

Bringing Kurdish Music to the West
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Chairperson: Kip Haaheim

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Abstract

This document will examine the music of two Kurdish composers, Dalshad Said and Brahim Shexo. It will begin with a biography of each composer that discusses important influences and elements of their musical styles. Because Kurdish music is not well known outside of Kurdistan, the document will also provide a brief history of Kurdistan and its musical culture to give the reader some context. This will include a short description of Middle Eastern musical instruments and a discussion of significant current and past Kurdish musicians and musical ensembles. In order to develop a meaningful analysis of Dalshad's and Shexo's music it also will be necessary to introduce a small amount of Middle Eastern music theory.

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I would love to thank all professors at both the University of Kansas and Northern Illinois University for their support throughout my studies in the United States, Professor David Neely my orchestral conducting mentor and Dr.Tami Lee Hughes my previous violin mentor at KU, and Dr. Tim Blickhan and Professor Mathias Tacke at NIU.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this document to my mother Shireen Mohammed and my father Hama Rasheed Abubakir for their education, support, and patience throughout my life. In addition, I would also like to dedicate this document to my wife Shan, my son Sharo, and my daughters Prwsha, Rose, and Sara for their patience. And I wish to dedicate this document to my brothers and sisters, especially Bahez who supported me on my scholarship.

Finally, I dedicate this humble document to Kurdish people and especially Kurdish musicians everywhere in the world.

Bringing Kurdish Music to the West

Introduction

This document will examine the music of two Kurdish composers, Dalshad Said and Brahim Shexo. It will begin with a biography of each composer that discusses important influences and elements of their musical styles. Because Kurdish music is not well known outside of Kurdistan, the document will also provide a brief history of Kurdistan and its musical culture to give the reader some context. This will include a short description of Middle Eastern musical instruments and a discussion of significant current and past Kurdish musicians and musical ensembles. In order to develop a meaningful analysis of Dalshad's and Shexo's music it also will be necessary to introduce a small amount of Middle Eastern music theory.

Dalshad Said: Biography

Dalshad Hama Said is a Kurdish composer and violinist. He was born on March 17, 1958 in Bashiqa, a suburb of Mosul, Iraq. His father wanted him to become a medical doctor or engineer, but he wanted to be a musician. In 1973 he was accepted to the Baghdad Fine Art Institute and studied music there for five years. After graduating with honors in 1978 he became a lecturer at the Teacher Preparation College in Duhok, Kurdistan (in northern Iraq). Around this time he also established the Duhok music ensemble which has produced many well-known concerts and recordings. As a part of the Duhok ensemble he also worked with a women's choir, which was rare in conservative Kurdish society.

Even though Iraq was at war with Iran at the time Dalshad received a scholarship from the Iraqi government in 1984 to study music at the University College of Wales, England where

he earned a master's degree in music in 1988.¹ His master's thesis examined the effect of Leopold Mozart on his son, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In 1988, he earned a certificate in violin performance from the Royal Academy of Music in London as well.² After completing his studies in the United Kingdom he returned to Duhok in 1989, where he began to teach at the University of Baghdad School of Music. During those years Iraq was in another war with Kuwait and in 1991 he left the country and moved to Leonding, Austria where he still lives today and where he is a high school teacher.

After Dalshad immigrated to Austria he continued giving recitals of Kurdish music, including also some classical music from standard western violin repertoire. Additionally, he composed a number of songs for his friend, the famous Kurdish singer Shivan Parvar, who lives in Bonn, Germany.

Many consider Dalshad to be a bridge between Western classical music and Kurdish music because he often 'westernizes' Kurdish folk music in his compositions. His style is distinctly Kurdish and does not seem to be influenced by other Arabic, Turkish, or Farsi styles. Dalshad is a purist and thinks that if Kurdish composers want to improve Kurdish music, they should use their preferred compositional techniques while still preserving a strong connection to Kurdish folk songs.³ He feels that maintaining the original folk tune is important.

Dalshad explains that his musical style is influenced by both Western and Kurdish cultures saying, "The fact that I have lived in two fairly diverse cultures has influenced my music

¹ Tariq Jmbaz and Fikrat Eizzet, "An interview with Dalshad," *Rangin Magazine* No.13 (January 1989): 12.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

to a great degree.”⁴ He spent 22 years in Vienna, historically a hub of Western classical music, and since the 1970s he tried to take advantage of the techniques of Western music in the context of Kurdish music. He described his compositional style as “still Kurdish music, but with a particular Western aroma.”⁵ This quality is evident in Dalshad’s music throughout his career. He typically places the Kurdish folk tune in the violin part, setting it straightforwardly with occasional embellishments borrowed from Western classical violin techniques. His arrangements usually specify piano accompaniment and use Western triadic harmonies; sometimes percussion and bass are added to the ensemble as well. This signifies a profound change from traditional Kurdish performance practice: harmony, as it is understood in Western classical music, is not a part of Kurdish music (or Middle Eastern music in general).

In 1995 Dalshad recorded his first album *Variations on Kurdish Melodies*,⁶ which was the first album of Kurdish violin music to be released in the West. The album was welcomed by audiences in both Kurdistan and Europe. Currently, he is working on a large composition dedicated to the Peshmarga (Kurdish troops) fighting the terrorist organization ISIS. In this work he features singers from all four parts of Kurdistan as a way of symbolically unifying the Kurdish people.

⁴ Ala Shali, “Giving a Western Aroma to Kurdish Music,” *Zagrose Life Flight Magazine* No. 3 (July 2014): 21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Dalshad Said, *Variations on Kurdish Melodies for Violin and Piano Accompaniment* (Sulaimany: Kurdish Heritage Institute KHI, 2004).



Figure No.1 Dalshad Said 1995⁷ (Used by permission)

Dalshad Said: Compositions:

1. *Narin*, Kurdish folk-song, Babel Co., Baghdad, Iraq. (1984)
2. *Shivan*, for violin and piano, Babel Co., Baghdad, Iraq. (1984)
3. *Kavoke* a music piece for violin and piano, Babel Co., Baghdad, Iraq. (1984)
4. *Le le waso* Kurdish song, Babel Co., Baghdad, Iraq, (1984)
5. *Bagie*, Babel Co, Baghdad, Iraq. (1984)
6. *Variation on Kurdish Melodies*, CD of violin and piano containing eight pieces, CCP, Austria. (1995)
7. *Variations on Kurdish Melodies*, score, Kurish Heritage Institute (KHI)., Sulaimany, Iraq.(2004)
8. *Destiny*, a small symphonic poem for orchestra, (2008) unpublished
9. *Spring*, for violin and orchestra, (2008) unpublished

⁷ Dalshad Said's Facebook page, accessed January 25, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/68380699512/photos/pb.68380699512.-2207520000.1428921842./10151436139644513/?type=3&theater>.

Brahim Shexo: Biography

In 1981, Brahim Shexo (Kurdish: Brahîm Şêxo) was born in the city of Gunbade Kauus, which is located in northeastern Iran. His maternal grandfather was a military captain under Qazi Mohammed during the proclamation of the Republic of Mahabad in 1946. After the resulting suppression of Kurdish culture and politics, his grandfather was exiled to Gunbade Kauus in Iran. In 1974 Brahim's father, Mohammed Shexo, a well-known Kurdish musician and Kurdish Syrian, took part in the Kurdish fight for independence and joined the resistance force Mulla Mustafa Barzani. After the failure of the counterinsurgency in 1975 Kurds sought refuge all over the world and his father fled to Iran. There Mohammed Shexo again pursued his musical career and gave music lessons.

In 1983 the Syrian authorities pardoned his father and allowed him to move back to his hometown Qamişlo (Qamishli) which is located in northeastern Syria. Nevertheless, Mohammed Shexo was under constant surveillance by authorities and could not return to the life he had had before his exile. He owned a small music store that eventually closed; the Syrian government forbade his music and allegedly tortured him on a regular basis.

Brahim was eight years old when his father passed away. His uncle, Beha Shexo, also a renowned musician, took care of his brother's family. He saw that the Brahim and his siblings had musical talent and wanted them to follow in their father's footsteps. At first, Brahim was interested in painting and calligraphy and wanted to pursue it professionally. He started to play the bazouki⁸ they had at home but it was too big for him. When his uncle saw him playing it, he bought him one of a more appropriate size. Brahim loved playing along with cassette recordings

⁸ The bazouki is a Middle Eastern stringed instrument similar to a mandolin with a larger fingerboard.

of the Duhok Ensemble (Tîpa Duhokê)—Dalshad Said's group. His bouzouki broke shortly after he got it so he turned to a small mono keyboard, an instrument spanning only two octaves and that could only play one note at a time, which his family also had at home.

As a youth Brahim never took music classes or lessons and as a result was completely self-taught. By the time he was twelve years old he was considered an expert bazouki player. He began to look for greater challenges. His uncle owned a record store that sold music tapes. When Brahim was about fourteen years old, he found some tapes in his uncle's store that opened the door to Western music for him. He began to love the harmonies of Western music and he developed a desire to learn more about the world of music, learn to play other instruments, and to play with other people. However, the circumstances he lived in did not allow him to do so and he went back to painting and calligraphy.

During his teen years Brahim often accompanied his uncle who gave concerts and played the keyboard at weddings. Brahim loved listening to his uncle play old Kurdish folk songs for audiences and appreciated the opportunity to carry on the Kurdish culture. The influence of this early exposure to Kurdish traditional music is still an important part of his musical voice.

When he graduated from high school Brahim stopped playing the bouzouki and focused on the keyboard because he was interested in harmony. He was constantly buying and ordering tapes from all over the world to get a more global understanding of music.

In 1997 Dr. Mohammed Eziz Zaza founded a music institute in Qamishli. Excited by the possibility of learning more about music from professional teachers Brahim signed up for music classes right away, not knowing whether he could afford it, and was eager to begin learning to play the violin. At the same time Brahim also arranged music for many artists in a local

recording studio. Unfortunately, the institute closed after a short period and Dr. Mohammed Aziz Zaza moved to Southern Kurdistan. After the closing of the institute Brahim decided to move out of Qamishli and to seek asylum in Germany. His asylum request was granted in 2004 and he began studying and learning the German language but never stopped playing music in the meantime. He constantly sought contact with German musicians.

From 2006 until 2009 Brahim gave piano lessons in the city of Kiel in northern Germany following the Suzuki method. During this time he also played first violin in the newly founded Chamber Orchestra of Kiel. However, he never was satisfied because he wanted to write his own music rather than always playing the works of other composers. He eventually founded a music ensemble made up of his music student friends to perform his own compositions.

In 2006 and 2007 Brahim underwent several eye surgeries for extreme nearsightedness. Because of his poor vision he had always had to rely on his hearing and his ability to memorize scores. After his surgeries he finally started to see clearly. This was the point in his life in which he finally decided to devote himself to the study of music and musical science (musicology).

In 2008 and 2009 he attended musical science lectures at Kiel University as a guest student for a year. In 2009 and 2010 he temporarily studied music theory at the Conservatory of Music in Detmold (Hochschule für Musik, Detmold). In 2011 he began studies at the Institute of Music at the University of Applied Sciences in Osnabrück, where he is currently completing a bachelor's degree in composition with a minor in piano performance under the direction of Peter Witte. In addition, he translates articles on musical psychology into Kurdish.

Brahim does not compose by following a system but rather according to his feelings and senses, finding himself constantly inspired by everyday life. His compositions are personal. It is

said that they have their own metaphoric language and reflect his past and his homeland. Brahim takes part in many concerts singing only the songs of his father because these songs have special messages about freedom in general and the Kurds' situation in particular. As primary influences he also lists Ukranian comtemporary composer Valentin Sylwesterov, American composer Tina Davidson, Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky.



Figure No.2 Brahim Shexo⁹ (Used by permission)

Brahim Shexo: Compositions:

1. *Dilopên Sîyekê/ Shadow of Drops*, CD, JCP Co., Georgsmarienhutte, Germany. (2014)
2. *Shadow of drops* - Solo Piano. (2006) unpublished, dedicated to Shin Heae Kang
3. *Nema/ Not more* - Solo Piano. (2007) unpublished
4. *Ne ew bû ... ne ew bû / it was not that...it was not that* – Solo Piano. (2010) unpublished
5. *Second Part* – Solo Piano. (2011) unpublished
6. *Ne ew bû ... ne ew bû / it was not that...it was not that* – Strings. (2012) unpublished

⁹ Brahim Shexo, "Brahim Shexo," <http://broderya.wix.com/brahimShexo> (accessed April 12, 2015).

7. *Love* – Choir and orchestra. (2012) unpublished
8. *Nema/ Not More* – Strings and Solo Piano. (2012) unpublished
9. *Way/ Rê* - Solo Violin with orchestra. (2013) unpublished
10. *Danse du Phrygien* – Wind Quintet. (2013) unpublished
11. *Prelude in F / Fa* . (2007) unpublished
12. *And yet / Tevi Wilo* – Solo Piano. (2008) unpublished
13. *Hêvron* – Solo Guitar. (2013) unpublished
14. *Gulek ji du bexcayan / Flower of two gardens* – Solo Harp. (2014) unpublished
15. *Nîgar* – Solo Piano with Violin. (2014) - dedicated to Martyr Nîgar Huseynî unpublished
16. *Saraband in g-minor* – Solo Piano. (2014) unpublished
17. *Kurdish Rhapsody* – Violin and Piano. (2014) unpublished
18. *Ta a din / Up to the other* – Violin and Piano. (2014) unpublished
19. *Pantomime* – Vibraphone, Clarinet in B, Accordion. (2014) unpublished
20. *Solo Violin and Piano*. (2014) – dedicated to Julia Parusch unpublished
21. *Coxe Mino* for violin and piano. (2014)
22. *Spiel im Krieg* – Solo Bassoon and Piano. (2014) unpublished
23. *Kahîn* – Solo Piano. (2015) unpublished

A Brief History of the Kurds



Figure No.3 Kurdistan map.¹⁰ (Public Domain).

¹⁰ “Rob Los Ricos’s Blog”, Accessed September 12, 2015, <http://roblosricos.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/kurdistan-1.jpg>

From 35-45,000,000 Kurds have been living in Kurdistan, translated “the land of Kurds,” in Southwestern Asia from thousands of years BCE to the present day. They were the people of the Median Empire from 900-500 BCE. When the Arabs defeated the Kurds in the seventh century CE, they brought Islam to the Kurdish region and most Kurds converted to Islam. In the eleventh century, the Kurdish land became a part of Seljuk’s empire and later became part of the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth century.

When the Ottoman Empire fell after World War I the Kurds were guaranteed an independent state according to the Sevres treaty (1920). This guarantee was never realized and the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 replaced the Sevres treaty without creating an independent Kurdish state. From 1915 to 1925 Kurdistan was divided between Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Russia by the Franco-British agreement Sikes-Picot.

This arbitrary division between five different governments had a generally negative effect on the Kurdish people and their culture. This is true for their music as well. For example, in Turkey, Kurdish people were not allowed to speak or sing in their own language. Even saying the word “Kurdistan” was illegal. This created a great deal of tension. Kurdish troops (peshmarga) were actively at war with the Turks, while civilians tried to make their voices heard in cities and towns when they had opportunities.

Since the 1990s, the Kurdish people in Iraq have been semi-independent but still have significant problems and disagreements with the Iraqi central and federal government. The Iraqi-Kurdistan region, compared to the middle and southern parts of Iraq, has been making progress under the leadership of President Masoud Barazani, and Jalal Talabani. Moreover, this region has been making progress under the leadership of Kurdistan’s regional government Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani and Barham Salih.

Kurdish Music History

The Kurdish people have a rich oral tradition in which songs have been transmitted from generation to generation throughout history. Many families would gather together, mostly at night, to share stories and sing together. The Kurdish tradition includes religious songs, working or farming songs, nationalist songs, storytelling songs, wedding songs with dance, and love songs.¹¹ Because of the several varieties of Kurdish language dialects and the existence of different religions in Kurdistan, Kurdish songs contain many different styles and characters. Despite the numerous political problems the country has had through history many Kurdish songs have remained present in the culture up to the present day and continue to be renewed by new singers and musicians in each generation.

Kurdish music is as ancient as the Kurdish nation; established as early as 2400 BC and then belonging to the Median Empire (900-500 BC). Many ancient artifacts and manuscripts found in Kurdish castles and caves tell us about how the Kurdish people used songs and musical instruments during farming work, for entertainment, wedding dances, religion and even wars.¹²

Islam was brought to Kurdistan in the seventh century and with it came disagreements about whether music should be forbidden or not. Some Islamic scholars advocated forbidding music but other religious scholars argued that music should be allowed in Islamic religion. These arguments had an enormous effect on musical development throughout the Middle East and Kurdistan was no exception. (Muslim musicians often consider this question even today).

¹¹ Stephen Blum, Dieter Christensen, and Amnon Shiloah/r, "Kurdish Music," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 36-41.

¹² Baqi Hama Mohammad, *The History of Kurdish Music* (Erbil: Hevi Press, 2009), 139.

Historically, in spite of these religious arguments, Kurdish Muslim musicians had an important role in the Islamic caliphates, especially during the Abbasid caliphate (750 to 1258 CE). For example, Abul Hasan Ali b. Nafi, (790-857 CE),¹³ who was nicknamed Ziryab (which loosely translates to “blackbird”) was a famous Kurdish singer and musician during Caliph Harun Al-Rashid’s reign. Because Caliph Al-Rashid favored Ziryab as an artist, Ziryab left Baghdad under the threat of his former teacher, Ibrahim Al-mously, who was afraid he would lose his position in the court to the younger musician. Ziryab fled to Cordova, Spain and became one of the city's greatest musicians, bringing Middle Eastern music to the West. He had many great musical achievements, including a memorized thousand-song repertoire. In addition, he is credited with having added a fifth string to the lute and using the quill feather of a vulture as an alternative to a wooden plectrum. While in Spain he established the Ziryab Academy of Music in which he taught music theory and Middle Eastern music repertoires.¹⁴

Kurdish musician and theorist Safi al-Din al-Urmawi was born in 1216 in Urmia, a Kurdish city in the Iranian part of Kurdistan; he died in 1294 in Baghdad. Al-Urmawi owes his lasting fame to his two books on music theory, the *Kitab al-Adwar (Book of Modes)* and *al-Risala al-Sharafiyya fi 'l-nisab al-ta' lifiyya (The Message of Honor)*.¹⁵ It contains important knowledge on the system and theory of music in the Perso-Iraqi area, such as the precise and

¹³ H. G. Farmer and E. Neubauer, “Ziryāb,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs in Brill Online, 2015, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ziryab-SIM_8172?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=ziryab (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ E. Neubauer, “Ṣafī al- Dīn al- Urmawī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs in Brill Online, 2016, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/safi-al-din-al-urmawi-SIM_6447 (accessed December 1, 2015).

accurate establishment of the five-stringed lute, dividing the octave into seventeen steps, the complete terminology and definition of the scales establishing the system of the twelve *maqams* (called *shudud*) and the six *awaz* modes, accurate descriptions of contemporary musical meters, and the use of numbers and letters for the notation of melodies. All this occurs in the *Kitab al-Adwar* for the first time making it a source of huge historical value. Because of its brevity it became the most well-known and leading book on Middle Eastern music for centuries.¹⁶

During his famous journey to the Middle East (including Kurdistan) in 1820 Claudius James Rich, a British antiquarian scholar, business agent, and traveler, documented many musical activities in his book, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh*. He wrote that, during social gatherings, one or two musicians played *rebec* to entertain him and others. He also describes some wedding celebration songs and dances he witnessed at that time. He wrote, “an old man played tolerably well on the native violin or *rebab* with two strings, which was not at all unpleasant. He came again in the evening to amuse me and sang many wild Koordish songs.”¹⁷ Kurdish people used music to accompany most of the activities of their life; singing for their guests was one of their ways of showing respect.

Current History of Kurdish Music

In the early twentieth century many great singers appeared in Kurdistan; however, instrumental musicians were rare and were not active in public (largely because it was not culturally acceptable). Some of the most famous Kurdish singers include Sayid Ali-Asghar Kurdistani (1881-1936), in Kurdish Iran, Mala Kareem (1885-1938) in both Kurdish Iran and

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Claudius James Rich, *Narrative of a residence in Koordistan, and on the site of ancient Nineveh* (London: Clowrs and Sons, n.d.), 262.

Iraq, Mohammed Arif Al-Jazrawi (1912-1986) in both Kurdish Turkey and Iraq, Ali Mardan (1904-1981), Sewa (1884-1863), Tahir Tefwiq (1922-1987), Rashol (1912-1974), Mohammed Sailh Dilan (1927-1990) in Kurdish Iraq, and Mohammed Sexo (father of Brahim Shexo). Unlike other Islamic nations in the Middle East, female Kurdish singers such as Maryam Xan (1904-1949), Nasrin Sherwani (1922-1990), and Aishe Shan (1938-1998) also enjoyed successful performing careers.

In the second half of the twentieth century several music schools were founded in Iraq and some Kurdish students were accepted as students. Upon completing their formal music education they brought their knowledge and training back to their home cities and many of them started their own ensembles. For example, Qadir Dilan and Wiliam Yohanna established the Maulaui music ensemble in 1954. Later, Anwer Qaradaghi, Farid Eisa, Wiliam Yohanna, Faraidun Dartash and Mohammed Amin Hussen established the Sulaimany ensemble in 1969. Jamal Hidayet, Yahya Marjan, Tahsin Taha, Sabah Abdulrahman, Chato Hassen, Abdulla Brahim, Mustafa Rasul, Adnan Ahmed, Wirya Ahmed, and Shamsadin Omer established Hawler ensemble in 1971, and Duhok ensemble was established under the leadership of Dalshad Said in 1980. The Fine Arts Institute in Sulaimaniyah was established in 1980 for studying arts, music, and eventually theater. This was the first institution of its kind in Kurdistan.

Kurdish Musical Style

Kurdish music is mainly based on folksongs, but uncovering its origins is not easy because Kurdistan was, and continues to be, very diverse. Kurdish music styles can be recognized- the dialect of the lyrics. Each dialect has its own musical distinctions and unique features.

There are four main dialects in the Kurdish language:

1. Kurmanjy/Badini - from the Northern and central part of Kurdistan (Turkey and Duhok in Iraq). The most famous singers are Shivan Parwar, Shehribana Kurdi, and Ahmet Kaya.

2. Sorani/ Gorani - mostly spoken in the south and eastern part of Kurdistan (Sulaimany, Hawler, Karkuk in Iraq, Sna, Mariwan, Mhabad in Iran). The most famous singers are Hasan Zirak, Mohammed Mamle, Mazhar Khalqi, Karim Kaban, Qadir Kaban, Ali Mardan and Tahir Tofiq.

3. Hawrami - mostly used in Hawraman area on the border of Iraq and Iran. The most famous singers are Osman Hawrami, Sabah Hawrami, Hama Hussein Kemnai, Dlsoz Kemnay, Adil Hawrami, and Arjumand Hawrami.

4. Kirmashani/Lurri - is used in Kermanshah in Iran, Zagros. The most famous singers are Shahram Nazeri, Keykhossro Pornazry and Azad khanaqini.

Each of these dialects has a special flavor of pronunciation and a distinctive vocabulary rooted in the geographic location and natural environment from which it derives. The use of trills and methods of improvisation, for example, are unique to each style. In this paper two of the Kurdish styles will be discussed: Badini and Sorani.

Kurdish Music Ensembles

In addition to the repressive effect of religion on musicians and the arts the complicated political realities of Kurdistan also have affected Kurdish music negatively. Certainly, none of those countries that absorbed the various parts of Kurdistan in the Sikes-Picot treaty supported Kurdish musicians unless they became a member of the prevailing political parties and work for their regimes. For example, the Iraqi regime supported those Kurdish musicians and singers who became members of the Baath political party (Saddam Hussein's political party) or those who had a close friendship with Saddam Hussein's government ministers. For example, in order to attend graduate school musicians had to become active Baath Party members. For most musicians the opposite was true: the government generally did not allow any musical instruments in Kurdish cities, especially modern Western instruments, until the middle of the twentieth century. Kurdish musicians did not give up and attempted to keep their Kurdish national music alive by recording traditional songs and teaching young musicians of future generations.

Nevertheless, many Kurdish ensembles have been founded, especially in the major Kurdish cities in present day Iraq. Notable groups include the Sulaimany Music Ensemble from the city of Sulaimany, the Hawler Music Ensemble from Hawler, and the Duhok Music Ensemble from Duhok. In Iran, the Kamkars Goup performs Kurdish music in Teheran.

Sulaimany Music Ensemble

In 1950 a group of students returned to Sulaimany after graduating from the Baghdad Fine Arts Institute to initiate new musical activities involving Kurdish traditional music (including summer programs for young musicians). Musicians Najat Abda, William Yohanna and Qadir Dilan established the Maulai Music Ensemble under Dilan's leadership. Later, more young people established a small ensemble under the name (خۆشی و به‌خێناری) - which translates as

- "Fun and Happiness Ensemble"); the same musicians performed under the name (تیبی هیوا - "The Hope Ensemble"). They were involved with many social musical activities.

In the 1967 the Rasheed Music Ensemble (تیبی موزیکی رشیدی به‌غداد) from Baghdad came to Sulaimany for a recital. During rehearsals, the visiting musicians noticed that some of the young Kurdish musicians played with great skill and they asked them to play twenty minutes in their recital. The audiences in the Sulaimany were unaware of the ability of their musicians and they enthusiastically encouraged them. This show of support caused the musicians to consider establishing a serious ensemble. In 1969, along with some actors and musicians, they established the Sulaimany Acting and Music Ensemble (تیبی نواندن و موسیقای سلیمانای), and this new ensemble presented many concerts and plays; but, because of their differences in specialty requirements they separated from each other in 1970.

In 1970 musicians William Youhanna, Anwer Qaradaghi, Faraidun Dartash, Mohammed Amin Hussen, and Farid Esa submitted a request to the Ministry of Cultures and Media in Iraq that they be officially allowed to work as a music ensemble. In 1973 the ensemble was given permission to work professionally. This version of the Sulaimany Music Ensemble presented and recorded many great Kurdish songs, and it played an important role in protecting Kurdish music styles from outside distortion and dilution. This ensemble mainly worked in the Kurdish Sorani musical style but they occasionally worked with the Badini, Hawrami, and Garmiany styles as well.

In 1975, after a Kurdish revolution, the Iraqi government exiled some of the members of this ensemble in order to prevent them from pursuing their musical activities. After reuniting, from 1977 to 1985, this ensemble recorded many great songs which were often broadcast on the single Kurdish TV station (in Karkuk) allowed by the Saddam Hussein regime. After this time

the ensemble's administration decided to stop all musical activities in order to avoid supporting the 'enemy' Saddam Hussein, whose ministers had invited them to perform a song for the president. By that time the ensemble stopped producing music together. Over the years many singers had worked with the Sulaimany music ensemble such as Karim Kaban, Qadir Kaban (who was hanged by the Iraqi regime because of his dissenting national songs), Hassan Garmiani, Mohammed Jaza, Osman Ali, and Assad Qaradaghi.

In 1991, when Kurdish cities were freed from the Iraqi regime, the Sulaimany Music Ensemble started performing again, especially during national events. Now, because of the difficult economic situation and unstable political future, the ensemble is still together but rarely gives recitals or television appearances.



Figure No.4 Sulaimany music ensemble in 1978¹⁸ (Used by permission)

The Hawler Music Ensemble

When the Maulai music ensemble visited Hawler in Iraq for a recital in 1957, some musicians in Hawler such as Jamal Hidayet, Yahya Marjan, Tahsin Taha, Sabah Abdulrahman, Chato Hassen, Abdulla Brahim, Mustafa Rasul, Adnan Ahmed, Wirya Ahmed, and Shamsadin Omer decided to establish their own group, which they named the Darsim Music Ensemble (1957-1967). In 1971, under the name Hawler Music Ensemble, they finally received governmental permission to work as an official musical ensemble. The Hawler Music Ensemble worked in the Sorani Kurdish musical style. Many great Kurdish singers worked with them such as Tahir Tofiq, Tahsin Taha, Fuad Ahmed, Hama Jaza, Qadir Zirak, Rasul Gardi, Arab Osman, and Bakuri. This ensemble was active for many years and finally recorded a commercially released album in 1978 that remains one of their great achievements.¹⁹

¹⁸ Anwer Qaradaghi's Facebook page, accessed January 22, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/183326445029473/photos/pb.183326445029473.-2207520000.1428940514./986005528094890/?type=3&theater>.

¹⁹ Bakhtyar Said, "The New Kurdistan: That Ensemble Which Became a Part of Kurdish Music History (ئەو تێپەڕی بەشێکە لەمێژووی میوزیکی کوردی)," <http://knew.org/Direje.aspx?Jimare=7489&Cor=9&Besh=Araste> (accessed November 12, 2014).



Figure No.5 Hawler Music Ensemble (Used by permission)

Duhok music ensemble

The Duhok music ensemble (تێپیا دهۆک یا موزیکێ) was established formally on May 31, 1979 under the leadership of Dalshad Said with Jamil Eibrahim Eissa, Badrkhan Taha, Eismaeil Abdulqadir, Walid Khalid, and Salahadin Salih. The ensemble included a female choir and was sponsored by the United Women of Iraq organization. The ensemble's goals were to keep Kurdish folk traditions alive and to never perform for Saddam Hussein (the Iraqi president at that time) even if their lives were in danger.

The first works Said presented with this ensemble were *Ghezale Hli Hli*, *Le Le Wesso*, and *Yar Gjloke*. Said arranged these folk songs for the group of instruments such as violins,

cello, flute, clarinet, Keyboard, drums and bazouki, adding some harmony to make the songs more interesting and acceptable to modern audiences. These are some of the earliest examples of what would become Said's modern style.

Under Dalshad's leadership the Duhok music ensemble performed many concerts in Iraq and participated in numerous festivals and competitions, winning first place several times. They wore traditional Kurdish clothing but played with a mixture of Middle Eastern and Western instruments. They appeared often on television. They released the commercial albums *Nergiz* in 1981 and *Avazet Chia* (“Mountain Melodies”) in 1984 and continued to record and produce many other songs. Dalshad left in 1984 and the ensemble disbanded. In 2000 the ensemble reformed and has experienced a revival in Kurdistan, giving concerts, recording, and performing on television shows under the leadership of one of Dalshad's friends, violinist Jamal Mohammed Adeeb. [In Fig. 6 Dalshad is pictured in the front row 8th from the left].



Figure No.6 Duhok music ensemble²⁰ (Used by permission)

The Kamkars

The Kamkars music ensemble was established in 1965 by Hassan Kamkar in Sanandaj, a Kurdish city of eastern Kurdistan-Iran. Kamkar was a well-known musician at that time and the ensemble featured his sons and daughters as musicians. Even today all of the performers in the ensemble are members of Kamkar's family. The Kamkars performed their first concert under that

²⁰ هۆی زەری / تیبی موسیقای دهۆک / YouTube video, posted by "sangar koyi," August 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj5Gj1RAbro>. (The photo pictured is a still shot from the YouTube video.)

name at the Azadi Complex and the Vahdat Hall in Iran. The program consisted of three parts: Persian music, a dulcimer solo by Ardavan, and Kurdish music.²¹ After these initial successes they started performing concerts in the Eastern-Kurdistan cities and Kurdish-Azari cities as well. The members included: Houshang (violinist), Pashang (dulcimer), Bijan (tar player and singer), Ghashang (singer), Arsalan (lute), Ardeshir Kamancheh (rebec - a violin-like Persian instrument with a small belly), and Arzhang (drum).

The Kamkars, along with Hossein Alizadeh, Mohammad Reza Lotfi, and Parviz Meshkatian, established the Sheida and Aref ensembles. Together they performed two successful concerts with well-known Persian singer Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Kurdish singer Shahram Nazeri. In 1971 Houshang, Arsalan, Bijan, and Pashang left for Tehran to study music academically.

The Kamkars ensemble has also performed extensively in neighboring countries such as the Kurdish cities of Southern Kurdistan, Iraq, and Istanbul and Diyarbakir, Turkey. They have also performed internationally in festivals such as World of Music Arts and Dance (known as WOMAD) organized by Peter Gabriel, performing in the Summer Stage festival in New York and performing concerts in Europe. During their tour to the United Kingdom in 2004 they gave a joint performance with a symphony orchestra in London in which both modern music and traditional Kurdish music were performed together. Another of their successful concerts was the performance of Kamancheh Concertino with the symphony orchestra of Malmo in Sweden in 2005.

²¹ World Music Co UK, "The Kamkars," World Music, "http://worldmusic.co.uk/the_kamkars" (accessed February 12, 2015).

The Kamkars have recorded numerous commercial albums such as *Uraman*, *Autumn Yellow*, *Shilereh*, *Gelavizh*, *The Kamkars*, *Agrizindo*, *Golnishan*, *Parshang*, and *Kanisepi*.²² The ensemble is still active today.



Figure No.7 Kamkars music ensemble²³ (Used by permission)

Kurdish String Orchestra

Kurdish musicians had attempted to establish an orchestra by the end of 1991 but they were not successful. After 2003 two amateur orchestras were established, one in Hawler, and the other in Sulaimany but the quality of their concerts was poor, especially when they played works from the classical music repertoire. Many of the musicians lacked the confidence to perform the

²² Kamkars, "The Kamkars," http://www.kamkars.net/about_en/ (accessed February 14, 2015).

²³ Ibid.

repertoire or take advantage of opportunities to give concerts outside of Kurdistan. But some young musicians did not like this idea and were always working hard to improve their abilities.

In the middle of 2007 a Kurd named Delschad Hothman, who worked with *Musikverein* in Vienna, informed me that there was a chance for some young musicians to participate in an international festival and competition. This chance of participating was really challenging and intimidating for Kurdish musicians. No one who conducted at that time wanted to take the risk to go to Austria and play Mozart or other classical music.

I had been the concertmaster of the Sulaimany orchestra and decided to try to take advantage of the opportunity. I recruited the best string players from all over Kurdistan region and coached them on the music. I also conducted the orchestra and made a recording to apply for the international festival and competition in Vienna. The group was accepted as a string orchestra ensemble. Delschad and I named the group the Kurdish String Orchestra and participated in the international festival and competition in Vienna known as the "1st Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival"²⁴ held at the Musikverein in Vienna.

²⁴ Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival Vienna, "1st Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival 2007, Golden Hall - Wiener Musikverein," <http://www.sclfestival.org/results07.htm> (accessed June 25, 2015).



Figure No.8 Kurdish String Orchestra in Vienna - Musikverein 2007²⁵ (Used by permission)

The Kurdish String Orchestra performed Mozart's *Divertimento KV138 in F major* and won second place with a ranking of "excellent success" (the Puchheimer Jugend Kammer Orchester from Germany took first place). The committee members of the competition told Delschad Hothman that they were unsure whether to give the first place to the German orchestra or to the Kurdish string orchestra. They were excited and surprised by the Kurdish String Orchestra. They said that they usually saw Kurdish people in Europe protesting and asking for political support for Kurds but this was the first time they saw Kurdish musicians competing in classical music!

²⁵ Kurdish String Orchestra's Facebook page, accessed June 15th 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/257454797611494/photos/pb.257454797611494.-2207520000.1444060355./550839454939692/?type=3&theater>.



Figure No.9 Kurdish String Orchestra Golden Hall – Musikverein 2007²⁶ (*Used by permission*)

After that success in Europe the Kurdish String orchestra gained some confidence and challenged the negative idea that Kurdish musicians cannot play classical music. After the experience I left the ensemble and came to the United States to study but the orchestra continued performing and gave many concerts inside and outside of Kurdistan under the baton of Swedish, Ukrainian, and Norwegian conductors.

²⁶ Kurdish String Orchestra's Facebook page, accessed June 15th 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/257454797611494/photos/pb.257454797611494.-2207520000.1444060355./550839838272987/?type=3&theater>.

An Introduction to Middle Eastern Music Theory

Before examining the music of Dalshad and Shexo basic understanding of Middle Eastern music theory is required. Middle Eastern music is based on tonal *maqams*. The *maqam* is the basis for the melodies and improvised parts of the music. A *maqam* is like a scale or mode in Western music, consisting of seven notes per octave. Many *maqams* use quarter-tone tuning for some of the notes. There are approximately thirty-five different *maqams*, although there is some disagreement among Middle Eastern music theorists about the total number (some theorists identify as many as forty).²⁷ See Table No. 1.

<i>Ajam</i>	<i>Athar Kurd</i>	<i>Bastanikar</i>	<i>Bayati</i>	<i>Bayati Shuri</i>	<i>Farahfaza</i>	<i>Hijaz</i>	<i>Hijaz Kar</i>
<i>Hijaz Kar Kurd</i>	<i>Husseini</i>	<i>Huzam</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Jiharkah</i>	<i>Kurd</i>	<i>Mahur</i>	<i>Musataar</i>
<i>Nahawand</i>	<i>Nairuz</i>	<i>Nawa Athar</i>	<i>Nikriz</i>	<i>Rahat Wl Arwah</i>	<i>Rast</i>	<i>Saba</i>	<i>Saba Zamzam</i>
<i>Shadd Araban</i>	<i>Shahnaz</i>	<i>Shawq Afza</i>	<i>Sikah</i>	<i>Sikah Baladi</i>	<i>Suzdil</i>	<i>Suznak</i>	<i>Ushaq Masri</i>
<i>Yakah</i>	<i>Zanjaran</i>						

Table No.1 the Middle Eastern Maqams²⁸

Although often referred to as Arabic the names of the *maqams* represent all the nations of the Middle East including Arabs, but also Turks, Kurds and Persians who don't identify as Arabic. For example many *maqam* names are Kurdish such as *Kurd*, *Hijaz Kar Kurd*, *Suzdil*, *Zuznak*, and *Shanaz*. But the Kurds do not consider themselves Arabs.

²⁷ Maqamworld, July 14, 2007, <http://www.maqamworld.com/maqamindex.html> (accessed December 22, 2014).

²⁸ Ibid.

All *maqams* have ascending and descending forms (like the Western melodic minor scale). One interesting feature about some of the *maqams* is that they can be used in such a way that the notes may differ by register (i.e. the same series of notes does not necessarily repeat in all octaves). Each *maqam* consists of two smaller trichord, tetrachord, or pentachord units. For example, a *maqam* can be made of two superimposed tetrachords, one trichord plus a pentachord, or one trichord plus a tetrachord. In order to understand the *maqams* one needs to first understand the different types of trichords, tetrachords, and pentachords.

There are two different trichords, one named *Ajam* and the other *Segah*. The *Ajam* consists of two whole tones (Bb – C – D) and the *Segah* consists of a $\frac{3}{4}$ tone and a whole-tone (see Figures 10 and 11).

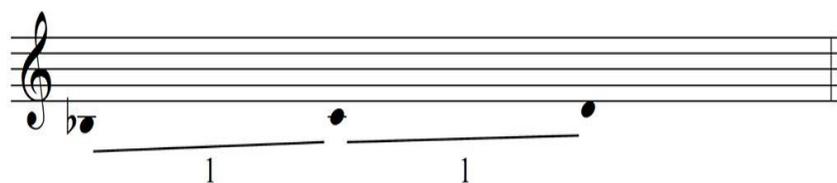


Figure No.10 *Ajam* trichord

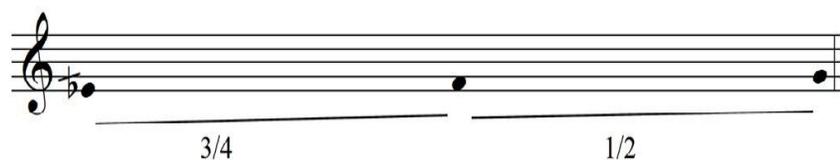


Figure No.11 *Segah* trichord

There are six tetrachords: *Nahawand*, *Saba*, *Bayat*, *Kurd*, *Rast*, and *Hijaz*. The *Nahawand* tetrachord consists of four tones, proceeding whole step, half step and whole step intervals (C, D, Eb, and F). This tetrachord is equivalent to the minor tetrachord in Western classical music.

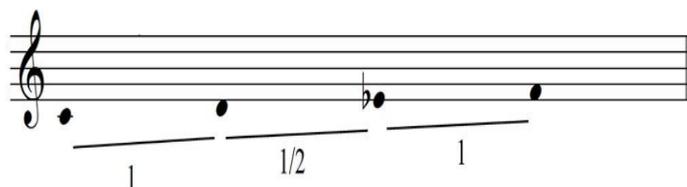


Figure No.12 *Nahawand* tetrachord

The *Hijaz* tetrachord consists of four tones with a half step, augmented step, and a half step (D, Eb, F#, G) as pictured in Figure 13.

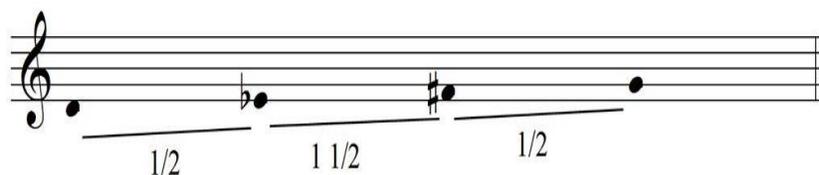


Figure No.13 *Hijaz* tetrachord

The *Bayat* tetrachord consists of four tones with two $\frac{3}{4}$ steps and a whole step, as pictured in Figure 14. (The second note is halfway between E-flat and E-natural.)

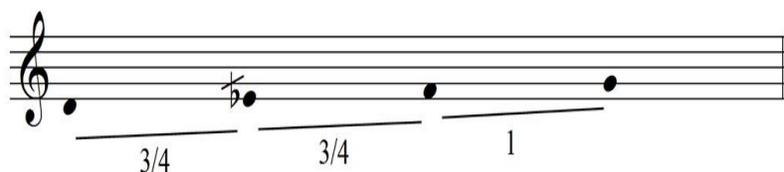


Figure No.14 *Bayat* tetrachord

The *Rast* tetrachord consists of a whole step and then two $\frac{3}{4}$ steps (C,D,E \flat ,F). In this case, the third note is exactly halfway between E-flat and E-natural.

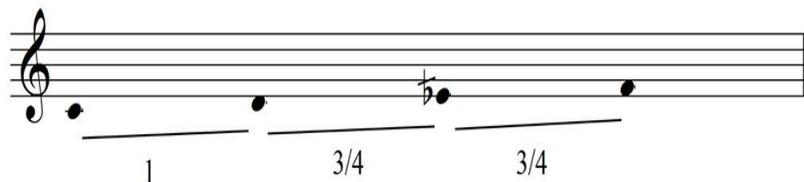


Figure No.15 *Rast* tetrachord

The *Kurd* tetrachord consists of four tones, proceeding by $\frac{1}{2}$ step, whole step, and another whole step (D,E \flat ,F,G).

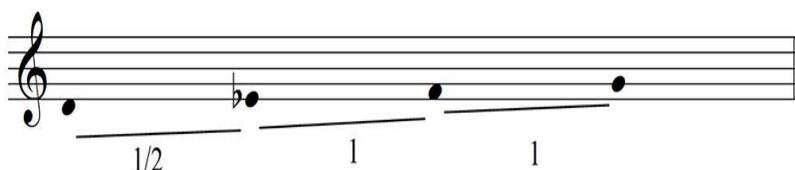


Figure No.16 *Kurd* tetrachord

The *Saba* tetrachord consists of four notes proceeding by a $\frac{3}{4}$ step, $\frac{3}{4}$ step, half step (D,E \flat ,F,G \flat). This is the only tetrachord in which the outer interval is a diminished fourth instead of a perfect fourth.

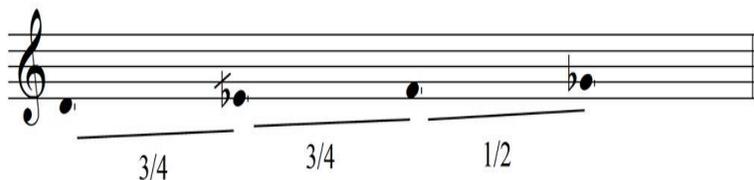


Figure No. 17 *Saba* tetrachord

There is only one pentachord. It contains a whole step, $\frac{1}{2}$ step, an augmented step, and a $\frac{1}{2}$ step (C, D, Eb, F#, G). Fig. 18.

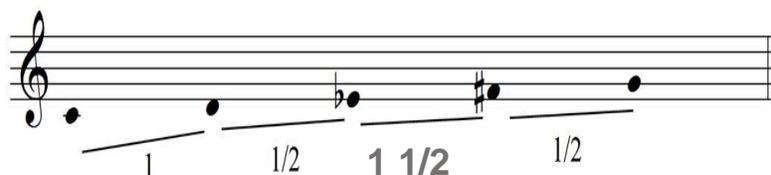


Figure No. 18 Nagris pentachord

Below is an example of the *maqam*: *Yek gah*. For the ascending version, the tetrachord *Rast* is used twice, first starting on G and then on D. The descending versions have several nested tetrachords and trichords [see figure 19].

Figure 19 *Yek gah* maqam²⁹

²⁹ Abbas Dhir Habib, *The Arabic Music Theory* (Baghdad: Melodies Studies Institutes, 1986), 70.

Another example is the *Hijaz kar maqam*. In the ascending version the tetrachord *Hijaz* is used twice, starting on C and then on G. The descending version uses a *Nagris* pentachord beginning on F and a *Saba zam zam* tetrachord beginning on E [see figure 20]. Dalshad Said composed *Soran* and *Badinan* based on this *maqam* transposed to A.

The image shows handwritten musical notation for the *Hijaz kar maqam*. It consists of two staves. The top staff is divided into two sections. The first section, labeled 'Hijaz tetrachord on C', shows the notes C4, D4, E4, and F4 with intervals of $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{2}$. The second section, labeled 'Hijaz tetrachord on G', shows the notes G4, A4, B4, and C5 with intervals of $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{2}$. The bottom staff shows a 'Nagris pentachord on F' with notes F4, G4, A4, B4, and C5, and a 'Sabā zam zam tetrachord on E' with notes E4, F4, G4, and A4. Arabic text labels are written above and below the notes, including 'جنس حجاز على درجة الرست', 'جنس حجاز على درجة النوى', 'عقد نكرين على درجة الجهاركاه', and 'جنس حجاز زمزم على درجة البوسليك'. The notes are marked with 'رست', 'بوسليك', 'نوى', 'ماهور', 'زركوله', 'جهاركاه', 'حصار', and 'كردان'.

Figure 20 *Hijaz kar maqam*³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., 57.

Another example is the *Bayat maqam*. For the ascending version, the tetrachord *Bayat* is used starting on D and then *Nahawand* tetrachord used starting on G. The descending version has several nested tetrachords and trichords such as the *Kurd* tetrachord on A, the *Ajam* tetrachord on F, and the *Segah* trichord on E \flat . Also during the descending scale, the B quartertone becomes a B-flat.³¹ Dalshad Said used the *Bayat maqam* in his work *Kavoky*,³² and Brahim Shexo used it in his piece *Coxe mino*.

The image shows handwritten musical notation for the Bayat maqam. The title is 'تحليل مقام البيات' (Analysis of Bayat Maqam). The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The ascending scale is shown with notes and intervals marked as 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4. The descending scale is shown with notes and intervals marked as 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4. The ascending scale is divided into two sections: 'Bayat tetrachord on D' (notes: D, E-flat, F, G) and 'Nahawand tetrachord on G' (notes: G, A, B, C). The descending scale is divided into three sections: 'Kurd tetrachord on A' (notes: A, B, C, D), 'Segah trichord on E quarter tone' (notes: E, F, G), and 'Ajam tetrachord on F' (notes: F, G, A, B). The notes are labeled with Arabic names: دوايه (D), سگاه (E-flat), نوى (F), حسي (G), نجوم (A), كردان (B), عيني (C). The tetrachords and trichords are labeled with Arabic names: حسي بيات على درجه الدوايه (Bayat tetrachord on D), حسي نهاوند على درجه النوى (Nahawand tetrachord on G), حسي كردان على درجه الحسي (Kurd tetrachord on A), حسي سگاه على درجه النوى (Segah trichord on E quarter tone), حسي نجوم على درجه الجهاركاه (Ajam tetrachord on F).

Figure 21 *Bayat maqam*

³¹ Ibid., 39.

³² Dalshad Said, interview by author, Skype interview, October 9, 2014.

Kurdish Performance Practice

Kurdish music is primarily an aural tradition in which students learn the music 'by ear' from their elders. The notation of Kurdish music started in the middle of 20th century when the first generation of the Kurdish students graduated from the Baghdad fine arts institute. Those students learned the fundamentals of music theory and music notation of European music and brought these techniques with them when they returned to Kurdistan.

The process of notation focuses on a simplified form of the melody with respect to the modes and rhythms without specific details about appoggiaturas, ornaments, trills, or other performing techniques. This kind of notation is still used in a majority of countries in the Middle East. Iranian musicians tend to notate their music with more precisely detailed notation.

As mentioned above Middle Eastern music in general and especially Kurdish music is learned by listening to the Kurdish folk songs and learning to playing them. There are four main styles of Kurdish music Badini, Sorani, Hawrami, and Lurri - the performance practice for each of them can be a little bit different. The music of Dalshad Said and Brahim Shexo belongs to the Badini Kurdish style though both have adapted the style for both eastern and western violinists. It is important to briefly explain some Kurdish music elements or performance practice techniques with examples.

Vibrato has a very important role in the Badini style of Kurdish music. The type of vibrato is different from what we all know in classical music and most other Middle Eastern

styles. It mimics a technique used by singers. This vibrato is the combination of a regular vibrato and a half-step trill (the performer uses two fingers instead of one). See Figure No.22. [In the next three figures the upper staff shows how the music is notated and the lower shows how it will sound when using the given ornament or technique.]

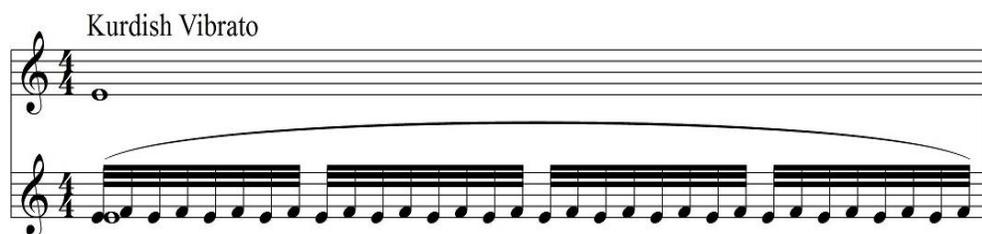


Figure No. 22 the Kurdish Vibrato technique.

Kurdish performers often use very short and fast glissando (like *portamento*) back and forth to notes in a melody. This technique is one of the main characteristics of Kurdish music playing and gives the violin a voice-like quality. See Figure No. 23.

Soran Badinan

Measure 43 - 46

The image shows a musical score for 'Soran Badinan', measures 43-46. It consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The upper staff shows a melody with various notes and rests. The lower staff shows a similar melody, but with a prominent glissando effect indicated by a wavy line between two notes, representing the 'portamento' technique.

Figure No. 23 Using glissandi.

Appoggiaturas and trills are commonly used ornaments and are widespread among Middle Eastern musicians but especially among Persian and Kurdish musicians. See Figures No. 24, No. 25, and No. 26.

Malli Malli

Measure 20 - 23

Musical score for 'Malli Malli' measures 20-23. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows measures 20 and 21. The second system shows measures 22 and 23. Trills are indicated by 'tr' above notes in measures 20, 21, and 22. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above the first measure of the second system.

Figure No. 24 Trills

Malli Malli

Measure 7 - 12

Musical score for 'Malli Malli' measures 7-12. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows measures 7, 8, and 9. The second system shows measures 10, 11, and 12. Appoggiaturas are indicated by a flat symbol above notes in measures 8, 10, and 11.

Figure No. 25. Ornaments



Figure No.26 Appoggiatura

Use of dynamics in Kurdish music is very limited because the instruments used in Kurdish music like the oud and the rebec tend to have a very small dynamic range and were generally for a small audiences. The range of dynamics can be from *p* to *f*.

The Analyses

Malli Malli

This music was composed by Dalshad Said in 1982 and is based on the Kurdish song *Malli Malli*. The piece was arranged for violin solo and a small ensemble, and was recorded by the Duhok music ensemble in 1984 under the direction of Dalshad Said; Said rearranged the piece for violin and piano and recorded it himself on his album *Variations on Kurdish Melodies for violin* in 1995. The piece starts with a long, cadenza-like improvisation played by the violin with a supporting E-minor pedal tone in the accompaniment. The improvisation is based on *Bayat maqam* on E [E, F quartertone, G, A, B, C, D, E]. Dalshad blends traditional Kurdish violin techniques with virtuosic western violin techniques. The performance style is highly expressive and the rhythm is free and unmetred. This kind of free rhythmic 'singing' style is called *lauk* (لاوك). The word *lauk* refers to both the form and style of a type of Badini dialect Kurdish song that expresses a feeling of profound loss (for example, the death of a close family

member or the loss of the Kurdish homeland). In an interview Dalshad used the term “lamentation” to describe the feeling expressed by this music. In the Sorani dialects this form is referred to as *hairan* حەيران.³³

Form Diagram

Lauk improvisation (*Bayat maqam* over an E-minor chord)

Once the metered music begins...

Rhythmic Intro (mm1-6)

A-minor tonal center

mm 1-3 – no violin

mm 4-6 with violin

Theme A (mm7-12)

A-minor tonal center for the harmony but using *Bayat maqam* on E for melody.

Two identical 3-bar phrases (a a)

Bridge mm13-19

Transition of one bar

4-bar phrase with violin with C major harmonies

Two bars no violin (distinctive rhythmic idea that sets up Theme B)

Theme B mm20-27 (tonal center E minor using *Bayat maqam*)

Two 4-bar phrases (a a')

Conscious reference to the introduction.

³³ Dalshad Said, interview with Nabaz Hama Rasheed Abubakir, *An Interview With Dalshad Said about his Compositions* (October 9, 2014).

Embellishes the melody on the second a

Theme A' mm28-39

Two 3-bar phrases (a a)

3-bar bridge (b)

One more 3-bar phrase (a)

For mm40-66 the form repeats the harmonic structure from m13-39 with improvisation on the themes and taking the second ending (codetta).

Soran Badinan Analysis

This piece is significant because the composer has mixed two famous Kurdish folksongs that represent two different Kurdish styles: Sorani and Badini. Sorani and Badini are regions of Kurdistan that represent opposing political views. Each utilizes a distinctive dialect of the Kurdish language; each region has its own musical style as well. The song *Soran Badinan* uses a folksong from each style. The A section incorporates a Badini folksong, while the B section is a folksong from the Sorani style. Finally, Dalshad plays both at the same time.

Soran Badinam begins with a Badini tune called *Zari zari*. Dalshad used this tune in 1982 in a work titled *Zari Zari* arranged for the Duhok music ensemble.³⁴ The middle section of *Soran Badinam* uses the tune *Krmashan shari shirinm*, which is a song composed by a famous Kurdish

³⁴ زەرقى ھوى / دھوك موسيقاى تيبى , YouTube video, posted by "sangar koyi," August 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj5Gj1RAbro>.

singer from Irani Kurdistan, Hasan Zirak.³⁵ *Soran Badinam*³⁶ was composed in 1992 in Vienna while Dalshad was living in Austria.

In this composition Dalshad embeds a political message to all Kurdish people and especially to Kurdish political leaders. The two central folksongs represent the two main Kurdish political parties who compete with each other for power in the Kurdish regional government and fight each other, thereby endangering the Kurdish cause. The composer's message is that both parties are important and neither can rule Kurdistan without the other.³⁷ The music utilizes the *Maqam Hijaz kar (Zuzidil)* on A, but sometimes the composer uses the *Hijazkar kurd*. The piece is in three large sections A, B, AB.

Form Diagram

A section - Badini (mm1-74)

Introduction (mm1-34) - A major tonal center

mm 1-2 no violin

mm3-10 with violin consisting of two 4-bar phrases

mm11-26 with violin consists of four 4-bar phrases

mm27-34 with violin consists of two 4-bar phrases

Zari Zari - Theme A - (mm35-50) on A major tonal center

On *Maqam Hijaz kar* on A [A Bb C# D E F G# A]

Four 4-measure phrases using the chords A-maj, D-min, and E-min

³⁵ "Kermashan – Hasan Zirak," YouTube video, posted by "Bidaadae," July 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJaEUnGCsuk>.

³⁶ "Soran & Badinan – Dalshad Said," YouTube video, posted by "JohnderSpartaner," March 24, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0KBi9UCeoE>.

³⁷ Said, *An Interview with Dalshad Said about his Compositions*.

Zari Zari - Theme B (mm51-66) -A major tonal center

On *Hijaz kar kurd Maqam* [A Bb C# D E F G A]

Consists of two eight-bar phrases (antecedent and consequent)

Zari Zari - Theme A' repeats (mm67-74)

On *Maqam Hijaz kar* on A [A Bb C# D E F G# A]

Bridge - the violinist performs a free lamentation improvisation on a 4-bar rhythmic pattern.

(mm75-78 repeated for the duration of the improvisation). This improvisation is based on *Hijaz kar Kurd Maqam* [A Bb C# D E F G A]. Dalshad uses a style of Kurdish lamentation that may be sung by a woman who lost her son in the war, or a man or woman who lost his or her lover.

B section - Sorani (mm79-150)

Krmashan shari shirinm - Theme A (mm79-94) A major tonal center.

Based on Sorany Kurdish style on *Hijaz kar Kurd Maqam* [A Bb C# D E F G A].

Four 4-bar phrases repeat

Krmashan shari shirinm -Theme B (mm95-114)

(mm95-102) eight-bar phrase with two 4-bar subphrases

(mm103-114) twelve-bar phrase with three 4-bar phrases.

Krmashan shari shirinm - Theme A' (mm115-130)

Two 4-bar phrases

Two 4-bar phrases using arpeggio with ricochet bow technique

Krmashan shari shirinm - Theme B' (mm131-150)

(m131-138) eight bar phrase with two 4-bar subphrases

(m139-150) twelve bar phrase with three 4-bar phrases.

Bridge (mm151-158) Rhythmic accompaniment to the violin lamentation improvisation.

Based on *Maqam Hijaz*

For the AB section (mm159-206), Dalshad mixes both A (Badini) and B (Sorani) themes divided between violin and piano.

Introduction - mm159-166 variation of mm3-10

mm167-174 - theme A played by piano and theme B played by the violin

mm 175-182 - theme A played by violin while the piano plays the first part of the B section in the bass.

mm183-199 - violin plays the second half of theme of A, and the piano plays the second part of the B theme.

mm191-198 - violin plays the second half of the A section; the piano plays four measures of the violin introduction (two times).

mm 199-206 - violin plays the first part of the A theme, and the piano plays the first part of the B theme.

Closing section (mm207-208) -

modal cadence V minor – I, which sounds like a perfect authentic cadence with no leading tone.

Coxe mino

This is a Kurdish folksong about a dress - *Coxe mino* translated as “my dress.” This song is very popular in the region of Botan, a large area made up of the Kurdistan parts of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. This song is often sung at weddings.

Brahim Shexo transcribed this song for violin and piano.³⁸ The violin plays the Kurdish tune on *Bayat Maqam*, and the piano accompanies the tune in A minor. Like Dalshad, Brahim Shexo had to invent the harmonic aspect of the arrangement as, again, Kurdish music usually does not have a harmonic element. The piece consists of three variations on a theme.

Form diagram:

First variation (mm1- 23)

Bayat Maqam (A, B quarter tone, C, D, E, F, G, A)

Introduction (mm1- 2) - A minor tonal center

First section (mm3-24) - violin melody consists of two 6-bar phrases mm3-8 and mm9-14 followed by three 3-bar phrases.

Second section (mm24- 44) - mm25-35 Basic idea followed by a contrasting idea (mm36-44).

Bridge (mm45-49)

³⁸ Dalshad Said also arranged this song for solo voice and female chorus to be performed by the music ensemble Duhok Ensemble in 1984. Ayaz Yussef Zaxoij sang the solo on the recording. For this arrangement Dalshad won the first prize in a competition in Iraq. Many other Kurdish singers such as Selah Resul, Shivan parvar, Shahribana Kurdi, and Avdo Alani have also performed this song.

Second variation (mm50- 70)

mm50-61 basic idea played by piano, violin accompanied it by pizzicatos.

mm62-70 contrasting idea played by violin.

Bridge (mm71- 87) similar to the first bridge with expansion.

Third variation (mm88-111)

mm 88-100 basic idea played by violin

mm 100-111 contrasting idea with a closing section.

Conclusion

In conclusion Kurdish composers such as Dalshad Said and Brahim Shexo have worked to blend Middle Eastern music with Western compositional techniques. Both use Kurdish folksongs in their compositions. Both employ Western musical techniques, especially harmony, alongside Middle Eastern musical practices. Both have also found a solution for accommodating the quartertone scale degrees common in the Middle Eastern *maqams* to major and minor Western harmonies.

Dalshad also brought Kurdish music to a higher level by using Western violin techniques in his pieces. In his compositions and arrangements he succeeded in keeping the soul of Kurdish musical style pure – without any Arabic, Persian, or Turkish influence. Dalshad hoped to make traditional Kurdish music more interesting to younger generations by using violin and piano, and then publishing the music (both in recorded and score formats) so that it was available to a wide audience. In my opinion Dalshad could be more successful if he notated the Kurdish music he performs with detailed performance practice and published his compositions via an international

publisher. In this way he could be a more effective bridge between Kurdish music and Western audiences.

Music is important to cultural identity and the Kurds face a unique challenge because numerous governments (such as those of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria) often actively suppress their culture. In these countries many composers and singers, in an effort to absorb Kurdish culture, have often used Kurdish folksongs without attributing them to the Kurds. Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, cultures are mixed in their openness to music in the first place. Before 1991 the Kurds did not have their own government to aid in preserving their culture and music. Therefore, even though their musical tradition had been passed down orally for a considerable time, Kurdish folksongs were easily taken and mislabeled by Turkish, Arabic, and Persian composers and singers.

In addition, the Sulaimany and Duhok music ensembles faced many difficulties by including Kurdish women in their performances because in Middle Eastern culture such activities were not allowed for women. The Kurdish music ensembles appeal specifically to Kurdish people in a way that Arabic, Persian, and Turkish music ensembles do not. Having Kurdish music available through concerts, recordings, music publication, and the media has had an important cultural function. Additionally, musicians like Dalshad, Shexo, the Kamkars music ensemble, and the Kurdish String Orchestra are introducing Kurdish folksongs and culture to Western audiences with their concerts in Europe, Canada, and the United States of America.

Music can also be an important form of protest. For example, while Saddam Hussein's regime arrested many Kurds and used chemical weapons against them, Kurdish musicians answered by keeping their musical culture intact and presenting their musical events with traditional Kurdish costumes in their live concerts and on television.

Kurdish people have a rich culture, and few researchers have studied and written about it. For that reason it has a great potential for future research. Kurdish music has a minimum of four musical styles; each style could be a topic for research. Kurdish music has numerous distinct musical forms such as *Heiran* and *Lauk* (especially in vocal repertoire) which could serve as a point of departure for scholars. Also, there are many different kind of Kurdish dances like *sepeiy*, *chapi*, and *khani* that can be researched by scholars. The Armenian³⁹ composer Aram Khchaturian used a Kurdish dance in his composition *Dance of the Kurds* and *Sabre Dance* from the ballet *Gayaneh*. Another potentially rich field for research may be found in the close relationship between Armenian and Azari music, for instance the influence of folksongs on Khachaturian's music or possible Kurdish folksong influences on Azerbaijani composer Fikret Amirov's compositions (especially his piece *Kurdish Ovshari*).

³⁹ In the past, the Armenian culture was closely aligned with the Kurdish culture.

Appendix I - Middle Eastern Musical instruments

Many different instruments have been used through history in the Middle East and there is always some argument between the nation's musicians and scholars about which instruments belong to which nation. The instruments can be divided into three categories: strings, woodwinds, and percussion.

Stringed instruments:

Oud (عود) or Lute is one of the most common instruments in Middle Eastern music and Kurdish musicians have used this instrument in their songs for many centuries. In the ninth century Kurdish musician Ziryab added the fifth string to the Oud. It is usually played by plucking or strumming.



Figure 25 Oud. (Used by permission)⁴⁰

The Kamancha (rebec) is one of the bowed string instruments used in Middle Eastern music. Kurdish musicians have used this instrument for many years. The instrument is called (جوژه) in Iraqi Kurdistan and it is called (كهمانچه) in Iranian Kurdistan. Ardeshir Kamkar, a member of the Kamkars music ensemble, is the most famous Kurdish performer of this instrument.

⁴⁰ Photograph by Aram Hassan.



Figure 26 Kamancha. (Used by permission)⁴¹

⁴¹ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

The Santur is a hammered dulcimer-like instrument that has been used in Kurdish music ensembles, but mostly has been used in Iranian music played by Iranian musicians.



Figure 27. Santur. (Used by permission)⁴²

The Qanun (plucked box zither) is a large zither with a soundboard used by Middle Eastern musicians. The strings (between 63 and 84) are set up over a single bridge, which rests on fish skins. The strings run the length of the instrument to the end at the tuning pegs. During performance the qanun lies horizontally on the lap of performer. Kurdish musicians played this instrument as a part of an ensemble and as a solo instrument.

⁴² Photograph by Aram Hassan.



Figure 28. *Qanun*. (Used by permission)⁴³

Also, Western stringed instruments such as the violin, viola, cello, and double-bass have been used in Kurdish music from the middle of the twentieth century to the present.

Woodwind instruments:

Shimshal (شمشال) or *Nay* is a woodwind instrument that is traditionally made of hollow sugar cane and has six holes. This instrument is used in all types of Middle Eastern music, including Kurdish music. Originally, farmers played Shimshal to their sheep and other animals during feeding time. This instrument is currently used in musical ensembles as a traditional instrument.



Figure 29. *Shimshal*. (Used by permission)⁴⁴

⁴³ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

⁴⁴ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

Jutzele is a woodwind instrument and has many different names among Middle Eastern nations such as Mijwiz, Zummara, and Arghul in Arabic, and Cifte in Turkish. It consists of two pipes of equal length tied side by side with two small reed pieces. This instrument is often associated with weddings, where it is paired with a drum for line dancing music. It is also used as a solo instrument in musical ensembles.



Figure 30. Jutzele. (Used by permission)⁴⁵

The Balaban is a wooden wind instrument made of walnut wood with seven holes and one thumb hole. This instrument is also used at wedding parties with a percussion instrument and as a solo instrument in musical ensembles.



Figure 31. Balaban. (Used by permission)⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

⁴⁶ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

Percussion instruments:

The daf is a percussion instrument popular among Persia, Azari, and Kurdish musical cultures. It goes by several different names such as duff, def, dayera, mazhar, and bendir. The daf is similar to a tambourine. It has two faces; one of them is covered with skin, and the other one has many loose rings attached to the wooden frame. The player shakes the instrument during performance, and the rings strike the skin, producing a different sound than the skin itself.



Figure 32. Daf. (Used by permission)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

Dahol is a percussion instrument with double side drum played with an hammer or stake. This instrument is usually used with a Jutzele in wedding music outside of the concert hall, mostly in a big yard.



Figure 32. Dahol. (Used by permission)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Photograph by Aram Hassan.

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