

# **The Druze Musical Heritage: An Overview<sup>1</sup>**

**By Kathleen Hood**

Is there something distinctive about Druze music? My research suggests that just as the Druzes are culturally and linguistically Arabs, in general they share musical traditions with other Arab groups. Indeed, although there are some genres that seem to have originated with the Druzes in Syria, there are no overarching traits that distinguish Druze music. Rather, I propose that the Druzes in each geographic region have adopted the prevailing musical style of that area. Nevertheless, in each locale where they live, music is an integral part of their life.

In my research, based on fieldwork as well as various audio-visual and written sources, I have found the music of the Lebanese and Palestinian/Israeli Druzes to be very similar to that of other Arab groups in those areas, whereas the music of the Syrian and Jordanian Druzes can be considered to be the most characteristically Druze, with regard to song lyrics, performance style, a few genres, and the contexts in which music and dance genres are used.

In this paper, I will give an overview of the various musical traditions found among the Druzes living in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, and Jordan, focusing mainly on weddings and funerals.

## **Druze Music**

In Druze communities, as in other Near Eastern societies, the main contexts for music are engagements and weddings, funerals, work, child rearing, and warfare.<sup>2</sup> Although there are common musical and cultural traits that are found throughout the Near East, there is a great deal

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on my book, *Music In Druze Life: Ritual, Values, and Performance Practice*, published by the Druze Heritage Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> After the mid-twentieth century, however, there has been a loss of musical accompaniment to some of these activities.

of diversity from one region to another. For example, Arab weddings tend to follow a standard format that includes various parties before the wedding followed by the wedding itself, including the *zaffa*, or procession to take the bride from her family's home to the groom's new home (which may be attached to his parents' home). The diversity is apparent in many details, most importantly the choice of music sung during the *zaffa*, where the type of song used depends on the particular geographic region.

### **Druze Musical Attitudes**

In general, Druze attitudes toward music are similar to those held by other religious groups in the Near East. The power of music to affect the emotions, and the association of music with physical pleasures, has made it problematic from the point of view of many religions, even though most make use of some sort of religious music or chanting. The conflict of using music in religious contexts while disapproving of it in secular contexts is resolved, in some cases, by clearly separating the two through the use of different sets of rules and terminology. Islam, like Orthodox Christianity, maintains a strict separation between sacred and secular music. While music is not specifically prohibited in the Qur'an, it has been condemned by some parts of al-Hadith.

Islamic attitudes and ambivalence toward music carry over into Druze musical life. According to my consultants (who, although not religious initiates, have nevertheless been instructed in matters of behavior by the religious initiates or '*uqqal*'), there is an attitude among some Druzes that secular, and particularly instrumental, music has no place in religion. On the other hand, the Thursday evening religious services at the *majlis* (a meeting place where Druzes go to worship) contain a type of religious recitation of the texts that approaches singing on the speech-song continuum. In addition, during the first part of the service when the *juhhal* (the

uninitiated) are present, the congregation sings unaccompanied religious poems in call-and-response fashion. The only public venue for religious chant is during the men's portion of the funeral ceremony, where the *mashayikh* perform prayers for the dead, which sound very much like recitation of the Qur'an and even include passages from it.

### **Separate but Complementary: Men's and Women's Musical Domains**

As with many aspects of Druze society, where men and women inhabit separate but complementary spheres, there is a division of musical domains along gender lines. Men's songs deal with outward, or worldly, concerns, such as honor, war, and love of the homeland (*hubb al-watan*), while women's songs deal primarily with love and social relationships. There is, however, some crossover, and men often sing love songs and women will sometimes sing songs that are war-related.

Another musical division based on gender is in the use of musical instruments. Although the Druzes use very few musical instruments in their traditional music, there is a clear distinction between men's and women's instruments. I believe that the division of instruments according to gender lines can be reflective of societal hierarchies. In the Arab world, men tend to play the stringed instruments, like the *rababa* (a one-stringed bowed fiddle), and wind instruments, such as the *mijwiz* (a wind instrument having two parallel reed-pipes, each with a single reed), while women play the frame drum. Al-Farabi, in his treatise on music called *al-Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir* (The Grand Book on Music), proposed a hierarchy of instruments in which the first instrument was the human voice, followed by instruments that could produce a sustained sound approximating the human voice, followed by plucked string instruments, and then percussion instruments.

## Syria & Jordan

The musical traditions of Syria and Jordan are grouped together here for a variety of reasons. First, Jabal al-‘Arab and northern Jordan have historically been culturally and geographically similar. They are both desert regions where bedouin influence has been predominant, especially in the areas of music, food, and social customs. Before the advent of the modern nations of Syria and Jordan, the area was part of the Ottoman region known as Greater Syria, and Druzes from the Jabal traveled frequently to northern Jordan, especially to the oasis at al-Azraq. Second, the Druze community in Jordan came almost entirely from Jabal al-‘Arab, and the settlers brought with them the same music and dance traditions that had developed over the years in the Jabal. Finally, the relatively brief existence of the Druze community in Jordan (less than one hundred years old) has not resulted in any marked cultural differences between the two areas. By contrast, although the Syrian Druze community originally came from Lebanon and presumably brought with them the Lebanese customs and music, over time, they adapted the music, dance, and other customs of the local bedouin to their own needs. For example, the Syrian and Jordanian Druzes have adopted the colloquial sung poetry known as *shuruqi*, which is performed by a poet-singer accompanied on the *rababa*. The use of unaccompanied song forms and songs that use only the *shabbaba* (small reed or metal flute) is also a bedouin legacy. The melodic line of many Druze songs features a jagged contour associated with bedouin songs, and the Druzes even adopt a characteristically bedouin accent when reciting poems and when singing.

Like other Arab folk music, the music of the Syrian and Jordanian Druzes is primarily vocal and monophonic. Except for the repertoire of the poet-singer, which is performed solo, traditional Druze music and dances are communal choral genres performed by groups of men or women (and sometimes by men and women together). Most of the genres are not sung in a

unison fashion, but are either responsorial (one or two soloists alternating with the chorus) or antiphonal (two choirs alternating). I believe that performing communal songs can be a way to reinforce feelings of communal solidarity.

### **Instruments**

There are four traditional instruments in the Jabal. The first in importance, in line with al-Farabi's classification, is the *rababa*, a rectangular fiddle, covered on both sides with goat skin, having one string made of horse hair and played with a bow made of wood and horse hair. Next in importance is the *mijwiz*, a wind instrument having two parallel reed-pipes with single reeds. The *mijwiz* player traditionally led Druze troops into battle, followed by the bearer of the *bayraq*, a battle flag.<sup>3</sup> Today, the *mijwiz* is mainly used in weddings to accompany *dabka*. Third in importance is the *shabbaba* (small reed or metal flute), which is associated with shepherds but is now used in weddings to accompany *dabka*. Finally, the only percussion instrument traditionally used is the *daff* (frame-drum), played only by women in weddings. (The *darbukka*, or goblet drum, is often used now in weddings, but it is a relatively recent addition from urban musical traditions. Either men or women may play it in the wedding context.)

In Jordan, the same instruments are used, with the addition of the *qirba*, the Scottish bagpipe, which was brought to Jordan with the British military bands. These bagpipes have a double-reed chanter, two tenor drones, and a bass drone. The *qirba* is often used instead of the *mijwiz* to accompany *dabka* in weddings.

The environment of southern Syria and northern Jordan is reflected in the instruments used. First, as is often found in societies that are nomadic or have a nomadic background, few instruments are used, and they are rather small and portable. Second, little wood is used in the

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<sup>3</sup> Each village had its own *bayraq* (flag), which was always carried by members of a family designated as the flag-bearers for that village. The flag served to unite the troops by village during combat (Bokova 1990:155).

construction of the instruments, reflecting the scarcity of trees. The *rababa* and the *daff* are both covered with goatskin, which is rather plentiful in the area.

### **Genres: the Communal Repertoire**

Throughout the Near East, war songs are very important. These can be songs that prepare the troops for battle or they can be exercises to make the fighters quick and agile. Nowadays in Syria and Jordan, most of the war song genres are not used for warfare, but are sung by men at weddings. One of these is the *jawfiyya*, an unaccompanied, antiphonal song and men's dance in which the men usually form two lines facing each other. The *jawfiyya* has various melodies and meters. Very often, the melodies are interchangeable, and one *qasida* can be set to a variety of different *jawfiyya* melodies. The *jawfiyya* is the war song par excellence because of its fast, driving rhythm and its power to inflame the emotions. Even the performance of the *jawfiyya*—two lines of men facing each other—simulates battle. Because the *jawfiyya*, like war itself, is a communal endeavor, it causes the whole Druze community to rally around to protect their honor and their land. Finally, the *jawfiyya*, as the prime vehicle for the transfer of Druze values and collective memory to successive generations, is one of the most important of all the song genres in Syrian and Jordanian Druze society.

The *hida* is a heroic genre. Although it was originally used as a camel-driving song, it gradually became associated with horses. The *hida*, although not as popular among Druzes in the Jabal as it is in Palestine<sup>4</sup> and formerly was in Lebanon, it is sometimes sung at certain points in Syrian Druze weddings. In contrast, the *hida* is still very popular among the bedouin in the Jabal, who perform it during the *zaffa*, the procession whereby the groom and his family go to “take” his bride.

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<sup>4</sup> For discussion of the Palestinian *hida*, see Sbait (1989).

The *hujayna* is a song originally sung while riding on the back of a camel. It is characterized by a triple beat, something like a waltz.

The *qasidat al-fann* is an unaccompanied vocal genre in which men sing a *qasida* while performing a slow-moving line dance. It has a somber quality, and is sung in a slow tempo. The subjects of these poems can be war, heroism, Druze history, or love. Originally from Suwayda province, this genre is performed by Druzes and Christians alike in Jabal al-Arab.

The *huliyya* (plural *huliyyat*), is an antiphonal, unaccompanied song with a dance performed in a circle by groups of men or women, or in mixed groups. The themes are generally related to love, although they sometimes speak of love against the backdrop of war, and some of lyrics voice social commentary. Based on my preliminary observations and information from music specialists in the area, this genre seems to be unique in Syria and Jordan to the Druzes. I did not witness any performances of *huliyya* at the bedouin or Christian weddings I attended in Syria.

There are a variety of women's songs that are performed at weddings. In general, they describe the events of the wedding, praise the bride and groom, and otherwise serve as entertainment for the bride and her guests. Other songs are performed during the *zaffa*, where men and women sing different songs at the same time during the procession. Often these songs are accompanied by one or more women who play either the *daff* (frame drum), or *darbukka* (goblet drum).

The genre of wedding song known colloquially as *mahahay* is performed exclusively by women. The short, unaccompanied songs, which praise the bride or groom, are somewhat recitative-like, are sung quickly in a high-pitched voice, and usually begin with the interjection *ayha* or *awiha*. Usually sung solo, the songs end with collective ululations known as *zagharid*

(colloquially called *zalaghit*) this term is also used to refer to the entire song and ululation sequence (Racy 1980:654; Shiloah 2001:827).<sup>5</sup> This genre is found throughout the Near East.

The *lawha* is a song and couples' dance originally performed by men holding a dagger in each hand but now danced by pairs of men or women, accompanied by *mijwiz* or *shabbaba* (small reed or metal flute) and *darbukka* (goblet drum). The dance step has a limping quality because the dancer steps on the strong beat of the duple meter melody with the right foot and only steps lightly on the left foot on the weak beat. Like the *huliyya*, this dance appears to be unique to the Druzes in Syria and Jordan.

The *dabka* is a dance performed in a line (sometimes in a circle) by groups of men or women, and now sometimes by both men and women together. Among the Druzes of the Syrian Jabal, the *dabka* is generally accompanied by the *mijwiz* and *darbukka* (and recently by *shabbaba* and *darbukka*). In Jordan, the *dabka* is sometimes accompanied by the *qirba*, or bagpipe, instead of the *mijwiz* or *shabbaba*. The *dabka* is found throughout the Arab Near East, although there are distinctive regional variations.

### **The Poet-Singer's Repertoire**

The poet-singer sings almost all the songs in the communal repertoire with the exception of the dance genres *dabka* and *lawha* and the women's genres. The poet-singer sometimes plays at weddings, but not outdoors in the *zaffa*, since the proper place for the *rababa* is in the *madhafa*.

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<sup>5</sup> In a very interesting study, Joel Kuipers (1999) discusses ululation, which is found in many parts of the world, as a phenomenon worthy of study on its own, not simply as an adjunct to another genre.

## Lebanon

Traditionally, a wide variety of rural folk songs and dances have been performed by the Druzes in Lebanon, mostly at weddings and funerals. These include communal genres, such as the *hida*, sung by men in unison or responsorially, and the *tarwid*, or light songs, sung by women at weddings. Many genres, however, are performed by one singer alone or in alternation with a chorus. One example is the *abu al-zuluf*, which is a strophic song with choral refrain and can be sung by a man or a woman (Racy 2001:422). The *'ataba* is a strophic genre in free rhythm, usually with an added metric choral refrain called *mijana* (thus it is sometimes referred to as *'ataba wa mijana*) (Racy 1980:654).<sup>6</sup> A further folk genre is the *dal'una* that often accompanies *dabka* dances, in which a dancer may sing a verse followed by a choral refrain by the rest of the dancers (Racy 2001:422). *Zajal* is an even more specialized genre, and its performers are now often professional or semi-professional.

The tendency toward solo genres that require some skill, coupled with influences from the West where musicians are in a class apart from the non-musician, has opened the door to the professionalization of folk music in Lebanon today. As of this writing, few Lebanese weddings have much communal participation. Rather, they are the domain of professional wedding bands and *zajal* singers, specialists who are hired to perform.

The lengthy civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) further propelled music performance in the direction of professionalization. During the war, festive weddings were not appropriate (Ammar, 3 July 2003). Thus, traditional music was not performed as much, and a new generation

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<sup>6</sup> According to Racy, the *'ataba* has a special rhyme scheme. "First, each of the first three segments of a *'ataba* verse—a segment being half a line—ends with a pun, actually one word used but with a different meaning each time. Secondly, at the end of the fourth and last segment, there is usually one traditionally used rhyme, characterized by the final long sound '...ab'" (1971:87).

has grown up without learning the old songs. Since the end of the war, a new tradition has been born, that of the professional wedding *firqa* (band).

Another type of professional or semi-professional group in Lebanon is the *nawba*, which is a brass band that uses Western instruments including the trumpet, trombone, baritone, clarinet, cymbals, snare drum, and bass drum. A typical band may consist of ten to fifteen musicians (Racy 1971:39). According to Racy, “their repertory includes adaptations of local traditional tunes, older Arab and Turkish marches as well as ‘Arabized’ renditions of European funerary compositions” (2001:422). The tradition of *nawba* bands performing at public events began sometime in the early twentieth century (Racy 1971:39). Although at one time, many villages had their own *nawba*, there is only one Druze *nawba* in Lebanon now, the Salima *nawba*. The musicians of the Salima *nawba* are all members of the al-Masri family, a family that has maintained a *nawba* since 1932.

Like other *nawba* groups, the Salima *nawba* performs at weddings, funerals, or at any other occasion in which the musicians are asked to play. When playing weddings, they perform during the *zaffa* to bring the bride to the groom’s house and they finish playing upon their arrival there. They do not play as many weddings as funerals, however, since many people associate the music with funerals (al-Masri, 20 September 2003). In general, they more often perform at the funerals of young, unmarried persons, but never if the deceased was a *shaykh* (ibid.). They are hired to play at both Christian and Druze events, using the same repertoire for both (ibid.).

## **Zajal**

In the broadest sense, *zajal* is a colloquial poetic genre written and performed by poet-singers. “In the Lebanese tradition it means primarily oral vernacular poetry in general, a discourse in many forms, composed in or for performance, declaimed or sung to the

accompaniment of music” (Haydar 1989:190). The art of *zajal* is often passed down from one generation of poet-singers to the next (Sharaf al-Din, 8 September 2003).

*Zajal* poets perform at four types of events: weddings, funerals, various holidays and official functions, and *zajal* parties (Khaddaj, 17 September 2003.) For weddings and funerals, the poet generally performs alone, whereas for the *zajal* parties, they perform nowadays as a member of a *jawqa* (or *firqqa*)—a team of four *zajal* poets. Originally, however, poetic duels would be held between two poets. These poets, or *qawwal*-s, would often travel from village to village in order to perform, accompanied by *al-raddada*, a small group of supporters who act as a chorus (Haydar 1989:202; Frayha 1957:279).

When two poets (or two pairs of poets) compete against each other, the audience takes sides. A topic is chosen for the debate and one poet begins to improvise a sung poem about it, addressing it to the other poet. The topic may be a riddle that he challenges the other to solve in verse, or it may be a debate on a social or political issue involving two opposing concepts, such as: the village and the city; the single and the married state; the sword and the pen, etc. (Haydar 1989:203; Khaddaj, 17 September 2003). The opponent must respond, keeping with the meter and rhyme used by the first poet. “If he is unable to solve the riddle, or emulate the meter and the rhyme, he must apologize in verse or else lose the contest” (Haydar 1989:203). Both poets must improvise all material on the spot and they cannot use previously composed materials (*ibid.*). In the past, a judge, who was generally a *qawwal* himself, would evaluate the competition and announce the winner (*ibid.*). As of this writing, there are no longer any formal judges of *zajal*. Instead, the poets will come to a compromise at the end or switch to love poetry or may perform the lively genre in short meter with word play called *mukhammas mardud* (Racy, 5 September 2004).

## **Palestine/Israel**

As in other Druze communities, the main contexts for music and dance are weddings, engagements, and funerals. The traditions and music performed by the Druzes in their weddings and other occasions are similar in most respects to that of the other Arab groups in Palestine/Israel. Similarly, there are few instruments used to accompany traditional music. Among them are the *shabbaba* (small, end-blown reed or metal flute), the *darbukka* (single-headed goblet drum), the *mijwiz*, and the *arghul* (usually spelled *yarghul* and pronounced as such), an instrument found in Egypt and Palestine with two parallel reed-pipes, often of unequal lengths, each having a single reed. Modern wedding bands may include violin, synthesizer, and drum set.

### **The Poet-Singer and His Repertoire**

As in Lebanese *zajal*, there is a tradition of sung colloquial poetry that is extemporaneously sung at many festive occasions, especially at weddings (Sbait 1989:213). The poet-singer in Palestine has a much more prominent position than his counterpart in Syria, Jordan, and even in Lebanon. In the past, the poet-singer was a specialist and not a professional, but it is now common for them to be professional or semi-professional.

The poet-singer is hired to perform at a wedding by the groom's family (Bahat [1973?]:39). His performance is an essential element of the wedding, and if the family has money, they will hire two poets (ibid.). Often, the two poets are regular partners (Yaquub 2002:574).

There are seven different genres that are regularly performed by the poet-singer: the *'ataba*, *hida*, *far'awi*, *muhawraba*, *m'anna*, *qarradi*, and the *qasida* (Sbait 1989:214). Two of the

most popular are *hida* and *qarradi* with *hida* being the most popular (ibid.). The poet-singers may move from genre to genre many times during their performance at a wedding.

The *'ataba* is a strophic poem that is mostly improvised (Sbait 2002: 582). The melody is non-metric and the poetry most commonly follows an *AAAB* rhyme scheme, in which the last verse of a quatrain ends with *na* or *ab* or *aba* (the last syllable of the word *'ataba*) (Shiloah 2001:826; Sbait 2002:582). The lyrics often praise the hosts and other participants at a wedding and describe the events of the wedding; they can also deal with love or social and political events (Sbait 2002:582).

The *hida* among the Arabs in Palestine and Israel differs somewhat from that in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. However, like the *hida* in other parts of the Arab world, the Palestinian version can be sung solo or responsorially.

*Hida* is strictly an outdoor genre, sung basically at the party on the evening before the groom's wedding and accompanied by the folk dance known by the Palestinian Arabs as *sahjih* (men's folk dance). In the *sahjih* the *sahjih* (folk dancers shake their bodies slightly, clap rhythmically, and sing the common *hida* refrain *ya halali ya mali*, which can be best translated as ('Oh how fortunate I am!' or 'I am delighted with my money or wealth') and other variations of the same phrase. (Sbait 1989:215)

During improvised performances of *hida*, the two poets may begin to debate intellectual subjects, similar in manner to the *zajal* competitions in Lebanon (Sbait 2002:584). The poets may debate on one topic, such as "the importance of education," or may take sides on contrasting issues, such as "imprisonment and freedom" or "the sword and the pen" (ibid.; Lala, 30 April 2004). The audience will take sides, each rooting for their favorite *hadda* (Lala, 30 April 2004). This is one of the highlights of a groom's evening celebration (Sbait 2002:584).

The *far'awi* is a fast, rhythmic genre in which the poet-singer improvises single verses, couplets, or quatrains. The chorus responds with the first verse of the poem, which then becomes

the refrain (Sbait 2002:584). Topics include the usual praise for the families involved in the wedding, descriptions of the event, love, zeal, politics, congratulations, and words of welcome (ibid.)

The *muhawraba*, or wedding procession songs, are slow and not accompanied by dancing or clapping (Sbait 2002:585). The verses of this genre are single or pairs of improvised lines that praise or congratulate (ibid.).

The *qarradi* is a fast, rhythmic song using improvised verses of two lines, four lines, or eight lines (Sbait 1989:223). These songs are suitable for dancing and may be accompanied by instruments such as the *darbukka*, although they are always performed indoors (ibid.:228). The audience participates by clapping and by singing refrains (ibid.:223). These songs can be performed at various points during the wedding, as well as during other occasions, such as festivals, engagement parties, and other private parties (ibid.:228). As in Lebanon, *qarradi* is also performed as part of the *nadwat zajal* (session involving poetic duels—can be performed on a radio or television show, or in a club or restaurant) (ibid.:228-229). The *qarradi* is used in Lebanon during *zajal* parties whenever the poet-singers sense that the audience is getting bored, because it invites audience participation (Haydar 1989:204). Sbait notes some similarity among the different *qarradi*, saying that, “in my collection all *qarradi* songs except one, have a fast tempo and are sung in duple meter following the musical *maqam* of *sigah*” (1989:223).

The Palestinian *qasida* (colloquially called *zajaliyya*), is an improvised poem sung in colloquial Arabic having two hemistiches (one couplet) that end in a monorhyme (Sbait 2002:585). The poet-singer sings alone, usually without a refrain, and he may congratulate the hosts or sing about a variety of topics, including love, politics, and social issues (ibid.)

## **The Communal Repertoire**

There are a variety of folk songs in colloquial Arabic—performed by the community, not by professionals—which are sung mainly during weddings. As in other areas of the Near East, there are a whole series of women’s songs dealing with the events of the wedding. Responsorial songs dealing with *hinna* (henna) are sung during parties where the bride’s hands are decorated with *hinna* (Sbait 2002:581). These parties, however, are going out of fashion, so it is possible that this repertoire will fall into disuse. The category of women’s song called *mahahay*, discussed earlier, is also performed.

Women also typically sing songs to accompany the groom’s shaving and bathing ritual, although men may also sing these. Poet-singers may also perform at this event (Sbait 2002:589). The songs are generally pre-composed, but may include improvised verses, and usually praise and congratulate the groom and his family (ibid.). These songs may be accompanied by instruments, such as the *mijwiz* and *darbukka* or in recent years, violin, electric guitar, or keyboard (ibid.).

Other communal genres include the formulaic refrains sung by the men at a wedding, for example in response to the verses sung by a poet-singer. There is also a genre of pre-composed folk songs written by anonymous composers that have been passed down orally for generations (Sbait 2002:579).

## **Funerals**

Among the Druzes, weddings and funerals are the main life-cycle ceremonies for the public demonstration of communal ties and religious values. The funeral however, is perhaps the most important of all occasions, and the Druzes consider going to any funeral a social and

religious duty. The funeral is also one of the main contexts for music in Druze life and includes secular laments as well as religious chant.

### **Song Repertoire**

The extensive female lament repertoire includes a variety of communal responsorial genres, as well as solo genres. Some of these are specifically for funerals, while others are borrowed war-songs or weddings songs whose lyrics have been modified for the funeral (Racy 1971:86; 1986:33). The women's performances may last several hours, and thus some songs may be combined in a suite or medley (Racy 1985:2). The male lament repertoire in Lebanon (no tradition of lament singing exists among men in Syria and Jordan) is much smaller than that of women and uses fewer borrowed genres (Racy 1985:2). These genres include communal responsorial songs and solo performances by professional poet-singers. Unlike women, men do not perform medleys of laments (ibid.)

### **Nadb**

Although the term "*nadb*" is used generically to mean funeral songs in general, the *nadb* proper is specifically a type of strophic song that is only performed in funerals. The majority of songs sung in a funeral are *nadb*. In Lebanon, they are sung by either men or women (and in Syria, only by women). Generally speaking, *nadb* songs are strophic, responsorial, and essentially metric. However, by comparison with the stylistically more reserved women's interpretations, the male solo verses can be much freer, allowing for more improvisation and display of vocal ability (Racy 1971:90-91).<sup>7</sup> Delivered against the metrically controlled choral renditions sometimes provided by ad hoc participants from the community, the more elaborate

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<sup>7</sup> The female lament singer may use slightly more ornamentation than the chorus, but she stays within the metric pulse.

performances are typical of the professional *zajal* poets, especially since the latter part of the twentieth century.

### **War Songs, including Hida and Jawfiyya**

As previously discussed, the *hida* and the *jawfiyya* are heroic songs, often associated with warfare and commonly performed at weddings and other festive occasions. When performed at funerals, the texts are sometimes altered for the occasion. In Lebanon, *hida* may be performed at funerals of adult males, especially if the deceased was a young man who had not yet married. Like the *nadb*, the *hida* are responsorial, metric, and strophic (Racy 1971:86; 1985:3). They can be performed by both men and women, but the men's *hida*, like the men's *nadb*, are often performed with an expanded solo verse in rather free rhythm (Racy 1971:90). *Jawfiyyat* are sometimes performed at funerals in Syria and Jordan, especially if the deceased was a young, unmarried man or a hero, particularly one who died in battle. Although instruments are generally not used in funerals, sometimes a *mijwiz* will be played at a hero's funeral.

### **Qasida**

In Lebanon, a *qasida*, or poem, is typically performed alone by a male and is an important part of the *zajal* poet's repertoire. There are *qasaid* for many occasions, including weddings, but the main type sung in funerals is called *ritha'* or *qasidat ritha'* (elegiac poem). These songs are vehicles for artistic display and are either recited or chanted non-metrically in an ornate and melismatic fashion (Racy 1971:91; 1985: 3-4). In Syria, poet-singers may be hired to perform a *qasidat ritha'*, but they usually recite the poem rather than singing it.

### **Fraqiyyat and Tanawih**

The *fraqiyyat* (singular *fraqiyya*: songs of departure) or *tanawih* (singular, *tanwiha*: wailing, lamentation) are songs for a female soloist. The *fraqiyya* and the *tanwiha* are closely related and are considered to be among the most important genres of the female lament singer's repertoire (Racy 1971:88; 1985:4). The melodies are characteristically descending in contour and non-metric, with extended melismatic sections. The text contains a series of couplet verses, which are usually memorized or pre-composed by the singer and then modified for the occasion (Racy 1971:88). Sometimes *fraqiyyat* will be performed in alternation with a short, metric choral refrain known as *scaba*. This pairing is similar to that of the '*ataba* and *mijana*, in which the '*ataba* is a strophic genre in free rhythm, while the choral refrain is called *mijana*. Like the '*ataba*, the *fraqiyya* has a special rhyming scheme, except that instead of the last line ending with the sound "...ab," it ends with the sound "...aba," as does the *scaba* refrain (Racy 1971:87).

### **Shawbasha and Tarwid**

These lively songs are usually sung by women at weddings, where they may be accompanied by dancing and hand-clapping. In the funeral context, their lyrics are modified and they would most likely be performed when the deceased is a young, unmarried man or woman. In this case, there may also be utterances of *zaghariid* (shrill, trilling cries of joy, ululations) (Racy 1971:86).

### **Conclusion**

My research shows that there is little that is intrinsically Druze about the traditional music performed in Druze communities in the Near East, which can be considered to be a part of the broader Arab folk music heritage. The exceptions to this are the lyrics of many songs found in Syria and Jordan that are repositories of Druze history and collective memory. In addition, the

genres *qasidat fann*, *lawha*, and *huliyya* appear to have originated among the Druzes of Jabal al-Arab in Syria. Although these genres are melodically, rhythmically, and stylistically Arab, they can be considered Druze by virtue of their origin. In general, the Druzes in each geographic location have adapted the music of that region. Men's genres seem to show more diversity from one region to another, with the music used in the *zaffa* being the most divergent. Music sung during other parts of the wedding, such as the bathing and shaving parties, seems to be more similar across the region. Likewise, women's genres and religious chant also tend to be more similar in all geographical areas.

The music of Syria and Jordan still retains much of its traditional character, although exposure to recorded music, especially Western and Arab popular music is gradually changing the nature of traditional music in those countries. Some of the changes include: loss of some genres; people performing fewer verses of a song; and the increasing replacement of performances of *jawfiyyat* and other song genres with recorded music during the evening parties following weddings. On the other hand, this erosion of tradition has caused some people to preserve the genres via folkloric groups. The music of Lebanon and Palestine/Israel, in contrast with the communal folk genres of Syria and Jordan, has had much more influence from Western and urban traditions, and the music performed now is largely the domain of professional or semi-professional soloists or groups. Communal participation, however, can still be found in some small villages. Nevertheless, whether communal or professional, there is no doubt that music still plays an important part in Druze life and society.

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