

# DAMANAT

**FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION BY MUSIC**

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## **Introduction**

Music is one of the most important elements to determine identity and civilization being connected to human, the earth and customs and traditions. It is with human in all the developments of his life and civilization. Plato considers music to be one of the main drivers of human beings. According to Ibn Khaldun, the first manifestation of the lack of civilization is the lack or decline of music. It is said that music is what precedes speech and transcends it when the latter cannot express.

Music is not a luxury or entertainment or a joy as the public thinks, however, it is a means of expression by tones and rhythms.

In the beginning, music was restricted to worship rituals, performed in places of worship, religious ceremonies and festivals. It was a means of man relationship with God. Music was then used in war to motivate fighters, bring people together, and instill fear among the enemies. It gradually evolved so that the music accompanied social rituals such as birth delivery, circumcision, wedding and death as well as it accompanied daily works such as songs of agriculture, construction and grazing.

With the development of civilizations, music has become a profession practiced by professional musicians to make their living. Music has its own approaches and methods. Perhaps the reason that has made music to be related to entertainment, it is the presence of musical art professionals who performed their art in the court of royalty and state officials in exchange of material revenue.

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With the intellectual and cultural revolution at the end of the nineteenth century AD, the musical concept developed and became a cultural art that contributes to cultural life and touches people's concerns and became one of the most important means of expressing social and political problems.

The importance of music in expression is because it reaches the public easily unlike the other arts that address some group or gender in the society such as theater or plastic arts, which despite its importance in the expression of society, it does not have the effect of music that is heard and echoed by the public at any time in any place.

Therefore, music often faces obstacles by the authorities or expedients under any pretext such as religious prohibition or moral disintegration

### **The State of Lyrical Music Art in Yemen** Lyrical

art in Yemen can be divided into two parts Traditional

lyric (City Lyric)

Folk lyric (Countryside Lyric)

The prevalent thought among Yemeni society is that folk lyric is a lyric accompany the work with the purpose to make the worker enthusiastic and active like the agricultural songs or the construction songs.

On the other hand, the traditional lyric or city's lyric is linked to entertainment and joy where it has no social function; just to be listened in the afternoons in idleness with Qat chewing and listening to music and emotional lyrics.

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Traditional songs were usually performed at weddings, in meetings and cultural office. In the 1950s in the south, and with the appearance of artistic symposia such as Aden Symposia, Lahj Symposia and other, the lyrical art came out from the sources to the audience directly in the theaters.

In the north, after glorious September Revolution, musical art came out from the cultural office to the public through television and theaters. Thus, subjects of songs were varied as they were already limited to emotional songs. Topics of revolutionary and political became themes of songs so the political song was matched to the emotional song in terms of the audience and fans.

With the expansion of radio and television broadcasting and their reach to every house, it was necessary that the song has to express the concerns and problems of society. A number of artists introduced the social song which received a great popularity in society, and became the best among the other songs. Some of those lyrics have contributed to change in the society, eliminated some of its disadvantages and encouraged its advantages.

### **Examples of Expression by Music**

Sing O Hadi the anthem of the country .... Sing the nice Dan song\*<sup>1</sup>

Do not mention the Sanani songs .... The songs of Branches of Akyan \*<sup>2</sup>

Welcome the Hashimi\*<sup>3</sup> who ease sorrows and the sadness

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<sup>1</sup> Dam is a Hadrami style of songs

<sup>2</sup> Gosn Akyan= branches of Akyan : This is a title of a Sanani Song

<sup>3</sup> Hashimi : is a title a Lahji Song

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This is how Al-Qumindan expressed in the 1930s his refusal to the domination of Sana'ani song over the other lyrical arts and he demanded to revive the Lahji song. In spite of criticism, and accusation of segregation, Al-Qumindan delivered his idea to the poets and artists of his society and thus the revival of Lahji song was achieved and became one of the lyrical arts of Yemen.

There is a misconception that only love and passions are the songs that become popular and accepted by the audience unlike songs that express the concerns and problems of the society. Of course, there are expressive songs excelled over all love songs. The following are some examples of that kind:

- 1- Ayoub Tarish Song (Come Back Home) in which he appealed expatriates to come back to their homeland to take care of the farms and fields. This song cause many expatriates to come back Yemen.
- 2- Ali Al-Simah Song (Al-Balah) which criticizes emigration and shows how emigration can cause social damages to the individual and society.
- 3- Abdulbaset Absi Song (The Most Bitter Glasses) which got its popularity with the voice of Amal Ka'adol in which she criticizes the marriage of minor girls to elderly men due to their need of money.
- 4- Fadhl Mohammed Al-Lahji and Faisal Alawi Song (We Will Reap) in which they express their pride of Lahji cotton and this lyric became widely popular in Lahj and all around Yemen.

- 5- The epic (Love and Coffee) by Ali Al-Ansi in which he encourages coffee tree cultivation as this tree has both physical and moral values.

These are simple examples of the expansion of social songs which became popular everywhere and were chanted by all people. They contributed in changing some customs of the society. The popularity and excellence of this kind of songs over other romantic songs indicate that the society liked and accepted this kind of songs which express its concerns and problems.

In the 1990s, the Yemeni lyrical art decreased where there were no new artists in the art field. Concerts and theatres disappeared; even youth chorus which appeared in the middle of 1980s disappeared.

In the millennium, songs were just related to wedding parties as many youth artists appeared, but all were restricted to perform concerts and to produce songs that meet the atmosphere of weddings and the audience.

By the end of the first decade of the millennium, new art came into the surface which originally came from western countries and was popular among the youth, namely, arts of hip-hop and rap, where a group of young guys performed songs that express their concerns and the social circumstances with rhythm of hip-hop music.

Fahd Alqarni and Mohammed Aladhra'ai became famous as monologue artists performing social songs that express the situation of the ordinary citizen. This kind of songs became so popular among people as it touches their daily life, where these songs were listened to on busses, taxis and cafes and were sung by elderly people and children.

Expression through music and singing was not an easier task where some artists faced disturbances from the authorities, some were thrown to jails and were charged with fabricated accuses, and others were threatened. They were even annoyed in their business and attacked by government owned media.

Even there was official controlling system which had the right to allow or prevent expression by such kind of social or political songs. The prevention of such kind of songs was due to their topics which criticize the situations of the society or which criticize the authorities such as songs: (I am the People, O Leader) and (Nashwan). The other reason to prevent such songs is the political attitude of the artist himself as the artist (Abo Nassar).

### **Recommendations**

The freedom of expression has many obstacles and problems including:

- 1- Religious scholars still prevent music as it is religiously prohibited.
- 2- Underestimating songs and music and those who perform them.
- 3- There are official control bodies on songs that grant or prevent license
- 4- Recent political changes and events that presented artistic types other than music
- 5- There are no specialized institutes or schools for music
- 6- The Yemeni Artists have no artistic and cultural awareness