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The author wishes to thank his wife, Neta, and his children Maya and Zohar, for their patience and support.

 Online audio is included with this book. This recording can make learning with the book easier and more enjoyable. The symbol shown at the left appears next to every example that is on the recording. Use the audio to help ensure that you're capturing the feel of the examples, interpreting the rhythms correctly, and so on. The track number below the symbol corresponds directly to the example you want to hear. Track 1 will help you tune your guitar to the audio.

Have fun!

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

This book assumes that you are an intermediate guitarist with the ability to read guitar tablature and/or standard music notation. You should have a good grasp of basic music theory, including scales and chords. You should also have some experience using scales to improvise, although the style you prefer to play is not important. With this book, you'll be learning to create new sounds that will stretch your imagination, and the imaginations of your listeners.



About the Written Music in This Book

The written examples printed in this book are doorways into the performance of this music. The key that unlocks them, however, is the recording. The musics of the Middle East are aural traditions, and capturing them in writing is only partially possible. While the written music examples are not literal transcriptions of the performances on the recording, they will serve as maps to what you are hearing.

HISTORY

Music has been on the planet longer than humans have been recording their history. Archeologists have discovered musical instruments dating back almost 30,000 years; many believe that music may even predate human speech. Ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) is believed to be where it all started.

The Middle East is the birthplace of many things in this world, from civilization and religions to paper, our alphabet and recorded history (not to mention calendars and time keeping). It should come as no surprise that the Middle East is also a birthplace of improvised music. The music of the region that we call the Middle East is a tradition that has been cultivated for thousands of years. It is mentioned in the Bible and has been academically documented since the late 6th century. Many styles which are still played today date back as far as the Sassanid Dynasty (Persia, 224–651 A.D.), the Byzantine Empire (4th–5th century) and earlier. The concept of using a stringed instrument as a vehicle for melodic improvisation comes from these ancient styles.

To truly understand how the music of the region evolved, we must paint a picture of what life was like during pre-Islamic Arabia. The era that predated Mohammed and the birth of Islam was a time of tribal unions, trade routes and gypsies. From North Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean coast up to the Caspian and Aegean seas, and as far east as the Zagros mountains and the Iranian Highlands, life was defined by tribal association. Its story was told through the sung poetry known as *Layali*. The sung poetry was often accompanied by an *ud* (also spelled *oud*) or other string instruments that were light and portable and could be carried easily in a trade caravan.

There were three ways in which people lived in the early days of the Middle East. One either lived in an urban center such as Baghdad or Damascus, a rural region as a farmer or a shepherd, or you were a nomad (Bedouin/Gypsy) and traveled the land according to the seasons and trade. While each way of life had its own unique contribution to the musical development of the region, the concept of using a group of notes (scale) as a basis for free expression (solo) is a common theme in the ancient music of the Middle East.

The *ud*, along with the *tanbar*, *saz*, *bazooki*, *tar* and *setar*, all precursors to the guitar, are the key instruments in the development of melodic plucked string improvisation. The approach to playing these instruments is the genesis of the way we play the guitar today. In other words, this is where the pre-historic Hendrix and Wes Montgomerys came from. It is the birthplace of the guitar solo.

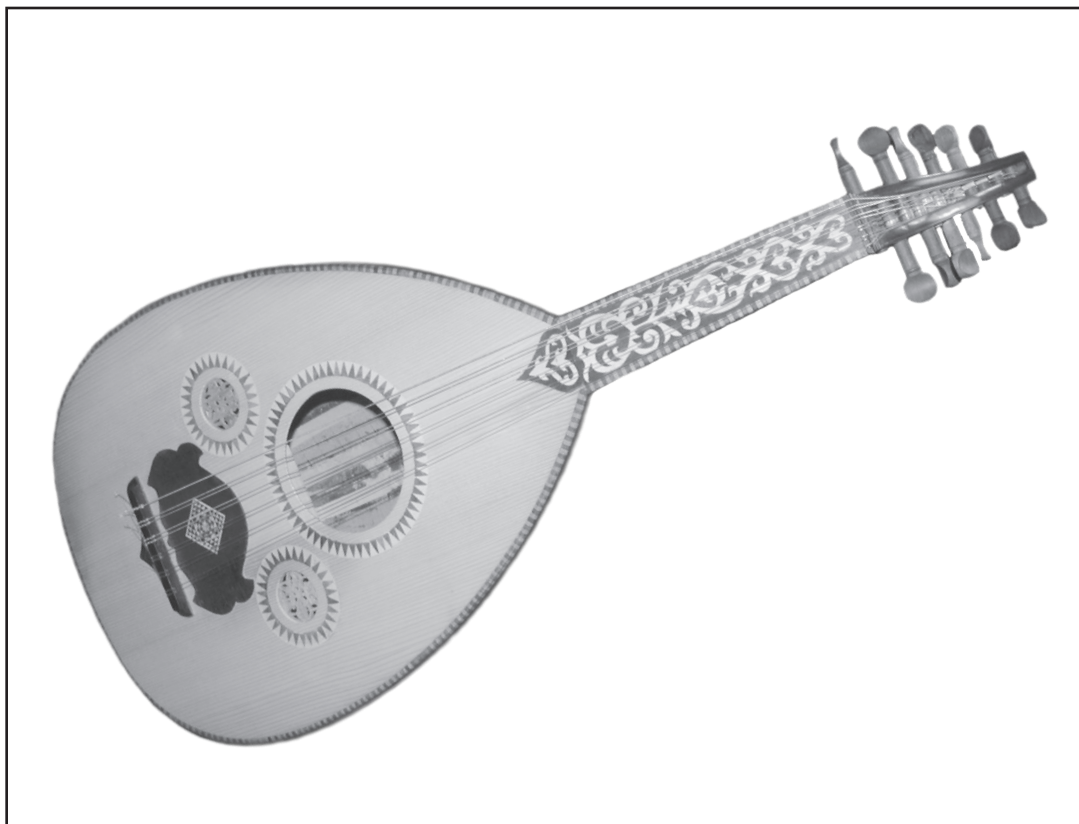
THE GUITAR / INSTRUMENTS

A book for guitar about Middle Eastern music is a tricky undertaking; it's like a book about squash for tennis players. The guitar is a relative (kind of like a nephew or niece) of the ud, saz, tar, tanbur, bazooki and setar, which are all featured prevalently in Middle Eastern music. The guitar, however, is not important in the modern music of the region and is absent from the traditional music of the Middle East. In fact, the traditional music of the Middle East predates the guitar's existence.

A serious problem arises when one tries to view the music of the Middle East through the eyes of a guitarist. As you will come to see, what makes the music of the Orient sound so different than the music of the West is that the music of the Middle East is not based on our 12-note, tempered system. The guitar, because its frets are based on a tempered system, is limited in what it can play. However, since the guitar has evolved as the modern Western version of its Middle Eastern ancestors, and since the approach and technique of the traditional stringed instruments of the region are very similar, it can be a worthy vessel to trek the sands of the Dry World.

The guitar belongs to the lute family as do all of the stringed instruments of the Middle East. In fact, the word lute is a Europeanization of the words "la ud." A lute is nothing more than an ud with frets, and is another very close relative of the guitar.

The word "tar" that is in *guitar*, *setar*, *dutar* and *sitar* means "drum" in most old world languages. All of the instruments in the lute family can be considered drums with necks and strings. It is believed that some type of guitar arrived in Spain from the Arabs around 1200. The earliest mention of the ud is around 300 A.D., although it is likely that some type of ud-like instrument has been around since days of antiquity (B.C.).



The ud.

The music and illustration on page 15 show the “what” of maqam hijaz. What makes a maqam become music and not just a series of pitches is the “how.” There are several different *ornamentations* (melodic decorations, usually involving rapid flourishes) used to bring the maqam to life. The following examples are based on maqam hijaz in the open position of the guitar. Open position is the main position for maqam exploration because you can take full advantage of the open strings.

The following example is maqam hijaz in open position with open string ornamentations.

9
Track 3

E B G D A D

E B G D A D

Picking ornamentations capture the essence of stringed instrument exploration of the maqam. The ud is traditionally played with a peacock quill, much the same way that we use a pick for the guitar. Often, what defines a certain player’s style is his picking technique. The following example is maqam hijaz in open position with ornamented picking.

= Ornament

10
Track 4

E B G D A D

E B G D A D