

Oud Study Guides Series

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This guide is part of a collection of study guides for Oud that I have written for myself and for lessons with my students. They do not intend to represent an authoritative reference or to impose any specific style of interpretation: they just reflect my own approach to the study of these pieces for Oud, and I share them in the hope that they can be useful to other musicians.

My focus is mainly on compositions and improvisations performed by Oud players with a great level of proficiency with the instrument. The objective is to understand and acquire elements of their style, both in terms of musical interpretation and instrumental techniques.

My aim is not to create slavish copies of original performances. Even if you may find videos on my website, they would not necessarily follow what's written in this guide. I simply believe that these guides can help Oud students in reaching a better understanding of the instrument and of each performer's style, acquiring skills and a methodology that can then be applied to other musical works.

Each guide explores first the composition as a whole, analysing its structure, the modal characteristics and eventual modulations, the overall musical vision and interpretation. When possible, historical references are also provided. Then, with the help of a detailed transcription, the more relevant techniques are exposed, accompanied by dedicated exercises in order to acquire enough proficiency for their execution.

If you have not read any of these guides before, you may find useful to review the 1st Appendix on the conventions being used for music notation.

Similarly important is the 2nd Appendix on the Oud tuning used for this piece.

The technical exercises are grouped in the 3rd Appendix and referenced from the text.

Corrections and suggestions are very much welcome, please get in touch via email oud@musilogue.com

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Jamil Bashir - Kapris

Oud study guide

Kapris² is a composition by Jamil Bashir, published in the first edition³ of his method (1961) at page 123, as part of the pieces for the sixth and last year of study. It is a very short piece, around 75 seconds, very lively and quite technical. It is not known when it was composed, but according to his son Junaid Bashir it was written during the years of study at the Music Institute in Baghdad, when his teacher Serif Muhiddin Haydar⁴ was present, therefore before 1948, when Haydar left Baghdad and went back to Istanbul.

The original recording by Jamil Bashir can be listened to here:

<https://soundcloud.com/musisearch/jamil-bashir-kapris>

When studying complex pieces like Kapris, it may be extremely helpful to slow down the recording in order to hear all the details. This makes the audio quality even worse than the original recording, whose quality is already pretty low, however it may still be useful.

This recording is slowed down to almost half-speed:

<https://soundcloud.com/musisearch/jamil-bashir-kapris-slow>

Jamil Bashir tuned his Oud *in Sol*; please check the 2nd Appendix for more details about this tuning and why in this guide I am instead using a tuning *in Do*.

The title Kapris, from the Italian “Capriccio”, refers to a free form often used in classical Western music for pieces which have a lively, very varied and virtuoso style. Literally, *Capriccio* is the whimsical behaviour of a child when asking for attention.

Two pieces called “Capriccio” had been composed in the 1920s by Jamil Bashir’s teacher, Serif Muhiddin Haydar, who had probably transported this form from his studies in Western music on the Cello. Extremely technical and innovative for the Oud, Haydar’s Capriccios were obviously known to Jamil Bashir and must have provided some inspiration and guidelines to his own composition.

One key aspect to consider in Kapris by Jamil Bashir is the right hand technique. The Oud is commonly played with a pick, named *risha* (feather) in Arabic, and this piece poses several technical challenges when played with the pick, which made it quite popular and an important additional to any Oudist repertoire. However, this piece could also be played with the fingers instead of the pick, exposing a totally different set of challenges for the right hand. I believe that both approaches (with the pick and with the fingers) are valuable and they will both be considered in this guide.

2 Spelled also as Kaprice, Kabris, Caprice, Capris, ...

3 The 1961 edition of the method was notated by Jamil Bashir himself and represents the most reliable source. Various editions of Jamil Bashir method have been published after 1961, usually rewritten according to a tuning *in Do*. Not only they are unauthorised copies, but they also contain several transcription errors and therefore should be ignored.

4 Sherif Muhiddin Haydar took the family name Targan after the Turkish Surname Law of 1934, therefore in Turkey he is known as Sherif Muhiddin Targan. In this guide the original Haydar surname is used, as known in the Arab world

The original score from the 1961 edition of the Oud method is shown here.



Please note the accurate notation by Jamil Bashir, who gives clear indications about left hand fingers (in small numbers) and string names (in Arabic letters).

These guides use specific notation conventions, outlined in Appendix 1. The following score has been rewritten according to these conventions, and transposed to the tuning *in Do*. In the rest of the guide I will refer to this rewritten score, which also includes measure numbers and rehearsal marks.

When looking at the details, extracts from the score may include additional notation and alternative techniques or fingerings may be proposed. The score on the following two pages is somehow simplified and meant to be used once the guide has been fully read and understood.

15 **C** VII ② ③ ④ ④ ② ④ ② ① ② ① ① ①

17 ③ ① V V IV ③ ①

19 ④ ① II VII VI II ②

21 I II ③ ④ ① ② ④ ① ② ④ ③ ④

23 **D** I IV I III ⑥ ⑤ ③

25 V II I ① ③ ① ③ ④ ④ ③ ① ④ ② ① ① ② ③

27 **E** I III VII IV ① ② ① ② ③ ③ ⑤ ③ ② ① ③ ③

29 I III VII VIII V ③ ② ④ ③ ②

31 I II ③ ④ ③ ④ ③ ③ ① ② ④ ① ② ③ ④ ③ ③

Modal analysis

Similarly to the Capriccios composed by his teacher, Jamil Bashir's piece is in neo-classical style and can be easily analysed according to Western music harmony. Rooted in Do Minor, it makes use of the harmonic minor scale and alternates swiftly between the tonic and its dominant Sol Major.

If we were to use Arabic modes (*maqam*) we would say that it's in Do Nahawand, which alternates with Sol Hijaz. Regardless of the theoretical framework being used, the piece is quite simple in terms of musical development. It consists of five episodes, highlighted in the score by the rehearsals marks A to E. The episodes explore various techniques and blend nicely into each other with several cross-references.

As much as the form is free, the tempo can be also considered non-rigid, with fluctuations in speed depending on the interpretation. The main rhythmic characteristic is the triplet division of each beat, almost constant throughout the piece.

Technical analysis

Some of the technical passages of Kapris were quite advanced for the Oud playing of that time, in particular considering the required speed, and Kapris still represents a challenging piece for modern Oud players.

Some of these techniques have been inherited from his teacher and further expanded, some others are specific to the very distinct Oud playing style of Jamil Bashir. We find them in several of his compositions and improvisations, and their smooth execution requires a remarkable amount of practice.

Here is a short summary of these techniques, which will be analysed in detail when dealing with the musical episodes.

- right-hand triplet picking / plucking patterns
- scales on one string, extending for more than one octave
- harmonics
- use of open strings for resonance
- fast passages on one string in alternate pick
- arpeggios
- use of right hand fingers

One technique in particular requires immediate attention, as it sits at the core of this piece. Each beat is divided in triplets, usually with an accent on the first note, which identifies the melody, while the other two notes are usually open strings.

We will first look at how to perform these triplets with the pick. The common approach is to use a *down-up-down* movement, as indicated with the symbols here on the right.



This technique had been pushed to extreme speed and virtuosity by Serif Muhiddin Haydar in his own Capriccios. Haydar used to play these triplets at very high speed, also adding ornamentations in between the elements of the triplet.

Jamil Bashir makes use of these triplets in a number of combinations, in particular splitting the

elements of the triplet on different strings. However the *down-up-down* triplet pattern must not be taken as a must. Of course it is possible to consider this piece a technical challenge and force this pattern throughout all the sections. However Kapris is firstly a musical composition, and the fluidity of movement of the right hand is more important for the end result than trying to win a technical challenge.

For example, when the melody, that is the first note of each triplet, is played on a string above the two other open strings, it makes much more sense to use a *down-down-up* pattern (we will see this in more detail in the very first episode). And in the opposite situation, that is the first note of each triplet below the two other open strings, it is quite clear from Jamil Bashir fingering that he prefers to play the melody on the same string in higher positions, avoiding a cumbersome pick crossing.

Section A

The first occurrence of this triplet technique is present in the opening section A. Jamil Bashir gives the melodic line to the first note of each triplet and leaves the other two as open string.

There are two options to play this phrase, in terms of right hand technique. The first one is to play everything with a *down-up-down* pattern, even when the first stroke is on a different string than the other two. For this approach the *down-up-down* stroke is notated in the first measure only, and is intended to be repeated throughout all the 4 measures.

The musical notation for Section A is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves. The top staff is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major, and contains a sequence of eighth notes with triplet markings (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and fingering numbers (1, 2, 3). The bottom staff continues the sequence with similar triplet markings and fingering. The second system also consists of two staves, continuing the melodic line with triplet markings and fingering. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and triplet markings.

The second approach is to use a *down-down-up* pattern when the note of the melody is on an upper string, taking advantage of the downward movement of the first note (a technique known to guitarists as sweep picking), and revert to the usual *down-up-down* elsewhere.

The musical notation for Section A is presented in two systems, similar to the first approach. The first system consists of two staves. The top staff is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major, and contains a sequence of eighth notes with triplet markings (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and fingering numbers (1, 2, 3). The bottom staff continues the sequence with similar triplet markings and fingering. The second system also consists of two staves, continuing the melodic line with triplet markings and fingering. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and triplet markings.

My own preference, as notated in the score, is to use this second approach, which requires some practice in order to swiftly switch the pattern but can definitely achieve higher speed.

In any case it is quite important that the left-hand fingers, which play the melody, do not block the resonating open strings. This can be particularly difficult to achieve with neighbouring strings, for example when the melody is on string ③ (end of measure 2).

Please also note that the melody on string ② is mostly played with finger 1, in order to keep a consistent timbre. This section ends with the left-hand finger 2, for a number of reasons. First, the fingered note Do (instead of the equivalent open string), gives a richer tone and the possibility of a well sustained vibrato (audible in the recording). Secondly, it prepares for the next section, where the 2nd finger will stay on the same string.

It is important to keep in mind the key element of the resonance of the Oud strings in this particular tuning. Listen carefully to the recording and pay attention to how notes are always prolonged as much as possible. The initial open bass string on string ⑤ vibrates throughout, and also the first note of measure 3 on string ④ is kept vibrating as long as possible (that is until half-measure, when the left-hand has to move into IV position).

The triplet picking technique requires practice in order to make the melodic line (the first note of each triplet) consistent when played above or on the open string that is plucked for the other two notes of the triplet. Remember that there is always a clear accent on the melodic line.

You can find several progressive exercises in Appendix 3.1.

Section B

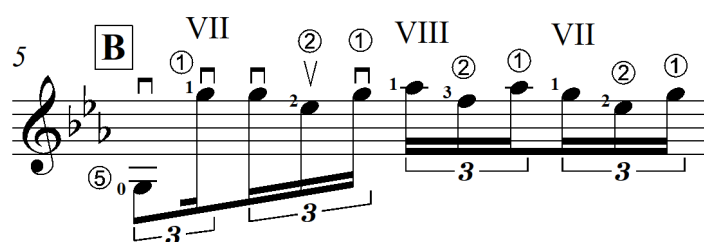
This section features an arpeggio on two strings, following a descending sequence of double stops in thirds⁵. The thirds reflect the current mode and can therefore be major or minor.

They represent another stylistic Iraqi feature, although they are usually plucked together, in short passages, with finger 1 on string ①, and with either finger 2 (major third) or finger 3 (minor third) on string ②. The very first step is to identify how these thirds are played in this section, starting with a major third in position VII (with the 1st finger at the junction of the neck with the body), and moving horizontally on the first two strings.

Pay attention to the Roman numerals (which indicate the position of the left hand). The finger numbers should help in identifying which third is being played on string ②.

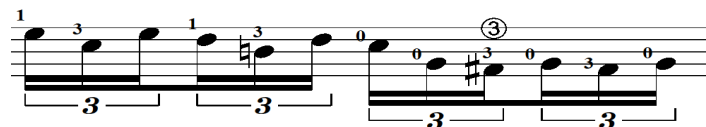
The down-up-down pattern used by Jamil Bashir for these thirds is a further challenge, as the movement is particularly intricate. Please check the progressive exercises in Appendix 3.2.

Always respect the *down-up-down* pattern. When one note is missing from the triplet (like in the opening of measures 5 and 7) just skip the relevant movement in the pattern, as notated at the beginning of measure 5.

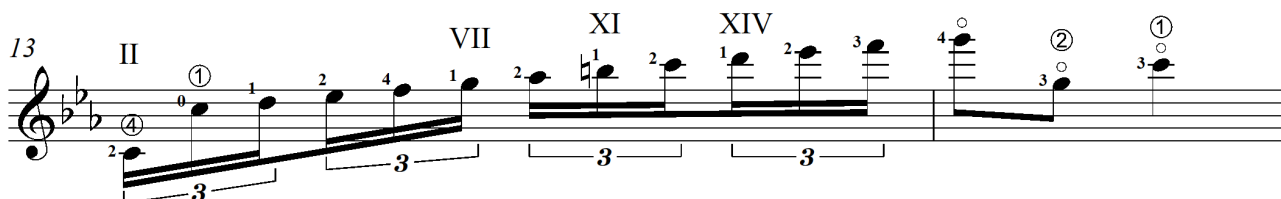


5 A third is a musical interval encompassing three staff positions. A major third spans four semitones, while a minor third spans three semitones.

At the end of measure 8 (and repeated at the beginning of measure 9) there is a passage with open strings. Remember again the important stylistic Oud feature of always looking for resonance. In this case, the Fa# on string ③ should resonate (i.e. kept pressed down) and create a dissonance with the open string ②. Pay attention that the 3rd finger, pressing the Fa#, does not block the vibration of string ②.



At the end of this section (measure 13) we meet a fast run on a single string, a technique popularised by Jamil Bashir and now strongly associated with the Iraqi style of Oud playing. This scale of one octave plus one fifth must be played smoothly, maintaining the same speed and quality of sound throughout, until the final harmonic.



Jamil Bashir executes similar scale runs with down strokes only. In Kapris audio recording there is no audible accent on the first note of each triplet, so we should assume that Jamil Bashir played these scale runs as down strokes only.

Specific exercises for the scale run are provided in Appendix 3.3.

Section C

This section opens with an unusual arpeggio, whose notes are plucked together with their open upper string. It's a passing dissonance which represents another Iraqi stylistic features, although it's almost inaudible when played at high speed.

The second part of this section mirrors section A, with a melodic line played on triplets together with two picks on the 2nd open string, however in a very high position on the fretboard. The melodic fragment moves from the 3rd to the 4th and to the 5th string, increasing the distance with the open strings (see exercise 1f).

As documented in some exercises from Sherif Muhiddin Haydar's own method (Targan 1995: 131)⁶, which would have been known by Jamil Bashir, when the distance between the strings increases it's ok to switch to a more comfortable *down-down-up* pattern, as shown at the beginning of measure 17.



Section D

The section is made of some very fast passages which are meant to be played, whenever is possible, on the same string in order to achieve the cleanest sound, and of course in pick alternation (*down-up-down-up-down*).



It's important to note that the change of left hand position sometimes happens during the fast passage, for example for the first phrases in measures 23 and 24. It is achieved as a very quick glissando with the index finger, which contributes to the sound of the phrase.

This represents an important technique that requires extensive practice (see exercises 4).

Section E

The final section builds up towards the finale with a sequence of arpeggios, another common technique associated with Jamil Bashir and in general the Iraqi Oud style. They require some left-hand stretching and quick changes of position in order to sound smooth. It is quite cumbersome to execute these arpeggios, which have a binary phrasing, with the triplet-based *down-up-down* right hand pattern. It's much more likely that they are played in pick alternation, or even with all down

⁶ Etude 3 on page 131 of the Ud Metodu

strokes. However the triplet-based phrasing clearly resumes from measure 30 until the final scale run, as usual played with down strokes only.

Interpretation

As the title says, Kapris is the whimsical behaviour of a small child, so it's not meant to be monotonous or mechanical. Indeed it is a technical piece that requires very good control of the various techniques, but its interpretation should be free and unpredictable, with changes in tempo and dynamics that introduce as much variety as possible.

Time expansion can be extremely effective when followed by high speed runs. Section D and E for example can start slow and pick up speed as they are being played, but there are several opportunities for *rubato* in the whole piece.

Playing with fingers

Jamil Bashir wrote a couple of pieces clearly meant to be played with the right hand fingers, Al-Andalus and Zaman; the indication of using fingers instead of the pick is clearly stated at the beginning of the page, in the top left corner. Kapris does not have such indication.

However something odd happened with the printing layout of the Oud method: Al-Andalus starts on page 121, but finishes on page 123, together with Kapris. Zaman is on page 122 with Raqsah Jumana. While the indication of playing with the fingers is present on pages 121 and 122 only, could it be that these indications were meant for the whole section of 4 pieces, which ends on page 123 and includes Kapris?

Here the three pages are shown, right to left as printed in the Arabic edition. Kapris is on page 123, the last on the left.



Another hint at the idea of playing Kapris with fingers has been provided by Junaid Bashir, who remembers that his father played this piece without *risha*. Although the only available audio recording seems to indicate that it was played with the pick, it could be plausible that this piece was also meant to be played with fingers.

Finally, Jamil Bashir occasionally notated the pick direction in his method, but no such signs are present in Kapris, despite the complex *risha* patterns that would have required if played with the pick.

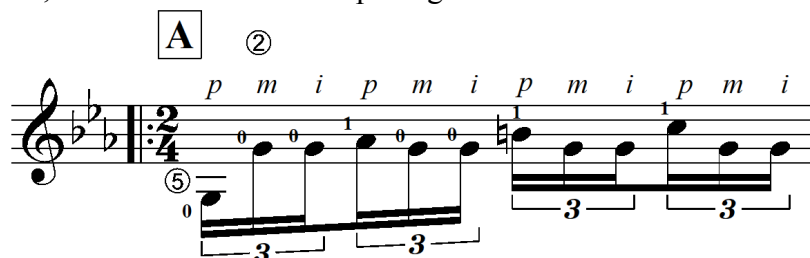
Therefore in this section we explore how the right hand fingers could be used to play Kapris.

Jamil Bashir does not provide any notation for the right hand fingers, even in the two pieces clearly written for it. Here I adopt the same notation convention in use for classical guitar (see Appendix 1).

It is clear from Al-Andalus that Jamil Bashir had been exposed to advanced right hand technique from the guitar. He met South-American guitarists in Iraq, and possibly other Western musicians in Iraq or abroad during his travels.

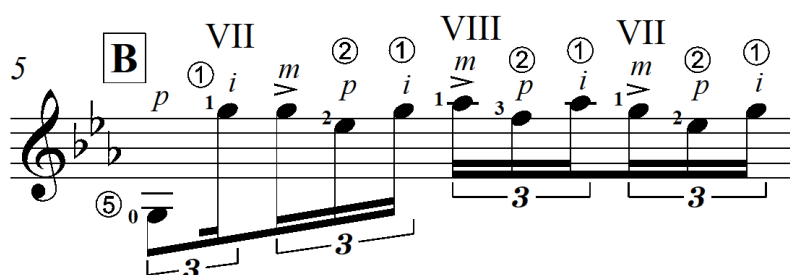
The triplet pattern with the pick, with the melody on the first note and open strings on the other two, has been discussed in detail in the previous sections. In Al-Andalus we have a quadruple pattern, with the first note, the melody, on one string and three equal notes on another open string. This technique is extremely popular in *flamenco* and it is performed with the right hand thumb (notated as *p*) playing the melody and three other fingers rolling to produce the tremolo note in this sequence: *a, m, i*.

Applying a similar approach to the triplet pattern, the melody would be played with the thumb while the other two notes could be plucked by the middle and index finger respectively, maintaining the rolling movement, as shown here for the opening measure.



It would be difficult to keep the same pattern when playing arpeggios, like in sections B and E.

A possible solution is to switch the accent to the middle finger, and keep a similar rolling pattern, as shown in this extract from the B section.



Scale runs could be played with the thumb only, and fast runs like section D could be executed with an alternation of index and middle fingers, however musicians with previous experience on the guitar may prefer different approaches. The use of right hand fingers for Kapris is just a hypothetical discussion, I would recommend studying the generic techniques for classical guitar and then freely adapt them to this repertoire for Oud, as probably Jamil Bashir did himself, without being too analytical regarding their use.

Appendix 1 – Notation conventions

String numbers

Similarly to the convention used for guitar and other Western instruments, strings are numbered from bottom to top, using circled numbers. Therefore ① identifies the first string at the bottom, usually the highest in pitch, and so forth until ⑥.

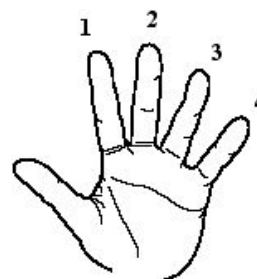
The Oud has double strings, a part for the lowest one in pitch. While the correct English name for these pairs of strings would be “courses”, in this guide I use the term string to refer to a pair of strings.

Left-hand fingers

It is quite often necessary to notate which left-hand finger is meant to be used for a specific note.

Fingers are identified with numbers, as follows:

- 0. No finger (open string)
- 1. Index finger
- 2. Middle finger
- 3. Ring finger
- 4. Little finger



Right-hand fingers

The strings of the Oud are usually picked with a *risha*. The use of right hand fingers is rare, but Kapris represents one of the very few pieces where this could be possible.

As audible in the recording of *Andalus*, Jamil Bashir imported some right hand techniques from the guitar, but did not provide any detailed indications in the score regarding their use.

The notation used in this guide is imported from classical guitar, using the initial letters of the finger names in Spanish / Italian. The following four letters specify the finger of the right hand to be used for plucking. The small finger is not used.

- p – thumb
- i – index
- m – middle
- a – ring finger

Left-hand positions

Positions of the left hand are based on the position of the index finger, identifying the half-tones from the left end of the fretboard. They are indicated with Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV...). For example, considering a string tuned in Do

- I position (index Do#, middle finger Re, ring finger RE#, little finger Mi)
- II position (index Re, middle finger Re#, ring finger Mi, little finger Fa)

and so forth. The VII position corresponds to the index finger at the junction between the neck and the sound board, corresponding to a 5th interval from the open string.

It may be difficult to figure out the location of these positions. The table below shows the note played by the index finger for each position on the open string Do.

Position	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Note of 1 st finger	Do#	Re	Re#	Mi	Fa	Fa#	Sol	Sol#	La	La#	Si	Do	Do#	Re

Risha directions

- down-strokes ▮
- up-strokes √

Note names

Notes are named according to the “solmization” in use across the Middle-East and various European and Latin-American countries.



If you are used to the English one, here is a conversion table.

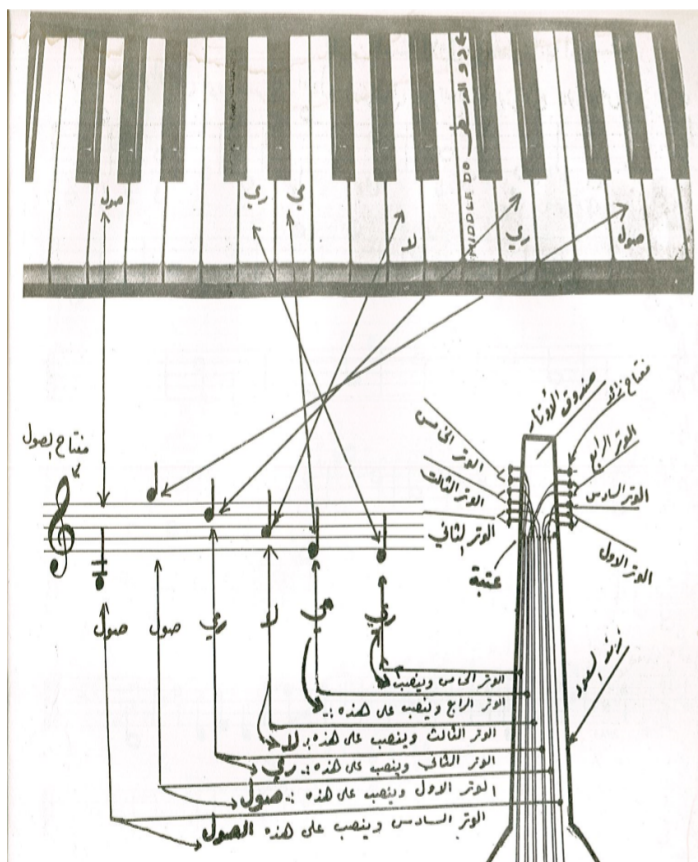
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Si

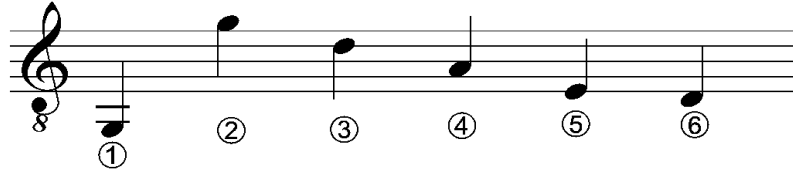
Appendix 2 – Jamil Bashir Oud tuning

When dealing with advanced technical pieces performed and composed by virtuoso players like Jamil Bashir it is key to understand the instrument tuning in order to appropriately follow the fingering indications. The Oud strings are traditionally tuned in fourths, but several changes were introduced by the Iraqi soloists and can be summarised in three main points:

1. The overall pitch is raised, in order to achieve a brighter sound. Usually the Oud has its highest string tuned to Do, but Iraqi soloists tend to tune the instrument much higher, a 4th (Fa) or even a 5th (Sol), as in the case of Jamil Bashir. I refer to this tuning as “*in Sol*”, meaning that the fundamental tone, which is usually Do, is raised to Sol. It is not clear when this practice emerged, but it is present in some recordings made by Sherif Muhiddin Haydar in the U.S. in the 20s. So we can assume it was inherited by his students.
2. Most playing occurs in the higher (in pitch) strings and the two lower ones are tuned to provide resonance.
3. The single bass string (called *bam*) is positioned at the bottom, as first string, to facilitate plucking patterns that involve the highest and lowest strings in pitch, but also to provide a more ergonomic position of the left hand. This approach was in use in Ottoman times and it was adopted by Sherif Muhiddin Haydar, as visible in the various photos of his Ouds. His Iraqi students maintained this tuning layout.

It is clear from Jamil Bashir recordings, and from his 1961 method edition (page 21, as shown here on the right), that he used the tuning *in Sol*.

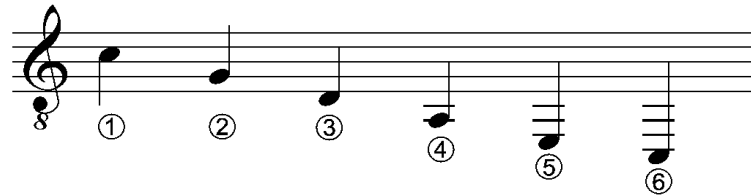




This tuning may appear a bit difficult to use, as nowadays most Oud players are either familiar with the tuning *in Do* or *in Fa*. Its notation may also be difficult to read, as it requires a high number of Ledger lines for the melodic parts. For these reasons, I have decided to notate the music assuming a tuning *in Do*, which should be familiar to most readers.

I have also avoided the change of position of the bass string. While it provides several benefits for the Iraqi style, it is quite problematic when playing in different styles which require the use of the lower range for melodic passages.

Therefore the tuning used in the notation for this guide is the standard Arabic Do-Do tuning:



In short, of the three changes discussed previously, I am only adopting the tuning of the 5th and 6th strings in respective resonance with the 2nd and 1st. This remains the key element for the study of this piece and for the execution of the original fingerings as notated by the composer himself.

When playing in different tunings (*in Fa* or *in Sol*), players should just think that they are playing in a Do tuning, a practice that they are likely to be already accustomed to.

In his method, Jamil Bashir uses small numbers to identify the left hand fingers, and Arabic letters to identify the strings, which are derived from the note names in Ottoman music (he probably acquired them from his teacher Sherif Muhiddin Haydar).

In this guide I use circled numbers to identify the strings, whose correspondence with Jamil Bashir letters is presented in the below table.

Arabic Letter	Arabic Name	Ottoman Name	Note	String Number
ك	کردان	Gerdaniye	Sol	1
ن	نوا	Neva	Re	2
د	دوكاه	Dugah	La	3
ع	عشيران	Ashyran	Mi	4
ي	يكا	Yegah	Re	5
ر	راست	Rast	Sol	6

Exercises

These sets of exercises are intended to help in mastering the various techniques needed for Kapris. Each set consists of several exercises of increasing difficulty.

Exercise Set 1: Triplet patterns

This first set of exercise focuses on the triplet pattern, which is extremely important for Kapris, as it is used in a number of combinations. As usual, start slowly and increase speed when you feel you have achieved enough fluency.

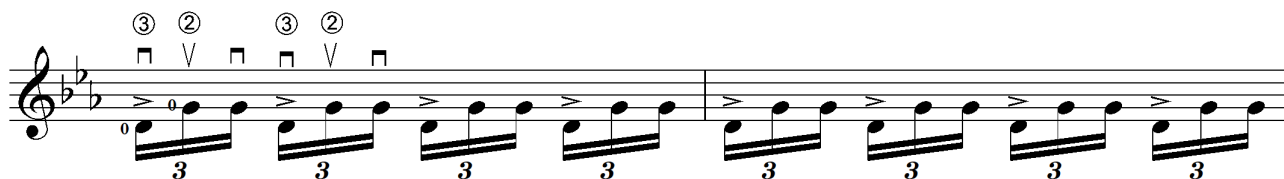
Exercise 1a

Play the *down-up-down* triplet pattern on an open string, with an accent on the first note of each triplet. The *risha* pattern is notated in the first two triplets only. Make sure your wrist is relaxed. Increase the speed gradually.



Exercise 1b

Play the triplet pattern on open strings, with the first note on the string above the other two.



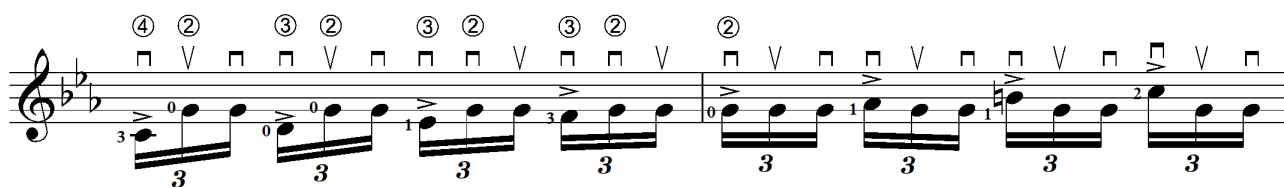
Exercise 1c

Play the triplet pattern on open strings, with the first note on the string below the other two.



Exercise 1d

Play a simple melody, whose note is plucked as the first note of each triplet, with an accent, in combination with the open strings for the other two notes of the triplet. You can loop through these two measures, gradually increasing the speed. You may notice the awkward difference in timbre when the melody is played on an open string instead of being fingered (such as the first note of the second measure). That's why Jamil Bashir often avoids the use of open strings for the melodic line.

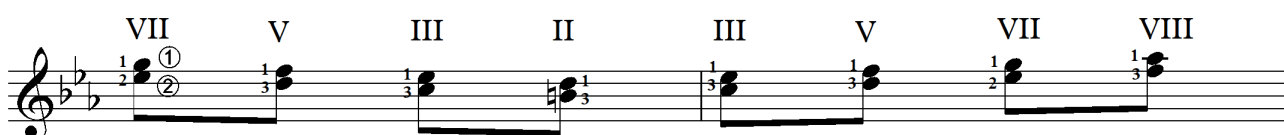


Exercise Set 2 – Thirds

Thirds are usually played on neighbouring strings (1 and 2 in this case), and always with finger 1 and 2 (for minor thirds) or 1 and 3 for major thirds.

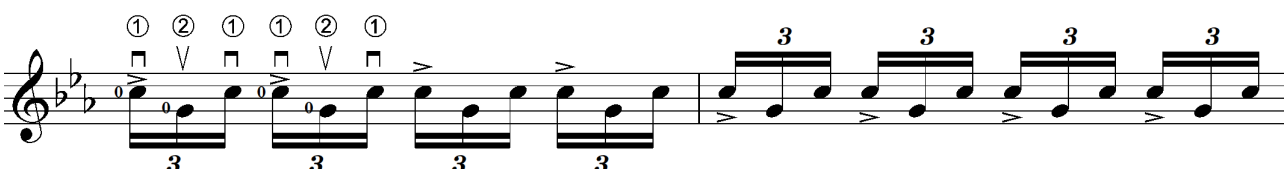
Exercise 2a

First we identify where this thirds are in Do Nahawand. Play these thirds together, with a single down stroke. The change of position must be quick and precise, avoiding a sliding effect; at the same time, you don't want to raise the fingers from the fretboard. The best approach is to raise the fingers enough to stop the vibration of the strings during the left-hand transition to the new position, approximately one millimetre from the fretboard, maintaining the contact with the strings but without pressing them down. It's the same technique used for *staccato*.



Exercise 2b

This is a variation of exercise 1c, and it is the pattern being used by Jamil Bashir for this passage in thirds. The exercise is played on open strings, in order to focus on the precision and agility of the right hand.



Exercise 2c

Now the triplet pattern in 3b is applied to a sequence of thirds in mode Nahawand, both ascending and descending.



Exercise 2d

Finally we introduce a slight glissando, as performed by Jamil Bashir in his recording. The

glissando is very quick.



Exercise Set 3 – One string scale runs

The scale run on one string is a typical feature of Jamil Bashir style, who mastered this technique so brilliantly that was able to drop runs wherever he felt they could fit, even at high speed.

Kapris includes only ascending scales on one string, and this is the focus of these exercises. As previously mentioned, three patterns are possible with the right hand (alternate, *down-up-down* triplets, all down strokes) and they are all considered in these exercises, as they represent useful alternatives.

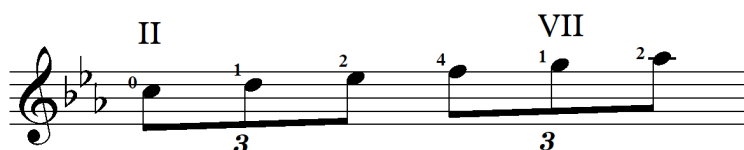
The full length of the scale run we want to achieve is one octave plus one fifth, starting from the open first string (Do) and ending on the harmonic usually placed in the centre of the sound hole (Sol of the above octave). This will require 3 changes of left-hand positions, which are introduced gradually in the exercises below.

The length of this scale run (12 notes) is particularly handy: it can be played in groups of 3 or 4 notes, and it can start on the beat filling an exact number of measures (depending on the meter). In the case of Kapris, it is used in combination with one rest on a beat, ending on the beat of one of the following measures.

It is extremely important to practice at low speed, focusing on the quality of the sound of each note of the scale, and increasing the speed gradually.

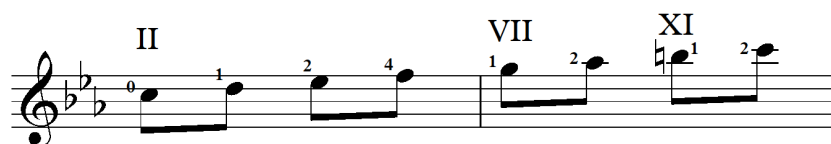
Exercise 3a

First practice one change of position (from II to VII), that is from Do on the open string to the fifth above (Sol). Mind that the starting position is II. You want to move the index very quickly, sliding on the string and reaching the junction of the neck with the body. The index finger never detaches from the string, even when playing other notes. The left-hand thumb swiftly moves behind the neck, in opposition to the index. Practice with both alternate pick and all down-strokes.



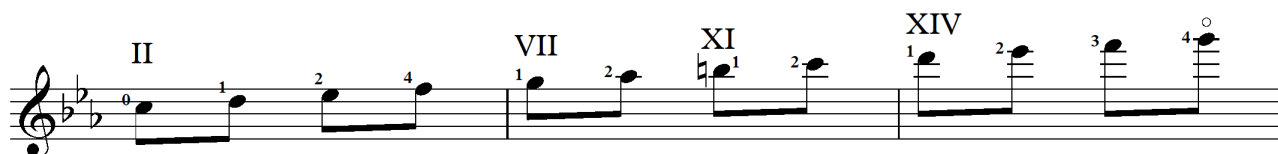
Exercise 3b

We are now playing a full one octave scale. Let's introduce a second change of position, sliding the 1st finger to the Si natural in order to play the Do with the 2nd finger. So we are first changing from II to VII, and then from VII to XI position. When switching to XI position, the left-hand thumb cannot stay behind the neck any more, and needs to slide down on the back of the neck, staying in touch with it, as it provides an anchor for the left-hand fingers. The index finger never detaches from the string, but slides quickly to the new position and stays firmly pressed. Practice with both alternate pick and all down-strokes.



Exercise 3c

We now play one octave + one fifth scale, introducing the final change of position, from XI to XIV. While we are used to associate each finger of the left-hand to a semitone interval (with of course microtonal adjustments when required), at high positions the space is so narrow that we may easily use one position for intervals higher than one major third. In this case (XIV position), the index plays a Re and the other fingers can play the rest of the Do Nahawand scale until the Sol on the centre of the sound hole. The thumb detaches from the neck, and the left-hand rotates clock-wise in order to let the small finger reach comfortably the last note without stretching.



One final recommendation about these exercises on scale runs. Eventually the changes of position of the left hand should happen without looking. Of course this can be quite difficult at first, but only by not looking, and allowing mistakes to happen, the necessary automatism in the movement will be achieved.

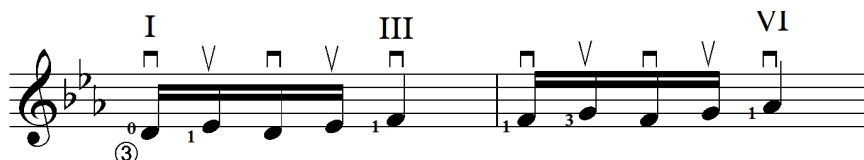
Exercise Set 4 – Fast one string passages

This is a peculiar technique which we find present in section D of Kapris, but it is extensively documented in Sherif Muhiddin Haydar method. It consist of bringing forward the 1st finger of the left hand in anticipation of a change of position, even within a musical passage that could be executed in isolation without a change of position.

The reason behind this technique is probably in the need to give more musical importance to the final note of the melodic phrase. Being played with finger 1, a good vibrato could be performed or an ornamentation (like an *acciaccatura*) could be added.

Exercise 4a

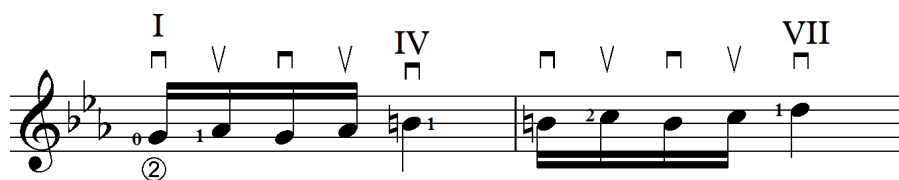
Consider for example the first measure of this exercise. Fa could be played with the 3rd finger, instead the 1st finger shifts to position III, ready to play the next phrase. This may not seem necessary, given that Fa is a crotchet, but it all depends on the speed of execution.



When increasing the speed of this exercise, pay attention that the alternate strokes of the semiquavers are cleanly audible.

Exercise 4b

Similar to 4a, but on string ②, requiring a wider change of position.

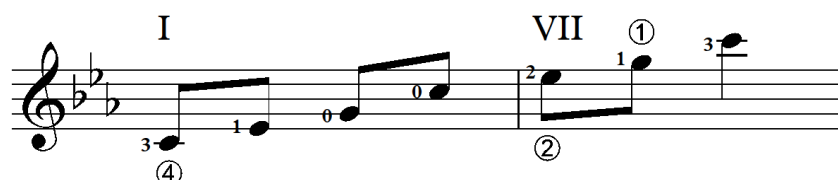


Exercise Set 5 – Arpeggios

There are endless possible variations when playing arpeggios, in fingering, positions, direction, picking patterns.

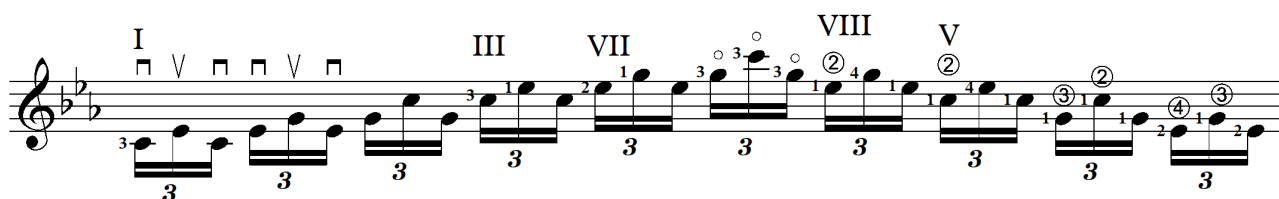
Exercise 5a

The first approach to an arpeggio is to explore the sequence of notes that constitute a chord, usually a minor or major triad, across at least a couple of octaves. For example here is a Do minor. Play this ascending sequence with down-strokes, trying to achieve the maximum possible resonance, that it leaving the notes, either fingered or open, vibrating as long as possible. You can also experiment with the descending sequence.



Exercise 5b

The next step is to add some pattern to each note of the sequence. In this exercise we add a triplet using the next note from the sequence.



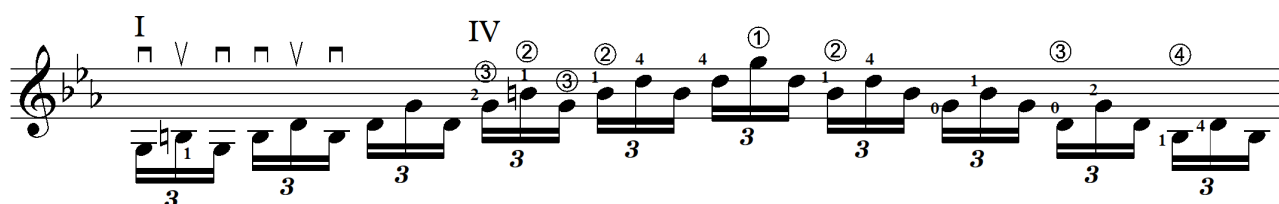
This arpeggio can be looped and repeated with gradually increasing speed.

The descending arpeggio uses a different fingering, actually taken from Kapris (measure 30).

Note that Jamil Bashir prefers to play harmonics with finger , which gives more control than .

Exercise 5c

This is a similar arpeggio but based on Sol major, the dominant chord of Do minor, which is also present in Kapris (measure 28).

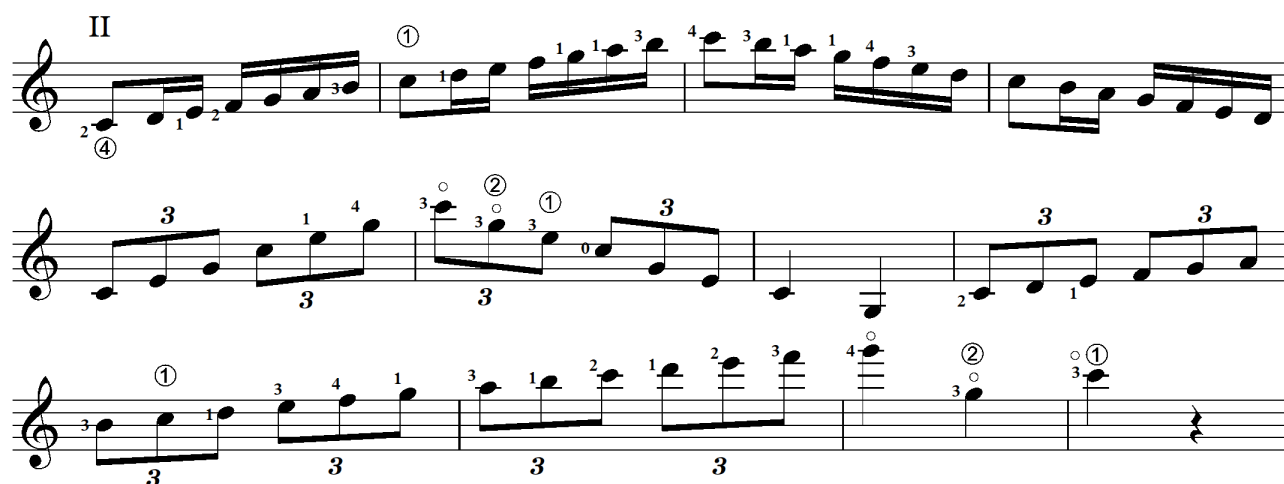


Exercise Set 6 – Summary exercises

The previous exercises were intended to prepare for the execution of the various techniques present in Kapis, but they all focus on one technique at a time. It could be useful to have gradual exercises that prepare towards the fluent playing of a mix of these techniques. For such a short piece like Kapis, this is probably not necessary. Once a technique has been acquired it can be directly applied to the piece. However some summary exercises can be helpful, even more so when they have been written by the composer himself. Indeed we can find such exercises in Jamil Bashir method, shortly preceding Kapis in the collection for the sixth and last year of study.

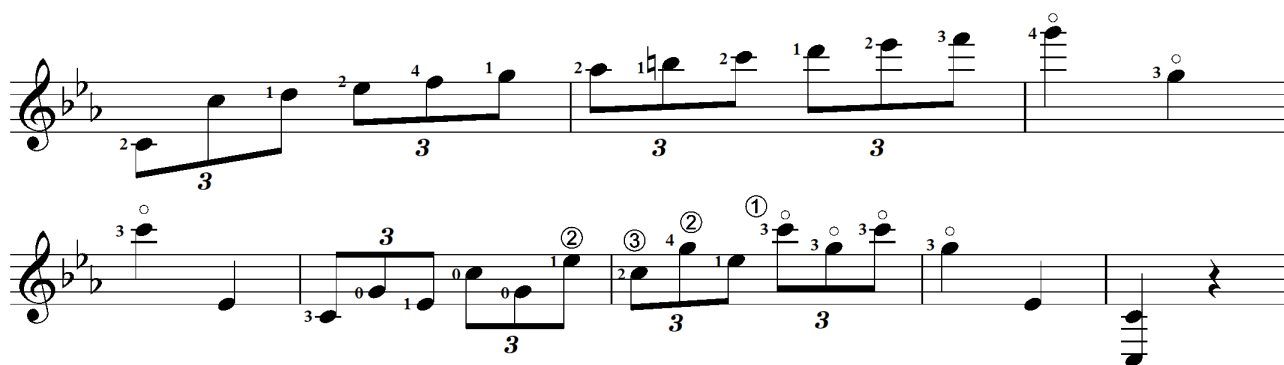
Exercise 6a

This is exercise 16 from 6th year of Jamil Bashir Oud method. Although in Do major, it provides a very good example of mixed scale runs and arpeggios.



Exercise 6b

This is exercise 17 from 6th year. Again a good example of scale run and arpeggio, this time in Do minor.



Jamil Bashir provided plenty of exercises in his Oud method, and he clearly expected students to be proficient in scales and arpeggios in all transpositions. His method still represents an invaluable resource for researching and expanding Oud techniques.

References

Bashir, Jamil. 1961. *Al-'ud wa tariqat radisihi*. Baghdad.

Targan, Şerif Muhiddin. 1995. *Ud Metodu*. Istanbul: Çağlar mûsiki Yayınları.