

# Rethinking *mālūf*, Arab Andalusian Music in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tunisia

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Questo articolo esplora i dibattiti sul *mālūf* – Musica Arabo Andalusia (Guettat 2004) – nel ventunesimo secolo in Tunisia. Esso fornisce una ricognizione musicologica dei termini e dei confini, la sua origine e identità, lo sviluppo del *mālūf* nei cambiamenti sociali, e in particolare, come il nazionalismo e l'élite culturale abbiano educato un nuovo pubblico a questo genere musicale. Attraverso lavori sul campo tra il 2015 e il 2017 a Tunisi, Sfax, Binzert, Testour, analizzo in che modo il *mālūf* è praticato oggi negli istituti di musica, club privati e festival, per comprendere qual è la sua relazione con le definizioni accademiche e per ripensare, in un quadro teorico di “intimità culturale” (Herzfeld 2005), il concetto di “musica nostalgica” ad esso attribuito (Davis 2015; Shannon 2015a; 2015b; Glasser 2016).

Both *mālūf* and Andalusian music are ambiguous when coming to definitions, since they draw attention to a seemingly unassailable morass of historical facts, national identity formation and intertwined relationships involving both public and private music making. In this article, I engage with scholarship that has used the myth of the *mālūf*'s Andalusian origins to lend authority to published notations of Tunisian *mālūf* (al-Mahdī 1967-1979: 8; Davis 2002: 510) and to the notion of “classical” music *mālūf* carries (Guettat 1980; 2000; Davis 2004; Ciantar 2013), establishing the critical discourse that has developed recently (Davis 2015; Shannon 2015a; Glasser 2016). Two initial questions need addressing in order to take this forward, namely the historical relationship between Arab Andalusian music and *mālūf*, and how *mālūf* is integrated into modern music practices. I start with these questions in what follows, investigating *mālūf*'s position in the Andalusian past and its varied definitions. I move on to demonstrate how *mālūf* is experienced today in private clubs, festivals and institutions, listening beyond the concepts of nostalgia that continue to dominate thinking about Andalusian music. Drawing on theories and methods from ethnomusicology and anthropology (Boym 2001; Herzfeld 2005), my article contributes an ethnographic and music-centered approach to interdisciplinary debates about postcolonial nationalism, public intimacy and cultural identity.

## *Al-Andalus as the “Golden Age:” History, Myth and National Construction*

So just what is Arab Andalusian music? In reference to music practices, the term *andalusiyya* was first used at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the French musicologist Jules Rouanet who applied it to a certain kind of music of Algeria (Rouanet 1922b: 2813). In the same vein, Julian Ribera (1929), in his book *Music in Ancient Arabia and Spain* provides an in-depth investigation, in terms of historical facts, of the evolution of oriental music in the Spanish peninsula, showing its relevance to North African and eastern traditions. Prior to the work of Rouanet and Ribera, the terms “Andalusian music” and *mālūf*