



(LYRCD 7439)

RHYTHMIC ESSENCE FISH ON THE DESSERT

Maqamat (or maqam, sing) in Arab music are primarily a system for mixing tetrachords of different scales and characteristics, which combine to form melodic modes. Tonally, the maqam is unique in how it manages the use of quarter tones for creating numerous scale potentials. However, the maqam is also an elaborated set of rules governing improvisational technique and performance. It can be identified as the primary root of all genres of vocal and instrumental improvisation in Arab music. A strict technical definition of the maqam places it squarely as phenomenon indigenous and manifest solely in Arabic music, however I find it significant that a corollary to maqam as a phenomenon surfaces in the evolution of American Jazz, Indian & Western Classical music, contemporary Rhythm & Blues, historical Negro spirituals and modern Hip-Hop freestyle, and I feel that it also may serve as a metaphor for the creative process itself.

In traditional Arabic music, one of the operative aspects of the maqam is that it can serve as a leverage component in respect to fixity of time or organized meter; allowing for fluidity and change to the initial mode of rhythm/beat and melody. Rhythmically, maqam allows for alteration and/or merging of structural beats; one over the other, via unannounced rapid tempo change or

through meter mutation. To me, maqam, both as a process, and as a metaphor, is one of the fundamental keys to an underlying universality in music expression. It is a formal, proscribed structure by which a player may begin to glimpse and express a fragment of the pure, unstructured universal core of spontaneous musical creation. Hence, the rules are – anything goes – once you know and follow the rules, in order that you may deviate from them or further re-appropriate them at fortuitous will. - R.A. Fish

Traditional North African forms: contemporary and the avant gard; spoken word...all maqamesque. A collaboration of musical synergy.

TRACKS:

1. Procession (Traditional) - 2:30

Dumbeks, large Egyptian tambourine, small tambourine, bass
Jorge Alfano & I attempt to recreate the ancient ritual of a drum circle as it might have been heard centuries ago. A Ghawazzee/Belidi rhythm; alternately soloing & interacting in their gathering.

2. Qanun Song (Traditional) - 4:34

Traditional Turkish Chaderemen Ustune in 9/8 Kahlimar.

R.A. Fish dumbek & large Egyptian tambourine, Scott Wilson qanun and saz. Oud, bazzuki, saz, and qanun player Scott Wilson joins me on qanun for a delightful Kashilimar.

Tracks 3 through 7: Middle Eastern Medleys

3. Turkish Love Song in Beledi/Fast Rhumba Rhythm - 3:29

4. Lebanese Wheyek Love Song/Slow Rhumba & Ghawazzee Rhythm - 2:45

5. Arabic Abule gel meyes/Moderate Beledi Traditional Folk Dance Middle - 2:11

6. Chiftetelli/Turkish Chant of Aman (Oh God-Praise!) - 3:24 (Drum solo at end, beledi and ghawazee)

7. Traditional Turkish Folk Dance Ending Song in 2/4 Rhythm - 2:29

Scott Wilson - oud and vocals, R.A. Fish - dumbek

My aim here is to simply make Middle Eastern dancers happy. After the release of Rhythmic Essence/The Art of the Dumbek (LYRCD 7411), dancers across the US would ask me for traditional dance music to use in performance. Scott is well versed in this area; his mother is Serena, the famous Middle Eastern dancer and teacher, and his father, Rip, is her lifetime accompanist on dumbek. Scott speaks of deep love poetically characterized in these traditional settings:

“Like rain on the roof of my tent, you come into my life...my love, I miss you...”

Later the vocal themes again resonate of the pain of love:

“I look in the mirror & my hair is going gray. Can’t you see what your love is doing to me...”?

8. Taqasim Shenai Tal (Traditional) - 3:55

R.A. Fish dumbek, Jorge Alfano, shenai.

Jorge Alfano and I create an exuberant musical moment in rhythm and reed based on the traditional setting of the duo found in performance throughout the ancient cultures of the Middle East and the regions surrounding India. The taqasim itself equates to the alap of the classical Indian raga.

9. Spirit Descending (Traditional) - 3:29

(frame drum solo) R.A. Fish.

With my favorite tar, I journey in the divine flow of rhythmic composition, as the ancients must have. The Shaman, the Voodun Priest, the QiGong Master, the Ustadji’s & Punditji’s

10. Gateway to Eternity (Traditional) - 5:07

Scott Wilson, oud Jon Kass violin, R.A. Fish, dumbek, Jorge Alfano, bansuri.

I wrote this musical work in 1977 for a drumset, tabla, synthesizer & bass. I found that the theme, extracted from the larger work, translated well into the Middle Eastern setting.

11. Intellect Lost (Traditional) - 5:50

Recited in farsi by the author.

Jorge Alfano, oud, R.A. Fish dumbek, cymbals and percussion.

I feel Jorge Alfano was ingenious in arranging our interaction with Shahram T. Shiva, poet and Rumi scholar. Here, traditional scale format and instrumentation merge with savant grade structures in an improvisational embrace of Shiva's poetry. Shahram speaks with the fervor of ancient Sufi Master Rumi, as he eloquently allegorizes the inebriation of the drunkard with wine to the intoxication of the spiritual seeker with God.

12. Tithi Sufi Trio (Traditional) - 5:31

Randy Crafton, bender, R.A. Fish, dumber, Jorge Alfano, bansuri.
Frame drummer & percussionist Randy Crafton joins Jorge & myself for a first-take improvisation on the repetition of a Pakistani Sufi (Qawali) rhythmic transition usually performed on the tabla. This performance features the bender, dumber and bansuri flute. At the start, the drums play a partial phrase known as the tihai, which will also be played in full at the end of the piece. Randy solos on a bendir with a one-strand snare. I solo next on dumbek in evocation fashion. Jorge creates an impromptu melody via improvisation (maqam) bringing us to a higher level. At Jorge's suggestion we begin and end with a tihai; in Indian Classical Music, a phrase repeated three times to bring the composition to the first beat of the leading measure is known as sum.

13. Desert Song (Traditional) - 2:37

R.A. Fish, dumbek, Jorge Alfano, saz (baglama-cura)
Again, improvisation using an ancestral rhythm & scale in a traditional duo setting with Jorge performing on the saz & myself on dumbek.

14. Chant (Traditional) - 2:11

R.A. Fish, dumbek, Scott Wilson, vocals
Dedicated to the memory of Om Sathoum, revered female Egyptian vocalist. My aim is to emulate the chant from the Mosque in art. Scott Wilson chants while I perform on two dumbeks (one over-dubbed); a small Remo dumbek that I perform on during most of this recording and a dumbek made by Indiana potter, Barbara Lund.

15. Ojala (Traditional) - 6:43

Jorge Alfano, raga bass and clarina, R.A. Fish, dumbek, cymbals and percussion
The word Ojala was brought to the Spanish vocabulary from the Arabic language by the Moors and is common in all Spanish speaking countries.

The root of the word is clearly related to God (ALA), so it's used as an expression of hope, (ex. "If God will" or "by the will of God"). On this song the use of the drone is provided by the raga bass, a bass with sympathetic strings much like the sitar, vina or surbahar. The combination of a natural minor scale, the sound of the clarina (a type of small Clarinet without keys), and the flowing rhythm of the dumbek, creates a mood of reflection and hope. In Ojala the proverbial meets the neoteric.

16. Divine Time (Traditional) - 9:53

R.A. Fish, percussion

Whether we utilize a traditional construct or a totally modern abstract, the essence of all music and rhythm is to realize our connection to the rest of the universe and move with the divine flow of energy; whatever it may be, at any given millisecond. I perform on dumbek, chimes, gong, ankle-bells and tambourine, evoking a microcosmic representation of the total spectrum of percussion on our planet.

I pray you enjoy!

Yours in Rhythm Music and Spirit!

R.A. FISH

DEDICATIONS

Dianna Young – My most profoundly talented drum student, exquisite jewelry design artist, art gallery owner, and now my co-teacher of world drumming – Bless your profound wisdom and timeless beauty. Eternal Divine Love.

Beloved Mom – Thank you eternally for being so kind and loving and allowing my art as a drummer to blossom.

Swami Paramahansa Hariharananda Giri Maharaji – O Great Kriya Yoga Teacher and Guide – Profound gratitude for your sweetness and knowledge beyond imagination.

Margie N. Kirsch – Energy Centering/Nidra (Sleep Meditation) Yoga Mistra who brought me to the realization of the invisible soul – Eternal Thanks –

Master Zhang – Youngest Grand Master of QiGong in China – Gratitude for healing and inspiring me – "May our wounds never walk alone." – S. A. Sao.

Blessings and thanks to Nick Fritsch of Lyrichord Discs and Jorge Alfano for their profound production chops, Scott Wilson, Randy Crafton, Shahram Shiva, Jon Kass, Vivian Stoll, Rene Ceballos, Sina-Aurelia Pleasant for her awesome talent and spirituality, Stephan Alexander and the Dhamma Collective, Lisa Lyskava, Marie Simone of Decorum, Sharon Eisman of Star Design, Eva Wild, Sam, Doug Powers, Sam Fahmi at www.channelsinternet.com, Liz and Arthur of The Internet Café in NYC www.bigmagic.com, to my Web Miest, Jonathan and Lisa and Arthur and their wonderful children in Santa Cruz (www.sacruz.net/~jarthur/); Pratiti, Pratah and Naresh of Oshoshambala, Richford, NY; Pamela Ruby Russell and Eric Linter, Craig and Allison Carpel, Rachel Margolin, Andrew Cohen, etc, etc.

THE MUSICIANS

ROBERT ARTHUR FISH has been performing professionally on drumset since the age of 14 in 1962. After studying at the Berklee School of Music with drummer Alan Dawson, he embraced the study of Indian Classical Tabla in 1973 studying with Vishwanath Mishraji of Varanasi, India and Vasant Raiji at the Alam School of Indian Classical Music in Brooklyn, N.Y. and later studied with K. Paramjyoti of New Delhi and Avtar Singe, also of India.

In the early 1980's Mr. Fish began playing dumbek in the Middle Eastern troupe of the New York Renaissance Festival in Tuxedo, N.Y. Over time, he has incorporated the elements of world drumming in his instruction of children and adults. He is currently teaching workshop/gatherings (circles), performing, lecturing, composing, and recording various in world music and contemporary settings. He has performed with Downbeat Critic Poll Winner, Clarinetist Perry Robinson, Mary Travers of Peter, Paul and Mary, The Jon Pousette-Dart Band, Victor Asis Brazil, The Drifters, Punadas, Bob Marley, Chet Baker, World Class Composer and Educator, Judith St. Croix among others. He is currently a member of Nigerian cultural troupe Mini Africana founded by Maria Okure and at the time of this recording performs with Stephen Alexander of the Dhamma Collective and Sina-Aurelia Pleasant at Channels Internet Café in the Brown University Area.

Mr. Fish has lectured at The Julliard School of Music for the Lincoln Center Summer Teacher's Program, on the "Origin and History of Jazz Drumming," Parsons School of Design on "North African and Middle

Eastern Drumming” with Serena, and Women and Infants Hospital Annual Conference on the Healing Aspects of Sound, Drumming and Music. He also gives lecture demonstrations on world percussion to children at museums and in classroom settings. Future projects include teaching, concert videos and cybercasts in collaboration with Diana Young of Handled with Care Art Gallery. Mr. Fish has also been commissioned to compose original music for the painting exhibition of European artist Lisa Lyskava.

JORGE ALFANO Producer, shenai, bansuri, clarina, oud, saz, raga bass
Jorge Alfano, a native of Buenos Aires, Argentina, is a multi-instrumentalist, composer and producer. He is also an expert in indigenous Andean, Eastern and Indian flutes, as well as many other world instruments. Jorge’s playing can be heard on the soundtracks of dozens of documentaries produced for the Discovery Channel, National Geographic Explorer, and feature films. He has played and recorded with Astor Piazzolla, Mercedes Sosa, and has recorded for Lyrichord Discs, The Relaxation Company. Jorge Alfano’s Lyrichord releases are: “Inti – Mystical Music of the Andes” (LYRCD 7429) “One Heart” (LYRCD 7431)

SCOTT WILSON, oud, saz, qanun
Scott Wilson started playing oud in 1967. He is the son of the internationally famous oriental dancer, Serena. Wilson has traveled extensively in the Middle East and recently completed a tour with Ricky Lee Jones.

RANDY CRAFTON, bendir
Randy Crafton, specializes in percussion from around the world, including the Middle East, North and South India, Brazil, Cuba, Zimbabwe, and Ghana. His extensive studies with Glen Velez make him a leading proponent of the frame drum. In addition to his work as a composer, performer, and collaborator, Randy is very involved as an educator and proponent of the therapeutic effects of rhythm based music. He is currently teaching at Berklee School of Music. Recording credits include Classical Music, Inc., Newport Classics, Inner Rhythms: The Relaxation Company, Bridges: Interworld Music, Alfamusic CMP, and Earwig Music.
Randy Crafton’s Lyrichord releases are:
Hal-an-tow Songs of the Six Celtic Nations, with vocalist Sandra Reid (LYRCD 7425)
Duologue (LYRCD 7430)

One Heart - percussion with Jorge Alfano (LYRCD 7431)

La Traversee – producer and percussion, Sandra Reid, vocals (LYRCD 7432)

JON KASS, violin

Jon Kass is a well-known studio musician and teacher who plays regularly for major Broadway shows and has recorded and performed with numerous jazz and pop figures including Joe Lovano. He and Jorge Alfano performed in the national touring company of Astor Piazzolla's "Dangerous Games."

Kass can also be heard on Sandra Reid's CD "La Traversee" (LYRCD 7432), and on Duologue with various artists (LYRCD 7430)

SHAHRAM T. SHIVA

Shahram T. Shiva, born in Iran and raised in the U.S., is the only major artist in the West who performs Rumi's poetry in the original Persia as well as his own English renditions. Shiva is known for his unique and passionate incantations of Rumi. He is currently in the midst of recording his first CD with Jorge Alfano and Randy Crafton. Shiva is also a prolific author, he has translated several hundred of Rumi's poems which serve as the basis for his many performances. His works include Rending the Veil: Literal and Poetic Translations of Rumi (Hohm Press), which is nominated for the Benjamin Franklin Award; A Garden Beyond Paradise: The Mystical Poetry of Rumi (Bantam Books); and the forthcoming book entitled Whispers of the Heart: Passionate Poems of Rumi (Jain Publishing).

SHAHRAM T. SHIVA

Intellect Lost

I have lost my intellect to wine
You have lost yours to madness
Who then will take us home.
I have told you a hundred times,
To drink a little less,
Can you find a person
Still on his feet in this town,
One worse than the other,
Drunk out of their minds.
O dear one,
come to the tavern of the ruins,
so you can see what real pleasure is like.

What pleasure can there be for the soul,
without the talk of the Beloved.
Around every corner a drunkard,
and there is saaghi, with her kingly cup.
You are from the ruins,
You are one with the ruins
Wine is what you earn,
Wine is what you spend
And of this to the sober ones,
Don't utter a word.
O the harp-playing gypsy,
Who is drunker you or I?
Outside of the house, I see a drunken man
In his every glance
A hundred flower gardens,
Like a boat without an anchor,
He sways from side to side,
drunkard, although a hundred wise men,
have died of his envy.
I said, where are you from,
He smiled and said, O dearer than my life,
Partly from the land of Turks,
Partly from Forghan
Partly of water and mud,
Partly of soul and heart,
Partly from the seashore,
And the rest,
Precious drops of pearls.
I said, please be kind to me,
I am one of your own.
He said, to me friend and stranger are one,
I have neither a heart nor a mind,
I dwell in the house of wine
I have a chest full of words,
Which ones to say, which ones to keep.
Such a good drunk,
Can he be less than a piece of wood,
Even that famous wooden pillar
Wept for his lost beloved.
O shams, how can you escape the public

now that you have turned these people
inside out.

(English translation of the Original Farsi as heard on track #11. Copyright
1998, Shahram T. Shiva)

PRODUCER'S NOTE

The fascination with a musical tradition sometimes makes musicians jump into a deep spiritual journey to discover the musical secret of that culture. Many years of study and strong will makes the music come alive. On this recording, Bob's talent and commitment to the tradition shows that the investment pays off. As a producer and musician I feel grateful to be part of his journey.

Rev. Jorge Alfano

Producer/Sacred Sounds Institute

CREDITS

Recorded, mixed and produced by Jorge Alfano at Sacred Sounds Studios,
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All selections BMI

Gateway to Eternity copyright R.A.Fish 1994

Ojala music and arrangements, Jorge Alfano, drum arrangements, R.A. Fish.



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