

## **Translating Syrianness: Migration, Masculinity, and Resistance through Syrian *Dabke***

Looking at the period of mass Syrian displacement in the 2010s, this paper considers three Syrian *dabke* projects produced after 2015: a choreography developed for European audiences that adapts social *dabke* (a Levantine dance music practice) into a postmodern critique of masculinity and state power; community *dabke* workshops led by Syrian dance-artists that bridge cross-cultural difference in Berlin through *dabke* pedagogy, as well as workshops led by the author in the US. I frame these projects as political and social interventions in which artists disidentify with state-sponsored nationalist projects by translating Syrianness on their own terms in two ways. First, their work unshackles *dabke* from the ethnonationalist project of *raqs sha'biyya* (folkloric dance) by conveying an irreverence for nationalism and dispensing of the need to reproduce Syrianness as an authentic, “whole” culture. Second, the dance-artists unsettle hegemonic forms of masculinity by advocating for themselves as young male Syrians, and as Syrian artists in European spaces that tend to render Syrian masculinity vulnerable. In my analysis of how such unsettling and rebalancing occurs, I detail the role of technique, including repertoire, rhythms, choreographic arrangements of bodies in performance, as well as the dynamics between music and dance, relationships between performers and audiences, and the political aesthetics of representation. Pointing to the radical directions and risky movements that Syrianness assumes, this paper details how displaced Syrian dance-artists recalibrate the balance of how Syrians relate to each other, their cultural traditions, and European public life.