

NOTES ON INSTRUMENTS:

The Tablah or Doumbek: Souhail teaches the Egyptian style, and you'll want to acquire this type of drum. Note that it has a rounded rim; not squared with external tuning bolts.

The modern style, made of cast aluminum with a mylar drum head and six internal tuning bolts, is your instrument of choice for durability, consistent tone in various weather conditions and tunability. Avoid thin copper or brass models. Your drum can be fancy with ornate inlaid decoration or simple with cheap vinyl covering, but it must be tunable and have good clear sound. When selecting, avoid drums that don't have any tuning space between the drum body and the rounded rim; you'll need at least 1/8" for tensioning. The drum head should be flush with the rim, or you'll hurt your fingers. There are many online sources if you're remote from a good world drum outlet, but nothing can beat personal selection. Protect your investment with a quality case (available at www.neareastmusic.com).

Riqq or Tambourine : Most imported models with wood frames and fish-skin heads are difficult to tune and play, especially in humid environments. Souhail demonstrates with the REMO Tunable Riqq (be sure it's the red frame). Cast aluminum riqqs with mylar heads play well but can be heavy. Cutouts make for a more comfortable playing position.



OTHER RECORDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES WITH SOUHAIL KASPAR:

Visit www.neareastmusic.com. Learn more about Souhail, get updates on new titles in the Master Class series, find other CD recordings you'll want to have in your collection, and get info on classes or workshops in your area. You'll find many other resources on Souhail's comprehensive and growing site.

Souhail travels frequently and workshops are available in many cities. Don't miss him when he comes to your area!

We wish you excellent progress in your rhythmic journey!

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FOUNDATIONS OF ARABIC RHYTHM WITH SOUHAIL KASPAR

EGYPTIAN TABLAH (DOUMBK) AND RIQQ (TAMBOURINE)

MASTER CLASS AT HOME SERIES VOL. 1

Welcome to *Foundations of Arabic Rhythm with Souhail Kaspar!* First in the *Master Class at Home DVD Series*, each volume is dedicated to helping you achieve great timing, tone, confidence and style in your percussion performance. Whether your goal is to become a concert performer, a cabaret drummer for Middle East dance, or just to enjoy the beautiful sounds of Arabic rhythm, this video companion is certain to help you build a solid foundation of technique that will stay with you for life!

Beginner or experienced drummer, you'll benefit from careful study and practice of the rhythms and techniques demonstrated here on both Egyptian tablah (also called Doumbek, or Darbukka) and Tambourine (Riqq, or Riq). You'll find the DVD an invaluable practice companion, but some hints we've provided here will help you get the most from your sessions.



FOR BEGINNERS:

At first the techniques may seem daunting. Your tone or timing will likely feel inadequate in comparison with Souhail's. Maybe you can't make the tones at all, or the techniques might feel uncomfortable. But after a bit of focused practice, you'll improve rapidly! Stay with Souhail on the timing, even if you can't make the sounds perfectly. Soon your hands will find their anchor on the drum, and your technique and endurance will grow.

It's been said many times before, but here it is again: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Give yourself special time, every day if you can, to develop your technique. Return to the DVD and check your progress. If you have friends to play with, that's even more fun.

FOR EXPERIENCED DRUMMERS:

Perhaps, if you've had some experience with Arabic rhythms, you'll find the rhythms a bit basic. But again, note the exact techniques and hand positions Souhail demonstrates. You'll discover that with careful, focused practice you can improve your precision .

Many advanced students find they improve dramatically by practicing fundamental techniques. Resist the temptation to get fancy with flourishes or tricks you know, and stay with the rhythm and technique he demonstrates. Especially for unschooled drummers, it's easy to develop habits that will get in your way as you advance. The technique Souhail shows is the classical, conservatory-trained system he learned in Syria, and it will serve you well as you gain proficiency. Stay with it. When your style differs significantly, you can be confident that by retraining your hands to the method he teaches, you'll be on the path to mastery!

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR DVD COMPANION:

- Imagine that you're in the room with Souhail. Get rid of distractions. Schedule practice time and stick with it! Replay each section to extend your practice.
- Turn up the volume on your TV (or wear headphones) so you can hear both you and Souhail clearly. Pause the DVD, play just on your own, replay repeatedly.
- Place a mirror near your TV so you can compare your hand technique with Souhail's. Observe the close-ups and slow motion intros carefully.
- Your hands will try to trick you into bad technique. Catch them and get back to the exact positions and timing Souhail uses. Every position he describes is essential. The drum is a precision instrument and will reward your effort with beautiful sound!
- See how close Souhail plays to the drum head. Wild arm swings are sloppy, "street" moves — correct these common errors. Even after months of practice, you'll find you can improve your technique by studying the fine points of hand position.
- Develop your endurance by holding a rhythm for an extended time. Take a tempo, then increase it. Hold that speed, then increase again. Then step back down to the original tempo.
- Beware of uncontrolled speedups! You can practice with a metronome, or try to hold a tempo Souhail plays as you pause the DVD for a bit and see how your speed compares with his rock-solid tempo. You can even use Souhail as your metronome against a different rhythm!
- Note where you feel discomfort. When you do, focus on relaxing that part of your body. Take a rest, and revisit the Foundation of Sound segment again. Playing should be comfortable —

and it should look good. Any pain in your shoulders or upper arms is a sign of unnatural tension. Don't hunch your shoulders or hold your arms away from your body; note how Souhail's arms rest comfortably at his side as his hands and wrist play.

- Don't skimp on the important warm-up and stretching exercises — before, during and at the end of your session.
- Breathe fully and naturally. Tension follows from poor breathing. Smile and have fun!

MORE ON THE FOUNDATION OF SOUND

The most important lesson on this DVD is the *Foundation of Sound*. It's natural for students to want to move onto the many wonderful Arabic rhythms and showy techniques, but resist this temptation! In his classes, Souhail often returns to these fundamentals — and truly advanced students revisit time and again to hone these skills.

Practice *Dum* and *Tek* slowly until the right sound is automatic. Mimic Souhail's tone and hand position as closely as you can before you go on to learning the rhythms. Be patient! Practice the sounds until you no longer have to think about them and you are relaxed and comfortable using each technique.

If you move on to the rhythms too soon, you will develop bad habits and poor technique. It is much better to learn the basics SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY! You'll advance much more quickly if you build the rhythms on a solid, perfect foundation.

THE RHYTHMS

On this DVD Souhail presents three deceptively simple rhythms; Taiir/Fox (2/4), Waltz (3/4) and the dance classic Beledi (4/4). Once you have a solid foundation in each of these, you'll find you can readily learn new ones and embellish these with techniques you'll learn soon. Listen to Souhail's solo sections, and you'll see where a solid foundation, a good teacher and much practice can take you!

These are the essential building blocks for many advanced rhythms. Arabic rhythms can be wonderfully mysterious and complex — they include many odd-metered time signatures unfamiliar to Western ears. Yet these rhythms, like 10/8, 9/8, 5/4 and many others, typically break down to these essential patterns. Learn them well, and you'll be rewarded with skills beyond your imagining!