

“Zamameer Everywhere!”: The *Mijwiz*’s Rapid Voyage from Folk to Pop and Implication of Digitization on Contemporary Arab Musical Practice

Abstract

The integration of traditional Levantine folklore, especially al-’Ughniyah al-Jabaliyah, into Contemporary Arab pop music illustrates a dynamic cultural resurgence that paralleled the global rise of digital music production in recent decades. This paper focuses on the performance practice of the mijwiz (a double-reed instrument traditionally used in the rural regions of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) and highlights its unique sonic characteristics, its playing techniques, and the socio-cultural implications of sampling and digitization of traditional instruments broadly. Its journey transcends the traditional, acoustic boundaries of al-rā’ī (the shepherd), and into the realms of modern, digital music production. A comparative analysis between the digital emulation of the mijwiz and accomplished mijwiz players spotlights variances in performance practice. Emphasizing the implications of this digital shift reveals how it both challenges and preserves the essence of authentic renditions and timbres of traditional instruments. Furthermore, this paper examines the burgeoning presence of this instrument’s influence in the pan-Arab popular music space, highlighting its growing popularity and integration among musicians. The impact of digitization on instrumental emulation, particularly the

org; or digital Arabic synthesizer, is probed with respect to instrumental sampling, melodic manipulation within the maqam system, and its paradoxical effects on audiences. While digitization may sometimes erode the richness of traditional music systems and tarab culture, it concurrently enables less experienced musicians easier access to a broader music platform, paradoxically democratizing the production landscape while eroding the compositional nuances and vocabularies of the maqam. The paper gives an insightful and critical foray into the complexities of Arab music's digitization and its ripple effects across performance, accessibility, and practice in modern Arab life. The recontextualization of the *mijwiz* and other functionally-driven rural music forms, along with sampling, amplification, and sound design of traditional instruments, underscores significant shifts in cultural and musical practices in the Arab music space. Modern audiences, influenced by contemporary music production, have redefined Arab musical expressions and expectations. Today's listener at large seem less inclined toward tarab's intellectual and contemplative engagement, favoring instead a visceral, rhythmic connection that manifests through dance—a primal instinct of rhythm felt and expressed through our bodies. While this evolution has its positive aspects—such as offering the masses a “democratization of performance” and highlighting spontaneous collaborative expression—it becomes concerning when it leads to a complete disengagement from melodic expression and elaboration commonly found in the maqam, deterioration of vocal mastery and poetic inspiration found in the language, and instrumental proficiency found on a variety of traditional Arab and Western instruments. The full implications are still emerging, but it seems to be resulting in a musical landscape characterized by a static, almost lifeless repetition of melodic, modal, and rhythmic patterns that serve as an accompaniment to a frantic embodied outburst. For the Levantine region and its

rich tapestry of folk music, this has led to a complete transformation of the tarab performance space within the Levantine, which had its stronghold in the latter half of the 20th century. I present several social and cultural factors that have shaped this reality, including the role of digital music production in redefining how we listen to Arab music, as well as the political and economic conditions that have impacted access to and dissemination of music.

Background

I hesitated in choosing the title above, wondering if it might offend some musicians.

After all, car horns are loud, erratic, annoying, and intended to signal or avoid impending danger. Just as car horns have become a constant in our urban soundscape, horns have increasingly entered music-making in recent years—not through breath as one might expect from traditional aerophones, but via electrified samples, often easily triggered with the press of a button on a keyboard. Of course, the association between aerophones and the word 'horn' is not uncommon in the English language musical terminologies—consider the French horn, an important and often challenging instrument in the orchestral repertoire of European classical music. In all shapes, sizes, and timbres, horns have played a significant role throughout human history, not only in music-

making but also in warfare, ceremonies, and rituals around the world. In fact, some of the earliest known musical instruments' imagery, including those unearthed right here in Egypt, depict horns being blown by the pharaohs during various occasions. Additionally, in the *hadith* recorded by Sahih Al-Bukhari, 'mazameer' (which broadly indexes musical instruments) are mentioned alongside other actions considered *haram*. While we do not have precise knowledge of the timbres of end-blown reed instruments from that period, one might question whether they produced a pleasing sound by today's standards, or what any melodic forms sounded like. Although it is beyond the scope of this discussion, a historical examination of the aerophones from that time in the Arabian Peninsula could shed light on the type of music that may have been played during the Prophet's era.

As a Syrian musician and scholar, I have observed an unprecedented rise in the popularity of the mijwiz, or similar instruments like the *mizmar* and the *zurna* in recent years. With the advent of synthesizers, nearly every song now features an electronic version of a *mijwiz* solo. It's not that these timbres are new to, as we often find them in many folk traditions within the Arab world. Rather their widespread use in Syrian music, particularly in the popular *jabali* or folkloric Syrian style, in sampled forms played by a "keyboardist" has been noted. Levantine folklore is rich in musical traditions, oral storytelling, which are passed

down across generations in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. A key element of this tradition is ‘*Al Ughnia Al Jabaliah*’ (the mountain song), known for its powerful, rhythmic singing that mirrors the daily lives, struggles, and celebrations of rural and mountain communities in that region. The mijwiz, holds a central place in this musical tradition, offering a sharp, resonant sound that complements the intensity of the vocals. I still remember the one time that my Phd mentor, Dr. Ali Jihad Racy, took out his mijwiz at the end of one of our rehearsals at UCLA and played it. The entire campus could hear his solo and students of all majors and backgrounds gathered around the room to observe what had been making these ear piercing sounds. Its tone makes it especially suitable for open-air performances, where it adds a dynamic, and audible monophonic layer to the music, capturing the essence of the Levantine mountains and their people. Aside from the music, and due to its loud sound, historically, the *mijwiz* also played an important functional role in the lives of shepherds who tended to their herds in that region and elsewhere in the world.

You may now ask, what is the significance of this? The rise in popularity of the *mijwiz* might not inherently be negative but liberating. Many traditional folk instruments worldwide have gained broader recognition, especially with the advent of recording technology. While this is entirely true, the issue at hand is not the instrument’s growing presence or

popularity but rather the manner in which it is played (or not played) sampled, composed for, and the musicians behind its rise. The rise of amateur keyboard players, who can reproduce both recognizable and distorted mijwiz sounds with the press of a key on a synthesizer or organ, has resulted in a superficial portrayal of the instrument. More importantly, it reflects a broader trend in the digital replication of traditional instruments, undermining their authentic, historical significance and altering the way they are traditionally performed.

The trend undermines the authentic artistry and cultural significance of traditional instruments as well as its players, makers, teachers, and students. Unlike a digital reproduction, performance of *mijwiz* requires immense physical effort and skill. Have you ever watched a mijwiz player? Their faces often show the strain of intense breath control, and their performance demands frequent pauses to recover. This paper critically examines the digitization of folkloric instruments in the Arab world, particularly the impact it has had on both the production of music and the public's consumption habits. The simplification of these rich musical traditions through technology raises important questions about cultural preservation and authenticity. The transformation of the mijwiz from traditional acoustic performances in the village, to modern digital music production reflects a broader cultural and musical shift in the Arab world.

Arab Music and the Digital Transformation

I want to highlight **three areas** that are of significance in how these practices have affected the musical culture of the Arab world. First, performance practice and musicianship. A great deal seen in the simplification of technique is noted in the audio files we hear.

Digitization has led to an oversimplification of the complex playing techniques required by traditional instruments. Ethnomusicologists have noted that instruments like the mijwiz, which traditionally demand high breath control and physical endurance, are now replicated with ease through synthesizers and digital samplers. This allows musicians with limited technical skill to reproduce sounds that would typically take years of practice to master, and possibly sounds that are impossible to reproduce on the actual instrument (Shannon, 2006). Another aspect to the performance practice implications is the loss of embodied performance: As noted by Miller and Shahriari in their observations in world music, the physicality and expressiveness of playing traditional instruments are diminished in digital versions. The energy, breath, imperfection, and manual dexterity that characterize live performances are replaced by mechanized and less dynamic forms of sound production (Miller & Shahriari, 2012).

Second, cultural significance and implications. One of the issues at concern regarding Arab musical culture in contemporary perspective is the erosion of authenticity: The widespread use of digital reproductions of traditional instruments has raised concerns among ethnomusicologists about the erosion of authenticity. The digital *mijwiz*, for example, loses the deep-rooted connection to its cultural and ritual significance when it is reduced to a few synthesized notes (Stokes, 1994). Traditional instruments are not just sonic objects but also cultural symbols, tied to specific practices, regions, and historical identities, which can become diluted in digitized forms. Thus the issues at hand aren't simply related to sonic reproduction but also the gray out of memories, loss, and time. Additionally within a capitalistic framework, commercialization. The digitization of folk instruments has contributed to their commercialization, making them more accessible but also more removed from their traditional contexts. This commodification often strips instruments of their original meaning, their tangibility, and the lives of those involved in their construction and maintenance, reducing them to sonic novelties used in mainstream, massproduced music (Hemetek, 2009). Again here we see erosion of identities, memories, and agencies tied to the lives of makers and craftsmen.

Thirdly, The exhaustive integration of usage in the popular music scene: While digitization has made obscure folk instruments more accessible and integrated into global pop music, it has also led to a loss of the deeper vocabularies embedded in their traditional usage.

Ethnomusicologists have observed that while digitization allows for broader experimentation and fusion, it also homogenizes the sound, limiting the unique timbral qualities that make instruments like the *mijwiz* culturally distinct (Baily, 2001). Lastly, as Anne Rasmussen observed even back in the 90s while doing fieldwork among *org* players, digitization has altered the way audiences perceive and engage with these instruments. The public is increasingly exposed to these sounds in a decontextualized form, which alters their original significance and reduces the instrument to an exoticized element in modern productions (Rasmussen, 2010).

Opportunities or Setbacks

To avoid falling into an essentialist argument regarding music and digitization, it is important to highlight the positive implications of these developments. This approach prevents the reductionist view that "everything new is bad, and the old is good," a perspective that many of us, as connoisseurs of music, may be inclined to adopt. However, this

inclination is not incidental. It is no coincidence that individuals with a deep understanding of tarab and the nuances of listening often have a distinctive perspective on Arab music. Younger generations, particularly students, lack the templates or role models that would guide their engagement with this cultural tradition. In fact, many of my students who express a lack of interest in Arab music do so largely because their opinions are shaped by what is readily accessible to them, rather than through exposure to the rich heritage and deeper understanding of the genre.

For music makers, we have seen an explosion of the democratization of music making, no longer only suitable for the select few, but for a larger amateur music-making scene. Digitization has lowered the barrier to entry for aspiring musicians and producers. Tools like digital audio workstations (DAWs), virtual instruments, and sample libraries allow anyone with a computer to create professional-quality music, reducing the need for expensive studio equipment and formal training. There is also a marked shift in traditional professional roles, and this has economic consequences in terms of labor and capital. But one could argue that these roles have not eroded but rather transformed into other responsibilities aligned more with the computer. Traditional roles like session musicians, sound engineers, and even studio technicians have seen a decline, while new roles such as sound designers, digital

producers, and audio engineers specializing in software have emerged. There's a growing demand for tech-savvy individuals in the music industry, such as those skilled in coding, audio programming, and sound synthesis. Additionally, live performance has also experienced a significant shift. With the ability to sample and reproduce sounds digitally, the need for live musicians in recording settings has diminished in some genres. However, there's still a niche for live performance, particularly in genres that prioritize acoustic authenticity. All of these consequences from our digital epoch offer negative and positive side effects.

The Audience

Now let us consider the listener's perspective, perhaps the most important component within our musical culture: the *samee'ia, al jumhoor*, the people on the receiving end, as they form the essential duality of musicking. As listeners have grown accustomed to digitally produced music, expectations for perfection and sonic clarity have increased. Digital tools allow for pristine production, pitch correction, and layered effects, which may diminish the appreciation for raw, unedited performances we so often heard in the past. I observe this frequently with some of my students, who have a very difficult time

focusing on older recordings to learn from and, at times, are unable to perceive certain details that might be more apparent to us who grew up with cassettes or vinyl records. Thus, the listening template becomes a pristine, error-free, unified sonic space—predetermined and polished. Although this has a profound effect on the audience and their expectations during a performance, it even has a larger consequence on the performers, as they are demanded to replicate every single aspect of what has been previously written and possibly erode any forms of spontaneity.

The landscape of musical consumption, in terms of genre and modes of production, has undergone rapid and significant changes that warrant attention. Often, when I hear something new, my initial reaction is to identify its inspiration, only to quickly realize that it is a fusion of various elements—constructed through the very digital processes previously described. Where does this fit? Is it more Western or more Arabic? How can it be both? Is an artist performing Arab hip hop an Arab artist, or a hip hop artist? Perhaps they are whatever they choose to be: An Arab Hip Hop artist. What I want to emphasize is that digital tools have facilitated the blending of genres, allowing artists to combine elements from multiple traditions and challenge conventional boundaries. As a result, listeners now engage with a more eclectic mix of music, often influenced by streaming platforms that curate diverse,

algorithmically recommended content. This content is frequently loosely defined, resisting classification within a single musical form. This blurring of genres contributes to the homogenization of music, gradually eroding indigenous traditions for more globalized easily consumed forms, which themselves have ceased evolving, reproducing, and developing. What does someone waking up to this world see? An analogy I like to use is that a musical system or culture is like a thread, continuously woven and rewoven into new weaves of its own making. When that thread is cut abruptly and rewoven into a larger, multicolored rope, it becomes indistinct, possibly fading, while simultaneously unable to assert its place as a new, authentic form, reproduced from tradition. I intend to frame this in a critical philosophical context toward the conclusion of this paper.

A more nuanced trend I have observed in consumption patterns over the last two decades—one not limited to Arab societies and their music—is the growing emphasis on sound design and soundscapes, rather than on composition and form. Digitization has contributed to this shift, diverting some of the listener's focus away from traditional elements such as melody, pitch, and rhythm, and toward the texture and manipulation of sound. Music today frequently highlights digitally-created sounds, with genres like electronic music and pop particularly incorporating these features in their tracks. It appears as though notes

and rhythms alone are no longer sufficient; they are often accompanied by sounds that may or may not mirror the natural, nonmusical sonics of everyday life. As a result, the compositional process has, in many cases, become secondary in importance and focus.

Economic and Ethical Concerns

As with many other art forms, music is currently experiencing a paradigm shift in terms of ownership and rights, particularly with the rise of artificial intelligence tools that can generate new works with the click of a button, using databases and predictive models. This raises the question of authorship: are we able to discern whether a work is the product of an artist's individual expertise or simply a reflection of their algorithmic skills? For instance, if someone samples a sound and a computer reprograms it for preservation in a digital library, who holds ownership—the person who recorded the sound or the individual who played it? In my own sample library, for example, I might have a collection of cello samples. But is it truly a representation of the cellist, or merely how their instrument sounded on that specific recording day? This scenario exemplifies the paradox in which the boundaries between performing and sampling become blurred, raising complex ethical questions regarding copyright and intellectual property. The ease of

digital sampling—using fragments of existing recordings—has created ambiguity around ownership, resulting in legal challenges and broader debates over artistic integrity.

Another highly significant and widely criticized business practice in the modern music industry is the reliance on streaming platforms. The question of how artists generate income in this new model has become increasingly pertinent. In a recent conversation with a friend of mine, who is not a traditional Arab musician but a DJ, he remarked that "it is nearly impossible to make a decent living from an album nowadays, no matter how many copies you can reasonably sell" (personal interview, May 17, 2024). According to him, regardless of genre, recording artists need to accumulate billions of streams to earn a sustainable income. This situation presents a double-edged sword, what I refer to as the "circular loop" of economic stagnation: artists remain unknown because they lack significant streaming numbers, but they fail to gain substantial streams because they are not well-known. This dynamic results in a static elite of performers who receive enough attention on streaming platforms primarily because they are already established. The cycle perpetuates itself, favoring those with prior recognition while leaving emerging artists struggling to break through. The rise of digital music production and streaming platforms has fundamentally transformed how artists earn money. Traditional revenue streams, such as physical album sales, have

diminished, while streaming royalties often provide minimal financial returns, leading to economic challenges and altering the way music is marketed and distributed.

Despite this aimless saturated digital market, we saw some positive aspects for individuals. For example, the idea of collaboration is much easier nowadays. Digitization has made it easier for musicians from different parts of the world to collaborate without being in the same physical space. Cloud-based music production platforms and file-sharing have made remote collaboration standard practice. This shift became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when musicians sought ways to connect and create music while confined to their computers.

Personally, I do not wish to return to that isolating mode of music-making, as for me, the essence of making music lies in the embodied co-presence of musicians interacting with one another. However, for some, this period offered new and improved methods for distributing their music, with numerous distributors now charging nominal fees and accepting virtually any submission. This development effectively eliminated the traditional "middle man" who once made aesthetic judgments about what should be published. In this regard, there is a positive aspect, as it has become significantly easier for some individuals to share their music without the gatekeeping of production

executives. Nevertheless, this accessibility comes with its challenges and costs, as it has led to a saturation of content—both good and bad—diluting the overall quality of what is available in the musical landscape.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The transformation of Arab music in the digital age finds grounding in several philosophical frameworks that allow us to critically explore the complexity and implications of this shift. Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity offers a lens through which to understand the digital evolution of instruments from their original context of performance into the digital space (1994). Bhabha argues that cultural identities are in constant flux, shaped by interactions and negotiations within what he calls the "Third Space." In this context, the integration of things like the *mijwiz* into contemporary music, despite its digital replication, can be seen not as a degradation of its authenticity but rather as a process of cultural fusion. This "Third Space" allows for the emergence of new forms of expression, where traditional Arab music intersects with modern technological elements, creating a hybridized soundscape reflective of current cultural realities. While this hybridity may risk losing elements of tradition, it also represents the dynamic adaptability of culture in the face of globalized influences. Although I

somewhat agree with Bhabha's perception, the digital landscape is itself constructed on Western terms in its investment, ownership, origination of novel ideas, and scope of its influence. Arabs' musical culture simply finds itself in the process of continually "catching up" with the digital *aesthetics* of the West, unable to create and recreate its own sonic identity.

Martin Heidegger's question concerning technology provides a contrasting perspective, framing digitization as a form of "enframing" (1977). This concept refers to how technology reveals the world to us, often reducing its elements to mere resources or commodities. The digital replication of our example, the *mijwiz*, could be seen through this lens as a process that strips the instrument of its historical and cultural significance, reducing it to a series of synthesized notes and automated rhythms, and as we've discussed degradation of creativity, performance, and musicianship. Heidegger warns that this technological enframing risks overshadowing the authentic experience of music-making, transforming an art form rooted in human expression and communal tradition into a commodified and uniform product. Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that new truths can emerge through technology, suggesting that while digitization risks commodification, it can also reveal new dimensions of cultural identity and expression, offering a potential for reimagining tradition in a modern context. In that case, if

we are to look at this from a positive perspective, what new dimensions of cultural identity and expression do we find in our music today?

Gilles Deleuze's notion of the rhizome, introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus*, presents a different approach to understanding cultural transformation. Unlike hierarchical structures, the rhizome represents a networked, non-linear approach to culture, where elements connect, disconnect, and reform into new configurations. The digitization of the *mijwiz* and its integration into contemporary genres can be viewed as a rhizomatic process, where traditional music is not merely transferred or lost but instead becomes part of a complex web of cultural production. This framework underscores the ongoing, fluid evolution of music, resisting the notion of a static or singular tradition. Deleuze's concept of "nomadology" – the idea of culture as a constant process of becoming – enhances our understanding of how Arab music adapts and evolves with digital technologies. From this perspective, one could explore whether the evolution of Arab music aligns with Deleuze's ideas in *Difference and Repetition*, where creativity departs from repetition, branching into new directions. However, Deleuze emphasizes gradual cultural transformations rather than sudden ruptures. In the case of Arab music, we are witnessing not a slow progression arising from creative exhaustion, but rather a rapid shift—a severing of traditional repetitions, leading to an abrupt change.

These philosophical underpinnings collectively suggest that the digitization of folk instruments like the mijwiz is neither entirely negative nor purely beneficial. While Bhabha's hybridity underscores the creative potential of digital transformation, Heidegger's enframing warns of the risks of commodification and cultural dilution. Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking celebrates the adaptability and continuous evolution inherent in cultural practices, advocating for an understanding that embraces both preservation and change. From my critical perspective, true cultural hybridity is reciprocal and cannot be confined to playing by the rules of Western hegemony, which aims to gradually erase other cultural processes over time: precisely the process we see today.

Exploring Solutions

So, what should we do? Should we simply accept the current state of things, allowing "progress" or "degradation," depending on one's perspective, to continue unchecked? I believe that various strategies can be employed to nurture appreciation and ensure the continuity of authentic music within modern contexts. We as music educators and experts may have the tools at our disposal to offer some solutions. The first one, which requires a lot of groundwork at the childcare level, is

cultivating music education, something our political elites have disregarded in the prospect of raising a capitalistic workforce, this is not just the case here in the Arab world but globally. Education plays a pivotal role in preserving the depth and significance of traditional music. Integrating instruments into school and university curricula helps foster a new generation of musicians and listeners who understand and appreciate these traditions and their academic realm. Moreover, music programs should highlight not just the technical mastery of playing traditional instruments but also their cultural and ethical significance. For instance, exposing students to the stories, rituals, and historical contexts surrounding these instruments, their pioneers, can deepen their connection to the music and its heritage.

Another aspect is developing community workshops that bring together traditional musicians, digital producers, and audiences to create spaces for cultural exchange. These collaborations can serve as a bridge between the authentic traditions of the past and the technological advancements of the present. For example, organizing workshops that explore the use of digital tools in enhancing rather than simplifying traditional music can provide valuable insights into the potentials of technological integration while respecting cultural authenticity. I have been involved in a project that uses digital software to enhance the teaching of the maqam to vocal students. Such initiatives can harness

technological innovation to improve the learning experience and open up new opportunities for expanding traditional music education.

Digital spaces for reflective listening. Given the pervasiveness of digital music platforms, there is an opportunity to cultivate spaces that encourage reflective and contextual engagement with traditional music. Digital platforms tailored for contemplative listening could feature curated playlists, historical notes, interviews, and documentaries about traditional musicians and practices. By creating environments that promote depth rather than superficial consumption, these platforms can counteract the loss of cultural context in the digital reproduction of music. Furthermore, the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies could immerse listeners in traditional musical settings, recreating the communal and performative aspects that are often lost in digitized versions. For instance, VR experiences can simulate a traditional Levantine or Egyptian music performance, guiding users through the nuances of the music and its cultural backdrop. This innovative use of technology can help bridge the gap between past and present, offering audiences a more informed and connected engagement with traditional music in a new technologically facilitated context. This could also be applied in performance where students and musicians are able to be on stage with an orchestra through virtual reality software.

Finally, when it comes to music production, fostering ethical work is of paramount importance. Companies seeking profits from commodified, highly produced, highly mimetic songs should consider originality, substance, and creativity in their distribution. However, as long as the profit motive is attached to their business, this vicious cycle will continue to oblivion. Introducing ethical standards in digital music production is crucial to preserving the integrity of traditional instruments. Music producers working with traditional forms can adopt practices that honor the cultural roots of the instruments they sample or digitize. Collaborations with traditional musicians, transparency in sampling processes, and acknowledgment of cultural origins can help maintain authenticity in digital reproductions. Incorporating philosophical discourse into music education further deepens the awareness of the ethical implications of digital transformation. By discussing the role of music in human development, the impact of technology on cultural practices, and the importance of spaces for contemplation, musicians, producers, and executives can critically reflect on their creative processes, making informed choices that respect the essence of the traditions they draw upon.

Slow Music Movement

Inspired by the principles of the Slow Food movement, a Slow Music movement advocates for a deliberate and contemplative engagement with music. By encouraging the production and appreciation of music that resists rapid consumption, this movement highlights the value of traditional practices and fosters a deeper connection between the listener and the music. Slow Music concerts, workshops, and albums can emphasize the artistic, cultural, and emotional depth of traditional music forms, providing a counterbalance to the fast-paced, commodified nature of mainstream digital music.

One notable example is The Slow Music Movement website (www.theslowmusicmovement.org), which advocates for a more mindful approach to music consumption. This platform emphasizes genres such as ambient, folk, world, and electronic music, offering a curated selection of tracks and articles that align with the principles of the Slow Music Movement. They promote less mainstream music that fosters relaxation, reflection, and a deeper listening experience. Additionally, other sites like Tracklib have featured articles about the Slow Music Movement, providing insights into how this approach influences various genres, and encouraging exploration beyond fast-paced mainstream music.

On the Policy Level

On the policy level, cultural preservation requires supportive policies that protect and promote traditional music. Governments, cultural institutions, and organizations can implement policies and provide funding for heritage projects, supporting traditional musicians and safeguarding cultural practices. Advocacy for ethical cultural production, including incentives for projects that emphasize cultural authenticity, can influence industry standards, encouraging a more respectful engagement with cultural heritage. Iran successfully and somewhat unintentionally employed this perspective. While other Arab government may have already engaged in this process recently, I would like to highlight how the process in Iran unfolded.

The Iranian government has enacted strict regulations on music production and performance, primarily influenced by religious and cultural considerations. However, these restrictions have inadvertently contributed to the preservation of traditional music forms. For example, while pop and Western-style music face heavy regulation, traditional Persian music, including classical and folk genres, receives more institutional support and public platforms. This includes music education programs, state-sponsored broadcasts, and funding for artists who

practice traditional styles. The establishment of institutions like the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and the National Orchestra of Iran has also provided spaces for the continuation of classical Persian music.

Moreover, Iran's cultural policy emphasizes the teaching and performance of the *radif*, the traditional repertoire of Persian classical music, in state music schools and universities. By promoting the *radif* as an essential cultural heritage, the government fosters a sense of national identity and cultural continuity. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance actively oversees music production to ensure it aligns with cultural values, which, while restrictive, creates a context where traditional music can be highlighted and preserved. Thus, Iran's policies, though rooted in ideological aims, have become a framework that supports traditional music's survival amidst globalizing pressures.

Conclusion

The digitization of Arab music and its folk instruments like the *mijwiz* presents a dual-edged phenomenon. Philosophical perspectives such as Bhabha's cultural hybridity, Heidegger's enframing, and Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking collectively reveal the complexities of this transformation. While digitization threatens the commodification and loss of traditional musical practices, it also opens up spaces for cultural

fusion, adaptation, and new forms of artistic expression. Balancing this transformation requires strategic interventions, from education and community engagement to fostering ethical production standards and promoting reflective digital spaces.

By critically engaging with the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age, musicians, educators, producers, and policymakers can work toward preserving the integrity and richness of Arab musical traditions. Through informed practices and innovative use of technology, it is possible to embrace the evolution of music while honoring its roots, ensuring that traditional instruments like the mijwiz continue to resonate with cultural and artistic significance in the modern world. This nuanced approach recognizes that digital transformation need not erase tradition but can serve as a vehicle for its reinvention, keeping it alive in an everchanging cultural landscape.

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