continues to play a vital role in shaping contemporary music, especially in the study of rhythm. Music that was once heard by voices, flutes, oboes, strings, bagpipes, auxiliary percussion, and drums—symbolic of Moroccan cultural identity--may now be heard on electric guitars, keyboards, and amplified voices in popular and modern music styles that reflect Morocco's continuing efforts to be active players in the international community. Having already influenced musicians around the world, the music and musicians of Morocco present boundless opportunities for further research in performance, repertoire, history, music education, and performance practice.



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## SLIDES

**Opening slide** (use some zippy color—fuchsia, purple, etc.)

### **Music of Morocco**

Dr. Mark U. Reimer

Christopher Newport University

#### **1. Instruments of Morocco**

Oboe (rhaita)

Frame drum (bendir)

Goblet-shaped drum (darboka)

Double-headed drum (tabbal)

Iron cymbals shaped like dumbbells sliced in half (qarqaba)

Small, cylindrical pottery drums (tarija)

Small flutes (awad)

Small piece of metal struck with a metal rod (naqus)

Banjo

Small Tambourine (tar)

Two- or three-stringed, pear-shaped lute (guimbri)

Violin (kamenjas)

Viola (kemenja),

Bagpipes (ghaita)

String instrument (outar)

Cylindrical, wooden drum that hangs from the neck (tbel)

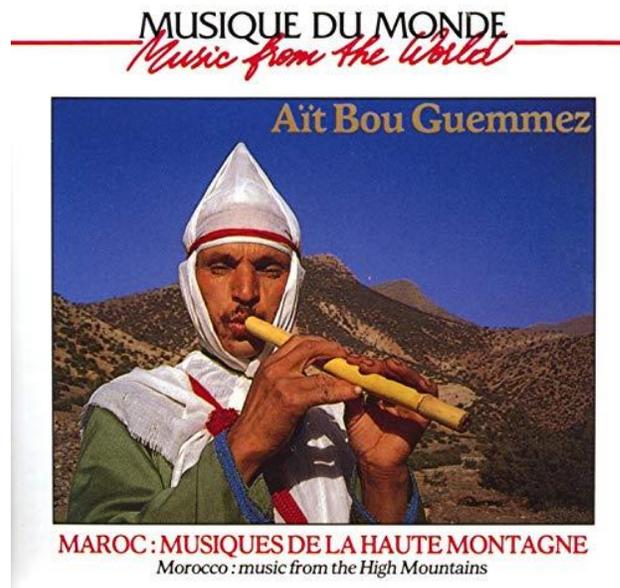
Drum of the Moors (guedra)

Metal castanets (querqbat)



## 2. Berber Music

'Awwade (short flute played obliquely)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r7aBPTwG78>



### 3. Whirling Dance

A'hidous



<https://www.everfest.com/magazine/the-whirling-dervishes-in-fes-imagine-my-surprise>

### 4. Aissawa Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2dZcF3tvZ8>

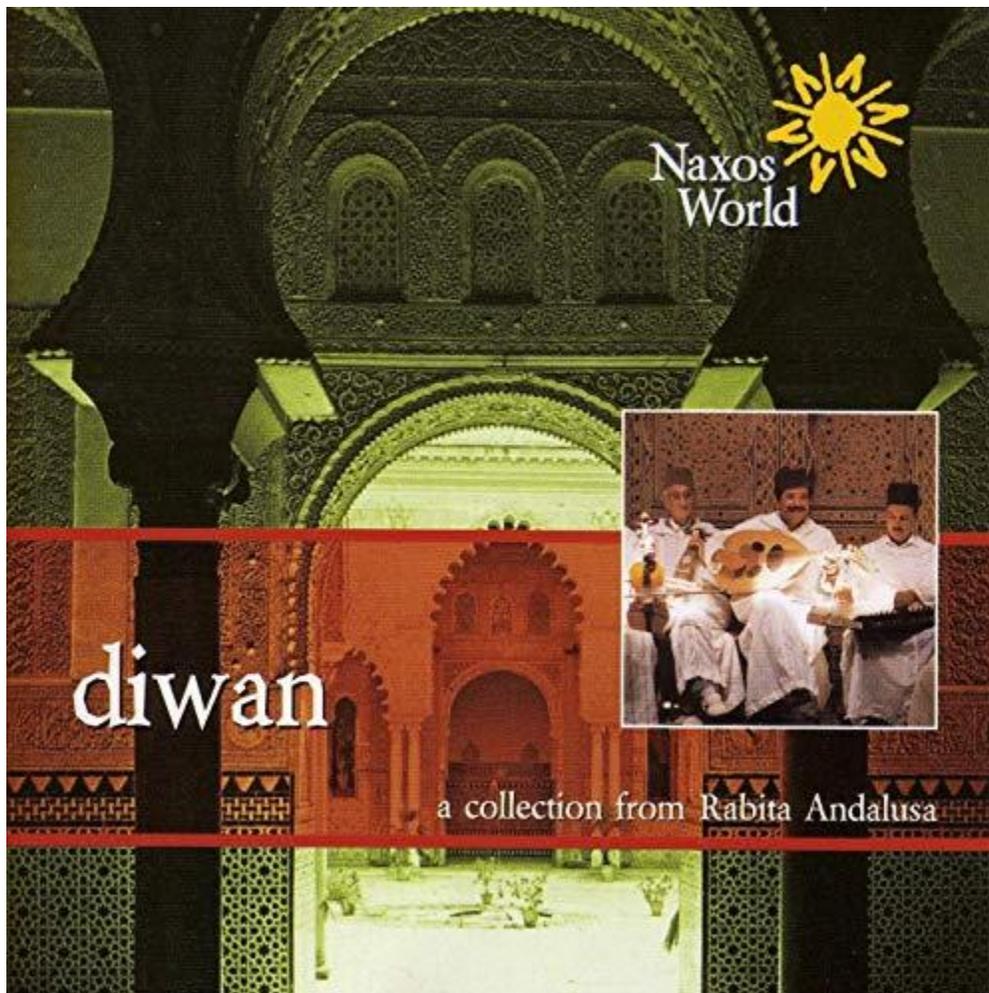


## 5. Sufi Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnrCGAWAMm8>

## 6. Diwan Music





## 7. Gharnati Nuba



<http://www.maisondesculturesdumonde.org/musique-gharnati-nuba-ramal>

## 8. Gnawa Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR3n2wea80k>



## 9. Sephardim Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOXhnD9IFIY>

## 10. L'Asri Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqBn8BmpzI4>



## 11. Sha'abi Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALOLV8CmHGA>



## 12. Fusion Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YISOGNhm3OE>

## 13. Nass el-Ghiwane



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjSNROI\\_-RI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjSNROI_-RI)



#### 14. Rap Music



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arnfR\\_VJNEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arnfR_VJNEw)

#### 15. Guedra Music





## 16. Belly Dance Music



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c29HV9aFCaM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nire9CCVF30>