

Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion / Music

From 1815 to 1920 Arab music underwent significant changes in part thanks to the patronage of Isma'il Pasha and the formation of the Khedivial School, or style, of music in Cairo. Theatres and cafes with performance spaces hosted concerts, often performed by female singers and male instrumentalists. However, direct European influence is difficult to pinpoint because the leaders of the al-Nahda movement in music wrote no theoretical treatises about their work. In contrast, 19th-century European composers named works after characters in Arab literature such as the character made famous as the central story-teller in the Arabian Nights, Sheherezade (Maurice Ravel). Isma'il Pasha commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to write an opera for the opening of the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo, and Aida was the result, though its debut in Cairo was delayed until 1871. Such events would certainly have had an impact on the musicians of the Khedivial School.



Working Number:	ET1 075
Name:	Opera House, 1869
Holding Museum:	Bibliotheca Alexandrina
Date:	1869
Materials:	-
Curator Justification:	In honour of the opening of the Suez Canal, the Khedive of Egypt ordered the building of the Cairo Opera House in 1869. The 850-seat theatre, designed by Italians Pietro Avoscani and Mario Rossi, opened with Verdi's Rigoletto. Although unprofitable, the Opera House continued to stage important performances, including Aida, which had been intended for its opening but debuted in Cairo in 1871.



Working Number:	MO 074
Name:	Photograph of a musician holding a violin and bow
Holding Museum:	General Library and Archives
Date:	1912
Materials:	-
Curator Justification:	This musician is posed standing holding his violin and bow rather than actually performing. He would certainly have been part of a group of musicians which could have included the lute, nay, piano, and drum. Under European influence in the 20th century musical ensembles grew in size, at times almost to that of an orchestra.
