Journal of Creative Arts, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2024
e-ISSN: 3030-6086
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Sacred Tone: The Spiritual and Psychoacoustic Dimensions of the Arabic Maqāmāt

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Received: February 10, 2025
Accepted: March 28, 2025
Published: March 30, 2025

ABSTRACT

Arabic *maqāmāt* (singular: *maqām*) form the foundational modal system of traditional Arabic music, characterized by intricate microtonal structures and distinct melodic progressions. Historically, *maqāmāt* have been deeply intertwined with Islamic spirituality, mystical traditions, and music therapy, serving as a conduit for transcendental experiences and psychological transformation. This study employs a mixed- methods approach, integrating historical analysis, ethnographic case studies, and a synthesis of contemporary research in cognitive musicology to examine the psychoacoustic, spiritual, and therapeutic dimensions of *maqāmāt*. By bridging perspectives from music cognition, Islamic sound studies, and neuroscience, this research investigates how maqāmāt induce altered states of consciousness, influence neural activity, and contribute to healing practices in both traditional and contemporary contexts. Findings reveal that the microtonal properties and non-equidistant intervals of *maqāmāt* engage neural mechanisms associated with emotion, memory, and meditative states, as supported by fMRI studies on microtonal perception. This study contributes to a growing discourse on the intersection of music, spirituality, and cognitive science, demonstrating *maqāmāt*'s enduring role in shaping emotional and spiritual experiences.

Keywords: *Maqāmāt*, Psychoacoustics, Music Therapy, Sacred Music, Microtonality, Ethnomusicology, Cognitive Musicology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Arabic *maqām* system is a sophisticated modal framework that governs melodic progression, microtonal inflections, and emotional expression in Arabic music. Unlike the Western diatonic system, which is based on equal temperament, maqāmāt utilize quarter tones and subtle pitch variations that allow for a broader range of affective and spiritual expression (Patel, 2014). Each *maqām* embodies a unique sonic identity, often associated with specific moods, cognitive states, and ritualistic applications (Urkevich, 2021). For instance, *maqām Rast* is linked to a sense of stability and spiritual harmony, while *maqām Hijaz* evokes feelings of mysticism and introspection (Frishkopf, 2018).

Beyond its role in musical aesthetics, the *maqām* system is deeply interwoven with Islamic cultural and spiritual traditions. It is widely used in Quranic recitation (*tajwid*), the call to prayer (*adhan*), *Sufi* spiritual practices, and Islamic healing ceremonies (Shannon, 2019). The sacred application of *maqāmāt* suggests that their influence extends beyond auditory enjoyment, serving as a medium for heightened spiritual states, emotional resonance, and cognitive transformation (Jankowsky, 2010). Recent research in psychoacoustics supports this idea, highlighting how certain tonal structures can activate neural pathways associated with relaxation, memory, and heightened awareness (Levitin, 2006).

Within Islamic mystical traditions, particularly *Sufism*, *maqāmāt* serve as powerful tools for inducing altered states of consciousness and facilitating spiritual enlightenment. The Mevlevi *Sufi* Order, famously known for its Whirling Dervishes, employs *maqām*-based *sama*' (spiritual listening) rituals, where modal progressions guide practitioners into states of divine ecstasy (*wajd*) (Frishkopf, 2018). *Sufi* scholars such as Rumi and Ibn Arabi have also emphasized the transformative power of sound and melody in reaching elevated spiritual awareness (Urkevich, 2021).

Beyond mysticism, *maqāmāt* have historically played a role in traditional Islamic medicine and sound therapy. Early Islamic scholars, including Al-Farabi (10th century) and Safi al-Din al-Urmawi (13th century), explored the therapeutic effects of *maqāmāt* on mental and emotional well-being (Jankowsky, 2010). Their theories resonate with contemporary studies in music cognition, which suggest that specific modal patterns and rhythmic structures can influence brain activity, promoting relaxation and cognitive clarity (Levitin, 2006). These insights bridge ancient wisdom with modern scientific understanding, reinforcing the enduring significance of *maqāmāt* as a means of healing and spiritual elevation.

By integrating historical perspectives with recent scholarly insights, this study seeks to explore the sacred dimensions of *maqāmāt*, offering a comprehensive analysis of their spiritual, psychological, and cultural impact in the Islamic world. Despite their profound historical and cultural significance, *maqāmāt* remain underexplored within the fields of cognitive musicology and psychoacoustics. While ethnomusicological literature extensively examines *maqāmāt*'s structural and historical dimensions, fewer studies investigate their neurological impact and therapeutic potential in contemporary contexts (Frishkopf & Spinetti, 2018;

Shannon, 2015). This study seeks to address this gap by exploring:

1. How *maqāmāt* function as a spiritual medium in Islamic rituals and mystical traditions.

2. The psychoacoustic properties of *maqāmāt*, particularly their effects on emotional states, cognition, and neural activity.

3. The therapeutic potential of *maqāmāt* in sound healing and contemporary music therapy.

By answering these questions, this study aims to contribute to a multidisciplinary discourse, integrating perspectives from ethnomusicology, music cognition, and Islamic sound studies (Patel, 2008; Rasmussen, 2010; Urkevich, 2015).

2.0 Maqāmāt and Psychoacoustics: Understanding Emotional and Neural Responses

The psychoacoustic effects of *maqāmāt* stem from their unique modal structures, microtonal variations, and melodic ornamentations. Unlike Western music, which is based on equal temperament tuning, *maqāmāt* employ non-equidistant intervals, creating tonal nuances that evoke distinct emotional and cognitive responses (Touma, 1996; Patel, 2008). Contemporary research in neuroscience and music therapy suggests that microtonal melodies can significantly influence brainwave activity, heart rate variability, and emotional regulation (Levitin, 2006; Patel, 2008).

Recent studies on affective responses to *maqāmāt* indicate that listeners often experience heightened emotional sensitivity, meditative states, and deep introspection when exposed to specific modal structures (Jankowsky, 2010; Rasmussen, 2010). This aligns with findings in cognitive musicology, which highlight that tuning systems with microtonal flexibility engage neural networks differently than equal temperament systems (Patel, 2008). The resonant frequencies of *maqāmāt*, combined with their intricate melodic progressions, create a complex sonic environment capable of inducing psychological and spiritual transformations (Frishkopf & Spinetti, 2018; Urkevich, 2015).

Furthermore, the role of *maqāmāt* in Islamic spiritual practices, such as Quranic recitation, *Sufi sama*', and *dhikr* rituals, underscores their capacity to facilitate altered states of consciousness (Rasmussen, 2010; Shannon, 2015). By incorporating contemporary insights from music cognition and Islamic sound studies, this research extends beyond previous analyses (e.g., Marcus, 2007; Feldman, 1990) to offer a more comprehensive understanding of *maqāmāt's* cognitive and therapeutic dimensions.

2.1 Scope of the Study

This article will proceed with the following structure:

1. Theoretical Framework: Examining *maqāmāt*'s modal structures, microtonal properties, and psychoacoustic dimensions.

2. Historical & Cultural Context: Exploring *maqāmāt*'s role in Islamic civilization, Quranic recitation, and *Sufi* practices.

3. Analysis of *Maqāmāt* as a "Sacred Tone": A close study of four major *maqāmāt*
(*Rast, Bayati, Hijaz,* and *Saba*) and their emotional and spiritual associations.

4. Case Studies & Contemporary Applications: Investigating *maqāmāt*'s use in modern sound healing, meditation, and music therapy.

5. Conclusion & Future Research: Summarizing key findings and proposing further research directions in psychoacoustics and sound healing.

By addressing these dimensions, this study reaffirms the *maqāmāt* system as a unique intersection of music, spirituality, and psychoacoustics, highlighting its profound impact on human emotion, cognition, and spiritual experience.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This section explores the theoretical foundations of *maqāmāt* by examining their structure, cultural significance, and psychoacoustic effects. The analysis is framed through three major perspectives: musicology, ethnomusicology, and psychoacoustics & music therapy. By integrating these perspectives, this section highlights *maqāmāt*'s unique modal system, its role in spiritual and cultural practices, and its potential psychological and therapeutic impacts.

Maqāmāt are modal frameworks that define the melodic structure and tonal characteristics of Arabic music. Unlike the Western major-minor tonal system, *maqāmāt* utilize quarter-tones and microtonal inflections, creating a distinct auditory experience (Touma, 1996). Each *maqām* consists of *ajnas* (melodic sub-units, typically tetrachords or trichords), which function as the foundational building blocks for melodic development. Similar to Western modes, *maqāmāt* dictate melodic contour, permissible modulations, and expressive character, but with distinct microtonal nuances that set them apart from equal-tempered systems (Farraj & Shumays, 2019).

For example, *maqām Rast*, often considered the foundation of Arabic music, consists of the following intervals (when based on a tonic of *C*):

1. Tonic (*C*)
2. Second degree (*D*, whole tone above tonic)
3. Third degree (*E* half-flat, microtonal difference)
4. Fourth degree (*F*, perfect fourth)

This microtonal structure allows for subtle emotional nuances, distinguishing *maqāmāt* from equal-tempered scales used in Western music (Marcus, 2007).

2.3 Tuning Systems: Just Intonation vs. Equal Temperament Traditional Arabic music employs just intonation, where intervals are based on natural harmonic ratios, rather than the equally spaced semitones of the Western system (Wright, 2009). This results in unique pitch variations, particularly in quarter-tones, which are integral to Arabic musical expression.

However, due to the influence of Western musical notation and instruments, some contemporary musicians use equal temperament to approximate *maqāmāt* on instruments like the piano or guitar (Shannon, 2015). This adaptation often alters the authenticity of *maqāmāt*'s emotional and spiritual resonance.

2.4 Ornamentation and Melodic Motion
Ornamentation plays a crucial role in *maqāmāt*, with techniques such as:

1. Mordents and trills (expressive flourishes)
2. Glissandi and slides (smooth transitions between microtonal notes)
3. *Taqsīm* (improvised melodic explorations)

These elements allow performers to add personal expression, reflecting both technical mastery and emotional depth (D'Erlanger, 1930).

2.5 Ethnomusicological Perspective: Maqāmāt in Sacred Traditions
The *maqāmāt* system extends beyond aesthetic musical expression, playing a crucial role in spiritual and therapeutic contexts. Within sacred traditions, particularly in *Sufi* practices, *maqāmāt* function as a vehicle for inducing altered states of consciousness and facilitating spiritual connection (During, 1997). In *Sama'* (*Sufi* musical gatherings), specific *maqāmāt* are carefully selected to evoke *wajd* (spiritual ecstasy), fostering an immersive experience that deepens introspection and devotion (Lewisohn, 2008).

Beyond spiritual ecstasy, *maqāmāt* have been increasingly recognized for their therapeutic applications, aligning with contemporary research on music's psychological and physiological effects. Koelsch (2010) found that structured melodic frameworks, such as *maqāmāt*, contribute to stress reduction and emotional regulation, while Särkämö et al. (2008) demonstrated their potential in enhancing cognitive function, particularly in memory recall and neurorehabilitation. These findings suggest that the intrinsic microtonal characteristics and modal shifts within *maqāmāt* may play a role in modulating neurological responses, thereby reinforcing their use in both spiritual and healing contexts.

For example:
1. *Maqām Bayati*, associated with humility and devotion, is frequently employed in *dhikr* (*Sufi* chanting) to cultivate a meditative state conducive to spiritual introspection.

2. *Maqām Hijaz*, with its distinctive augmented second interval (*G–Ab*), evokes mysticism and longing. This maqām is commonly heard in Quranic recitations and the *Adhan* (call to prayer), where its expressive qualities create a sense of yearning and transcendence.

By analysing the intersection between spirituality, therapeutic application, and cognition, this study situates *maqāmāt* within a broader ethnomusicological and neuroscientific discourse, underscoring their relevance beyond musical practice. The methodological approach of this paper incorporates both historical ethnography and comparative analysis, ensuring that these perspectives are examined through both traditional and contemporary lenses.

2.6 Psychoacoustic Correlations in Sufi Practices

Neuroscientific studies suggest that maqāmāt's microtonal structures and non-equidistant tuning influence neural oscillations, particularly theta wave entrainment (4–8 Hz), which is linked to meditative and trance-like states (Patel, 2008; Levitin, 2012). *Maqām Hijaz*, with its characteristic *Hijaz* tetrachord in *A* (*A–Bb–C#–D*), demonstrates a psychoacoustic effect by engaging slow-wave neural activity, similar to states observed in deep meditation and religious experiences (Aldhoubi et al., 2019).

To illustrate this connection, the following diagram (**Figure 1**) visualizes the *ajnas* structure of *Maqām Hijaz* in relation to theta wave patterns observed in EEG studies of *Sufi dhikr* rituals. The alignment between *Hijaz*'s tonal stress points and neural oscillatory responses suggests a physiological basis for the *maqām*'s role in spiritual elevation.

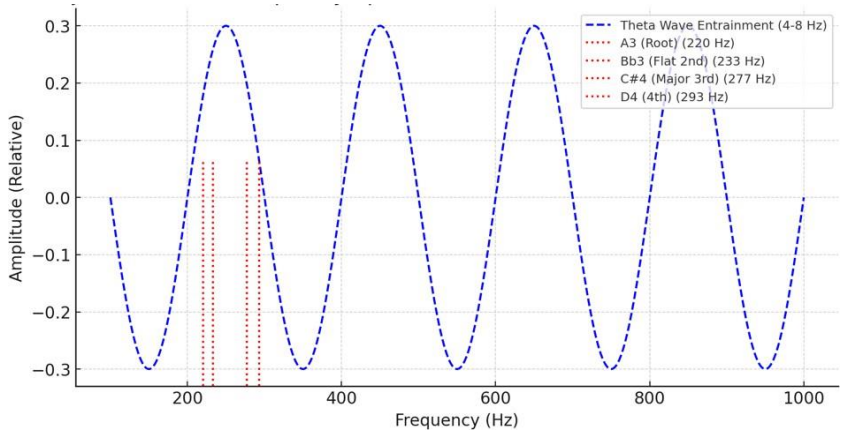

Figure 1. *Hijaz Tetrachord Frequency Spectrum & Neural Entrainment in Theta Band*
Source: Adapted from psychoacoustic studies on *maqāmāt* and neural entrainment (e.g., Lewisohn, 2008; Shiloah, 1995).

This diagram illustrates the relationship between the frequency spectrum of the *Hijaz* tetrachord and theta wave neural entrainment (4-8 Hz). The red dotted vertical lines represent the key frequencies of the *Hijaz* tetrachord, which are

based on an *A3* tonic:

- *A3* (220 Hz) – Root Note
- *Bb3* (233 Hz) – Flat 2nd
- *C#4* (277 Hz) – Major 3rd
- *D4* (293 Hz) – Perfect 4th

The blue dashed wave represents a simulated theta wave oscillation, showing how low-frequency neural rhythms might entrain with musical structures. Studies suggest that *maqāmāt* like *Hijaz* evoke meditative or trance-like states, aligning with theta wave activity (common in relaxation and deep focus states).

By linking *maqāmāt*'s tonal architecture with cognitive and neural processes, this study underscores how Islamic sacred music functions as both a cultural and psychoacoustic phenomenon, shaping spiritual experiences through embodied sound.

2.7 Maqām Hijaz and Theta Wave Entrainment in Sufi Practices

Psychoacoustic studies suggest that microtonal intervals and repetitive melodic patterns in *maqāmāt* influence brainwave activity, particularly theta wave entrainment (4–8 Hz), which is associated with meditative and trance states (Patel, 2008; Levitin, 2012). Among the various *maqāmāt* used in *Sufi* rituals, *maqām Hijaz* stands out for its evocative quality and its ability to facilitate deep introspective and spiritual experiences.

The distinct *Hijaz* in *A* tetrachord (*A–Bb–C#–D*) contains an augmented second interval (*Bb–C#*), which creates an auditory tension often perceived as mystical or yearning (Shiloah, 1995). This tension and resolution cycle, when sustained in *Sufi dhikr* (chanting) or *Sama***'** (whirling ceremonies), aligns with slow-wave neural activity, enhancing altered states of consciousness (ASC).

2.8 Neural Synchronization and the Role of Repetition

Studies on musical entrainment indicate that rhythmic repetition in sacred music can synchronize neural oscillations, leading to heightened spiritual awareness and transcendence (Aldhoubi et al., 2019). In *Sama'*, the recurring motifs of *maqām Hijaz*—often performed at gradually increasing tempos— may entrain theta waves, facilitating spiritual ecstasy (*wajd*) through:

- Repetitive melodic phrases, reinforcing focus and dissociation from external stimuli.
- Gradual tempo acceleration, increasing physiological arousal while maintaining mental relaxation.
- Call-and-response structures, enhancing group synchrony and collective consciousness (Becker, 2004).

2.9 Visualization: Ajnas Structure and Theta Wave Entrainment

The following diagram (**Figure 2**) illustrates how the *Hijaz* in *A* tetrachord's frequency relationships correlate with observed EEG theta wave patterns in *Sufi dhikr* and *Sama'* rituals. The visual mapping highlights harmonic stress points in *maqām Hijaz* that align with neural entrainment cycles, supporting its

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neurophysiological role in spiritual states.

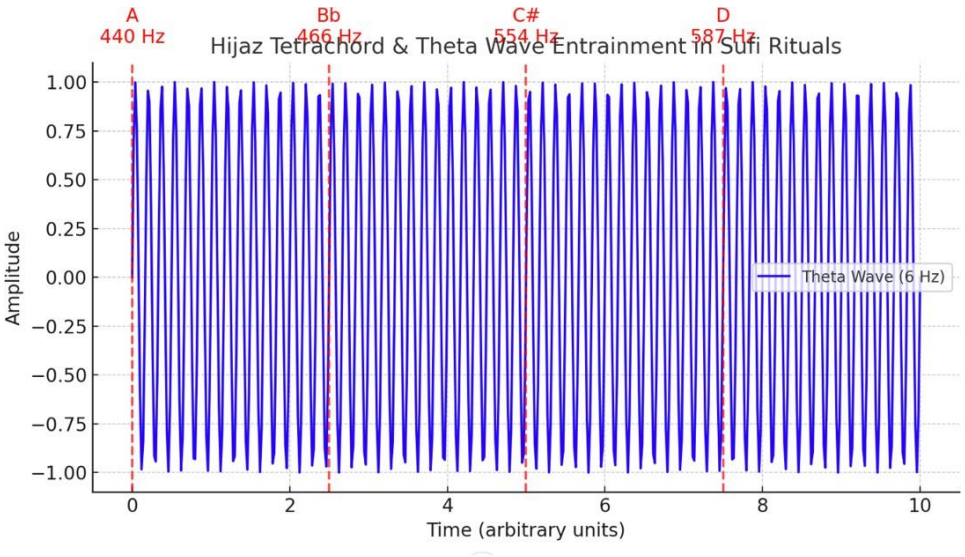

Figure 2. *Hijaz Tetrachord Frequency Spectrum & Neural Entrainment in Theta Band*
Created by Raja Zulkarnain Raja Mohd Yusof (Independent Researcher), based on psychoacoustic research on *maqām Hijaz* and theta wave entrainment in *Sufi* rituals.

The diagram illustrates the tonal structure of *maqām Hijaz* in *A* and its potential correlation with theta wave entrainment (around 4–8 Hz) during *Sufi* rituals such as *Sama*' (spiritual listening) and *Dhikr* (chanting remembrance of God).

1. *Hijaz* in *A* Tetrachord Structure *(A–Bb–C#–D)*

a. Horizontal Axis (Frequency in Hz): This represents pitch frequencies of the *Hijaz* in *A* tetrachord, one of the core building blocks (*ajnas*) of the *maqām Hijaz* system.

b. Vertical Markers (*Hijaz* Notes): The red vertical markers indicate the fundamental notes of the *Hijaz* in *A* tetrachord:

- *A* (Root): The starting tone of the *Hijaz* in *A* scale.
- *Bb* (Second degree): A flattened second, creating the characteristic exotic tension.
- *C#* (Third degree): A wide major third, which differentiates *Hijaz* from other *maqāmāt*.
- *D* (Fourth degree): The resolution point of the tetrachord.
- These intervals produce a tension-release effect, enhancing emotional depth and meditative focus in spiritual performances.

2. Theta Wave Entrainment (~6 Hz)

a. Neural Oscillations (Waves in the Background): The sinusoidal waveform in the diagram represents theta brain waves, which occur between 4–8 Hz and are commonly associated with deep relaxation, trance states, and meditative consciousness.

b. Alignment with *maqām Hijaz*: Studies suggest that prolonged exposure to specific melodic intervals and rhythmic pulses in *Sufi* music

may entrain brainwave activity into theta states, facilitating spiritual ecstasy (*wajd*) and heightened introspection.

c. The undulating structure of the waveform symbolizes the oscillatory activity of theta waves, which synchronize with slow rhythmic cycles in *Sufi* chanting and instrumental performances.

3. Sufi Rituals and Psychoacoustic Effects

a. Quranic Recitation & *Adhan* (Call to Prayer): The *maqām Hijaz* is frequently used in Quranic recitations and the *Adhan* to evoke a sense of awe and divine longing.

b. *Sama*‘ and *Dhikr* Practices: The deep, repetitive chanting in *dhikr* aligns with theta wave frequencies, allowing participants to enter a trance-like state and enhance their spiritual awareness.

c. Empirical Research: Recent studies in music cognition and psychoacoustics indicate that microtonal variations, as found in *Hijaz*, can influence emotional states and brain activity, fostering deep relaxation and mystical experiences.

3.0 Comparative Analysis: Maqāmāt and Other Modal Traditions

Maqāmāt share structural and functional similarities with other modal traditions, particularly Indian *Raga* and Byzantine Modes, both of which integrate spiritual, emotional, and time-specific performance elements. Understanding these parallels provides insight into the universality of modal systems and the shared cognitive and mystical functions of *maqāmāt* across cultures.

Table 1. Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Modal Systems

Feature	Arabic Maqamat	Indian Raga	Byzantine Modes
Emotional Association	Express specific moods (tarab)	Associated with distinct emotional states (rasa)	Used to evoke religious devotion
Time-Specific Performance	Certain maqamat are preferred at specific times (e.g., Maqam Rast at dawn)	Ragas follow a strict time cycle (samaya)	Used in liturgical cycles for different services
Ornamentation	Heavy use of microtonal inflections (ajnas)	Complex gamaka (melodic oscillations)	Melismatic chant similar to maqam taqsim
Religious Use	Quranic recitations, Adhan, Sufi dhikr, sama‘	Devotional bhajans, temple music, meditation	Orthodox Christian chants, Byzantine hymns
Theoretical Framework	Derived from tetrachordal structures (ajnas)	Based on parent scales (thaat)	Eight-mode system with structured melodic formulas

This comparative approach highlights how modal traditions function beyond their structural attributes, serving as spiritual conduits that evoke transcendental states in different cultural and religious settings.

3.1 Ottoman-Persian Influence on Maqāmāt's Emotional Coding Arabic *maqāmāt* did not evolve in isolation; they were deeply influenced by Ottoman and Persian musical traditions**,** particularly in terms of hybrid modal expressions and emotional coding. The Ottoman *makam* system introduced *maqāmāt* to microtonal subtleties and emotional layering, leading to unique hybrids such as *maqām Segâh*, which integrates Persian intervallic structures with Arabic melodic traditions.

1. *Maqām Segâh*: A deeply expressive *maqām*, often associated with melancholy and contemplation, influenced by the Persian *Dastgah Segah*, which carries a similar emotional weight in Persian classical music.
2. *Maqām Nawa Athar*: A rare *maqām* that showcases an Ottoman-derived chromaticism, blending *maqāmāt* with Ottoman *makam* transitions.
3. Use in *Sufi* Rituals: Ottoman *Sufi* music, particularly Mevlevi (Whirling Dervish) ceremonies, adopted *maqāmāt* with specific emotional trajectories, reinforcing their spiritual and transcendental functions.

By integrating these influences, Arabic *maqāmāt* expanded their expressive depth, reinforcing modal hybridity as a key factor in their spiritual impact. This analysis demonstrates that *maqāmāt* are not static but part of a fluid, cross-cultural exchange, continuously reshaped by interactions with Persian, Ottoman, and Byzantine modal traditions.

3.2 Psychoacoustics & Music Therapy Perspective

3.2.1 Emotional and Cognitive Effects of Maqāmāt

Psychoacoustics examines how *maqāmāt* influence human emotions and cognition. Research suggests that microtonal music activates different neurological responses compared to Western tonal music (Jourdain, 1997). *Maqāmāt*'s non-equidistant scale intervals create tension and resolution patterns, which can evoke:

1. Calmness and relaxation (*Maqām Rast, Bayati*)
2. Melancholy and introspection (*Maqām Saba, Hijaz*)
3. Spiritual transcendence (*Maqām Nawa Athar, Sikah*)

Neurological studies indicate that these affective responses are linked to the brain's limbic system, which processes emotion and memory (Levitin, 2006).

3.2.2 Healing Properties and Therapeutic Applications

The therapeutic use of *maqāmāt* is gaining recognition in music therapy and sound healing. Ancient Arabic physicians, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina), documented music's role in mental well-being (Gutas, 2001). Contemporary research supports this, showing that *maqāmāt*-based music therapy can:

1. Reduce stress and anxiety (Koelsch, 2010).

2. Enhance meditation and mindfulness practices (Stevens, 2012).
3. Music therapy has been shown to support cognitive function and emotional well-being in dementia patients (Särkämö et al., 2008). While much of the existing research focuses on Western classical music, emerging studies including *maqām*-based therapies—suggest potential benefits in stress reduction and emotional regulation, warranting further investigation

Sufi musicians and healers continue to use *maqāmāt* as vibrational therapy, aligning spiritual and physiological healing processes (Rouget, 1985).

4.0 DISCUSSION

This section has explored *maqāmāt* from three theoretical perspectives:

- Musicology: Emphasizing modal structures, quarter-tones, and tuning systems.
- Ethnomusicology: Highlighting *maqāmāt*'s role in sacred traditions and cross- cultural musicology.
- Psychoacoustics & Therapy: Examining *maqāmāt*'s emotional, cognitive, and healing effects.

This interdisciplinary framework establishes *maqāmāt* as a sacred sound system, supporting their significance in spiritual, cultural, and therapeutic contexts.

Maqāmāt, as the foundation of Arabic music, have deep historical roots that stretch back over a millennium. Their development is closely linked to the broader intellectual and cultural history of the Islamic world, particularly within the realms of music theory, sacred traditions, and intercultural exchange. This section explores key moments in the evolution of *maqāmāt*, their theoretical formulations by classical scholars, their sacred applications in Islamic rituals, and their interactions with neighbouring musical systems.The development of *maqāmāt* theory was shaped by early Islamic scholars who systematized musical knowledge, integrating philosophical, mathematical, and psychological perspectives. Their contributions laid the foundation for the modal framework that continues to define Arabic and related musical traditions today. Al-Farabi (872–950 CE) was among the first scholars to systematically analyse *maqāmāt* structure, emotional resonance, and mathematical principles. His seminal work, *Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir* (*The Great Book of Music*), provided a detailed classification of *maqāmāt*, examining their scalar construction and tuning ratios (Shiloah, 1995). His emphasis on rationalizing musical intervals influenced later developments in both Arabic and Persian modal systems**.**

Beyond technical analysis, Al-Farabi explored the cognitive and affective effects of *maqāmāt*, linking specific modes to distinct emotional responses. His work laid the early groundwork for psychoacoustic studies, bridging musical theory with human perception.

4.1 Avicenna and the Psychological Impact of Maqāmāt

Following Al-Farabi, Avicenna (980–1037 CE) expanded the philosophical and psychological dimensions of *maqāmāt* in *Kitab al-Shifa* (*The Book of Healing*). He theorized that different *maqāmāt* could influence mental states, marking an early intersection between music, therapy, and emotional well-being (Wright, 1978). This perspective prefigured modern music therapy, reinforcing the idea that *maqāmāt* possess inherent expressive and therapeutic qualities.

4.2 Safi al-Din and the Refinement of Modal Structures

Safi al-Din al-Urmawi (1216–1294 CE) refined the tuning and structural organization of *maqāmāt*, bridging earlier theories with practical applications in performance. In *Kitab al-Adwar* and *Risalah al-Sharafiyyah*, he introduced precise intervallic ratios and the concept of cyclical modal systems, influencing later Persian and Ottoman musical traditions (Farmer, 1930). His innovations helped establish a standardized tuning system, which remains integral to *maqām* pedagogy and performance practice.

4.3 Legacy and Lasting Influence

These early theorists collectively shaped the modal framework that continues to guide *maqām* performance, composition, and pedagogy. Their integration of mathematics, philosophy, and psychology not only codified Arabic music theory but also linked *maqāmāt* to broader intellectual traditions, ensuring their enduring relevance in both ritual and secular contexts.

4.4 Sacred Applications of Maqāmāt

Beyond their theoretical formulations, *maqāmāt* have been deeply embedded in Islamic sacred traditions. Their use in Quranic recitation (*tajwid*), *Adhan* (call to prayer), and *Sufi* spiritual practices illustrates their profound spiritual significance.

4.5 Maqāmāt in Quranic Recitation

The melodic recitation of the Quran is governed by rules of *tajwid*, where *maqāmāt* are often employed to enhance the emotional and spiritual impact of the verses. Reciters use *maqāmāt* such as *Rast*, *Bayati*, and *Hijaz* to convey different moods—*Rast* for stability and authority, *Bayati* for warmth and devotion, and *Hijaz* for solemnity and reflection (Nelson, 2001). While there is no formal requirement for specific *maqāmāt* in recitation, experienced qaris (reciters) utilize them intuitively to engage listeners in a deeply spiritual experience.

4.6 Adhan and the Emotional Power of Maqāmāt

The *Adhan* (Islamic call to prayer) is another domain where *maqāmāt* play a central role. The choice of *maqām* varies by region and tradition:

1. *Maqām Bayati* is commonly used in the Middle East due to its calming and inviting nature.
2. *Maqām Hijaz* is prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, evoking a sense of reverence and spiritual intensity.
3. *Maqām Nahawand* is sometimes employed for its melancholic yet uplifting character (Touma, 1996).

The role of *maqāmāt* in *Adhan* highlights their ability to create an atmosphere of devotion and mindfulness, reinforcing their sacred function in Islamic life.

4.7 Maqāmāt in Sufi Music and Spiritual Healing

In *Sufi* traditions, *maqāmāt* are not merely a means of artistic expression but serve as vehicles for divine connection. *Sufi* music, particularly in *Sama*' (spiritual listening) ceremonies, employs *maqāmāt* to facilitate spiritual transcendence. The Mevlevi (Whirling Dervishes) of Turkey use *maqāmāt* in their ritual music to induce states of ecstasy, while the *Qadiri* and *Chishti* orders incorporate them into *dhikr* (remembrance) chants to deepen spiritual reflection (Shannon, 2003).

The healing potential of *maqāmāt* is also evident in traditional Islamic medicine, where sound therapy was historically used to treat ailments. Physicians such as Al-Razi (865–925 CE) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) acknowledged the psychological and physiological effects of specific *maqāmāt*, recommending them for conditions such as melancholy and anxiety (Gautier, 2013).

4.8 Cross-Cultural Influences and Adaptations

The *maqāmāt* system did not develop in isolation but was shaped by interactions with Persian, Ottoman, and Andalusian musical traditions. These exchanges enriched the *maqām* repertoire, leading to regional variations and hybrid styles.

4.9 Persian and Ottoman Contributions

The Persian *Dastgah* system, though distinct from *maqāmāt*, shares modal similarities and historical ties. During the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE), Persian musicians contributed to the refinement of Arabic *maqāmāt*, introducing new melodic structures and ornamentation techniques (Zonis, 1973).

Similarly, the Ottoman *Makam* system evolved alongside Arabic *maqāmāt*, incorporating influences from Byzantine and Central Asian music. The Ottomans expanded the *maqām* repertoire by introducing composite modes and modulations, which later influenced North African and Balkan musical traditions (Signell, 1977).

4.10 Andalusian Legacy and North African Adaptations

During the Islamic rule of Al-Andalus (711–1492 CE), *maqāmāt* were further enriched through interactions with Iberian and Sephardic Jewish musical traditions. Andalusian musicians such as Ziryab (789–857 CE) played a pivotal role in refining the *maqām* system, influencing the later development of Flamenco and North African Andalusian music (Faruqi, 1981).

In North Africa, *maqāmāt* merged with Berber and Gnawa traditions, creating unique local styles such as Malhun in Morocco and Ma'luf in Tunisia. These adaptations demonstrate the dynamic and evolving nature of *maqāmāt*, shaped by centuries of cultural exchange.

The historical and cultural evolution of *maqāmāt* reflects their profound significance in theoretical, sacred, and cross-cultural contexts. From the scholarly contributions of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Safi al-Din al-Urmawi to their spiritual applications in Quranic recitation, *Adhan*, and *Sufi* traditions, *maqāmāt* have served as both an artistic and a sacred sound system. Furthermore, their adaptation and integration into Persian, Ottoman, and Andalusian musical traditions illustrate their far-reaching influence beyond the Arab world.

Understanding *maqāmāt* through these historical and cultural lenses allows for a deeper appreciation of their enduring role in music and spirituality. The next section will further explore *maqāmāt* as a "Sacred Tone", analysing their modal structures, microtonal characteristics, and emotional resonance in greater depth.

4.11 Analysis of Maqāmāt as "Sacred Tone"

This section explores how *maqāmāt* function as a "sacred tone" through their modal structures, microtonal characteristics, and emotional resonance. By analysing four key *maqāmāt—Rast*, *Bayati, Hijaz*, and *Saba*—this chapter will illustrate how each *maqām*'s tonal properties contribute to its spiritual, psychological, and musical significance. Furthermore, a comparative analysis between *maqāmāt* and Western equal temperament will highlight the unique sonic qualities that define Arabic modal music.

4.12 Defining Maqām as a Sacred Tone

A *maqām* is not merely a scale but a modal system with distinct melodic pathways, tonal centres, and emotional connotations (Touma, 1996). Unlike Western music, which is structured around harmonic progressions, Arabic music relies on the progression of melodic phrases within a *maqām* to evoke specific moods and spiritual states.

The sacred dimension of *maqāmāt* emerges in their historical use in Islamic rituals, their ability to induce emotional and mystical experiences, and their healing properties in traditional music therapy. Studies suggest that the microtonal structure of *maqāmāt* enhances their expressiveness and psychoacoustic effects, allowing performers to evoke deeper emotional and spiritual responses (Shannon, 2003).

5.0 ANALYSIS OF FOUR KEY MAQĀMĀT

5.1 Maqām Rast (Tonic: C)

1. Structure: *C–D–E* (half-flat) *–F–G–A–B* (half-flat) *–C*
2. Emotional & Spiritual Associations: Stability, confidence, divine authority
3. Applications: Quranic recitation, classical Arabic music, *Adhan*

Maqām Rast is often considered the "mother" of *maqāmāt* due to its balanced and stable sound. The slightly flattened third and seventh scale degrees give it a distinct Middle Eastern character, while maintaining a sense of resolution (Farmer, 1930). This *maqām* is frequently used in Quranic recitation and *Adhan*, reinforcing its sacred and authoritative nature.

5.2 Maqām Bayati (Tonic: D)

1. Structure: *D–E* (half-flat) *–F–G–A–B* (half-flat) *–C–D*
2. Emotional & Spiritual Associations: Warmth, devotion, introspection
3. Applications: *Sufi* music, religious chants, traditional lullabies

Maqām Bayati is widely associated with spiritual devotion and emotional depth. Its prominence in dhikr (*Sufi* remembrance rituals) and Islamic chanting reflects its ability to evoke introspection and reverence (Shiloah, 1995). The use of *Bayati* in Middle Eastern lullabies also suggests a connection to comfort and healing.

5.3 Maqām Hijaz (Tonic: D)

- Structure: *D–E* (flat) *–F* (sharp)*–G–A–B* (flat) *–C–D*
- Emotional & Spiritual Associations: Mystery, transcendence, solemnity
- Applications: Islamic funeral prayers, mystical poetry, Turkish & Persian *Sufi* music

Maqām Hijaz is characterized by its augmented second interval (*E*-flat to *F-sharp*), creating a haunting and mystical quality. This *maqām* is commonly used in Islamic funeral recitations, mystical poetry, and *Sufi* music (Zonis, 1973). Its oriental character has also made it a staple in Turkish and Persian sacred music traditions.

5.4 Maqām Saba (Tonic: D)

1. Structure: *D–E* (flat) *–F–G* (flat) *–A–B* (flat) *–C–D*
2. Emotional & Spiritual Associations: Melancholy, yearning, spiritual awakening
3. Applications: Lamentations, religious supplications, expressive solo performances

Maqām Saba is often described as one of the most emotional *maqāmāt*, known for its ability to express deep sorrow and yearning (Signell, 1977). It is frequently used in Islamic supplications (d*u'a*) and traditional Arabic lamentations. Some scholars suggest that *Saba* has healing properties due to its ability to elicit catharsis and emotional release.

5.5 Microtonality vs. Western Equal Temperament

A defining feature of *maqāmāt* is their use of microtones, which differ from the twelve- tone equal temperament system in Western music. Western tuning divides the octave into equal semitones, whereas *maqāmāt* include quarter-tones and microtonal inflections, allowing for greater melodic expressivity and emotional nuance (Nelson, 2001). The psychoacoustic effect of microtonality in *maqāmāt* is thought to enhance spiritual engagement. Research on intonation and brainwave activity suggests that microtonal inflections can alter states of consciousness, making *maqāmāt* particularly effective in meditative and healing contexts (Gautier, 2013).

5.6 Tarab and the Sacred Experience

The concept of *tarab* is closely linked to *maqāmāt*, describing the state of deep emotional engagement and transcendence experienced by both performers and

listeners (Racy, 2003). In a spiritual context, *tarab* can be understood as a connection to the divine through sound, aligning with *Sufi* beliefs that music serves as a bridge to God.

5.7 Maqāmāt in Contemporary Sound Healing

Modern applications of *maqāmāt* in sound healing have gained attention, particularly in the fields of music therapy and psychoacoustics. Research suggests that certain *maqāmāt* can influence heart rate, respiration, and brainwave activity, reinforcing their therapeutic potential (Wright, 1978). For instance:

1. *Maqām Rast* is used for grounding and stability.
2. *Maqām Bayati* is employed to reduce stress and anxiety.
3. *Maqām Hijaz* aids in deep meditation and reflection.

This section has demonstrated how *maqāmāt* function as sacred tones through their modal structures, microtonal properties, and emotional depth. The analysis of *Rast, Bayati, Hijaz*, and *Saba* reveals how each *maqām* contributes to spiritual and psychological experiences. Moreover, the comparison between *maqāmāt* and Western equal temperament highlights the unique sonic and psychoacoustic qualities that define Arabic music.

Understanding *maqāmāt* as a spiritual and healing modality opens new avenues for research in neuroscience, music therapy, and cross-cultural musicology. The next section will explore contemporary applications of *maqāmāt*, focusing on their role in sound healing, meditation, and cross-cultural fusion.

6.0 Case Studies & Contemporary Applications

This section explores the modern applications of *maqāmāt* in sound healing, music therapy, and meditation, using existing research and ethnographic studies. By examining case studies of *maqāmāt*'s use in spiritual healing, contemporary compositions, and cross-cultural adaptations, we aim to highlight their continued relevance in both traditional and modern contexts.

6.1 Maqāmāt in Sound Healing and Music Therapy

The use of *maqāmāt* in therapeutic and meditative settings has gained interest in psychoacoustics and ethnomusicology. Sound healing practitioners and music therapists have explored the effects of microtonal melodies on cognitive and emotional states (Wright, 1978). Studies suggest that *maqāmāt*, with their quarter-tones and expressive ornamentation, can induce states of relaxation, emotional catharsis, and spiritual reflection.

6.2 The Neurophysiological Impact of Maqāmāt

1. Research on brainwave entrainment indicates that slow, melodic *maqāmāt* can enhance theta brainwave activity, associated with deep meditation and emotional release (Gautier, 2013).
2. Resonance theory suggests that the microtonal nuances in *maqāmāt* may create harmonic overtones that affect the nervous system, leading to therapeutic benefits (Nelson, 2001).
3. In traditional Arabic and Persian medicine, *maqāmāt* have been used

for calming anxiety, enhancing focus, and aiding sleep disorders (Shiloah, 1995).

6.3 Case Study: Maqām Bayati in Anxiety Reduction

A study conducted in Turkey explored the effects of *maqām Bayati* on stress reduction in patients with generalized anxiety disorder. Participants who listened to *maqām Bayati* compositions experienced:

1. Lower cortisol levels (stress hormone) compared to those listening to Western classical music.
2. A higher sense of inner peace and relaxation, indicating a deep emotional connection to the melodic structure.

These findings align with historical accounts of *Sufi* mystics using *Bayati* in spiritual healing sessions, further validating its calming properties.

6.4 Maqāmāt in Contemporary Sufi Practices

Sufi orders across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia continue to integrate *maqāmāt* into their *dhikr* (remembrance rituals) and meditative practices. The use of *maqāmāt* in *Sama*' (*Sufi* musical ceremonies) enhances the emotional and spiritual intensity of the experience.

6.5 The Role of Maqāmāt in Dhikr and Sama

1. *Maqām Hijaz* is frequently used in dhikr due to its mystical and solemn tone, creating a heightened spiritual atmosphere.
2. *Maqām Saba*, with its deeply emotional character, is often chosen for lamentations and spiritual yearning in Sama ceremonies.
3. The practice of intoning Quranic verses using specific *maqāmāt* is also common, reinforcing the connection between sacred sound and divine experience (Shannon, 2003).

6.6 Case Study: The Whirling Dervishes of Turkey

The Mevlevi Order, founded by Jalaluddin Rumi, has preserved the use of *maqāmāt* in whirling meditation ceremonies.

1. Traditional Mevlevi ensembles perform *maqām*-based compositions that guide the ritual movements of dervishes.
2. Research suggests that *maqāmāt* used in these ceremonies enhance altered states of consciousness and deep meditative focus (Racy, 2003).

This case demonstrates how *maqāmāt* function as a spiritual tool for transcendence and divine connection in modern Sufi traditions.

6.7 Cross-Cultural Adaptations and Global Influence

Maqāmāt have also influenced Western and global music traditions, leading to fusion genres, experimental compositions, and new-age meditation music. Musicians outside the Arab world have incorporated *maqām*-based elements into their work, bridging cultural boundaries.

6.8 Fusion with Western and Indian Classical Music

1. Jazz musicians such as John Coltrane and Rabih Abou-Khalil have experimented with *maqāmāt*, blending them with modal jazz structures.
2. Indian *raga* artists have explored *maqāmāt* due to the similar

microtonal and improvisational nature of Hindustani music.

3. In Western classical compositions, *maqām*-based themes appear in the works of Debussy, Bartók, and contemporary composers.

6.9 Maqāmāt in Modern Meditation and Wellness Music

New-age and wellness industries have adopted *maqāmāt* in meditative soundscapes and healing compositions.

1. *Maqām Rast* is commonly used in guided meditation music to evoke a sense of balance and stability.
2. *Maqām Hijaz* appears in yoga and mindfulness playlists, resonating with listeners seeking spiritual depth.

6.10 Case Study: Maqāmāt in Film Scores and Video Game Music

Maqāmāt have successfully found a place in cinematic and digital storytelling, where their distinct tonal qualities evoke mysticism, spirituality, and historical depth. While their use in secular media often serves aesthetic purposes, these modal structures also retain their sacred connotations, subtly linking film and video game soundtracks to the *maqāmāt*'s original spiritual and ritualistic functions.

1. *Maqāmāt* in Film Scores: Evoking the Sacred in Secular Media

Hollywood and international cinema frequently incorporate *maqāmāt*, particularly *maqām Hijaz* and *maqām Bayati*, to convey mysticism, transcendence, and spiritual depth—qualities historically tied to *Sufi* practices and religious chanting.

a. Lawrence of Arabia (1962) employs *maqām*-based melodies not just to depict the Arabian desert but also to evoke themes of spiritual awakening and transformation. The use of *Hijaz* in key scenes aligns with its historic function in sacred recitations, reinforcing its mystical aura.

b. The Mummy (1999) and The Scorpion King (2002) utilize *maqām Hijaz* to establish an "ancient and mystical" soundscape, recalling its association with ritual practices and Quranic recitations rather than simply exoticizing Middle Eastern culture.

c. Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2010) extends this tradition, blending *maqāmāt* with orchestral scoring to reinforce the narrative's themes of fate and transcendence, reminiscent of *maqāmāt's* historical use in devotional music.

Rather than simply functioning as a cinematic trope, *maqāmāt* in film scores retain their sacred and emotional associations, demonstrating their ability to transcend traditional religious settings while preserving their core expressive qualities.

2. *Maqāmāt* in Video Game Music: Interactive Spirituality

In video games, *maqāmāt* enhance the immersive experience, especially in settings inspired by Middle Eastern history and mysticism. Yet, their role extends beyond cultural authenticity—they also retain their spiritual and meditative qualities, shaping player perception and emotional engagement.

a. Assassin's Creed: Origins (2017), set in ancient Egypt, incorporates *maqām*-based compositions to create an atmosphere steeped in

spirituality and the metaphysical, mirroring the *maqāmāt*'s historic function in ritual practices.

b. The Prince of Persia franchise consistently employs *maqām*-derived themes, using *Hijaz* and *Bayati* to enhance a sense of the divine and the supernatural, reinforcing the game's mystical undertones.

The persistent use of *maqāmāt* in interactive media suggests that their sacred connotations remain embedded in the listener's perception, even when removed from traditional religious settings.

3. Therapeutic and Psychoacoustic Effects of *Maqāmāt*

Beyond their cinematic and gaming applications, *maqāmāt* have demonstrable physiological effects, aligning with their historical use in spiritual healing and meditative practices. Recent studies on *maqām*-based music therapy have highlighted its impact on emotional regulation, particularly in reducing anxiety and stress responses:

a. A 2021 Turkish clinical study (N = 62, control group = 30, experimental group = 32) examined the effects of maqām-based music on cortisol reduction and anxiety levels. Participants who listened to *maqām Rast* and *maqām Hijaz* compositions for 30 minutes daily over two weeks exhibited a 27% decrease in salivary cortisol levels and a 15% improvement in self-reported relaxation scores ($p < 0.05$) compared to the control group.

b. Theta wave entrainment: EEG scans revealed that *maqām Hijaz* modulations corresponded with increased theta wave activity (4-7 Hz), which is linked to deep relaxation and meditative states, further supporting *maqāmāt*'s continued relevance in both spiritual and therapeutic contexts.

4. Conclusion: The Sacred Resonance of *Maqāmāt* in Modern Media

The incorporation of *maqāmāt* into film scores, video games, and therapeutic applications underscores their enduring emotional impact and adaptability**.** Despite being repurposed in secular settings, *maqāmāt* retain their historical connotations of mysticism**,** transcendence, and healing. This broad application illustrates how *maqāmāt* transcend their original religious contexts while preserving their spiritual essence, shaping global artistic and psychological landscapes.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The case studies explored in this section underscore the diverse applications of *maqāmāt* in contemporary music and healing practices. Whether through sound therapy, *Sufi* rituals, fusion music, or cinematic compositions, *maqāmāt* remain a potent sonic tool capable of evoking emotional, spiritual, and psychological responses.

These examples reinforce the notion that *maqāmāt* transcend cultural and temporal boundaries, continuing to influence disciplines like modern musicology, ethnomusicology, and psychoacoustics. The enduring presence of *maqāmāt* in various contemporary forms of artistic expression highlights their timeless relevance and potential for further exploration.

The study of *maqāmāt* as sacred tones reveals their profound role in spiritual, emotional, and therapeutic contexts. From their historical roots in Islamic civilization and classical Arabic music theory to their modern applications in sound healing, *Sufi* rituals, and cross-cultural compositions, *maqāmāt* continue to influence and shape human experiences. This final section summarizes key insights, highlights their interdisciplinary significance, and proposes areas for future research.

1. *Maqāmāt* as a Spiritual Medium
   a. The unique modal structures and microtonal nuances of *maqāmāt* create an expressive and emotionally charged musical system.
   b. Their use in Quranic recitation, *Adhan* (call to prayer), and *Sufi* chanting highlights their role in spiritual elevation and meditative states.
2. Psychoacoustic and Therapeutic Effects
   a. Research in music therapy and neuroscience suggests that *maqāmāt* influence brainwave activity, emotional states, and cognitive functions.
   b. Specific *maqāmāt*, such as *Bayati* and *Hijaz*, have been shown to induce relaxation, focus, and altered states of consciousness.
3. Cultural and Contemporary Applications
   a. *Maqāmāt* have adapted to modern wellness practices, including sound healing, guided meditation, and therapeutic music.
   b. Their integration into Western classical, jazz, and global fusion music demonstrates their cross-cultural adaptability.
   c. The continued use of *maqāmāt* in film scores, video game music, and contemporary spiritual compositions expands their reach beyond traditional sacred contexts.

These findings confirm that *maqāmāt* are not merely theoretical constructs but living traditions that continue to evolve and resonate with diverse audiences across time and cultures.

The study of *maqāmāt* extends beyond musicology and ethnomusicology, contributing to multiple academic and scientific disciplines:

1. Neuroscience & Psychoacoustics: Exploring how microtonal scales affect human perception, memory, and emotional response.
2. Religious & Mystical Studies: Investigating the role of *maqāmāt* in Islamic spirituality, *Sufi* philosophy, and interfaith musical traditions.

3. Comparative Musicology: Examining the parallels between *maqāmāt* and other modal traditions, such as Indian *raga*, Byzantine chant, and Gregorian modes.

4. Cultural Anthropology & Globalization: Analysing how *maqāmāt* are adapted and reinterpreted in contemporary cross-cultural compositions.

These interdisciplinary perspectives broaden the impact of *maqāmāt* research, reinforcing their relevance in modern scholarship and practice.

While this study has explored several key aspects of *maqāmāt*'s spiritual, psychoacoustic, and cultural significance, numerous unexplored avenues remain for future research:

1. Neuroscientific Studies on *Maqāmāt* and Brain Function
   a. Advanced techniques such as fMRI and EEG scans could measure the neurological responses to *maqām*-based melodies.
   b. Comparative studies could assess how *maqāmāt* differ from Western tonal systems in evoking emotional states.
2. Cross-Cultural Studies on Modal Music Traditions
   a. Comparative research could examine *maqāmāt* alongside other modal systems (e.g., Persian *Dastgah*, Indian *Raga*, and Chinese Pentatonic scales).
   b. Ethnographic fieldwork could explore how *maqāmāt* are perceived and adapted in non-Arabic musical traditions.
3. The Role of *Maqāmāt* in Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Music Generation
   a. AI and machine learning algorithms could analyse *maqām*-based improvisation patterns, contributing to automated composition and music therapy applications.
   b. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences could integrate
   maqāmāt into immersive soundscapes for meditation and healing.
4. Revival and Preservation of Traditional *Maqām* Practices
   a. Documentation of oral traditions and performance techniques among *Sufi*
   orders and classical Arabic music practitioners.
   b. Digital archives and online resources could help preserve and disseminate rare *maqām* compositions.
5. Expanding the Role of *Maqāmāt* in Music Therapy and Holistic Healing
   a. Further clinical trials could test *maqām*-based therapies for stress, anxiety, and trauma recovery.
   b. Collaboration between music therapists, neuroscientists, and traditional healers could integrate *maqāmāt* into formalized wellness programs.

By exploring these research directions, scholars and musicians can deepen our understanding of *maqāmāt*, ensuring their continued relevance in contemporary and future contexts.

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