

The first international conference on
**SEA SONGS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN:
COLLECTION, COMPARISON, ANALYSIS**

- Friday 11 to Sunday 13 April 2025 -

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THE CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

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Sea songs of Turkey: a cross-cultural analysis of sea songs and their impact on Turkish folk music and dances

Ali Fuat Aydin [of Izmir]

Abstract: Turkish Folk Music has combined distinct cultural values of all civilisations which lived in Anatolia and the Ottoman territories. However, it is in a changing period and its sources are changing rapidly, depending on the changing cultural, social and economic conditions. The sea itself is very important for people's lives and the aim of this paper is to make a list of songs which were collected from different regions of Turkey about the sea and this study delves into the rich tradition of sea songs in Turkey, examining their historical roots, cultural significance, and unique characteristics. By comparing Turkish sea songs with those from other maritime cultures, this research aims to uncover both universal themes and distinctive features that define the genre. Through a comprehensive analysis of lyrics, melodies, and performance contexts, the paper highlights how these songs reflect the maritime heritage and sociocultural milieu of Turkey. Additionally, the study explores the role of sea songs in community identity and their evolution in response to changing maritime practices. By placing Turkish sea songs within a broader cross-cultural

framework, this paper contributes to the understanding of maritime music traditions and their enduring legacy in contemporary cultural expressions.

CV: He was born in Aydin-Karpuzlu-Ektirli in 1973. He has made a significant contribution to the repertoire of Turkish Folk Music with his collecting activities in several regions, especially Aydin, Mugla and Izmir. He has mainly worked on "slow zeybeks" and the main element of his collections is the "kaba zurna" culture in Aydin-Germencik and Mugla-Milas. His articles on musical subjects, mainly on Turkish Music, have been published in various publications and he has presented papers in various conferences abroad. Meanwhile, he has also participated in many studio recordings, concerts, radio and tv programs as a musician and a researcher.

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Catching and selling tuna and swordfish in Sicily: ergological dimension and expressive practices

Sergio Bonanzinga [University of Palermo]

Abstract: The paper will outline the history of tuna fishing methods, a common heritage of various Mediterranean communities, whose work songs on the Sicilian side bear out contacts and interactions between the fishing communities of Southern Italy, Sardinia, Spain and Mediterranean Africa. The role of shouted calls will also be illustrated in the context of swordfish 'hunting', which was carried out according to traditional methods until the early 1960s, fitting in with the geographical specificities of the Strait of Messina. Finally, attention will be paid to the selling systems of these big fishes, also marked by 'musical' practices based on oral tradition.

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The sea as a place of musical exchange: shanty singing across the Mediterranean

Mollie Carlyle [University of Aberdeen]

Abstract: Stan Hugill in his seminal work describes port cities as 'shanty marts' where sailors would gather from around the world to exchange stories and songs (Hugill: 1961). Port cities are often considered to be the key setting of musical exchange through their function as a hub for trade, travel and work opportunities. Many studies have been undertaken that explore musical cultures that developed in specific port cities such as Marseille (Van der Miesen: 2024) and Izmir (Fuhrmann: 2009). The sea itself as a place of musical exchange, however, has been largely ignored in favour of a land-centric (often nationalistic) portrayal of maritime music. In reality, the men of the merchant service were a salmagundi of men from varied nationalities, backgrounds and occupations. When we examine shanty repertoire, we can clearly observe the melting pot of musical cultures that were influential in what the sailors were singing, creating a genre that transcends land borders, nationality and even language. This paper explores the exchange of shanty repertoire in the Mediterranean,

mapping the movement of song from shore-based origins in countries bordering the Mediterranean to becoming part of a wider work song repertoire that could be heard across the ocean.

CV: Dr. Mollie Carlyle is a maritime music scholar conducting research into the sea as a place of musical exchange. Carlyle recently completed her doctorate exploring the life and legacy of 'the last shantyman', Stan Hugill (1906-1992). This project was a joint venture between the Department of Music and the Elphinstone Institute for the study of Ethnology, Folklore and Ethnomusicology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Carlyle's current research uses a combination of ethnographic fieldwork, archival study and music mapping to create an integrated understanding of maritime song exchange from a number of socio-cultural and historic perspectives.

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The sea and its manifestations in women's songs of the Kerkennah Islands

Noura Chelly [University of Sfax]

Abstract: Like any island community, the lives of the inhabitants of the Kerkennah Islands are closely linked to the sea, as economic activities, social relations, psychological states of the inhabitants and even artistic productions revolve around the state of the sea and its giving as the main source of livelihood ...

Folk songs in general and women's songs in particular are among the most prominent artistic productions and one of its basic components that can convey to us the various phenomena of daily practices related to the sea and the contents and images they carry that show the relationship of the "Kerkennians" (Kerkennah people) with the sea and introduce their culture, identity and environment, as the "Kerkennian woman" contributed to enriching and transmitting a musical heritage that expresses her interactions and feelings and depicts her various characteristics and customs.

Therefore, through this research, we will try to present these songs, part of which are linked to work and daily activities related to the sea as a means of distracting the soul and forgetting the hardships of work or expressing the problems and difficulties that confront her.

We will also discuss the second part of it, which includes various aspects related to women's musical practices, from daily activities to occasions, during which a type of songs is performed that employs terms related to the sea, carrying within them manifestations of the sea that women have adopted as a means to highlight to us the various symbols of the sea in women's singing and to confirm the value of the sea in the collective memory and their constant communication with it.

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Musico-stylistic heterotopias: from Mediterranean island folk traditions to urban rebetiko sea songs

Spiros Delegos [Sibelius Academy Uniarts Helsinki]

Abstract: In the Mediterranean, myriad musical traditions have influenced each other, a plethora of musical idioms have been travelling, and a multitude of mobile musical agents have contributed to the development of blended musico-cultural phenomena. The present Greek islands were under Ottoman, Venetian, and Italian rule demonstrating a mosaic of music cultures. During the twentieth century, the violin was the most representative solo instrument in Greek sea-related songs, shaping the typical island folk style, especially in the Aegean. Rebetiko was an urban popular musical genre during and around the interwar period, associated with Greek communities and widespread in Greece nowadays. The three-course bouzouki-based idiom constitutes the very emblematic style in rebetiko. But how and why did folk island violin-based traditions move to urban settings through bouzouki-backed recordings? Why did rebetiko protagonists record in this style, even referring to sponge-fishing expeditions to North Africa? In my paper, I examine such cases by employing the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as an analytical/interpretive tool, viewing the results of these developments as musico-stylistic heterotopias. In this regard, elements of island folk violin-based traditions are *represented* in the corresponding bouzouki style, while simultaneously the rebetiko performers *contest* and *invert* the initial, primary island style.

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Some old fishing songs of Mallorca: repertoire on the common dolphinfish

Bàrbara Duran Bordoy [Grup de Recerca en Estudis Etnopoètics, University of the Balearic Islands]

Abstract: Most of the well-known songbooks of the folk repertoire in Mallorca do not contain fishing songs. They are, in fact, a rare repertoire.

Rev. Antoni Josep Pont and Antoni Noguera were two musicians of Mallorca engaged in the research around traditional folk songs in the late XIX century. Both were linked to Felip Pedrell, father of the Spanish Musicology, whom sent some songs published in the *Cancionero Musical Espanol*.

Part of the Rev. Antoni Josep Pont transcriptions were kept by the Monastery of Santa Familia (Manacor, Mallorca), nowadays a Benedictine Monastery. The nuns kept a box with some of his manuscripts, and around 2017 they discovered that a rich musical archive was in there. A few songs are fishing songs, related to the common dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*). The Catalan name for this fish is *llampuga* means "lightning", the weather phenomenon especially present in September (when the *llampuga* fishing is common).

The most relevant point, here, is the transcription of the songs, collected

in the late nineteenth century in Porto Cristo (Mallorca) by Rev. Antoni J. Pont. They are, without doubt, a remnant of old fishing songs present in the Western Mediterranean area.

CV: Barbara Duran holds degrees in Piano/Musical Language by the Conservatori Superior de València; Musicology (University of La Rioja), Master's Degree in Cultural Management (UOC / UdG / UIB) and Grade Recorders by the Trinity College of London (Exhibition Award 2003). PhD in Art and Musicology by the Autonomous University of Barcelona, she belongs to the GREE (Research Group on Folk Poetry) and the Institut de Musicologia Pau Villalonga. She plays recorders, organ and piano, and has published several books and papers. She got the 2018 Alexandre Ballester Prize and the City of Manacor 2019 Award for her thesis.

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Bodies in stasis, bodies in flight - new musical inflections of the body. The *harraga* songs of trans-Mediterranean small-boat migration from c. 2010 *

Ed Emery [SOAS, University of London]

Abstract: A major upcropping of Mediterranean music in the past decade has been the genre of *harraga* (literally "burning" - of one's past identity), a conjoined phenomenon of trans-national songs, musical forms and videography, predicated on the antithesis between *stasis* of bodies and *flight* of bodies. The frozen realities of unemployment, boredom, drug-taking, corruption and "no future" on the one hand, and the possibilities of "flight" across the sea. Bare life, *pace* Agamben. I start from research in Mahdia and Sfax in Tunisia, both launch-points for the illegalised cross-Mediterranean journeys of migrants and refugees. Both have a strong tradition of civic dance associated with Sufi observances. Hundreds of participants, frame drums, shawms, hand-clappings, overriding vocals an intense body-by-body rhythmic enactments.

In the trans-Mediterranean migration post-2010, the small boats carry those bodies away from their societal rooting into a context of policed, individualised and isolated anomie, wherein the old musical-societal-corporeal bonds are broken and may never be recovered. As they travel, they (mostly young men) film themselves, in selfie hand-held video clips, either singing as they go, or with tracks of song superimposed. They tell of the stasis of life under corrupt government regimes, but also of the certainty of deaths at sea for some of those bodies-in-flight. Strikingly, in the transition to Europe the communal musical modes of their home communities give way to the modes of rap and hip-hop, as best expressing the anger and the protest, and the "in-myself" personhood of the narrator. The dance gestures and body stances of Sufi embodied rhythms thus give way to those of rap and hip-hop. However, the musics of the incoming migrants, in turn, make a profound mark on the musical culture of Fortress Europe.

CV: Ed Emery is currently a Research Associate in the Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

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* This is a reworking and updating of a paper originally presented at MMS Palermo.

Physiology and vocality in work songs

Carlo Frasca' [PhD in the Conservatory of Catanzaro]

Abstract: In the folkloric world, the majority of manual tasks involved, in a more or less spontaneous way (if carried out alone) but above all culturally and musically organised (if conducted in a group) the use of the voice with a regulatory, isorhythmic, unifying function in the collective performance of the activity. However, another point of view can also be considered, before the psychoacoustic or cultural one, which is the physiological one, functionally and musically ordered by the different traditions. The new SoundPNEI® methodology, based on the acoustic spectrometry of sound signals and on frequency analysis, investigates this body dimension of the tuna trap songs, which is not only a cultural or technical element but an essential element in the possibility to carry out physically demanding jobs.

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Aesthetics, functionality and rituality in work songs

Danilo Gatto [Conservatory of Catanzaro]

Abstract: An extremely important aspect of sea work songs, much more significant than in the countryside work songs, is the religious, or magical-religious dimension, whereby the set of techniques, procedures and musical actions involved in catching fish very often acquires, in addition to a necessary functional aspect, a marked ritual, symbolic and aesthetic aspect. Tuna trap songs and swordfish hunting cries will then be examined, starting from a central role on the technical process and aiming to highlight their distinctive cultural meanings.

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Rap tunisien et immigration clandestine via la mer méditerranéenne.

Inscription générique ou expression réaliste

Imed Ghdemsi [University of Sousse, Tunisia]

Résumé: L'expression musicale tunisienne présente le genre *Rap* comme une voix qui aborde des thèmes issus des problématiques sociales et politiques agissant sur les jeunes et les familles. Zegnani, S. (2019). Catégoriquement, par définition et par usage, la musique englobe dans son discours et ses contextes de création et de diffusion les éléments de références qui évoquent les intentions des artistes. En effet, les idées élaborées sont exprimées à travers les paroles, les mélodies et les images. Salzbrunn, M., Souiah, F., Mastrangelo, S. (2015).

Les chansons *Rap-s* se propagent dans les canaux de diffusion relativement anciennes, mais aussi, ces chansons de révoltes et d'engagements se propagent dans les canaux inter médiaux, à travers *Internet* et ses différentes plateformes. Altman, R. (2000). Face à ces deux contextes de diffusion du *Rap* tunisien abordant le thème de *Harqa* (immigration clandestine via la mer), on peut de loin percevoir deux approches protagonistes analogues à ces différents canaux de diffusion.

En fait, quand *Balti* et *Samir Loussif* chantait le générique de la série *Harqa*, il dressait en musique le thème de ce drame télévisuel. Bien que *Balti* se présente comme un rappeur, du moins depuis une classification représentant ses début, *Loussif*, lui, il vient d'un répertoire musical populaire tunisien. Faisant un dialogue en chant, cette chanson raconte les malheurs d'immigrer clandestinement à travers la mer. Le croisement entre l'univers *Rap* et les airs populaires répond à des conventions de genre. Béthune, C. (2011).

Cette exposition converge vers quelques questions : Y-t-il des caractéristiques spécifiques de l'immigration via la mer méditerranée depuis la Tunisie ? La chanson *Rap* tunisienne, est-elle une traduction personnelle et une écriture autobiographique ? Quelles places et quelles fonctions de la mer dans les éléments du langage musical et imagé dans l'exemple tunisien ?

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The lyre in the Mediterranean: bridging Greek and Arabic cultures through song

Anas Ghrab [University of Sousse]

Abstract: This paper explores the enduring influence of ancient Greek musical heritage on contemporary song traditions in the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the lyre. Historically, parts of the ancient Greek cultural area, such as Egypt and Jordan, now lie within modern Arab countries. Notable examples include Alexandria in Egypt and regions influenced by Hellenistic culture.

The Arabic translations of Greek musical texts during the Islamic Golden Age were pivotal in preserving and disseminating Greek music theory. These translations facilitated a cultural exchange that enriched Arabic musical traditions and song repertoires, demonstrating a significant interconnection between the two cultures.

Today, the lyre continues to be used in the musical traditions and songs of Port Said, Egypt, and the Gulf of Aqaba, Jordan. This paper investigates these contemporary uses, exploring how they reflect and adapt ancient Greek traditions within modern song practices. In these regions, the lyre not only serves as a musical instrument but also as a cultural bridge, blending ancient Greek melodies with local Arabic influences to create unique musical expressions.

The primary research question addresses the extent to which today's song practices involving the lyre in these regions are directly connected to

ancient Greek culture. By analysing historical continuity, cultural adaptations, and the interplay between Greek and Arabic musical traditions in song, this study sheds light on the dynamic relationship between these cultures in the Mediterranean.

This research underscores the significance of cultural heritage in the realm of song and its ongoing impact on modern musical practices, offering insights into the complexities of cultural transmission, adaptation, and the creation of new musical forms in the Mediterranean.

CV: Anas Ghrab. After completing his studies in music and musicology at the University of Lyon 2, he earned his PhD from the University of Paris-Sorbonne. He previously served as the director of the Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music at Ennejma Ezzahra Palace and currently teaches at the University of Sousse's Higher Institute of Music. Additionally, he is a researcher at the L3S laboratory (ENIT), an associate researcher at IreMus (Paris), and leads several interdisciplinary projects in digital arts and humanities. Notably, he is involved in the Musée du Patrimoine Écrit project, in collaboration with the National Library of Tunisia and the Tunisian Academy Beït al-Hikma-Carthage. He also recently co-founded LiSa-Digit, an initiative aimed at enhancing digital databases for cultural heritages.

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Images of the sea from the edge of the Tunisian Sahara

Alan Karass [US Naval Academy, Annapolis]

Abstract: The town of Douz, Tunisia - 400 km southwest of Mahdia - is considered to be the gateway to the Sahara Desert. Residents of Douz are proud of their relationship to the desert, and many rites and rituals are connected to the landscape and their Bedouin ancestors. Although songs, poems, and stories feature the desert, camels, and the nomadic way of life, there are noteworthy references to the sea. The sea appears as a metaphor for significant life challenges and barriers. The Mediterranean is also part of the migration narrative - citizens of Douz who wish to seek a better life in Europe must face all the challenges that crossing the Mediterranean poses. In this presentation, I explore ocean imagery in song and poetry as found in Douz, especially the work of local writer Beshir Abdeladhim.

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Sea songs of the Turkish Black Sea coast. Collection, comparison, analysis

Dorit M. Klebe [Independent researcher]

Abstract: I will start my proposal with the reflection, "not to exclude", as Ed Emery says, "the maritime peripheries of the Atlantic and the Red Sea", but to integrate the Black Sea as well, being connected by the Bosphorus and Dardanelles with the Eastern Mediterranean. I begin my paper with a very short overview of Turkey along the Black Sea with the

neighbouring countries; the ethnies lived and living on the Turkish Black Sea Coast, their mother tongues, their various song repertoires.

The main part of my paper will focus on sea songs from my own collection, supplemented by examples out of the collection at the Berlin Free University, collected in 1963 in Turkey by my doctoral supervisor Kurt Reinhard, who collected 276 songs in the form of tape recordings and published a compendium of the song texts.

For my examples I have chosen one fishermen's song, and one patriotic song in connection to the Wars of Freedom 1917-18. The first song belongs to the group of folk songs, moreover to be danced to. The patriotic song emphasises a captain fighting for the Armed Forces with their sailing boat in 55 trips. This song I was able to record in Berlin in 1979, where it was sung by the *Batiberlin işçi Korosu* - Turkish Workers' Choir Berlin-West. The song exists as a folk song, on the other hand in a composition applying the features of the former Ottoman-Turkish so-called classical music. Each of the songs is analysed with regard to its formal song text structure, musical settings, its basic metro-rhythmic principles and its basic melodic-harmonic formulas.

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Musicological analysis and rhythmic function in tuna trap songs

Francesco Magaro' [Conservatory of Campobasso]

Abstract: How the basic structures of heterophonic singing have not only accompanied, but materially enabled the coordinated group work. The close link existing between bodily gesture and vocal gesture, which characterises every sound event as a moment of both performance and cultural learning, is examined in the light of the contemporary reality in which the songs are completely defunctionalised with respect to the original context and re-functionalised in the dimension of reproposal also oriented towards performance, according to assimilative and interpretative modalities that determine processes of actualisation and cocreation pertaining to the actual field of Artistic Research.

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The theme of the sea in Palestinian resistance songs

Mohamed Masmoudi [University of Sfax]

Abstract: This study explores the symbolic significance of the sea in Palestinian resistance songs. It analyzes how the sea is employed to convey deeper meanings of defiance against colonial powers, reinforcing a threatened identity, and attachment to the land. Additionally, the research examines the relationship between the lyrics and the musical composition of these songs to enhance the communicative purposes."

Keywords: resistance songs, sea songs, Palestinian songs

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Sea songs of Tunisia

Imed Nsiri [American University of Sharjah]

Growing up in Tunisia I remember hearing the song that says, "Baba Bahri save me from the mire." I often heard my relatives' enchanting *Hizb al-Bahr* of Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al Shadhili. The story goes that while at sea, a storm was about to sink the boat (safina) when the prophet came to Shaykh Abu al-Hasan and gave him *Hizb al Bahr*. Shayth Abu al Hassan al-Shadhili learned *Hizb al-Bahr* by heart and recited it, and they were saved. In most of the sea songs, the sea is dangerous place from which we need saving and in Sufism the prayers or the way of the shaykh is the way to be saved. In the popular Mezwed style the sea is also present, and in the recent years the sea is seen as a very dangerous place. I live now in the UAE and I found that sea songs used to be very common but it's an art that is dying out.

I would like to use the frame work of performance theory and in particular the ideas of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, especially the notion of liminality and communitas, to look into the sea songs of Tunisia and the UAE.

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Bambutiyya: The maritime identity of Port Said

Kawkab Tawfik [Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire]

Abstract: In the northern Suez Canal area, *simsimiyya* songs blended with Sufi traditions, love songs, fishermen and sailors' songs in the 19th century, coinciding with the construction and development of the Canal. The *bambutiyya*, along with its dance, is one of the most characteristic expressions of Port Said's identity. Emerging from port workers who used to transfer goods and passengers between larger vessels anchored offshore and the docks of Port Said, operating small boats, or *bambüt*, the *bambutiyya* reflects the city's maritime culture and the commercial spirit of its people, expressed through dance movements that mimic the handling of goods.

As part of the *simsimiyya* culture, the *bambutiyya* gained significance and a sense of identity among the communities in the Suez Canal cities. Initially played by workers and fishermen in harbour cafés, the music of *simsimiyya* began to embody themes of popular and anti-colonial resistance during the wars of 1956 and 1967, evolving beyond its original context. Later, *simsimiyya* was formalized by the Egyptian state, promoted on national stages, television, and radio, and underwent a process of institutionalisation that included the adoption of "uniforms" and traditional costumes, as well as the creation of choreographed performances.

CV: Kawkab Tawfik is an ethnomusicologist and *membres scientifiques à titre étranger* at the *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*. She is currently the Diego Carpitella Fellow at Fondazione Cini in Venice, where she is producing a scientific documentary on *Salila, the zar spirit of the*

water. She obtained her PhD in Cultural Heritage from "Tor Vergata University" of Rome in 2020, with research focusing on music, politics, and identity in Egypt. Her current research centres on ritual and trance music, particularly Egyptian *zar* and *zikr* practices. In her work, she employs audiovisual documentation, along with a participatory approach, working closely with music practitioners and local communities.

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Time and the body in the Greco-Islamic seas: Qur'anic recitation as the conduit to embodied knowledge of time

Hani Zewail [University of California Santa Barbara]

ABSTRACT: Heraclitus wrote: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man' (Kahn, 1995). The flow of the river provides a powerful metaphor for describing the *aporia* that reveals time's duality in identity, as both same and different in each moment. Both common to everyday life and an object for philosophical reflection, rivers, seas, and oceans became the subject of aesthetic expression of time not just for Greek but also for Islamic philosophers and mystics. The Ikhwan al-Safa theorised human finitude, temporality, and the body/soul relationship as the passage of ships along seas. Ibn al-'Arabi rooted his conceptualisation of the limit of time as the *barzakh*, an intermediary realm between the eternal and the temporal (Bashier, 2004). A metaphysical concept that finds spatial representation in the Qur'an as the meeting of two flowing rivers. I argue that Qur'anic recitation makes these types of mimetic representations corporeal, where embodied aesthetic experience harmonises the complex resonances between the poeticity of the text and the rules of recitation (*tajwīd*). Epistemologically, that the body's production of acoustic consonances, pharyngealisations, and durational alterations becomes the conduit for an embodied knowledge of temporality through orality.

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Recent Conferences:

Southern California and Hawai'i chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology: "Musico-Theological Anthropology of the Macro/Microcosmos relationship: Al-Kindi's Musicology and Celestial Spheres as Listening Agents" March 2024

9th Conference of the Music and Philosophy Study Group, Department of Music, King's College London: Harmonia of the Nafs: Musico-Theological Anthropology of the Body-Soul Problem in 9th-10th Islamic Peripatetic

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