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From Dissemination Media to Creation Media: Media Reflections on the Transformation of Arab Musical Discourse in the 20th Century

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Abstract

Our article examines the role of technical supports — records, radio, television, digital platforms — in transforming the processes of musical creation in the Arab world. Through a mediological perspective, particularly based on the work of Régis Debray and Said Yaqtin, we aim to go beyond the classical opposition between musical content and transmission vectors, to consider the medium as a fully-fledged aesthetic and symbolic actor. The study relies on a multidisciplinary methodology, crossing musicology, semiology, and media studies, to analyze the effects of media on the form, structure, memory, and reception of musical works. Our work explores successively: -

- 1- The standardization of musical taste under the influence of state dissemination media;
- 2- The mutation of the studio into a sound co-creation space;
- 3- The emergence of hybrid genres (dialectal rap, electro-chaabi, fusion) born from the digital environment;
- 4- The reconfiguration of the traditional repertoire through recording and remixability;
- 5- The construction of a technological sound memory through digital archives;

Keywords: musical mediology, creation supports, Arab music, sound memory, digital archives, cultural hybridization, media studies, heritage.

* Introduction

In the flow of contemporary changes in artistic practices, Arab music faces profound transformations related to recording, dissemination, and archiving technologies. The rapid development of audio and audiovisual media, from radio to digital platforms, has not only modified the modes of reception of musical discourse but has also profoundly reconfigured the very forms of musical creation. This shift from the medium as a simple transmission channel to that of a "medium of creation" constitutes one of the central issues of mediology applied to musicology.

It is precisely in this perspective that this work is situated, echoing the proposals of Régis Debray (1991, p. 7), who defines mediology as the discipline studying "superior social functions in their relations with the technical structures of transmission." For Debray, it is not only about treating media as cultural or economic objects but understanding how the technical universe shapes the symbolic memory of societies. In the musical field, this approach implies considering sound recordings, tapes, CDs, video clips, and digital platforms as devices that structurally influence the nature of the produced

works, their aesthetic forms, social functions, and the regimes of memory in which they participate.

Following this intellectual lineage, Said Yaqtin (2005, p. 266) extends the reflection by emphasizing that the "medium" is never neutral: "Everything that is not imitation of reality is called writing: the camera is a writing of the image, but the image is not reality." Thus, musical mediology examines how the technical supports of music — particularly in the Arab world — become matrices for developing meaning, aesthetic selection, and cultural archiving.

From this theoretical framework, this article seeks to interrogate the mediological effects of technical supports on contemporary Arab music, posing the following problem: how have media supports (radio, records, television, internet) transformed not only dissemination but also production conditions, aesthetic structure, and the memory of the Arab music repertoire in the 20th and 21st centuries? To answer this, a multidisciplinary methodology will be used, crossing semiological analysis of musical supports, critical reading of media discourses, and historical study of mediation devices (discographic, radio, digital). This

approach will allow us to understand how the “creation medium” acts as a revealer of tensions between tradition and modernity, between living memory and technological memory, and between performed orality and recorded archive.

1- Supports as transmission media: A historically secondary role: The history of technical supports in the Arab world does not begin with their role in musical creation; rather, they initially acted as instruments of controlled dissemination. For most of the 20th century, these supports served as "secondary vectors" placed in a historical context where the state, often in search of national unification or ideological legitimization, played a central role in managing musical culture.

From the 1930s onwards, radio constituted a fundamental lever for the dissemination of music in several Arab capitals. Egypt, a pioneer in this regard, saw the creation of Radio Cairo in 1934. This station quickly became hegemonic, central to pan-Arab musical culture, imposing emblematic figures like Oum Kalthoum and Mohammed Abdel Wahab. As Pasler (2020, p. 36) points out, this media centralization allowed for a certain homogenization of musical taste in Arabic-speaking regions while promoting a "sonic

nationalism" based on rigorous aesthetic and political choices.

The introduction of the record as a fixed recording support at the turn of the century also contributed to the standardization of musical works. Unlike oral tradition, where performance was subject to variation and improvisation, a record freezes the performance and transforms it into a canonical model. This had a structuring effect on classical Arab music, particularly affecting forms such as muwashshah, qasida, or taqtuqa, which had to bend to the temporal constraint of the 78 RPM (approximately 3 to 4 minutes per side). Thus, the support conditions the musical form long before being involved in its actual creation (Arbo, 2014, p. 30).

However, this standardized circulation should not be confused with cultural democratization. On the contrary, as Laborde and Charles-Dominique (2019, p. 45) indicate, states have very often filtered the musical content disseminated, in a desire for symbolic control over national identities. This phenomenon is particularly perceptible in Lebanon, Iraq, or Tunisia, where censorship or aesthetic selection has heavily influenced the sonic landscape disseminated by radio waves or pressed onto records.

In summary, in this first phase, supports such as records and radio were hierarchical and oriented vectors, primarily used to disseminate an "official" version of musical heritage. They played a structuring but secondary role, acting as intermediaries between the artist and the public without fundamentally disrupting the logics of creation. It was only later, with the advent of television and then digital media, that these supports would become full actors in the creative process.

2- From support as container to support as co-creator: While the early decades of the 20th century conferred a relatively passive dissemination role to technical supports — records, radios, tapes — the latter half of the century saw their rise as active agents in the process of musical creation. This paradigmatic shift to the "creation medium" marks a decisive step in the history of Arab musical practices: supports are no longer mere neutral containers but become devices that shape, constrain, and inspire musical composition itself.

This idea is rooted in the work of mediologists like Debray (1991, p. 15), who posits that technical devices are inextricably linked to symbolic forms: "There is no content without a medium, nor culture without technical infrastructure." In music,

this means that formal, harmonic, and rhythmic choices can be directly induced by the characteristics of the supports. Thus, the 78 RPM record, dominant until the 1950s, imposes a maximum duration of 3 to 4 minutes per side. This technical constraint pushes Arab composers to tighten their forms, condense melodic motifs, and abandon certain long traditional forms, such as improvised taqsim or complete modal suites (wasla). It is therefore not just a mechanical limitation, but a major aesthetic and cultural impact (Arbo, 2014, p. 32).

With the rise of multitrack mixing and stereophony, particularly from the 1960s onwards, studios became autonomous creative spaces, detached from live performance. Artists can construct sound textures impossible to reproduce live, and the producer intervenes as a co-author of the work. It is in this context that a workshop music, designed for the record and not for the stage, developed in some Arab countries (Lebanon, Egypt, Syria). This silent revolution is analyzed by Secheyaye (2022, p. 105), who shows how popular Arab genres have gradually adapted to these production logics, transforming the very structure of pieces — notably through the increased use of refrains, sound layers, or autotune in recent music.

This shift from concert to studio also marks a break in the conception of the musical work. While the oral tradition valued immediacy, variation, and performative co-presence, the recording medium freezes the performance, makes it reproducible, and universal. It substitutes the lived temporality of the listening experience with a mechanized memory, reproducible ad infinitum, which does not go without consequences for reception. For Laborde and Charles-Dominique (2019, p. 47), this sonic fixation also modifies the relationship between the musician and their repertoire: the recorded work becomes a normative reference, a "sound canon," against which every future execution is measured.

Moreover, recent digital supports have accentuated this logic. The physical album has given way to deconstructed playlists, with the linearity of listening dislocated in favor of fragmented, personalized, algorithmic listening. In this new media regime, the support also acts as an editor, prescriber, and sometimes even a creator, through automated suggestions, viral popularity effects, or formats imposed by platforms (YouTube, Spotify, TikTok).

In summary, the support is no longer the simple receptacle of a pre-existing musical content. It becomes an implicit co-author, conditioning not only the form of the work but also its manufacturing process, its circulation, and its reception modalities. This mutation disrupts the classical paradigms of musicology and requires an integrated mediological approach, capable of grasping its technical, aesthetic, and symbolic ramifications.

3- The case of contemporary arab music: fragmentation and hybridization: The advent of television in the 1960s, followed by the explosion of the internet at the turn of the 21st century, brought about a radical mutation in the Arab musical landscape, both in its aesthetic forms and in its logics of production and reception. These two media broke with the unity of centralized dissemination circuits, provoking what could be termed cultural fragmentation, accompanied by a parallel phenomenon of stylistic hybridization, revealing the extent of the mediological transformation of the musical field.

From its inception, television allowed for a more visual and spectacular portrayal of musicians, enhancing their symbolic and identity dimensions. Programs such as Fann

wa Fannān in Egypt or Studio El Fan in Lebanon not only launched careers but also redefined artistic recognition criteria. The body, costume, gestures, and decor became essential components of televised musical performance, introducing a visual grammar that profoundly modifies the performative relationship with the audience. As Magnat (2018, p. 194) points out, these audiovisual forms have accelerated the standardization of the musical image and contributed to the construction of "reproducible aesthetic models, often detached from traditional stylistic roots."

The generalization of the internet, on the other hand, had an even more destabilizing impact. It broke the hegemony of record companies and states in managing sound heritage, allowing for a radical decentralization of production, dissemination, and consumption circuits. Today, artists emerge via platforms like YouTube, SoundCloud, or TikTok, where short formats, community interaction, and viral logics supplant the old channels of cultural valorization. This new context favors an economy of the fragment, where works are conceived not as closed and hierarchical entities but as flexible, remixable, and shared objects. As Secheyaye (2022, p. 106) observed, these formats promote a

constant rewriting of genres, at the intersection of pop, trap, electro-chaabi, or remix raï.

This dynamic produces what Bachir-Loopuyt and Belly (2018, p. 50) identify as widespread aesthetic hybridization: traditional music is "reconfigured through media logics, often in tension between heritage authenticity and algorithmic novelty demands." In the Maghreb and Mashrek countries, we thus witness the rise of fusion music: oriental jazz, dialectal rap, electro mawwal, sometimes carried by artists from the diaspora. Far from being ruptures, these hybrid creations testify to a creative continuity, where digital supports become active matrices of a new sound canon.

The shift of the Arab music scene towards interconnected and visually oriented formats has also transformed the relationship with the audience. The latter is no longer passive but becomes active, critical, and creative, participating in musical manufacturing through comments, remixes, and collaborative videos. The logic of interaction and coproduction, that some researchers call prosumers (producer-consumer), disrupts traditional models of artistic authority. In this new ecosystem, the boundaries between the popular and the scholarly, the local and the global,

the traditional and the contemporary become increasingly blurred and permeable.

In conclusion, television and the internet have transformed Arab music into a hybrid, multicentric, and dynamic field, where media supports no longer just transmit sounds: they reshape cultural identities, rewrite aesthetic hierarchies, and actively participate in the coproduction of musical meaning. This phenomenon requires a critical rereading in light of mediology tools, capable of articulating technique, culture, and creation within the same logic of analysis.

4- The transformation of the traditional repertoire: The advent of recording technologies, media dissemination, and more recently, digital supports has profoundly disrupted the relationship with the traditional musical repertoire in the Arab world. Whereas this repertoire historically relied on oral transmission, collective performance, and anchoring in ritual or festive contexts, its passage through modern supports has led to a series of aesthetic, functional, and symbolic displacements. The result is a reconfiguration of musical heritage, oscillating between preservation, normalization, innovation, and commercialization.

In the early decades of the 20th century, phonographic recordings allowed for the first time the fixation of fragments of the traditional repertoire, thus putting an end to the variability constitutive of musical orality. Music, previously transmitted from master to disciple in informal settings (zawiya, royal court, café, souk), suddenly became an archivable and standardizable object intended for a broader audience. According to Bachir-Loopuyt and Belly (2018, p. 52), this capture transforms the very function of performance: it is no longer a lived act, located, and communal, but becomes a reproducible cultural artifact, subject to a logic of dissemination and consumption.

This mutation has two major effects: on one hand, it museumizes certain aspects of the repertoire — for example, Andalusian muwashshah in Morocco or Syrian waslat — by extracting them from their ritual or festive framework to present them as fixed heritage objects. On the other hand, it paves the way for a contemporary reinterpretation of these forms, linked to the possibilities offered by new supports. The studio, synthesizer, and rhythmic loop become means to infuse a second life into centuries-old melodies. As Sechehaye (2022, p. 110) notes, these

mutations produce a "recomposed traditional," where stylistic fidelity sometimes gives way to bold hybridizations that respond to market, stage, or diasporic identity logics.

A good example of this dynamic is observable in the work of contemporary artists like Souad Massi, Nass Al Ghiwane, or remixing Sufi music collectives. These draw inspiration from traditional melodic and modal structures (maqām, nūba, samaʿ) but integrate them into modern formats — amplification, pop-rock arrangement, digital production — intended for a globalized audience. These works no longer aim to faithfully reproduce the heritage but to reinterpret, displace, and reinscribe it into new sound narratives.

This process does not come without tensions. Part of the critical musicological field sees it as a form of media acculturation, where the demands for visibility, profitability, or adaptability to digital supports lead to the diluting of the modal and rhythmic complexity of the original repertoire. Arbo (2014, p. 34) thus evokes a tension between "living memory" — that of interpreting communities — and "recorded memory," often filtered, cleaned, and

restructured according to the aesthetic criteria of the support.

However, this tension should not be perceived solely from the perspective of loss. It can also be read as a creative updating process in which traditional musics find new functions and audiences. Thanks to digital supports, some long-marginalized repertoires — Berber chants, gnawa music, Yemeni traditions — now enjoy unprecedented visibility and a form of symbolic reactivation. As Magnat (2018, p. 195) writes, "digital redisplay produces recomposed heritages, at the crossroads of documentary, global stage, and community memory."

In summary, the transformation of the Arab traditional repertoire through modern media supports does not mean its disappearance or dilution. It rather signals a change of cultural regime, where recording, digitization, and online dissemination become forms of musical writing, on par with scores or oral modes. In this perspective, musical mediology allows us to question not only what we listen to but how, where, and why we listen to it in this way today.

5- Toward a technological musical memory: Sound memory vs. scriptural memory: The emergence of

sound recording supports has profoundly reconfigured the status of memory in the Arab musical tradition. Where scriptural memory embodied by scores, collections of sung poems, or music treatises dominated in scholarly contexts, and where living memory carried by bodies, voices, and ritual practices structured oral transmission, the appearance of a technological sound memory introduces an unprecedented form of mechanical and reproducible fixation of the musical event. This new regime of memory raises fundamental questions about the nature of musical heritage, its transmission modalities, and the aesthetic reconfigurations it involves.

In Arab societies, the score has never occupied the central place it holds in Western musical traditions. Oral transmission, supported by modal improvisation (taqsīm), melodic recitation, or master-to-disciple learning, constituted the main axis of conserving repertoires. This memory was embodied, contextual, and evolutionary, and was incarnated in codified community practices. The "scriptural memory," although existing notably through maqāmāt, sung poems, or collections of musical adab, often played a complementary, secondary, and

hermeneutic role rather than a prescriptive one (Arbo, 2014, p. 36).

The shift toward a technological sound memory, initiated with the first recordings in the early 20th century, marks an ontological rupture. Now, the musical work can be heard without being replayed, transmitted without being reinterpreted, learned without being experienced. Music becomes an archive independent of the physical presence of the musician. Sechehaye (2022, p. 112) emphasizes this mutation by pointing out that recording generates a form of "frozen memory," where the captured sound becomes a normative reference, a model to imitate more than a guide to reinterpret. This transformation leads to a standardization of musical practices but also to a revaluation of certain works as "authentic" sound heritage.

This mechanical memory is not devoid of biases. The choice of recorded works, their sound quality, and their editorial shaping all influence how future generations perceive, categorize, and hierarchize musical traditions. Technology does not capture the real; it models it according to its own constraints (recording duration, choice of microphone, sound balancing) as Debray (1991, p. 23) points out, for

whom "any technical memory is a filtered, mediated memory shaped by the very conditions of its transmission."

In the current digital context, this technological sound memory takes on an infinitely malleable dimension. Archives are digitized, indexed, recontextualized, and sometimes manipulated for aesthetic or ideological ends. This instability — or plasticity — sharply contrasts with the supposed stability of written text. According to Magnat (2018, p. 200), this technological memory generates a "dynamic memory," made of permanent updates, unexpected rediscoveries, and subjective reappropriations, participating in the very redefinition of what it means to "preserve" or "inherit."

Finally, the multiplication of online platforms, sound databases (e.g., Arab Music Archive and Research), specialized YouTube channels, transforms Arab musical memory into an interactive, evolving, and community-rich space. The public is no longer merely the depositary of tradition; it becomes a co-builder of this memory through comments, remixes, and playlists. Digital supports permit a popular archival practice, alternative to institutions, where hierarchies

between scholarly, popular, and experimental musics are often overturned.

Thus, the tension between sound memory and scriptural memory cannot be reduced to a binary opposition. It rather represents a shift from a regime of embodied and contextual memory to a regime of technological and mediated memory, whose stakes are both aesthetic, political, and epistemological. Mediology, as an approach to the technical conditions of culture, offers a relevant framework for thinking about this new cartography of Arab musical memory, where the support is both conservator, producer, and transformer of meaning.

6- The role of digital archives: In the digital age, the establishment of electronic musical archives marks a new stage in the management, transmission, and interpretation of sound heritage. Long reserved for state institutions, national broadcasters, or research centers, musical archives are now accessible, extensible, and interactive. This accessibility transforms not only how traditional musics are preserved but also how they are reactivated, appropriated, and rethought in contemporary practices.

Digital archives, such as the Arab Music Archiving and Research

(AMAR), the digital library of the Arab World Institute, or independent bases like Zeryab or Maqam World, offer a vast collection of sound documents, videos, digitized scores, and critical texts. These platforms do not simply store musical works; they editorialize them by providing metadata (dates, places, artists, styles), historical contextualizations, and sometimes analytical interpretations. As Bachir-Loopuyt and Belly (2018, p. 52) indicate, the digital archive acts as both a documentary tool and a hermeneutic device, capable of redirecting researchers' and listeners' perspectives on sometimes forgotten or marginalized repertoires.

Another central aspect is the democratization of access. Where analog archives required physical presence, institutional access, or specific expertise, digital archives allow for a horizontal and plural appropriation. Artists, students, playlist curators, discerning amateurs, and independent researchers access and sometimes even contribute simultaneously. This active participation transforms the archive into a collaborative space, where musical memory becomes a common good, shared, commented upon, and reinterpreted.

However, this openness is accompanied by new epistemological and ethical challenges. Digitizing a document does not guarantee its neutrality. The choice of pieces, the quality of sound restitution, the structuring of the interface, and the search algorithm all participate in a technical curation of memory that can reinforce some narratives at the expense of others. As Sechehaye (2022, p. 115) noted, digital archives can sometimes "freeze musical interpretations into a form of technological truth, overlooking the plurality of interpretation traditions." In other words, while scriptural memory imposed stability on the text, digital memory risks imposing the stability of a file, freezing a sound or a particular version as representative of a whole.

However, it should be emphasized that some platforms encourage a dynamic reading of archives. This is the case with AMAR, which integrates podcasts, interpretive comparisons, and musicological commentary, allowing for the reintroduction of historical and stylistic complexity into repertoires. Furthermore, contemporary artistic initiatives — notably in remix or sound art circles — use archives as raw material for creation, further blurring the

boundary between memory, document, and work. In this perspective, the archive becomes a medium of creation in the mediological sense: it provides raw material but also the formal, technical, and cultural conditions for the emergence of new musical objects.

Finally, the role of digital archives is particularly crucial in the context of endangered repertoires, whether linked to marginalized communities, threatened languages, or unstable geopolitical contexts. Digitization thus becomes a gesture of heritage safeguarding, but also a political and symbolic act of recognition. As Magnat (2018, p. 202) reminds us, "digitizing a song not only preserves it but also places it within a global visibility economy." This visibility, if well-framed, reconnects young generations to ancestral musical forms while giving them the opportunity to transform and evolve them.

In summary, digital archives actively participate in redefining Arab musical memory. They are neither mere databases nor simple heritage showcases; they are dynamic cultural actors located at the intersection of conservation, interpretation, transmission, and creation. Their study fits fully into

mediology, which invites us to think about the symbolic effects of storage and dissemination technologies on contemporary cultural practices.

7- Medialization and heritage building: Between preservation and transformation: The heritage building of the Arab musical repertoire in the contemporary context relies on a doubly mediated process. On one hand, technical supports — radio, records, cassettes, CDs, digital archives — serve as vectors of conservation, allowing for the preservation of entire segments of sound traditions likely to disappear. On the other hand, these same supports, by reorienting the form, content, and listening context, act as agents of transformation, deeply altering the perception, hierarchy, and function of musical works in Arab societies. This dual movement of conservation-transformation, at the heart of modern heritage logic, perfectly illustrates the contributions of a mediological reading of the phenomenon.

The notion of medialization implies that every heritage content is always inscribed in a medium — a technical, institutional, and symbolic device — that directs its accessibility, meaning, and value. Régis Debray (1991, p. 37) insists on this idea: "Every heritage is as much a technical

message as a symbolic message." Thus, the recording of a mawāl or nūba does not constitute a simple trace of the past; it is the result of a capturing choice, a dissemination framework, an editorial policy, and a specific cultural usage.

In the Arab world, this process has been intensified by the heritage building policies implemented by states, cultural NGOs, private foundations, and international institutions like UNESCO. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing desire to museify musical traditions, classify them, archive them, and especially to "inscribe" them — in the administrative sense — in the lists of intangible heritage. Although this symbolic recognition secures some visibility for local musical traditions, it often comes with aesthetic normalization. As Bachir-Loopuyt and Belly (2018, p. 50) analyze, this heritage building sometimes produces a "frozen" version of music, "purged of its social or spiritual roughness," to meet criteria for institutional recognition.

In parallel, digital medialization offers alternatives to this vertical institutionalization. Local communities, diasporas, and independent artists now use digital tools to produce their own archives, bypass institutional filters, and

propose more flexible, dynamic, and participative forms of heritage building. Sechehaye (2022, p. 107) speaks of a "mobile heritage," constantly redefined by listening practices, media recontextualizations, and cultural remixes. These horizontal forms of heritage building allow musical memory to be preserved without crystallizing it into a single authorized version.

This tension between preservation and transformation also plays out at the reception level. By becoming heritage, music changes status: it is no longer just performed; it is displayed, interpreted, showcased. This can create a gap between the original intent and contemporary reception. However, this constant rereading can also enrich tradition: by being listened to in new frameworks — heritage concerts, intercultural festivals, digital platforms — Arab music is continuously recontextualized, creating bridges between generations, between audiences, and between territories.

Finally, the heritage building process through medialization invites us to rethink the very notion of creation. By stabilizing a musical work as heritage, one does not necessarily immobilize it; one may

also make it available for new arrangements, new readings, and creative extensions. Heritage building thus becomes not an act of closure but a device of activation, allowing sound memory to be continually reinterpreted, reconstructed, and reimagined. As Magnat (2018, p. 204) aptly states, "Every archive is a potential stage; every media memory is a place for cultural invention."

Thus, medialization and heritage building are not fixed processes, but dynamic cultural practices at the crossroads of techniques, politics, and imaginaries. They highlight the importance of considering supports not as simple tools of safeguarding but as transformative actors of living culture, fully integrated into the epistemology of musical mediology.

*** Conclusion: Synthesis of contributions**

The objective of our article was to shed light on how technical supports, far from being merely vectors of musical transmission, actively participate in reshaping musical creation in the contemporary Arab world. Through a mediological approach based on the work of Debray (1991, p. 7) and Yaqtin (2005, p. 266), we have demonstrated that the creation medium constitutes

a relevant analytical prism to understand the aesthetic, symbolic, and social mutations of Arab music since the 20th century.

We first showed that initial supports — records, radios, cassettes — played a historically secondary but structuring role, conditioning the duration, sound quality, and aesthetic choices of musical productions. This process was accompanied by a form of standardization of tastes, notably under the influence of cultural policies of Arab states, eager to unify their sound spaces from a nationalist perspective (Pasler, 2020, p. 36; Laborde & Charles-Dominique, 2019, p. 45).

Secondly, we observed how, from the 1960s onwards, production technologies — particularly mixing, stereophony, and then digital tools — transformed supports into true co-authors of the musical work. The shift from live performance to the fixed work, then to the manipulable sound object, inaugurated a new era in which musical creation becomes inseparable from its medium (Arbo, 2014, p. 34; Sechehaye, 2022, p. 111).

This paradigm shift was particularly noticeable in the emergence of new hybrid musical genres, such as dialectal rap, electro-chaabi, or fusion music integrating

jazz, flamenco, or electronic music. These forms, born from a digital media environment, reflect a creativity marked by public fragmentation and style interconnection (Magnat, 2018, p. 195). They call into question traditional hierarchies between art music and popular music, between tradition and modernity.

The study of the transformation of the traditional repertoire also highlighted the ambivalent role of supports: both tools of heritage preservation and agents of aesthetic recomposition. Sound recording does not simply preserve a trace; it redefines what it means to "interpret" or "transmit" a work, imposing stabilized versions that become sound canons.

Finally, the emergence of digital archives and media heritage building processes has opened new pathways for preserving and disseminating Arab musical heritage. These archives are not neutral; they editorialize, select, and organize sound memory. They become active spaces of cultural production, where the past is constantly reinterpreted, and where the boundaries between preservation and creation become porous (Bachir-Loopuyt & Belly, 2018, p. 52; Debray, 1991, p. 37).

In conclusion, the mediological perspective allows us to surpass purely musicological or sociological approaches to consider music as a complex technical, cultural, and symbolic system, of which supports are constitutive elements. In this framework, contemporary Arab music appears as a living, dynamic field shaped by dynamics of medialization, memorialization, and identity reconfiguration.

This work finally paves the way for future interdisciplinary research, crossing musicology, anthropology, media studies, and critical theory, to further explore the contemporary modalities of sound creation in the era of intelligent technologies, musical artificial intelligence, and participative archives.

*** Opening: Towards a conceptual apparatus for arab musical mediology?**

The diversity of phenomena analyzed in this article — from discographic standardization to participative digital practices, from technological sound memory to hybrid forms of creation — highlights the urgency of forging a conceptual apparatus specific to Arab musical mediology. Such an apparatus would be able to grasp the

multiple interactions between transmission techniques, sound aesthetics, sociopolitical contexts, and cultural imaginaries. It would be less about constructing a new autonomous paradigm than about fostering a fruitful methodological dialogue between disciplines, particularly musicology, semiology, and media studies.

Contemporary musicology offers valuable tools for analyzing musical forms, modal systems, rhythmic structures, and practices of interpretation. However, historically focused on works and their notation (often Western), it sometimes struggles to fully integrate the impact of technical supports and mediation devices. In this regard, the contributions of semiology, particularly inherited from the work of Jean Molino or Roland Barthes, allow for reinserting musical discourse into a symbolic and meaningful field, where sound is no longer a simple aesthetic object but an active vector of meaning anchored in dynamic cultural contexts.

At this crossroads, media studies — and more broadly cultural and mediological studies — constitute an essential link. They place musical production within the logics of circulation, infrastructure, and media performance. The musical

work ceases to be a closed entity and becomes an object-mediation, traversed by political, economic, technological, and identity stakes. Régis Debray (1991, p. 15) has well shown this: symbolic forms are only intelligible in relation to the technical devices that support and disseminate them. Thus, to understand a *nūba* broadcast live on YouTube, it is not enough to analyze its modal structure; one must also consider the impact of the platform, the recommendation algorithm, the digital commentary, the potential remix, the identity of the performer, and the target audience.

The horizon of an Arab mediological conceptual apparatus would thus be to create a flexible but rigorous analytical framework, capable of thinking together: -

- 1- The sound as an aesthetic, sensitive, and structured phenomenon (musicology);
- 2- The meaning as a symbolic and intertextual construction (semiology);
- 3- The support as a condition of technical, political, and social possibility (mediology/media studies).

Such an approach would allow for a reevaluation of central notions such as heritage, authenticity, creation, or dissemination in light of

digital technologies and the mutations of audiences. It would also open the way for a critique of cultural hierarchies that still tend to oppose learned music to popular music, tradition to modernity, or local to global. In the Arab context, these dichotomies are particularly problematic, as they do not account for the complexity of musical trajectories that navigate between orality, diasporas, colonial archives, digital platforms, and contestation scenes.

Finally, such an apparatus could nourish action-research projects involving musicians, sound engineers, researchers, and cultural institutions. By articulating theoretical analysis and field practices, it would be possible to document, preserve, and revitalize fragile repertoires while creating new transmission formats suited to the realities of digitalization. This Arab musical mediology would thus not only be an academic field but a transformative practice, attentive to both the legacies and the futures of sound creation.

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