

Nine Arabic Maqamat

maqamat (sg. **maqam**) – Arabic melodic modes

ajnas (sg. **jins**) – tetrachords or mini-scales, the building blocks of Arabic melody

Out of the dozens of Arabic maqamat, these are some of the most foundational to the understanding of Arabic melody. Each one is the most common maqam associated with its lower jins, which together represent the 9 most common ajnas: Rast, Bayati, Hijaz, Nahawand, Ajam, Kurd, Saba, Sikah, and Nikriz. (In most of these cases, the lower jins and the maqam share the same name). All of these maqamat except Nawa Athar are very commonly used in Arabic songs and improvisation.

Note: The scale degrees represented by whole note symbols are either the tonic (the root of the maqam) or the *ghammaz* (the root of an upper jins). The ghammaz is a particularly important pivot note for modulation (switching among different ajnas and maqamat), although other scale degrees frequently function as a pivot notes as well.

Rast

The prototypical maqam (like C major in European music).
Song example: Ya Shadi Al-Alhan

Bayati

An especially common maqam Arabic folk music.
Song example: Salouni Ennas

Hijaz

E-flat often slightly sharp; F-sharp often slightly flat.
Song example: El Helwa Di

Nahawand

Similar to European minor.
Also often played in G.
Song example: Bint Al Shalabiya

Ajam

Similar to European major.
Often played in B-flat or F, especially in modulations.
Song example: Zourouni

Kurd

Once fairly rare, but became very popular in the 20th century.
Song example: Nassam Alayna

Saba

An intense, melancholic maqam.
Song example: Huwwah Sahih

Huzam

Huzam is a member of the Sikah family, but is much more common than maqam Sikah itself (which is similar to Huzam but with Rast instead of Hijaz for the middle jins).
Song example: Tala Al-Badru Alayna

Nawa Athar

Nawa Athar is a member of the Nikriz family. While not especially common, it's still more common than maqam Nikriz itself (which is similar to Nawa Athar but with Nahawand instead of Hijaz in the upper jins).
Song example: Gamil Gamal