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The Wizard of Oud:

A Case Study of Sydney-based Oud Player Joseph Tawadros

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Introduction

This paper follows a growing body of work, the focus of which concerns musicians who intentionally engage and invest in the World Music industries as a central locus of creative activity (see, for example, [Garrido and Bendrups 2013](#)). Here, I adopt a slightly different angle from the trends generally followed in academic discourse on World Music, which form a critique of this term and its role in broader colonial and capitalist systems (see, for example, [Feld 1996, 2000, 2012](#); [Frith 2000](#); [Erlman 1996](#)) and consider World Music at the micro level of individual musical encounters (see, for example, [Bohlman 2002: 1](#); [Slobin 1993](#)) or both. While not eschewing in any way the critical literature concerning World Music — the tensions between the celebratory and anxious narratives concerning the reification, commodification and global circulation of sounds of the ‘other’, systems and agents — in this paper I consider the activities of Sydney-based musician Joseph Tawadros in order to draw particular attention to the discursive practices associated with the contemporary World Music industries in Australia and the ways musicians position themselves in local and global marketplaces. The discussion here is framed within Stuart Hall’s understanding of cultural identities as not essential but an act of positioning ([Hall 1989: 226](#)). In this paper, I consider the ways in which this musician has skilfully and strategically positioned himself and his music, and the links between this positioning, identity formation and musical patronage.

There have been a number of definitions and explanations of World Music and its significance, a full account of which I do not have sufficient space to discuss here. The academic treatment of this topic ranges from discussing World Music within broader critiques of global capitalism and exploitation of the ‘sounds of the other’ ([Erlman 1996](#); [Brennan 2001](#); [Feld 2000, 2012](#)), to considering World Music as descriptive of a series of micro-musical processes ([Slobin 1993](#); [Bohlman 2002](#)). World Music has been criticised for its inherent orientalism and the ways in which it perpetuates the dangerous binary opposition of the music of ‘the West and the rest’ ([Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000](#)). There has also been significant scholarship focusing on the specific ways in which ‘World Music’ has become common parlance in Australia, detailing the tensions and the musicians associated with this term ([Mitchell 1993](#)). World Music has been discussed in connection to migration and multicultural policy in



Australia ([Smith 2005](#); [Jordan 2010](#); [Elder 2010](#); [Holdsworth 2010](#); [Scott-Maxwell 2008](#)), and its effects (both positive and negative) on diverse forms of Australian Indigenous musical expression ([Mitchell 1993](#); [Gibson and Connell 2003](#)).

For the purposes of this paper, I take 'World Music' to refer to the complex discourses surrounding this term and also as pertaining to the series of musical encounters that are framed by this discourse ([Frith 2000](#)). World Music in this sense can be understood as both concept(s) and contact zone — the activities, representations and experiential effects of World Music ([Feld 2000: 154](#)). World Music is not simply limited to the language of World Music, but also refers to the effects of this discourse, the ways in which it is enmeshed in circumstance and historical contingency, and is a site of contestation and struggle. Amidst the complexities of this discourse, I highlight the discursive practices of Tawadros as an agent working in the context of World Music, both in Australia and to a lesser extent internationally.

Tawadros' career to date represents a rich field for analysis. Born in Cairo in 1983, he moved with his family to Sydney at the age of three. Although he performs on the Egyptian *oud*¹ (Tawadros is also accomplished on a number of other instruments such as the *qanun*, violin and *ney* flutes), he has made a significant name for himself in the Australian music industries. His presence in the music industries can be demonstrated with reference to the nine Australian Recording Industry Awards (ARIA) nominations he has received in the categories of Best World Music and Best Jazz Album, and the fact that he was the winner of the Best World Music Album in 2012 and 2013 respectively ([Tawadros 2012](#)). He has also collaborated with many prominent musicians in Australia including Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, classical guitarists Slava and Leonard Grigoryan, in addition to internationally renowned jazz musicians John Abercrombie, Jack deJohnette, John Pettatuci, and Jean-Louis Matinier. In 2011, Tawadros was ranked twentieth amongst the most influential people in Sydney ([Author Unknown, 2011](#)), which provides further indication of Tawadros' presence and success as a musician, particularly in Australia. Having observed Tawadros' fluidity as a musician, traversing categorical boundary lines while retaining and projecting a strong affiliation with Arabic music and culture, in this paper I focus on the agency of this musician in strategically positioning himself in the market, and how this may have implications for accessing diverse streams of patronage.

The issue of identity has been a prominent topic across the disciplinary studies of music and features prominently within the disciplines of Popular Music and Ethnomusicology studies. Similar to Hall's ([1989: 226](#)) understanding of cultural identity, Frith ([1996](#)) argues for an understanding of identity as a fluid process and experience, rather than an immutable characteristic of an individual or community. According to Frith, the question informing studies in identity is not how a text reflects those who created it, but rather how texts construct identities through experience, both communally and individually ([Frith 1996: 109](#)). This reading of identity as process, where identity studies focus on the experiential site of the text informing individual and communal identities, is a common approach adopted by ethnomusicologists (see, for example, [Waterman 1990: 367](#); [Sherinian 2007](#)).

While this study of Tawadros concerns the idea of identity as fluid process, as construct rather than an essentialised property, I wish to emphasise the agency of the individual in creating and positioning different texts for different purposes. So while it is important to view terms such as 'Egyptian,' 'Australian,' 'Classical,' and 'World' as identifying discursive categories, the meanings of which are constantly open to fluctuation and change, here I wish to highlight the specific moves of the individual agent in the complexities and complications of the Australian and global music industries. Like Garrido's discussion of his deliberate and intentional pursuit of a 'transcultural Latin music agenda in the Australian music industry' ([Garrido and Bendrups 2013: 146](#)), here I discuss Tawadros' intentional industry strategies.

Gerstin's article concerning the role of reputation building and identity construction in musician peer networks provides a helpful model of analysis for the purposes of this paper ([Gerstin 1998: 386](#)). Though admittedly a little dated, Gerstin's approach outlines three useful focuses of analysis for understanding the discourse of musicians as they speak of themselves and their own music:

- (i) statements made by musicians that can be understood as more or less factual;
- (ii) statements made by musicians that can be understood as statements of intent;
- (iii) statements that position musicians in relation to other performers ([Gerstin, 1998: 389](#)).

This study on Tawadros resonates with the third of Gerstin's points. However, where Gerstin's focus is directed at the level of personal relationships between musicians, and the politics associated with identity construction at this level, the intention in this paper is directed towards examples of strategic identity positioning within the more formalised contexts of local and international music industries and



mainstream media. Rather than focusing on the ways in which acts of identity positioning exhibited by Tawadros contribute within the networks of musicians, this study concerns the effects of this positioning in generating income and performance opportunities for him.

Omojola's (2009) ethnographic study of Victor Olaiya is a helpful example in this regard. In that paper, Omojola discusses the agency of Olaiya in strategically invoking notions of traditional Yoruba identity in his music, which inform his identities as a Nigerian and West African (Omojola, 2009: 250). The paper also observes the correlations between the identities projected by musicians and how this may affect opportunities for patronage. For example, Omojola draws the connection between Olaiya as a symbol of national and ethnic unity in Nigeria and occasions in which Victor Olaiya was selected to perform at the independence celebration banquet in Marina, Lagos 1960, and at the official celebrations of Nigerian independence in 1963 (Omojola 2009: 254).

In addition to Omojola's paper, some very useful studies have been conducted by Australian scholars concerning the theme of strategic identity positioning and its benefit to musicians and their careers. For example, Whiteoak's (2005, 2010) discussion of the Dom Caffaro Argentinian tango band of the 1930s, demonstrates how musicians of Italian heritage strategically tapped into constructions of race and otherness, and were able to comfortably perform in a range of racially signified contexts. Additionally, Scott-Maxwell (2005), in her article concerning well-known crooner Kamahl, brilliantly demonstrates how he capitalised on essentialist notions of 'blackness,' and appropriated exotic tropes to suit his career objectives (Scott-Maxwell 2005: 32, 34). To a lesser extent, Smith's (2005) discussion of multicultural music highlights some of the tensions that can arise in the performance of World Music in Australia. He notes several examples, such as the reliance on Anglo-Australians performing African Township music in Melbourne in the late 1980s to early 1990s (Smith 2005: 160), where the perceived authenticity of the artist is compromised. Smith's examples highlight the fragility of positioning oneself in the World Music industries in Australia and the authenticity effects associated with race, cultural background, and class.

The example of Tawadros discussed in this article is both similar to and different from the examples of agency and identity construction surrounding Kamahl and the Dom Caffaro tango band. The Tawadros example diverges at the point at which the identity claims of Tawadros can be made without recourse to such demonstrably overt fabrication. The examples of Dom Caffaro and Kamahl demonstrate agency in capitalising on the cultural and racial blind spots of their audience, whereas the positioning of the Tawadros narrative represents invocations of identity more convincingly present in the material and cultural histories of the musician. However, points of similarity can also be detected, especially with respect to the use of multiple invocations of identity for the purposes of navigating systems and networks of patronage in both local and international music industries.

Thus, this study addresses the ways in which Tawadros strategically positions himself within local and international music industries, with a particular focus on the agency of this musician in constructing narratives of identity in these market spaces. Moreover, this discussion addresses the correlations between these identity invocations and the spaces of patronage to which he has been able to gain access. The various aspects of identity that are invoked in this musician's own narrative not only speak to the complexities of global migration, technology and the political economy of music on a macro-level, but also demonstrate the agency of musicians who capitalise on these narratives in order to create and access diverse forms of patronage.

(Not Completely) Fluid Biographies

In this section I analyse four separate interviews conducted across Australia, Turkey and Thailand, which demonstrate the different ways that Tawadros positions himself and his music. In these interviews, he simultaneously invokes archetypes of the *tarab*² musician, notions of Egyptian and Australian national identity, and constructs affiliations with Western classical and Jazz idioms: a musician weaving and navigating these diverse and oft-times paradoxical identities.

In an interview on the Turkish website, *Today's Zaman*, it appears (whether consciously or not) that Tawadros highlights aspects of his musical heritage that conform to the expectations of a *tarab* musician. In this interview it seems that there are resonances between the way in which Tawadros positions himself and the archetype of a traditional *tarab* musician as outlined by scholar Ali Jihad Racy. Racy (2003), in his book *Making Music in the Arab World*, outlines the archetype of a *tarab* musician. He describes a set of five experiences or phases that are common to the development of the *tarab* performer. They are (i) the appearance or recognition of talent during childhood;



(ii) musical obsession; (iii) recognition of talent by family or community; (iv) training of some sort; and, finally; (v) the undertaking of a performance career ([Racy 2003: 18](#)).

At several points throughout the Turkish interview, the evidence suggests resonances between the positioning of the Tawadros identity and Racy's archetype of a *tarab* musician. The interview recounts his musical training, family connections, and also describes Tawadros' development as a musician beginning at the age of eight, when he acquired his first instrument. In the interview, the description of Tawadros' transition from musician in training to a professional musician, suggests the dedication to music and musical obsession referred to by Racy. The interview reads:

In the beginning, Tawadros didn't intend to play professionally, but his commitment to music resulted in his graduating with a Bachelor of Music with honours from the University of New South Wales in May 2006 ([Utku 2010](#)).

Tawadros then recalls:

I just continued to play it, copying the great masters ... you get better and better and people start to enjoy it more, and it ends up taking over your life ([Utku 2010](#)).

Tawadros identifies an important family connection, in this case Tawadros' maternal grandfather, which provides a biological explanation for Tawadros' musical abilities ([Racy 2003: 18](#)). Referring to relatives with exceptional musical abilities is seen as a common way of providing some evidence or explanation for the talent innate within the young musician ([Racy 2003: 19](#)). Family members such as Egyptian Trumpeter Yacoub Mansi Habib are referenced, firmly establishing point (i) of Racy's observation of the development of a *tarab* artist. Additionally, Tawadros informs the interviewer of his period of training (point (iv) of Racy's archetype) under *oud* player and jazz pianist Mohamed Youseff, and violinist Esawi Dagher ([Utku 2010](#)).

These themes are extrapolated further in the biographical account located on Tawadros' website which announces upcoming performances and CD releases ([Tawadros 2011a](#)), the links to which are circulated regularly via email to the musician's database of fans. The biography details Tawadros' return to Egypt in 2001 where he became a student of Dagher. Apparently, Dagher was so impressed by his talent he decided to teach him *pro bono*, giving further credence to point (iii) of Racy's archetype ([Tawadros 2011a](#)). Recalling this recognition accorded to Tawadros by Dagher in the biography enhances the authenticity effects being constructed to ground him firmly within the Egyptian *tarab* tradition. Additionally, by referring to Mohamed Youseff as both a famous *oud* player and a jazz pianist, this narrative locates the collaborative and intercultural process (which Tawadros is later to become known for) within the period of musical acquisition. Engaging in the intercultural musical collaboration is thus naturalised, and portrayed as an integral aspect of his heritage, disarming any potential claims of inauthenticity as Tawadros engages in collaborative and fusion projects³. While establishing himself firmly within the pan-Arabic and specifically Egyptian musical disciplines, Tawadros' identification as an Australian is also strongly affirmed. In an interview with the ABC's⁴ Anne Maria Nicholson, Tawadros' refers to himself as 'an Australian man stuck in an Egyptian man's body' ([Tawadros 2012](#)). This statement could be read as only partly a jest: it does indeed describe the complexities of his own position as an Egyptian-born man who has grown up in Australia. This kind of perceived and projected hybridity at the level of the individual's identity also affords a basis and natural reason for the musician's diverse and hybrid musical projects. It also provides Tawadros with a position as both 'insider' and 'outsider', simultaneously familiar and exotic. Thus, he is connected to the Middle East, can be interviewed on SBS in Arabic ([Arabic SBS Radio 2003](#)) but can also joke in a broad Australian accent about ACDC and Jimmy Barnes. This corresponds well with the aesthetic demands of the local and transnational World Music industries based on the production and consumption of sameness and difference (see [Aubert 2007: 55](#)).

As an Egyptian-born Australian, it might be expected that a musician with his cultural and disciplinary background as a *tarab* musician might position himself within the market categories of 'World,' 'Multicultural' and 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)' in Australia. Indeed, this sometimes is the case. However, when I interviewed Tawadros on 14 July 2010, he identified more strongly with the discipline of the Western classical tradition. Tawadros noted that this identification with Western classical music was unashamedly strategic, seemingly in response to the lack of patronage on offer by the World Music industries in Australia. He said:



I don't actually consider myself as part of the World Music scene in Australia, I consider myself a classical musician if anything, you know, won The Freedman Fellowship Award for classical music⁵, played with all the classical dudes ... so I think that's the way I've had that success is to go through a different door. 'Cause World Music here man, forget it, there's no way you can make a living off [it] (Keogh, B. Interview with Joseph Tawadros.)

Tawadros' identification with Western classical music is a common theme that can be detected in various media articles concerning this musician. For example, a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described him as a 'classically trained composer and performer' (Jackson 2012). Again, the connection with Western classical music (and jazz in this case) is demonstrated in an article published by *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

The virtuoso Sydney musician has transformed the way the fretless, round-backed stringed instrument is viewed, taking it out of its traditional Middle Eastern setting and into the realms of classical music and jazz (Jackson 2012).

Tawadros' identification with Western classical music in Australia evidently suggests an intentional strategy in response to the market failure (whether real or perceived) of the World Music industries in Australia. In light of this positioning, it is interesting to reflect on how is it possible for a musician from Egyptian-Arabic heritage playing a middle-eastern lute could possibly be associated with the Western classical music tradition in Australia. The interview between Tawadros and Nicholson of the ABC (Tawadros 2012) demonstrates some of the ways in which the identity of this musician and his instrument is constructed within the discourse of art music in Australia. The interview begins with an introduction to 'Tawadros and his *oud*', in which themes of nationality, place, ethnicity and musical style coalesce to form complex narratives of identity:

Nicholson: He plays one of the world's oldest instruments, and at the age of 28, Egyptian-born Australian Joseph Tawadros is being hailed as one of the master players of the *oud* ... his latest album was a collaboration with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and he dedicated it to his mother who brought him here when he was three years old ... Joseph Tawadros, welcome to you and to your *oud* to One Plus One ... You're capturing music that seems very old, but also very new, tell us about your music?

Tawadros: Well, they're all original compositions, and the idea behind it is the *oud* is such a Middle-Eastern voice, when you hear it, it instantly takes you to that region. I guess I'm very much Australian as well, I like to think of myself as an Australian stuck in an Egyptian man's body ... its about creating music that doesn't lean towards any ethnicity, doesn't lean towards Middle-Eastern music. I know as I said I do play a Middle-Eastern instrument ... but for me it's a general instrument that has its respect in all genres and all types of musics. (Tawadros 2012).

Examples such as this demonstrate the skilful market positioning of this musician. It is possible that examples such as these also speak to a more relaxed, inclusive and fluid discourse concerning the boundaries of Western classical music in Australia.

With respect to the interviews surveyed in this study, it appears that Tawadros positions these narratives of musician and instrument slightly differently depending on the context of the interview. In both the interview with Nicholson (Tawadros 2012) and in an interview with Peter Sow (2012), Tawadros retells a narrative of the instrument's history, beginning with the Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol *nefa*, through to the *oud*'s evolution as the Persian *barbat*, and the etymological transformation of the Arabic term *al oud* to the English *lute*. Interestingly, in the Australian interview, Tawadros refers to the *oud*'s presence in the Biblical Psalms of King David, which he does not do in his interview in Thailand. In the account presented in the Thai interview, Tawadros recounts how the *oud* was spread to Spain, then throughout Europe as the lute, and thus became a precursor to the contemporary guitar.

In both these interviews, Tawadros' positions the sounds of the *oud* as one that is practically synonymous with the Middle East before positioning his music as designed for a much wider audience. In the interview with Nicholson, Tawadros draws on notions of Australian identity as a way of positioning his collaborations and compositions. Here he articulates himself and his instrument as part of a musical meta-narrative that links the instrument's ancientness and geographical origins to his practice within the contemporary Australian



context. In the interview with Sow, however, Tawadros does not refer to any sense of Australianness at all, but instead tries to position his music as something with a much broader appeal. When asked by Sow, 'What is the identity of Arabian music?'⁶ Tawadros redirected the question towards his own identity as a musician:

It's a tough question that one, it's a big one. I think that with the stuff that I do, I think the *oud* has a very Arabic sound, so when someone hears it, it takes them to the Middle East. But what I do, I try and mix it up with other instruments and create a certain repertoire for it that everyone can accept. And that's basically my idea, collaboration and finding a good meeting point with people. So I hope that its identity can fit in everywhere (Sow 2011).

The evidence from this interview suggests that Tawadros invokes both locally specific and more universal identities. The oft-presented tensions between local and global, specific and universal, are presented as themes that permeate, resonate and entwine in the sounds, compositions and arrangements of Tawadros' music. For example, Tawadros' track titles and album art evoke diverse aspects of this musician's identity. 'Maqam of the Nile' and 'Cairo 1927' sit alongside tracks such as 'Café Riche' and 'Freo' (named after Fremantle in Western Australia) (Tawadros 2011a). The album art on the *The Hour of Separation* features Tawadros walking across a bridge with New York City as the backdrop of the photo: fitting artwork for this artist's first nomination in the ARIA category of 'Best Jazz Album 2010'. Western classical terminology is also used in the nomenclature of his tracks, such as 'Angel Suite in D', 'Concerto of the Greater Sea' and 'Whirlwind Caprice for Solo Oud'.

In addition to identity constructions along ethnic, national and musical lines of demarcation, Tawadros' handling of the complexities between identity and politics in these interviews is intriguing. Nicholson, in the interview with Tawadros, asked 'Is politics important to you or not?', to which he replied,

No, I don't want anything to do with politics. My music is for everyone, it has no religion, it has no politics, but in saying that, it doesn't take me from being a humanist, you know, politics is one thing, politics is wheeling and dealing and all sorts of things which I as a musician can not get involved in ... but as a human, and human rights and all of that, you can only play your part and do your bit. So politics I stay right away (Tawadros 2012).

Despite this attempt to distance himself from siding with any particular political position or religious affiliation, Tawadros has on occasion become entangled within broader political events and discourse. While on tour in December 2010, Joseph and his brother James were completing an international tour when they flew to Cairo, at the time of the riots that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarek's. An article was published in a February edition of *The Australian*, leading with the headline, 'Tawadros Brothers Caught in Cairo Drama' (Wilson 2011). While the Tawadros brothers were flying to Cairo, the article recalls, the air hostess announced that this day was a historic day in Egypt, called the 'Day of the Martyrs'. During their time spent in the city, the Tawadros brothers witnessed the police station opposite their apartment being burnt to the ground, survived civilian checkpoints where they were pulled out of their car at knifepoint and questioned as to why they spoke Arabic so well if they were indeed Australian. Their trip ended with an impromptu performance in which the Tawadros brothers played to a crowd at the airport. Joseph recalls, 'We had a singalong basically ... I played some traditional Egyptian songs, some patriotic songs as well. People starting clapping, joining in' (Wilson 2011).

While the article featured in *The Australian* mentioned that the Tawadros brothers were *en route* to Cairo from Istanbul, it doesn't mention that Tawadros had also performed at the Red Sea Winter Jazz Festival in Israel. The desire to distance himself from political positions was further complicated when the Australian Artists Against Apartheid appealed to Tawadros to cancel the upcoming gig at the Red Sea Jazz Festival in order to show his support for the Palestinian agenda in that region (Loewenstein 2010). This letter was also used by the blog space, *Middle East Reality Check*, which critiqued his involvement in the jazz festival in Israel as well as seeking to correct Tawadros' rendition of Arabic and Coptic history in Egypt in an interview in January 2011 (MERC 2011). Tawadros decided against joining the boycott and cancelling the gig, and, except for this mild protest, managed to avoid any major ramifications back in Australia.



More recently, Tawadros was involved in a gathering of musicians (the show was entitled ‘Gig for Gaza’) showing their support for the Palestinian people regarding the violent conflicts occurring in 2014. This, perhaps, is a demonstration of the distinction he makes between what he refers to as a ‘humanitarian’ consciousness and politics. Whether or not this distinction can indeed be made, it appears that, even when intentionally trying to make one’s music as broadly appealing to as many people as possible, it is still difficult (if not impossible) to be seen to be completely disconnected from political actuality.

These narratives of identity display complex articulations in which Tawadros positions himself as a *tarab* musician, a Western classical musician, an Egyptian, an Australian, an advocate or tradition bearer of the *oud*, as well as a versatile musician who has collaborated with an extensive number of musicians in a diversity of styles. It appears that Tawadros, either consciously or not, discursively positions narratives of himself and his instrument according to the context and audience of the interview. Within this discourse, Tawadros emphasises certain projections of identity over others depending on the context, with the view of reaching as wide an audience as possible. This principle extends to the realm of political discourse in which this musician tries, with varying degrees of success, to remain neutral.

Identity and Patronage

While there are many other factors that have undoubtedly played a role in Tawadros’ ability to gain performance opportunities in Australia and abroad, not least his proficiency as a musician, it is intriguing to consider what role this strategic positioning of his identity has played in attracting patronage. Surveying a selection of performances given by Tawadros in the period 2006–2011 ([Tawadros 2011b](#)) one wonders whether or not Tawadros would have been able to capitalise on these opportunities if he had not been able to position his identity in the way that he has. A selection of the performance opportunities which Tawadros has been able to access have been arranged in [Table 1](#), according to the diverse musical and nationalistic identities invoked by this musician, which have been discussed in this paper.

It is possible to see, from [Table 1](#), not only the sheer diversity of the performance opportunities Tawadros has had access to, but also the ways in which the identity of this musician has shifted to match these opportunities. As an Egyptian and musician from the *tarab* and *pan-maqam*⁷ disciplines, he has been able to invoke identities that represent at times the Egyptian articulation of the *maqam* heritage (such as the Egyptian Cultural Centre in Paris, or the Egyptian Consulate in Sydney), at other times representing contemporary playing styles of the *oud* (Istanbul Oud Conference), and, on other occasions, representing the broader imagined community of pan-Arabic identity ([Anderson 1983: 211](#)). For example, while Tawadros is of Coptic heritage, he was asked to perform for the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Sydney University for a conference celebrating Lebanese author and thinker, Ameen Rihani.

This musician’s ability to adapt and collaborate with other musicians from outside his discipline has perhaps been one of his most useful tools for gaining performance opportunities, and has allowed him to appropriate diverse identity positions. His relationship with Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) has afforded him many performance opportunities both in Australia and abroad, as evidenced in [Table 1](#). This relationship has had a particular resonance for Tawadros, in which this identification with the Western classical tradition in Australia has created opportunities for greater exposure through media channels such as *Limelight* magazine, the ABC, and classical music radio stations such as 2MBS. Considering Tawadros has been nominated eight times for an ARIA award in the World Music category, but only finally won an award with his album featuring Tognetti and the ACO, it appears that this strategy of aligning himself with Western classical music has translated into significant forms of patronage.

By aligning himself with prominent American and European jazz musicians, Tawadros has opened up opportunities for himself overseas, where the jazz and fusion circuit is much more lucrative than in the Australian context. This seems a strategically astute move, as *oud* players such as Anouar Brahem (on the ECM label) and Dhafer Youssef (Enja) have been enjoying success on the European circuit for some years. His collaborations with John Abercrombie, Jack deJohnette, and John Pettatuci in particular on the album, *The Hour of Separation*, has been a great success, gaining him access to the European jazz label, Enja, a move which has provided the artist with a point of distribution in Europe.



Table 1. Tawadros performances 2006–2011

Musical Identity	Performance Venue
Egyptian/Traditional	<p>Egyptian Cultural Centre, Paris, 16 June 2011.</p> <p>Great Hall, Sydney University for the Department of Arab and Islamic Studies, 25–26 November 2010.</p> <p>Istanbul <i>Oud</i> Festival, 21–24 October 2010.</p> <p>Alwan Arabic Centre for the Arts, New York, 2 October 2009.</p> <p>Citadel Festival, Cairo, 12 August 2009.</p> <p>Damascus <i>Oud</i> Conference, Syria, 4–9 August 2009.</p> <p>Conservatorium of Music, Sydney, 16 February 2008.</p> <p>Egyptian Consulate, Sydney, 24 August 2007.</p> <p>Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris, 25 November 2005.</p>
Western Classical Music	<p>Townsville Chamber Music Festival, Queensland, 28 July–1 August 2012.</p> <p>With Adelaide Chamber Choir, St. Peter’s Cathedral, North Adelaide, 16 June 2012.</p> <p>With Richard Tognetti and ACO, Kennedy Centre Washington D.C., 30 September 2009.</p> <p>With Richard Tognetti and Camerata Salzburg, Maribor Festival, Slovenia, 4–14 September 2008.</p> <p>With ACO, Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, 2006.</p>
Jazz	<p>Wangaratta Jazz Festival, 4 November, 2012.</p> <p>Tour with Jean-Louis Matinier, Porgy and Bess Jazz Club, Vienna, Austria, 12–21 May 2012.</p> <p>Sarejevo Jazz Festival, 3 November 2010.</p> <p>With Free Jazz band, Bucketrider, Adelaide Festival, 11 March, 2006.</p> <p>With Sandy Evans (sax), Steve Elphick (bass), James Tawadros (req’), Australian Institute of Music, 8 July 2005.</p>
Australian	<p>Australia Day, Parliament House, Melbourne, 26 January 2012.</p> <p>Australian Ambassador’s Residence, Laos, 22 February 2011.</p> <p>The Australian Embassy, Rue de la Federation, Paris, 30 May 2007.</p>
Multicultural/World/CALD	<p>Parliament for World Religions, for Dalai Lama, Melbourne Exhibition Centre, 9 December 2009.</p> <p>Qirks, Marrickville, Sydney, 17 September 2009.</p> <p>Womadelaide, Botanical Gardens, 7–9 March 2008.</p> <p>Belingen Global Carnivale, 28–30 September 2007.</p> <p>Aurora Festival – Joseph Tawadros, Marshall McGuire (harp), Riley Lee (shakuhachi), Q Theatre, Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Penrith, Sydney, 6 May 2006(?).</p> <p>KULCHA, Fremantle, Perth, 19 November 2005.</p> <p>Performing with Adrian McNeil (sarod), Bobby Singh (tabla), James Tawadros (req’), Sound Lounge, Seymour Centre, 25 August 2005.</p>

Finally, it is possible to draw connections between Tawadros’ articulation as an Australian and opportunities for patronage. As demonstrated in [Table 1](#), Tawadros’ identification as an Australian citizen correlates well with his performance at the official Australia Day celebrations in Melbourne’s Parliament House. Further evidence of this correlation can be seen as this musician has represented Australia overseas. In our interview, Tawadros spoke about identifying with his Australian nationality in China and also at the Damascus *Oud* Competition:



With the department of foreign affairs, I got to go with 'Band of Brothers' to China, which was a great thing ... it shows a great thing about Australia 'cause I play the *oud* and I'm representing Australia, and even at the Damascus *Oud* Competition I was representing Australia as a judge, so it's good to fly the flag for Australia (Keogh, B. Interview with Joseph Tawadros).

As an Australian citizen, Tawadros has also had the opportunity to work in Laos as Australian Ambassador in Residence ([Talk Vietnam 2012](#)), has represented Australia at the Shanghai World Expo ([DFAT 2012](#)), and has been awarded several prominent Australian Government grants ([Australia Council for the Arts 2008](#)).

Conclusion

Musicians on the peripheries of global flows, such as those caught up in the schizophrenic and schizogenic appropriations of Deep Forest, Herbie Hancock and Madonna ([Feld 1996](#)), are often presented as powerless in this global transaction, as deritualised sounds become inscribed into the transnational political economy ([Attali 1985: 24](#)). While this may be the case for some musicians, the example of Tawadros, like Olaiya, highlights the agency of musicians within the transactions of the political economy of musical sound. These examples arguably add further nuance to the discourse surrounding power relationships in the transnational flow of sounds, demonstrating at times complicity with certain power structures, but also agency within the transactions that occur in these spaces. By engaging with and courting various forms of media, Tawadros has been able to take part in the discursive representation of himself and his music, benefiting from the exposure and patronage that flows from this engagement.

Rather than using an intentional deceit playing on the exotic and racial blind spots of audiences, the identity of Tawadros is presented instead as a complexly interwoven melange, entangling histories of migration, national identities, flows and counterflows of musical sounds and disciplines. Through this complex and strategic articulation of identity, Tawadros has been able to emphasise certain aspects of this identity in order to speak to the context in which he finds himself.

This multifaceted approach has aided Tawadros in navigating various forms of patronage both in Australia and overseas. As an Egyptian, Tawadros has been able to present and represent Egyptian music to Australians, positioning himself and his instrument within an economy that still values novelty and exoticism, while simultaneously positioning the *oud* within a multicultural narrative of Australian identity. This identity invocation has been extremely useful for this musician, affording him opportunities such as performing at the Egyptian Consulate in Sydney, and the Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris. As an Australian, he has been able to represent Australian diversity to the world at events like the World Expo in China. Tawadros' alignment with prominent jazz musicians has afforded him performance opportunities in Europe and America, attracting the interest of European label Enja, and exposing his compositions to new audiences. Finally, identifying with Western classical musicians in Australia has afforded him opportunities to perform in concert halls such as the Sydney Opera House and Melbourne Recital Hall, giving him access to, and exposure within, the discourse and power structures of Western classical music in this country.

While Tawadros has attempted to court as wide an audience as possible, even going as far as intentionally disengaging with political discourse, the construction of the Tawadros narrative has not been able to entirely escape the political realities of global events, nor the boundary lines that divide ideological and religious positions. The fact of the Tawadros brothers being in Cairo during the Egyptian revolution of 2011 highlights the kinds of tensions that occur in the complex engagement of identities, politics, nationalism and sounds in global and local contexts.

In light of Tawadros' strong distancing from the label, 'World Music', one could speculate as to whether or not Tawadros would have been able to sustain a professional career as a musician relying solely on the World Music, Multicultural or CALD avenues for patronage in Australia. As evidenced by our interview, it seems that Tawadros has been almost driven to explore other avenues of patronage, because those offered by the World Music industry in Australia seemed to be insufficient for a musician relying solely on performance for survival. This research raises questions, therefore, concerning the efficacy of the World Music industries in Australia to support musicians attempting to make a full-time living from their creative practice.



ENDNOTES

1. The *oud* is a fretless lute common throughout North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey, and Greece. Alternative spellings of *oud* exist, such as 'ud. I have chosen to use *oud* throughout this paper as it is the spelling preferred by Tawadros.
2. The term 'tarab' has a wide range of meanings denoting genre, as well as describing an aesthetic quality of Arabic music which leads to ecstatic emotional states in the interaction between performer and audience.
3. See Touma (1996) as an example of a strong reaction against intercultural collaboration between Arabic and Western musical styles.
4. ABC is an abbreviation of the Australian Broadcasting Association.
5. In 2006, Tawadros won the Freedman Fellowship for Classical Music, which provides the winner with a \$15,000 grant and an additional \$5,000 worth of ongoing career development opportunities.
6. This question appeared to suffer from the interviewer's poor proficiency in English.
7. 'Maqam' refers to the musical practices historically associated with Arabic, Persian and Turkish musical repertoires, spanning the region stretching from Mesopotamia to Egypt (Shiloah 2001: 15; Davis 2004).

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ABSTRACT

This article is a case study of Sydney based *oud* player Joseph Tawadros. The discussion centres on the strategic market positioning of this musician and the use of identity as a tool for navigating patronage within the local and international music economies. This study observes the ways in which Tawadros embraces multiple identity positions, reinscribing himself and his instrument within the dominant narratives of art music in Australia, and considers how this may have helped him gain access to different forms of patronage. By reference to media interviews and interviews conducted with the author, this case study presents him as a musician who skilfully adopts and invokes various musical identities and identities tied to nationalism. These have helped Tawadros navigate diverse musical categories and mainstream media. This paper uses the Tawadros case study to explore the strategies used by musicians associated with World Music, Multicultural arts and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse arts in Australia.

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