

The William and Mary Middle Eastern Music Ensemble

Sama'i Shat Araban by Tamburi Cemil Bey

A composition in the mode Shat Araban from the Golden Age of Ottoman Multiculturalism

Billadhi Askara

Muwashshah from the Andalusian and Syrian Tradition

The texts of muwashshahat (pl.) mix metaphors of nature, particularly plants and animals with those of physical beauty, particularly references to the face and eyes as a way to describe love, longing, and separation. Love for a lover is always confounded with love for the divine, a common trait of mysticism among many cultures. Thank you to Zema Mirza for this translation

اللحمى بالذي أسكر من عرف Billadhi askara min 'arf el-lama

The one who intoxicates by the scent of the dark lips

كُلُّكَ أس تَحْتَسِيهِ وَحَبَابِ; Kulla ka'sin tahtasihi wa habab;

Each cup she sips, and the pearl-like teeth

والذي كحل جفني بك بما Walladhi kahlala jafnayka bima

The one who has darkened your eyelids with kohl

سجد السحر لدي واقتراب Sajada-sse'eru ladayhi wa-qtarab

Magic bowed down toward him and got close

أجرى دموعي عن دم والذي Walladhi ajra dumu'i andama

And the one who made my tears flow like red dye

عن دم أعرضت من غي سبب Indama a'radta min ghayri sabab

When you shunned me for no reason

فماض على صدري ي مناك Di 'ala sadri yayumnaka fama

Put your right hand on my breast

أجدر الماء بإطفاء اللهب Ajdara-l-ma'a bi-itfa el-lahab

It is more suitable than water to put out the flames.