

Dawn Has Appeared is a reflection on the conflict involving Syria, ISIS, the United States, and Russia. The sorrowful inspiration for this piece came one morning while reading an article describing a "mistaken" bombing in Syria, one of many that have characterized the continued warring there. At this moment I was profoundly struck by the question of U.S. presence in Syria, and the use of Syria as a proxy battleground for U.S. and Russian interests, even while ISIS violently destroys ancient art, while the group kills and tortures and displaces.

Dawn Has Appeared is an amalgamation of two pieces. The first is *Dawlat al-Islam Qamat* or "My Nation, Dawn Has Appeared" which is a 'nasheed' or Islamic chant. *Anasheed*, in keeping with orthodox Islamic practices, which do not allow for instrumental music, are exclusively vocal songs that deal with Islamic beliefs and values. While the tradition is certainly diverse and by no means monolithic, since at least the 1950's a variety of Islamic groups have used the genre to create politicized ideologic songs. There are media foundations that are dedicated to the production of *anasheed* which are released as sound recordings as well as music videos that depict individuals preparing for war, idolizing the battlefield, and engaging in violent acts. The songs are released as tracks in many languages with the intent of garnering support for the Islamic state. The tone is often spiritual, solemn, religious, devout until sounds of swords being unsheathed and gunfire break this meditative tone. "My Nation, Dawn Has Appeared" was produced by the Al-Ajnad Media Foundation, a media organization associated with ISIS, in 2014 and has been cited as one of their most popular *anasheed*, the thing closest to what we would call a national anthem.

The second source material for this piece is the Syrian national anthem *Humat ad-Diyar* or "Protectors of the Homeland". Originally adopted in 1938, the piece has a distinctly Western march-like quality, a characteristic of many national anthems adopted around WWI and WWII by non-Western countries. This is an all too poignant example of the omnipresent political social and cultural influence of the U.S., Russia, and other world powers on conflicts in the Middle East.

In *Dawn Has Appeared* I begin with a meditation on the *nasheed*. The melody and comments around it are stated in a reflective way that evokes the original recording, but also reflects my personal attempt to understand and interpret and come to terms with the complex reasons that a song such as this should exist. It is not a judgment but hopefully a dialogue or impetus for a dialogue. This meditation is abruptly interrupted by the brazen melody of *Humat ad-Diyar*, interestingly a simultaneous representation of Syria as well as outside influence on the country. The piece ends with an echo of the thoughts and comments made.

This piece was composed in conjunction with a concert at the New England Conservatory in Boston honoring Ran Blake. Ran has a history of composing and improvising pieces that deal with social and political injustices. Ran's piece *Memphis*, is a response to the devastating assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and racially motivated violence that Ran witnessed. *Vradiazzi* is a Greek folk song, but Ran's improvisations on it make it a response to the conflicts in Greece of

the late 60's and early 70's. These are sublimely effective portrayals of the complex emotions that these events evoke. In addition to this genre of social-song, Ran's use of often dense harmony; his phrasing, which oscillates between off-balanced and extremely rigid; and articulation, which includes a piercing staccato and a painfully smooth legato; inform the musical vocabulary of 'Dawn Has Appeared'.

NOTES

"How Isis Got Its Anthem" <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/nov/09/nasheed-how-isis-got-its-anthem>

"The Songs Of The Islamic State – A Major Tool For Reinforcing Its Narrative, Spreading Its Message, Recruiting Supporters"
<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/8701.htm>

"Background: Nasheed"

<http://jihadology.net/2012/05/31/guest-post-a-brief-look-at-the-history-and-power-of-anasheed-in-jihadist-culture/>