

Ibrahim Keivo about the main musical traditions in Northern Syria

The Kurdish tradition

The ancient Kurdish music is dominated by the epic tradition: the long epic songs accompanied by music and speaking about love, like the epics of *Mamzwin* and *Siman wa Khajah*; the *Shara*, short songs about war heroes like the song *Darwish Abdi*; the wedding and funeral songs; and the Islamic, Christian and Yazidi hymns in the Kurdish language.

The Assyrian tradition

One of the main sources of Assyrian music is the book of *Khadra*, a collection of all the forms of religious songs and melodies. Many of the Assyrian songs are written and composed in the *Rawi* - storyteller - tradition, this is in addition to several styles of *Dabkeh* – folkloric dances - such the *Shikhani*, *Bakiah* and *Shara*.

The Syriac tradition

The Syriac music cannot be considered aside from its church roots, as it is essentially religious music, though there are today several attempts to modernize it. The main source of the Syriac music tradition is what is left today from the work of St. Ephraim the Syriac, considered to be the spiritual father of the Syriac music since he composed numerous Syriac hymns and melodies. The other source is the collected songs and airs in the famous anthology *Beit Kaz* that was transcribed by the Syrian composer Nouri Iskandar, considered to be the beholder of the Syriac tradition and the one who have brought it to the music of the 21st century.

The Arabic tradition

The Arabic music tradition of Northern Syria is as diverse as its population. The Mardalli music is one of the strongest traditions in the region. Though it is mainly “anonymous” music, it is one of the most elaborated styles of oriental music due to its sophisticated tempo (8/10) known as the *Georgina*. The other dominant form is the Bedouin tradition specific to Northern Syria. The Bedouin population of this region is quite distinctive because it has moved from a nomadic society to live in constructions based around the rivers Khabour and Tiger. The Bedouin music in Al-Jezireh has its own sound, strongly influenced by the Iraqi popular music, and is divided in four main styles: *Moulayya*, *Sweihli*, *Atabat*, and *Nayel*.

1 Dadi dadi & Ati wet ghazalet

From the Assyrian folklore
Ibrahim Keivo: voice & baglama

Dadi dadi - Mother, mother

Dadi dadi jan dadi
Ai dhanet amren dadi
Min weti hal hadiya
Lwain deminkhal spadia

loubi biekh ki khadi
kipatikhi gul wardi
gudar nankh dordia
ana khlapakh wia

Oh, Mother, my soul, when I call you I feel all my senses weave in strange conditions. Ever since I was born till this very moment I cannot forget your tender embrace... So, today, please accept that I sacrifice myself for you.

Ati wet ghazalet - You my gazelle

Ati wet ghazalet be ou ttorra w barria
Messlteli lmdita katlteli mkhemmi
Kammodetli khishenta kmoudi sayada

wana sayada barakhen wia
babi ttorreli w barria yemmi
loubakh bia kapoura lele bekkayada

You gazelle living in the woods and up in the mountains, where do you run away from me? For I am your hunter; I am a mountain man, whose father is a mountain man as well, while his mother belongs to the woods. How do you want me then to live in the crowd and the agitation of a city? She replies to the hunter: "Why don't you, oh cruel hunter, have mercy on me? Why did you make me feel so sad?"

2 Bi hobo - We fell in love

Composed by Ibrahim Keivo
Syriac folklore
Ibrahim Keivo: voice & baglama

Bi hobo nafilina mena legdo`arina
Demshenter a`alen kubi mhalkina a`alaih wardi
takh zano mahezmina mannoshi dhaidourina

mekba`ni annoshi komhashwi itritina
torina li laloho mhasholeh biomo mideh
ho ketlen haii herkeh maghameh sayfina

*We will not give up our love, in which we fell, no matter how people tend to bring us apart...
What do they want from us? They don't have the right to judge us.
But we decided though, to gift flowers to those who don't wish us good or love, even if they paid
us back with thrones. We leave it to God's judgment one day.
My love, let's just run away from those people around us to get rid of the troubles and difficul-
ties.*

3 Lawk - Oh you, (dear) boy!

From the Kurdish tradition (15th-16th century),
in *Botani* dialect (the region of Botan in Northern Syria)
Ibrahim Keivo: voice & buzok

Wra lawk wra lawk
ayno aw nino pir aw payzek lman nzani
min afdali khoudi nekerubu tkara aw biri zafez tani
aw nameenem ai
letleh zozani jori mesh aw mourani
hiliki kurra joukh aw mersh aw sani dokhazi taiveh shaveh haif barani ai
letehketchekeh dgout kurruko agri halabi lmala bavetakato
jema maro mar kozi havini teh deynaker
ai lai'iro baizameh heli meli davjahav bardani
ai lebarraki malimeh barkeren
zozani jori danineh lessereh kerri sweidicyeh
lsser baro bar kozi zveztana hi naminem
laih ai drabeh kazio souri teh malameni.
Wainabej la'vdaleh khoudi denrem shavaka niveh shaveh payda
tarkinak aw kharinak aw marinak dekaveh ardhana aw hafti azmana
aw henek dbejen hamdi bahlawana aw rustumi zal
lebeneh veh barrieh havdu gueretena lehavdu dana de darbeh krana
ai lawaz avdaleh khoudi deguerem shavakch niveh shaveh payda
jelboutameh rabu elsserdareh lengana
ai lahmü khorina aw morina dengueh koharana.

You boy, who carries a lot of objects that are unknown to me, you made my mind busy with thoughts in a way that prevented me from doing any of my tasks. Look! Look north! How awesome clouds and mist became, how dark black the clouds became, how ready is the weather for a strong falling rain.

And here is the girl calling out again: "You boy who made me suffer a lot, how I wish the glimmering flames of Aleppo would put your house down with fire... Why did you stay silent? why didn't you speak during summer, when we were all at ease relaxed of all heavy tiring labors... And here you are speaking in autumn, when everything is harsh and difficult, when every house is busy with its own duties. Now, it is time to leave and each family is looking for a secure and safe shelter".

"O...You, splendid beauty! I am that poor guy sitting in the dark of night hearing strange horrible sounds that make both sky and earth tremble, and I wonder what are they... Is it the sound of the sword of Hamdi Bahlawan, known as Al-Maher; and the sword of the Persian King, the hero Rustum Zal, when the war between them starts violently in the battle field? No, no, no. Is it the sound of the Christian tribes in the region of Qush, when they start fighting among each others... and this is the sound of their swords, spears and other various war instruments??? No, no, no. Are these then the accompanying sounds of the Pasha Hassan's convoy, when opposing the Sultan's way in Nineveh? No, no, no. Do you know that what you have heard is only the jingling sound of my beloved's earrings when she slightly moves her head!!"

4 Az Khalfem - I am the hero, Khalaf

From the Kurdish tradition (15th-16th century), in *Botani* dialect, describing the situation of the hero Khalaf in front of the Prince of Botan Island, Izeddin Sher Beik.

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & buzok

Az khalfem khalfem hawara mir hawara mir
Leguel ashira iz bgafem
Az khalafi kenguem

Az khalafi draijem

khwadieh shoureh bsadafem hawara mir
hawara mir hawara mir
khodyieh shoureh bepertchkem dejmenekhohueh
perjehdekem
khodyieh shoureh brejem leguel ashira az
dbaijem

I am Khalaf, the hero with the encrusted beautiful sword, and among the tribes, I have a great reputation

I am the hero Khalaf, the short, Oh you, prince, with a sword of numerous decorations

I chop my enemies into pieces, you Izeddin Sher Beik, prince of Botan Island

I am Khalaf, the tall with a tall sword, among tribes I talk, wander and roam making my enemies a tasty meal like a piece of grilled meat.

5 Kayef - Enjoy & Semsem - Sesame

From the Mardalli tradition (the region of Mardin, Southeastern Turkey)

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & saz

Kayef tankayef dhalal w elkayf alena fawt

Fahal eldenia elkhayneh kelletna bezer elmout

Life is no way eternal, so why don't we just enjoy its happiness and pleasure.

Nzelna fi wadi ameek w elsumsum ghattana awi awi awi dhalal

Kaukאו froukh elhawal w itnainna bakana awi awi awi dhalal

Mandhara fouk mandhara kfalto men bardi awi awi awi dhalal

Wesh faydet elmandhara dalali mo andi awi awi awi dhalal

Ala dhawak ya kamar tefah helo heshna w men elmassa lassoubeh w khdoon humer bessna

My sweetheart and me are together in one of the most beautiful ballades, among sesame plants, happily listening to the singing of the little partridges and pigeons... We even cried with them. Sweetheart, let's go to Nssaibin and sit on one of its crossroads smelling the breeze of Mardin. How beautiful would it be to sit on that nice high place with the gentle wind blowing... but only when my beloved is with me. Sweetheart! Come, let's go for a walk under the moonlight and collect apples, drowning in kisses all night long till the daylight is in.

6 Chanci - My fortune & Halimayeh - My Halimah

From the Mardalli tradition (the region of Mardin, Southeastern Turkey)

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & saz

Chanci eswedweh leyadi faldenieh yakhud lawn aw ya`ati lawn akhtouh lelmahkameh
Tassawiyou far`oun kallabouhu classatezeh w dawarouhu elsuna`a kalouli chancki asswadweh fi
eldunieh la yensheri w la yenba`a

*He is unfortunate even if the Pharaoh was his own friend, and so are all writers, people, judges
and teachers... He will certainly always remain in pain and sorrow.*

Firas hak eljabal doumi inkassar ouda	ai laili Halimayeh
Taharreb mahboubti wa anzel la Douguer w Aamouda	ai laili Halimayeh

*My beloved Halimah, come with me let's run away from all people up to the mountains where we
can live in a tent...or even to the nearby beautiful city of Aamouda or the village of Douguer,
where we can live happily away from all.*

7 Sharfadinah - The holy prophet

From the Yezidi religious tradition that used to be sung during the ceremonies in Lalish temple
which was a pilgrimage place for all Yezidi followers in the word. The temple of Lalish is located
between the area of Ba`ashish and Bahzani near Mosul (ancient Nineveh) in Iraq.

Languages: Arabic - Persian - Kurdish

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & buzok

(A simulation between the mother and the great Yezidi Prophet)

Makeh dbait beket hekayet
shir aw khudaniyeh itaket
sultan izibtcheh rangui dhaherbu leruweh veh keniani
maka sultan Ayezid tou denk heltina
ija khonki lekhou dbineh
rabhed soubaki bekhaunakhwed gazineh
Ayezid kerbo kawnan okara

maka sultan Ayezid darker jeshara
sheker lwan ronaya bouleet bo para
deh thaherbet Ayezidimenah awi neh btchouka aw neh mezna
aw tchendi awsafat jeh detchenah
tchehsbaki jekhawlaia sultan Ayezid jeh makakhweh depersia
maki tou bkhoudekeh ilahiyah
naveh bavemen tchia law bavi teh bat shaya
ser tekhtikhou rawstyaya aw lalesh benvehwi avaya.

“Oh! tender mother, in the name of God and his almighty strength, tell me how the Yezidi Sultan appeared to the universe!” The mother says loudly: “What shall I say; it is like a morning dream from which I woke up horrified calling for help”.

What did you see?”

She continues: “The prophet Yezid appeared in each and every bit of this universe...in the desert, in the sea, in the sky, in the villages and the cities... a glimmering light shining over everything.

Show up, our Prophet! You are neither big nor small in size... but within you all strength and perfection lay”.

Here the Yezidi Prophet continues asking his mother: “What a terrifying morning... I beg you and ask you in the name of He who created day and night, who is my father? Speak and say?”

The mother says: “Your father is Tawoos Malek, the king of all kings, sitting on the thrown of Time and Place... everything is under his command... And this big temple, Lalish the Luminous, was built upon his name”.

8 Dhalal Darwish Abdi - My beloved Darwish Abdi

Yezidi epic song about the hero Darwish Abdi and his beloved Adlani, in Kurdish (about 400 years-old). Adhlani sings about her beloved after he was murdered in a famous battle that took place in Al-Jezireh (Northern Syria), between the city of Raas Al-Ein and the Turkish city Wiran Shahr.

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & saz

Adlani dbeh w zneh kikima w zneh mlima
iz dusta Darwishavdi lawki Ayezidima
Adlani dbeh khwadou khwazia jekhera naveh khoudira
meni techtek joukhoua bukhousta
leh dalalimen lebarkouni bafimin rawsta
bwana def aw drani chekri tasak av bukhusta
mni tasa aveh jeh kanika dakerta
meni bedistehchpeh guelwa haspeh beguerta
o berasti menelber dhalali mali raguerta
bla henki izrael aw derdael jebrael aw mikael
amanatikhweh jmenbukhsta.

I neither belong to the tribe of Kikieh nor the tribe of Mullieh, I belong now to Shuraikan, the tribe of my beloved Darwish Abdi, the Yazidi boy, the rider of that horse Hadban. I prayed and asked God to fulfill my wish so the hero Darwish Abdi comes to our tribe's yard and stands in front of my father's tent, asking me whatever he wants in order to be his maid and serve him. How I wish he says to me : "I want to drink a glass of water from your hands". I would – may God be my witness – go to the spring and fill the glass of the purest water ever and mix it with milk, sugar and honey, and then blend them all with my little finger. I will then hold the leach of the dear horse in my left hand, while the right one offers him the drink. He will give me that look from his eyes and say only some words from his lips. After that, I don't really mind if all angels, Azrael, Gabriel, Michael or Derdael, come to take my soul whenever they like. Darwish you are my love, and I would not trade you, not even for all the universe's heroes... So don't tell me that the Yezidi hero Darwish Abdi is dead, because is not a reality, this is just a dream!

9 Dabkeh (dances) from Al-Jezireh

A mawal followed by 3 folkloric dances from the Syriac, Kurdish and Mardalli traditions specific to Northern Syria

Languages: Kurdish, Syriac and Mardalli

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & al-jazewera (folkloric string instrument from Al-Jezireh)

Mariami (Mardalli song)

Yar yar bemen yari
hzar darbi mendegou barikhweh mada wi khetyari
leh bda khourtaki wa kmen tcharda sali
jboutah bka waka pazza gourandi
takhemi singuetah bukalpinch viali wyali
yar yar mariami.

Oh, my beloved! My beloved! I told you over and over again not to fall in love with that old man, because he does not know how to treat his lover. So, come and love me, and you will see how full our life will be with kisses, love and tenderness.

Khanemeh (Kurdish song)

Leh naman naman leh khanemi bouka mala bavemeni
wez heliyam techetdemenama nebmethkala aw nabderhama

Oh beautiful girl whose name is Khanem! How I wish you were a bride in my parents' house... and that you were mine, because I am deeply in love with you.

Hano Hano (Syriac song)

Hano hano krayto bartet kasho mito	thletobi karnito shreh hasso messleyounito
Babekh lekezai leh azzaili lebshieyah	dmoutaileh deshieyah leh dano d' assrieyah
Talekh hano krayto mlelekh a' ali brisso	bi hobo detrina hoyokhet tesh' itho
Lo darbou dkoumina besh sham' ii kayto	wbenouti ko azmrin la' younothekh halaitho

Oh beautiful girl! The daughter of the village's dead priest, who is always praying in the corners of this village...come on Hano! Our village's most beautiful girl...let's meet and talk about love, let's light candles in our way and make all girls in the village sing and dance for your eyes.

Ya dhalal, ya dhalal (Mardalli song)

Ya dhalal ya dhalal ya mdalalet kalbi ya dhalal ya dhalal w elkhayen dhalali

You, oh so dear to my heart, please don't betray me.

10 Akhkik Akhtchik - You beautiful girl & Iskeshir

Folkloric song from the Armenian tradition in the dialect of Diar Baker

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & al-junbosh

Akhkik akhtchik yies zar guoguim bouieti
Guozim adkan larim ikam kofiti

shad havnerim parak midgkait khouieti
akhkik akhtchik

Oh pretty, I am so fond of everything in you, especially your body and your slim waist. How I wish to be close to you, oh you beautiful girl!

Iskeshir (the name of a special ceremony celebrated by girls only during on the Ascension)
Iskeshir hampartsoumeh hala halaninayah aghtchik neron harsnoumeh hala halaninayah
Nesdeereh badikouchan hala halaninayah arakeh guela chouchan hala halaninayah
Egu indzi bak midour hala halaninayah ignam babouti pissan hala halaninayah
Nesdeereh tonder doneh hala halaninayah irisseh garmer doneh hala halaninayah
Egu indzi bak midour hala halaninayah magari ashkhar antsoumeh hala halaninayah

In this beautiful day of Iskeshir, a special day for brides to be, how I wish to see you filling wine in vessels, to get a kiss from you and to become then your father's son-in-law.

I see you sitting in the kitchen preparing food and your face is red like a flower. Come give me one sole kiss since everything is mortal and going to an end.

11 Halak shalou - Your parents have left & Kul el hala - All Welcome

From the Bedouin tradition of Northern Syria, in the Arabic dialect of Al-Jezireh

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & oud

Halak shalou ala elgutrain aw ala elham
Ma akwak ya galbi ala hamel elham

w khalou begalbi elalhum
methel tchabed eldloul ala althana

Your parents have left to far away places, leaving nothing but pain and sorrow in my heart. How solid can my heart be to carry all this pain within? It is like the pain of the female of the camel while baring her child.

Kul elhala belnahi in tchan za'alan
Kul elhala beljani elnasher zelfo
Walla lanteek awsafo in chan ta'refo
Kul elhala belhadeth lo jen kulhen
Ma gueltelech ya Yuma kh dini menhen
Kul alhala bel ghali ya habibi
Tmanetak yalghali inta tebibu

yabu oyoun elwasa' belkhashmi eran
yeshbeh anz eljazeera mdhaye' welfo
yabu oyoun wassiea' welkhad rayani
rihet messetch w khdiara bettai guedalhen
baltchi yeghferletch soumet ramadani
ya bu hatchi liyeshbah garta elzibibi
tqlelbn ala rjani w tgoul waja'ani

All welcome to the one who abandoned her lover if she comes mad at me, the one with wide eyes and with a piercing in the nose. All welcome to the one who came spreading her long forge, looking like a deer from Al-Jezireh, who lost its beloved.

I want to give you her description, may you know her; the one with wide eyes and fresh cheeks. All welcome to the young girls even if they come all together; spreading a perfume of musk and greenery in the curves of their braids. Didn't I tell you mother to take me away from them, so that God may then excuse you from fasting in Ramadan?

All welcome to my dear sweetheart whose speech is like eating raisins.

I wished you were my doctor to turn me on my side and to tell me about my pain.

12 Massa' el kheir - Good evening

Written & composed by Ibrahim Keivo

From Al-Jezireh's folkloric tradition, in Arabic

Ibrahim Keivo: voice & baglama

Massa elkhair massa elkhair
Fkalbi frouhi
Ala jame'tkun masha'alla
Ala eldabkeh yalla yalla

ahlan w sahlan bettaletkun
ala rassi jayitkun
aw mhabetkun hala hala
ana w idi fi idkun

*Good evening, good evening,
In my heart, in my soul,
May God protect your gathering
Let's go to dance the dabkeh,*

*your presence is most welcome
"over my head", so dear is your visit
and your love, welcome! Welcome!
with my hand in yours*