

Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion

In addition to the sweeping cultural changes in Arab and Ottoman lands, Western European culture was increasingly exposed to ideas, styles and commodities from the Ottoman and Arab world that resulted in the incorporation of new motifs and a romanticised view of the “East”. The 19th-century reform movement, called al-Nahda (the Awakening), was born of the encounter with Europeans who developed commercial, then colonial interests in North Africa and the Levant. Many Europeans settled in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Ottoman Turkey, bringing their cultural preferences with them. While the local populations did not adopt European tastes wholesale, they did embrace certain institutions – theatres, and technology such as the printing press for example, plus styles of dress and new musical instruments and harmonic systems. The adoption of European-style military uniforms was probably based on practical considerations, but the taste for the men’s frock-coat and fez was a form of emulation of European styles. Women’s dress in the Ottoman world owed less to foreign models. Rather, European designers such as Mariano Fortuny designed women’s clothes in the shapes of Arab robes or with patterns based on Ottoman textiles. New literary forms in the Arab lands included newspapers, periodicals and novels, but an interest in traditional Arabic literature was also rekindled. European composers in a range of genres evoked Ancient Egypt and the Ottoman court although their music was not based on Eastern harmonic systems. Likewise, stories from traditional Arab literature inspired the great impresarios of dance in Paris, but their interpretations were the product of imagination and unrelated to actual dances of the Ottoman or Arab lands.

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Music

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La Reine de Saba: 14 costume sketches

1861-1862

National Library of France

Paris, France

Alfred Albert and Paul Lormier



Buckles (Pafti)

Bridal waist ornament

19th century

Museum of Macedonia

Skopje, North Macedonia

Silver, filigree, granulation.

Decoration with semi-precious stones, pearls and live gold plating



Burqu` rayyasi

Decorated facemask

19th century

National Museum of Qatar

Doha, Qatar

Calico, gold, golden silk cord