

Sufi Music and Dance

*Come, let's scatter roses and pour wine in the glass;
we'll shatter heaven's roof and lay a new foundation.*

If sorrow raises armies to shed the blood of lovers,

I'll join with the wine bearer so we can overthrow them.

*With a sweet string at hand, play a sweet song, my friend,
so we can clap and sing a song, and lose our heads in dancing.*

—HAFIZ (GHANI-QAZVINI, NO. 374)

PERHAPS NO OTHER ASPECT of Sufism has been more contentious, and at the same time more popular, than the practice of music and dance.¹ Music and dance are by no means universally found among Sufis, for orders such as the Naqshbandis and the Qadiriis typically frown upon music and dance (though there have been notable exceptions in both groups). Still, the chanted recitation of poetry in Sufi circles has frequently been accompanied by musical instruments, while at the same time physical motions ranging from spontaneous trance movement to measured ritual gestures have also taken place at these gatherings. Popular appreciation of Sufism today frequently focuses on music and dance, which in our public culture are much more familiar categories than prayer or metaphysics. Today Sufi practice in the form of music and dance is being redefined in terms of contemporary Western aesthetic standards. The Mevlevi

sema ritual, developed in Turkey in close proximity to the Ottoman court, is now performed on concert stages as the dance of the Whirling Dervishes. A Pakistani singer trained in Chishti *qawwali* ritual, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, records in the world music genre and collaborates with American musicians on movie sound tracks. How are these contemporary manifestations to be understood in terms of the role of music and dance in earlier Sufi tradition?

The term that Sufis used was *sama'* (literally, listening), which referred to listening to chanted or recited poetry that might or might not be accompanied by musical instruments. The accent was therefore on the experience of listening rather than on the performance of music; performance was generally the job of service professionals of relatively low social status, much like actors or dancers in nineteenth-century Europe. The place to begin the consideration of Sufi music is therefore with the voice. Early Sufi theorists are fully aware of the power of the human voice to bring out powerful emotion. Many stories are told to illustrate the power of the voice, starting with the effect of the recitation of the Qur'an, the divine names, and religious poetry. Numerous *hadith* relate that the prophets have all been endowed with beautiful voices of remarkable intensity; it is said that when David recited the Psalms, the coffins of four hundred Israelites who expired during the recitation had to be carried out of the assembly. In contrast, ugly voices are to be avoided. After all, in the Qur'an God said, "The most objectionable of voices is the voice of the ass" (31:19). One of the common examples of the powerful voice in Sufi literature is the cry of the camel driver, which when thoughtlessly employed can cause weary animals to exert themselves to such an extent that they die from exhaustion. A similar theme is the influence of the cries of birds and beasts, in which the sensitive listener can perceive the praise of God:

I remember one night when I traveled all night in a caravan, and slept at dawn at the edge of a wood. A madman who was

our companion on the journey cried out and headed into the desert, but he did not find a moment's peace. When day came I said to him, "What state were you in?" He said, "I saw the nightingales begin to sing in the tree, the partridges on the hill, the frogs in the water, and the beasts in the wood. I thought to myself, 'It is a disgrace that all are praising God, and I am heedlessly asleep.'"

Last night a bird cried out till dawn, ravishing my mind and patience, my strength and thoughts.

The sound of my voice must have reached the ear of a sincere friend.

He said, "I can't believe that a bird's call could drive you so crazy."

I said, "It is contrary to human nature that a bird sings God's praises while I remain silent!"²

In all discussions of Sufi music, it is the sensitivity of the listener that is the critical issue.

It is commonly stated in Sufi texts that music is never permissible for all, and in this way it is acknowledged that music is to be approached in terms of Islamic law; it must be evaluated like anything else for its ethical content:

Sama' is of four types. One is the lawful, in which the listener is totally longing for God and not at all longing for the created. The second is the permitted, in which the listener is mostly longing for God and only a little for the created. The third is the disapproved, in which there is much longing for the created and a little for God. The fourth is the forbidden, in which there is no longing for God and all is for the created. . . . But the listener should know the difference between doing the lawful, the forbidden, the permitted, and the disapproved. And this is a secret between God and the listener.³

In a famous and simple Arabic phrase, listening to music must be judged according to who, when, and where (*makan zaman ikhwan*, literally, the place, the time, the brethren). It should not be performed as a regular habit; it should not be accessible to the spiritually immature; and it should not be done in uncontrolled public locations. As one early Sufi said, "*Sama'* is forbidden for the masses, so they may preserve their souls; it is permitted for ascetics, so they may attain the goal of their efforts; and it is recommended for our companions [the Sufis], so they may enliven their hearts."⁴ Listening to music was therefore treated with the utmost seriousness. One needed to perform ablutions beforehand as if for prayer and dress soberly in clean clothes. Since the verses recited in these sessions can easily be interpreted in a worldly fashion, novices are instructed to focus their attention on understanding them spiritually. It is also important not to be distracted by the singer's voice or personal appearance, because this physical beauty can easily overpower the search for divine beauty. The basic distinction is whether one listens to music out of sensual desire or out of longing for God. Music cannot be spiritually effective without moral purification.

The effect of *sama'* if properly performed is ecstasy (*wajd*). Many discussions have taken place on the problem of distinguishing real ecstasy from imitation. Since the criterion for participation in the musical session is purity of intention, hypocrisy is the greatest danger. Here more than anywhere else one can see the usefulness of the concept of the pseudo-Sufi. In circles where prestige is based on spiritual attainments, it must be tempting for those who lack ecstasy to pretend to have it. Sufi manuals are full of dire warnings against this kind of false claim, as in this catalogue of prohibitions from a fourteenth-century Sufi manual:

If it is known that the musical gathering contains certain forbidden and unlawful things, such as food provided by the unjust, the proximity of women, and the presence of young

men, with objectionable things [for example, wine], or such as the presence of anyone unrelated to the Sufis, such as the would-be ascetic who does not enjoy music but does not dare to reject it, or the powerful man from the nobility who has to be treated with insincere respect, or the presence of the insincere person who falsely manifests ecstasy and with mendacious pseudo-ecstasy disturbs the mood of those present, then the sincere seekers must avoid being present in such an assembly.⁵

If listening to music ceases to be a session for listening to the chanted recitation of the beloved's attributes, it becomes a merely aesthetic occasion, musical self-indulgence. Ibn 'Arabi was highly critical of those who thought that mysticism was nothing but enjoyment of music:

God does not talk of desire; he has blamed people who take their religion in fun and jest, who nowadays are the lovers of music, the people of drum and flute—let us flee to God from abandonment!

There is no religion in drum, flute, and games; religion is in the Qur'an and manners.

When I heard the book of God, it moved me;

that is listening [*sama'*], and it brought me near the veils

So that I witnessed him whom no eye can perceive

but one who witnesses the lights in the Book.⁶

Those who focus on the exterior manifestation of music to the exclusion of its inner form are deluded; for Ibn 'Arabi, the highest form of spiritual audition in *sama'* is the concentration on the manifestation of beauty in the divine revelation itself, in the Qur'an. In most Sufi manuals, self-control in both mind and body is demanded of the novice. Each participant is instructed to avoid being distracted by what others are doing. Despite these recommendations, other

rules for listening to music indicate that musical assemblies could generate considerable emotional energy, which had to be channeled through ritual. The most notable of these rules are those that deal with the proper method of ripping one's garment when in ecstasy and the correct manner of distributing the torn pieces of cloth, which still retained a fragrance of that ecstasy.⁷

Dance is only peripherally discussed in accounts of listening to music in Sufi literature—except in the Mevlevi tradition, to which we shall return.⁸ Although spontaneous dance is acknowledged as a possible result of ecstasy, it is just as possible (and according to some, preferable) to sit unmoving and impassive as the ecstasy pours through. Miniature paintings often depict Sufis dancing in gardens with musicians present, but they do not appear to follow any uniform choreography. While the manuals often urge those who are present to rise and conform to the state of one who enters ecstasy, it is difficult to see how following the spontaneous motions of a person in trance could have any regular dance form, but our information is very sketchy on this subject. Among the Chishtis, for example, the followers of Burhan al-Din Charib were said to have a particular style of dancing, but there is no indication of what exactly this might be. The miniatures also show long sleeves hanging down over the hand, as the conventional sign of ecstasy (calling to mind the loosened hose of deranged Shakespearean lovers). Texts also refer to stamping the feet, probably in time to the music, clapping the hands, and turning. Since it is constantly emphasized that everyone experiences the music on a different level, it is quite likely that in many of these sessions every dervish danced to a private measure, without any movements in unison.

The rituals of Sufi music took place in an atmosphere saturated with cosmic symbolism, which enables participants to return to the beginning of time. Ever since the time of Junayd (d. 910), it has been common for Sufis to link *sama'* with the Qur'anic theme of the

primordial covenant between God and the unborn souls of humanity, when God demanded, "Am I not your Lord?" (Qur'an 7:172). This moment, for the Sufis, was not only the perfect statement of the divine unity but also the forging of the link of love between God and the soul. Moreover, the music of *sama'* is nothing but the reverberation of that primal word of God: "*Sama'* is the recollection of the speech of the covenant, and the burning of the fire of longing." The Sufis describe God as having placed a secret into the human heart that day, which is concealed like a spark in stone but which blazes forth when struck with the steel of *sama'*. Junayd is quoted as saying, "When to the essence of the children of Adam on the day of the covenant there came the words 'Am I not your Lord?' all the spirits became absorbed by its delight. Thus those who came into this world, whenever they hear a beautiful voice, their spirits tremble and are disturbed by the memory of that speech, because the influence of that speech is in the beautiful voice." In other terms, the source of *sama'* is said to be the rapture or attraction (*jadh*) of God, a kind of energy that irresistibly draws one towards him. The Egyptian Sufi Dhu al-Nun said, "*Sama'* is the rapture of God that incites hearts towards God."⁹

Regional Traditions of Music and Dance

Sufi music is found in all Muslim regions where Sufi poetry is recited, while dance is really a specialty of just one Sufi order, the Mevlevis. The local musical traditions employed in Sufi music vary considerably, and they have long and complex histories that are in many cases hardly known to outsiders. Specialists in ethnomusicology have discussed the technical aspects of these different musical traditions in terms of musical theory and performance. Rather than attempting a detailed historical survey, here I will briefly describe a few representative varieties of Sufi music from the viewpoint of reli-

gion and ritual, with attention to those traditions that have been recently popularized in the West and which can be heard in recordings.

One of the best-known traditions of Sufi music is practiced by the Chishti order in India and Pakistan.¹⁰ Because of its wide popularity in contemporary circles far beyond those interested in traditional Sufi rituals, it is a good example to begin with, to raise the issue of the redefinition of Sufi music in the West. Although Persian and Urdu texts written by Chishti authors use the term *samāʿ*, nowadays this type of music is known primarily by the term *qawwali*, an Arabic word meaning recited; this name preserves an old terminology, since Arabic Sufi texts from nine centuries ago refer to the reciter (*qawwal*) of poetry as a central figure in musical rituals. The oldest Chishti texts, from the early thirteenth century, testify to the outstanding importance of listening to music in this order. Court historians also indicate that jurists opposed to music challenged its legitimacy at this time, but the sultans of Delhi in every instance found the Sufi arguments in favor of music convincing. The single most striking piece of evidence concerning music among the Chishtis is the death of Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki at the end of a musical session held in Delhi in 1235 (his tomb is near the Qutb Minar south of Delhi). He went into ecstasy when the singers recited a Persian verse by Ahmad-i Jam: "Those slain by submission's knife / ever from beyond find life." Convention requires that when someone enters ecstasy during such a session, it is necessary to repeat the same line of verse until the person returns to his senses. An oral tradition has it that each time the singers sang the first half of the verse, Qutb al-Din would be reduced to near unconsciousness ("slain by submission's knife"). But when the second half of the verse was recited ("ever from beyond find life"), he would revive. As the story goes, Qutb al-Din's disciples finally called a stop to the music after this repetition had gone on for three days. Unfortunately, the singers stopped in the middle of the verse, and the saint expired. This is by

no means an isolated instance of death during *samāʿ*. Biographical collections are full of similar incidents, the most recent of which took place less than a century ago when a Chishti Sufi named Muhammad Husayn Ilahabadi died at Ajmer during a recitation of verses about the ascension of the Prophet.

Typically the Chishti *qawwali* performance is a highly structured ritual that is performed at Sufi shrines on the death anniversaries of famous saints and on other religious holidays. The major locations for Chishti festivals in India are shrines at Ajmer, Delhi (Nizamuddin), Gulbarga, Kalyar, and Khuldabad, while in Pakistan the largest Chishti shrine is at Pakpattan. Thursday afternoon (the day before the Friday communal prayer) is also generally a good day to visit Chishti shrines if one wishes to see *qawwali* performed. The musicians, who are service professionals, perform these days on modern instruments, including the harmonium, a bellows-driven keyboard instrument of European origin, and occasionally the clarinet; for percussion they employ north Indian drums and hand clapping. An audience form of *qawwali* called *band samāʿ*, accompanied only by the drum, is performed on special occasions at Gulbarga. Many Chishti *qawwali* songs are in Indian languages, such as Hindi, Punjabi, and Siraiki, plus some Urdu poetry especially in concert performance; classical Persian poems and a few Arabic pieces also play a part in the repertory. While some *qawwali* singers are trained in the classical Indian musical styles formerly associated with the princely courts, others employ local and regional styles developed at Sufi shrines.

The audience is arranged in a hierarchical fashion with the senior Sufi acting as the master of the assembly. Some Chishti groups call for a planned sequence of songs designed to bring out particular kinds of experiences. One such sequence is to begin with songs addressed to the Prophet, followed by songs of love to excite powerful emotion; then come songs of mystical annihilation, followed by songs of divine presence. Many songs are also dedicated to particular saints, especially of the Chishti order. Ritual today involves the use

of paper money (at major festivals, money changers are available to provide bills of small denominations for participants). Those who are especially moved by a song addressed to a favorite saint approach the master of the assembly and present cash donations, which are later distributed to the musicians. If a listener notices that someone else is attuned to a song, he may first approach that person and press the money into the other person's hand, so that together they may deliver the offering to the master of the assembly. Unsuspecting foreign scholars, who believe that they are merely observing the proceedings, may be drawn into the ritual by this device. It is only in secular public performances that the audience gives money directly to the musicians.

Like a number of other Sufi practices, the *qawwali* music of the Chishtis has come under attack by Muslim reformers. The influential theological school at Deoband, though it was founded by conservative scholars trained in the Chishti tradition, has been over the past century a center of *hadith*-based criticism of *sama'* as an innovation. It has accordingly become necessary for modern Chishtis spokesmen to defend the legitimacy of listening to music in terms of Islamic law. Because of the controversies over music, one frequently hears in India and Pakistan a kind of apologetic defense of *qawwali* music based on its alleged role in the preaching of Islam. Because the Sufis were great missionaries, so the argument goes, they would use whatever technique seemed most practical to get their message across. Seeing how fond Indians are of music, the Sufis therefore decided to use music to attract them to Islam, despite their recognition that music is illegitimate. This is a very weak argument for the use of music, since it basically authorizes listening to music only for non-Muslims who are likely converts to Islam. This position ignores the established role of music in early Sufism, and it wrongly views Sufis as dedicated to mass conversion, despite the lack of any early evidence for such a program. It also runs against the grain of Sufi texts, which only permitted music for those mystical elites who are

capable of understanding spiritually the powerful emotional message of love poetry put to music. This paradoxical view of Chishti music is another testimony to the intensity of the debate over Sufi practice today.

On the level of popular culture, Chishti *qawwali* music has found a much enlarged audience in the twentieth century through the recording industry, initially in colonial India and now on a broader international basis. For a number of years, the wildly successful Bombay film industry has relied on *filmi* music explicitly based on the Urdu *ghazal* tradition, which in terms of theme, rhyme, and meter is closely linked to the poetry of *qawwali*. The difference lies primarily in the secular and commercial context of film music. More than one observer has commented, however, on the spillover of Bombay musical style into performances at Chishti shrines. The market for *qawwali* as a widely accepted devotional music has been vigorous in India and Pakistan for decades, and it has a popularity extending far beyond the circles of South Asian Muslims; many Hindus and Sikhs enjoy this music as an artistic performance, in the same way that many Hindus and Sikhs visit Sufi tombs on pilgrimage. The initial dissemination of *qawwali* music beyond India and Pakistan has been through specialized niche marketing at Indian and Pakistani shops in Britain and America by subsidiaries of the same British firms (principally EMI) that control the music industry in South Asia.¹¹

The reception of this music in the West was initially limited to the specialist ethnomusicology category of international folk music. *Qawwali* performers could be seen in the same concert series as folkloric ballet ensembles and ethnic choral groups. Famous performers such as the Sabri Brothers and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan have for some years performed in concert tours and music festivals in theaters in Europe, Japan, and America. Some of the best recordings of *qawwali* music (as well as other types of Sufi music noted below) are available from European institutes, such as the Maison des Cultures du Monde run by the French Ministry of Culture or the Ocora label

produced by Radio France. UNESCO has included a considerable amount of *qawwali* and other Sufi music in its recording series. This was basically a "highbrow" way of presenting Sufi music, as an aesthetic performance that could be appreciated by the sophisticated and cosmopolitan listener. In the notes to a 1989 recording of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan made by Radio France, Pierre Toureille cites his meteoric rise to popularity (ten compact disks produced in four different countries), and calls him "one of the greatest voices of this century . . . for centuries to come" (today one can find about one hundred recordings by this artist). These European recordings, in acknowledgment of the distance that separates the Parisian concert stage from the Sufi shrine in Pakistan, often provide scholarly translations of the texts of the songs in the recordings, with notes on the technical aspects of the music as well.

In more recent years, *qawwali* music has taken on a new identity through the popular world music category. This new trend has made singers, percussionists, and instrumental performers from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia much more familiar to Western audiences, not only in recordings but also in motion picture sound tracks (*The Last Temptation of Christ*). The world music recordings are bolder than the European ethnomusicology recordings in treating Sufi music as a universal property that speaks to everyone; it is music that people can dance to. While the notes to world music recordings recognize that lyrics are an important part of the *qawwali* tradition, they generally provide only a minimal annotation and rarely translate the words. This is a major shift from the earlier contexts of Chishti musical performance, where the words were the crucial and essential factor (in a similar fashion, polyphonic harmony was introduced into European church music on the grounds that it improved understanding of the words of hymns).

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan has now collaborated to produce movie sound tracks with American musicians such as Eddie Vedder of the alternative band Pearl Jam (in *Dead Man Walking*) and Trent Reznor

of the mainstream industrial group Nine Inch Nails (in *Natural Born Killers*).¹² Here he performs as a pure vocalist without a recognizable text. His rendition of a song honoring a Pakistani Sufi saint, "Mustt Mustt," was remixed by the British trip-hop group Massive Attack, in 1990 and became an international dance hit. One reviewer recently remarked after a 1996 concert, "As far as Western audiences are concerned, Khan might as well be belting out entries from the Yellow Pages."¹³ In an interview, Khan has commented on the way he performs for Western audiences: "The people of the West do not understand the language, but they understand the rhythm, and they enjoy it. As music has no language, it is international in itself. I've met many Westerners who know our language as well. In Pakistan, I tend to sing more poetry along with the rhythm because they know the language."¹⁴ While Khan feels the tension between traditional *qawwali* and new musical experimentation, as a musician he is open to new ideas. His ability to move between secular concert performance and spiritual shrine ritual is not new, however, but continues the role of the musician or poet who could be heard differently by courtly and mystical audiences. It is clear, nonetheless, that the international popularity of *qawwali* involves a radical redefinition of Sufi music. No longer a lower class professional performing for spiritually elite listeners, the singer has become a star performer for mass audiences.

The other example of Sufi music that has captured the imagination of the West has been that of the Mevlevi Sufi order, in the ritual of *sama'* that has given them the name of Whirling Dervishes.¹⁵ This practice has been known for much longer through the reports of travelers, and it is of course the dance aspect of the ritual that has caught the attention of observers. Still, the turning dervish dance of the Mevlevis is inseparable from its musical context, and it is known by the same word for listening to music: *sema* in Turkish pronunciation. The Mevlevi Sufi order was founded by Jalal al-Din Rumi's son Sultan Walad in the late thirteenth century. The complex liturgical

performance of today's Mevlevi was introduced at a later period, and attained its present form by the seventeenth century. Certainly Rumi was intimately involved with *sama*' on a regular basis, and his poetry abounds with references to music and dance. In his time, however, these gatherings were less structured events, with food and drink served along with the music, and the musicians were professionals rather than dervishes. As the order developed, a formal performance structure developed, in which the Persian poetry of Rumi was put to music along with poems in praise of the Prophet and Qur'anic recitations. The novices during their 1001-day training studied this poetry as they were trained in the dance, learning to whirl in place by spinning around a large nail placed between the big toe of the left foot and the toe next to it. Musical accompaniment came from the plucked *tambur*, the bowed *rebab*, and above all the reed flute, or *ney*, which has such a prominent symbolic role in Rumi's poetry.

Most of the known Mevlevi musical repertoire was composed from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, and the music overlapped in style with that which was composed for the Ottoman court. Indeed, an Ottoman sultan, Selim III (1761-1808) was a Mevlevi and composed a ceremonial musical piece that became accepted in the order. In the nineteenth century, the Mevlevi were one of about twenty Sufi orders active in Istanbul, while there were thirty-seven orders to be found in the Ottoman empire as a whole. Out of some three hundred dervish lodges in Istanbul, four belonged to the Mevlevi.¹⁶ Yet for Western observers both then and now, the Whirling Dervishes became emblematic of Sufism as a whole. This may be partly explained by the remarkable setting of the Galata Mevlevihane in Istanbul, which had been the site of a Mevlevi lodge for centuries. By the nineteenth century, however, the hill of Galata on the Golden Horn had become a well-established colony for foreign merchants and visitors, and the Mevlevi lodge and the twice weekly performances of *sama* became well-known tourist attractions by mid-

century. Access to the lodge was made easier by the construction in 1875 of the funicular railroad, or Tunel, leading to the top of the hill, and a French restaurant flourished right next door.¹⁷ It is remarkable how many European books of the time feature pictures of dervishes, with the Mevlevi whirling dance forming the most dramatic and prominent of all the portraits.¹⁸ These portraits, particularly those by artists such as Preziosi, show the Mevlevi dervishes as truly exotic creatures, with feminine-looking skirts and trancelike expressions.

All this would change after the revolution that established Turkey as a secular republic in 1922. Increasingly impatient with the remnants of medieval religious authority, Kemal Atatürk in 1925 promulgated a law banning the dervish orders and the public performance of their rituals. Sufi lodges were seized by the state. The Mevlevi dance was thus declared illegal. The tomb of Rumi in Konya was converted into a state-run museum in 1927, and it has functioned so ever since, though many visitors covertly pay it the reverence due to a saintly shrine. Late in 1953, by agreement with the municipal authorities of Konya, the Mevlevi dance was revived on the condition that it be done only as an artistic performance for tourists. Since then, it has been performed on the anniversary of Rumi's death every December 17, to increasingly large audiences. International concert tours have been undertaken in subsequent years (the use of the Gregorian solar calendar for the festival's date signals its secular origins, in contrast with the Muslim lunar calendar used for most saint's festivals). Although the public climate in Turkey has become somewhat more friendly for religion recently, Sufism is still essentially illegal, and Sufi groups have suffered persecution over the years.

The structure and organization of the Mevlevi liturgy is complex. It is divided into a first part containing a poem in praise of the Prophet, musical improvisations, and a whirling dance cycle, followed by a second part divided into four music and dance sections, called *selams*, followed by an instrumental finale and Qur'an recitation with prayers. The dervishes enter wearing long conical felt hats

of Central Asian origin, with black cloaks that are cast off during the dance to reveal white garments. Symbolic explanations are offered of the clothing, in terms of death and resurrection. While turning, the dervish holds the arms out with the right hand turned up to heaven and the left turned down to earth. The movements are slow and stately to begin with, increasing to a fast pace with the music but never out of control.

As in the case of Chishti *qawwali*, the transplantation of the Mevlevi *sema* to the concert stage offers several conundrums about the relationship between music and spirituality. The 1994 concert tour exemplified the tension between symbolic performance and mystical ritual. The first part of the performance at Duke University, preceded by recitation of English versions of Rumi's poems, was essentially classical Ottoman court music, played by musicians wearing distinctive European-style formal wear. This was a high-culture phenomenon as one would see it in a secular Istanbul concert hall. After the intermission, dervishes came onto the stage and, under the direction of two Mevlevi leaders, performed the sequence of the *sema* with instrumental and vocal accompaniment. But who is the performance intended for? As one reviewer noted, "The 10 dervishes and 12 musicians who make up the Mevlevi Ensemble fall somewhere between performers and worshipers."¹⁹ For the audience as a whole, the Mevlevi dance can be an entrancing art form that contrasts interestingly with European ballet. For the dervish dancers, the *sema* can be a meditation. But to what extent does the observation of this ritual become a spiritual event?

Other Turkish Sufi groups have also made the transition to the concert stage. The Qadiri (or Kadiri) *dhikr* ritual can be heard on a compact disk recorded by a European ethnographic center. The ceremony begins with prayers in Arabic chanted in unison. This is followed by poems in Turkish recited in a beautiful tenor solo, overlaid upon a deep bass line of male voices chanting the profession of faith (*la ilaha illa allah*, "There is no god but God."). I had the

opportunity to observe this group in Istanbul in 1990, in a lovely wooden lodge attached to a seventeenth-century tomb. The main room for the *dhikr* (and the meal that followed) was decorated with striking dervish paraphernalia, amidst which was set a poster advertising the order's European tour of the previous year. That evening a recording crew from an ethnomusicology program on Belgian radio was present with recording gear and intrusive bright lights. The chief recording engineer was repeatedly heard to make disparaging remarks; to him the music was interesting, but the "superstition" of the dervishes was ridiculous. Yet this necessarily private ritual, performed with considerable energy after the end of Ramadan, was clearly an act of worship for those who participated. The late Shaykh Muzaffer led a group of Cerrahi-Halveti dervishes from Istanbul on an international tour in 1980, and at the climax of a stately dervish dance with musical accompaniment, he invited spiritual seekers in the audience to join him on the stage. There is an ambiguous line between performance and participation in these situations, which ends up being defined differently according to one's perspective. Turkish music that falls more neatly into the ethnographic or classical categories, such as recordings of the folk music of Chinese Turkestan, or the classical *mugam* (*maqam*) of Azerbaijan, lacks this ambiguity even when it retains some of the characteristics of Sufi music.

Outside the Sunni Sufi orders, such as the Qadiri, Mevlevi, and Halveti, there is an important tradition of Shi'i-oriented Turkish Sufi music and dance related to the Bektashi order that is still practiced in certain communities. The Turkish Alevis (related to the Syrian 'Alawis) are a Shi'i group of about fifteen million people who regard 'Ali as a divine manifestation superior even to the Prophet. They have historically been regarded as heretical by Sunni authorities and have suffered serious persecution. Their sober and devout musical rituals, always held in private, have also been regarded with suspicion by outsiders because both men and women take part. It is

ajouka very stolen. . . performances at the saint's tomb continue to be from their Sufi connections. . . but by no means all of these other traditions of Sufi music.

There are many other musical traditions practiced in different regions. Some, such as the Moroccan traditions, have attracted the interest of the West Africanologists and popular music producers. The music of the West Africanologists and popular music producers, which derives from "very Sufi brotherhood of the Gnawa, which derives from an American producer as "very Sufi brotherhood of the Gnawa, which derives from an American producer as "very roots, is currently being advertised by an American producer as "very roots, is currently being advertised by an American producer as "very bluesy, sort of like Malian music. . . . It's very warm and spiritual, with a healing quality to it."²³ The Bauls, who are itinerant bards reciting Bengali songs on Tantric and Sufi themes, have been recorded several times as an example of ecstatic singing in a folk tradition. There are highly refined developments of Andalusian Arabic music that have been employed by Sufi orders for centuries in Morocco. There are highly refined developments of Andalusian Arabic music that have been employed by Sufi orders for centuries in Morocco, in which different musical modes are linked to healing through a complex physiological theory based on Greco-Arabic medicine. Egypt has a vital musical tradition of the Sufi orders; as Earle the *dhikr* rituals and saint's festivals of the Shaykh Yasin, are Waugh has shown, Egyptian performers, such as Shaykh al-Farid, amazingly popular both in person and through recordings, which include classical Arabic Sufi pieces, such as the poems of Ibn al-Farid. In Iran, singers such as Shahram Nazeri have recorded powerful musical renderings of Rumi's Persian poetry, in styles ranging from

Another Sun-related group known as the Magicians is the Moroccan society initially discovered by several expatriates (or Jajouka).²¹ This group was initially discovered by Paul Bowles, and William S. Burroughs. Cysyn hired the group to play in his Tangier restaurant The 1001 Nights in the late 1950s. Later on Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones visited the musicians in 1967, producing a recording of their music in 1971. What seemed to interest these visitors was the theory, first promulgated a century ago by the Orientalist Westerner, that the wild Moroccan music produced on double-reed pipes was somehow connected to ancient Greek Dionysian mysteries (Jones's recording was called *The Pipes of Pan at Jajouka*). This theory seemed to be verified by ritual dances of animal representation (the goat-man Bu llud) and spirit possession (the demoness Aisha Qandisha) which occur during the celebration of 'Id al-Adha, the Muslim feast of Abrahamic sacrifice. The availability of powerful Moroccan hashish at some of these performances have evidently an attraction. Since that time, the Jajouka musicians have engaged in several musical collaborations with Euro-American artists. These collaborations include recordings by jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman (*Dancing in Your Head* in 1977) and the Rolling Stones (*Continental Drift* in 1989). Their recent concert tours have featured performances with jazz drummer Pete LaRoca and the

tambur-backed dervish choruses to classical court music (in compositions by 'Alizade) to European string orchestras. Pakistan's Folk Heritage Institute (Lok Virsa) has produced a series of books and recordings called *The Sufi Poetry Series* featuring musical performances in a variety of regional languages. Most of these musical traditions have been unconnected to dance. An exception is the practice of the Dances of Universal Peace, introduced by American Sufi leader Samuel Lewis, drawing upon dance forms and liturgies from a variety of traditions. While Sufi music is thus based on many different literary, musical, and symbolic idioms, the central element that allows us to call it Sufi music is the ritual use of the human voice to recite poetry directed to God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Sufi saints. The mass reproduction of Sufi music for new audiences in the twentieth century and the performance of Sufi music and dance on concert stages have to some extent redefined this spiritual practice as an aesthetic event for spectators in which music takes priority over the word.