

WORLD MUSIC **THE BASICS**

richard nidel

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WORLD MUSIC

THE BASICS

"World Music: The Basics is a one-of-a-kind book . . . that fills a void in this evolving genre, a book that may be used both as a reference and to explore new musical vistas. It is a book that I will consult for years to come" —Branford Marsalis

- A complete introduction to world music styles
- Includes a complete list of key recordings, videos, websites, and books

World Music: The Basics gives a brief introduction to popular musical styles found around the world. Organized in chapters by continent/region, and then A to Z by country, the book features both background information on the cultural and musical history of each area, along with succinct reviews of key recordings. The reader can quickly find out enough about each musical style to appreciate its subtleties, and is also directed to the best available CDs for further listening.

World Music: The Basics is an excellent introduction to the players, the music, and the styles that make world music one of the most exciting new musical genres.

Richard Nidel is a world-music enthusiast who booked leading acts into his New York-based club for many years. A lawyer by day, Nidel has written extensively on world music, as well as his other passion, wine.

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In Memory of Lenore Hill

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FOREWORD

The late Avant Garde tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler was on the mark when he proclaimed some thirty-five years ago that "Music is the healing force in the universe." As we move forward in the new millennium, mankind indeed needs some healing.

I believe that music is an undervalued commodity, one that can be an important force in the quest for greater understanding among cultures around the world. The future of the media will involve the dynamic mixing of cultures as people grow closer through all forms of communication. Music is the one form of communication that is devoid of prejudice, a language without borders that speaks to us all as equals in the most profound way.

Throughout my career I have taken great care to accept musical challenges and expand the scope of my musical horizons and awareness. While my training and love of music is based in America's greatest art form, the one known as jazz, I have always studied and revered other disciplines. I have had the good fortune to be able to practice my art in a wide variety of settings and venues across the globe with many truly remarkable artists who are fluent and erudite in their chosen genres, which has broadened my perspective on life and increased my musical vocabulary exponentially over the years. I have always made it a practice to listen to music of all persuasions, including that which is commercially defined as world music, especially the wonderful music from Brazil, West Africa and the Caribbean.

Several years ago, while touring with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra I became friendly with Orpheus's wonderful flutist, Susan Palma Nidel, who introduced me to her husband Richard. He

is a true music devotee, well versed in the history of jazz and classical music, and is currently focusing on and passionate about world music. Over the past several years, we have discussed his idea for this book, engaged in friendly arguments about our favorite artists and their best recordings and I have wholeheartedly supported him in this most worthy endeavor.

World Music: The Basics is a one-of-a-kind book, one I would have bought, sight unseen, even if I did not know Richard and Susan. It is an important work that fills a void in this evolving genre, a book that may be used both as a reference and to explore new musical vistas. *World Music* is also a well reasoned argument that advocates the power and value of music in the modern world and how music is relevant and vital when considering the issues of the day that confront us all.

World Music: The Basics is a book that I will consult for years to come.

Branford Marsalis, August 2004

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Undying thanks to my wife Susan for her encouragement, patience, love, and support and to my sons Danny, Brett, and Sam for always checking and mocking my musical taste.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing interest in world music, especially in the United States, there are remarkably few books available that give an overview on the entire subject under one cover. The ten volume *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (retail price \$2,500) is the leading work in the field, but it is an ethnomusicological treatise, not a popular survey. The incomparable *Rough Guide to World Music* from England is the most recognized popular work, but it is not designed as a quick reference to be carried around.

This *Basics* survey is organized by continent, with each country on a particular continent listed in alphabetical order. We have endeavored to include as many countries as possible (a total of 130), omitting only those where the available music is either wholly derivative of a neighboring country or *de minimis*. Virtually every entry in the survey includes a brief statement about the history of the country, a discussion of the major genres and styles, a list and description of instruments found in that country, and references to the most important artists and innovators.

We have included recommended recordings for each country so that the reader can explore the music in conjunction with the survey. All recommendations are for the most important works of

an artist or group. The list of recordings is by no means comprehensive or complete, rather, it is an informed starting point, directing the reader to compact discs we know are representative, significant, and, in our humble opinion, the artist's best.

Our reverence for the music should be apparent to all who read this work. We have endeavored to present a balanced view of the music of the world, highlighting countries, artists, and genres that have made the most significant contributions to world music. We have accordingly allotted more space to certain countries (e.g., India, Brazil, France, Egypt, and Spain, to name a few) without regard to any political or economic importance the country may otherwise possess, but because the music from that country has had a proportionately far-reaching effect on the music of the world.

WHAT IS WORLD MUSIC?

Any term that attempts to reduce an art form to a single phrase is of course suspect, but world music works better than most as an accurate, descriptive label. It is easy to generally agree on a few things; namely, that the term refers most often to traditional, folk, or roots music: (a) created and played by indigenous musicians; (b) naturally incorporating other musical forms; and (c) part of virtually every culture and society on the planet. A more succinct definition is that world music includes the many forms of music of various cultures that remain closely informed or guided by indigenous music of the regions of their origin.

In some respects it is easier to state what is not world music. It is widely agreed in the world music press and among the international entities selling music that rock & roll, R&B, soul, jazz, Broadway, classical, heavy metal, new age, fusion, country, alternative rock, blues, disco, hip hop (with some exceptions), techno, karaoke, trip hop, and pure pop are *not* World Music.

Having set forth a definition and listed genres that fall outside the purview of world music, we must assert that world music can *be* popular music. Once any folk music is uprooted from the medium that produced it, once it is transferred to an artistic production and performance (rather than used in its original form), it is automatically altered, adjusting to a new stage, function, and setting. Most of

what even the staunchest purists call traditional or folk music really is, in the context of an individual country, popular music.

Ideally, *all* music is world music and, admittedly, there is no way to comprehensively define or even agree on the parameters of the term. Clearly jazz and Western classical music (both vague terms) are the basis of and incorporated into much world music, just as a great deal of world music, as defined here, is an essential element of Western classical and jazz. Nevertheless, our working definition conforms to generally accepted definitions of world music in the trade and serves as a helpful common frame of reference for the *Basics* Survey.

AFRICA

North Africa

West and Central Africa

East Africa

South Africa

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria

Libya

Mauritania

Morocco

Tunisia

Western Sahara

For the purposes of this book, North Africa is defined as including the countries commonly referred to as the Maghreb—Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia—as well as Libya, and, due to a musical kinship with the region, Mauritania and Western Sahara. Although Egypt is geographically part of Northern Africa, it is the musical epicenter for all Arabs and not conceptually part of the musical culture of North Africa. The largest recording industry for Arab music is in Cairo—the musical *lingua franca* of the Arab world—and we have therefore included Egypt under the Middle East section, which also includes virtually every other Arab country. North African music caters to a more European-based market and historically includes major influences from southern Europe and West Africa.

The oft-used term "*Sub-Saharan Africa*," a euphemism for Black Africa, has in modern times come to connote an internationally accepted geographic demarcation, a default term conveniently applied in many fields, including world music, to discuss related traditions, musical styles, and genres. In fact, musical forms below the amorphous Saharan line in the sand are mostly unrelated to the music from North Africa. There are notable exceptions, including music of the nomadic Tuareg people who inhabit portions of Mali and Libya. The European and Moorish influence so prevalent in *al Andalous* music (discussed in the Moroccan section) is almost completely absent in black African music but is an integral part of the music of virtually all of North Africa.

THE MOORS, JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CULTURE, AND THE RECONQUISTA

The Moors ruled much of southern Europe for many centuries prior to their expulsion during the Inquisition circa 1492. The ubiquitous musical form *al Andalous* traveled across the Mediterranean to North Africa along with the Moors and the Jewish Ladino culture and has been the most revered musical form in the region for more than 500 years.

Many Moors and Jews from parallel diasporas settled in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, the area commonly referred to as the *Maghreb*. Muslims, Christians, and Jews continued to coexist in relative harmony for many centuries in essentially Muslim-governed countries much as they did in Iberia before the Inquisition. While this harmony was disrupted in the middle of the twentieth century, the tradition carries on in different guises across the Maghreb with each country enhancing the music with its own cultural flavors.

Local North Africans who shared a love of ancient poetry and a reverence for the prestigious role that music held in society assimilated their collective music with the transplanted Europeans. From this mosaic a series of related forms arose including *hawzi*, *gnawa*, and eventually *rai*. These musical forms borrowed from many sources, including Judeo-Christian liturgy, synthesizing and combining different musical cultures to create a new, cohesive genre of North African music.

ALGERIA

Home to *rai*, classical *al-Andalous*, and *kabyle*, Algeria is the most important voice in North African world music today. Algeria's exposure to Ottoman, Sub-Saharan, and West African culture has been more extensive over the past millennium than its Moroccan, Tunisian, and Libyan neighbors, and its folk and traditional music has evolved accordingly. It is a country of vast musical treasures, but the Algeria of today is paradoxical. It is an epicenter for part of the fundamentalist horror plaguing our planet in the new millennium, with a draconian government whose view of life seems guided by chauvinism and disregard for human rights. Another segment of society, however, craves today's modern culture and is in the vanguard of the world music movement. Despite the political situation that plagues the country, Algerians (most living as expatriates in France and across Europe) continue to produce the richest, most diverse music in all of the Maghreb.

ORAN

Known as the "Little Paris of North Africa" prior to Algeria's independence in 1962, Oran has a rich musical history dating back many centuries. *Al Andalous* has evolved over the centuries into several modern styles, all of which retain their classical, melodic tonal center and tight structural form, richly enhanced by Arabic poetry. The music was furthered enhanced by the Jewish population who lived harmoniously with the Moors both in Spain and North Africa. Today, as in centuries past, *al Andalous* is a subtly structured music, performed by highly trained musicians with lyrics sung mostly by women.

After World War I, Oran served as a cultural center and playground for a multitude of ethnic groups from Europe and the Middle East. During the period between the two World Wars, the cafés and cabarets in Oran became famous for exotic forms of entertainment. The city was divided into French, Jewish, Spanish, and Arab quarters, all with distinct sets of rules and settings. Spanish Civil War fighters and refugees, Muslims from all parts of North Africa, and the ruling French frequented Oran's musical venues, mostly in the Jewish quarter where alcohol could be sold and the

rigid Islamic morality and French colonial rule were conveniently not enforced. A diverse mixture of cultures coexisted peacefully in Oran during this period and for a short time after World War II music served as the common denominator and healing force. These exotic haunts produced some of the most soulful music of the day, sounds that have lasting integrity and a modern appeal.

In contrast to the formal, highly structured *al Andalous*, a Bedouin folk music emerged during this same period, a music spawned by an oppressive street life and its characteristically raunchy vernacular. *Bedoui*, a vocal genre that incorporated Egyptian popular music and Cuban rhythms, gained popularity in the bars, bordellos, and hash dens of Oran, much to the consternation of the Islamic rebels who would eventually overthrow their French Colonizers. The music was performed by *Cheikhas*—a term of respect referring to the *Bedoui* singers—women from peasant backgrounds, often abused and cast out by the vain morality of the fundamentalists, the singers became a unique part of the local street culture. They were known for their extraordinary ability to improvise and their scandalous behavior. They performed in the grungiest clubs, singing of the poverty and harshness of their difficult lives. This music was the forerunner of Algeria's most popular musical export, *rai*.

The Cheikhas reign was short-lived. After independence in 1962 Algeria quickly fell into the hands of a ruthless military dictatorship. The new government's intolerant, anti-Semitic policies forced many citizens into exile in Paris, Marseilles, and Western Europe. The diaspora, comprising a great deal of progressive, artistic, and educated members of Algerian society, were forced to perpetuate their culture and distinct musical forms as expatriates in the New World.

THE MUSIC

***Rai*.** The children of the Algerian diaspora have developed the genre now collectively referred to as *rai*, which spiritually, if not musically, derives from the Bedouin folk music of the Cheikhas. *Rai* has a disco-style dance rhythm and a pop sound that combine with provocative lyrics that exhort the listener to party at all costs. It is sung in Arabic (or Tamazight dialect) laced with French, and possesses a street sensibility and message that parallels and rivals

American hip-hop. The essence of *rai* is the direct expression of heartfelt opinion with a high value placed on improvisation. Like hip-hop, ample borrowing and sampling from other musical genres is a regular component of the music, which has become a staple of the international dance floor

Kabylie and the Berbers. The most traditional and arguably greatest musical tradition of Algeria resides within the unique Berber culture. The Berbers (more accurately Tamazghas; “Berber” is an Arabic term meaning stranger) are a nation within a nation in Algeria. Their region is known as Kabylia, the music *kabyle*, the culture Amazigh, and the language Tamazight—the poetic soul of Algeria’s indigenous people. The Berbers are fiercely independent, far more progressive than their fundamentalist brethren and the rest of Algeria, a mountain-dwelling people whose presence across North Africa predates Arab culture by at least a millennium.

Prior to independence in 1962, the Berbers were staunch supporters of the national movement to overthrow their French oppressors. However, since the revolution the various governments have turned on Algeria’s indigenous people. In the late 1960s the military dictators became obsessed with curtailing the very freedoms the Berbers thought they had achieved as supporters of the revolution. Since the 1970s Berber poets, politicians, artists, journalists, and musicians have been blatantly murdered for their views and way of life. Many Berbers are now naturalized French citizens. The Berbers’ plight is analogous to that of the Kurds in Iraq and in Turkey; they enjoy virtually no freedom of the press or speech, suffering under harsh laws obsessively enforced against speaking or writing their language, performing their music, and expressing their culture, a policy reminiscent of Fascist Spain’s approach to Catalan, Galician, and Basque culture during Franco’s rule.

Despite this ongoing persecution, a strong musical culture continues to flourish both in Kabylia and among expatriates in France. Since the 1980s, a soulful, more commercially viable form of *kabyle* has evolved, deriving its initial inspiration from the worldwide civil rights movement of the 1960s and sharing a textual context with the South American *Nueva Cancion* movement of the 1970s. (See *Argentina, Chile, Cuba, and Portugal Sections*.)

Reinette l'Oranaise (1910–1998) is considered the “First Lady” of North African music, renowned for classic interpretations of the *al Andalous* based classical song form, *hawzi*. She gained her fame between the two World Wars singing in the cafes in the Jewish quarter of Oran. Blind from the age of two, Reinette (born Sultana Daoud), was the voice of Moorish North African music in her day, a voice that was bluesy and bittersweet, sexy and seductive. Although Jewish, she was a student of Arab literature, respected by Muslims and Jews throughout the Maghreb and an early proponent of the musical form now known as *rai*. She was forced to flee the anti-Semitic Algerian regime that took over in 1962, settling into obscurity in France. On the heels of the world music revival before her death in 1998, she recorded three CDs accompanying herself masterfully on the oud.

RECOMMENDED CDs

ABDELLI. Berber composer/singer with a Celtic flare. *Among Brothers* (Real World, 2003).

DJURA ABOUDA. Parisian based singer/songwriter. *Songs of Silence* (Luaka Bop, 1998).

AL-DJAZARIA. Traditional string orchestra playing *al Andalous* instrumental music. *Classical Music of Algeria* (Harrnonia Mundi, 1999).

SLIMANE AZEM. Father figure of *kabyle* music, achieved popularity at home and in France just after World War II. *Le Fabuliste; Le Grands Maitres de la Chanson kabyle Vol. 3*, (Club dudisque Arabe, 1979).

HASNA EL BECHARIA. Female Berber vocalist, guitarist, and gimbri player forced to perform only in private for 30 years. *Djazair Johara, Gnawa tradition* (Blue Indigo, 2001).

LILI BONICHE. Legendary singer-guitarist, integral part of the Jewish-Algerian diaspora. *Alger, Alger* (Sachem, 1998) with Maurice el Medioni, produced by Bill Laswell.

CHERIFA. The diva of Berber music in the 1950s and 1960s. *Chants Berbers*, (1964) with colleague *Hanifa*.

DAHMANE EL HARRACHI. Composer and the Algerian Charles Aznavour, el Harrachi was an early advocate for women's rights and a tragic figure who died in a car crash in 1980. *Le Chaabi*, Vol. III (Club du disque Arabe, 1977).

FAUDEL. The current Prince of *rai*, a star in the United States and France, long touted as Cheb Mami and Khaled's successor; he sings *rai* from the Parisian ghetto. *Baida* (Mercury, 1999).

FERHAT. With Idir and Ait Menguelelt, Ferhat changed the face of *kabyle* music. He ceased performing in 1989 after numerous arrests for his outspoken lyrics. *Tuyac n ddkir* is a compilation from 1972 to 1992 (Blue Silver, 1994).

IDIR. Idir's *A Vava Inouva/My little father* (Blue Silver, 1973) is widely credited as the first recording of *kabyle* music to gain popularity outside of North Africa; also, *Chaussiers des Lumieres*.

KHALED. King of *rai*, responsible for the worldwide popularity of the genre. *N'ssi N'ssi* (Barclay, 1998) is the best. *Khaled* (Barclay); *1,2,3 Soliel*, live w/Rachid Taha and Faudel (World Village, 2000).

CHEB MAMI. Heir apparent to Khaled. *Meli Meli* (Mondo Melodia, 1996) made him a star. *Saida* (Mondo Melodia, 1994).

SAOUD MASSI. Composer/guitarist/vocalist; *Raoui* (Island, 2001) is a masterful recording of modern *kabyle*, French chanteuse, and American pop. *Deb* (Universal, 2003).

LOUNES MATOUB. The conscience of modern *kabyle* music was murdered in 1998 by the forces of Arabization. *Lettre Ouverte Aux*, (Blue Silver, 1997) was Matoub's last recording; *Se trouver dans l'ombre* is folksier (Disky, 1986); *Kenza* (Blue Silver, 1997) is strident & political; *Ironie du Sort* (Blue Silver, 1996).

MAURICE EL MEDIONI. (b.1928) Clever pianist who draws on jazz, Cuban rhythms, klezmer, and Middle Eastern classical music with a reverence for Art Tatum and Fats Waller. *Café Oran* (Piranha, 1994) with Klezmatics stars David Krakauer and Frank London.

LOUNES AIT MENGUELETT. Dean of living Kabylie artists and a leading poet. *Inasen* (Melodie, 2000); *Inagen* (1999); *Chants & Poesie de Kabylie* is a good Compilation (Blue Silver, 1995); *Aftis, Awel*, from the early 1990s.