

Music of Muslim Spain

The music of Muslim Spain, which combined musical styles from all over the world, was an important achievement during the Golden Age of Muslims. Europe's first music conservatory (school) was established in Cordoba by an Arab named Ziriyad, a slave liberated from Baghdad. Musicians from all over Central Asia and Africa were hired by royal courts to entertain royalty and important visitors, such as wealthy merchants. These musicians developed a distinct style of music from the patterns and rhythms of poetry that combined the styles of classical Arab and native Spanish cultures. In fact, poets and musicians worked together to create songs about love, nature, and glorious achievements of the empire. By the eleventh century, this music was so popular that the courts of the caliphs and other rulers competed to see whose musicians produced the most pleasing songs. The instruments most often used in this music included: the *oud*, a short-necked string instrument that is the ancestor of the guitar; the *rebab*, an instrument brought to Spain by Middle Eastern musicians that resembles a violin; the *ney*, a simple wood flute; and the *darbuka*, a goblet-shaped drum made of pottery. The origins of many instruments, including the oboe, trumpet, violin, guitar, harp, and percussion instruments can be traced to this music of Muslim Spain.

Note: Play CD Tracks 1 and 2 and listen to the two examples of Arabic music.