

**Arabic singing today: peculiarities of
language treatment and practical
experience with non-Arabic singers in the
classical and popular fields.**

Diploma

thesis

submitted by

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Note

For better readability, gender-specific formulations have been avoided in this thesis. The formulations used (e.g. singer, listener, composer, etc.) refer to both genders, unless otherwise noted.

Audio CD

The appendix contains an audio CD with supplementary audio materials. Item 1 of the appendix lists the contents of the CD.

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1. Introductory Presentation

1.1 Motivation and objective of the work

One of the most famous violinists of the 20th century, Yehudi Menuhin, said: "Singing is the true mother tongue of man. [...] For singing, like nothing else, makes possible the direct communication of hearts across all cultural boundaries."¹

Since I was born in Lebanon and was interested in music, I became acquainted with the ancient Christian chants in the different Arabic maqamat of the Maronite Church at an early age. This initiated me into the Arabic chant culture. With my later piano studies and my resettlement to Europe, my involvement with Western singing intensified. After my studies in classical and popular singing here in Germany, the desire grew to build cultural bridges to my Arab roots and to find out whether what Menuhin wrote in "On the Meaning of Singing" could be implemented in reality.

The present work should provide an insight into the Arabic singing, with its different forms and techniques and its history, in order to be able to understand it better. In the context of this work, the question should be answered, where the Arabic singing has its origin and what makes this special kind of singing.

Based on this, it will be examined on the basis of two vocal works whether it is possible to integrate Arabic singing into Western musical forms and, moreover, to communicate it to singers of non-Arabic origin. In this context, methods of mediation will be tested and presented, as well as reports on the experiences of two choirs will be shared.

In order to preserve the framework of the work, Arabic music in general cannot be discussed. All statements therefore refer to Arabic song, unless otherwise indicated.

¹ Menuhin (1999)

1.2 Structure of the work

The thesis is divided into four main parts. Following the introductory presentation, the theoretical basics of the topics dealt with in this thesis are presented. An introduction to the Arabic language is given, which, due to its special sounds, strongly influences Arabic singing, both technically and emotionally. Based on this, the so-called *tarab* and the role of emotion in Arabic singing will be examined in more detail before the various sound colors and techniques are explained. These theoretical basics will be illustrated with the help of two Arabic singers.

Furthermore, the history of Arabic singing will be discussed, in order to finally be able to take a look at today's development, whereby some music projects will also be presented, in which the linking of Western and Arabic music is in the foreground.

In the practical part that builds on this, the work with two choirs of non-Arabic origin is examined, each of which has rehearsed a piece with Arabic elements under my direction. These are the cantata "Joseph Lamento" for soli, choir and orchestra and the popular work "Ahlam" for mixed-voice a cappella choir. In this part of the work, it will be empirically worked out how non-Arab singers can experience access to Arabic singing and how they themselves experienced the work, what challenges they faced and what they learned in terms of singing technique.

For this purpose, among others, a total of 39 singers were interviewed. The results are also presented in this part of the paper.²

In a final conclusion, the results are summarized once again and considered against the background of future possibilities and developments.

² The complete questionnaire can be found in the appendix of this paper.

2. Basics of Arabic singing

2.1 Characteristics of Arabic singing

In the following subsections, the main elements that make up Arabic singing will be examined. These include the Arabic language, the Arabic tonal system (maqam), and the importance of emotional exchange and dialogue between singer and listener (tarab).

2.1.1 The Arabic language as the cradle of the special Arabic sounds in song

The Arabic language is a member of the Semitic language family. Other members are the Hebrew language, the Aramaic language and the Amharic language (official language in Ethiopia).³ "Today, Arabic is the state language in 22 countries from Mauritania to North Africa to Iraq with about 280 million people"⁴ and the cult language for over 1 billion Muslims⁵ in the world. Today, at its peak, it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (UN).⁶ All of this suggests that Arabic is one of the world's important languages. Elsaid Badawi, director of the Institute for the Arabic Language at the American University in Cairo, calls Arabic "the cradle of Arab culture and the Islamic religion."⁷ In fact, High Arabic "is grammatically based on the language of the Koran, the holy scripture of Islam," according to Wiebke Walther, professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Tübingen. Thus, it is of great religious importance for a devout Muslim to master the Arabic high-level language. This will play an important role in the later chapter on the singer Umm Kulthum.

High Arabic is taught in schools in Arab countries and is used in radio and television news, in most literature and in newspapers. However, there are various forms of regional and local dialects, some of which differ so much from each other that, for example, "a

³ Cf. Walther (2004), p. 10 f and Badawi (2002).

⁴ Walther (2004), p. 10

⁵ Cf. Badawi (2002)

⁶ Cf. United Nations (2013)

⁷ Badawi (2002)

Algerian and an Iraqi would have strong communication difficulties if both spoke their colloquial language "⁸.

Despite these dialectal differences, it is important for this paper to describe the particular consonants and their productions in High Arabic. Because these, even if they are not present in some dialects, have fundamentally influenced Arabic singing. In order to keep the framework of the work, only some important consonants within High Arabic will be discussed here.

The High Arabic language consists of 28 letters, of which only three are long vowels: *a*, *i*, and *u*. These last two, however, are also semiconsonants, because their signs also stand for *j*, respectively for *w*.⁹ The following consonants are characteristic for the sound of the Arabic language: ¹⁰

- **The voiceless glottal plosive** ("glottal stop"):

This plosive is called laryngeal closure sound and represents a sound of its own in the Arabic language, whereas "in German [...] it is only uttered in a non-distinctive function consistently before word- and morpheme-sounding vowels "¹¹, e.g.: geachtet, Theater, in.¹²

- **The voiceless and the voiced pharyngeal** ^{fricatives}¹³

To produce the sound of the fricative, a constriction is articulatory formed in the embouchure tube, through which air flows outward, producing a sound. In the voiceless fricative, the vocal folds are open and the air can flow through unhindered. In German, this sound is known in words such as ich (palatal), Vater (labial) and Bass (alveolar).

⁸ Walther (2004), p. 14

⁹ Walther (2004), p. 11

¹⁰ The following explanations can also be found in the publications of the International Phonetic Association (IPA) (see list of sources). An audio sample of the various sounds can be found, in addition to the examples on the enclosed CD, at http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_IPA-Zeichen#.C4.A7.

¹¹ Pompino-Marschall (2009), p. 190

¹² Audio sample voiceless glottal plosive see CD track 1

¹³ Cf. Pompino-Marschall (2009), p. 196 ff and Ladefoged/Maddison (2008), p. 137 ff.

In the voiced fricative, the vocal folds are closed. A tone is produced, therefore voiced. As an example in the German language, we can cite winter and say. The voiceless and voiced *pharyngeal* fricatives are not found in the German language. They are special Arabic sounds, because here the articulatory constriction is formed in the pharynx.¹⁴

- **The voiceless uvular** ^{plosive}¹⁵

The plosive (also called a closure sound) is formed by an articulatory closure in the area "between the vocal folds and the lips."¹⁶ The plosives in German are the consonants *p* and *b* (bilabial), *t* and *d* (alveolar), and *k* and *g* (velar). The *uvular* plosive, on the other hand, does not exist in German and is a peculiar Arabic sound. The articulatory closure occurs between the posterior tongue and the uvula (also called "uvula").¹⁷

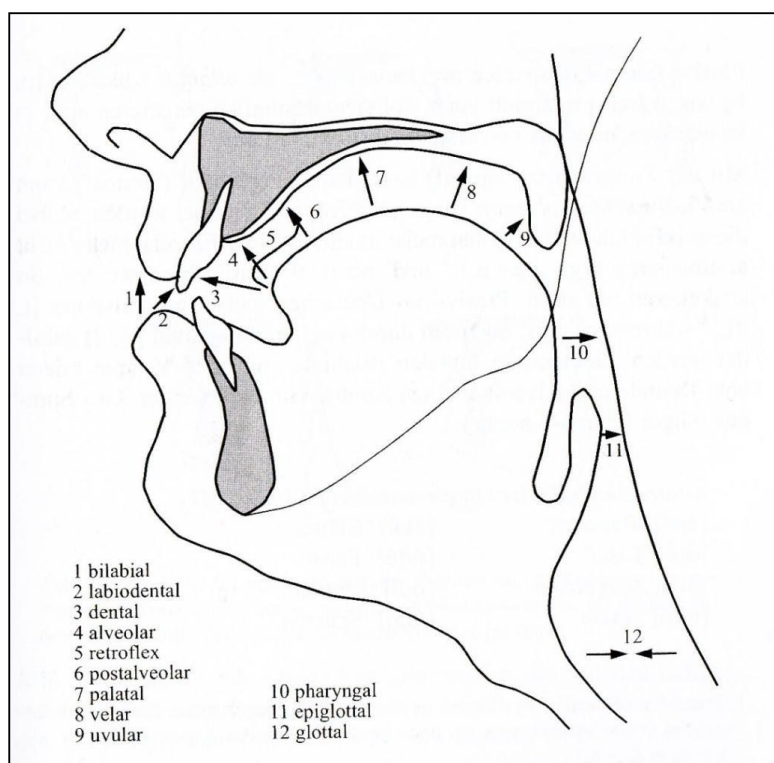


Figure 1: Sagittal scheme of the articulatory constellation for consonant production (from: Pompino-Marschall (2009), p. 185).

¹⁴ Listening example voiceless and voiced pharyngeal fricative see CD track 2 and 3

¹⁵ Cf. Pompino-Marschall (2009), p. 184 f

¹⁶ Pompino-Marschall (2009), p. 184

¹⁷ Listening example voiceless uvular plosive see CD track 4

It becomes clear that the Arabic language is playful with the timbre of consonants. This means that a consonant can have several colors and can change between light and dark or a front and back production of the sound in the resonance chamber. Through speaking, the vocal tract is discovered and "practiced" from childhood.

The Arabic language is not only tonally but also rhythmically peculiar. Like all Semitic languages, Arabic has the root ^{system}¹⁸ or "root and pattern system" ¹⁹ characteristic of this language stem. In this system, "[...] the basic meaning of most words [...] is based on three 'root consonants', ²⁰ which are changed by the addition of prefixes, suffixes and infixes, thus forming the rhythm within the language. This means that rhythm (created by e.g. the addition of syllables and shifted stress) and meaning (i.e. the content of the language) are closely connected. Not only single words but also sentences have an extraordinary rhythm in the Arabic language. "Short sentences, short verbal and nominal forms of the same construction without personal pronouns, nominal sentences without auxiliary verbs, give the language a rhythm that can hardly be imitated in Indo-European languages" ²¹.

In addition to the special features of the Arabic language explained in this chapter, surveys were conducted among singers of non-Arabic origin, which will play an important role in the empirical part of the thesis. At this point, only two results of the questionnaire will be presented, because it is interesting to examine how the Arabic language is perceived by the "everyday singer" in Germany.

When asked if the sound of Arabic could be compared to another language, 49% of the 39 respondents answered "no." The 36% of respondents who answered "Yes" almost exclusively named Hebrew and Turkish as comparable (see Figure 2).

¹⁸ Cf. Walther (2004), p. 11

¹⁹ Brustad (2002)

²⁰ Walther (2004), p. 11 (For an example of word formation according to Walther, see the source used, p. 11 f).

²¹ Walther (2004), p. 17

The answers to the second question, how to characterize the sound of the Arabic language, show that the language sounds "foreign" but "melodic" to most respondents (see Figure 3).

The statements of the interviewees confirm the above explained special feature of the

"foreign rhythms" of the Arabic language and make it clear that its tonal richness is also perceived as me- lodic by persons of non-Arabic origin.

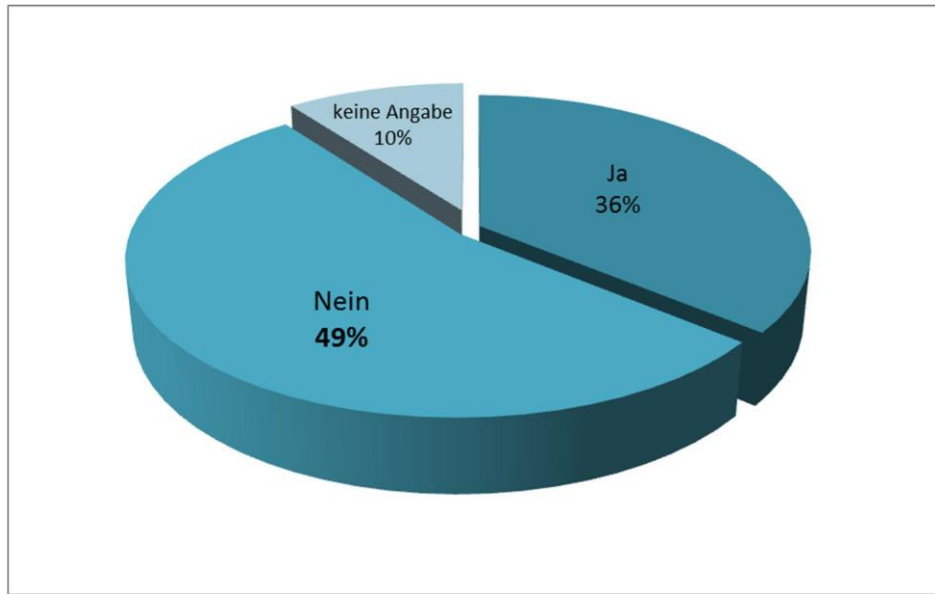


Figure 2: Questionnaire Question 1 "Is the sound of Arabic comparable to any other language?" (n=39)

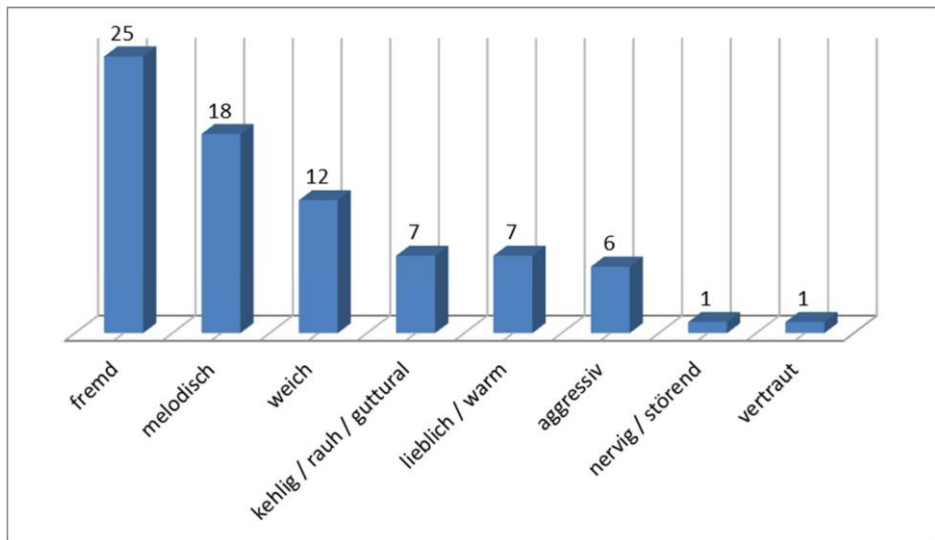


Figure 3: Questionnaire Question 1b "How would you characteristically describe the Arabic language/sound?" (n=39)

2.1.2 Tarab - the role of emotion in Arabic song

"Arab music must engage the listener emotionally."²² This quote shows the central importance of emotion in Arab music, and especially in Arab song. Racy also states elsewhere that while every form of music is associated with emotion, one can be almost shocked by the almost dramatically important role of emotion in Arabic music.²³ The highest expression of this emotion in Arabic song is called "tarab".

The word *tarab* originates from High Arabic and cannot be translated directly into German.²⁴ Frishkopf describes the *tarab* as an "aesthetic concept"²⁵ consisting of musical emotion (especially through singing), inspirational poetry, and improvisation within the *maqam*²⁶ series. These components play a supporting role in vocal rendition, as the ultimate goal of vocal expression is the fusion of all these elements with true emotion. This leads to the full and all-encompassing participation of the listeners, who connect with the singer's emotion and audibly interact with it:

"The emotive orientation of the arab music is also 'played out' during the traditional performance events. Unlike the formal western classical concert, the arab performance tends to be highly interactive and emotionally charged."²⁷

The emergence of *tarab* is thus dependent on the listeners, or much more on the interaction between singer and listener. The singer is influenced and encouraged by the listeners to increase his emotion even more. Through this dynamic, emotion is shared, exchanged, and ver-

²² Racy (2003), p. 4

²³ Cf. Racy (2003), p. 4.

²⁴ Cf. Racy (2003), p. 5 and Frishkopf (1998), p. 233.

²⁵ Frishkopf (1998), p. 233

²⁶ Definition of Maqam series according to Touma (1975), p. 36: "The Arabic tonal system of today's musical practice includes all tones that occur in the so-called Maqam series, i.e. the modes, of which there are more than seventy different ones. The maqam series are based on heptatonic scales, which can consist of augmented, major, middle, and minor secondary intervals." In order to keep the scope of the paper, further scientific explanations of the Maqam will be omitted. Supplementary explanations of maqam can be found at www.maqamworld.com.

²⁷ Racy (2003), p. 5

strengthens.²⁸ The singer, as the impulse giver, bears responsibility in the process of *Tarab's* creation, since he renders the sung words with the utmost authenticity and has deeply understood their meaning.

Since the tradition of *tarab* has its origin in the recitation of the Qur'an, this authenticity consists in the literal and meaningful rendering of the holy words of the Qur'an. This style was transferred by famous singers (for example the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum) to secular poems. Thus, Umm Kulthum has used her religious background-through which she learned about the power of *tarab* in song-to enchant her audience as a singer of secular literature.²⁹ For conservative Muslims, the recitation of the Qur'an is not singing; thus, Touma writes that, "the believing Muhammadan [...] never uses the word 'singing' for Qur'anic recitation" and that "the performer [...] is never a 'singer' but a muqri', i.e. reader"³⁰. Nevertheless, both singing and recitation of the Qur'an have common elements: correct pronunciation, sensitive expression of the textual content, attention to the unity of the textual phrases, and the use of the timbres of the voice.³¹

After the conveyance of the sung words in the *tarab* has been dealt with, the special feature of the vocal timbre is now to be described. In general, the vocal timbres serve to clarify the textual content and the feelings, or are used when intense emotional moments are expressed in song. In the following, four widely used timbres of the *Tarab* are described:

- *Şaut ṭabiʿi*³² (Arab. "natural voice"): In Arabic *tarab* singing, *Şaut ṭabiʿi* refers to a full voice (so-called chest voice). The sound is metallic and ranges between a sound of lamentation ("*weeping*"³³) and a shouting sound, in part with a particular metallic sharpness.³⁴

²⁸ Cf. Frishkopf (1998), p. 233 f

²⁹ Awad (1971), p. 111

³⁰ Touma (1975), p. 142

³¹ Cf. Danielson (1997), p. 141 ff and Touma (1975), p. 141 ff.

³² The correct pronunciation can be understood at the following link of the IPA: <http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/> [accessed on 31.05.2013 CET 21:05h].

³³ Racy (2003), p. 88

³⁴ Audio sample *Şaut ṭabiʿi* see CD track 5

The opposite of *Şaut tabiʿi* is *Şaut mustaʿar*³⁵ (Arab. borrowed, artificial voice), which stands for a light head voice and is often found in Western classical singing.³⁶

- *Baḥḥa* literally means "hoarseness". Normally, this expression describes an overstrained and tired voice ("I am hoarse" - *Ana mabḥuḥ*). In Arabic singing, however, the expression *Baḥḥa* is used when the singer uses a certain effect that sounds like hoarseness, but without being hoarse. Our own experience has shown that either a breathy voice is used or the effect "creaking"³⁷ is used.
- *Ghunna* is a frontal, bright resonance of the voice, using the nasal resonance spaces. This nasal sound should be used in the right dosage so that the voice retains its sweetness ("having nasality, sweetness and melodiousness"³⁸):

"Critics distinguished the sweet nasality (variously referred to as Ghunna) [...] from singing through the nose which was viewed as unpleasant and musically uncultivated."³⁹

(Audio examples for *Baḥḥa* and *Ghunna* can be found on the enclosed CD, track 8).

- The role of *ornamentation*⁴⁰ in *tarab* is essential. Ornamentation is ornamentation and is known as *coloratura* in Western classical singing. In Arabic singing, they occur at the end of phrases and on long held notes. The power of ornamentation is appreciated by the audience and shows great vocal quality of the singer.

³⁵ Audio sample *Şaut mustaʿar* see CD track 6 and 7

³⁶ Cf. Racy (2003), p. 88f.

³⁷ Creaking = effect that can also be found in the Complete Vocal Technique® according to Cathrine Sadolin. It is produced at the level of the vocal folds and is a creaking sound that is created by irregular vibrations of the vocal folds. (Sadolin (2010), p. 179)

³⁸ Al-Khula'l (1904/1905), p. 26

³⁹ Danielson (1997), p. 93

⁴⁰ Audio example ornamentation see CD track 9

It is used to evoke emotions of the listeners in the *Tarab* and to invite them to interact.⁴¹

In addition, there are the vibrato, the trill, and the falsetto, which cannot be discussed further in this paper.

As described in this chapter, emotion is in the foreground in Arabic singing and takes a central role. The survey of singers conducted as part of this study revealed that even those of non-Arabic origin who have heard Arabic singing before (= 67% of respondents) associate it mainly with emotion and especially with melancholy.

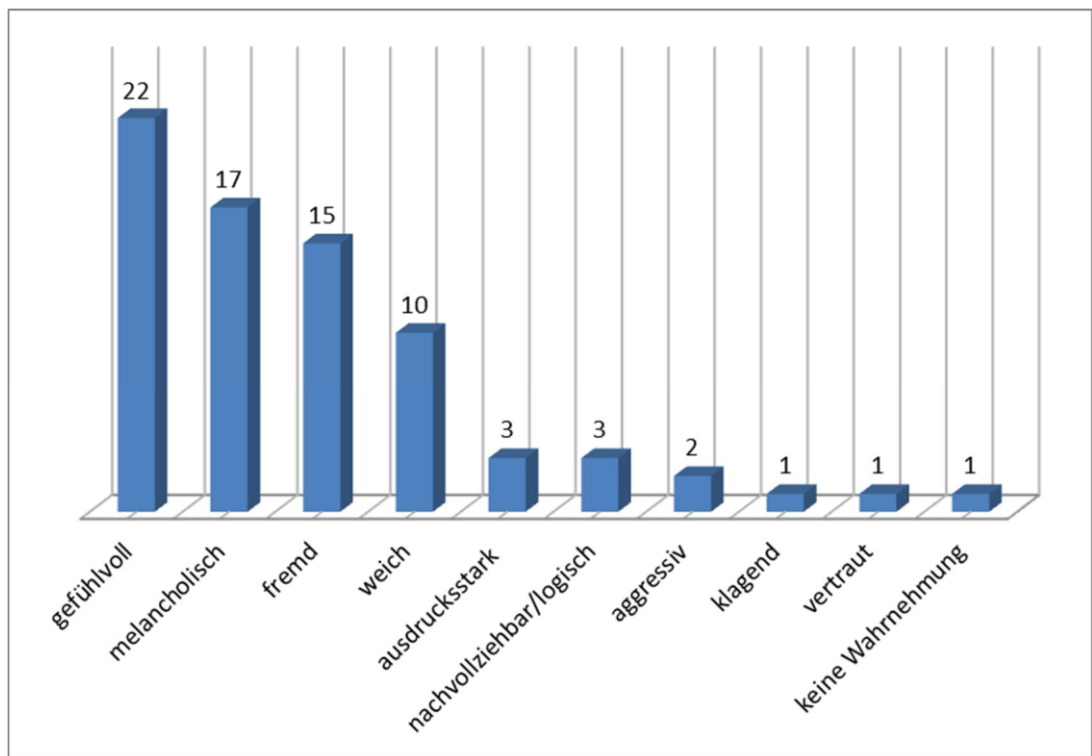


Figure 4: Questionnaire Question 2 "How would you describe Arabic singing?" ($n=39$)

⁴¹ Cf. Racy (2003), p. 86 f

2.2 Historical development of Arabic song

Singing plays an important role in Arabic music and has constantly changed due to the increasing contact with other cultures. In the first part of the following chapter, the historical development of Arabic singing and the resulting various musical forms will be described. In the second part, this development will be exemplified by the singers Umm Kulthum and Fayruz.

2.2.1 Musical forms of Arabic singing

Singing has always existed as an art form in Arabic music. From the *Qaina* (singer and slave in the pre-Islamic period) to the famous singers and music theorists of the Islamic period to the renaissance of Arabic music in the 19th century, singing was the core of the construction of musical forms. In the following, some of these forms of Arabic singing will be examined in more detail: Muwashah, Layali, Mawwal, Dawr and Qasidah.⁴²

The ^{muwashah}⁴³ is a vocal form that originated in Andalusia in the 9th century. It is performed by a male choir accompanied by a few instrumentalists who occasionally sing along. It is based on a poetic form and a fixed rhythm that carries the entire piece. The *muwashah* is considered the classical vocal form of Arabic music and is used as a teaching tool for learning Arabic singing. Today, the region around Aleppo in Syria is the center of *muwashah*.

The ^{layali}⁴⁴ is an improvised vocal form based on the sung words *ya leli ya ayni* (Arab. my night, my eye), thus singing to the beloved. The singer often accompanies himself on the ud (Arab. short-necked lute) or is accompanied by the qanun (Arab. box zither) or an entire ensemble.

⁴² For the following, cf. Touma (1975), pp. 81 - 97, Racy (2003), pp. 89 ff and p. 103, and Danielson (1997), p. 112 ff.

⁴³ Audio samples Muwashah see CD track 10 and 11

⁴⁴ For audio examples Layali see CD track 12 and 13

A *layali* is usually followed by another vowel form - the *mawwal*.⁴⁵ Like the *layali*, the *mawwal* has a "beatless melodic line,"⁴⁶ but the underlying poem, which is almost exclusively about love, gives it a rhythm of its own that distinguishes it from the *layali*.

The *Dawr* is a young music form of the 19th century and has its origin in Egypt. The solo singer is accompanied by a choir and several instrumentalists and is usually the composer himself. This shows that the *dawr* is not a purely improvised song, but the performance was usually not a faithful reproduction of the composer's setting.⁴⁷ The singer plays the central role by emphasizing words and repeating them improvisationally. He takes over, so to speak, the "meta-morphosis of the setting,"⁴⁸ whereby he can prolong the performance at will.

In a *qasidah*, a long poem is set to music. The *qasidah* has no set rhythm and is performed by a singer accompanied by a choral group and a *takht*.⁴⁹ The content of the text can be religious or secular. The *qasidah* has no fixed form and could have a refrain or improvised moments.

The singer personalities who became known in the 20th century in the Arab world and influenced it musically, used, interpreted and changed these old vocal forms so that new ones could emerge. The two singers Umm Kulthum and Fayruz, who will be examined in more detail in the following section, are a good example of how the 20th century Arab singer revived the old musical traditions and renewed them by opening them up.

⁴⁵ Cf. Touma (1975), p. 96

⁴⁶ Touma (1975), p. 97

⁴⁷ Cf. Touma (1995), p. 94

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Takht (literally translated: bed, seat, podium) is a traditional ensemble of Arabic art music. Takht could include the following instruments: Ud, Qanun, Violin, Nay, Riqq, Darabukka. These instruments play heterophonously at intervals of one or more octaves and produce a special timbre, which is also conveyed by the soloistic character of the melodic lines performed. (Cf. Touma (1995), p. 125)

2.2.2 The singers Umm Kulthum⁵⁰ and Fayruz⁵¹

The singer Umm Kulthum was most likely born in May 1904 in Tammay al-Zahayra, in the delta province of Daqahliyya north of Cairo, the youngest of three children.⁵² Her father, Al-Shaykh Ibrahim al-Sayyid al-Baltaji, was the imam of the local mosque, which is why she attended the ko-ran school at an early age. In it, she learned the Quran by heart and thus its correct recitation and phrasing. Through her father, who sang at festivities in the surrounding villages, Kulthum came into contact with religious singing at an early age. Her father recognized her talent and her quick perception and took her into his lessons, where she learned the religious songs.

The five- to eight-year-old Umm Kulthum made her first appearances in the house of Umda - a kind of mayor, when she replaced her brother, who was ill, at her father's performances. As a result, she was invited beyond the village borders and soon earned half of the family income, which led the family to seriously consider her career. This developed so that from the early twenties she was an established singer in the capital, Cairo, and by 1928 had risen to national prominence.

At the beginning of her career, she was a religious singer from the countryside, which was also reflected in her appearance and the way she dressed. For example, she wore a *kufiyya* and *iqbal*, a kind of headdress worn by Bedouin boys at that time. Her musical accompaniment was exclusively vocal, consisting of a chorus-like group around her father. When she came to Cairo in the early twenties, Umm Kulthum began to include non-religious songs in her repertoire. Her later composer Mohammad Al-Qasabji heard her for the first time at this time and describes the singer as follows:

⁵⁰ Cf. Danielson (1997)

⁵¹ Cf. Weinrich (2006)

⁵² According to Danielson, the date of Umm Kulthum's birth is not clearly provable (cf. Danielson (1997), p. 21)

"She sang old *adwar*⁵³ in the style of the *mulid* (saint's day) accompanied by her father and a chorus made up of turbaned *mashayikh* (Arab. Religiously educated men). She also sang new *taqatiq*⁵⁴ ."⁵⁵

Her greatest success came with commercial recordings, when she was signed by Odeon Records in 1923. Thus, fourteen pieces appeared between 1924 and 1926 - all without religious reference.



Figure 5: The Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum
(Source: www.norient.com)

From then on, Umm Kulthum was no longer satisfied with the secondary role given to religious singers, but wanted to sing in the great theaters of Cairo. The text of their earlier religious songs was High Arabic and thus difficult to understand for the majority of Egyptians. The lyrics of the popular *taqatiq*, on the other hand, were written in the generally understandable dialect, but their content was of a low standard. Umm Kulthum asked the poet Ahmad Rami to write texts for her in the Egyptian dialect and of high literary quality, which the young composer Al-Qasabji set to music. The music from that time was based on old musical forms, such as *dawr*, which were renewed by the composed music. Their style was virtuos, dramatic, romantic and innovative. To these musical choices, the original choir around her father no longer fit and she replaced the singers with instrumental *takht*. The composer Al-

⁵³ Adwar = plural of Dawr (explanation under point 2.2.1)

⁵⁴ Taqatiq = simple short strophic song

⁵⁵ From a 1955 interview (quoted in Danielson (1997), p. 51).

Qasabji wrote harmonic accompaniments for some songs and sung phrases that did not yet exist in Arabic music and had a great influence on the general development.

Umm Kulthum's background and her own ideas merged to create a new sound, which she artfully incorporated into the new compositions. She possessed a powerful voice that she knew how to control with bravura, which was essential in times of acoustic singing and in front of a large audience. She mastered all the techniques of the *tarab* (see chapter 2.1.2) and especially the use of the timbres of the voice explained above. Thus, she created herself as a classical Arab singer and all subsequent singers were measured against her.

Another exceptional Arab singer is Fayruz, née Nuhad Haddad. Her brother-in-law Mansur ar-Rahbani said about her: "We tried a lot with her voice [...]. We made her sing difficult European *alwan* (Arabic colors), then difficult Oriental *alwan*, together with different orchestras, and she always proved her ability. Thus, an experience was formed in her that no other singer has achieved."⁵⁶

Fayruz was born in 1935 in Shuf, Lebanon, the oldest of four siblings, and grew up in the Zuqaq al-Blat neighborhood of Beirut. Unlike Umm Kulthum, her family belonged to the Christian faith. She could only pursue her childhood passion for music by listening to the neighbors' radio.

Musician Muhammad Fulayfil discovered Fayruz when she performed *Anashid* (Arabic for hymns) solo at her government girls' school.

The English colonial power in Egypt was not interested in cultural education for Egyptians, but the French, who had colonized the Syrian and Lebanese regions, were interested in passing on their own culture. Thus, culture was highly valued in schools and other educational institutions, and Fayruz learned to sing hymns and (school) songs in her school day.

⁵⁶ Aliksan (1987), p. 41

In the mid-1940s, it was customary in Lebanon to look for musical talents and - once they had been found - to promote them. Fulayfil trained the young Fayruz at the Beirut Conservatory (today: National Conservatory of Music) and at the same time provided her with engagements in his radio choir. The pieces performed there were mostly European in character.



Figure 6: Lebanese singer Fayruz

(Source: www.kadmous.org)

Halim Ar-Rumi was sure that "her voice was new and rare, and that radio needed a voice like hers. "⁵⁷ It was he who introduced Fayruz to the Rahbani brothers in 1951, who brought the "Fayruz phenomenon" to its greatest success.

"Two aspects are important from this period for the development of their later styles and forms: the so-called short song and the short skits and plays as precursors of the later vocal theater. "⁵⁸ Moving away from the old Arabic musical tradition of filling entire evenings with a song, as Umm Kulthum did, the trio consisting of Fayruz and the Rahbani brothers approached the younger generation and wrote through-composed short works. The director of Damascus Radio considered this trio suitable for attracting the young generation of the Arab world to his radiosender. Thus, from 1953, Fayruz sang in Damascus, where she became an icon for an entire generation.

⁵⁷ Ar-Rumi (1992), p. 32

⁵⁸ Weinrich (2006), p. 97

Later, Fayruz was hired by the radio as a solo singer, where she was able to present that she had mastered not only *Anashid* but also *Mawwal*, a form of traditional Arabic singing.

The then head of the Lebanese

Unlike Umm Kulthum, Fayruz received extensive vocal training in which she was introduced to both European music and the recitation of the Qur'an (although she was Christian), making it clear that Qur'anic recitation was a common part of vocal training at the time. "Fayruz's voice is perceived by most Arabs as dark and deep, while many Europeans describe it as high and penetrating."⁵⁹ This quote makes clear how versatile and different Fayruz's sound is perceived on both sides of the Mediterranean. In her singing, Fayruz does not only exclusively use Na- sen resonance spaces, also called *Ghunna* (for explanation see chapter 2.1.2),

"Instead, she changed her vocal color "analogously to the stylistic orientation of the songs.

e.g., a dark metallic voice with the *ghunna and bahha color* when interpreting short slow qasa^{#d62} and used the imperceptible transition from the metallic voice to the soft non-metallic voice (commonly known as the "head voice") to interpret more Western styles. She even switched between these different colors within the same piece.⁶³

Through this versatility, she gave the Arabic voice a new gentleness: "Her voice is calm and gentle. [...] It is different with Umm Kulthum: her voice is powerful, whoever hears it stays awake all night. Fayruz, on the other hand, calms."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Weinrich (2006), p. 364

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Weinrich (2006), p. 365

⁶² Plural of Qasidah (see chapter 2.2.1)

⁶³ Audio sample see CD Track 14

⁶⁴ Quoted in Weinrich (2006), p. 366.

2.3 Arabic song today

Arabic singing today is a complex and diverse phenomenon. It is the product of a long tradition and the result of revolutionary cultural, social and political developments in the Arab world, especially in the second half of the 20th century. These developments, in turn, are very different within the respective Arab countries, which were created by the European colonial powers through the arbitrary formation of borders. A detailed examination of these countries is beyond the scope of this paper, so the present section will be limited to Lebanon and highlight some aspects of its present-day history.

2.3.1 Overview of the current development of Arabic song using ^{Lebanon} as an example⁶⁵

The Lebanese state is a special example because here the mixing of old traditions and own values with European or Western influences is very pronounced. The singing of Lebanese singers "[...] reflects the changing history of a multiconfessional state [...]"⁶⁶.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Cairo was the undisputed center of the music industry in the Arab region, so Lebanese singers also went to Cairo to launch their careers. After 1920, France took over the mandate over Lebanon and set the country's borders so that the Christian population formed the majority. It was at this time that Lebanon began its search for cultural identity, moving from then on between Arab and Western culture. To illustrate this, the Lebanese national anthem composed by *Wadi' Sabra* (a Lebanese student at the Paris Conservatory) can be cited as an example. It was originally based on a maqam and was rewritten at the time of the French mandate so that it subsequently sounded in a major key.

In 1929, the Lebanese Conservatory was founded in Beirut, because, as explained before, the French attached importance to education or wei-

⁶⁵ The following statements are based on various articles and contributions of the association

"Norient", which published them on the homepage www.norient.com.

⁶⁶ Norient Association
(2013)

tion of their European culture. The lecturers of the newly founded Konservatorium saw Western musical culture as the most advanced and accordingly taught mainly in the European musical disciplines.

With the founding of the state of Israel and the resulting influx of refugees into Lebanon, Palestinian, mostly Muslim musicians also came to the region and influenced the musical culture around Beirut. At that time, the leading radio stations in the Middle East were on the lookout in Beirut for singers who could be used to create a new national Lebanese music - a mixture of Lebanese folk music and European music. In the 1950s, Lebanese singers and composers experienced "a golden age"; they were permanently employed by the radio and were allowed to experiment a lot, taking their cue from folk composers such as Bartók, Glinka and Sibelius. Through the support of the Lebanese government of the time, national and international music festivals emerged to showcase Lebanese national art. During this time, the Lebanese singer Fayruz, portrayed in Chapter 2.2.2, rose to become the most famous singer in the Arab world.

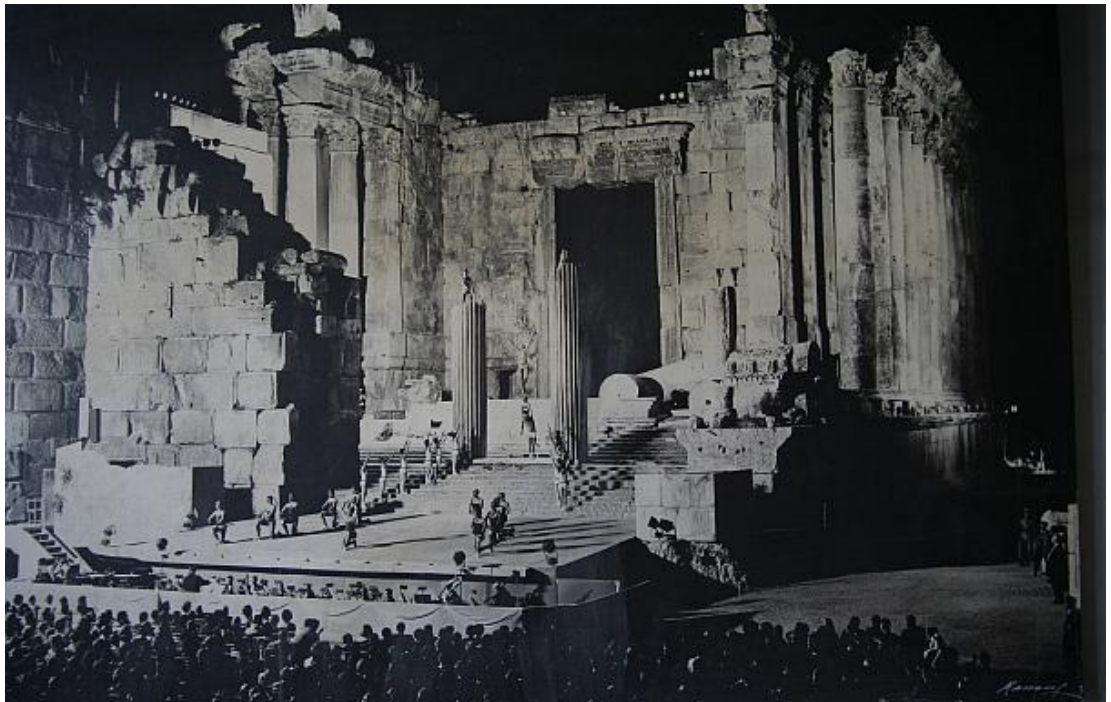


Figure 7: International Festival Baalbek in the 1950s

(Source: norient <http://norient.com/files/2010/08/BAALBEK.jpg>)

In 1975, the Lebanese civil war began, which lasted until 1990 and radically changed not only the culture in Lebanon.

"Beirut had a name as a hub between orient and occident. Lebanese psychedelic rock bands entertained an international crowd in hip Beiruti clubs. Life felt like in Paris or London. The cities reputation was shot to pieces during the civil war."⁶⁷

During the war years, the country's cultural movement came to a standstill and a wartime generation grew up that determined the music scene in the following years and still shapes it today:

Two major currents emerged - on the one hand, the commercial pan-Arab pop culture, spread by the satellite programs, and on the other hand, the alter-native scene, which included many music genres, such as rock, punk, experimental jazz and electronic music. Left-leaning singer-songwriters, such as Marcel Khalife, also played an important role, receiving great acclaim from the Lebanese population. "A new art and music scene had slowly grown out of the ruins [...]"⁶⁸ whose protagonists, tired of the war, were looking for a new identity:

"Most of these musicians do not believe in any of the regional politicians and clan leaders. In a highly radicalized and commercialized country like Lebanon, their political approach lies in their focus on musical quality and value. These artists can thus be considered as "alternative" or "counter-cultural" in relation to the dominant "commercial" pan-Arabic pop scene that is constantly-ly reproduced by Saudi satellite TV stations."⁶⁹

If you look at the alternative scene in Lebanon, it makes use of various musical influences from the West. The singer's style, however, retains a sound of its own through the use of the Arabic language, which is not comparable with Western singing, and which repeatedly provides the musical events with ornamentation and with Arabic timbres such as *ghunna* and *bahha*. As an example, bands like *Mashrou' Leila* (Arab. Project Leila) with their song "El hal

⁶⁷ Burkhalter (2013)

⁶⁸ Schmidt (2011)

⁶⁹ Burkhalter (2011): <http://norient.com/blog/goldenbeirut/>

Romancy "⁷⁰ (Arab. The solution is romantic) and *Soap Kills* with the song "Herzan "⁷¹ (Arab. It is worthwhile).

This scene is contrasted with the commercialized pop music video culture.⁷² The newly established satellite television enabled the creation of a pop singer image throughout the Arab world. This commercially oriented pop music embodies pleasure and consumption in the form of almost pornographic images of women and men. The following description of a well-known video clip of the singer Haifa Wehbe illustrates this statement by Burkhalter:

"First I see her hairline. Then her big dark eyes, shortly afterwards her red mouth. Lebanese star singer Haifa Wehbe emerges from a swimming pool. Already her golden swimsuit appears, then her legs, on which water rolls off. A repeating guitar melody, a drum in rapid rhythm, electronic sounds show: Haifa's feelings are in turmoil in this video clip. She is already lolling on a divan: 'I can't wait another day. My desire is too great,' she croons, 'Come back to me. For far too long I've lived without comfort and security.'"⁷³

This description is reminiscent of the music videos that are prevalent in the U.S. and also in Europe, which are (mostly) produced in connection with hip-hop music. In the Arab world, however, these videos are in stark contrast to the opposing, usually extremely conservative social rules that predominate there.

The singers of this "pop music video culture" usually have no musical training and are often selected and marketed by producers. In a very short time, a large number of songs are produced, which flood the music market and quickly disappear again, because the music, as described above, is kept simple and therefore quickly interchangeable.

⁷⁰ The song "El hal Romancy" can be found on the CD under track 15.

⁷¹ The song "Herzan" can be found on the CD under track 16.

⁷² The Swiss ethnomusicologist and music journalist Thomas Burkhalter dealt extensively with the phenomenon of Arabic music today. His publications provide a more in-depth analysis and can be consulted for further study.

⁷³ Burkhalter (2010): Yasmine on the moon (see norient.com)

These opposing cultural movements in their most extreme form show the still existing disunity of the country and the nation, but also the young generation's search for cultural identity.

2.3.2 Linking Arabic song with Western music

Linking Arabic song with Western music has long been a goal of Lebanese musicians and composers, as mentioned above. The Rahbani brothers and the singer Fayruz were the pioneers in these ventures, and Fayruz's vocal capabilities led to these linkages being very successful. Many works emerged that opened up new worlds for Arabic singing and gave Lebanon a new music. This openness and desire to experiment is still a characteristic of Lebanese musicians today. Composers like Marcel ^{Khalife}⁷⁴, Zad ^{Moultaka}⁷⁵ and Joelle ^{Khoury}⁷⁶ and singers like Fadia ^{El-Hage}⁷⁷ and Rima ^{Khcheich}⁷⁸ are some examples.

In this chapter, two current projects will be presented that have carried out the fusion - once starting from Lebanon, once starting from Germany - in order to make clear where Arabic singing has developed to, among other things.

2.3.2.1 Arabic-Lebanese Opera

The two Lebanese composers Joelle Khoury and Zad Moultaka have combined contemporary European music with Arabic singing. Their work will be briefly presented in the following.

The Lebanese composer Joelle Khoury studied musicology in the USA and now lives in Beirut, her birthplace in Lebanon. She teaches at the Lebanese National Conservatory and works as a pianist and jazz musician in the Lebanese music scene.⁷⁹ In 2008, her work "Halman asfarat" (Arab. "A Dream is She") - a "monodrama for alto-

⁷⁴ Marcel Khalife: <http://www.marcelkhalife.com/>

⁷⁵ Zad Moultaka. <http://www.zadmoultaka.com/>

⁷⁶ Joelle Khoury: http://www.joellek.com/Joelle_content.html

⁷⁷ Fadia El-Hage: <http://www.fadiatombelhage.com/home.php>

⁷⁸ Rima Khcheich: <http://www.rimakhcheich.com/>

⁷⁹ Cf. Preuß (2008)

voice, five soloists and electronics" premiered in Arabic in Lebanon.⁸⁰

In the October 2008 issue of nmz (neue musik zeitung) Thorsten Preuß deals with contemporary music in Lebanon and in this context also with the work of Joelle Khoury.

The composer uses fragments from 40 poems by the Lebanese lyricist Jacques Aswad, which thematize a woman's crises and search for meaning.⁸¹

The composer was inspired by the Lebanese singer Fadia El-Hage, who also sang the work in the concert premiere on July 12, 2008 in Beirut. The voice of the singer El-Hage plays the central role in the piece, as between sprechgesang and cantilena she intensively shapes the expressionistic psychodrama.⁸² Khoury did not intend any orientalisms with her piece, as the only Arabic element in the work is the language. High Arabic, with its use of the entire vocal tract, gives El-Hage's contemporary singing a special coloration that captivated many listeners and critics: "Fadia El-Hage conveyed oriental gentleness, crowned by a cultivated mezzo-sopran full of vital, intimate, and tender vocal artistry."⁸³

El-Hage studied classical singing in Munich and worked as a teenager with the brothers Rahbani and Fayruz. These varied experiences have made her an exceptional singer who can "[...] master and combine the vocal techniques of Western and Middle Eastern classical music"⁸⁴. Her repertoire ranges from classical Arabic music to the music of the European Middle Ages and new music.

Fadia El-Hage also premiered the chamber opera "Zajal" by the Lebanese composer Zad Moutaka in France in 2010.⁸⁵ In this opera, Moutaka addresses the Lebanese zajal tradition: a popular form of improvised poetry in the Lebanese dialect.⁸⁶ The piece is for one alto voice, one narrator, two saxophones, one horn, one trumpet,

⁸⁰ An excerpt from the work "Halman asfarat" can be found on the CD under track 17.

⁸¹ Cf. Preuß (2008)

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Szabo (2008)

⁸⁴ Sarband (2013)

⁸⁵ An excerpt from the chamber opera "Zajal" can be found on the CD under track 18.

⁸⁶ Cf. Moutaka (2013): <http://www.zadmoutaka.com/spip.php?article126>

a trombone, a tuba and percussion. In this work, unlike the work just presented, "Halman asfarat," El-Hage uses her Arabic vocal technique and remains in the low chest voice. She represents a young poet who, despite the pressures of tradition (his father), finds and takes his place in the world.

El-Hage is a member of the ensemble *Sarband*, with whom she has already interpreted Bach in Arabic in Europe and the USA.⁸⁷

"Sarband unites musical traditions from orient and occident, past and contemporary and mediates between medieval music and traditions that are still alive today. [...] Sarband's most recent CD is *The Arabian passion according to J.S.Bach*. Here Bach's melodies remain unaltered, but the ensemble in collaboration with Arab and European musicians, has given them an Arabian feel. The lyrics of the alto aries were translated into Arabic and are sung in Arabic by Lebanese singer Fadia El-Hage."⁸⁸ .

She uses her experience to give voice to contemporary Arabic opera.

Both works by the above composers were performed in Europe, "Zajal" even in Canada, followed by many positive reviews and widespread attention.⁸⁹

2.3.2.2 The German-Lebanese Jazz Band *Masaa*

Not only Lebanon strives for a fusion with Western music, but also Europe would like to discover the musical Orient and especially Arabic singing and integrate it into its culture. In 2008, at the North Sea Jazz Festival in The Hague, Dutch jazz bassist Tony Overwater spoke about his encounter with Lebanese singer Rima Khcheich in Beirut.⁹⁰ In doing so, he described his relationship to Arab-Lebanese musical culture, which changed as a result of his work with the singer. In the beginning, he could hardly imagine working together and did not like Arabic music culture. Then

⁸⁷ The aria "Erbarne Dich, mein Gott" from the St. Matthew Passion, interpreted by the ensemble Sarband can be found on the CD under track 19.

⁸⁸ Taufiq (2011), p. 28

⁸⁹ Cf. Zad Moulaka. <http://www.zadmoulaka.com/>

⁹⁰ Overwater and Khcheich recorded the CD "Orient Express" in the Netherlands in 2001.

he experienced, however, that the Arabic *tarab* can be compared to the *blues*, for both imply an intense sense of longing.⁹¹

Also in Germany, four musicians founded the jazz band *Masaa* (Arabic for evening) in 2011 to give concrete expression to their longing. Trumpeter Marcus Rust had the desire to combine jazz with Arabic music. The music of Markus Stockhausen and his band *Eternal Voyage* served as a model for him. The pianist Clemens Pöttsch, the drummer Demian Kappenstein and the Lebanese singer Rabih Lahoud founded this project together with him. The current press release of the band states:

"The music of the band moves between contemporary jazz, world music and pop and combines these musical elements with oriental sounds and Arabic poetry. The singer of the band, Rabih Lahoud, tells stories from a distant world with his emotional singing and knows how to let the different sound worlds merge. Through their own style *Masaa* succeeds in avoiding the usual clichés of orientalism. Rather, one can observe the four musicians creating a poetic-musical mosaic out of the abundance of their personal worlds, which captures the diversity of life."⁹²

The common desire to combine Arabic singing with the musical talent and background of each individual resulted in the release of the first CD ("Freedom Dance"), which was released in 2012, and with the awarding of the Bremen Jazz Prize in 2012.

The vocals use all the possibilities of vocal technique - from the classical to the popular voice to Arabic *tarab elements* and combine with the jazzy *takht* of the three instrumentalists. Many parts in *Masaa's* music are created in the moment and are improvised, capturing the mood of the listener and interpreting it musically. The sung lyrics are mostly created in the moment and are formed from single Lebanese words that are often unrelated to each other.

⁹¹ Cf. Overwater / Khcheich (2008).

⁹² Masaa (2013)

2. basics of arabic singing

This relationship with the audience is elemental to the creation of the music and makes jazz music more emotionally accessible off stage. This is possible through the power of Arabic singing, which is originally based on emotions.

Masaa is a symbiosis of emotionally charged Arabic song and the conceptual richness of jazz.⁹³



Figure 8: Masaa in Beirut (Lebanon) 2012

⁹³ The piece "Asrari" by the band Masaa can be heard on the CD under track 20.

3. The vocal work with not Arabic singers - an experience report

3.1 Reflection on personal compositional work

In order to better understand the results of my work as a composer, I would like to briefly explain my own relationship to the combination of Arabic and Western music:

Although I was born and raised in Lebanon, it was always difficult for me to establish any relationship at all with the music of my homeland. When I was eight years old, my uncle gave me a cassette with the first movement of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. He thought that I might like this music, since I was constantly composing little piano pieces - even though I had no lessons at that time. This cassette was my first contact with European music. Since then, my heart knew where it belonged.

At that time I never wanted to deal with Arabic music and thirsted for every opportunity to get piano sheet music of Beethoven, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Chopin and others. In Lebanon, obtaining music was extremely difficult and every new discovery always filled me with great joy.

When I came to Germany in 2003, I was very grateful to have finally arrived in my spiritual home. However, I had to realize that all the musical ideas that had been so difficult to acquire in Lebanon were often taken for granted here in Germany, and in some cases were considered old or outdated. This realization initially extinguished my passionate flame to develop myself as a composer in Germany. Nevertheless, I took up the study of composition, in which, however, it was signaled to me that I would have to distance myself from my Arabic musical roots, since the mixture of musical worlds was not conceivable.

In the few works I wrote during this period, a kind of longing for Arabic music was constantly reflected, and I began to think about my childhood and my musical imprint.

In 2011, the musical director of the Bach-Verein Köln and the Philharmonic Choir Bonn (among others) Thomas Neuhoff asked me if I could imagine composing a piece for choir and orchestra inspired by the poem of *Mahmoud Darwish* and, if possible, containing Arabic elements. With great passion I started to unite my different (musical) worlds for the first time and it was easier than I thought. This made me very happy and laid the foundation for many more compositions in which I combine the different and yet for me so similar styles.

Especially exciting for me as a composer and artist is the work with non-Arab singers. In the third part of this diploma thesis, I would like to give an insight into this work by means of two of my own compositions. In this context, a survey was conducted with singers of the choirs Bach-Verein Köln and BonnVoice from Bonn, the results of which will also be presented here.

3.2 The Arabic timbre in the classical context of the voice using the example of the work "Joseph Lamento".

As mentioned above, the Arabic language, through the richness of its consonant formation and the special colors of its vowels, allows a broad spectrum of sound colors. For the European classical singer, the Arabic language is usually completely unfamiliar in connection with his usual vocal technique. This is because the western classical vocal technique mainly demands a dark sound, a balanced timbre in all registers of the voice and avoids voice effects. Its goal is the creation of a pure sound ideal. The Arabic *Tarab*, on the other hand, demands from the singers - in order to be able to convey contents and feelings as authentically as possible - the use of different effects and colors, whereby the language has a supporting effect.

In the work "Joseph Lamento" I have used exclusively Arabic texts - both for the choir and for the soloists. When rehearsing this piece, the European singer is faced with the challenge of combining the Arabic language with the classical technique in a meaningful way.

3.2.1 The work "Joseph Lamento" - cantata for soli, choir and orchestra

The piece "Joseph Lamento" was premiered as a commission from the Bach-Verein Köln in March 2011 at the Kölner Philharmonie. The cantata for solos, choir and orchestra is based on the poem "I am Joseph, my father" by Mahmud Darwish:

"Father, my brothers do not love me.
They do not tolerate me among them,
Father.
They are hostile to me and throw stones and words at me. They
want me to die so that they can praise me.
They locked the door of your house from me.
They drove me out of the field. Father, they poisoned my grapes. And they
broke my toys, Father.
When they saw the wind playing with my hair, they became jealous and
rebelled against me and against you.
But what have I done to them, Father?
The butterflies settled on my shoulders, the ears of corn bent before me, and
a bird landed on my hand.
What have I done, Father, and why me? You called me Joseph, and they
threw me into the well and blamed the wolf.
But the wolf is more merciful than my brothers, O Father. Have I wronged
anyone when I said that I have seen eleven stars, and the sun and the moon,
seen them bowing to me?"

(Mahmud Darwish, 2002 by Ammann Verlag & Co., Zurich)

The poem was written in 1986, at the time of the civil war in Lebanon. Mahmud Darwish, himself Palestinian, fled to Lebanon after the founding of the state of Israel and experienced the subsequent occupation of Beirut by Israel: "The further aggravation of the situation of the Palestinian population in the Lebanese civil war, culminating in the Israeli siege of Beirut in the summer of 1982 and the subsequent exile of the PLO, put an end to this phase of [Mahmud Darwish's] work, which was still characterized by a hopeful basic tone. The forced exodus from Beirut was experienced by Darwish as traumatic as the defeat of 1967."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Weidner (2008)

When I received the commission to compose "Joseph Lamento" and started to deal with the poem, I recognized the mourning and the Bewei-nen as central points and tried to implement them musically. Due to the Lebanese civil war, in which I grew up, I also often had to experience mourning and the lamentation associated with it. However, these laments were often silent, without many words, but connected with a profound expression. The piece "Joseph Lamento" is therefore based on only a few Arabic words, which first express the pain and then the hatred. The lines of text are inspired by the poem of Darwish and mean freely translated:

"O Father, why have my pains become my brothers?"

"We hate you!"

"You hate me!"

A seemingly endless sigh opens the piece and thus expresses the human lament. This fog of grief is suddenly broken through when the brothers' abysmal hatred for Joseph releases unbridled energies in the second part of the piece. At the end of the cantata, however, hope for a reunion in brotherly love and for forgiveness should also find its place and be awakened.

The work can be divided into two main parts: a slower one, representing lamentation, and a faster part, expressing hatred, consisting of a short final coda. The voice of Joseph is represented by the solo baritone voice. It already uses the typical ornamentation of the Arabic *tarab* after the first use (see chapter 2.1.2). Thus, the baritone's first entry is a long held *g-sharp*, which is followed by an abundance of ornamentation. These ornamentations are notated here. However, it is up to the singer to decide how long he wants to hold his note until the ornamentation, because his emotion should be in the foreground here. The accompanying strings meanwhile hold a chord and give the soloist the possibility to define the timing himself - comparable to a *takht*.

The image displays a musical score for a single bar (bar 23) from Joseph Lamento. The score is arranged in a system of staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: S. (Soprano), A. (Alto), Bar. (Baritone), S. (Soprano), A. (Alto), T. (Tenor), B. (Bass), Kinder (Children), Pk. (Piano), VI. I (Violin I), VI. II (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), and Vc. (Violoncello). The Baritone part is the most prominent, featuring a complex melodic line with many triplets and a long, sweeping slur. The lyrics 'Ae bi Li' are written below the Baritone staff. The other vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the instrumental parts (Kinder, Piano, Violins, Viola, Cello) are mostly silent, indicated by rests on their respective staves.

Figure 9: Example ornamentation baritone voice in orchestral accompaniment (excerpt Joseph Lamento - bar 23)

Two more solo voices (soprano and alto) are added in the second part of the piece. These support the voice of the baritone and transform Joseph's personal suffering into the universal suffering of humanity.

A four-part choir opens the piece and accompanies or comments on the baritone voice until the end.

3.2.2 The approach and rehearsal work on the work "Joseph Lamento"

The choir of the Bach-Verein commissioned the work "Joseph Lamento" as mentioned above and was also the performing choir in the premiere in March 2011. As composer and soloist I was allowed to accompany the rehearsal work. For me it was important that the singers internalize the following points from the basics of Arabic singing in the short rehearsal time: The correct pronunciation of the High Arabic text and the own emotion as the main goal of the vocal expression.

The work begins with the choir alone, and the singers were not given any fixed text or vowel specifications. It was important to me that the singers free themselves in each case from predetermined consonants and vowels and give expression to the lament with their own intuitive formations of the vocal tract.



Figure 10: Beginning of the piece by choir (excerpt Joseph Lamento - bars 1-3)



Figure 11: Vocalise freely selectable by singer (excerpt Joseph Lamento bar 4-7)

The singers were not to abandon their usual classical vocal technique, but only to bring the emotion of the lament to the fore. This should achieve that the choir after a very short time an ele-

ment of Arabic singing: The focus is on emotion, not vocal technique.

As the piece progressed, the choristers abandoned the vocalise and moved into given Arabic texts. This added another element of Arabic singing, correct pronunciation. The learning of the language was characterized by the principle of demonstration and imitation. This auditory component also played an important role in the use of different timbres of the Arabic vowels. Many singers learned new timbres of their own voices.

For the choir, the vocal freedom at the beginning of the work was very unfamiliar. To ease them into the piece, we agreed to use the vowel 'A'. However, the singers were supposed to use their own "clage color," because it was important to me that no uniform color be striven for, as is usually the case in classical choral singing. So each singer was allowed to use an individual emotional voice to emphasize the Arabic timbre of the work (*Tarab*).

This individual emotional value of each voice was a new and sometimes irritating experience for the choir singers. However, the choir group quickly realized that as soon as their own emotion carried the vocalization, the keys used (respectively Maqamat: Hijaz, Ajam and Nahawand) no longer sounded so European, but took on a special "distant coloring". It was this freedom to foreground one's own feelings and not necessarily a different vocal technique that made this work more "Arabic" in the first place.

Furthermore, the choristers were rhythmically challenged. The second part of the work is a notated long ornamentation (see figures 12, 13 and 14).

3. the vocal work with non-Arab singers - a field report

Figure 12: Joseph Lamento - bars 99-100

Figure 13: Joseph Lamento - bars 101-102

Figure 14: Joseph Lamento - bars 103-104

Here the singers had to master a difficult vocal line together and at the same time. Because of the shortness of time, we decided to treat these ornaments as rehearsed coloraturas rather than as the basis of an individual improvisation, as I had originally intended.

This made this part a rhythmic challenge, because the notated running semiquavers had to be sung precisely - a well-known difficulty for a classical choir.

The ornamentations alternated between two maqamat: Ajam and Nahawand. Because these ornaments were rather understood as coloratura, it was difficult for me as a rehearser to include the different moods of the two maqamat in the interpretation. Nevertheless, the interplay between the western coloratura of the choir and the Arabic ornamentation of the baritone was delightful.⁹⁵

3.2.3 The singers' experience of "Joseph Lamento"

The work with the singers of the Bach Society explained above was very satisfying and instructive for me. Fortunately, the choir was open to the novelties in terms of approaches and stylistics. Even before the actual work began, 83% of the singers could imagine combining the different musical styles:

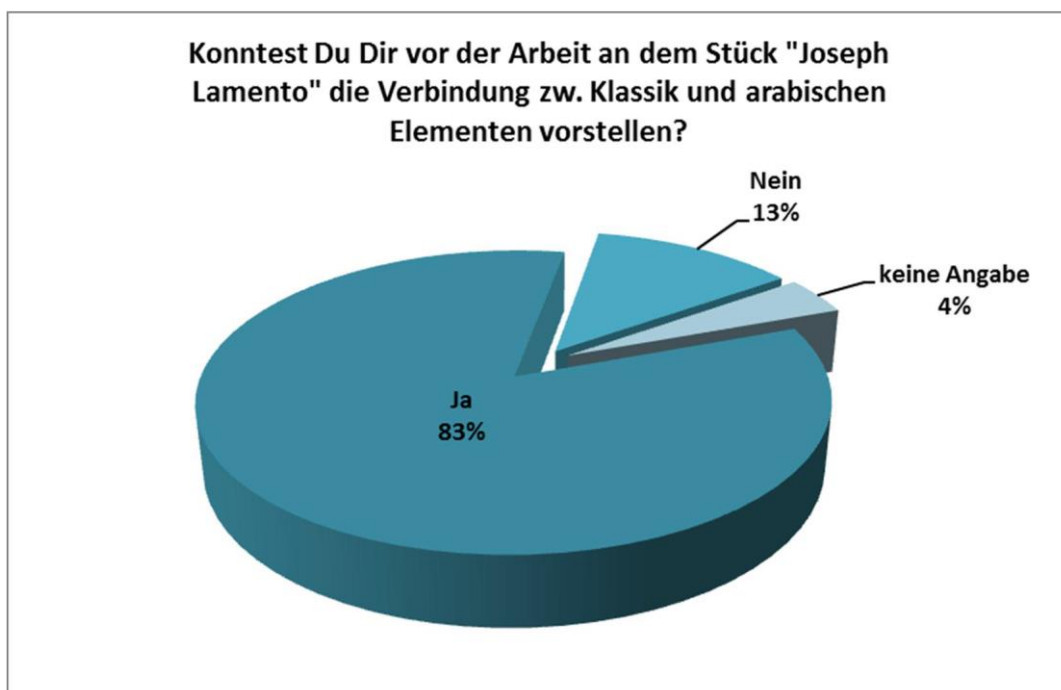


Figure 15: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 4 of the questionnaire (n=23)

⁹⁵ A recording of the cantata "Joseph Lamento" can be found on the CD under track 21.

The following answers show that it was already intuitively clear to the singers which special features would make up Arabic singing. The main feature mentioned was "throaty singing", which means that new, yet unknown places in the vocal tract would be addressed. In second place, the singers mentioned ornamentation as a new main stylistic feature. Both features play an important role in "Joseph Lamento".

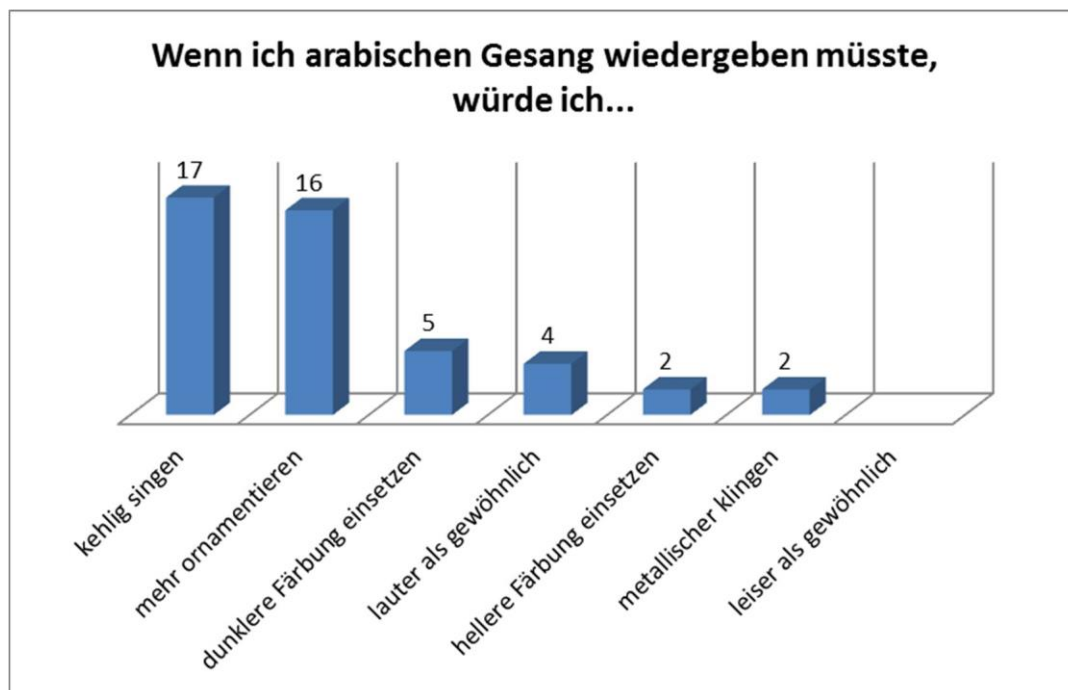


Figure 16: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 3 of the questionnaire (n=23)

It was important for me to find out through the survey how the singers perceived the work on the piece, what they learned about Arabic singing and how satisfied they were with the result at the end of the editing period.

As described above, at the beginning of the rehearsal work, despite their openness to my idea, the singers had difficulties "arriving" at the piece. Especially the language, the freedom of emotions and the rhythm were challenging from my point of view. Thus, 39% of the interviewed singers answered that they had access to the piece after two to four rehearsals and 18% even needed longer than four rehearsals, which is relatively long considering the total number of eight rehearsals (see Figure 17). According to the singers, the reason for this was mainly language and rhythm, which confirmed my personal assumption (see Figure 18).

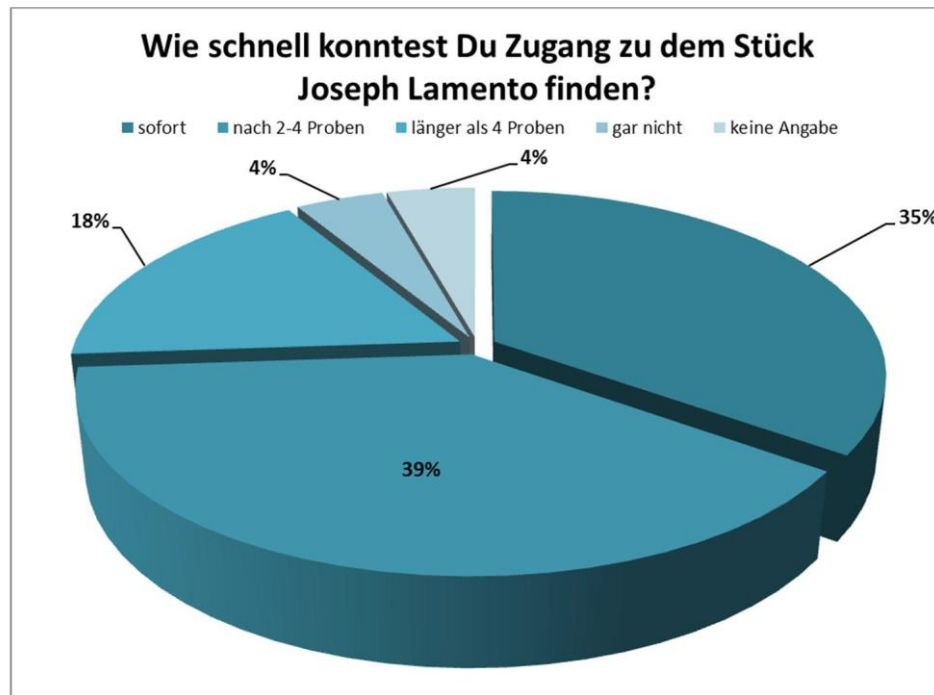


Figure 17: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 5 of the questionnaire (n=23)

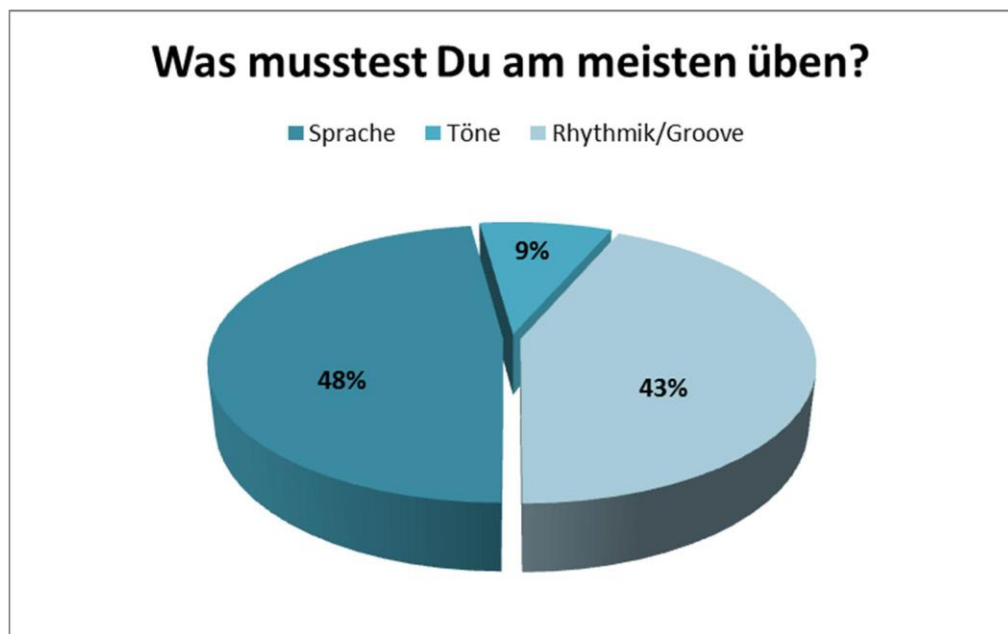


Figure 18: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 6 of the questionnaire (n=23)

During the rehearsals, I found that the singers were able to overcome these difficulties primarily by practicing and imitating. This method proved to be the most successful - also from the point of view of the singers interviewed (see Figure 19).



Figure 19: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 6b of the questionnaire (n=23)

With the piece "Joseph Lamento" I wanted to emphasize singing as a unifying element between cultures. From the singers I received including the following feedback:

- "Exciting musical cross-cultural experience."
- "It was very interesting to get involved with the Arabic language and melodic forms."
- "There's something primal about the music."

I was particularly pleased to see that the number of singers who approved of the mixing of styles increased slightly after working on the piece: 83% of respondents before, 92% after (see Figure 20).

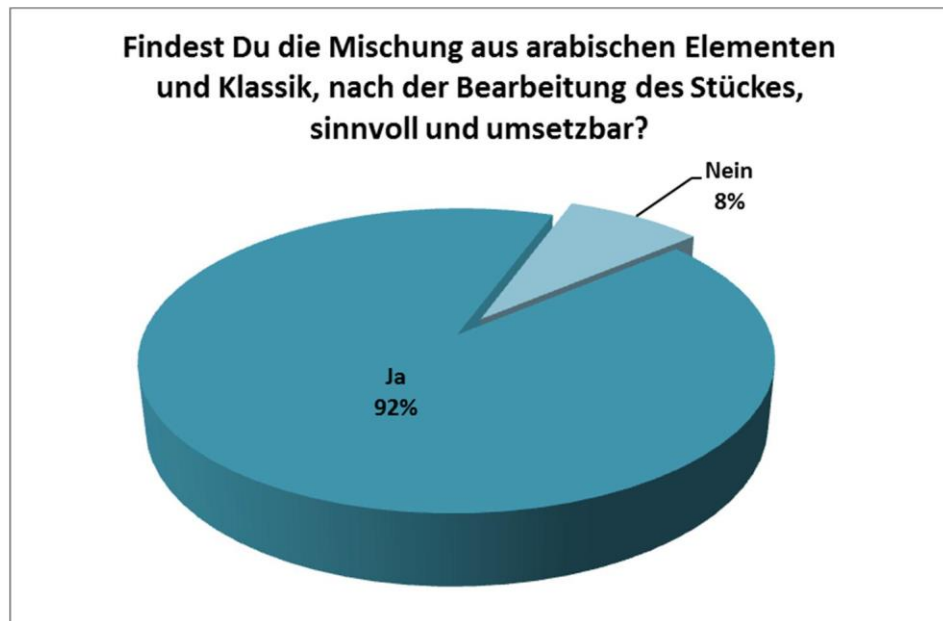


Figure 20: Answers Bach-Verein Köln to question 7 of the questionnaire (n=23)

3.3 The use of Arabic timbre in pop singing using the example of an a cappella choral work

As explained in chapter 3.2, Western classical vocal technique pursues the formation of a pure sound ideal, which means a balanced timbre in all vocal registers. In the popular field, however, an individual sound that depends on the individual singer and is usually very emotional is not an exception. In contrast to the classical voice, the popular voice does not try to establish an ideal sound. Rather, similar to the Arabic *tarab*, it puts the emotions and the personality of the singer in the foreground. Thus, the singer may use different timbres here and also use voice effects in order to be able to convey his emotional message in the best possible way.

A pop and jazz choir consists primarily of such independent voices, which often have a very individual sound. Therefore, it is a challenge in such a choir to overcome this individuality in tutti passages in order to create "a single choir sound". In today's popular choral work this is called "blending". What is meant by this is that the choir changes uniformly between the timbres and uses uniform effects. In contrast to "blending" in the classical choir, this creates more "ideal sounds".

The use of the Arabic language in popular choral singing, opens the way to a new further timbre and to a new approach to the formation of sounds in general, and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

3.3.1 The a cappella choral work "Ahlam"

I composed the choral work *Ahlam* for mixed-voice choir in 2012, worked on it with the Bonn pop and jazz choir BonnVoice and premiered it in April 2013.

The piece works with conventional Western keys and uses the Lebanese Arabic dialect and English as language. It begins with smaller rhythmic units that build on each other voice by voice to produce an overall groove. In the following illustration this groove can be read, which is built up from bar 13 on:

The image shows a musical score for a mixed-voice choir, specifically bars 13 and 14 of the piece "Ahlam". The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two sharps (D major). The parts are labeled S (Soprano), A.1 (Alto 1), A.2 (Alto 2), T (Tenor), BAR. (Bass), and B. (Bass). The lyrics are in Arabic and English. The overall groove is built up from bar 13 on.

S. 13

A.1

A.2
MEN - NI RA HU HEM - NI MEN - NI MEN NI RA HU HEM NI HEM NI

T.
HEM - NI RA HU MEN - NI MA RA HU HEM - NI HEM - NI RA HU MEN - NI MA RA HU HEM - NI

BAR.
DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO

B.
DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO

Figure 21: Overall groove in the piece "Ahlam" (bar 13 - 14)

The groove is of central importance in the popular field, which is why the term "groove" in popular singing will be briefly discussed at this point. One of today's best-known German choir directors in this field, Martin Carbow, dedicates the largest part of his book "Chorleitung - Pop, Jazz, Gospel - Der sichere Weg zum richtigen Groove" (Choir Conducting - Pop, Jazz, Gospel - The Sure Way to the Right Groove) to the groove, which underlines its importance:

"The term 'groove' comes from English slang. In the musical context there is no direct translation for the word, but the meaning of the word in general usage already gives interesting hints:

.to groove - to get one loose.

.to be in the groove - to be in the mood, to be in top form.

.groovy - strong, crazy [...]

In the parlance of musicians, the word groove refers to the way rhythms are interpreted and enforced [...].⁹⁶

In *Ahlam*, the peculiarity is that each voice has its own groove, but through the superimposition of the different voices, a common new rhythm is then created:

- Bass and baritone use two variants of the "sixteenth group of three"⁹⁷. In the bass, this is broken in half of the measure, in the baritone it runs through.



Figure 22: Sixteenth-note triplet in bass and baritone voice (excerpt "Ahlam" - measures 21 - 22)

- The tenor sings in a sixteenth-note groove, but syncopated. The alto, on the other hand, sings a straight eighth-note groove.



Figure 23: Syncopated semiquavers in the tenor (excerpt "Ahlam" - measures 21 - 22)

⁹⁶ Carbow (2006), p. 82

⁹⁷ "Normally, sixteenth notes in 4/4 time are accented on the first note of each group of four, according to the center of the measure. The term sixteenth triplet describes a sequence of accents on every third sixteenth - thus one hears a shift against the pulse." Carbow (2006), p. 205

3. the vocal work with non-Arab singers - a field report

The alto and tenor sing words in the Li-banese dialect even before the sopranos enter, supporting the rhythm (e.g. Hen-ni (Arab. she), Ra-hu (Arab. have gone), Men-ni (Arab. from me)).

On top of this groove action, the soprano voice and then the first alto voice begin. Their groove consists of advanced semiquavers that alternate between the two voices.

Figure 25: Sopranos' advanced semiquavers (excerpt "Ahlam" - measures 27 - 28)

Figure 24: Alto and soprano alternating (excerpt "Ahlam" - measures 29 - 30)

A new Lebanese text, with the following translation is set to music here:⁹⁸

My night is full of dreams.

Where is my day? He is awake alone.

Who am I waiting for today?

Tell me, how can I meet you today?

In the middle section, the groove is interrupted, and the soprano voice sings a new melody with new text over a chorale-like accompaniment:⁹⁹

You are with me and I hold my dreams in my hand. Our hearts are together and the world is more colorful. Do not be afraid, I am watching over you in your heart.

We travel the world, hand in hand.

⁹⁸ The sound sample with which the singers of the choir BonnVoice practiced this passage can be found on the CD under track 22.

⁹⁹ CD Track 23

After this chorale-like section, a new groove emerges, consisting of continuous sixteenth notes distributed among all voices. The alto voices repeat the melody of the soprano, but here in English.

The image shows a musical score for six vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto 1 (A. 1), Alto 2 (A. 2), Tenor (T.), Baritone (BAR.), and Bass (B.). The score is for measures 55 and 56. The Soprano part (S.) has a melodic line with 'DOO' syllables. The Alto 1 (A. 1) and Alto 2 (A. 2) parts have a similar melodic line. The Tenor (T.) part has a continuous sixteenth-note line with 'DOO' syllables. The Baritone (BAR.) part has a continuous sixteenth-note line with 'DOO' syllables. The Bass (B.) part has a continuous sixteenth-note line with 'DOO' syllables. The word 'SIMILE' is written above the Soprano, Alto 2, Tenor, and Baritone parts. The number '55' is written at the beginning of the Soprano part.

Figure 26: Continuous sixteenth notes (excerpt "Ahlam" - measures 55-56)

Without lyrics, and with the syllables (doo) borrowed from English, the piece ends with a fading chord.

3.3.2 The approach and the rehearsal work on "Ahlam"

In the piece *Ahlam*, two languages and two different rhythmic "worlds" are combined: The Western groove in the accompanying voices, which is to be produced strictly according to the notation, and the free melodic shaping in the Arabic singing. Bass and baritone hold a strict rhythmic foundation with the English syllable *doo*, whereupon the tenors and altos are challenged to control the freedom implied by the Lebanese language and thus establish the groove with the other two voices.

The Lebanese creates new unfamiliar vocal percussive impulses. For example, the altos and tenors must use Lebanese words in the opening section, discovering new possibilities in the vocal tract (e.g., the voiceless pharyngeal fricative in the Lebanese word "Ra- hu").

The biggest challenge during the rehearsal work with BonnVoice was therefore the pronunciation. The singers could learn best aurally by imitating, which is why I made a recording of the texts that could be used in addition to the rehearsal work.

Over time, the singers created a common expression and at the same time were able to develop a naturalness in their voices. What then emerged was a uniform timbre in the longer melodic sections. This naturalness came intuitively through exposure to the Arabic language. This fact confirmed to me that the Arabic language demands a certain authenticity in sound from singing in general - based on the speaking voice. The sought-after "natural voice" in *Tarab* is a result of striving for authenticity in the sound of this language. The amazing thing about the rehearsal process was that these results were achieved without the intense experience of Arabic culture. Just by engaging with the language, the non-Arabic singers were able to access Arabic singing.

Despite the use of popular vocal techniques and strict Western grooves, the singers were able to give their singing a typical Arabic coloration through their study of the correct pronunciation of the Lebanese dialect. The better they became at pronunciation, the more authentic their "Arabic voice" became.

This Arabic voice, which I was able to study by analyzing recordings of Arabic singers and by working directly with non-Arabic singers, is created by minimal colorations in the vocal tract and sensitive changes in vocal fold tone. The fact that the singers of the pop and jazz choir were able to implement this so quickly was a positive surprise to me.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ A recording of the piece "Ahlam" can be found on the CD under track 24.

3.3.3 The singers' experience of "Ahlam

In contrast to the choir of the Bach-Verein, which arranged the piece "Joseph Lamem- to", BonnVoice is a choir with many young singers: of the 16 singers interviewed, 56% are under 30 years old (cf. Bach-Verein 0% under 30, but 48% between 40 and 50 years old).

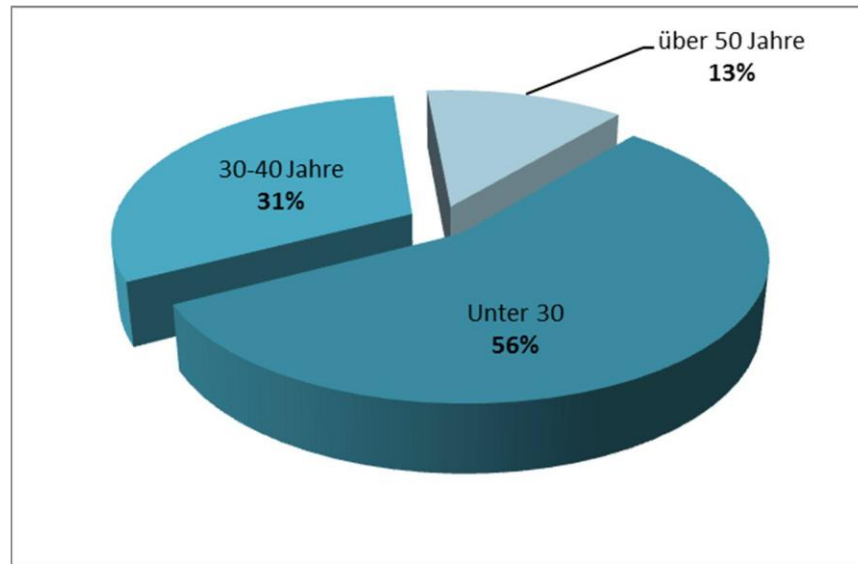


Figure 27: Age structure BonnVoice - as of April 2013 (n=16)

The choir's repertoire is also different, as BonnVoice is dedicated exclusively to pop and jazz literature for choirs. Nevertheless, the piece was "Ahlam" a great challenge for all singers, especially, as explained above, because of the language and the extremely complex groove.

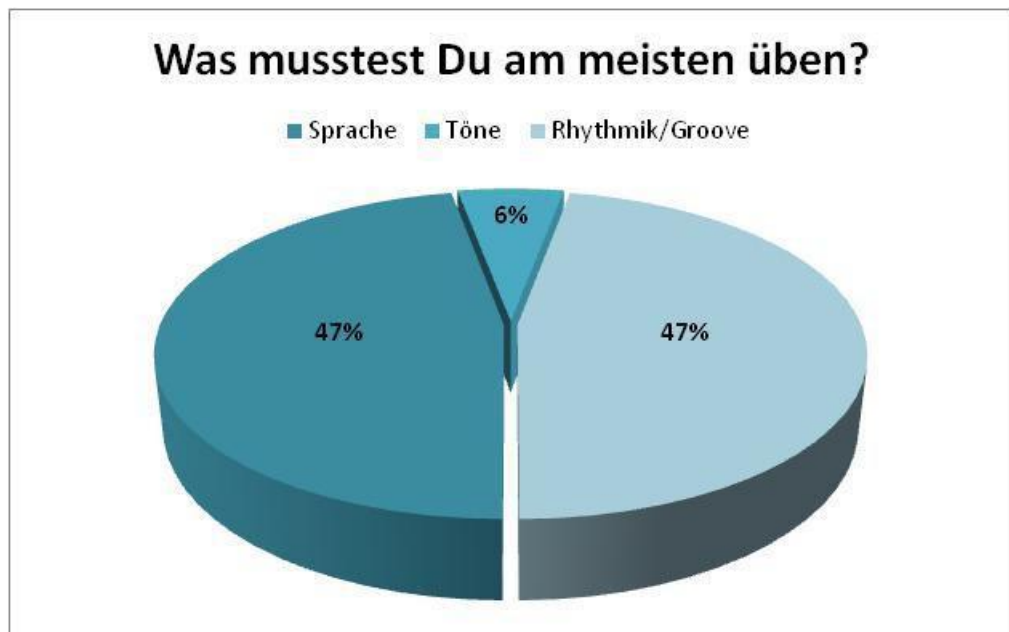


Figure 28: BonnVoice responses to question 6 of the questionnaire (n=16)

As can be seen in Figure 28, this was also clearly confirmed by the BonnVoice singers.

The language is so difficult for singers of non-Arabic origin to translate because it can hardly be compared with any other language and its sound therefore seems very foreign, as the results in Figure 29 and the following comment by a singer show: "I like [...] the interplay of the Arabic language and Western music. However, to be honest, I have a hard time with it because I don't have access to the language at all and I can't understand it at all from the languages I know." Also, at the beginning of the rehearsal work, the singers did not know how to technically implement the various sounds of the Arabic language.



Figure 29: BonnVoice responses to question 1a of the questionnaire (n=16)

However, during my work I trusted that the sound of the language would be better realized if I made the feelings and the *tarab* of Arabic singing clearer to the singers involved. Another singer confirmed to me that this approach was correct by adding the following on the questionnaire as feedback: "Although I don't understand the language, it always sounds to me very much like a great desire and singing in the language is existential. So the singer is complaining about something or accusing someone and really means it

like this. The language combined with singing sounds to me like the singer is always giving his last."

This is exactly the feeling I wanted to achieve through my work with BonnVoice and also with the choir of the Bach-Verein.

The best way for the singers to learn to implement the foreign sound was by auditorily recording and imitating sounds. To make this easier for them, I recorded texts with a recorder so that they could learn them at home by listening to them several times. This method turned out to be particularly suitable.



Figure 30: BonnVoice responses to question 6b of the questionnaire (n=15)

In addition to the language, the groove of the piece was extremely difficult to transpose. In order to make the complex rhythms more accessible, all the singers learned all the voices together so that their own voices could be recognized and experienced in context rather than detached. Furthermore, I developed certain rhythmic exercises that also helped to make the difference between the various types explained above clearer and to build on each other.

All these methods helped to make the piece "Ahlam" more accessible to the singers. Encouragingly, 44% of the interviewed singers said that they could access the piece almost immediately and 31% after 2-4 rehearsals

(compared to 35% immediately, 39% after 2-4 rehearsals) - see also Figure 31.

In conclusion, I was particularly pleased with the following result:

Before working on the piece "Ahlam" only 75% could imagine the combination of Arabic and popular Western music, after editing 100%. Some singers added the following feedback to their vote:

- "Ahlam is a great piece. It is something completely different. The combination of language and music is really successful. The audience has to realize what it's about just by our feeling and expression.... It's a nice challenge."
- "I think the combination of Western and Arabic elements is great. It gives you a completely different feeling for Arabic music and especially for the Arabic language."
- "I think the piece is very beautiful and I think it's nice not to sing English lyrics for a change.
It could sound more 'Arabic' for all I care."

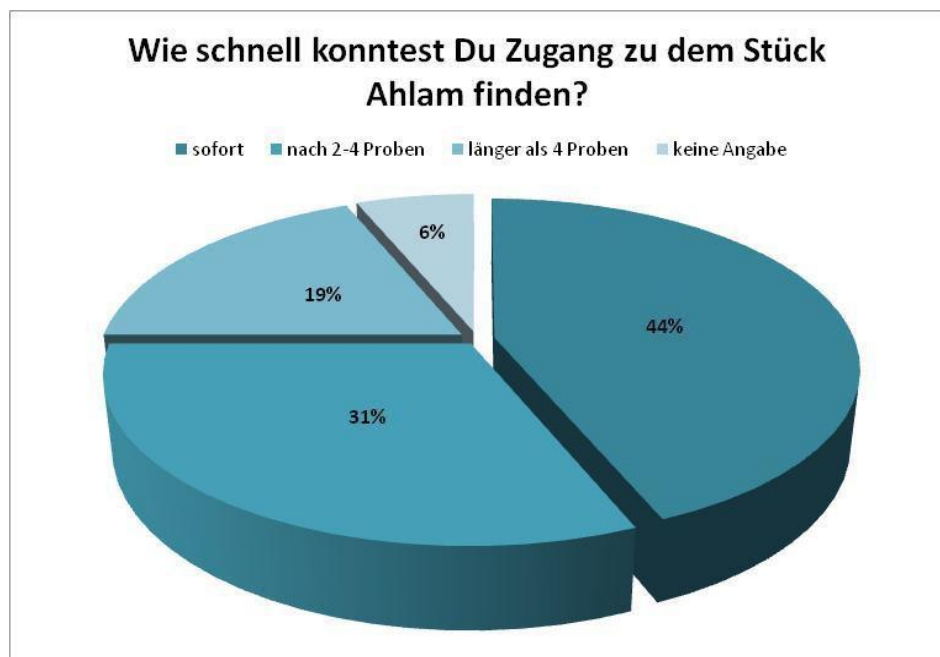


Figure 31: BonnVoice responses to question 5 of the questionnaire (n=16)

The work with the two choirs shows that a connection between the two musical worlds is not only possible, but is also perceived as enriching by the singers.

4. Summary and Outlook

At a time when Arab society is increasingly coming into the focus of the world through the "Arab Spring", interest in Arab culture is also increasing. Through the work with the choirs listed here and through further various conversations during the time of writing this thesis, this interest became clear.

The results of the work show different ways of connecting the two cultures and how they influence each other to create something new and unique. The statements of the singers who experienced this process of connection in practice are of central importance. They show that the foreign can lose its foreignness and that the foreign can even become a part of one's own expression (of singing).

For this to happen, the facilitator must play the main role. The mediator should know the different building blocks that make up these singing worlds in order to be able to find the lowest common emotional denominator. As Menuhin says, "Singing is unquestionably part of human nature, so that there is, as it were, no human culture in which there is no singing."¹⁰¹ Thus, the lowest common denominator is the desire to sing, and the various types of singing are the many ways of implementing this desire.

A mediator between Arabic singing and the Western singer should therefore always keep this origin of singing in mind and thus not emphasize the differences, but always start from the commonalities in order to inspire the singer with whom he works. For only inspired singers can authentically render the emotional message of singing. Through this approach, I was able to overcome the difficulties that came with the foreign language and discovering the various little nuances of the Arabic sounds. The singers could even feel an originality of the singing, which went beyond both forms of singing (classical and popular). This could give rise to the possibility of strengthening the authenticity of the singer.

¹⁰¹ Menuhin (1999)

The double standards of the Arab world described in chapter 2.3.1 (Overview of the current development of Arab song using the example of Lebanon) stem from such a lack of authenticity. The Arab world needs an intensive engagement with its own culture in order to experience this originality anew.

In my experience, the path taken is important not only in Western countries, but also in Arab countries in the future. This means that Arab singers work together to open up their singing art by dealing with other cultures and at the same time deepening their own. Because this authenticity comes from trying out what is foreign and at the same time deepening what is one's own. The choral culture offers a platform for this, which currently does not exist in the Arab world in the diversity known in Germany. The works that make this possible are also lacking.

A future development could therefore be to promote this (choral) culture in Arabic and also here in the West. In my eyes, this presupposes that local choirs that deal with literature such as "Joseph Lamento" or "Ahlam" also perform it in the Arab countries. A subsequent step would be the inclusion of singers of Arab origin, who study these choral works in the form of workshops and perform them together with singers of non-Arab origin.

"We move ahead to an unknown that we like to keep mysterious. Let us develop our language and protect it from repetition and tiredness. A free human being is a human being who can leave narrow soul to move towards the absolute as a traveler. Life gains its meaning from the realization of this constant travel".¹⁰²

These words come from the Lebanese singer and composer Marcel Khalife, who has already been mentioned in this paper. His attitude towards the future development of Arabic music inspires and confirms me very much.

¹⁰² Khalife (2012)

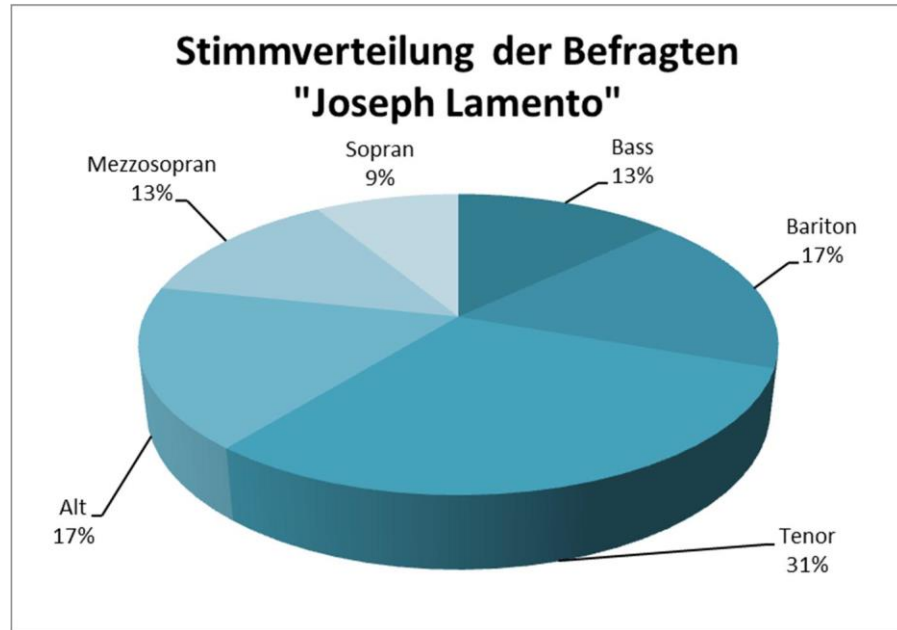
I hope that Arabic singing and its special possibilities will play a role in the vocal education of music academies in the Western world and thus become a great inspiration. And that it will flourish again in its homeland and help Arab society to new strength and self-confidence.

Appendix

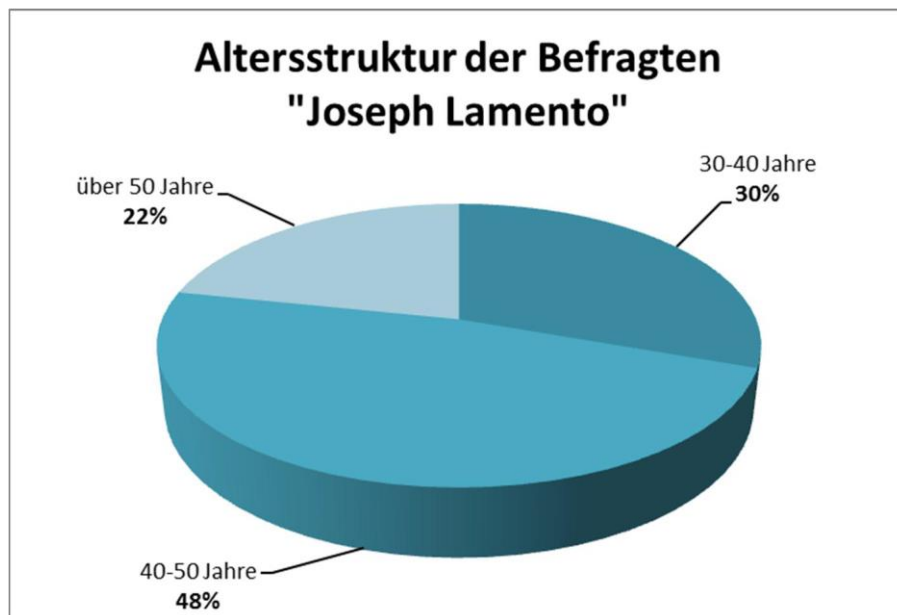
1.) Content Audio CD

- Track 1: Voiceless glottal plosive
Track 2: Voiceless pharyngeal fricative
- Track 3: pharyngeal fricative
Track 4: Voiceless uvular plosive
- Track 5: Example of the natural voice in the Tarab - Umm Kulthum
- Track 6: Example of the transition from the natural to the borrowed voice in Arabic singing - Asmahan
- Track 7: Example of transition from natural to borrowed voice in classical singing - Jessy Norman sings Mahler.
- Track 8: Bahha and Ghunna - Umm Kulthum
- Track 9: Ornamentation - Asmahan
- Track 10: Muwashah with choir
- Track 11: Muwaschah without choir - Rabih Lahoud concert recording HMT Rostock 12.11.2011
- Track 12: Layali traditional - Unknown performer
Track 13: Layali modern - Fayruz
- Track 14: Fayruz and Mozart
- Track 15: Mashrou' Leila - El Hal Romancy
- Track 16: Soap Kills - Herzan
- Track 17: Joelle Khoury - Halman asfarat (excerpt)
- Track 18: Zad Moultaqa - Zajal (excerpt)
- Track 19: Sarband with an Arabic interpretation of - Erbarme dich, mein Gott - from the St. Matthew Passion
- Track 20: Masaa - Asrari (live)
- Track 21: Rabih Lahoud - Joseph Lamento Recording Dress Rehearsal
- Track 22: Ahlam - First Lebanese Text Section
- Track 23: Ahlam - Second Lebanese Text Section
- Track 24: Rabih Lahoud - Ahlam sung by BonnVoice concert recording

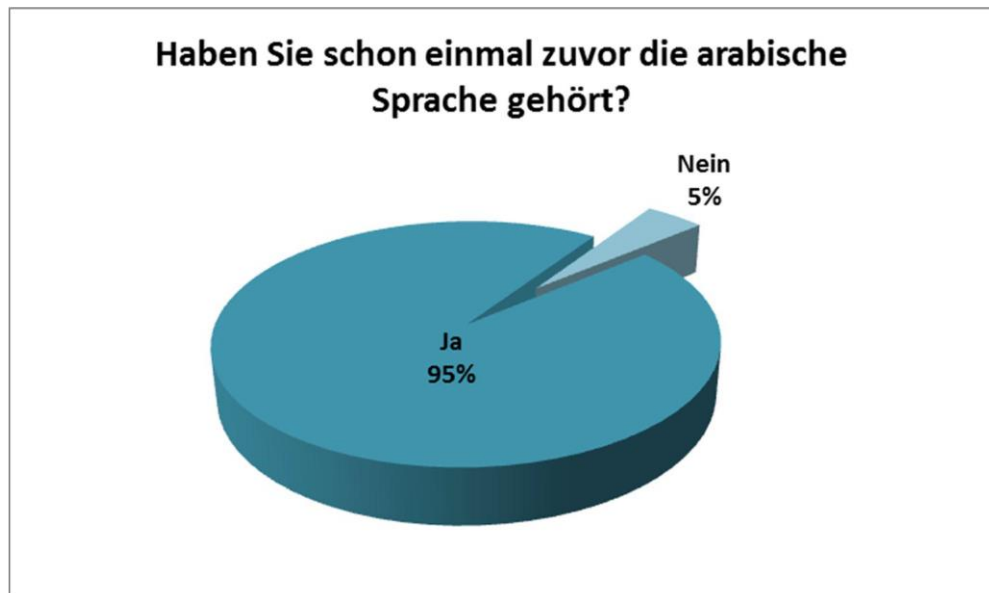
4.) Overview of the results of the Bach Association Cologne survey not used in this study



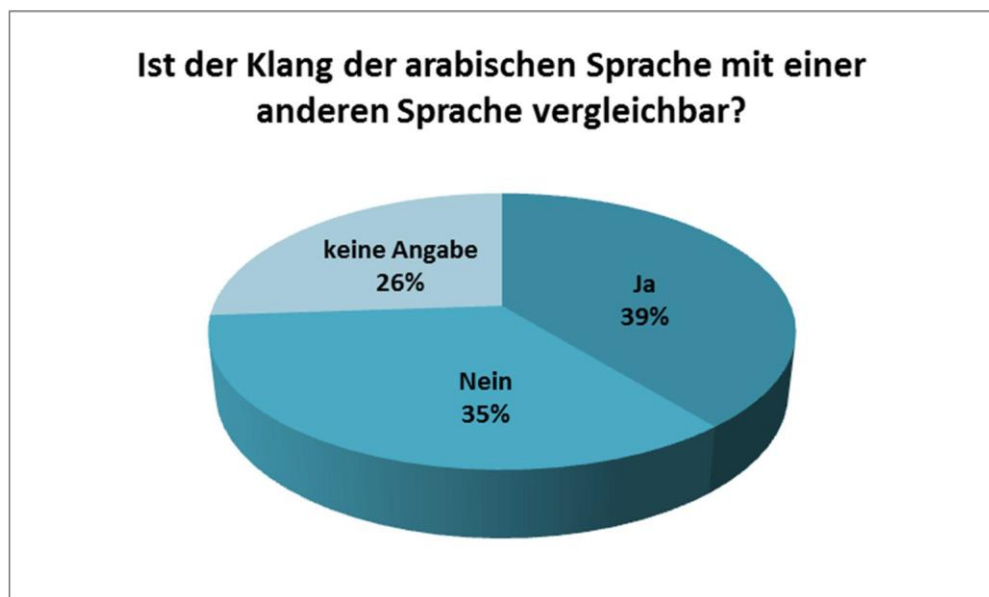
Appendix Fig. 1: Voice distribution of respondents in the Bach Society choir (n=23).



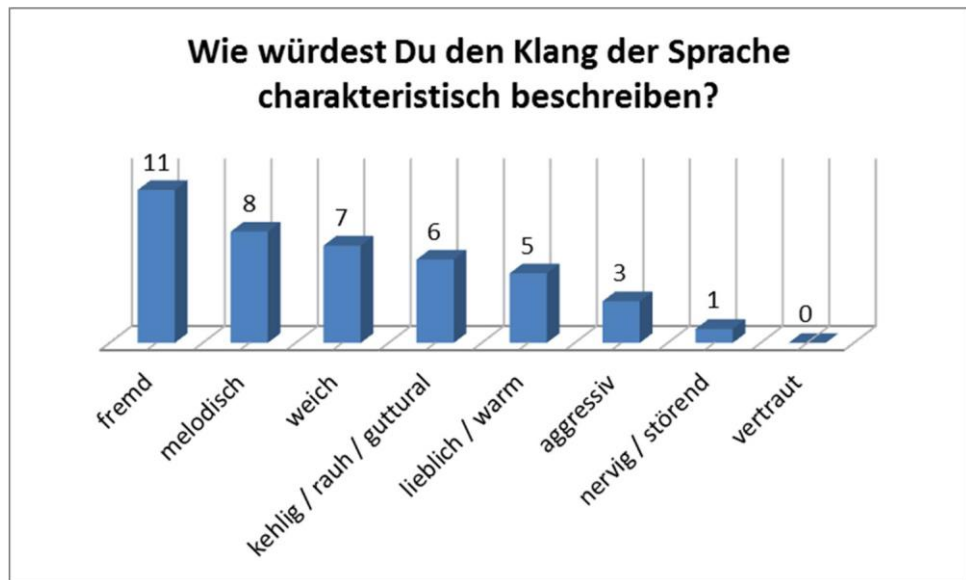
Appendix Fig. 2: Age structure of respondents in the Bach Society choir (n=23)



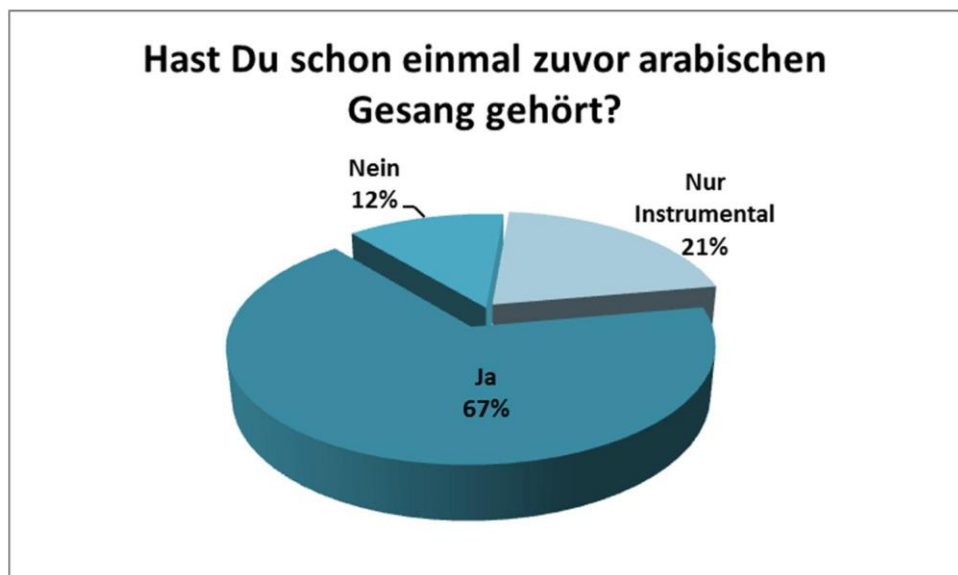
Appendix Fig. 3: Answers to question 1 Bach Association (n=23)



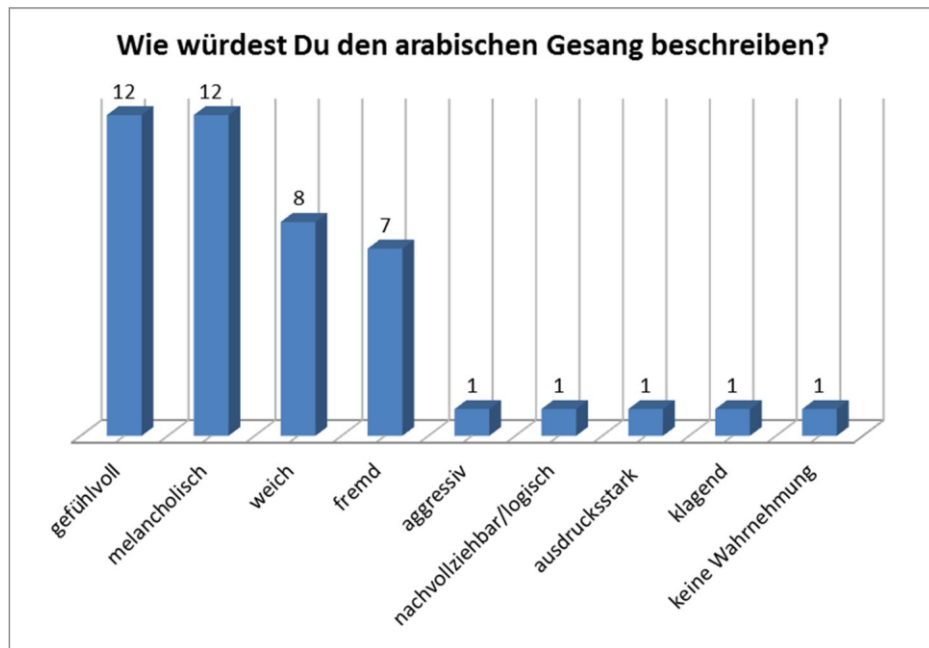
Appendix Fig. 4: Answers to question 1a Bach Association (n=23)



Appendix Fig. 5: Answers to question 1b Bach Association (n=23)

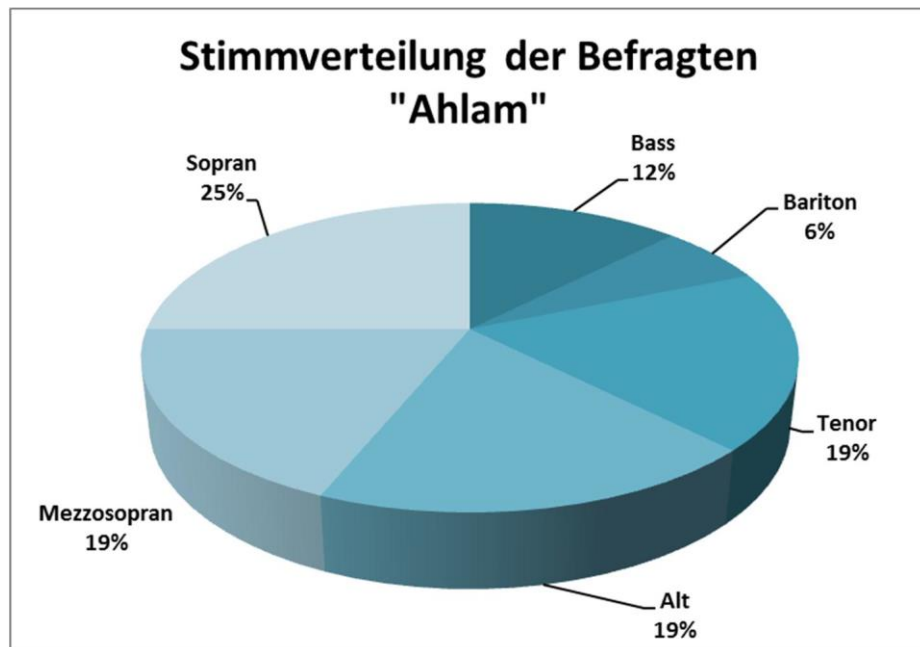


Appendix Fig. 6: Answers to question 2 Bach Association (n=23)

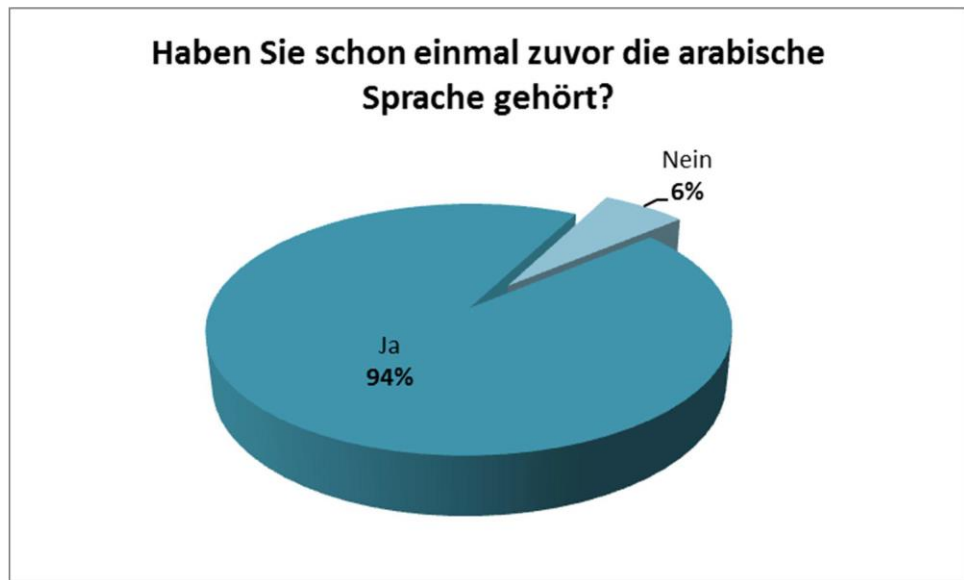


Appendix Fig. 7: Answers to question 2a Bach Association (n=23)

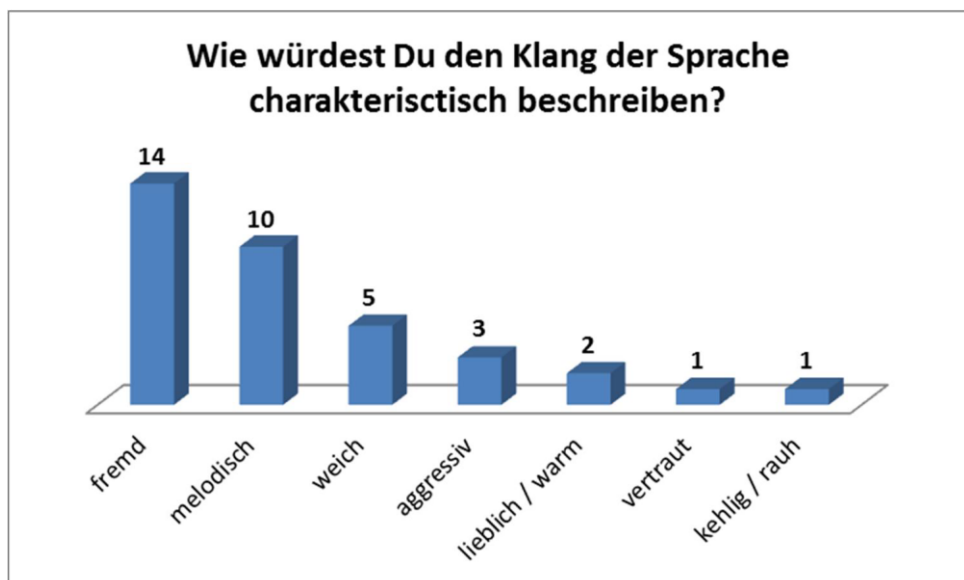
5.) Overview of the results of the BonnVoice Bonn survey not used in this study



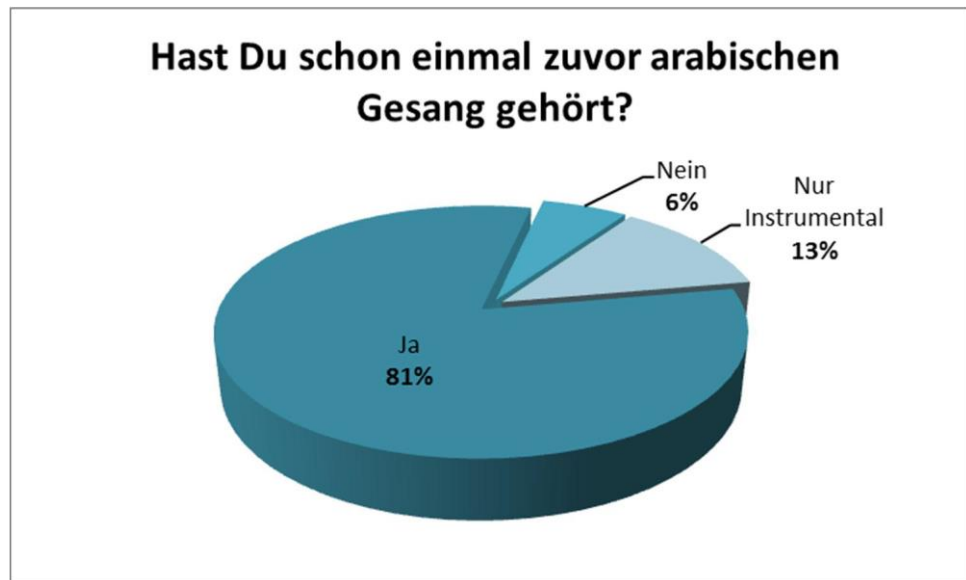
Appendix Fig. 8: Voice distribution of respondents in the BonnVoice choir (n=16)



Appendix Fig. 9: Answers to question 1 BonnVoice (n=16)



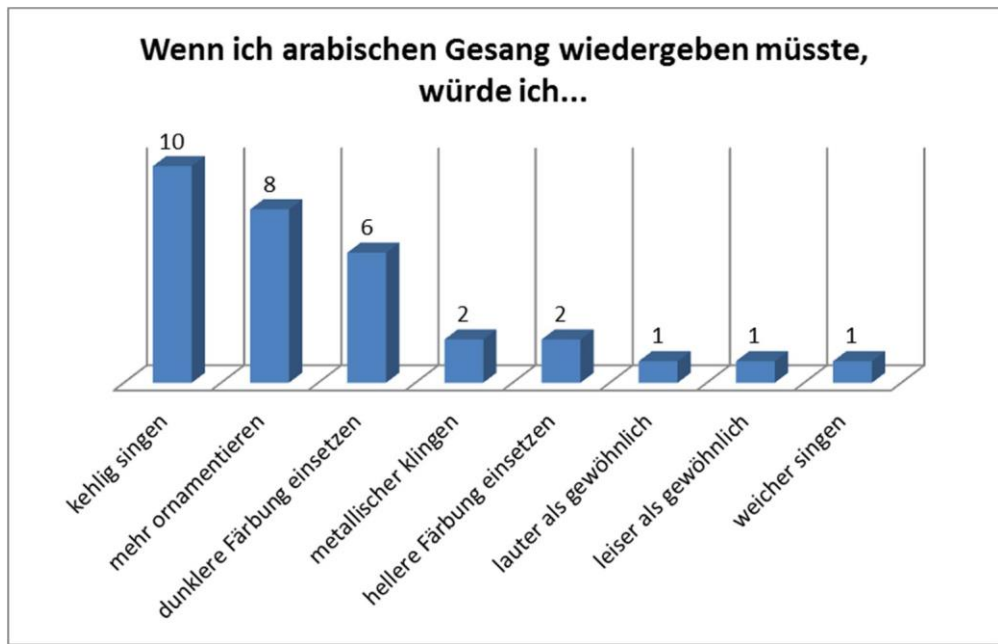
Appendix Fig. 10: Answers to question 1b BonnVoice (n=16)



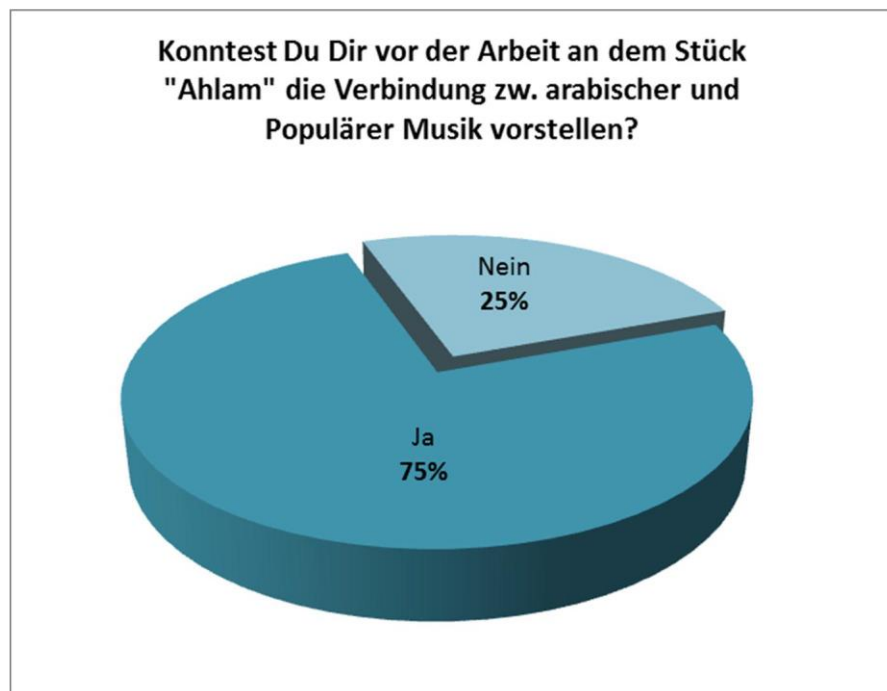
Appendix Fig. 11: Answers to question 2 (n=16)



Appendix Fig. 12: Answers to question 2a BonnVoice (n=16)



Appendix Fig. 13: Answers to question 3 BonnVoice (n=16)



Appendix Fig. 14: Answers to question 4 BonnVoice (n=16)

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Insurance

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