fig. 1

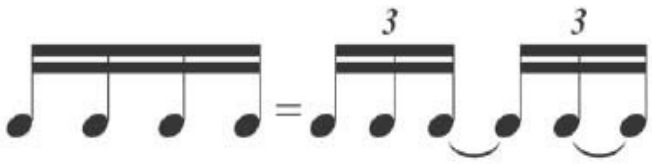


fig. 2

The Percussion Ensemble

of the Arabian Peninsula

Published by Tarek Yamani

Musical transcription and notation: Rony Afif

Text, editorial revisions, and additional transcription: Tarek Yamani

Special thanks to Brad Saunders for further editorial assistance

Yamani, Tarek

Afif, Rony

The Percussion Ensemble of the Arabian Peninsula.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN: 978-9948-23-250-6

Design by Lara Balaa (maajoun) and Carine Zahabi

Instrument illustration by Karien Mulder

Cover photo by Vartan Kelechian

Publication of this book was made possible through

a commission by the Abu Dhabi Festival

Online video demonstrations can be found at

www.khalijipercussion.com

The Percussion Ensemble of the Arabian Peninsula

Tarek Yamani and Rony Afif

Contents

حبشي

‘Awwadi

عوادي

Saudi Arabia

Rayeh Bisha

رايح بيشة

Khobayti

خبيتي

Majrur

مجرور

Dana Yamani

دانة يماني

‘Arda Janubia

عرضة جنوبية

Samri

سامري

La’ib Al Baha

لعب الباحة

United Arab Emirates

‘Ayyala

عيالة

Lewa

ليوة

Habban

هبان

Kuwait

Sawt Shami

صوت شامي

Sawt Khayyali

صوت خيالي

Sawt Arabi

صوت عربي

Samri

سامري

Samri Naggazi

سامري نقازي

Dosari

دوسري

Qadri Bahri

قادري بحري

Qadri Rifai

قادري رفاعي

Hadadi Mukhalef

حدادي مخالف

Arda Bahriyya

عرضة بحرية

Arda Barriya

عرضة برية

Oman

M’dimah

مديمة

Razha

رزحة

Rabuba

ربوبة

Bahrain

Besta

بستة

‘Ashuri

عاشوري

Qatar

‘Arda

عرضة

Arabana Muttu

Appendix

Bandari

بندري

Khaliji ‘Arabi

خليجي عربي

Cha’abi Emirati

شعبي إماراتي

Glossary

Bibliography

Acknowledgement

Such a book wouldn’t have been possible without the generous support of the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (ADMAF) whose mission is to promote music and arts as educational tools, as well as to raise the appreciation of traditional cultures and to export them internationally. Utmost gratitude goes to H.E. Hoda Al Khamis-Kanoo, philanthropist and ADMAF founder, for her special trust in our ability to conduct such a research project and compile it in an educational manuscript.

Even though there is a range of material out there covering music from the Arabian Peninsula, finding this material is no easy task, especially through online research. One particular resource, Music and Traditions from the Arabian Peninsula, was truly invaluable and without it we would have been completely lost. The book’s author, Dr. Lisa Urkevich, did a pioneering job in detailing the musical practices of this massive stretch of land, both from a cultural and historical point of view.

Many other notable sources were extremely helpful in the preparation of this book, such as the remarkable Folk Culture Magazine (a specialized scientific magazine from Bahrain about Arabic folk culture), Rawdat al-balabel (a highly informative radio podcast by the Arab Music Archiving and Research Foundation–AMAR,) Performing the Past: Sea Music in the Gulf States by Laith Ulaby, and Culture and Customs of the Arab Gulf States by Rebecca Torstrick and Elizabeth Faier.

Online forums played a big part in discovering rare material and local knowledge that would have otherwise been impossible to find, the most

helpful being the “Sama3y.net” forum.

The work of Ghannam Dikan’s, Tahlil al-iqa’at al-kuwaitiya fil ughniya al-cha’biyya is considered a quintessential reference about Kuwaiti music. Unfortunately, it is out of print and we were not able to find a copy, but much of the material we consulted was, in fact, indirectly taken from this book. Fortunately, we were able to find a recording of a masterclass of Mr. Dikan from which the majority of the Kuwaiti rhythms were transcribed.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all those random people from little towns in the middle of the desert who, by filming weddings in their community and uploading them on YouTube, helped us to explore, analyze, and verify rhythms we would have otherwise never known existed.

Preface

In the Arab world, finding resources regarding indigenous music is a continuous struggle. Even though there are many scholarly efforts out there, they're scattered locally amongst lands that stretch east to west from the Arabian Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, and north to south from the Mediterranean Sea to the Horn of Africa. We're talking about twenty-two countries with hundreds of subcultures but with no working contemporary archival system. There are many well-documented books about specialized musical topics, but the fact they're written in Arabic and printed only locally (if not out-of-print) makes them almost impossible to find and, therefore, useless to the international community of musicians.

It was important to us that this book be straightforward, concise, and written for the specialized musician, Arab and Western alike, who is looking to explore, in particular, the rhythms and percussion ensembles of the Peninsula and to use them as a starting point for a deeper understanding of this music. This book is also meant to appeal to researchers and world music enthusiasts as well since the accompanying texts give a historical and societal background about said rhythms and traditions.

Our main challenge during research was to determine the correct names of the instruments as well as the rhythms. When oral tradition dominates such a vast land for at least a millennium, being accurate and specific is difficult. The Gulf is comprised of so many cities, villages and isolated tribes that very often the same instrument or rhythm can be called four different things in four different places. In this regard specifically, Dr. Urkevich's book was instrumental because she herself went into the fields, photographed the instruments and got vital information about their names, the way they're held/played, and how they're made. The case with rhythm wasn't as straightforward and therefore demanded more vigilance. Kuwait was the

only exception since Kuwaiti sawt is relatively new and there has been a lot of effort to preserve this art in writing.

On conducting further research online

In order for the Western reader to conduct further research about any of the rhythms/instruments in this book, placing the transliterated versions in a search engine won't produce useful results. For instance, if one writes rayeh bisha in a YouTube search it will literally produce one result (at the time of this writing). Searching in Arabic however, will produce a whopping three hundred hits.

To solve this issue, we decided to create a "Translate" tab on www.khalijipercussion.com where the equivalent Arabic words could be copied and then pasted into search engines. Be advised, however, that the number of videos with wrongly identified genres is pretty high, so please use this service with caution.

Note about the khaliji swing feel

The characteristic that most stands out about khaliji music is the way it swings (khaliji is the term used to refer to the Arabian Gulf). The most famed reason behind the khaliji swing is the camel's walk. It is widely believed that the difference in pace between the camel's walk and his body motion produces a sense of drag, commonly known in music as a "laid back" feel. This feel is said to be the inspiration behind the khaliji swing.

For thousands of years Arabs have ridden camels and there's no doubt that the camel's gait has made it into the performers' sense of rhythm, but to attribute the swing solely to the camel's walk is misleading. "Swing" and "laid-back," as is well known, are terms used to describe the feel of jazz, African-American, and Latin American music and what makes this "feel" as such is that all these genres flourished from the ancestral African polyrhythm which slaves brought with them into the Americas. Africa is a stone's throw away from the Arabian Peninsula and there have been countless migrations for centuries between these two continents, whether through slavery or Trans-Saharan trade with the result being that an African influence is deeply embedded into the rhythmic core of khaliji music.

In terms of notation, coming up with a scheme to convert straight notes to swing notes is important to facilitate reading. In jazz, for instance, they came up with a conversion formula that quickly became an international standard (fig. 1). We wanted to propose something similar for the khaliji feel to be used in this book when needed and we found that the best way to convert straight notes to khaliji swing notes would be as in fig. 2. Of course, just as in all types of swing, these conversions are estimated to the closest possible interpretation, as they vary widely from person to person and culture to culture.

Note that in khaliji music, the degrees of swing itself vary, meaning, in some genres (rayeh bisha, for example) they are as extreme as the figure above and become almost indistinguishable from 4/4 or 3/4, while in other genres the swing degrees are somewhere in between the two.

To illustrate the khaliji swing feel in an audio example, we invite you to look for "shil sotak" (

شل صوتك

) by Yemeni ‘ud player and singer Badawi Zubair (

بدوي زبير

). This song clearly states that it’s in 4/4 but if we focus where the doms of the derbuka are we find that they’re not exactly on beats one and four but rather around the first and third beats of the big triplet, and this creates the “drag” feeling in the overall 4/4 atmosphere (fig. 3). The ‘ud’s swing fits both figures: his comping swings like we see in fig. 2, and his bass strums fall with the derbuka doms as in fig. 3.

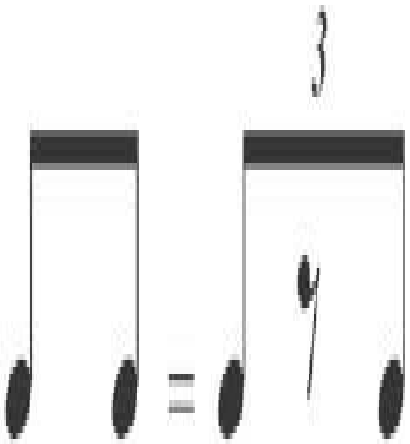


fig. 1

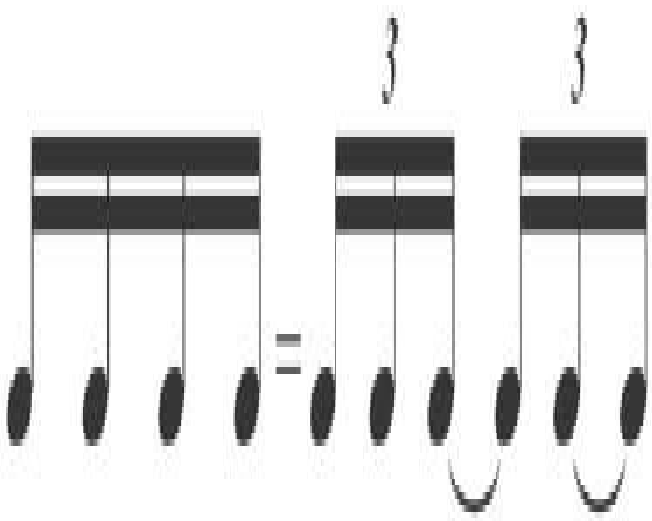


fig. 2

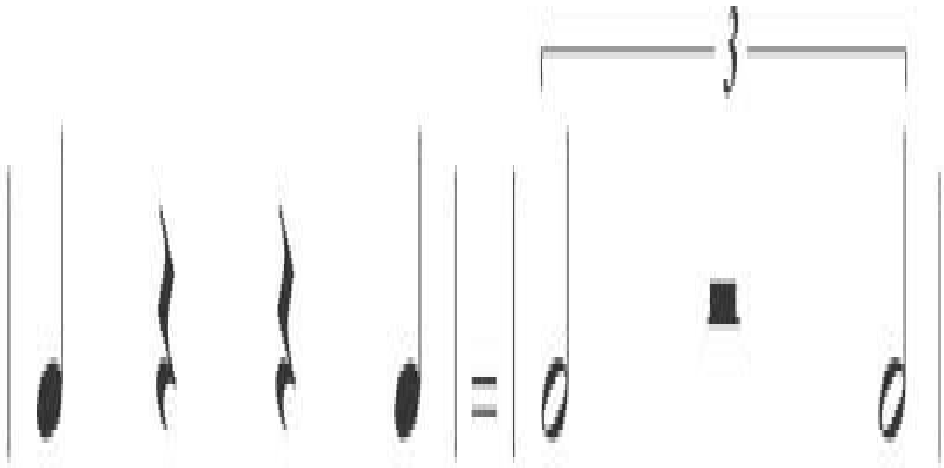


fig. 3

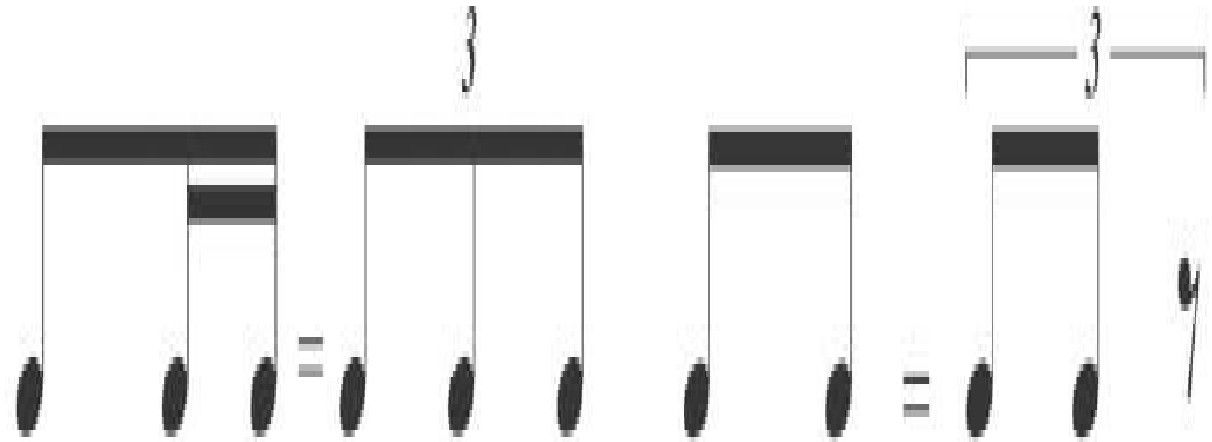


fig.4 fig.5

In particular to rhythmic cousins rayeh bisha, khobayti, and samri, the following “swing feels” should also be taken in consideration (fig 4, fig 5).

Accuracy

It is very important to note that the “correctness” of the notation in this book varies greatly from one region to another. Some rhythms are so widespread that they acquired multiple names, variations, and instrumentations. We have spent countless hours verifying the authenticity of what we’re presenting and have decided on the results that appeared to be the most definitive. Finally, we see this work as a genuine step towards having more dedicated

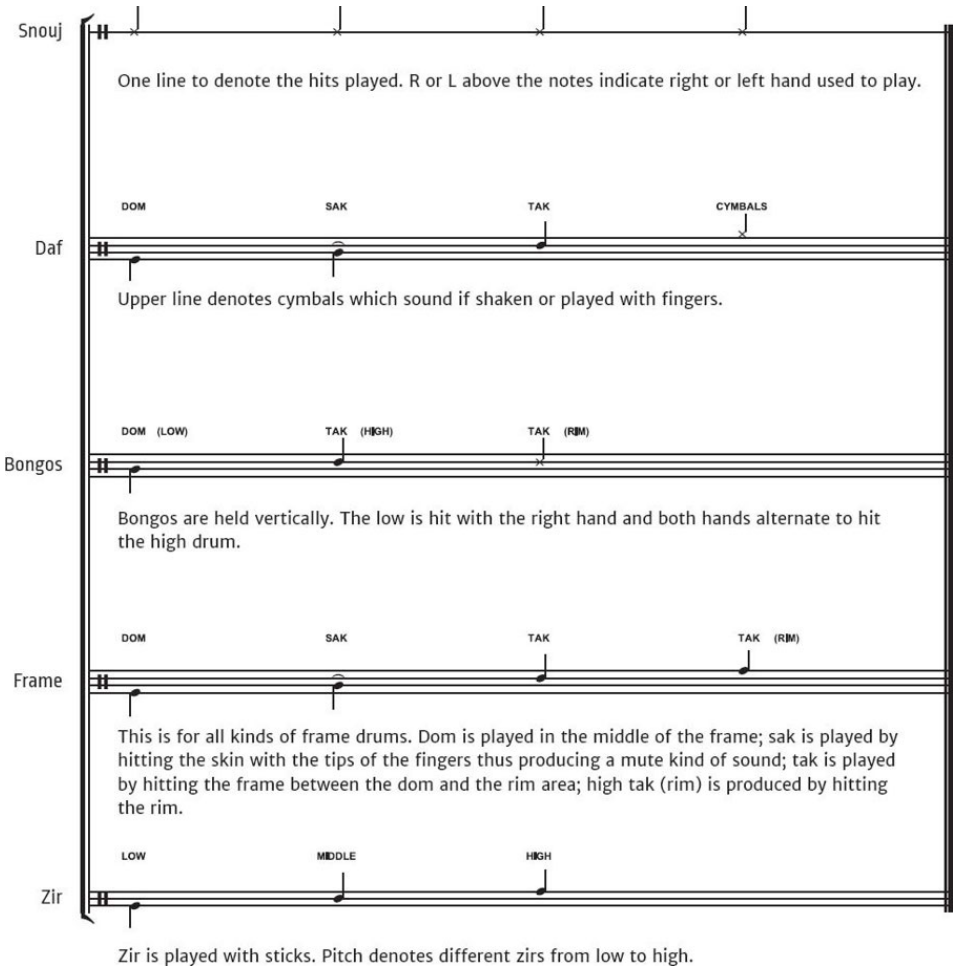
educational books that will hopefully lead to a fully comprehensive guide where one can actually become accomplished in playing khaliji music.

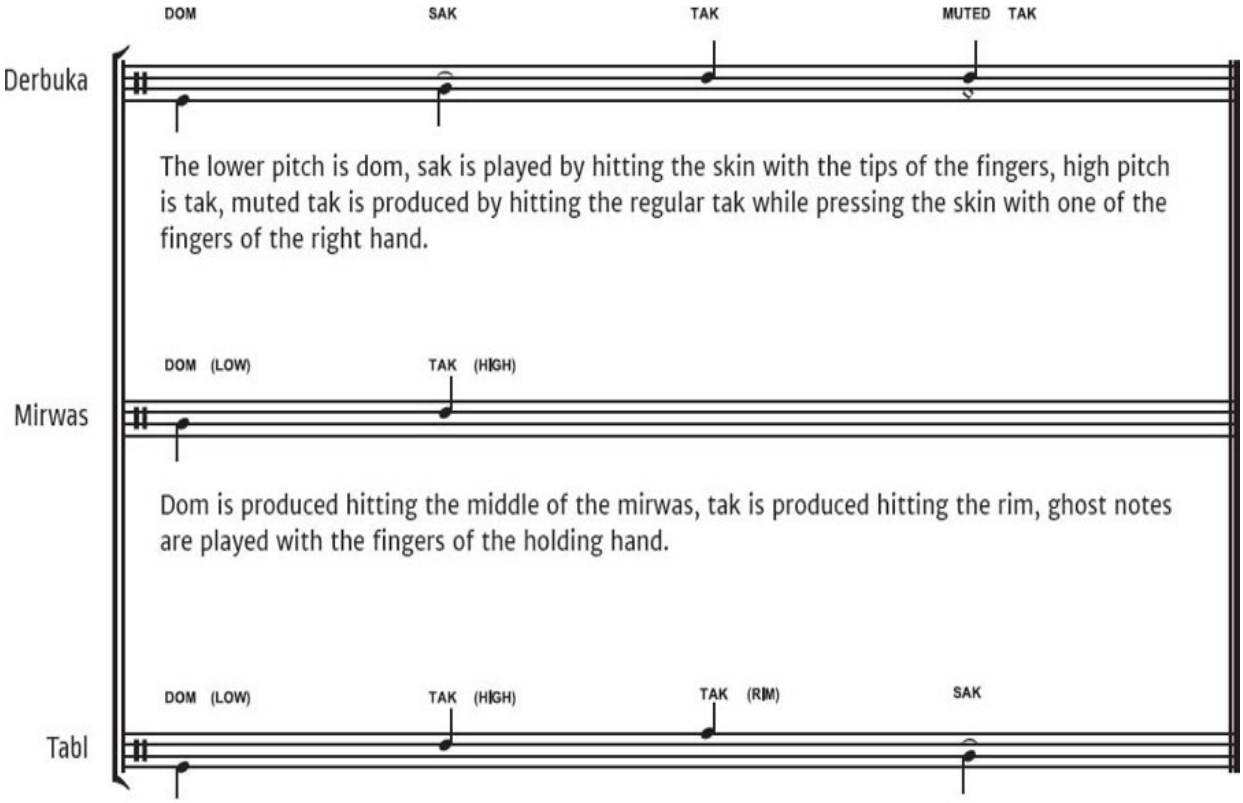
Tarek Yamani

Dubai, UAE

27 January 2017

Legend


Snouj
One line to denote the hits played. R or L above the notes indicate right or left hand used to play.
DOM
SAK
TAK
CYMBALS
Daf
Upper line denotes cymbals which sound if shaken or played with fingers.
DOM (LOW)
TAK (HIGH)
TAK (RIM)
Bongos
Bongos are held vertically. The low is hit with the right hand and both hands alternate to hit the high drum.
DOM
SAK
TAK
TAK (RIM)
Frame
This is for all kinds of frame drums. Dom is played in the middle of the frame; sak is played by hitting the skin with the tips of the fingers thus producing a mute kind of sound; tak is played by hitting the frame between the dom and the rim area; high tak (rim) is produced by hitting the rim.
LOW
MIDDLE
HIGH
Zir
Zir is played with sticks. Pitch denotes different zirs from low to high.



This is for all 2-sided barrel drums which are held horizontally.
Dom is on the right side, tak is on the left. A sharper tak can be produed by hitting the rim;
When hit by the tips of the fingers, both sides can produce a kind of muted sound "sak" which is usually played as a filler or ghost notes.

Introduction

The Arabian Gulf, the largest peninsula in the world, stretches over a little more than three million square kilometers and, despite its harsh desert climate, has managed to remain a home for nomads and settled peoples for thousands of years. The area is roughly divided into three distinct geographical entities: Saudi Arabia (comprising Najd and Hijaz), Southern Arabia (Yemen), and eastern Arabia (the rest of the Gulf, i.e. the entire coastal strip of the Persian Gulf). Each of these entities contributed significantly to the collective musical practice and development of khaliji (

خليجي

) music throughout history. For instance, Najd and Hijaz gave us samri (

سامري

) and ‘arda (

عرضة

), while eastern Arabia gave us pearl-diving songs and the traditional urban music known as sawt (

صوت

).

In this book we chose 36 rhythms from all corners of the Peninsula with the aim to cover as much of the versatile musical practices of the area as possible. Some rhythms we covered were widely popular while others were largely unknown. As experienced musicians with backgrounds in jazz and Latin American music, it was impossible not to notice how much common

ground there existed between khaliji music and American music of African origins. It is fascinating how music migrates and how it morphs into myriad forms along the way while maintaining its ancestral DNA. What's intriguing about the rapport between khaliji music and African- American music is that it clearly shows family ties linked to a common source that existed in Africa thousands of years ago. It is as if the lineage migrated, at different time intervals, in both directions: east via the red sea, and west via the Atlantic Ocean merging, respectively, with Bedouin and classical European music.

There's no doubt, at least to our ears, that the maritime ayyala (

عيالة

) of the UAE is a distant cousin of the Cuban cha cha and the zir (

زير

) patterns of the 'arda janubia (

عرضة جنوبية

) of Saudi Arabia are reminiscent of the tamborim pattern of Brazilian music. Also, the traditional pickup of the surdo drums before the start of the samba rhythm is almost the same as the low derbuka pickup before the start of Yemen's sharh 'adani (

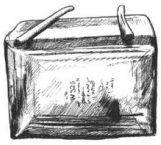
شرح عدني

) and the rhythmic core of Kuwait's hadadi mukhalef (

حدادي مخالف

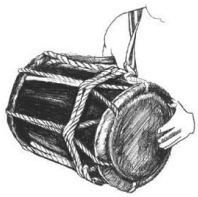
) is precisely a Cuban 3-2 rumba clave.

Lastly, we hope that with this selection we were able to shed light on a rhythmic richness unique to a subcontinent that was once a melting pot of Bedouin, African, Middle Eastern, Persian, and South Asian cultures.



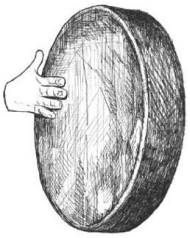
Tanaka تنكة

Dof دف



Ras راس

Kasour كاسور



Tar طار

Shindo شيندو

Chappuwa جابووه

Musundo موسيندو

Derbuka دربكة

Yemen

Yemen has a very special place in the heart of khaliji rhythms. Being one of the oldest centers of civilization in the ancient world, Yemen was home to the earliest stream of human migrations out of Africa, 60,000 years ago through the strait of Bab al-Mandeb and in recent times, has held a strategic location in terms of trade between South East Asia, Africa and the Levant. This powerful historic position naturally puts Yemen at a crossroads of Arabian culture. Even though it is very hard to track Yemen's influence on regional rhythms, there's a general consensus among researchers and musicians affirming this influence.

With the discovery of oil in the Gulf, this country, once known as the "Arabia Felix," wasn't as fortunate with oil reserves as many of its neighbors. which resulted in a massive migration of Yemenis throughout the Peninsula, who took along with them their music. According to ethnomusicologist Laith Ulaby, music recordings in the Gulf came into their own with the advent of new popular styles. The first was 'adani (

عدني

), which emerged in the '60s based on musical structures from Aden, Yemen (Ulaby, 2008).

Al ghina' al-san'ani (The Song of San'a',

الغناء الصنعاني

) is the most ancient tradition of urban music known in Yemen and in the Arabian Peninsula. It developed along with a poetical tradition, the homayni (

حميني

), in colloquial Arabic, which was born in Yemen around the 14th century (Lambert, 2002 b). In fact, in Kuwaiti sawt, lyrics are borrowed from the works of Yemeni poets or often use a Yemeni poetic form (Urkevich, Sawt: Art Song of Kuwait 2007).

Yemen’s distinctive richness when it comes to rhythm is explained in a podcast interview with Jean Lambert, an anthropologist and musicologist who specializes in music from Yemen. He says that there are about 10 different nomenclatures for different rhythms. There is also a composite form called “al qawma,

القومة

” which is like a suite (wasla,

وصلة

) of at least 3 rhythms, 3 melodies and 3 songs at the same time. The qawma usually starts with the “das’a,

دسعة

” in 7/8 or 11/8, then “al wosta (the middle,

الوسطة

)” in 4/4, then the “sare’ (fast,

السارع

)” which is almost the same rhythm but faster (Lambert, durub al nagham, episode 113).

Most of a Yemeni percussion section consists of bongos (held vertically, called locally bingiz), a derbouka and a riq (

رق

). It is also common for some sections to add a second bongo player and a double-sided drum barrel.

Drum bands are popular in the coastal areas and show strong African influences.

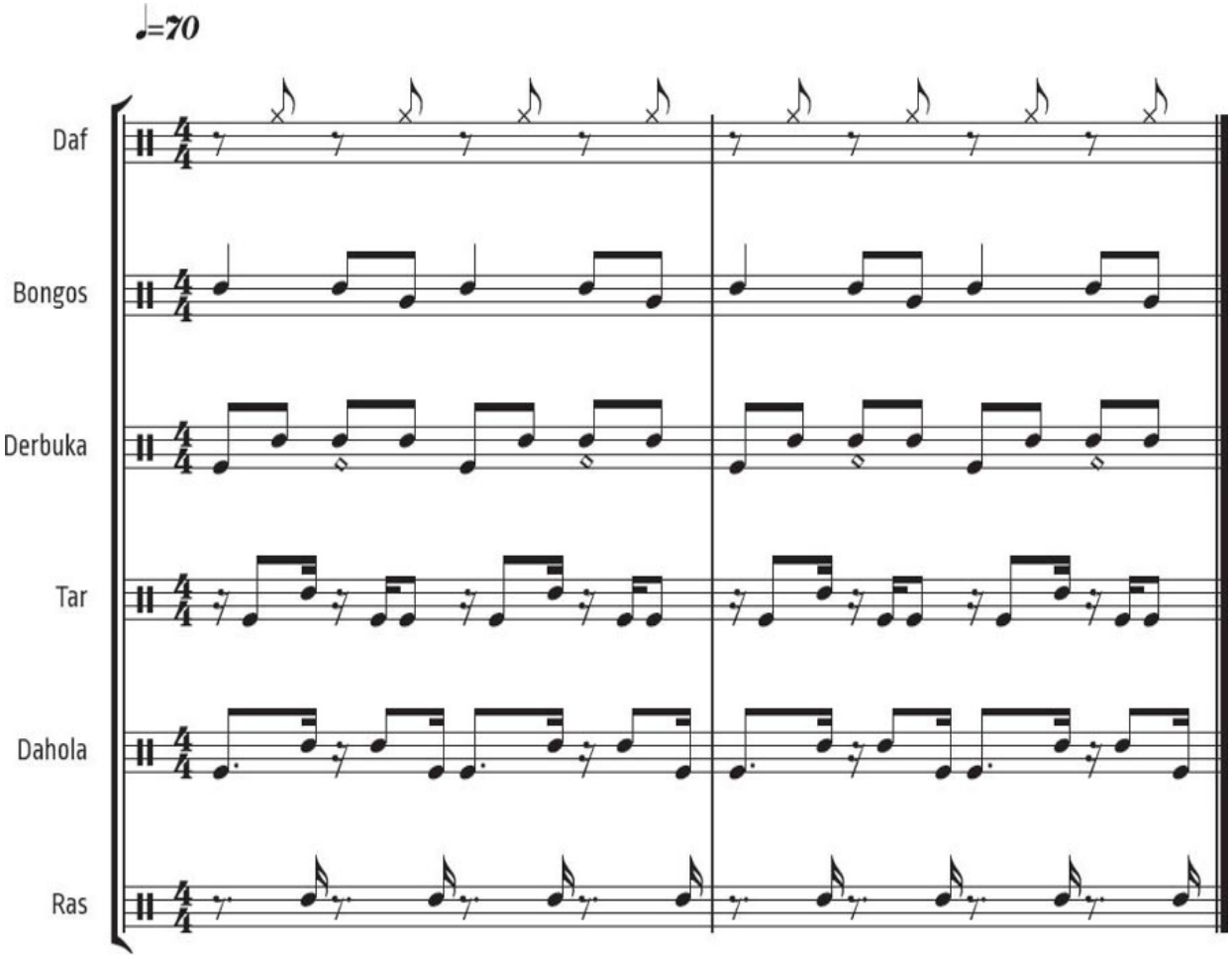
Rumba Khaliji

رومبا خليجي

Rumba is a widely popular rhythm across the Peninsula. It is in 4/4 and is similar to shahri (

شحري

) which is native to the coastal Yemeni town of Shihr.



Sharh ‘Adani

شرح عدني

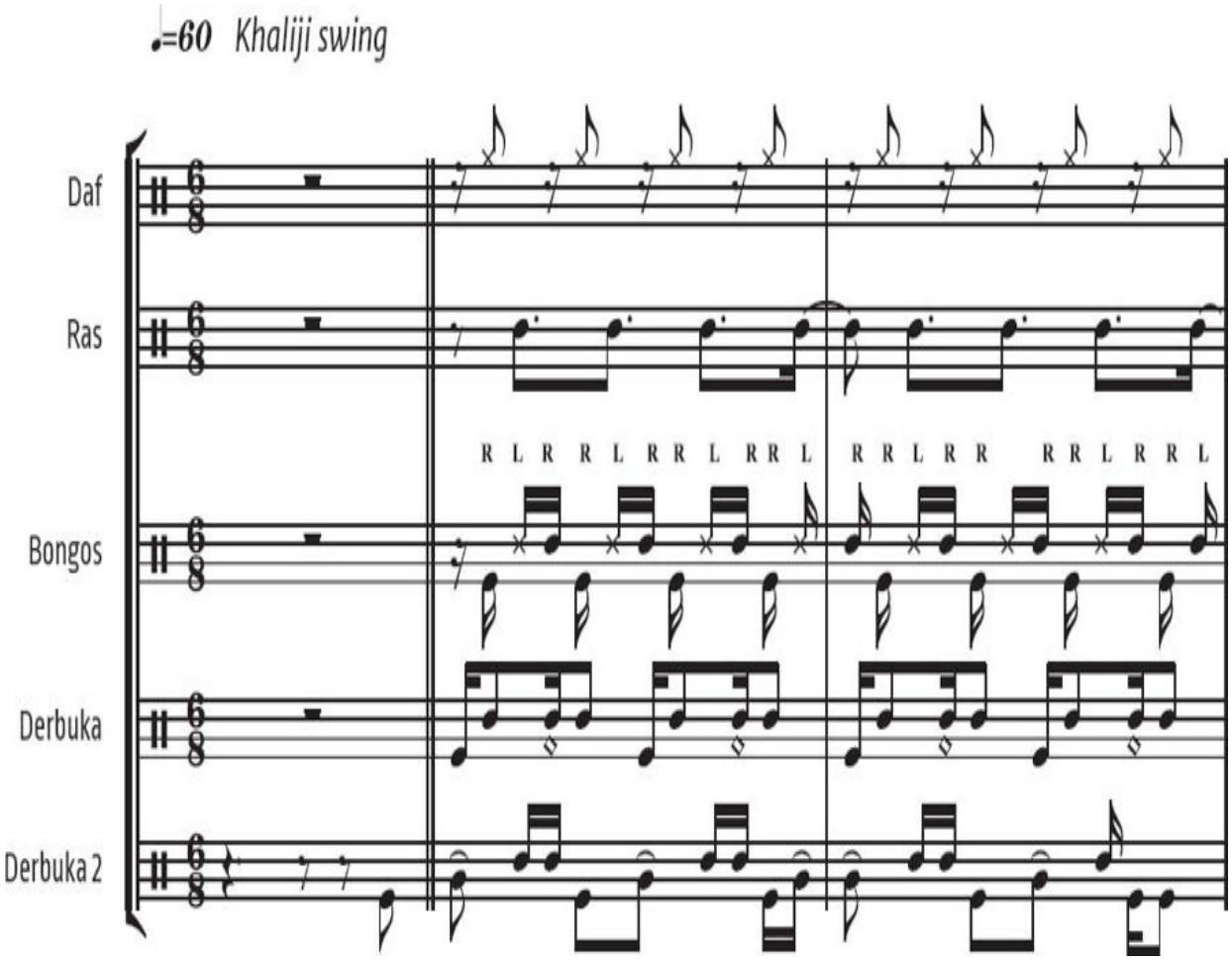
Sharh ‘adani (

شرح عدني

) of Aden is the most widespread and it has the African 6/8 polyrhythm cycle. In some places it is also called sawahili (coastal,

سواحلي

).


♩.=60 Khaliji swing
Daf
Ras
Bongos
Derbuka
Derbuka 2
R L R R L R R L R R L R R R L R R R R L R R L

Habachi

حبشي

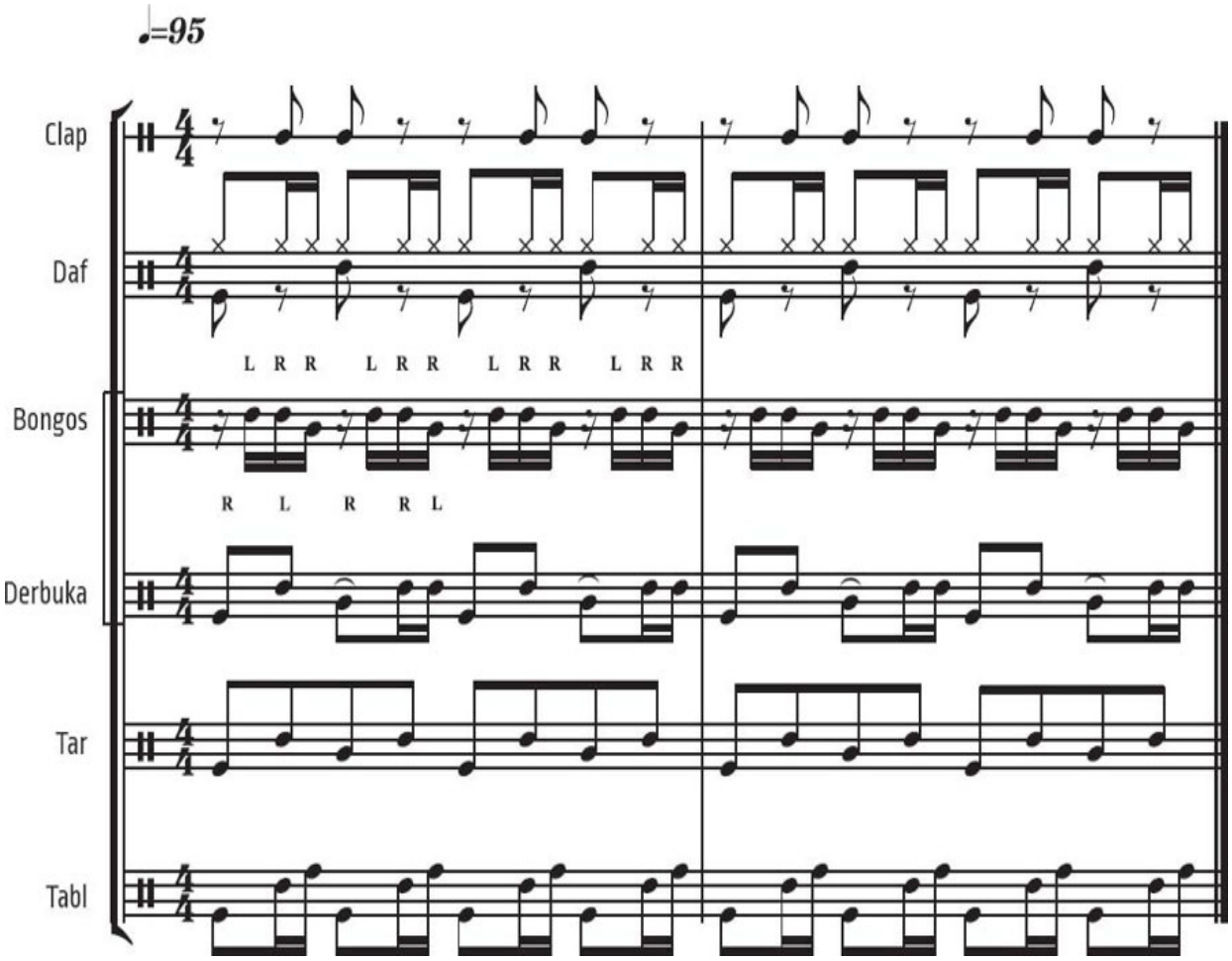
Habachi (

حبشي

) (from the land of habacha i.e. Ethiopia) is a less popular rhythm from Yemen. Even though Yemen was under Ethiopian rule for a short time in the 6th century, it is not clear whether the rhythm comes from there originally or if it was inspired by musicians of Ethiopian origins in recent times. The song Yalla ma’ al lel (

يالله مع الليل

) by Yemen’s iconic singer Abu Bakr Salem is played with the habachi rhythm (Urkevich 2015, 332).


♩=95
Clap
Daf
L R R L R R L R R L R R
Bongos
R L R R L
Derbuka
Tar
Tabl

‘Awwadi

عوادي

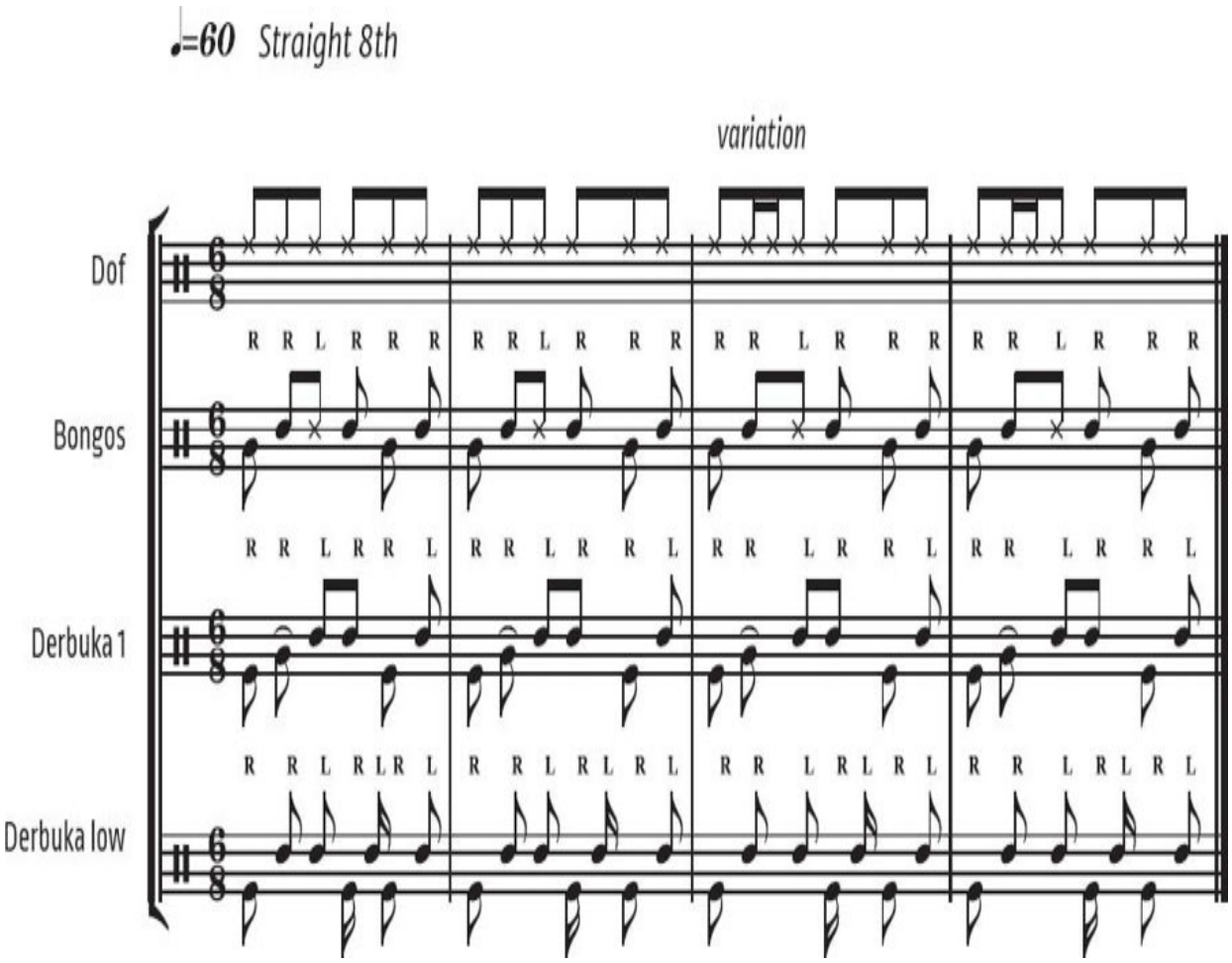
‘Awwadi (

عوادي

) is a lyrical 6/8 rhythm. In the ancient harbors of al-Mukalla and Shihr there is a strong tradition of this urban music. ‘Awwadi (Arabic for “the one of the ‘ud/lute) is a rhythm associated with the famous singer and ‘ud player Muuhammad Jum’a Khan (Lambert 2001, Yemen). There is a lot of Indian influence in this rhythm which can be heard on “Ataha rasuli” (

اتاها رسولي

) by singer and ‘ud player Badawi Zoubair.


♩=60 Straight 8th
variation
Dof
Bongos
Derbuka 1
Derbuka low

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is certainly not the first country that comes to mind when talking about world music history, but as the largest territory in the Peninsula it has an overwhelming variety of musical genres that have contributed greatly to contemporary khaliji music. In fact, long before Islam, due to Mecca’s position as a center for pilgrimage and trade, the Hijaz held a special cultural position and became a hub where travelers would enjoy an exciting nightlife full of music, poetry, and dance.

Rayeh Bisha

رايح بيشة

Rayeh Bisha (

رايح بيشة

) is a genre native to the governorate of Bisha that rose to prominence as a very popular style outside of Saudi Arabia only recently. Qal'at Bisha (aka Bisha Fortress) is a town located in the southwestern province of 'Asir (

عسير

) which was under Ottoman rule until the 1920s when it became part of the Saudi Kingdom. Bisha's rayeh is of a highly energetic nature with clear African roots. In fact, Bisha was the home of many slaves before the abolition of slavery in Saudi Arabia in 1962 and until today is still a rhythm predominantly performed by Bishis of African descent.

Rayeh Bisha is an example of one of the most successful marriages between African and khaliji music. This rhythm is sometimes swung so hard that it becomes impossible to tell if it's four or triple metered. The intense flavor of rayeh, and its direct association with trance, made it become a YouTube sensation as soon as local videos were shared online. A typical performance of rayeh features a lead singer (who would start with a free-form mawwal,

موال

), up to 6 tiran (frame drums, singular tar,

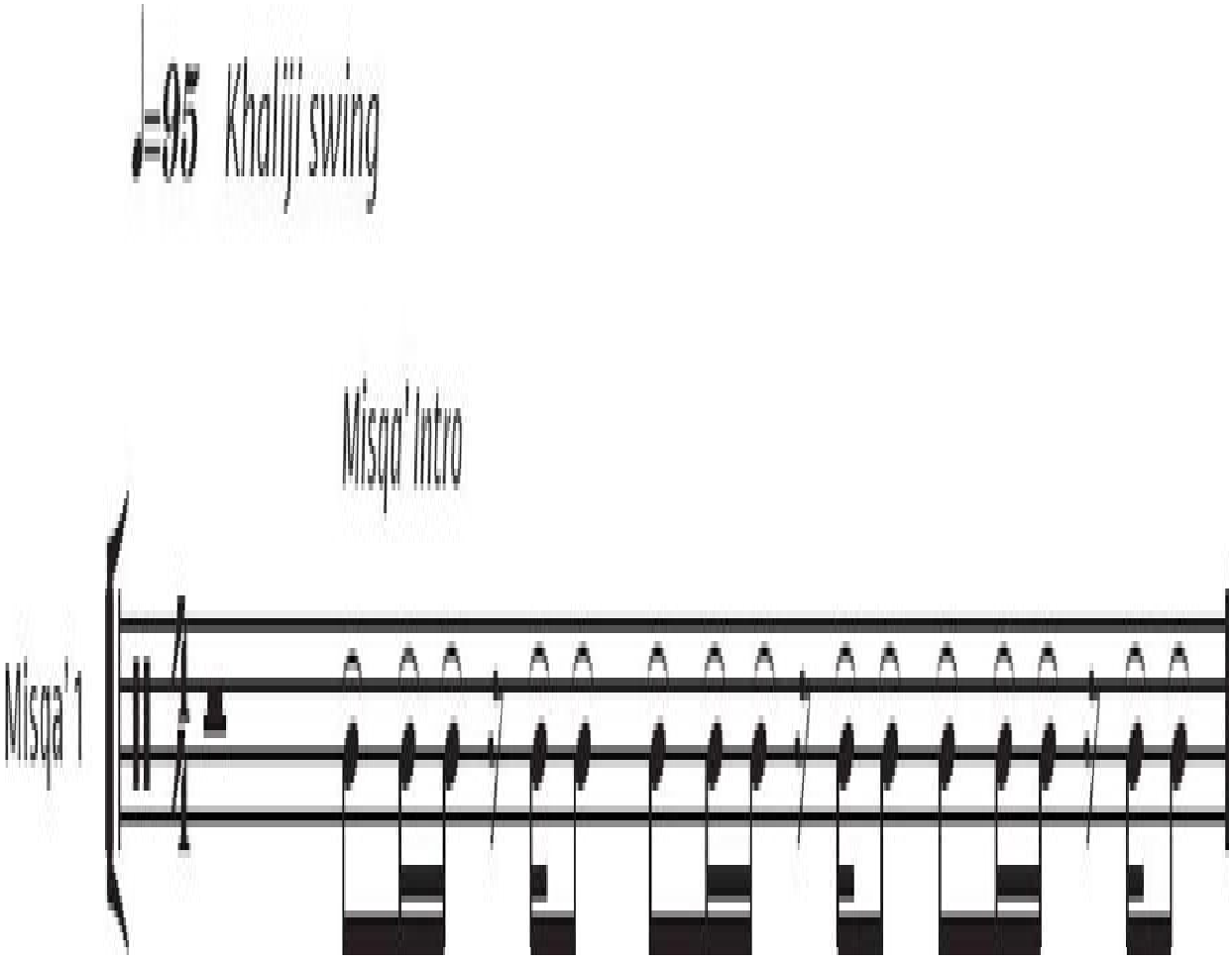
طار – طيران

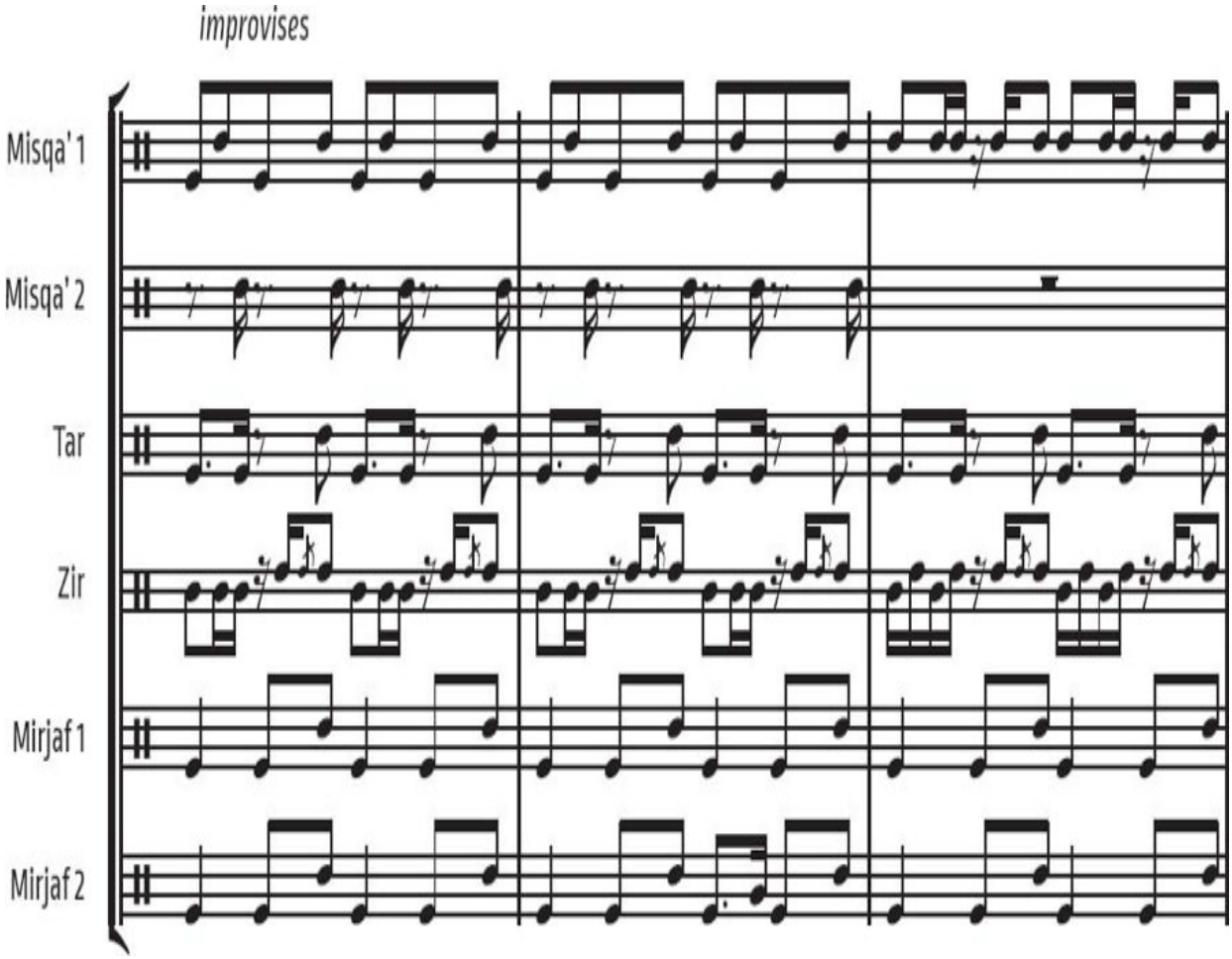
) of different sizes with the misqa’ (

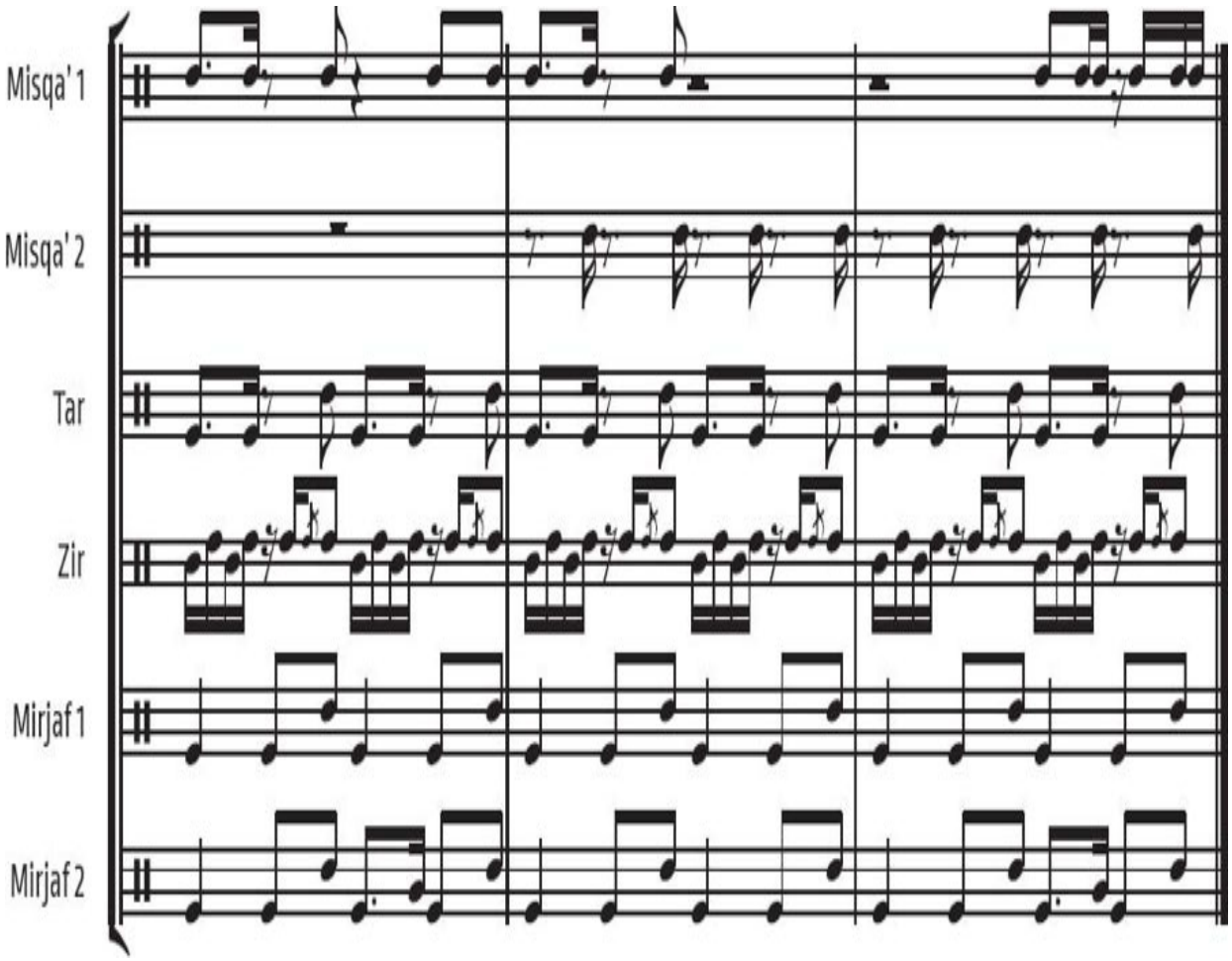
مصقاع

) being the accenting frame drum, up to 4 zir (kettle drums) and a keyboard (aka “org,” not originally part of the ensemble but introduced later) (Urkevich 2015). One song can go on for as long as 15 minutes where all men in attendance join the chorus by repeating the typical “ya, la, la, la” refrain. The keyboard player plays the same melody over and over again with very little melodic variations but what he does to break the feeling of monotony is change the keyboard sounds every once in a while.

Note the typical misqa’ intro which calls out on the rest to join.




improvises
Misqa' 1
Misqa' 2
Tar
Zir
Mirjaf 1
Mirjaf 2


Misqa' 1
Misqa' 2
Tar
Zir
Mirjaf 1
Mirjaf 2

Khobayti

خبيتي

In Arabic the word “khabt” means “lowland of sand” and is the origin of the name of this rhythm.

“Khobayti (

خبيتي

) is, by far, the Hijazi folk music genre that is the most widespread in the Peninsula and its rhythmic mode is a standard throughout the Gulf as well as in khaliji pop music. It is because of khobayti that the zir instrument spread from the west into central and eastern Arabia” (Urkevich 2015, 183).

Khobayti music was originally used for zar (

زار

) spirit rituals where attendees would experience istinzal (

استنزال

), however only the rhythm itself is popular now and not its zar origins especially since the latter is considered sinful and against local Islamic culture.

The common percussion section of the khobayti consists up to 4 frame drums of different sizes, a zir and a derbuka. In traditional khobayti, the frame drums are called maqfi (

مقفي

, midsized, placed between the knees), nawba (

نوبة

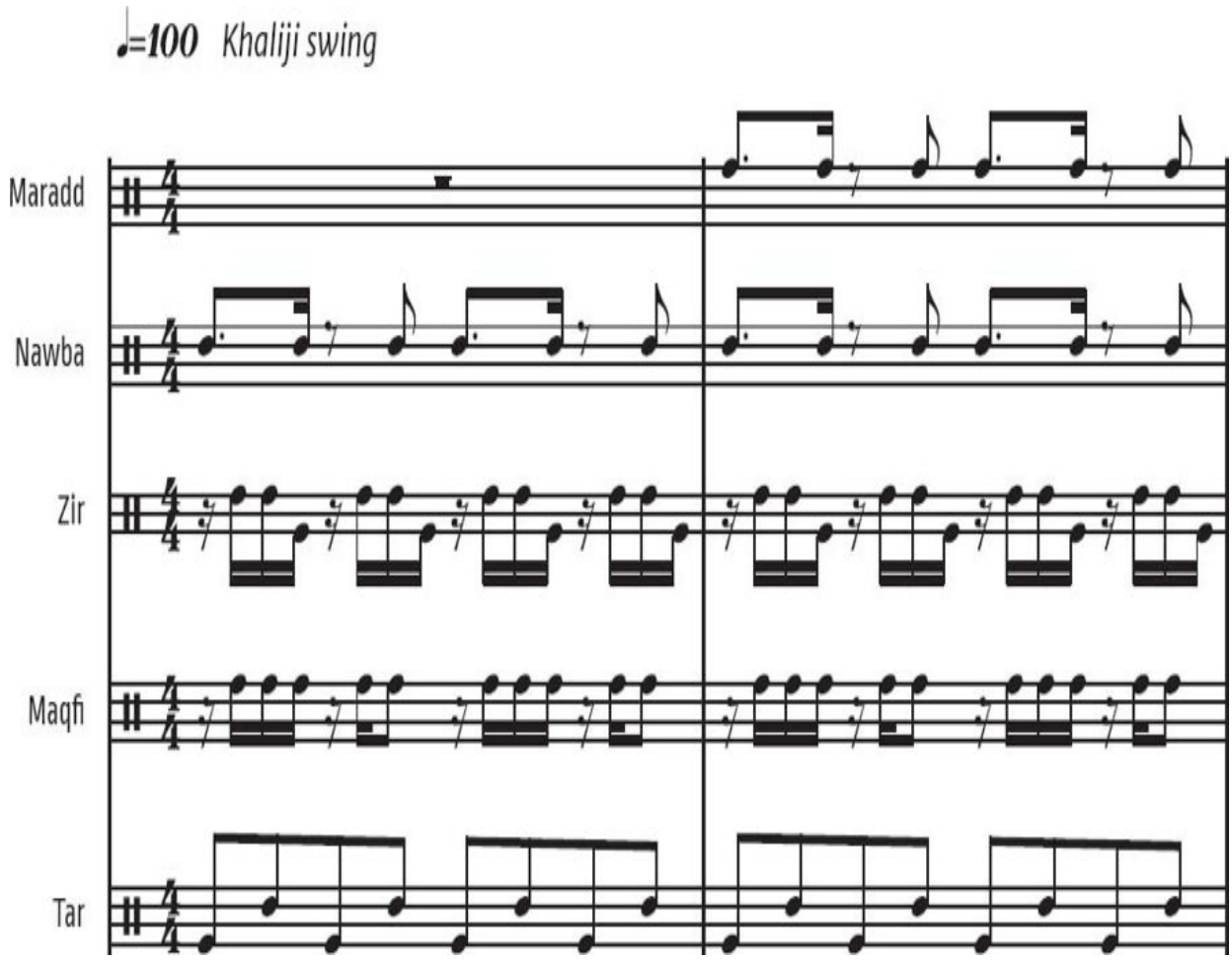
, slightly smaller than the maqfi), the maradd (

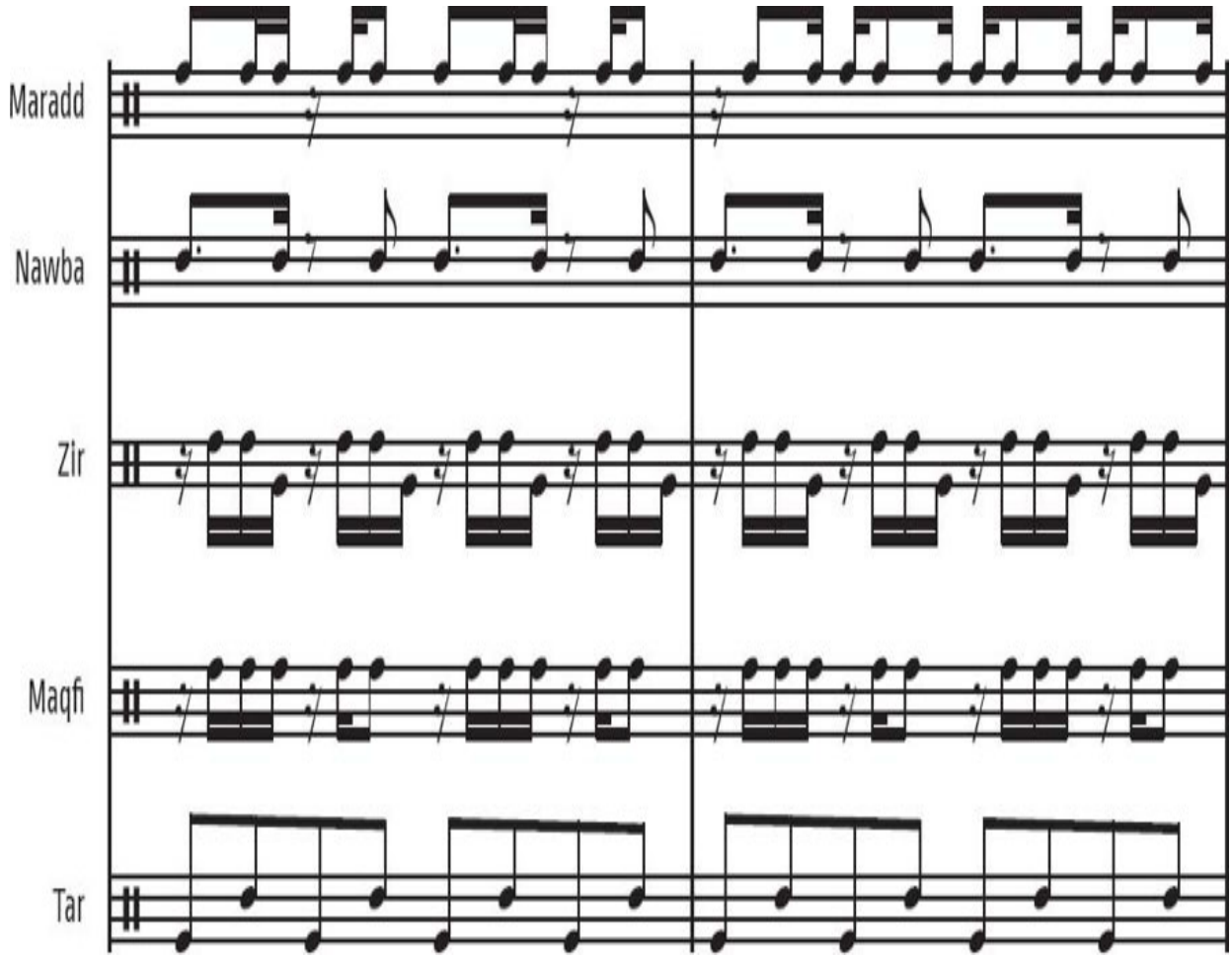
مرد

, meaning responder, freely embellishes solo accents), and the mirjaf (

مرجاف

, the largest of the set) (Urkevich 2015, 189).


♩=100 Khaliji swing
Maradd
Nawba
Zir
Maqfi
Tar


Maradd
Nawba
Zir
Maqfi
Tar

Majrur

مجرور

Majrur (

مجرور

) is an ancient traditional art believed to have originated in Ta’if in the tribe of thaqif (

ثقيف

). In it, two lines of men face each other in white dresses and bullet belts while one of the dancers who memorized the poem teaches it to the rest. While drumming, one line of dancers sings the first verse and the second line repeats it, then they alternate repeating the first verse three times each and then move on to the second verse and continue as such until the end of the poem. When one line is singing one dancer from the other group goes into a big gap between the players and does a competing dance with his drum in hand. The dancer has to return to his line before the opposing group finishes his verse.

“Majrur is considered to be almost a millennium old and therefore its origin is difficult to ascertain and is a matter of controversy. Baghaffar (1994, 69) states that majrur was originally sung in an African language. The famed majrur musician from the 1970s, Awad Ala Al-Judi – a descendent of African slaves born and raised in Ta’if – states in an interview that majrur was brought to Ta’if by Africans centuries ago” (Urkevich 2015, 211).

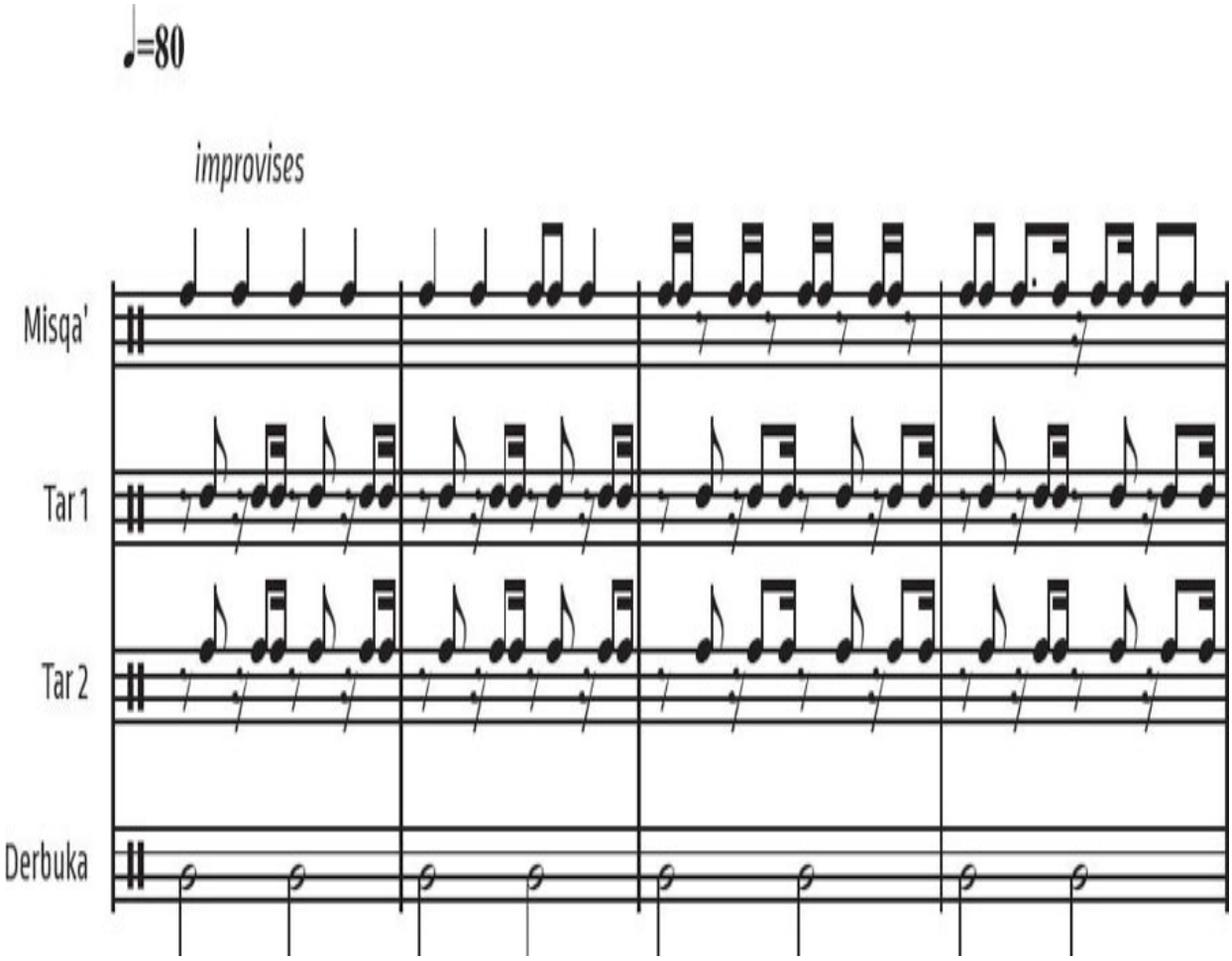
Majrur comes from the root verb jar which means “to pull” and majrur literally means “pulled”.

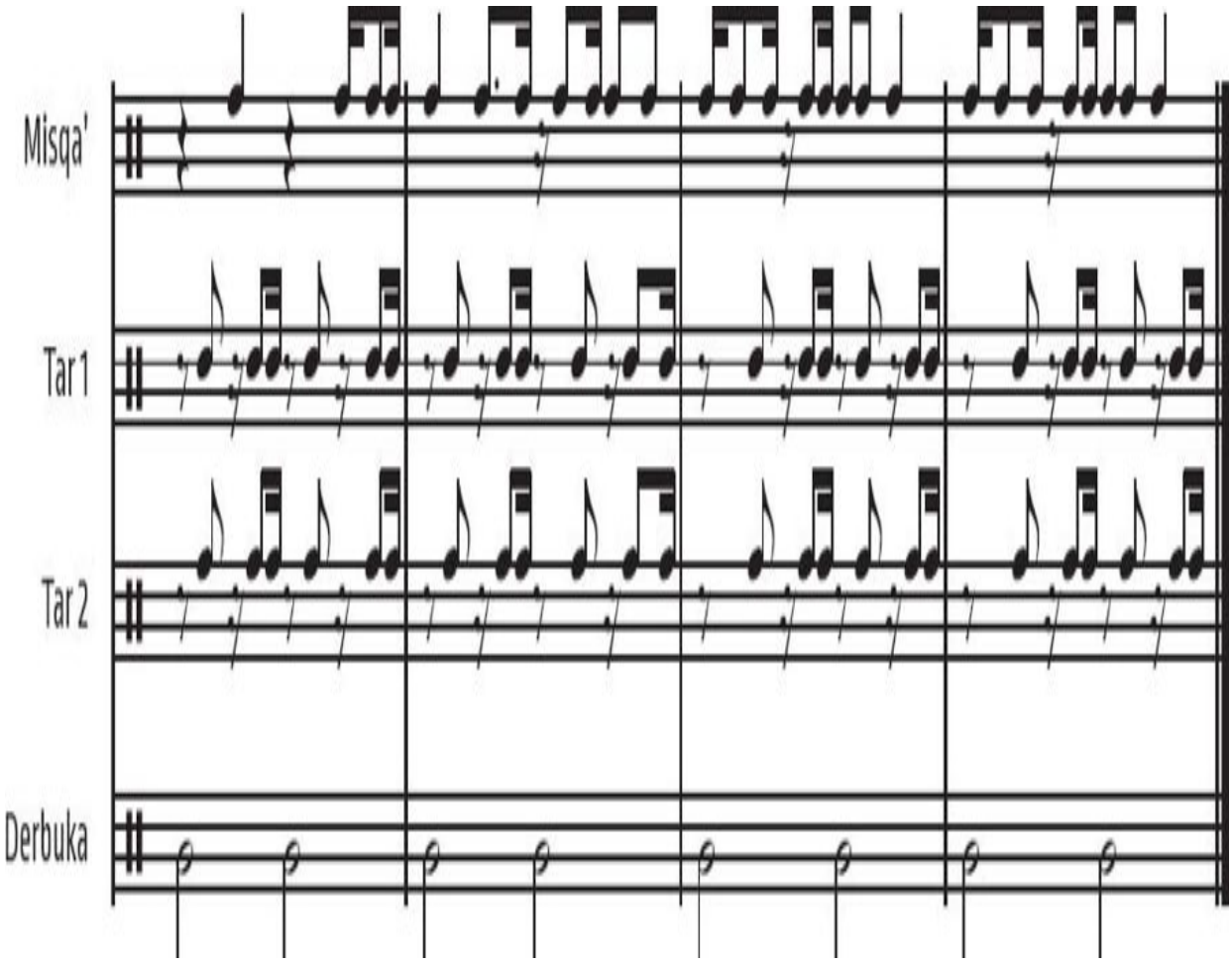
Note that this rhythm can be very confusing to any listener (even musicians) outside of the Hijaz because it sounds so much like an inverted maqsum (

مقسوم

, probably the most popular rhythm in the Arab world) which tricks the listener into “flipping” the rhythm in his head.

“There are two types of majrur: the traditional percussive and the urban, which includes ‘ud and singing. Usually played with frame drums only, the derbuka was recently added to the majrur” (Urkevich, Classical Music of Makkah).


♩=80
improvises
Misqa'
Tar 1
Tar 2
Derbuka


Misqa'
Tar 1
Tar 2
Derbuka

Dana Yamāni

دانة يماني

Dana (

دانه

) is a term that requires clarification because it could refer to a stand-alone musical genre while it also denotes an art-music category of the Hijaz. Many songs include a refrain based on rhymed combinations of the nonsense syllables dan, dan as in “ya dan dan li dan,” similar to how scatting syllables are used in bebop. In Yemen, the dan is a poetic context with improvisation that takes place indoors at nighttime gatherings (Lambert 2001). Dana Yamāni (

دانه يماني

) is a rhythm that adds to the confusion because its name suggests that it comes from Yemen. However, many musicians from Hijaz assert that this rhythm is one of the Hijazi dana types (which include yamāni al kāff, sana’ani, roadaman, tariqa and tatrib) (Urkevich, Classical Music of Makkah). A look at the encyclopedic book called “Al Aghani” (meaning “the songs”) by Abu Al-Faraj Al-Asfahani (897 – 967), shows that the words yamani (

يمني

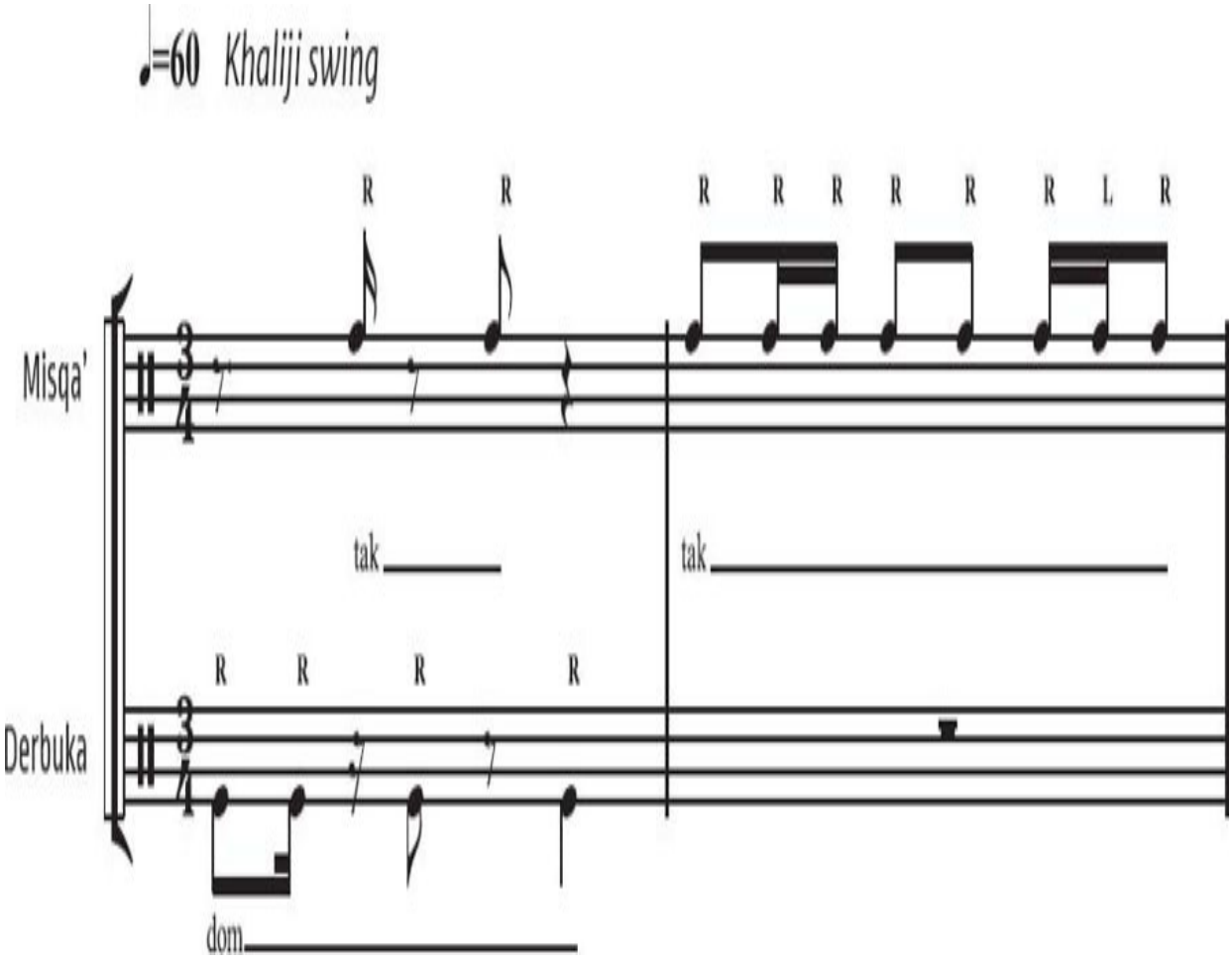
) and yamāni (

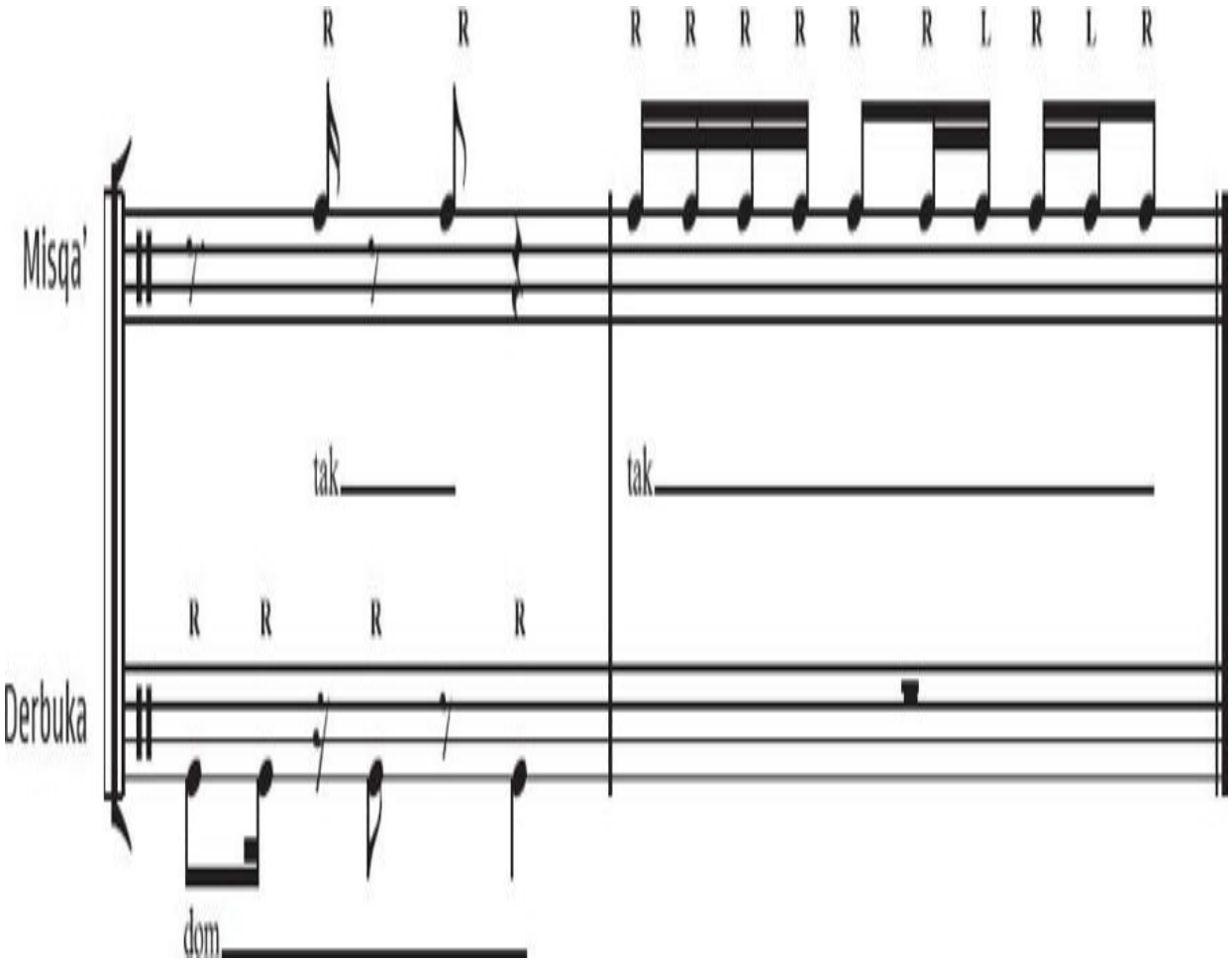
يماني

) are both used in various places which clearly states that at the time both terms meant two different things. In fact, this difference is first found in the

work of Ishac Al Mousali (772 – 850), and later asserted by Al Asfahani. Therefore it seems that “yamani” (short “a”) denotes that the rhythm is related to Yemen while yamāni (long “ā”) means that the melody and lyrics are derived from the Hijaz area in Saudi Arabia (Mecca, Jeddah, Medina) (Mubarak Omro Al Ammari, Folk Culture issue 29).

The dana yamāni is in 3/4 with a subtle polyrhythmic feel of 4 against 6. The way this polyrhythm is employed is nothing like a typical 4 in 6 polyrhythm which is probably why it has such charisma to it. Note that in dana, one person plays two drums at the same time by placing the derbuka on his lap and holding the misqa’ in one hand. According to Dr. Urkevich, this type of instrumentation is strictly Hijazi and only found in dana musical types.




R R R R R R R R L R L R
Misqa'
tak
tak
R R R R
Derbuka
dom

‘Arda Janubia

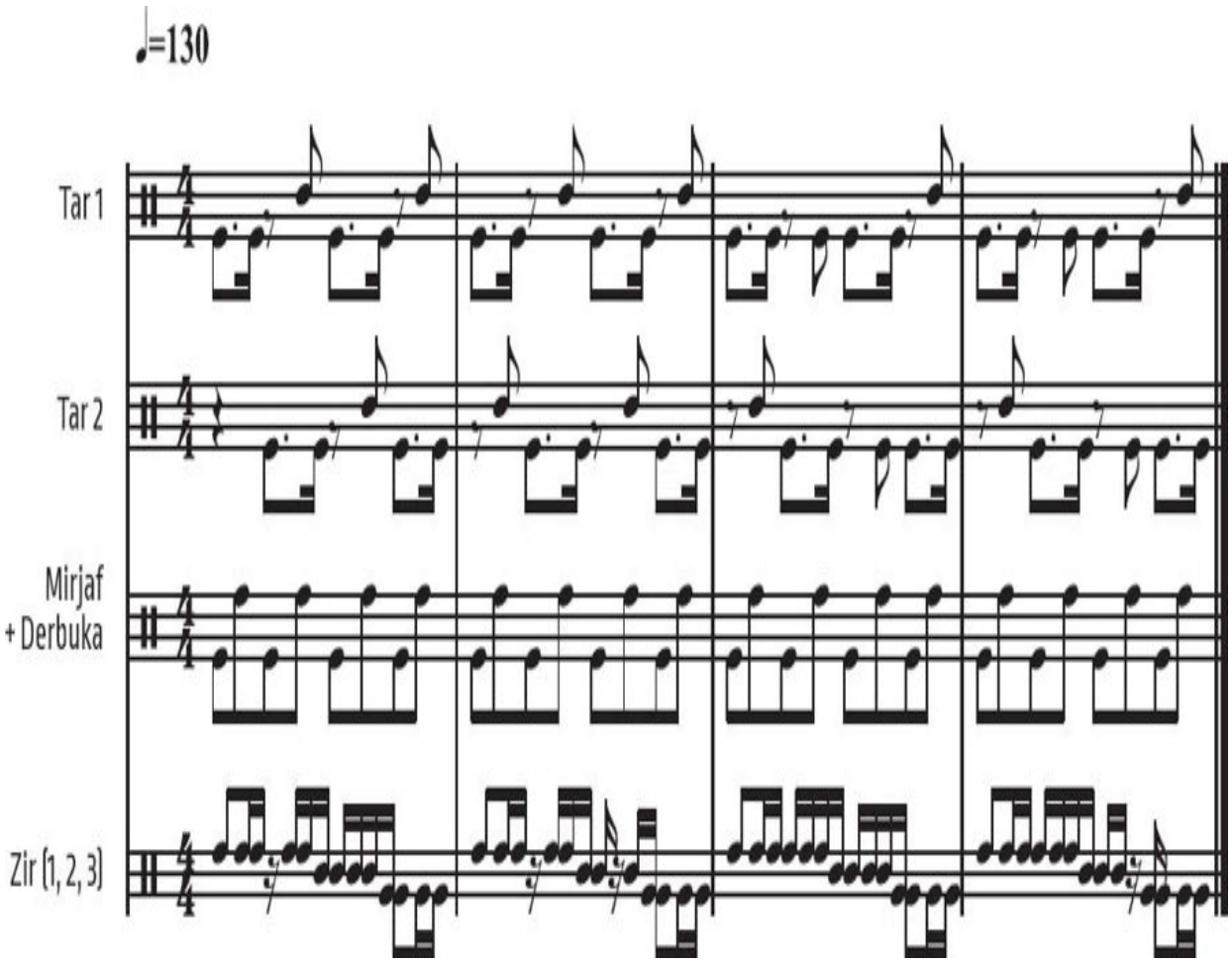
عرضة جنوبية

‘Arda (

عرضة

) is a battle dance performed by men only and is the most emblematic of all of the desert traditions. It is considered one the oldest forms of Arabian dance. The name comes from the verb “arada” which means to show or exhibit, and is basically a way for the tribe to show off their strength of arms. “As a dance connected to warfare, ‘arda is also known as al-‘ayyala in the UAE or al-razha in Oman and both dances portray a mock battle” (Torstrick and Faier 2009). ‘Arda’s drumming is an equally important characteristic of this art and is like samri, triple-metered and thought to originate from Najd. There are many genres called ‘arda across the Peninsula and they all share similar characteristics but differ greatly in their dance, type of performance, and music.

The ‘arda janubia (southern ‘arda) is from the southern part of Saudi Arabia and is very different from the triple-metered ‘arda of the Najd and Qatar (see ‘arda Qatar). This one is in 4/4 and its feel and pulse is very reminiscent of Brazilian samba. Jizan, ‘Asir, and Najran each have their own variation, some have more swing than others but the ‘arda transcribed here is one that is duple-metered with a light sense of swing and a very distinguishable zir pattern.

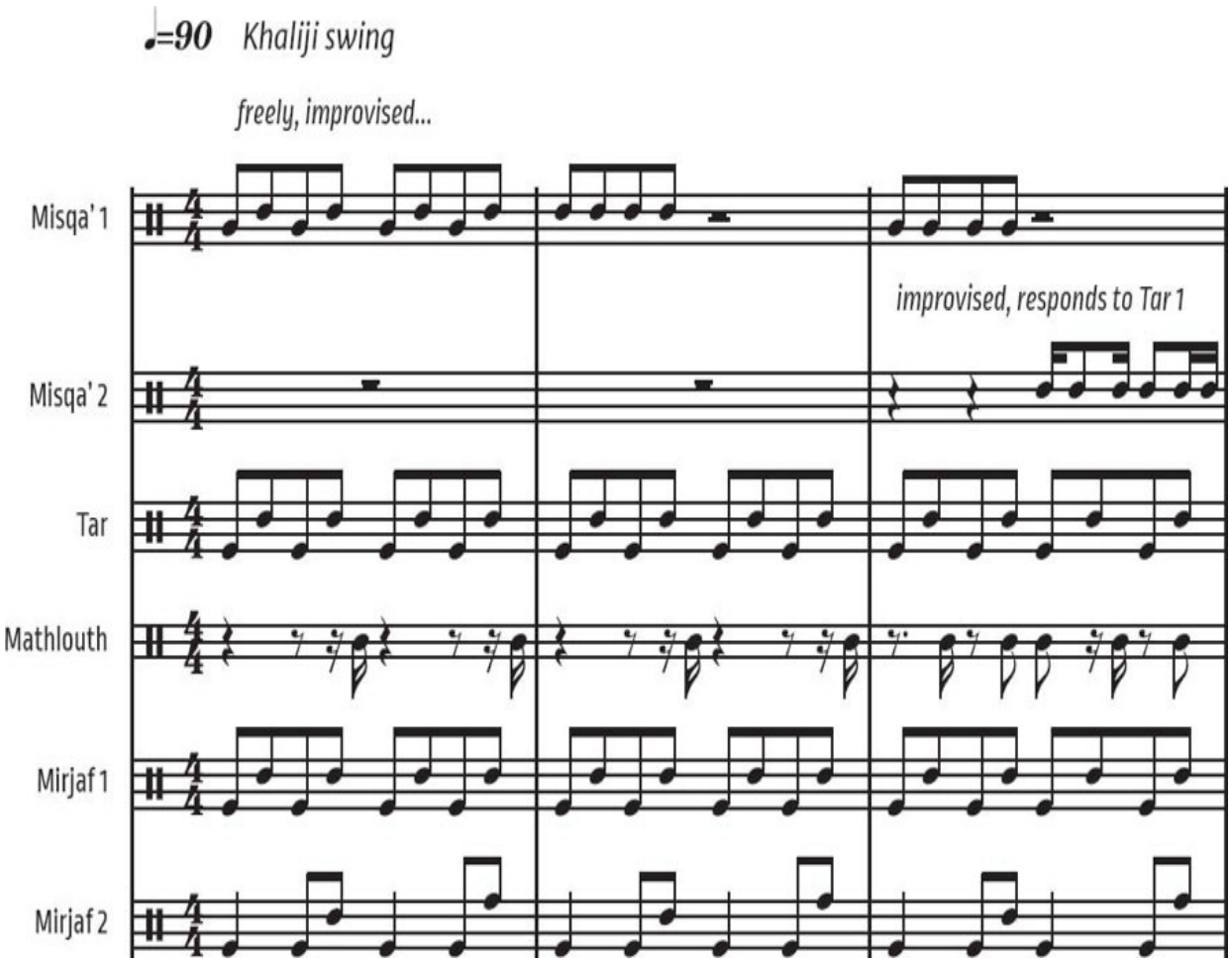

♩=130
Tar 1
Tar 2
Mirjaf
+ Derbuka
Zir (1, 2, 3)

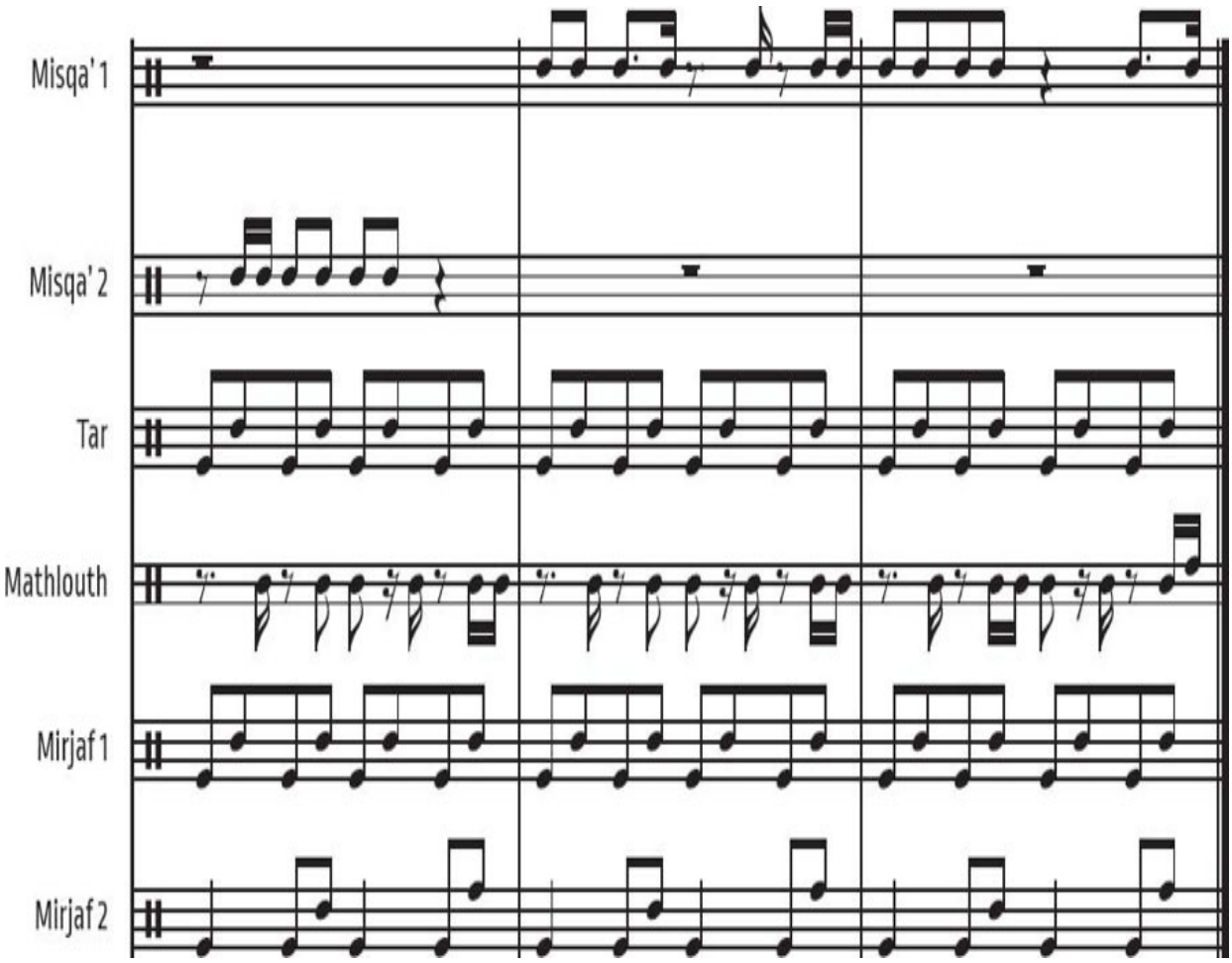
Samri

سامري

Samri is a broad term that is widely used in the folk culture of the Peninsula. Originally samri from the verb samara refers to late-night gatherings playing music and drumming until the morning. The Samri is believed to be a Bedouin art originating from Najd. This particular samri is triple- metered and shares with Najdi ‘arda the same musical core and metric feel but “‘arda, performed standing, is a battle genre and samri, for the most part performed seated, has passionate “love” lyrics” (Urkevich 2015, 63).

The samri rhythm we’re presenting here is one that is duple-metered and historically associated with jinn or spirit possession, especially in Wadi-Al-Dawasir. In samri gatherings men kneel and sway left and right to the music. Their hands, held at the chest level, move in a well-coordinated choreography. Samri is a frame-dominated genre and is performed straight except for the accenting frames, which can sometimes add some degrees of swing.


♩=90 Khaliji swing
freely, improvised...
Misqa' 1
improvised, responds to Tar 1
Misqa' 2
Tar
Mathlouth
Mirjaf 1
Mirjaf 2


Misqa' 1
Misqa' 2
Tar
Mathlouth
Mirjaf 1
Mirjaf 2

La’ib Al Baha

لعب الباحة

Fan al la’ib (

فن اللعب

) literally means “the art of playing” (also as in playing games). Al-Baha is a city in the southwest of Saudi Arabia known as one of the Kingdom’s prime touristic attractions. “La’ib al-baha (

لعب الباحة

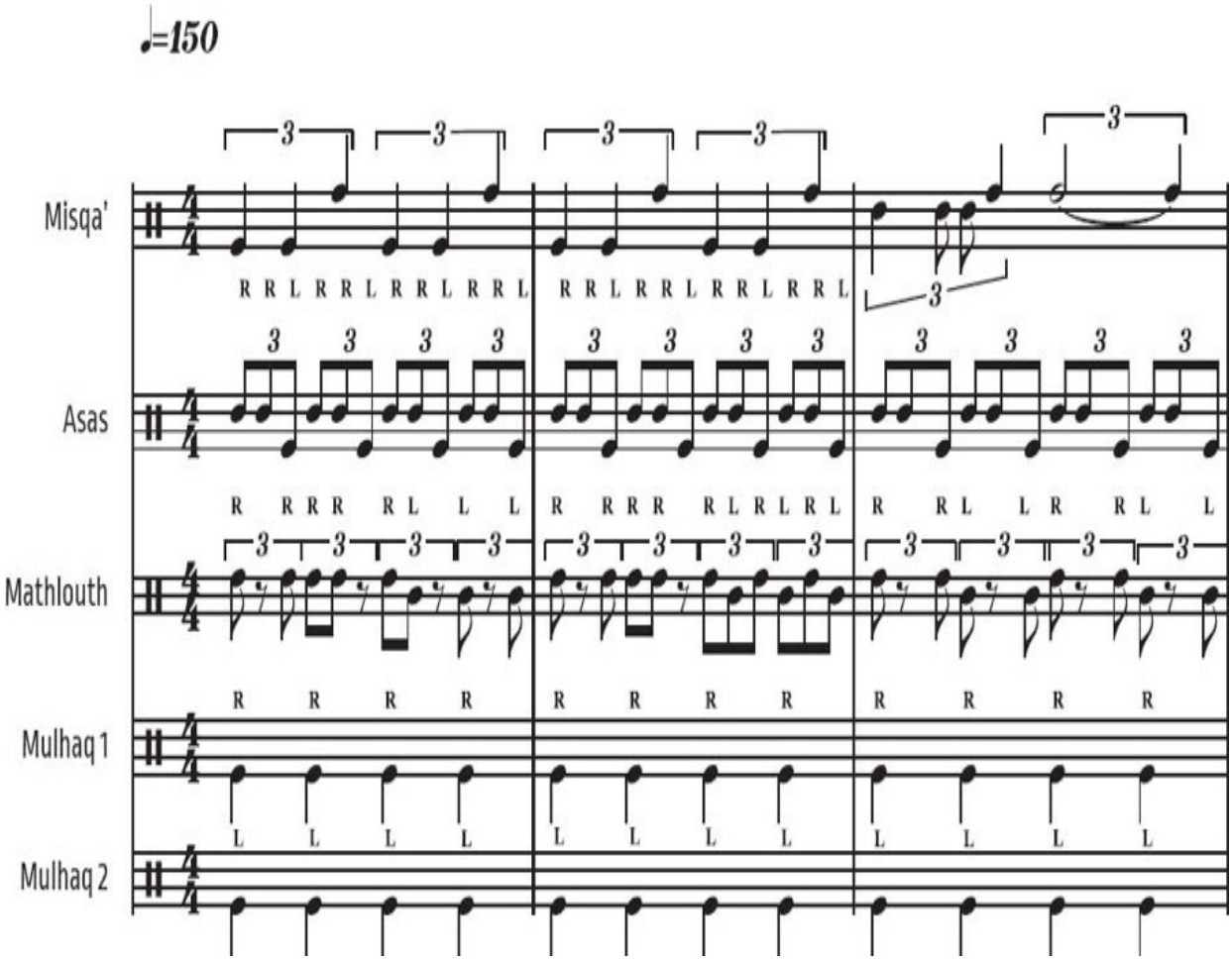
) is a quick, exciting, aerobic step dance that is weaponless and not as militaristic as ‘arda but it is like ‘arda in that two poets compete to show off their improvisational skills” (Urkevich 2015, 306). The poet sings some verses, unaccompanied, and then the percussionists perform a short interlude before the poet resumes his lines again, and so on. This genre features the mulhaq (

ملحق

, a large bass zir), a maradd (frame drum), and a small zir, which in Baha is called an asas (

اساس

, meaning “foundation”).


♩=150
Misqa'
Asas
Mathlouth
Mulhaq 1
Mulhaq 2

United Arab Emirates

Almost all of the traditional music of the UAE is considered a national heritage and is therefore only performed as part of heritage festivals and thus does not enjoy any commercial visibility. The UAE’s most cherished traditional art is called the ‘ayyala

عيالة

and in 2014 both the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE had the ‘ayyala inscribed on the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. From the incoming arts, the UAE is also home to the lewa (

ليوة

) from Africa and to the habban (

هبان

) from Iran. Other lesser known UAE arts include the indimah (

انديمة

, related to Omani m’dimah), the rababa art (

فن الربابة

), the razif (

رزيف

, related to Omani razfa), the maled (

مالد

, religious), and the nuban (

نوبان

, referring to Nubia (south Egypt and Sudan)).

‘Ayyala

عيالة

“In ‘ayyala the dancers stand in two rows facing each other. Men stand close together with hands around each other’s waists, creating a strong front. Drummers and swordsmen move around in the space between the dancing men, advancing and retreating before the lines of men. A group of young girls joins the dance, swinging their hair from side to side in na’ash (

نعش

), reminding the men of their obligation to protect the women” (Torstrick and Faier 2009, 151).

In the UAE, there are two variants of this genre, the bahriyya in 4/4 (coastal/maritime), which is shared with most of the coastal cities of UAE from Abu Dhabi to Ras Al Khaimah, and the barriyya in 3/4 (inland/desert), which is locally referred to as “ayyala Al-Ain (

عيالة العين

)”, in reference to the city of Al-Ain.

The instrumentation for both variants is comprised of a ras (the large drum and leader), the takhamir drum (

تخامير

three smaller drums played with one stick and one hand, also called kasir

كاسر

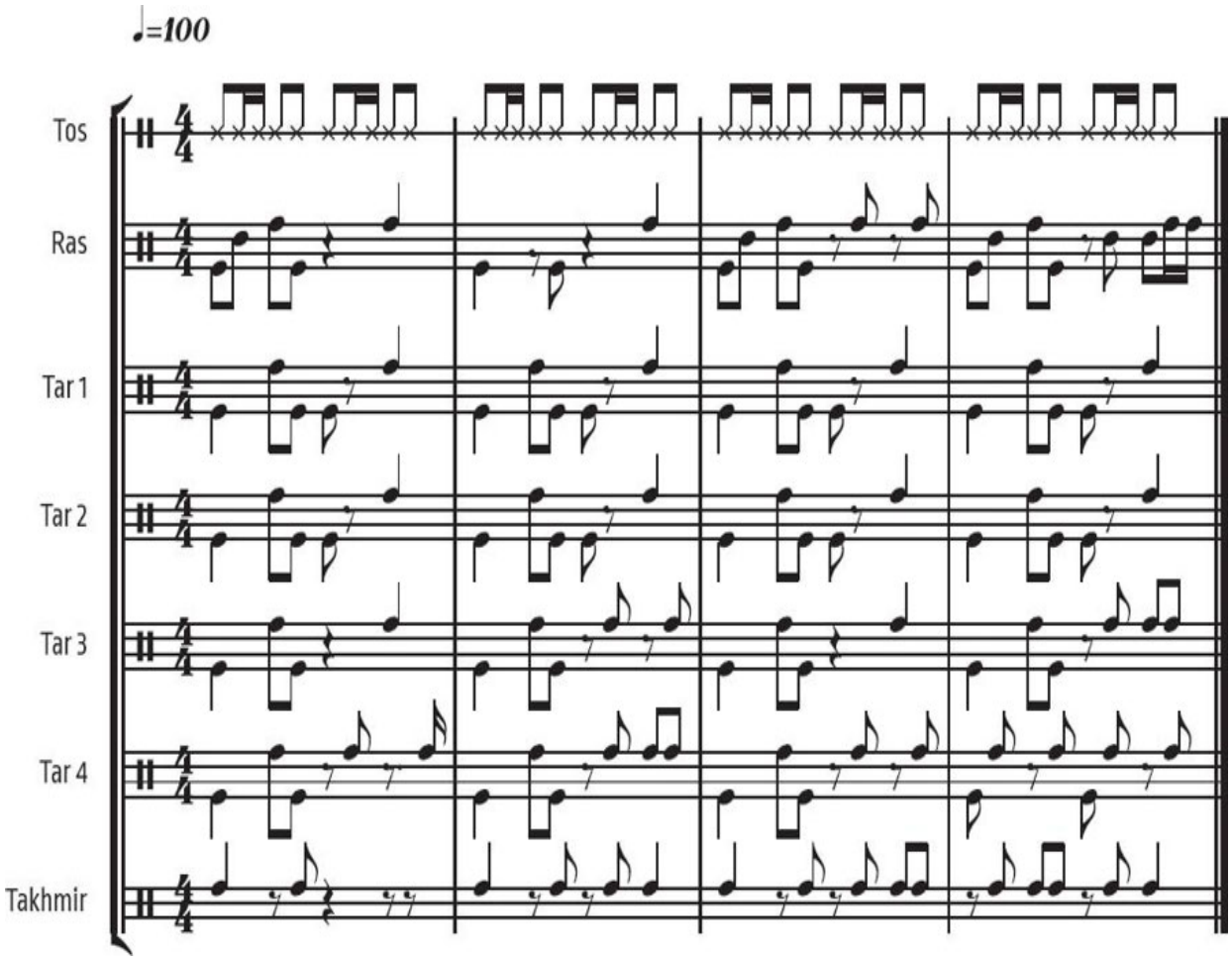
in Oman), the tar, and the tos (

طوس – طويسات

, plural towaysat).

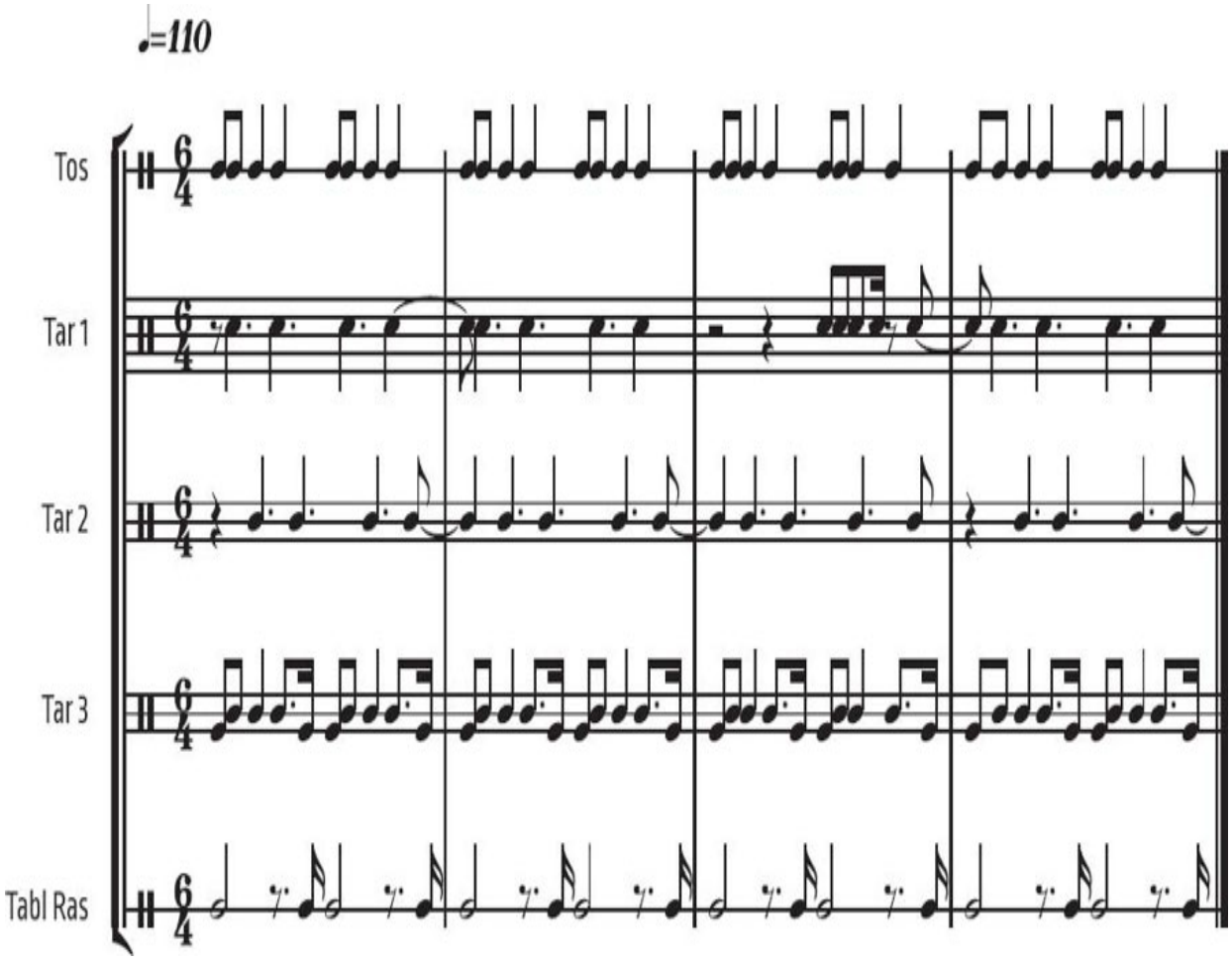
Ayyala Bahriya

عيالة بحرية



Ayyala Barriya

عيالة برية


♩=110
Tos
Tar 1
Tar 2
Tar 3
Tabl Ras

Lewa

ليوة

The lewa, liwa, or laywa, is said to come from Kenya or Tanzania and is performed in areas with large populations originally from Africa, in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, in Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, and in Basra. The dance is performed by men and women (or men only depending on the region) and the texts of the songs are either in Swahili or a mixture of Swahili and Arabic. The lyrics are sad and concern separation from loved ones (Zuhur 2011, 295). The common instrumentation includes a mizmar-type double-reeded woodwind instrument called the surnay (

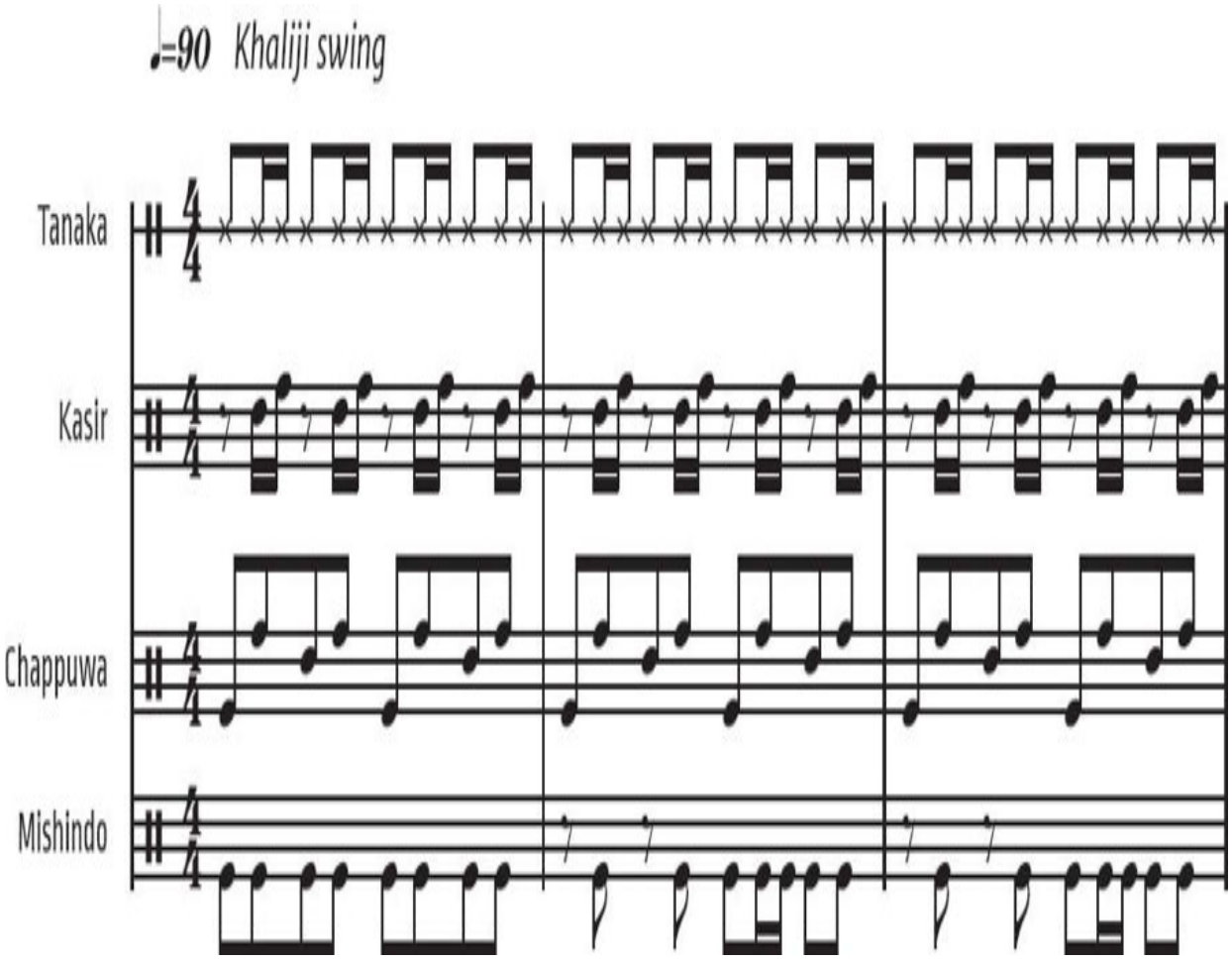
صرناي

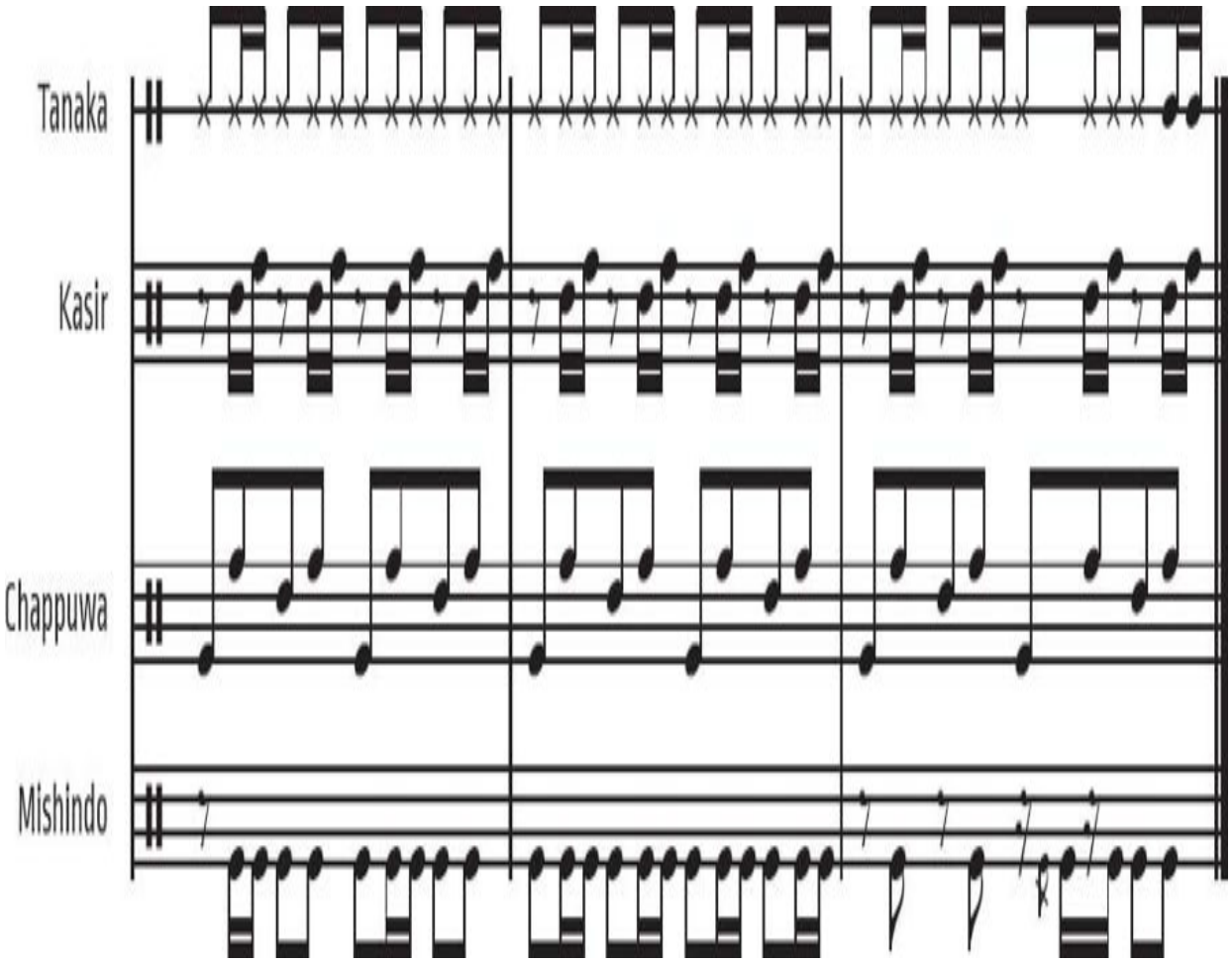
), and a set of three drums, and one idiophone. The lowest sounding barrel drum is called the tabl al ‘ud (

طبل العود

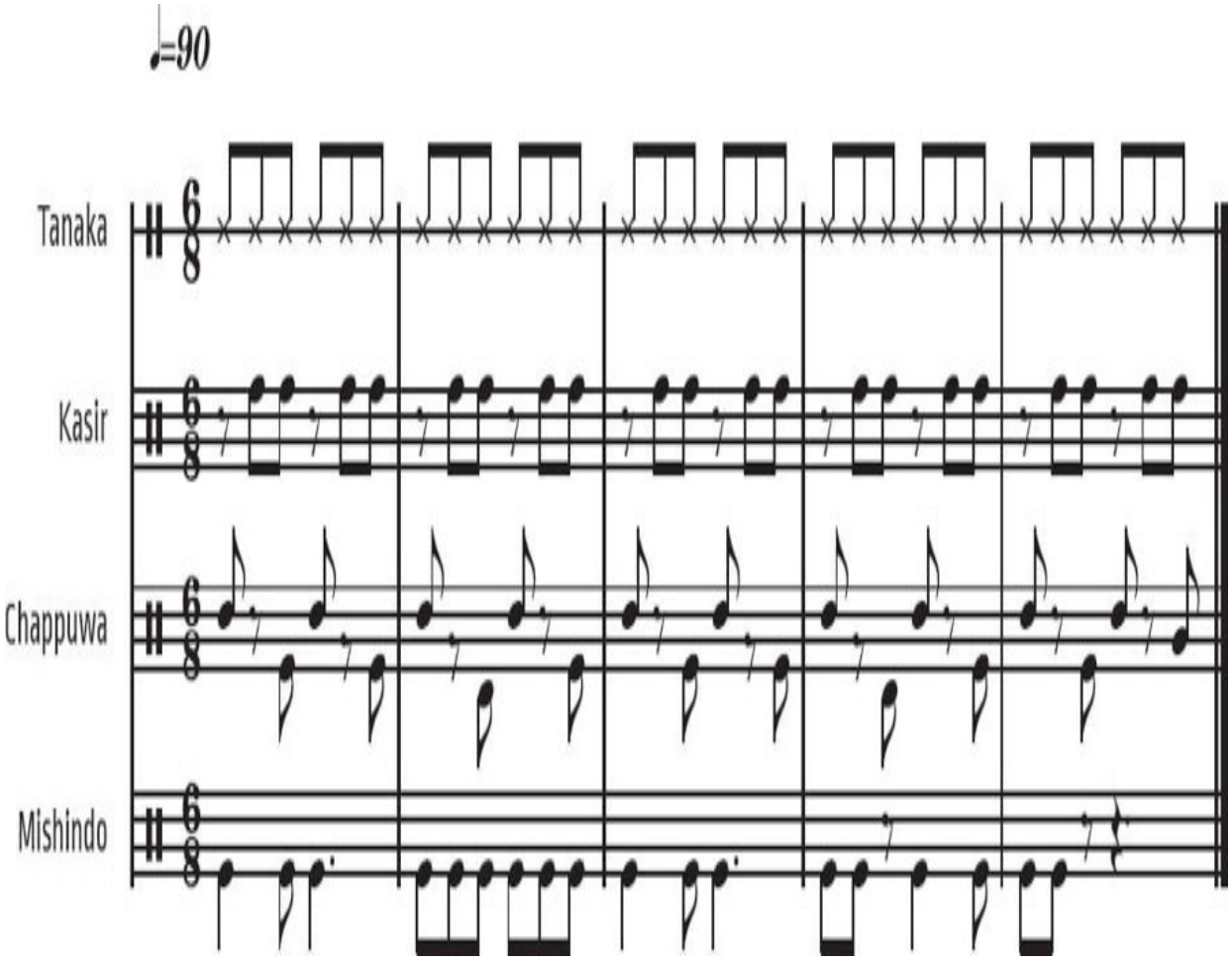
, also called mishindo in UAE and rahmani in Oman), the second drum is called the musundo and is usually tied around the drummer’s waist using a rope with the long barrel resting on the ground between the legs of the standing drummer (musundo is also called rahmani tawil meaning long rahmani in Oman). The third drum is called the chappuwa and resembles a small musundu but is held to the side of the performer’s body by a shoulder strap. “The idiophone is the batu also known as the tanaka, i.e., “tank”, which is a foot long rectangular metal container that is crushed in on one side. Originally such tins were used to transport petrol, or before oil discovery, water. It is played with two bamboo sticks” (Urkevich 2015, 140).

Lewa in 4/4





Lewa in 6/8


♩=90
Tanaka
Kasir
Chappuwa
Mishindo

Habban

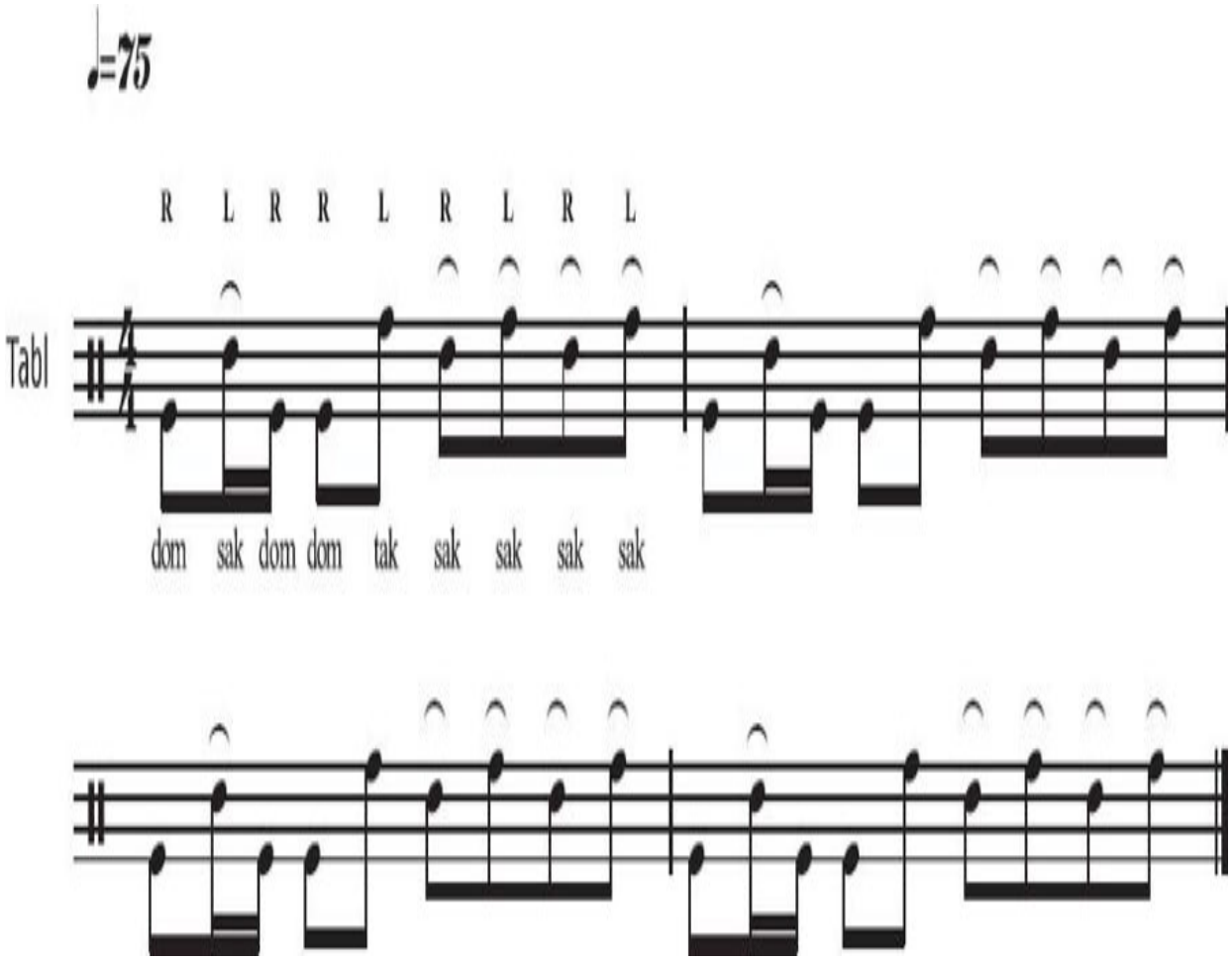
هبان

Habban (

هبان

) is another traditional art commonly performed today in the UAE. This folk dance is of Persian origin. “The word habban is a Persian word which means qirba in Arabic (jirba in UAE colloquial Arabic is also the name of the genre in Bahrain) which comes from the name of a bag made of goat or sheep skin used for keeping and cooling water” (Hurriez 2002, 134). In this dance the main instrument is the habban, which is a bagpipe very similar to the Scottish one. This is one of those incoming arts from the eastern coast of the Persian Gulf that has a lot of similarities to Arab culture and traditions. Some sources assert that the instrument originated in Arabia and was introduced to Iran from the Arab immigration of the tribes to the eastern coast of the gulf and then made its way back again (Khalifa, Khaled Abdallah: Folk Culture, Issue 15).

Apart from the main habban instrument, drums are a big part of the performance. One small kasir drum is used in the middle with ten medium-sized drums, five to the right and five to the left. The habban player goes around them while the drummers advance in light moves in a circular way. Technically, the left hand is always kept on the left side of the drum and the treble sound sak is produced by hitting the tip of the fingers on the drum’s skin. The same sound can be produced by using fingertips on the right side which usually plays the low sound dom. All drummers play in unison and resort to occasional variations.


♩=75
R L R R L R L R L
Tabl
dom sak dom dom tak sak sak sak sak

Kuwait

Of all the Arabian Peninsula countries, Kuwait holds a highly distinguished position when it comes to music because of the art of sawt. “Sawt (

صوت

, plural aswat,

اصوات

)” literally means “voice” or “sound.” Sawt is distinguished among all other Gulf genres because it managed to become a sophisticated art form that requires practical, technical, and theoretical skills and soon started to be performed in concert- hall settings and stopped being considered folk.

The father of sawt and the greatest figure in Kuwaiti music is Abdallah Al Faraj (1836 - 1901), whose lineage stems from the famous Al Dawasir tribe of the Saudi Najd region. He was also one of the finest poets in the history of Kuwait and wrote Nabati poetry, a vernacular form with a colloquial style common to the Najd region and to the Bedouin (Urkevich 2015).

Although sawt is like classical Arabic music, played in maqam, the accompanying rhythms make it unique. The genre is said to have come from Yemen (‘Abdu Ghanim 1986) and was recorded as early as 1927 in Baghdad, and 1929 in Cairo by Abel Latif Al-Kuwaiti (Lambert 2002, 649 - 650, also see Zuhur 2001, 295).

The main instruments used in sawt are the mirwas (

مرواس

, plural marawis), and the ‘ud. The mirwas is a small hand drum constructed in India which has an older variant used in Yemeni music. There are clear Yemeni links to Kuwaiti aswat. “The drum has the same name and is similar to the Yemeni drum, and aswat lyrics are borrowed from the works of Yemeni poets” (Urkevich, Sawt: Art Song of Kuwait).

The main rhythms of sawt are categorized in three modes: sawt shami in 8, sawt ‘arabi in 6, and sawt khayyali in 12/8 polyrhythm. Interlocking clapping became an integral part of the sawt, though this is not true of all sawt rhythms.

Here are some of the most important rhythms of this Kuwaiti art (note that tabl khammari is a tabl with a fixed figure and tabl la’ub (

طبل لعوب

) is the tabl that makes variations (la’ub means playful)).

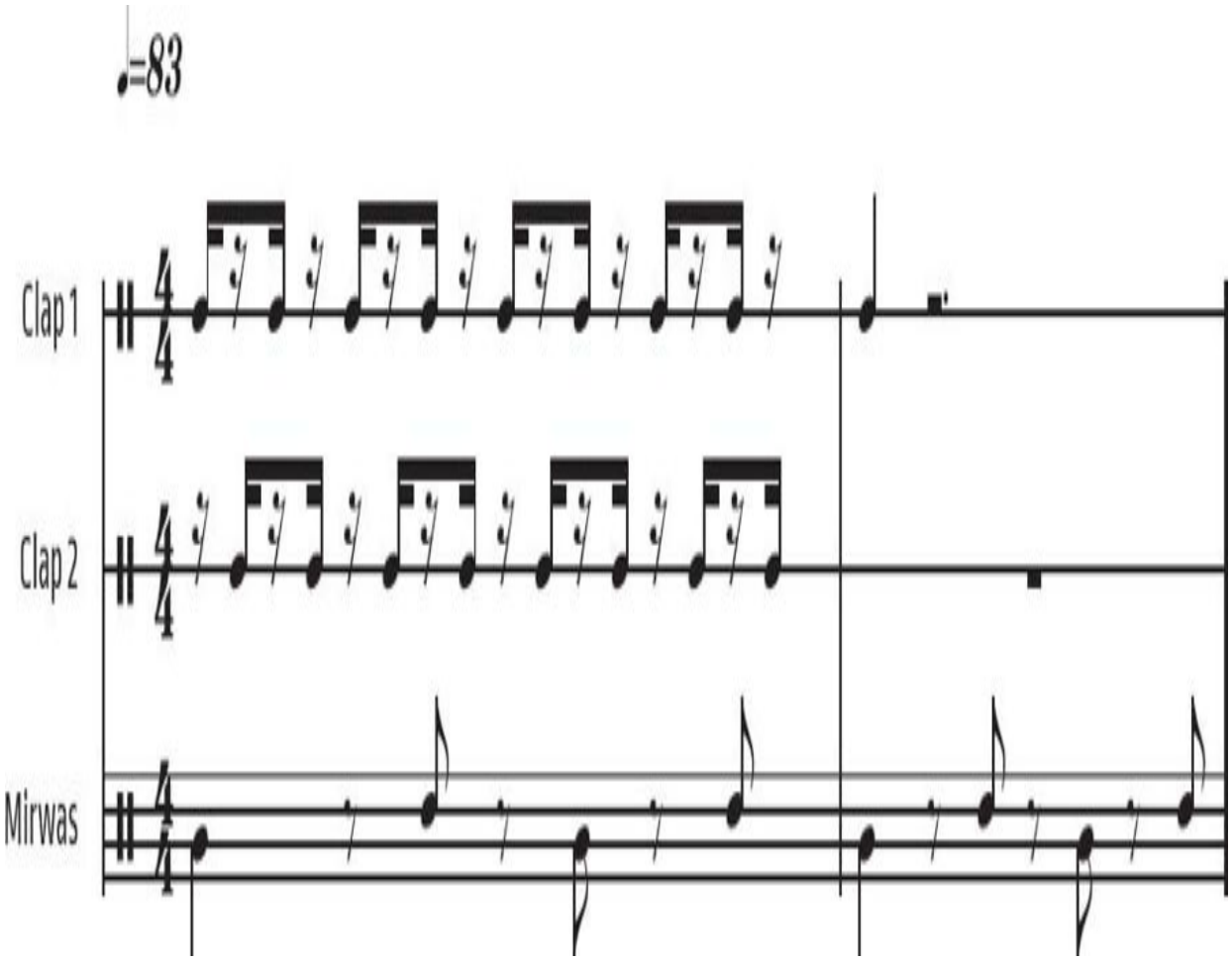
All notations hereafter, except for hadadi mukhalef (

حدادي مخالف

), are transcribed from the audio of a masterclass about Kuwaiti rhythms by Mr. Ghannam Al Dikan.

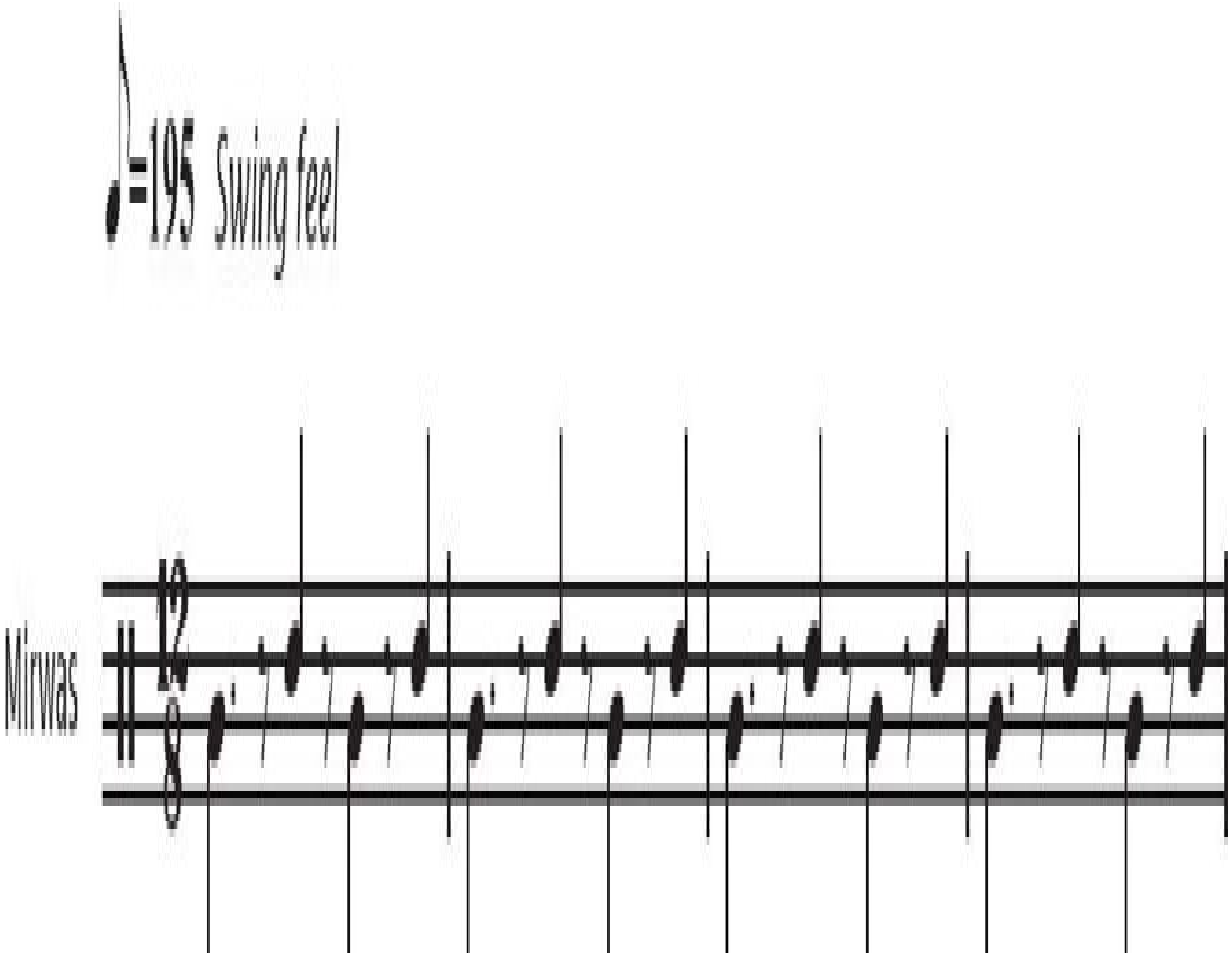
Sawt Shami

صوت شامي



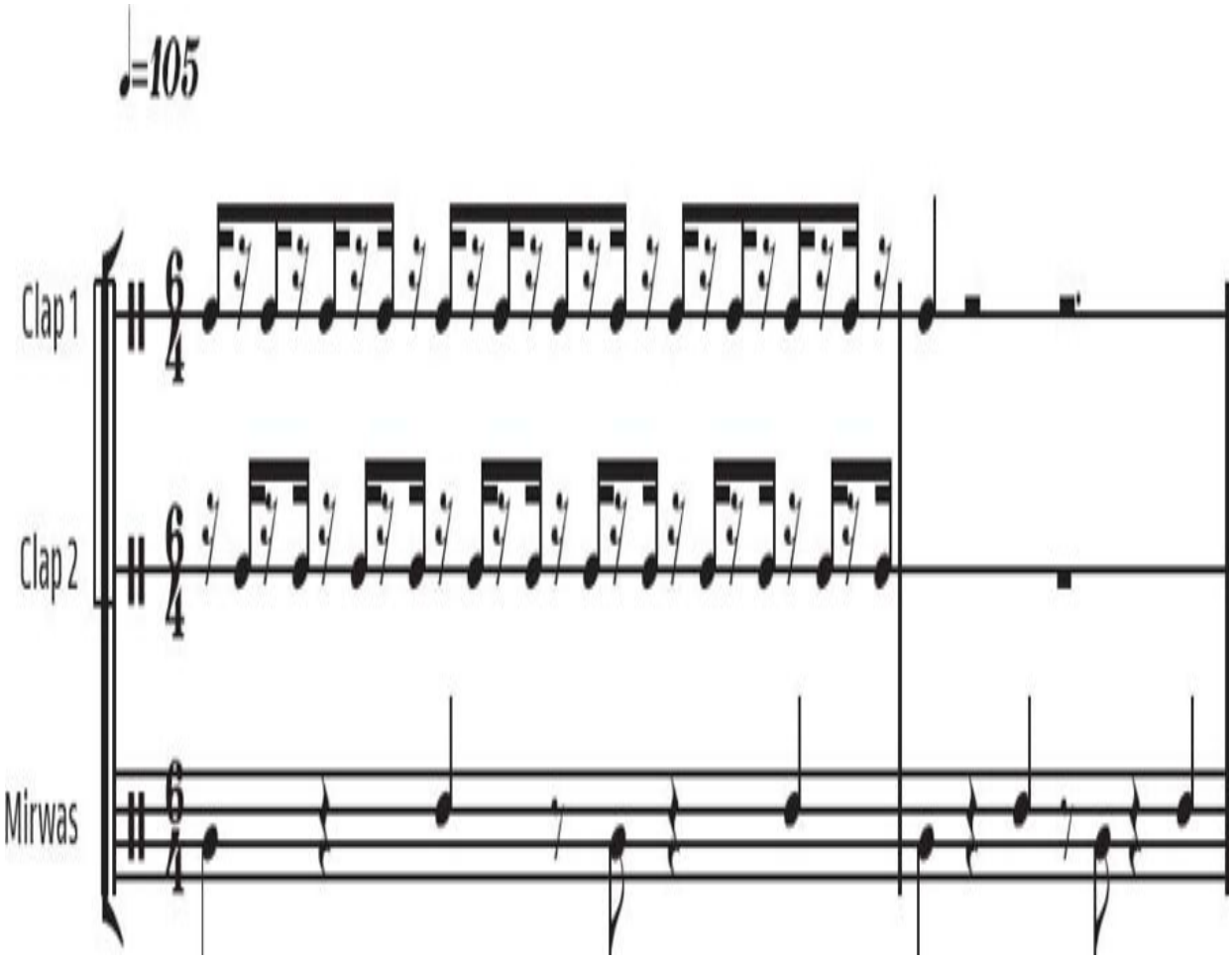
Sawt Khayyali

صوت خيالي



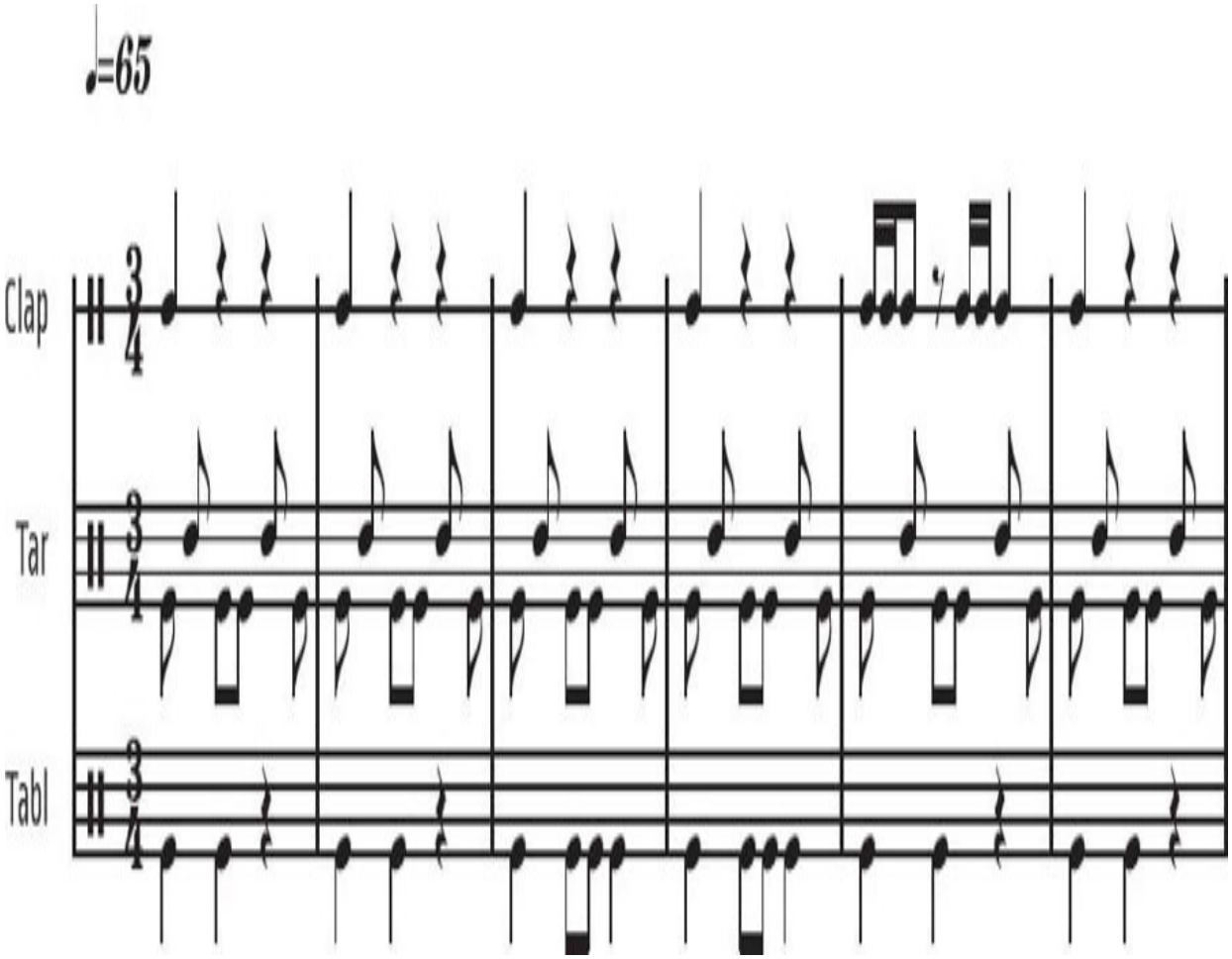
Sawt Arabi

صوت عربي



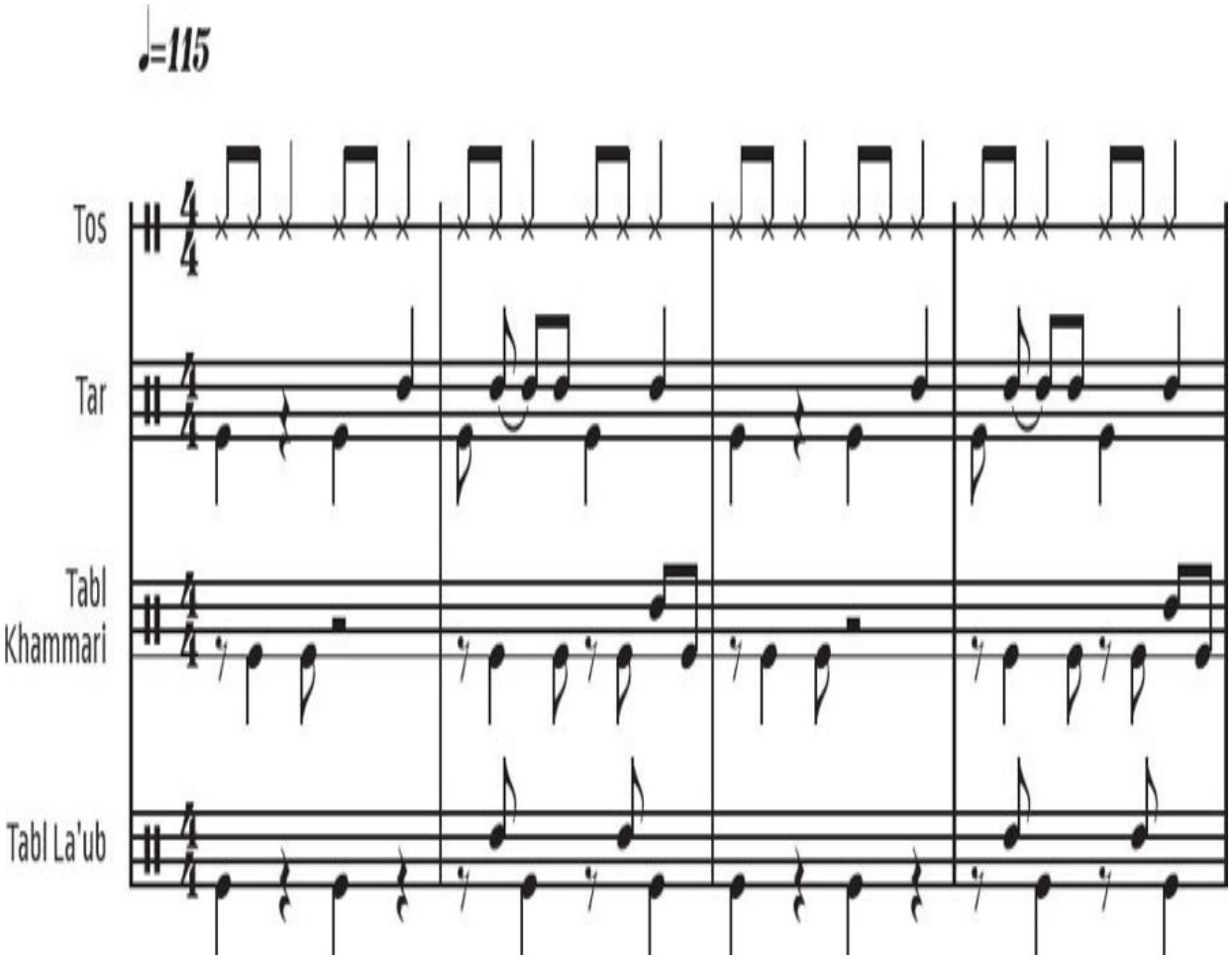
Samri

سامري



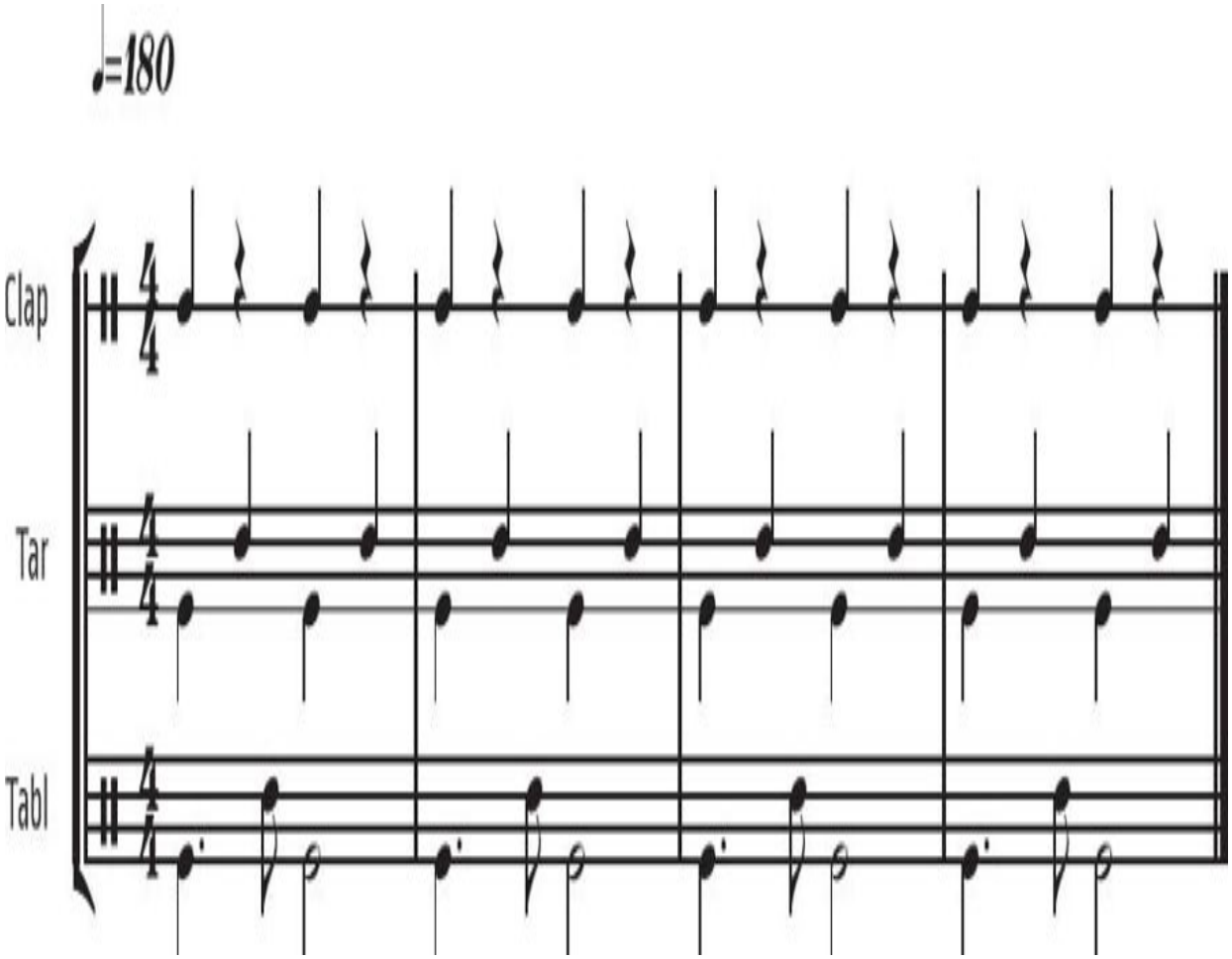
Samri Naggazi

سامري نقازي



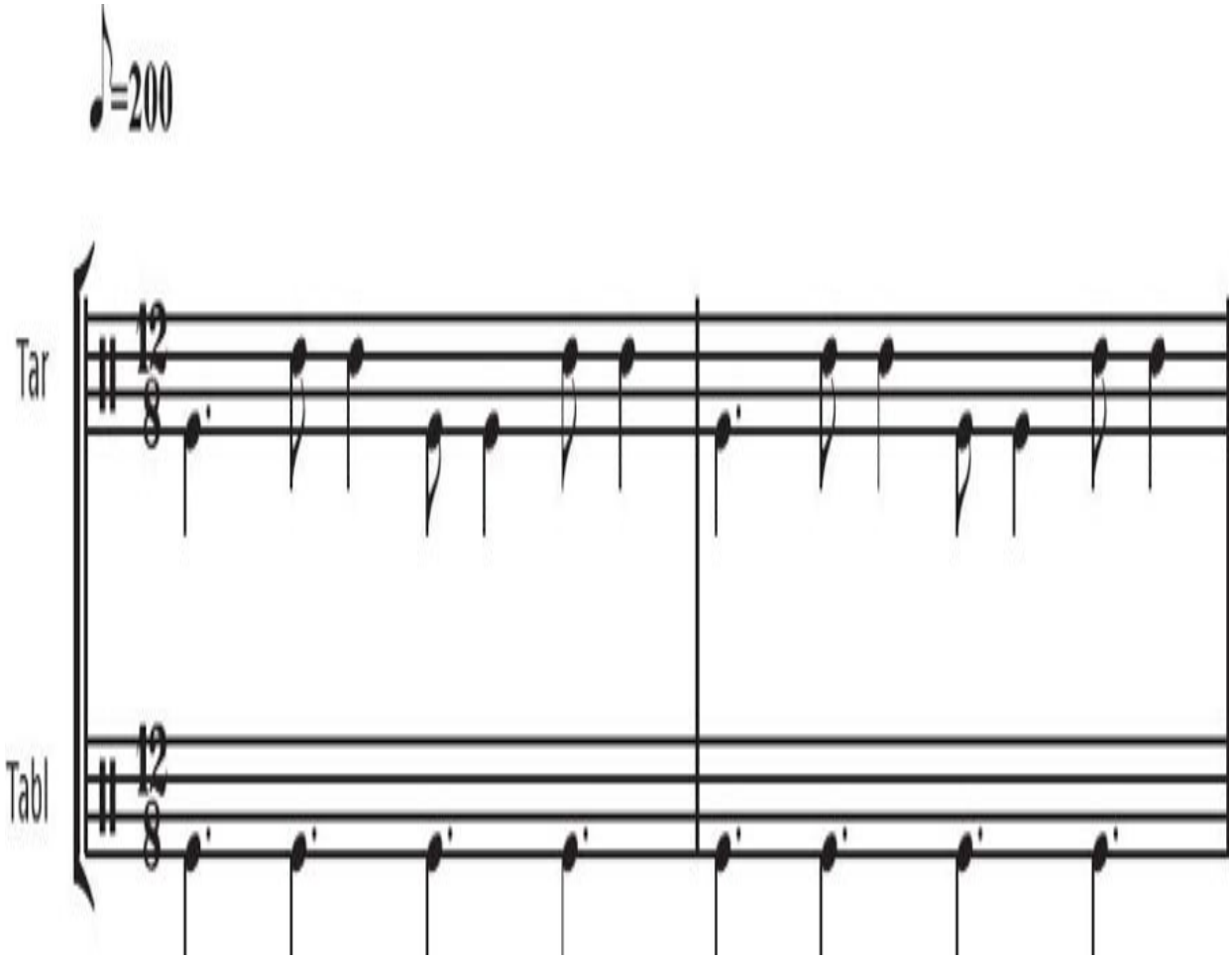
Dosari

دوسري



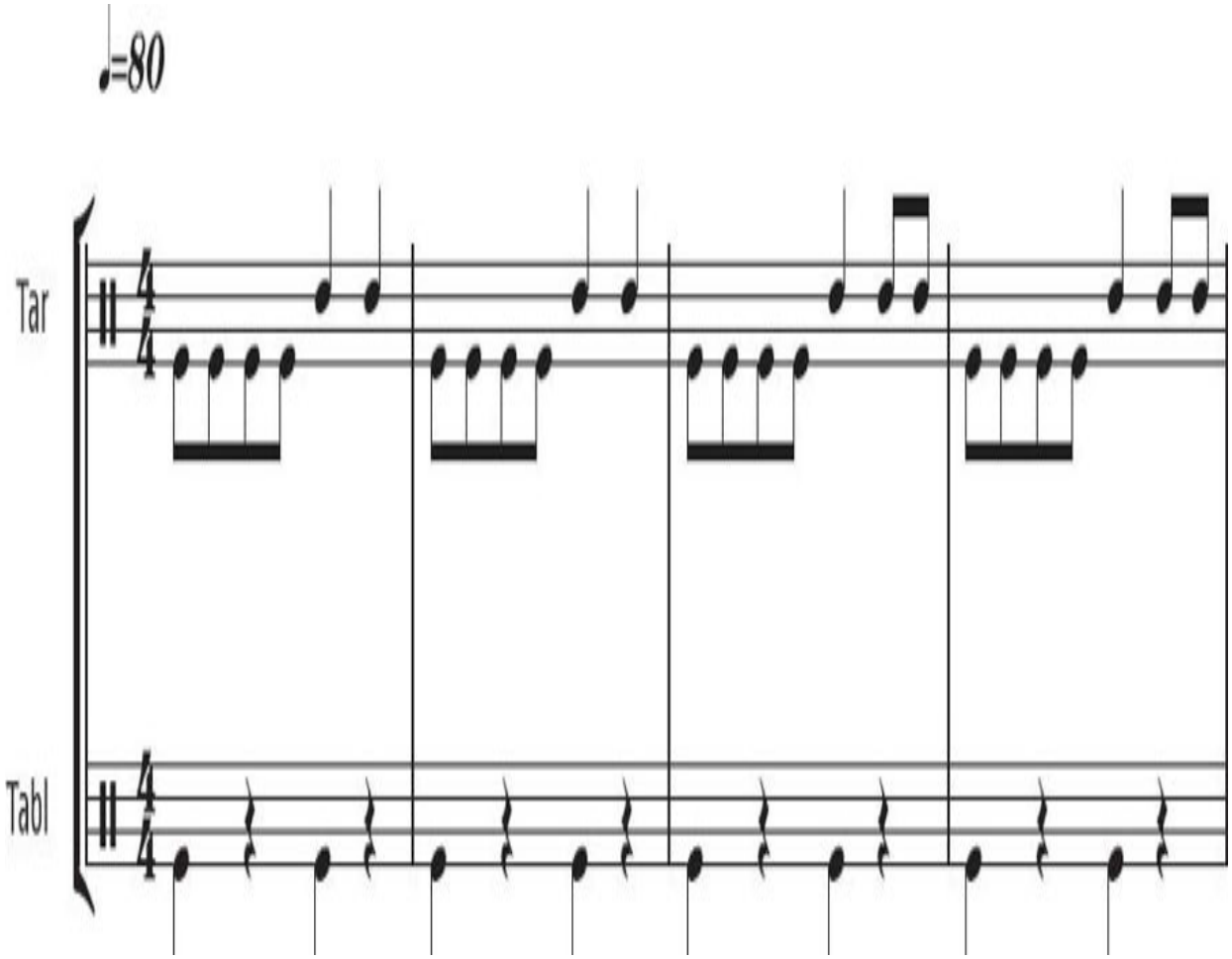
Qadri Bahri

قادري بحري



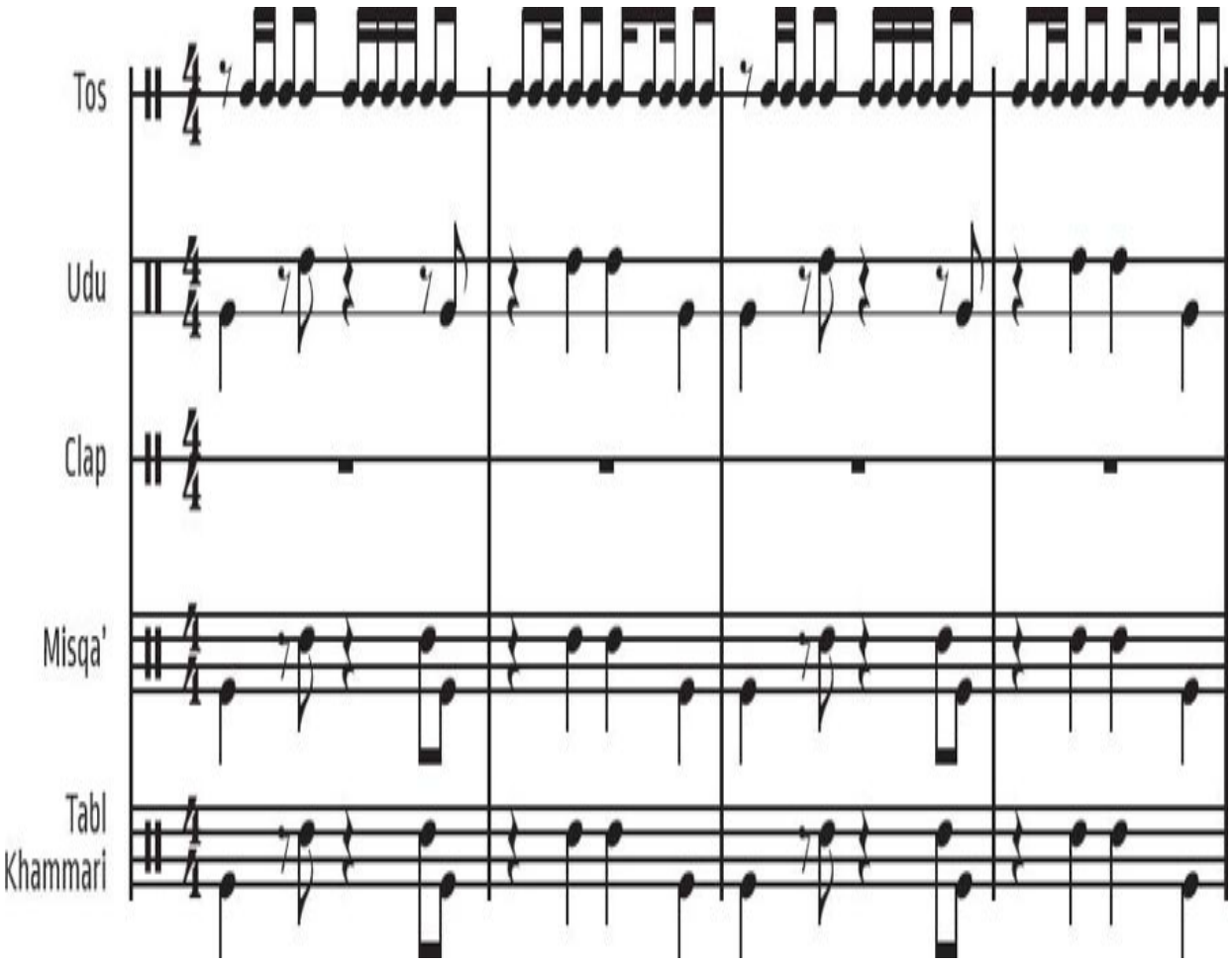
Qadri Rifai

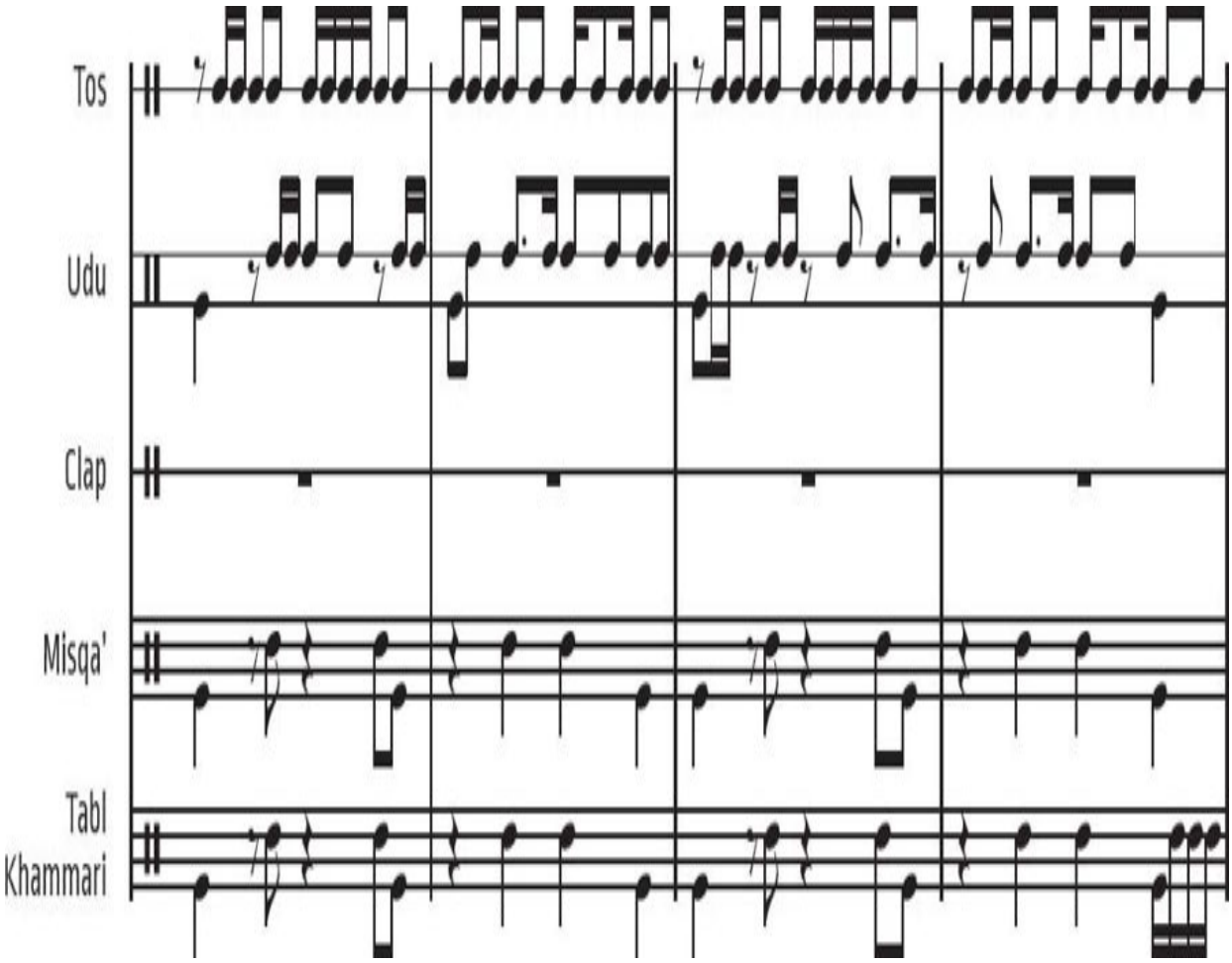
قادري رفاعي

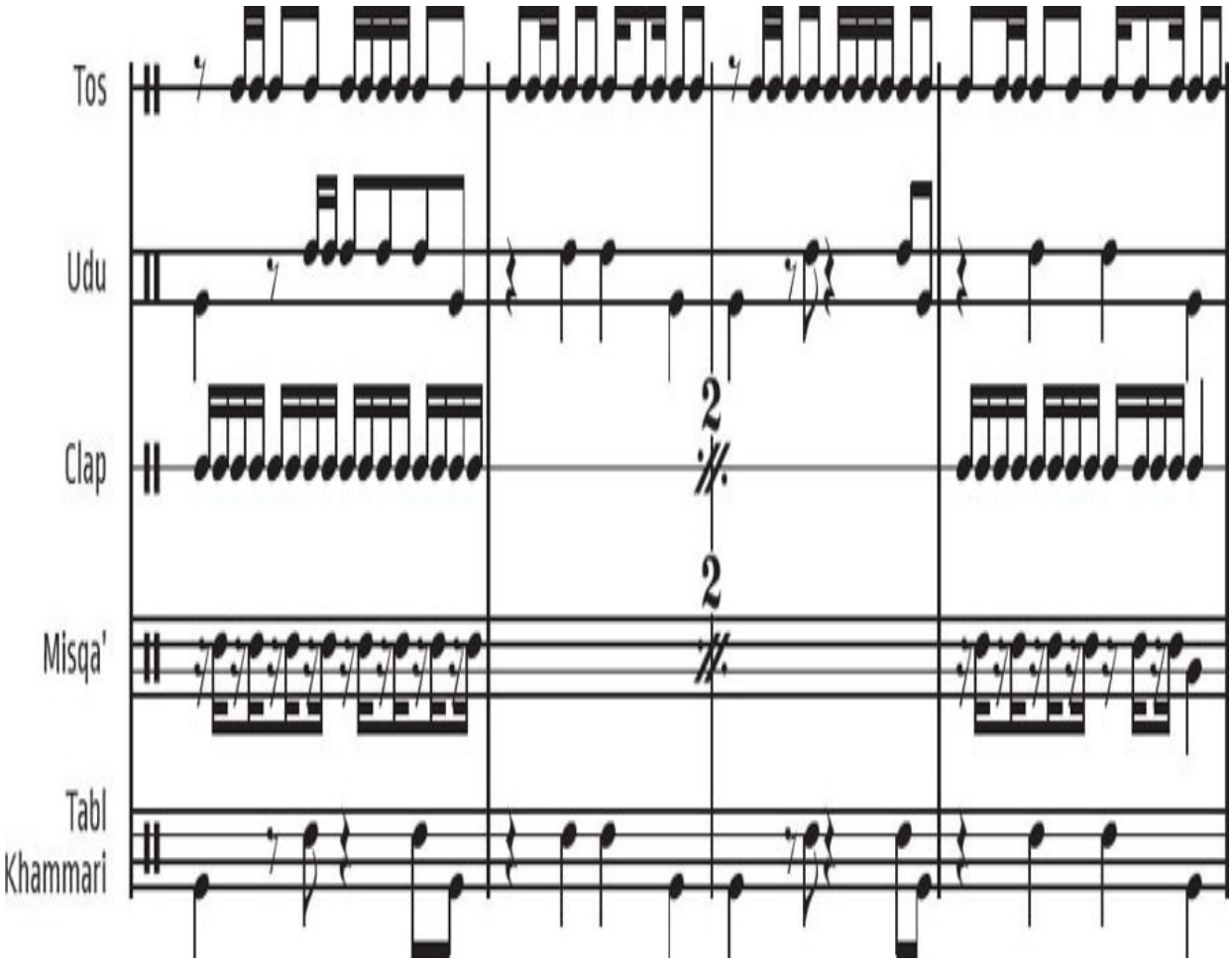


Hadadi Mukhalef

حدادي مخالف

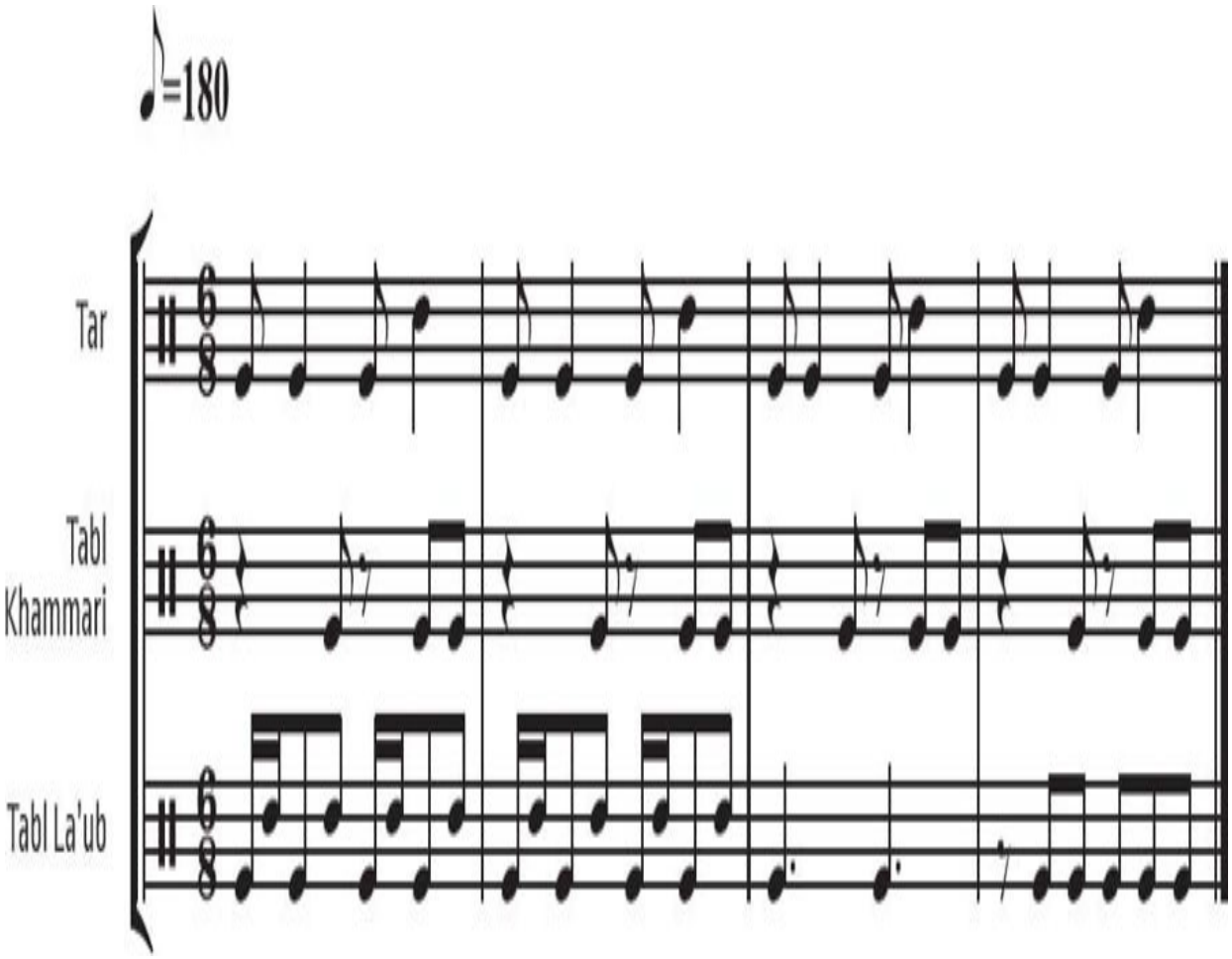



Tos
Udu
Clap
Misqa'
Tabl
Khammari


Tos
Udu
Clap
Misqa'
Tabl
Khammari
2
2

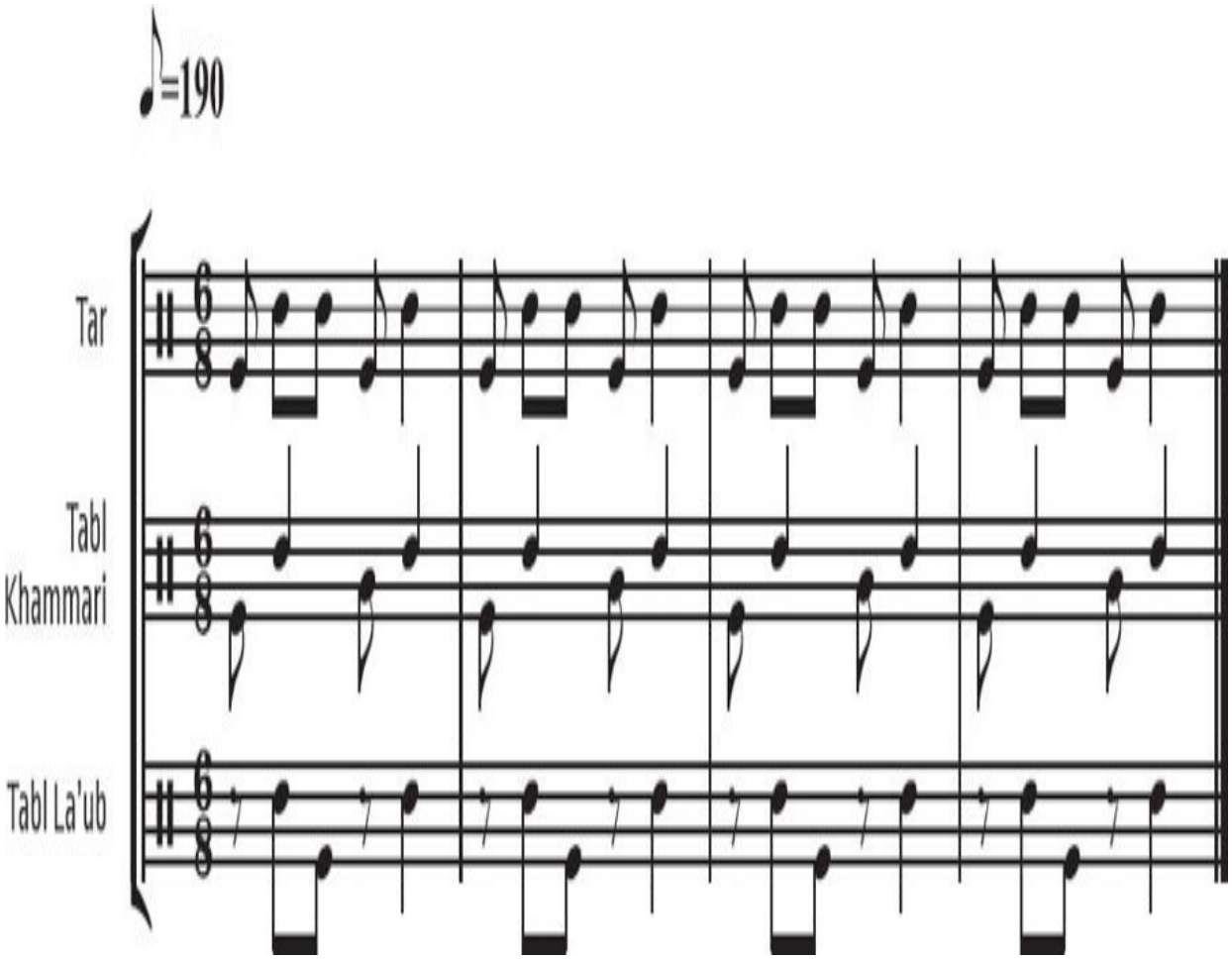
Arda Bahriyya

عرضة بحرية



Arda Barriya

عرضة برية



Oman

Oman’s appreciation of music stands out amongst all other Gulf countries. Oman was the first Arab country to become part of the International Council for Traditional Music. Under Unesco, and as early as 1984, Oman established the Oman Center for Traditional Music to preserve 130 forms of traditional Omani songs and dances. Of all musical influences on Omani rhythms from neighboring countries, the Persian coast, and the Indian subcontinent, the African influence is undeniably the greatest as Zanzibar was effectively the capital of the Sultanate for more than a century.

M’dimah

مديمة

Al m’dimah (

مديمة

), also called indima, is a sea art from Oman whith clear African ancestry. Seamen stand in a circle led by drummers playing a collection of drums called the rahmani (

رحماني

), named after the main drum instrument.

“The rahmani drums are all double-skinned drums that can be tuned by tightening the ropes that lash the skins to the body of the drum. The drums may be beaten by sticks on both sides, or by a stick on one side and a hand on the other. The rahmani is considered a symbol in Omani folkloric music. It has a deep, full sound suitable to its function of providing the main rhythmic base for the music. The kasir, by contrast, has a higher-pitched sound and usually complements the rahmani figures. The rahmani tawil (long rahmani) is usually carried vertically and has a rope that is wrapped around the drummer’s waist. The ranna (

رنةّ

) fills the middle between the rahmani and kasir.

This set also includes the kasir al qasir (

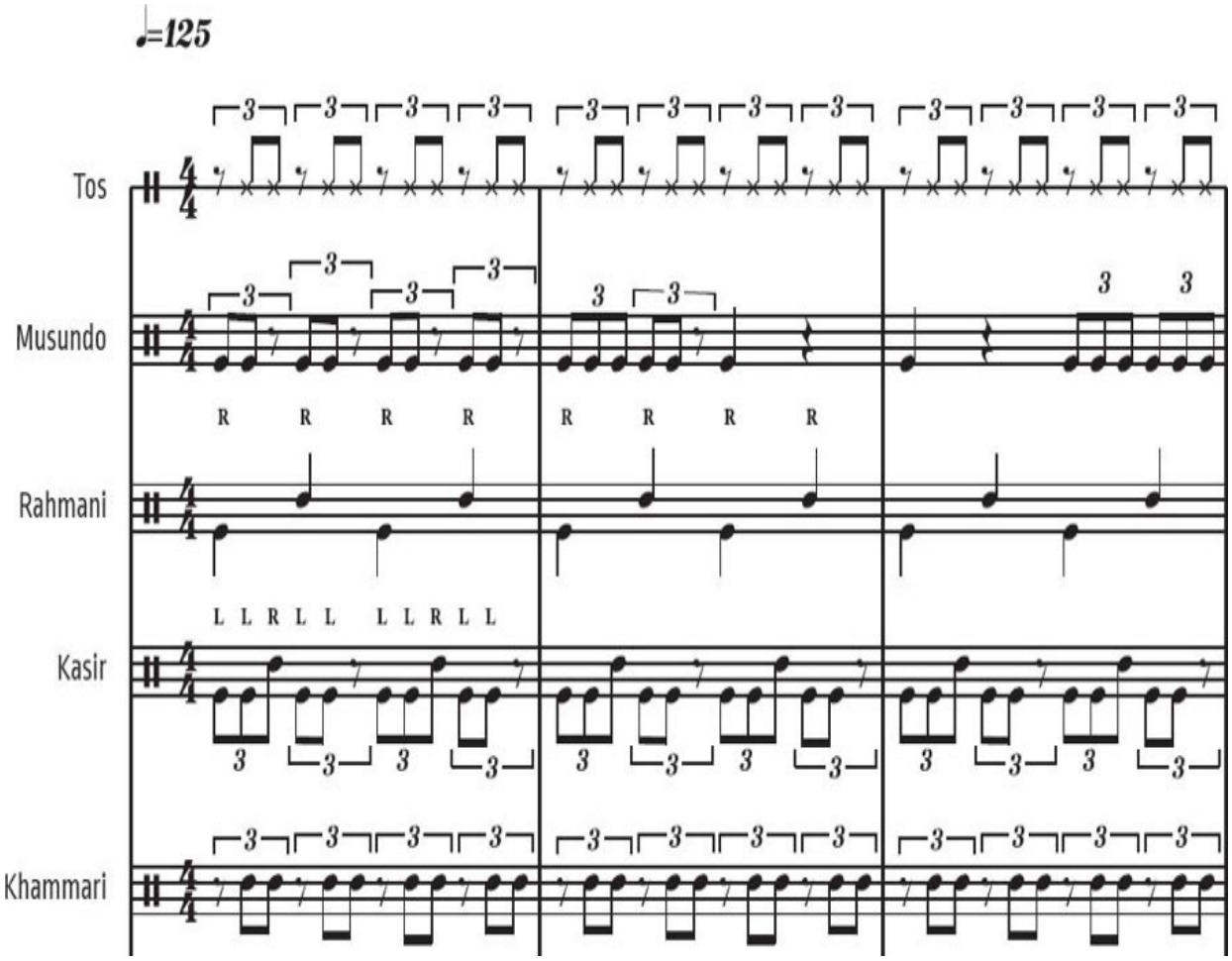
كاسر قصير

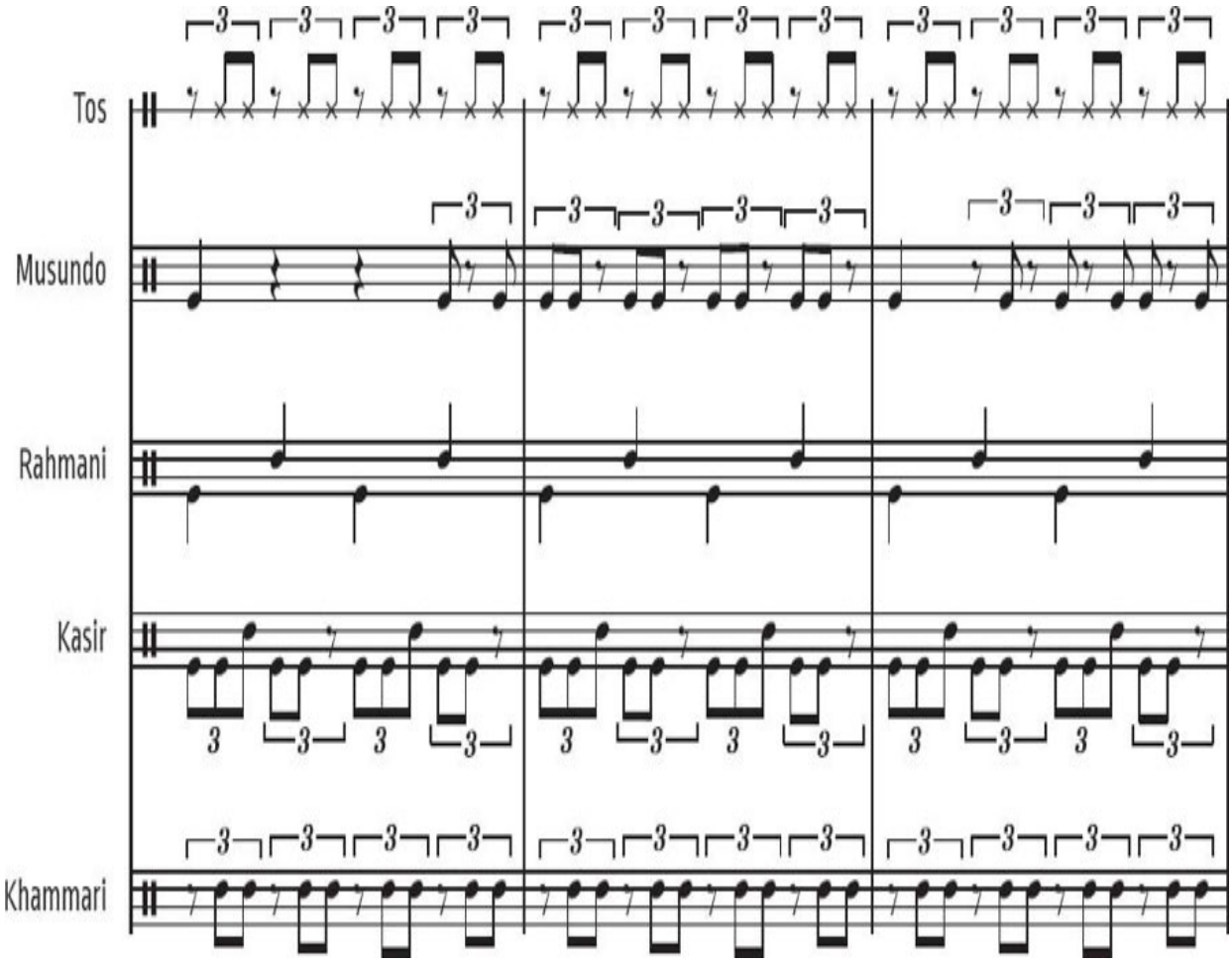
, short kasir), the kasir mufaltah (

كاسر مفلطح

, flat kasir), and the mirwas (also used in Kuwaiti sawt). The musundu is a single-skinned drum that originated in Africa” (Torstrick and Faier, 2009).

In al m’dimah, the dance is very important. The leader sings in a mix of Swahili and Arabic as the seamen collectively respond. While doing interlocking clapping, one of the group exits the line to do specific jumps then returns where he is then replaced by someone else in the group.


♩=125
Tos
Musundo
R R R R R R R R
Rahmani
Kasir
L L R L L L L R L L
Khammari


Tos
Musundo
Rahmani
Kasir
Khammari

Razha

رزحة

Razha (

رزحة

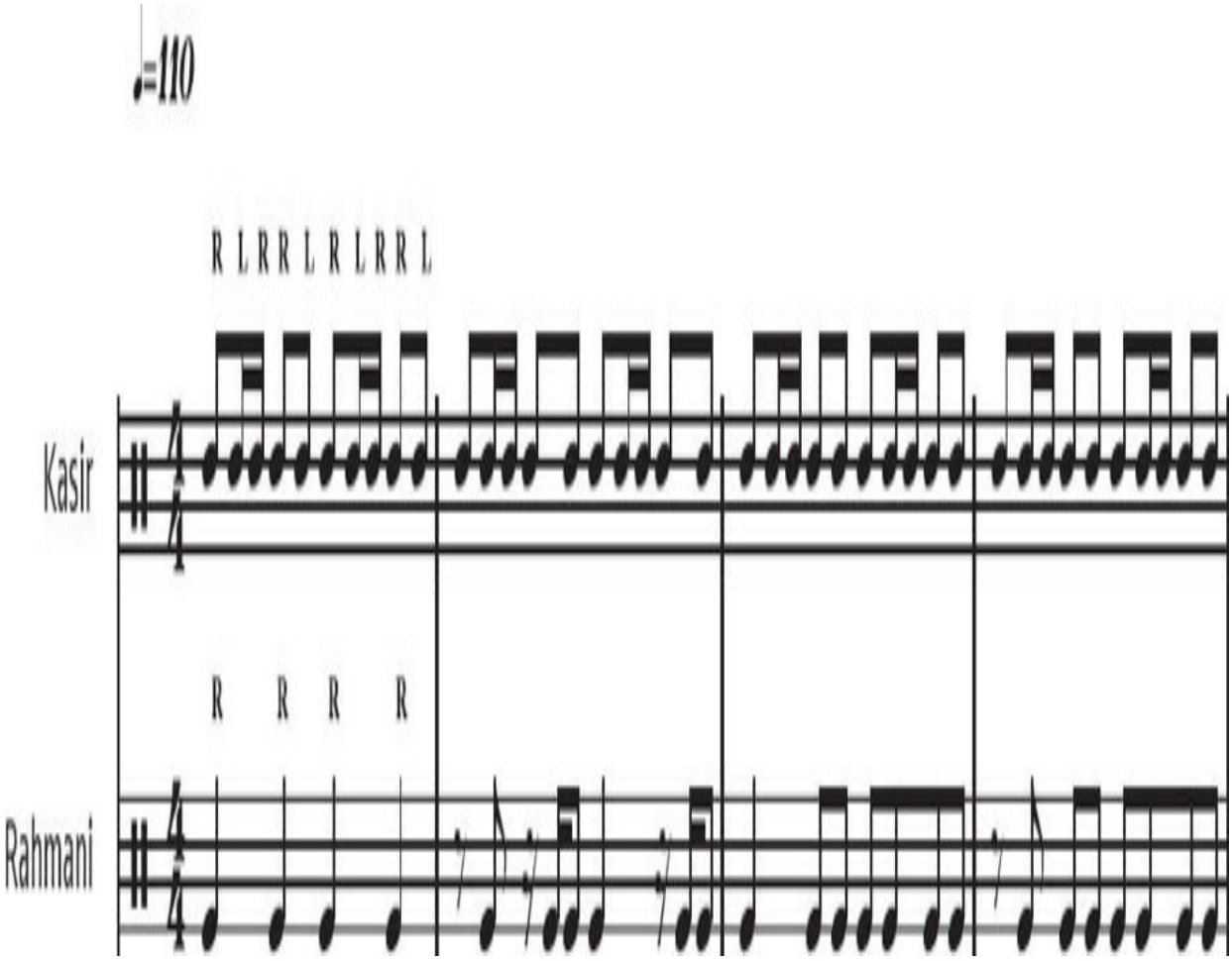
) is the oldest and most famous folk art of Oman and is concerned with subjects as diverse as the art of sword fighting, war, courage, pride, praise, as well as social commentary made through the use of the lampoon. Razha has three different subgenres: hambal, qassafi and al-lal al-‘ud.

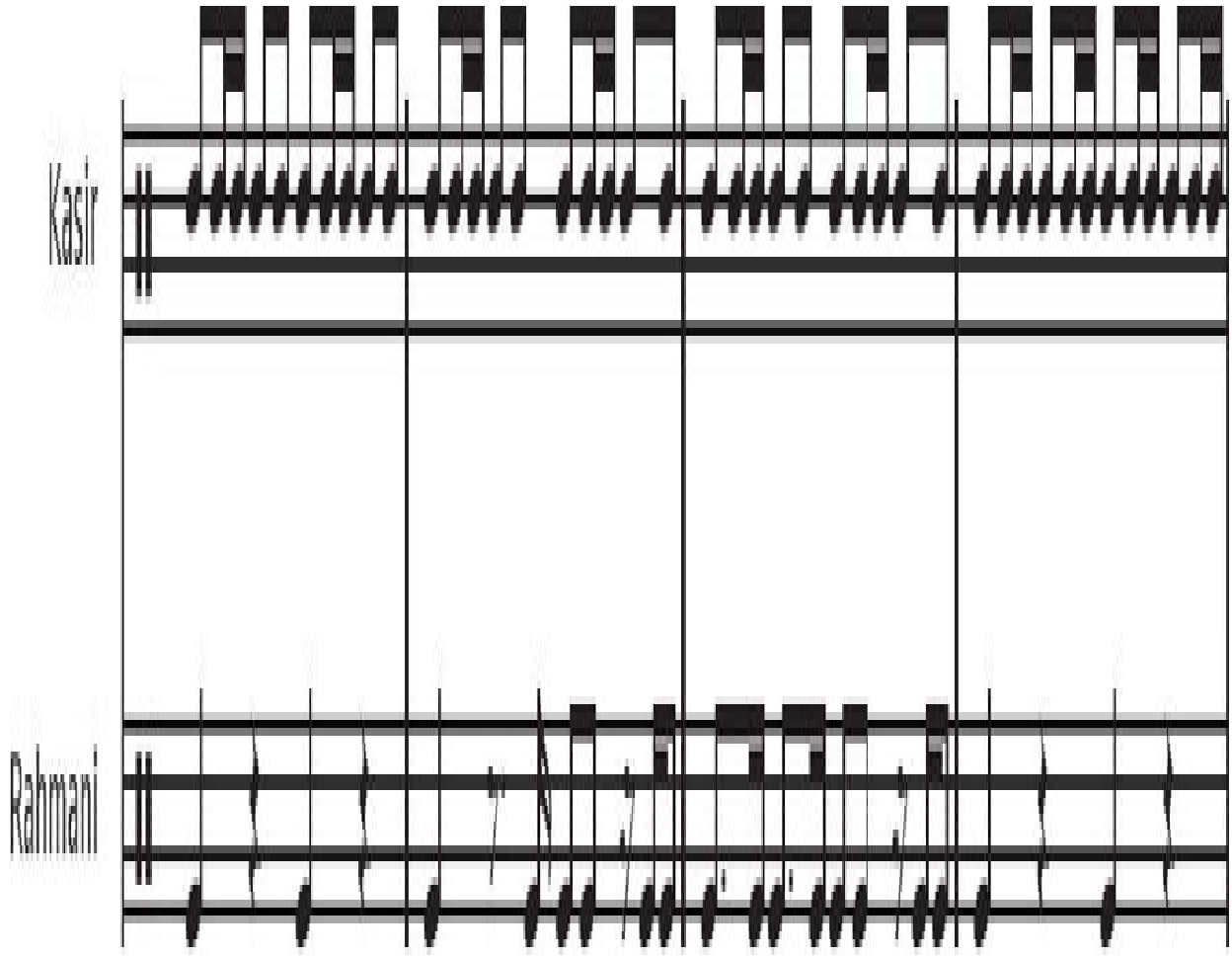
In the qassafia (razha qassafi), men stand in two opposing lines while drummers move in between them and the men take turns singing. In qassafi two rahmani drums are used only: the kasir and the rahmani (see al m’dimah). However, in certain areas of Oman up to four drums can be used, with the provision that they should all be rahmani (see m’dimah). Qassafia (

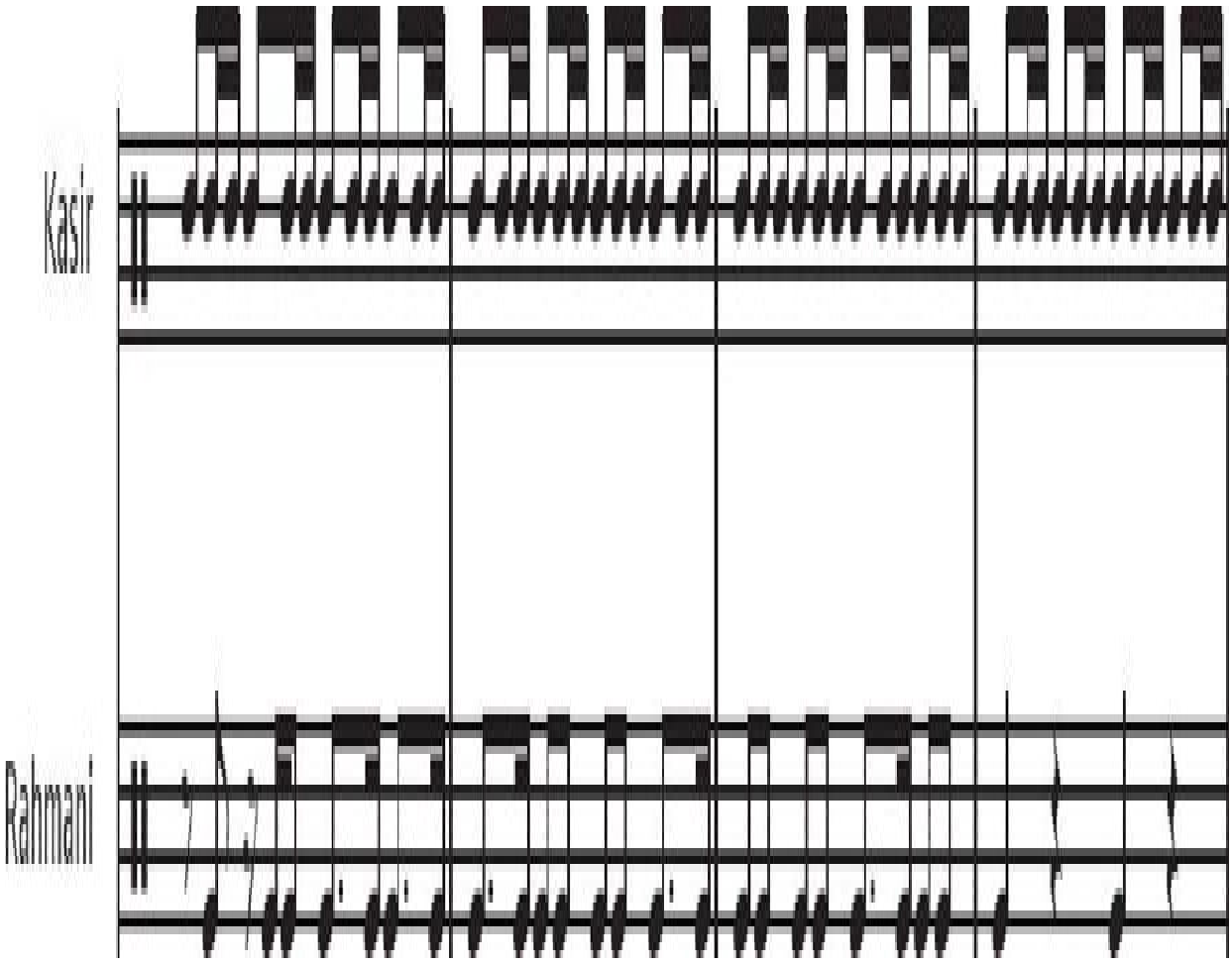
قصافية

) is a fast razha.

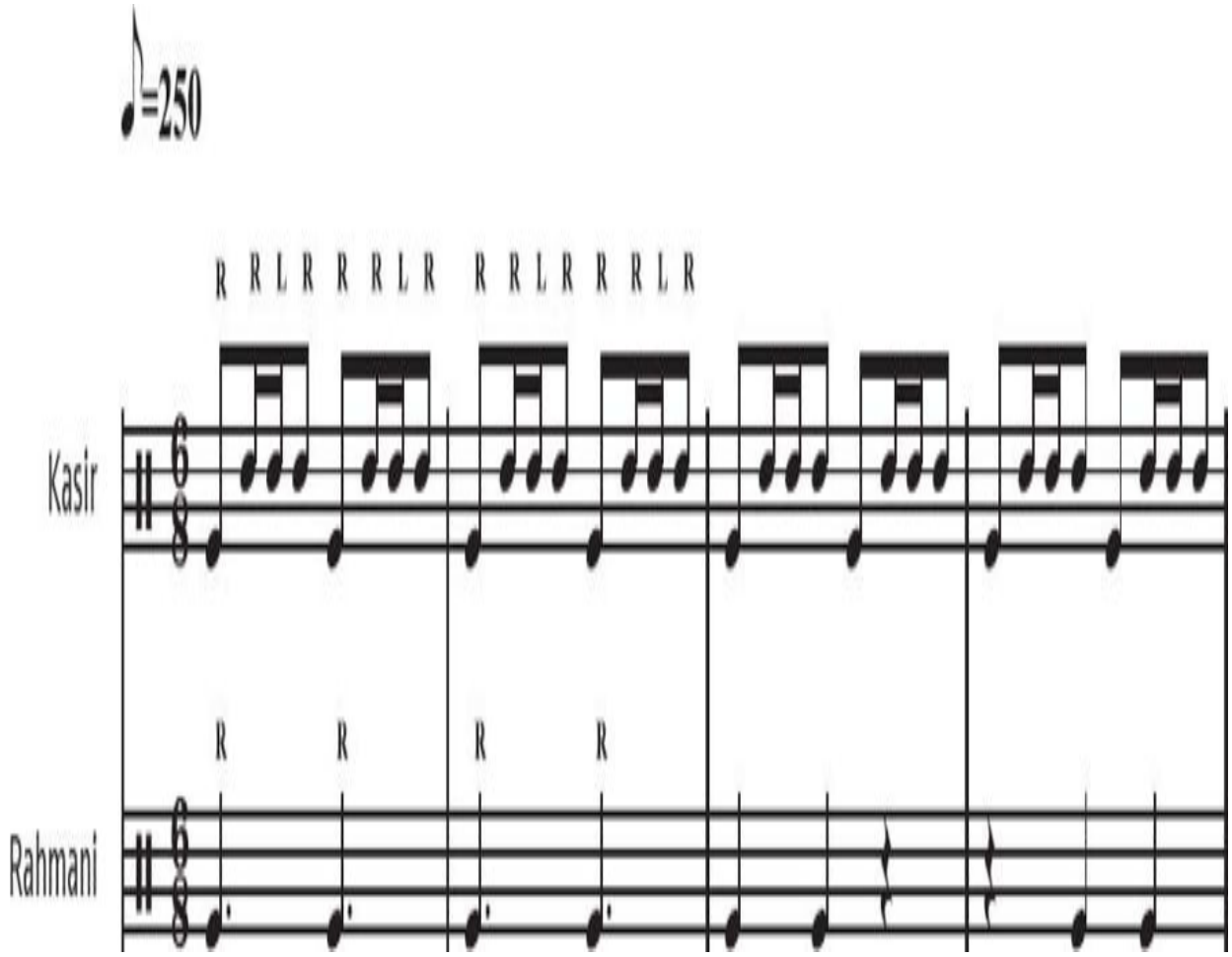
Razha in 4/4

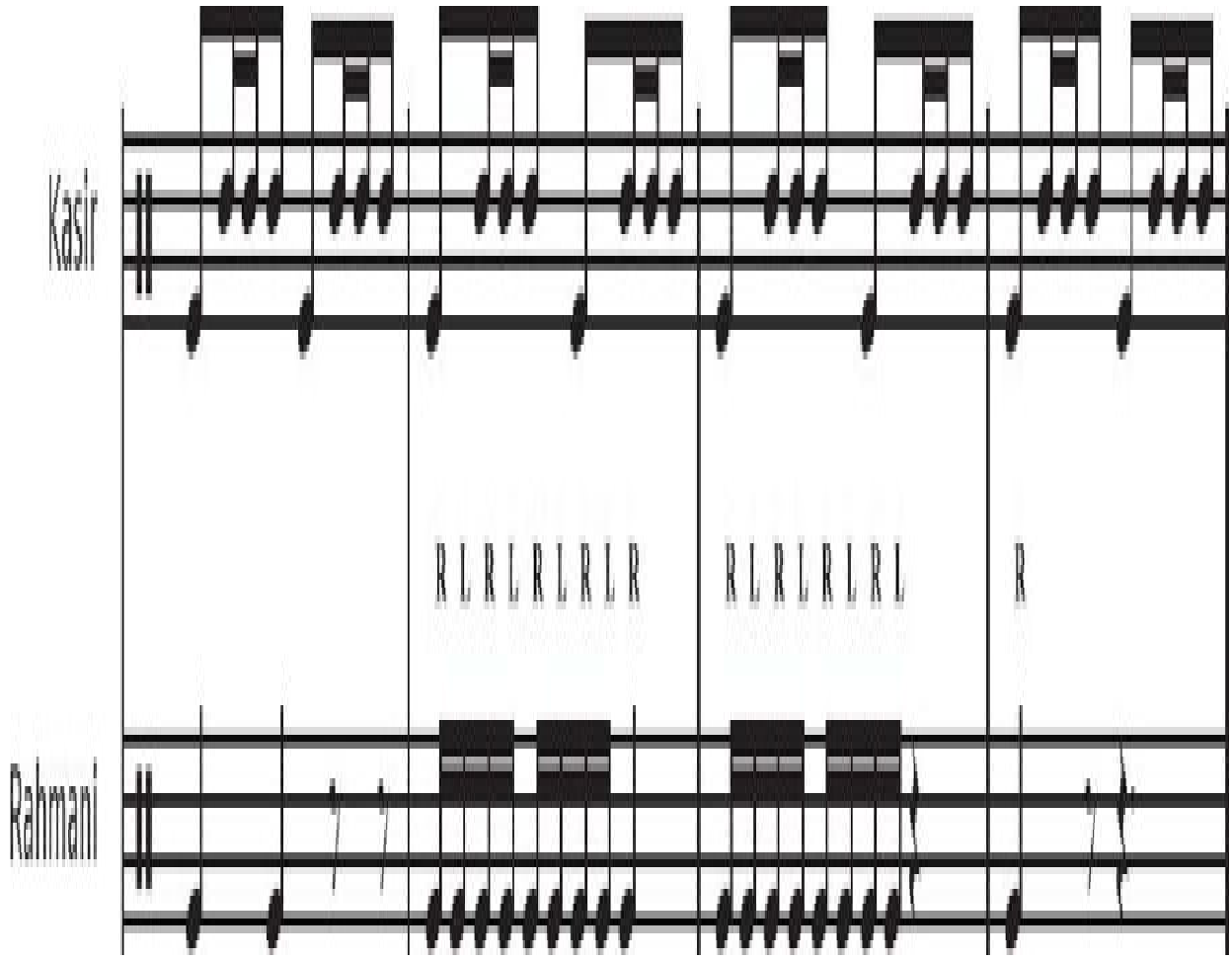

♩=110
R L R R L R L R R L
Kasir
R R R R
Rahmani

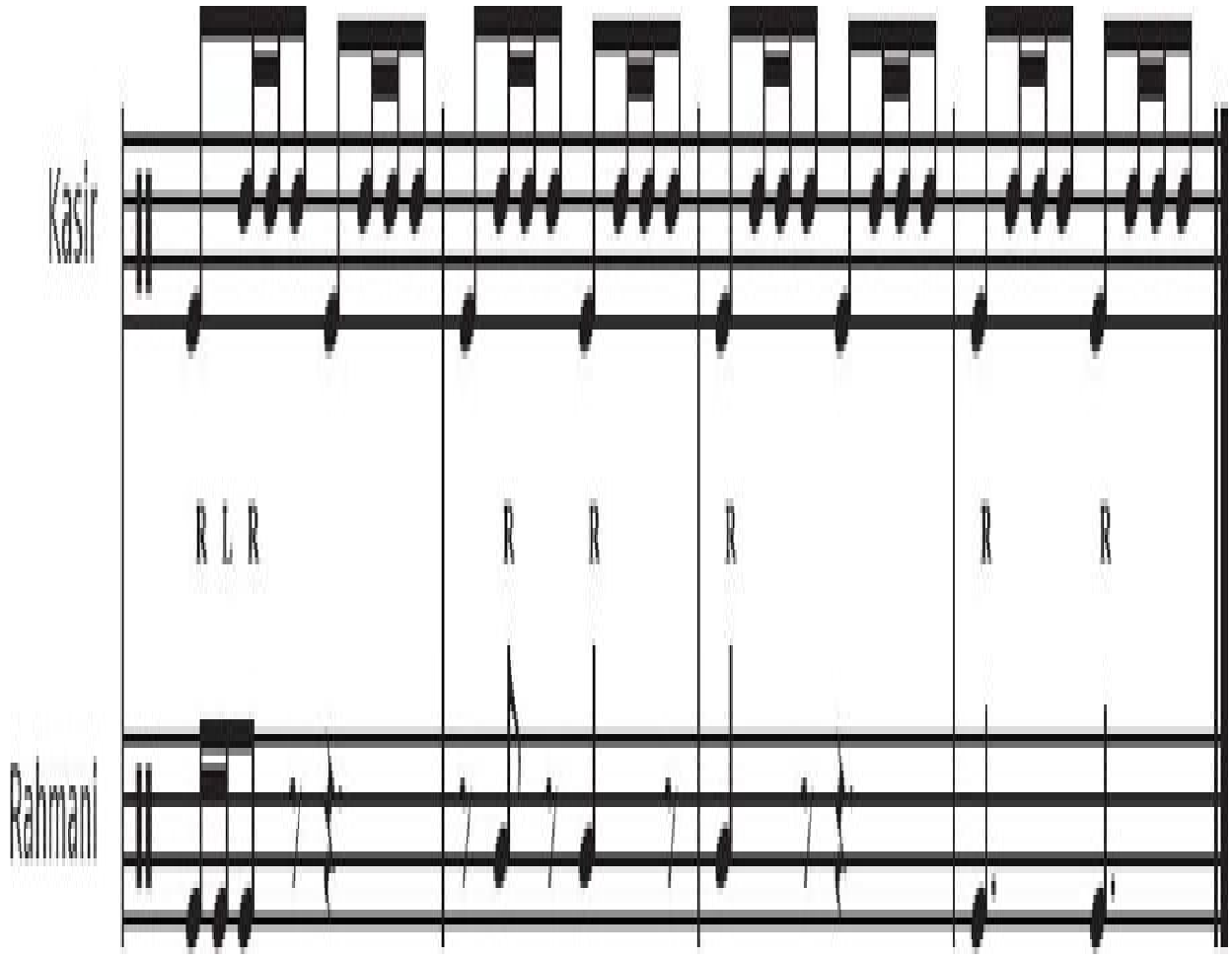

Kasir
Rahmani



Razha in 6/8


♩=250
R R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R
Kasir
R R R R
Rahmani


Kashr
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
Rahmani


Kasir
R L R
R
R
R
R
R
Rahmani

Rabuba

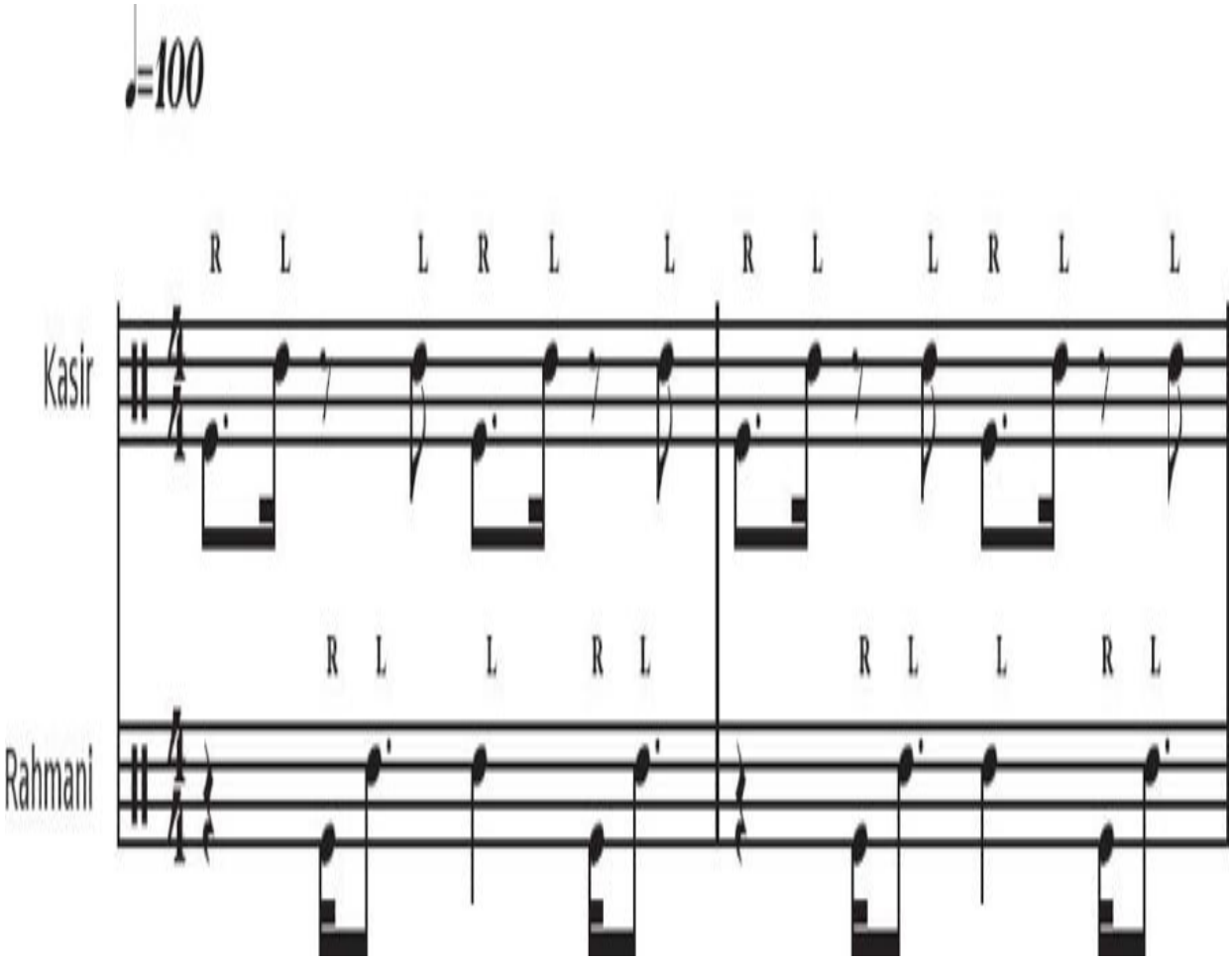
ربوبة

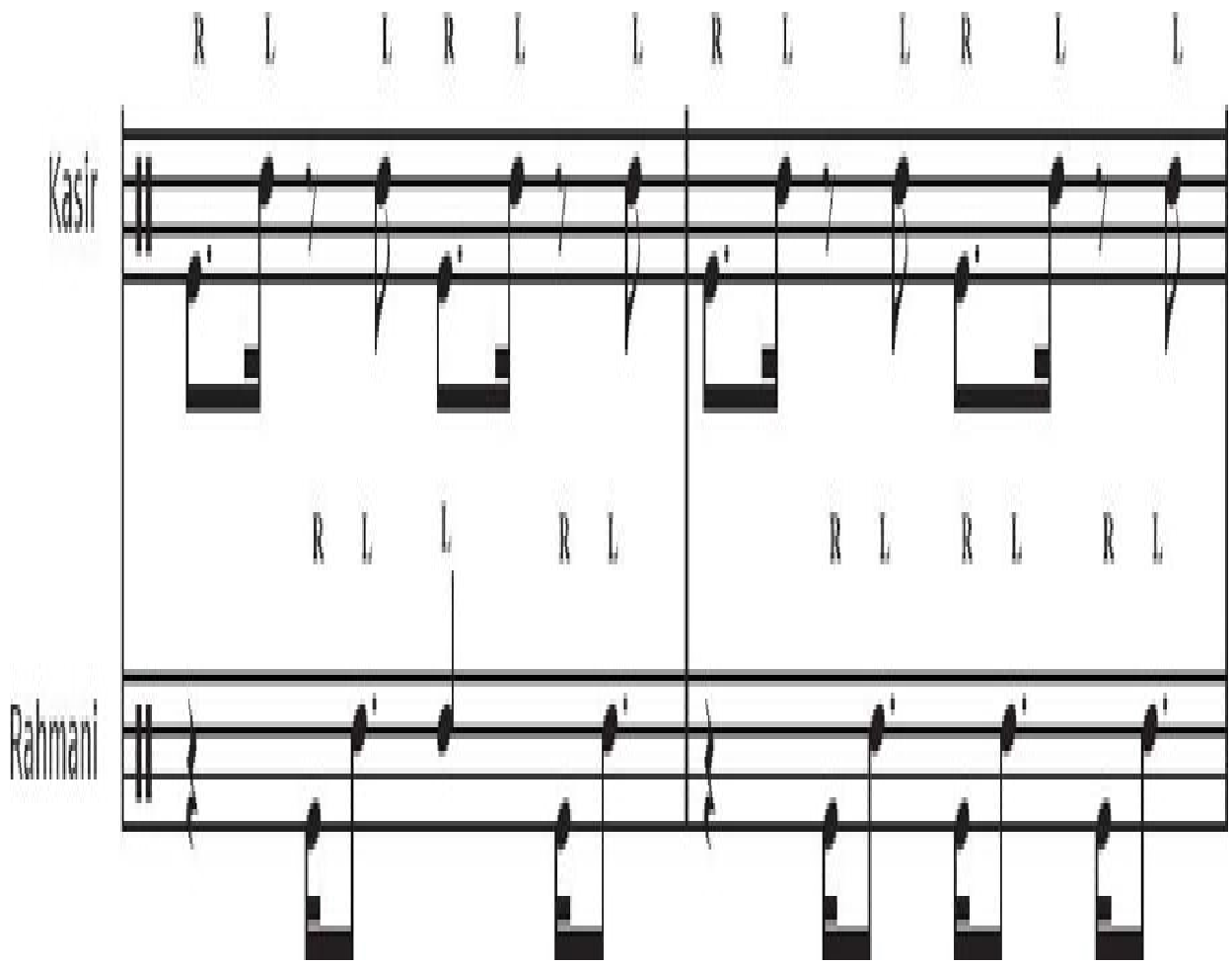
The rabuba (

الربوبة

) is a dance native to the governorate of Dhofar, which lies in southern Oman on the eastern border of Yemen. It is believed that in, old times, this art was played with the rababa. (“rebab” is a one-string bowed instrument played by Bedouins and the name rabuba comes from there.) In the small town of Rakhyut, however, on the border with Yemen, it is still referred to by its original name, the rababa.

What’s different about the rabuba is that, unlike other genres, the kasir does the work of the rahmani, i.e. it maintains the basic pulse of the music while the rahmani does the kasir’s work of complementing the music and improvising. This genre can sometimes be accompanied by clapping.


♩=100
R L L R L L R L L R L L
Kasir
R L L R L R L L R L L R L
Rahmani


R L L R L L R L L R L L
Kasir
R L L R L R L R L
Rahmani

Bahrain

Long before the discovery of oil Bahrainis were largely dependent on the pearl diving industry, the largest producer of work songs in east Arabia. The singer of the vessel, called the nahham (

نهام

), was the most important member of the crew. He motivated and energized the divers during the months-long trips into the sea and entertained them at night joined by a chorus complimented by interlocking clapping. Bahrain was an early major contributor to the art of aghani al-ghaws (

اغاني الغوص

, diving songs), but it wasn’t long until Bahrain’s iconic musician Mohamed Bin Faris (1895 – 1947) made a name for himself by refining sawt in his own way, building, as he did, upon the body of work of Abdallah Al Faraj (see Kuwait) and thus making Bahrain the second major contributor to sawt after Kuwait. As Kuwaiti sawt has already been covered, other Bahraini traditional arts are presented here.

Besta

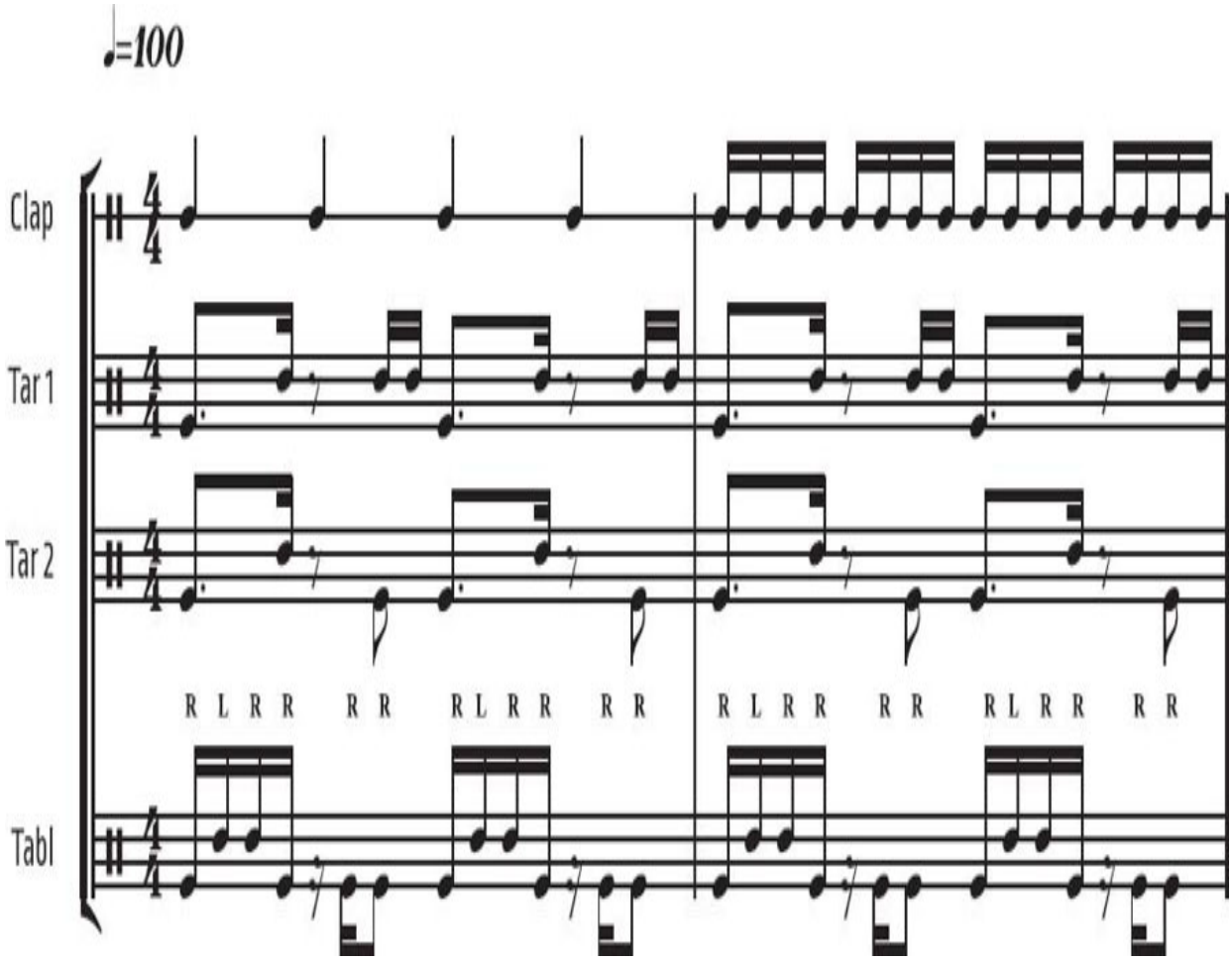
بستة

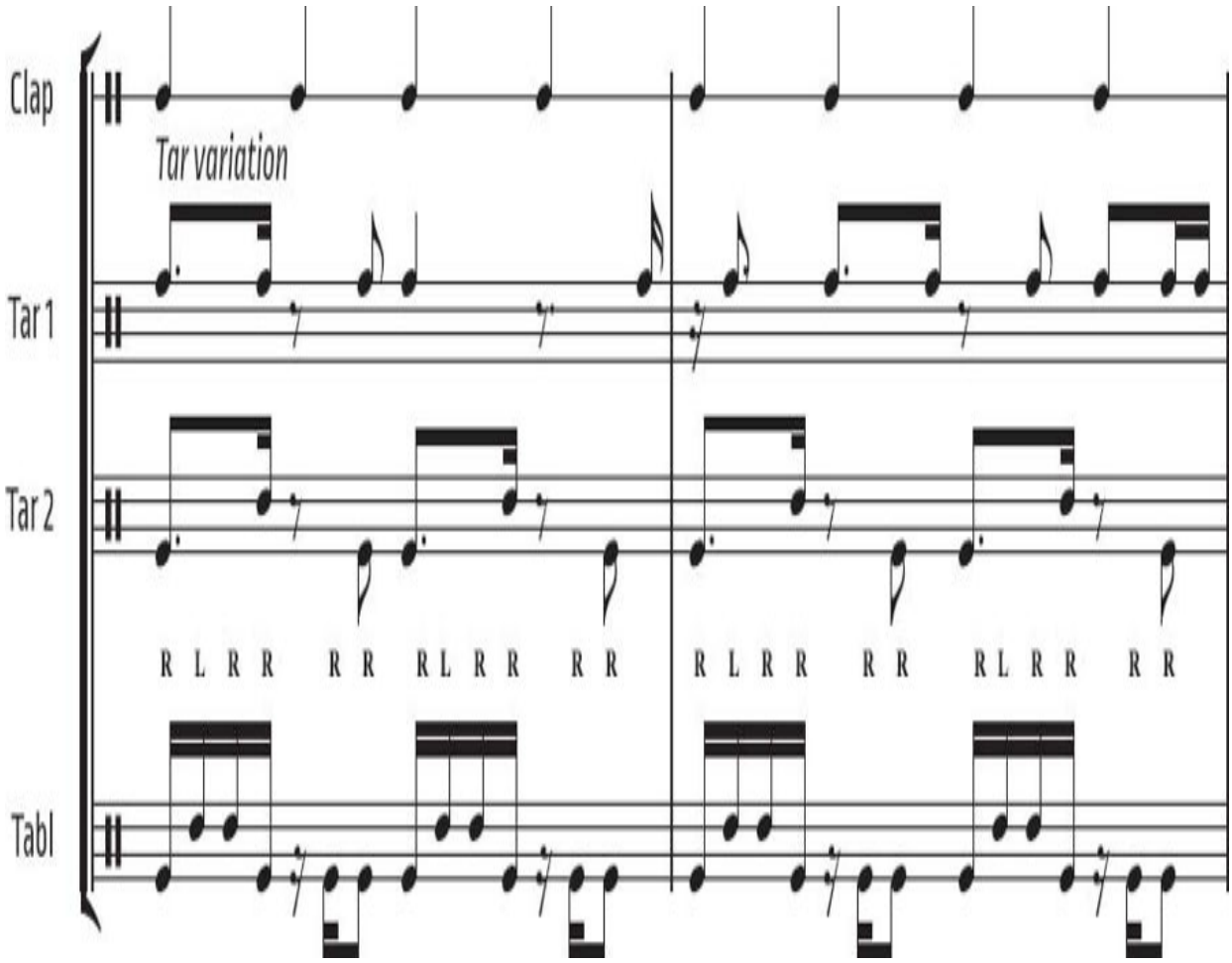
Besta (

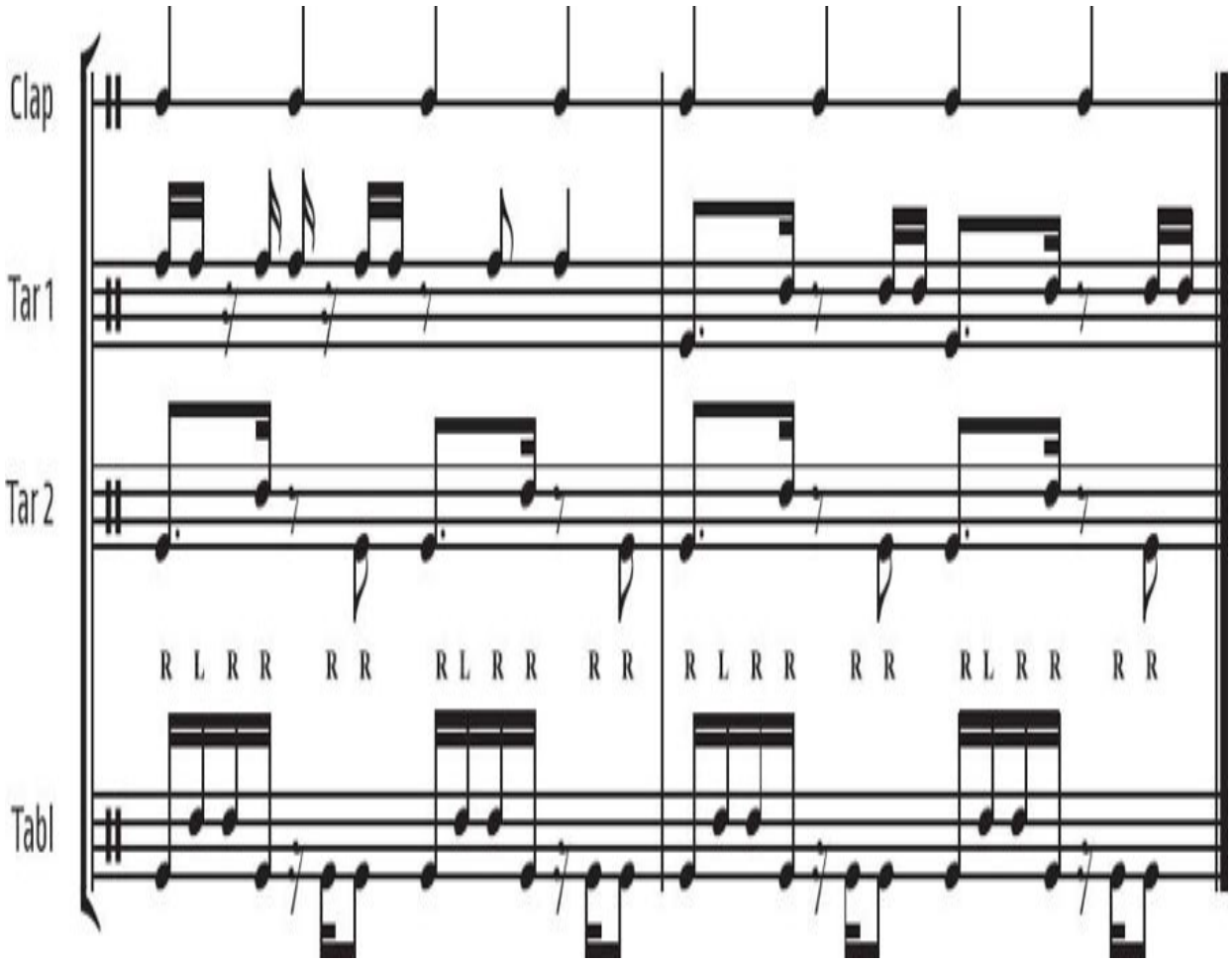
البستة

) comes from Iraq where it is called pesta and it can be compared to the sawt genre of eastern Arabia. Pesta songs are usually played after an Iraqi maqam recital and their themes are mostly centered around love and separation (Killius, Rolf: “Love and Separation in Baghdad”).

“In the Gulf, besta can be performed like other arts, with just a tar and tabl bahri, or it can be presented like urban music, with an ‘ud and percussion ensemble accompanying the main singer. Besta is well known throughout the Upper Gulf but it is the Bahrainis who particularly excel at it” (Urkevich 2015, 108).


♩=100
Clap
Tar 1
Tar 2
Tabl
R L R R R R R L R R R R R L R R R R R L R R R R


Clap
Tar variation
Tar 1
Tar 2
R L R R R R R L R R R R
R L R R R R R L R R R R
Tabl


Clap
Tar 1
Tar 2
R L R R R R R L R R R R R L R R R R R L R R R R
Tabl

‘Ashuri

عاشوري

“Among the many dances performed at wedding festivities, ‘ashuri (

عاشوري

) and dazza (

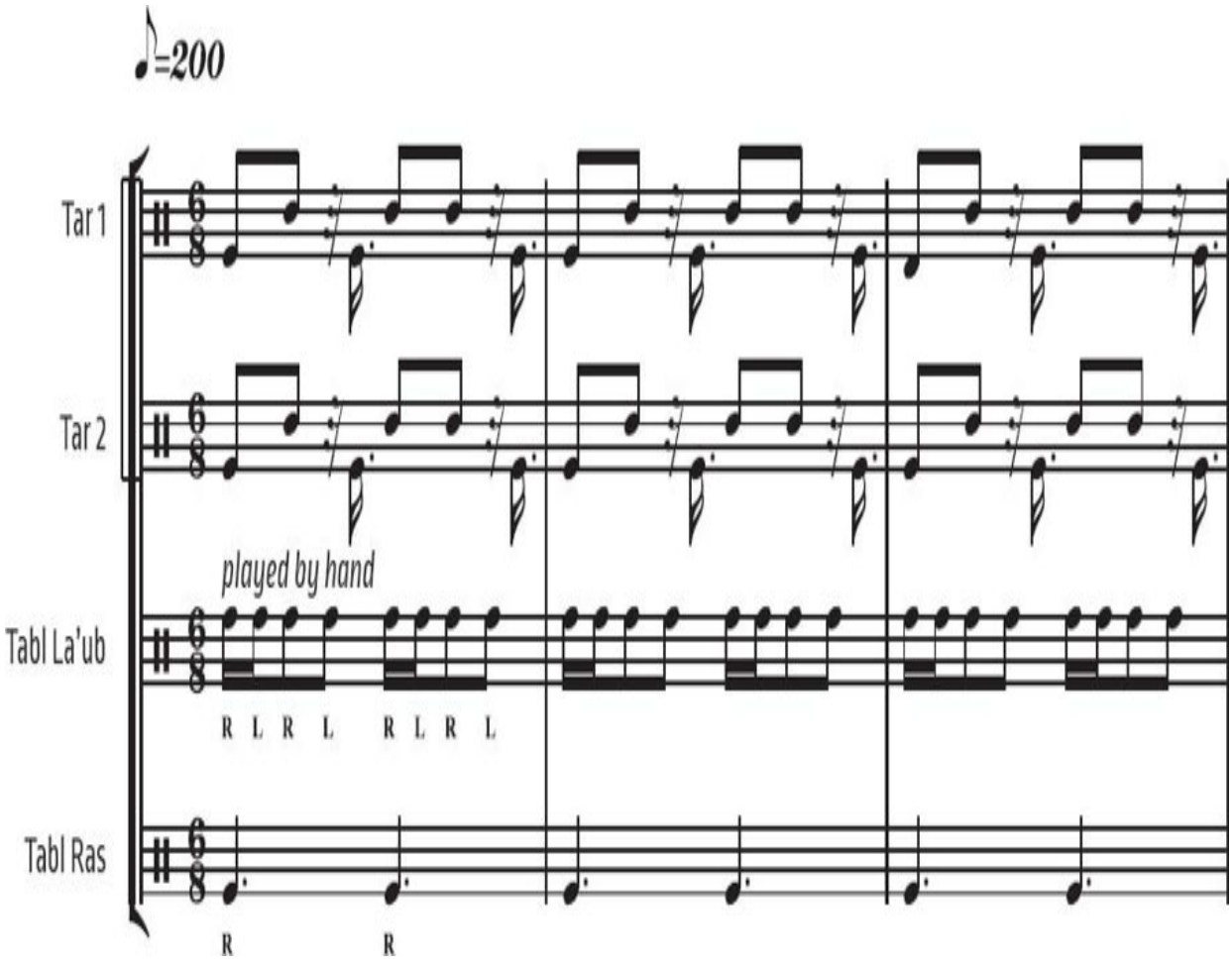
دزة

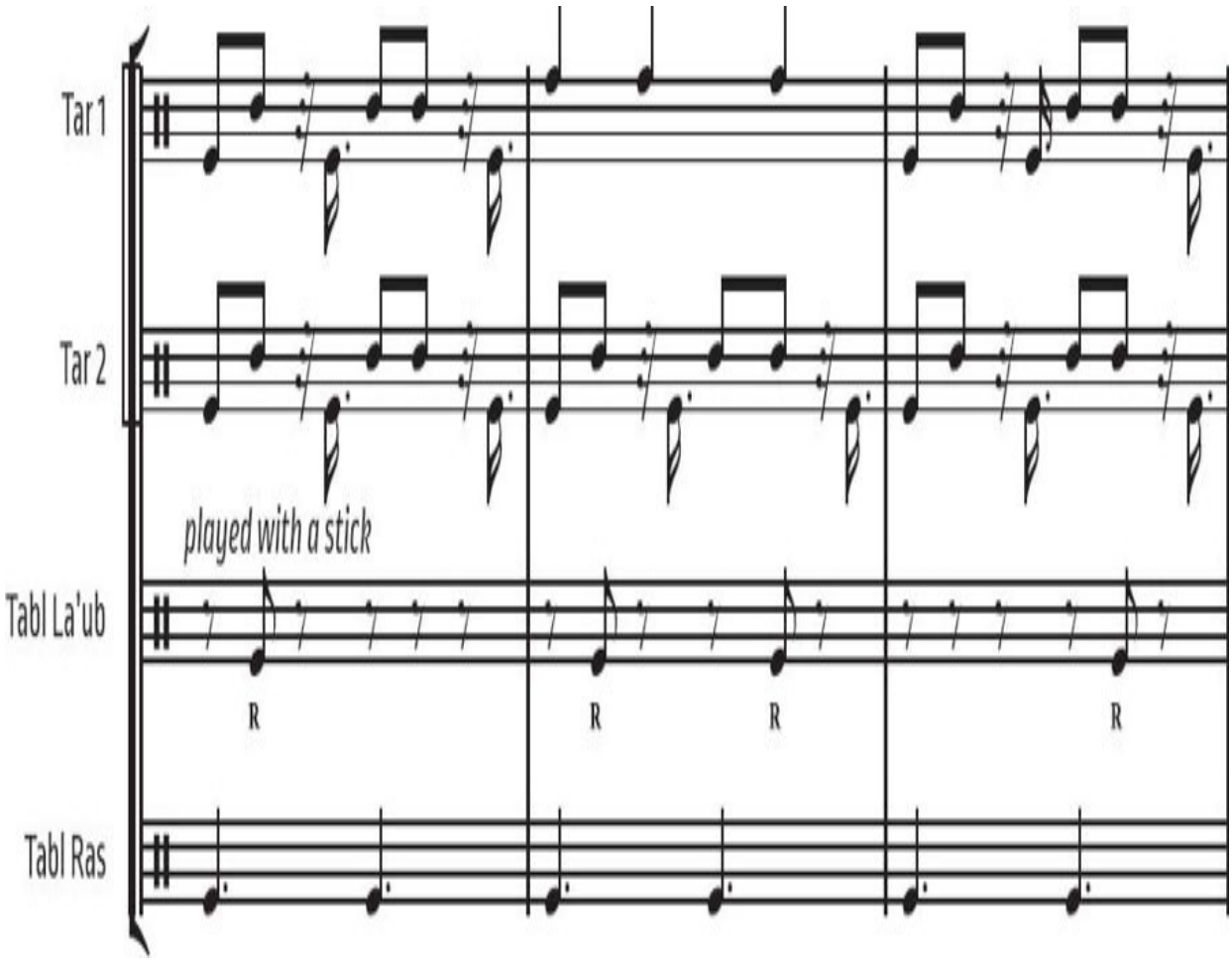
) have a special place. When the procession moves to the house of the bride, traditionally ‘ashuri is sung and danced. But when arriving at the bride’s house, the ‘ashuri will be substituted by a dazza” (Olsen 2002, 71). Due to the fact that the Shiite sect is prevalent in Bahrain, it is possible that the name of this genre is related to the word ‘ashura.

There’s a strong similarity between the Qatari ‘arda and the Bahraini ‘ashuri, as if both could be descendants from the triple samri. The instrumentation for the ‘ashuri consists of tiran (singular tar), two tabl bahri (one acts as ras i.e. leads and the other as khammari i.e. freely embellishes).

“The tabl bahri parts are requisite (unlike in samri) as their rhythms interlock with the frame drum part. All parts should be performed a bit off the beat, irregularly, so that they do not line up smoothly. A proper ‘ashuri has an idiosyncratic rhythmic feel” (Urkevich 2015, 106).

Note that in this transcription, the irregularity is shown where 32nd notes are found.




Tar 1
Tar 2
played with a stick
Tabl La'ub
R
R
R
R
Tabl Ras

Qatar

Qatar is a small peninsula that is bordered by Saudi Arabia. It was Najdi tribes who probably found their way there centuries ago and brought their music along with them. The ‘arda in Qatar doesn’t seem to have any variations except in instrumentation and tempo. There’s such a close similarity between Qatari ‘arda and Najdi samri that there’s little doubt they have both evolved from the same samri clave. Like its neighbors, Qatar has a rich history in pearl-diving and trade and therefore shares a lot of the sawt music traditions of Bahrain and Kuwait.

‘Arda

عرضة

The provided transcription is from a typical ‘arda performance in Qatar which can be intense because of the use of up to sixteen barashem (

براشم

, frame drums with camel bells attached on the inside), four mirjaf (a large frame drum), a hager (

هاجر

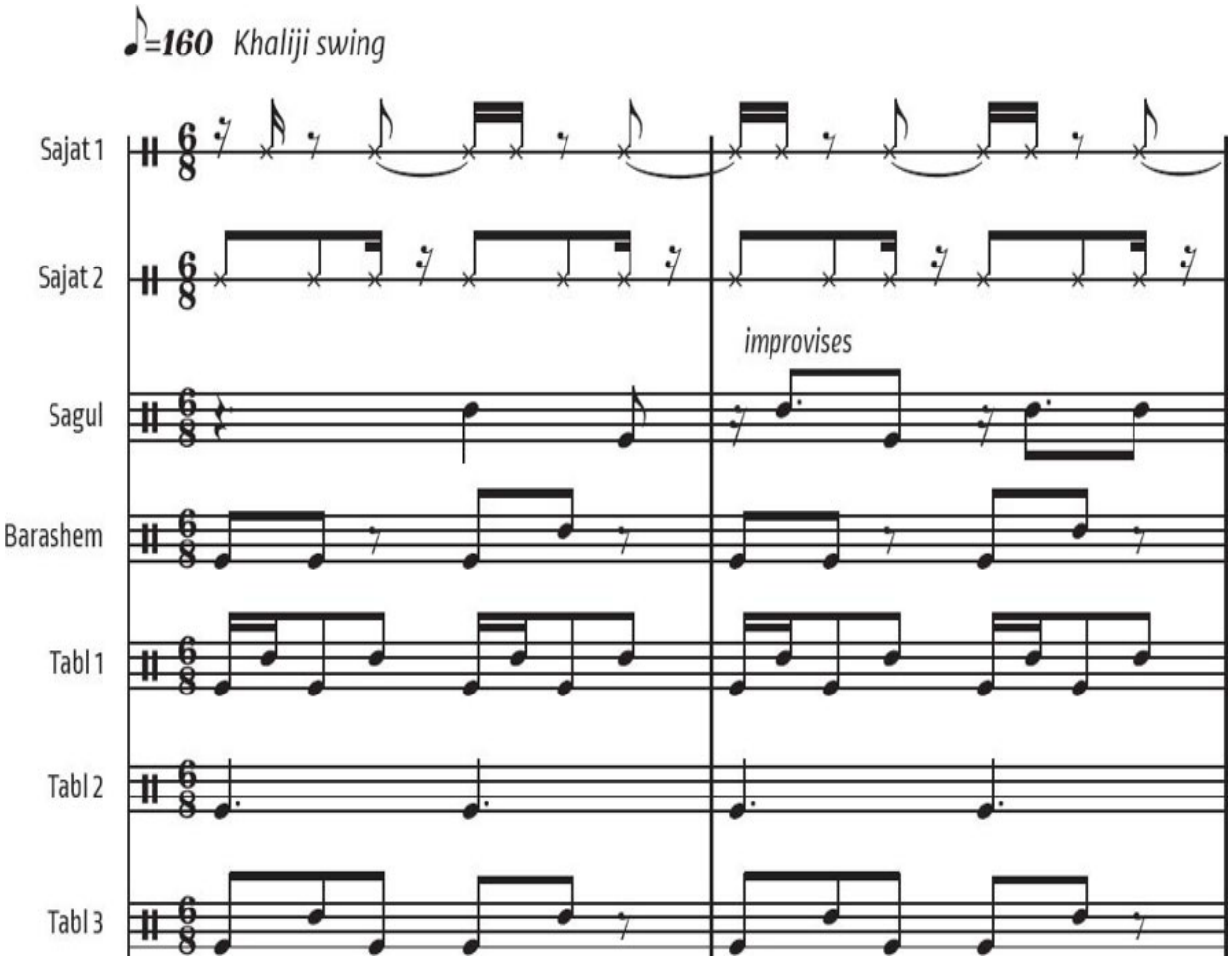
, a double-headed barrel drum), a tabl (a barrel drum), sajat (

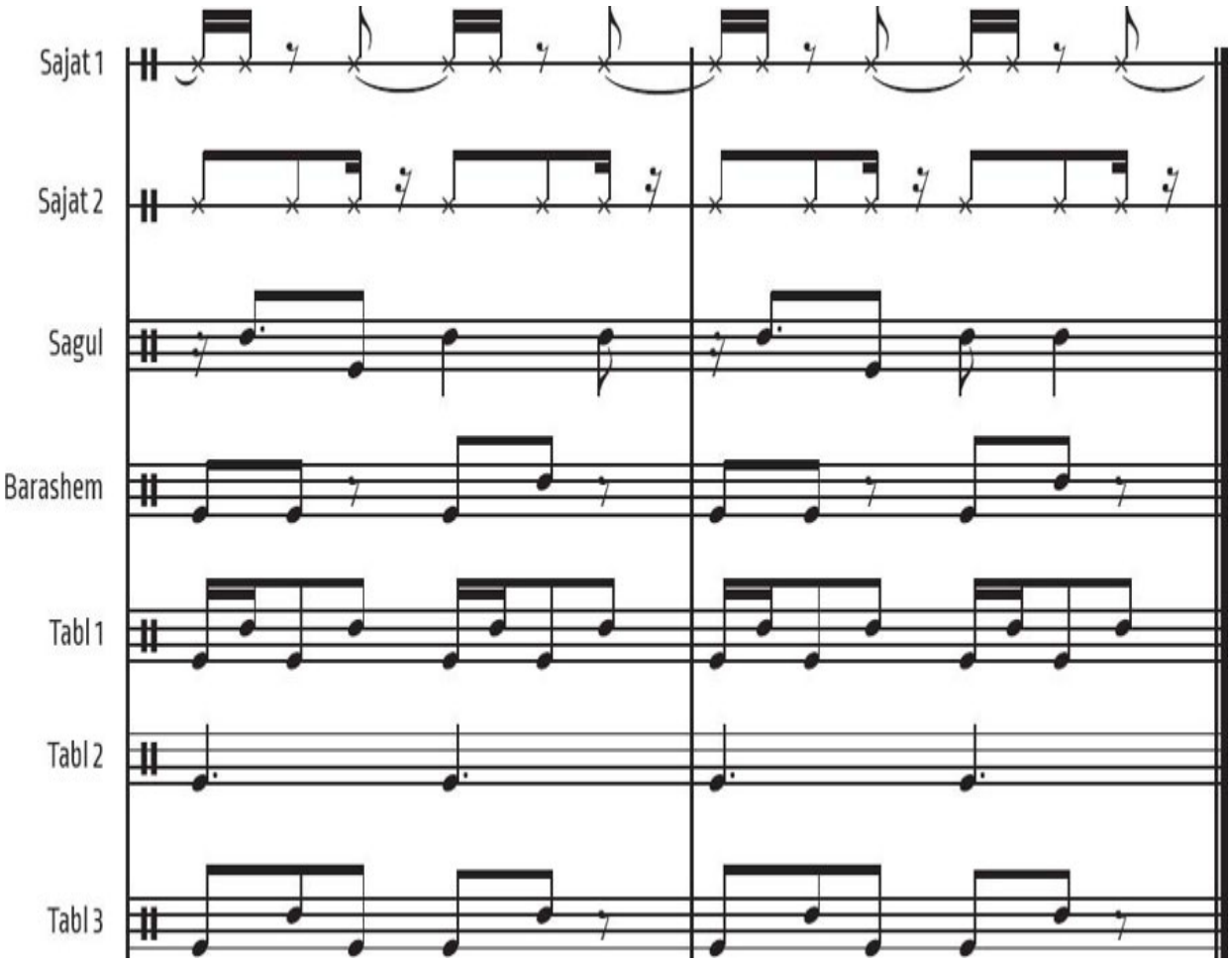
ساجات

, or tos, finger cymbals), and a saqul (

صاقول

, an accenting high-pitched frame drum). Sometimes a dahola (low-end derbuka) will be added for more bass punch.

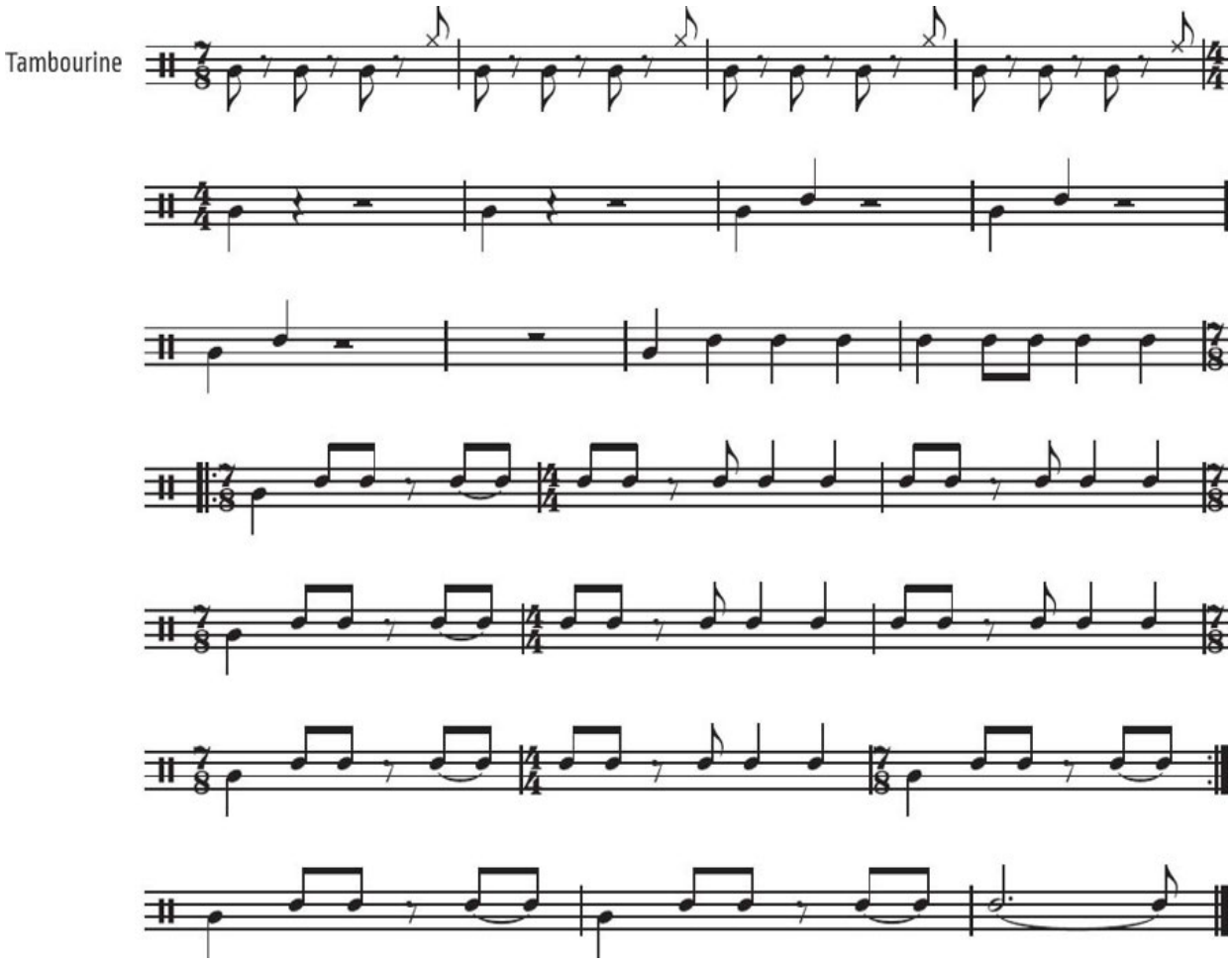

♪=160 Khaliji swing
Sajat 1
Sajat 2
improvises
Sagul
Barashem
Tabl 1
Tabl 2
Tabl 3


Sajat 1
Sajat 2
Sagul
Barashem
Tabl 1
Tabl 2
Tabl 3

Arabana Muttu

“Arabana (or aravana) muttu is one of the most important vocal and percussion dance genres of the Maplah community from Kerala in south India. The dancers and chanters of this community settled in Qatar and are descendants of Arab seafarers and Kerala women who still live today in the coastal areas of northern Kerala and the Arabic countries around the Gulf. Arabana muttu belongs to the genre of devotional Islamic music sung in Arabic and mixed with the south Indian language Malayalam. The veneration of Allah and his prophet Mohammed is central to the lyrics. Eight male dancers and singers support themselves on the arabana, a small tambourine frame drum of Arabic origin (similar to the dof). In a kneeling position the artists dance in cycles and at the same time sing in a call-and-response style while whirling the drums around their bodies” (Killius, Rolf: “Devotional Songs, Dances on Knees and Tambourines”)

The main elements of an Arabana Muttu performance are the devotional words and the choreographic moves. Apparently, there is no one unified rhythm for this genre. Rather, every rhythm follows the beats of the verses. The transcription provided here is from an Arabana Muttu performance published by the Qatar Digital Library and serves only as an example.

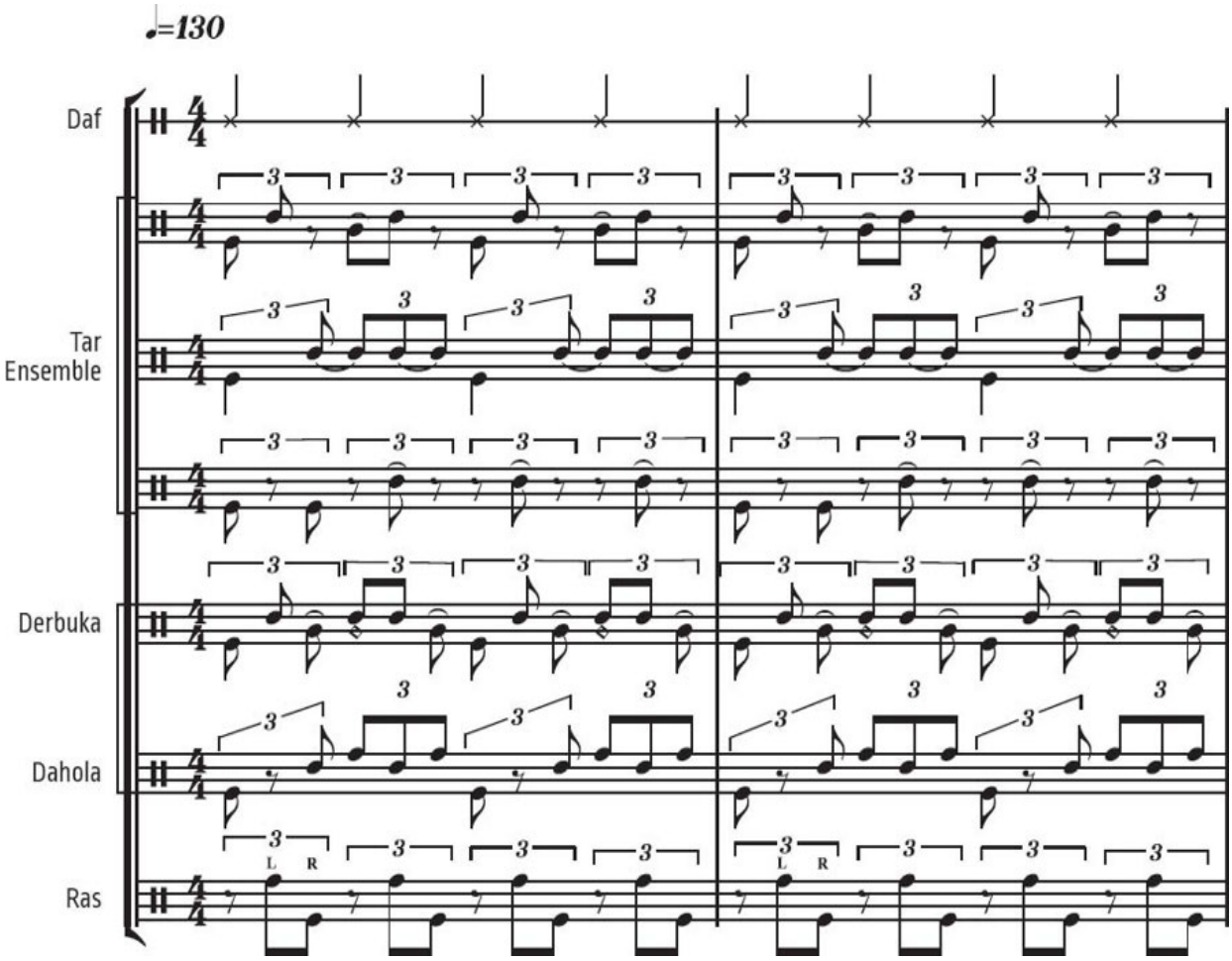

Tambourine

Appendix

Bandari

بندري

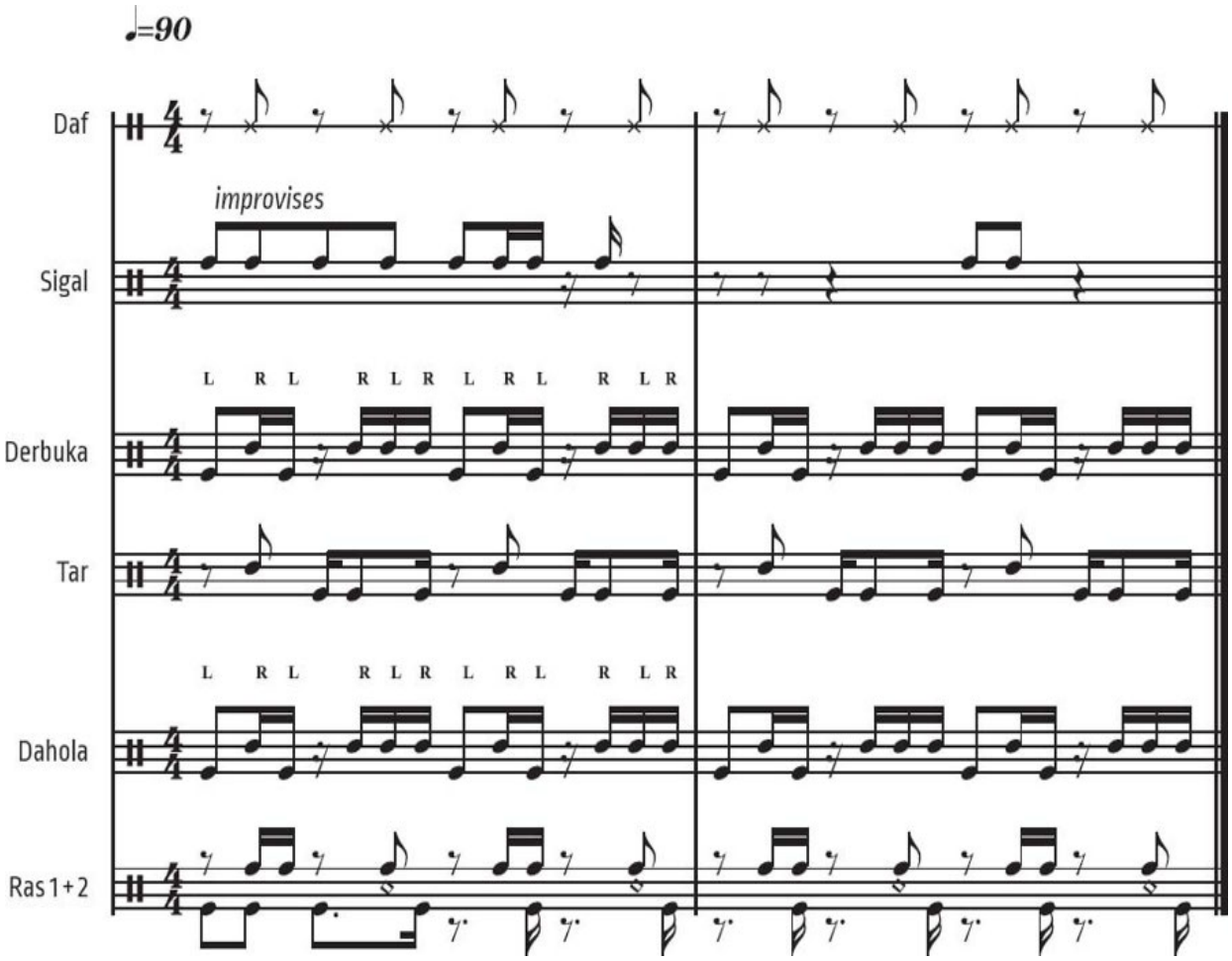
Bandari is a musical genre from the south of Iran. Bandar means “port” in Farsi and refers to the region in Iran that is on the Persian Gulf (also referred to as the Arabian Gulf). The coast of south Iran faces the coasts of the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia and there’s ample evidence that there was a great deal of music exchanged between the boats of the pearl divers and those of the traders between these various coasts. Bandari is very well known today in the Arabian Peninsula going by the name from where it originated. It has a 6/8 rhythm polyrhythmic feel and even though traditional bandari is played with a Persian tonbak, a derbuka and a dof, the khaliji musicians use a dahola (bass derbuka), a derbuka, a dof, frame drums, and a ras.


♩=130
Daf
Tar
Ensemble
Derbuka
Dahola
Ras
L
R
L
R

Khaliji ‘Arabi

خليجي عربي

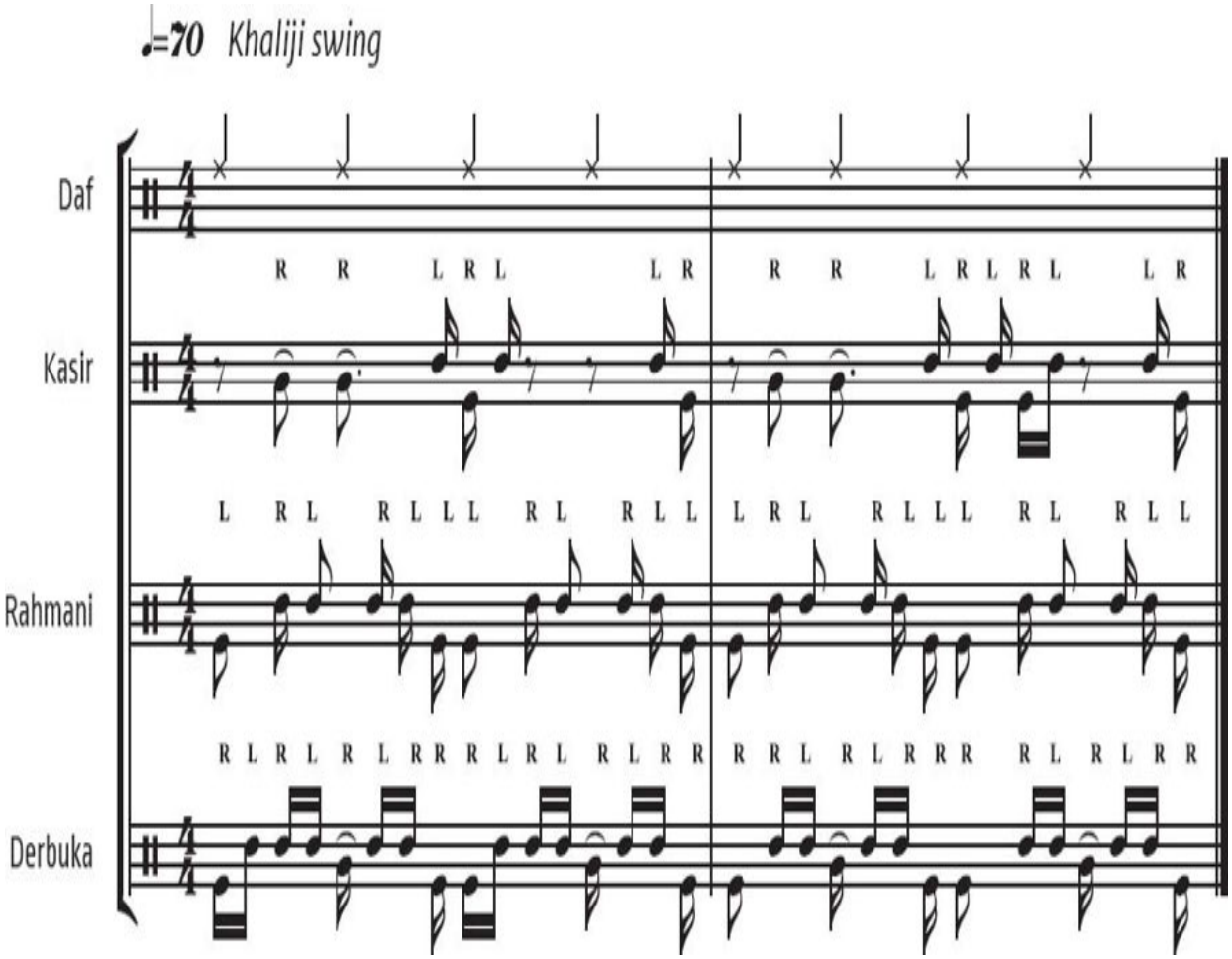
Along with khaliji Rumba, khaliji ‘Arabi is another characteristic sound of khaliji pop.



Cha’abi Emirati

شعبي إماراتي

Cha’abi Emirati is heard on countless songs in Emirati pop (cha’abi means popular). This rhythm is locally called dodek and it is very well known all throughout the Gulf.



Glossary

Arabia Felix: The Latin name previously used to describe southern Arabia (present day Yemen).

‘arda (

عرضة

): A battle-dance desert genre widespread across the Gulf in different forms and variations.

asas (

اساس

): Means “main”: It is the name of the main drum of the ensemble, also the name of the smallest zir in a Baha percussion ensemble.

barashem (

براشم

): Frame drums with camel bells attached on the inside.

bingiz: Bongos.

Candomblé: Religion developed in Brazil and brought from West Africa by enslaved captives. During these ceremonies, orixas (divinities) are invoked by way of a hypnotic rhythm and dance that enables worshippers to become possessed. The principal drums traditionally used are: lé (high), rum (medium), and rumpi (low).

chappuwa: African drum close to musundo but held to the side of the performer in lewa.

daf: A small frame drum with cymbals, like the tambourine.

dahola: A derbuka with a lower and bigger sound.

derbuka: A goblet drum widely popular in the Arab world, also called tablé, dom, and dumbek.

ghaws (

غوص

): Arabic for diving; songs associated with pearl diving are called aghani al-ghaws.

hager (

هاجر

): Also hajir, a double-headed barrel drum from the Hijaz.

homayni (

حميني

): Poetical tradition in colloquial Arabic born in Yemen.

istinzal (

استنزال

): To make the jinn descend. In the Najd and Gulf the term is used to indicate a state of trance which features moving or dancing as if possessed. Experiencing istinzal though music is a practice that seems to have come from Africa, with peculiar similarities to the practice in South America known as the Candomblé.

kasir (

كاسر

): A large barrel drum, part of the rahmani set, smaller than the rahmani drum.

kasour (

كاسور

): Also known as khishba or zanbour; a drum from Iraq; the drum is one piece of solid wood, with a fish-skin head glued on top. It is about

39 cm in height, 7 cm diameter at the head, and 9 cm diameter at the base.

maqfi (

مقفي

): Frame drum.

maqsum (

مقسوم

): Very popular rhythm in the Levant, associated with belly-dancing.

maradd (

مرد

): “Responder,” a mid-sized tar.

mathluth (

مثلوث

): Medium-sized zir in the percussion ensemble of Baha (

باحة

).

mawwal (

موال

): A free-form vocal introduction, could be accompanied by instruments or go a cappella.

mirjaf (

مرجاف

): Large frame drums.

mirwas (

مرواس

): A small barrel drum held by hand, commonly used in sawt; also a generic term to denote any barrel in the Hijaz. Plural Marawis (

مراويس

).

mishindo: Lowest sounding barrel drum in UAE.

misqa’ (

مصقاع

): A small accenting frame drum.

mulhaq (

ملحق

): The largest zir in the percussion ensemble of Baha.

musundo: Drum from Africa used in lewa.

nahham (

نهام

): A singer hired to accompany pearl divers on the boat.

nawba (

نوبة

): Hand-held frame drum in khobayti.

org (

اورغ

): Arabic keyboard with option to play quarter tones.

rababa (

ربابة

): One-string bowed instrument played by the Bedouins.

rahmani (

رحماني

): A set of barrel drums in Oman, also the name of the largest of the set.

ras (

راس

): A rahmani drum called ras in the UAE; literally means “head” or “main.”

ras mushindo: The largest of the barrel drums used in lewa, called as such in the UAE.

riq (

رق

): A popular term for the daf in the Levant.

sajat (

ساجات

): Hand cymbals, also called tos.

samri (

سامري

): A Bedouin art genre; a late night musical gathering.

saqul (

صاقول

): Accenting frame drum.

Sawahili: Arabic for coastal.

Sigal (

صقال

): Another name for the saqul.

surdo: Large bass drum used in Brazilian music.

surnay (

صرناي

): Double-reeded instrument used in lewa.

tabl (

طبل

): Barrel drum.

tabl bahri (

طبل بحري

): Large double-headed drum with thick skin heads which features a black dot on the skin made of starch and iron filings, like the syahi tuning paste of the Indian tabla.

tabl khammari (

طبل خماري

): A gulf barrel drum that usually has fixed patterns.

tabl la’ub (

طبل لعوب

): A gulf barrel drum that “plays,” i.e. makes variations.

tabl ras: Main tabl.

takhamir (

تخامير

): In the set of drums of the ayyala the ras is usually the largest and the rest are called takhamir.

tamborim: Small and round Brazilian frame drum.

tanaka (

تنكة

): Oil or water tins played with sticks in Emirati, Omani, and Bahraini lewa.

tar (

طار

): Generic name for the frame drum.

tathlith (

تثليث

): Smaller drum with two skin heads and held by a long handle.

tiran (

طيران

): Frame drums (plural of tar).

tonbak: The name of the goblet drum in Iran.

tos (

طوس

): (plural towaysat) Hand cymbals, also called sajat, common in traditional arts from the Gulf.

‘ud (

عود

): A short neck lute-type, pear-shaped, stringed instrument, the most popular in Arabic music.

Yamani (

يمني

): From Yemen.

Yamāni (

يماني

): From Hijaz.

zir (

زير

): Kettledrums made of cut metal barrels or clay pots covered with tanned camel skin and beaten by two sticks. The name comes from the same word in Arabic which means both, “jar of water” (shape) and the “highest string on the ‘ud” (high-pitched sound).

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