

1. Nuba Al-Hiyaz Al-Mashriqi

This nuba is the ninth in the Kunndsh al-Ha'ik, (1800), a compilation of the poetry of the eleven Núbas known as "al-ála' that make up the musical heritage from the area covered by Morocco and Moorish Andalusia. Al-ála means "instrument" and is thus different from the assamá-repertoire which refers to the vocal music of the religious brotherhoods (zdwya).

A nuba is a collection of musical, vocal and instrumental works that have a principal mode (tab) in common. This mode gives the nuba its name, and the nuba is then ordered according to the different rhythmic cycles (mizan). The name of this nuba is related to the Islamic place of pilgrimage (hyaz) in the east (mashriq). The famous interval of the augmented second (F sharp-E flat), which to the western ear sounds very oriental and exotic, is typical of this mode, which is based on the note D. This nuba is the only one that has seven instrumental preludes (twishya), which are connected by a "ritornello". Instrumental preludes are very popular in Morocco and this nuba is known as (at-tasdshi as-sap) "the seven preludes". The bugya is an instrumental piece with free rhythm and a melodic system based on tradition. In it the fundamental notes of the mode, with their inflexions and embellishments, can be fully appreciated, and the audience is engulfed in the special atmosphere created by this mode. This effect on the audience is called (ta'tir at- tubú'fiat-tibd) by the theorists and refers to the effect of the mode on the human temperament. This theory goes back to the times of Ancient Greece and was later developed by the Arab sages Al-Kindi, Al-Frabi, Ijwan as- Sapa', between the 9th and 10th centuries. In Al-Andalus this science, introduced by the Persian master Ziryab in the 9th Century, was developed by the great Andalusian musician Ibn Baya (Avenpace) in the 12th century.

The twishya is a rhythmic instrumental piece used as a prelude to the nuba or to the mizan (rhythmic mode), or to the sana (song).

The inshád are placed between the twishya, and introduce a new musical element involving a solo song. They have a free rhythm and the melodic system is also based on tradition, in a similar way to the bugya.

The rhythms of this nuba are varied and difficult to define. The percussionist must follow the inflexions in the melody and use his own sense of rhythm to accentuate it, without changing the rhythmic base transmitted by oral tradition.

2. Nuba 'Iraq al-'Ayam

This is nuba number 10 in the classification as defined by al-Haik. The mode is based on the note G and has F sharp in the key signature.

According to al-Watisahrisi(16th Century) this mode is one of the six derived from the root mode Dayl. It must be played at midday, following the r-Rásd mode. Its element is the earth, its humour is atrabillious and its season of the year is autumn.

Al-Ha'ik emphasises "the sweetness of this mode and the beauty of its melodies. Its effects stimulate happiness and joy, and suppress sorrow and fatigue which weigh heavily on the soul, insufflating the positive energy necessary for honesty and good works. Anything that has high moral values cannot remain indifferent to the melodies of this mode 'Iraq al-'Ayam. The music lovers spirit vibrates and he is lifted to a state of emotion (tarab)".

The Bta'yi, the third cycle of the five in the nuba, has been chosen for this recording. After the bugya and the twishya (instrumental preludes), the song (sand) Futintu min nazra has a slow 8/4 beat. The lute improvisation, taqsim, picks up the air of the mode and develops it freely with a different tempo from the bugya. The art of improvisation allows the performer to express his own feelings within the range of emotion suggested by the musical mode.

The songs that follow accelerate the rhythm reducing the time (dawr) to 4/4. In the muwwal which is a free song for solo voice, the accompanying instruments create a background for the voice and at the same time an atmosphere of rivalry and complicity between the soloist and the instrumentalists. The muww'al brings the most secret moments of the art of improvisation in Andalusian music to an eager audience. In the last songs the rhythm accelerates more and more, reaching a frenzy at the end known in the jargon of the theorists as the (gafila) close.