



## Research Article

# The musical representation of unity, divine love, and inner journey in Graham Hair's Sufi Couplets

Firat Altun<sup>1</sup>

Music Education Department, Harran University, Şanlıurfa, Türkiye

### Article Info

**Received:** 30 October 2024

**Accepted:** 29 Dec 2024

**Available online:** 30 Dec 2024

### Keywords

Divine love  
Graham Hair  
Inner journey  
Mevlana  
Musical semiotics  
Sufi Couplets  
Unity of being

### Abstract

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the symbolic and semiotic dimensions of Graham Hair's composition Sufi Couplets, exploring how it encapsulates the themes of unity, divine love, and the inner spiritual journey central to the mystic philosophies of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and Yunus Emre. By employing a musical semiotics approach, the research examines Hair's specific compositional choices—such as his use of 12-tone equal temperament (12-EDO), intricate vocal harmonies, and the continuous drone sounds produced by the harmonium—that collectively embody and reflect these profound mystical concepts. Rumi's philosophy of Wahdat al-Wujud (unity of being) is musically symbolized through the sustained harmonium drone, representing the unchanging and eternal nature of the divine presence. The concept of transformative divine love is manifested in the dynamic melodic leaps and shifts within the vocal lines, mirroring Rumi's notion of ascension toward the divine essence. Furthermore, the theme of the inner spiritual journey is emphasized through repetitive rhythmic patterns and the harmonium's constant tone, which together create a meditative and immersive experience for the listener, akin to the practices of Sufi meditation. Grounded in hermeneutics and musical semiotics, this study demonstrates how Sufi Couplets effectively bridges Eastern mystical ideals with Western musical aesthetics. By integrating elements from both traditions, the composition offers a universal narrative that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, presenting transcendental themes in a manner accessible to a diverse audience. The findings contribute to the field of intercultural musicology by showcasing the capacity of music to convey complex philosophical and spiritual concepts across cultural boundaries. This underscores the role of music as a universal language capable of fostering intercultural understanding and spiritual exploration.

2717-8870 © 2024 The JIAE.  
Published by Genc Bilge (Young Wise)  
Pub. Ltd. This is an open access article  
under the CC BY-NC-ND license



### To cite this article

Altun, F. (2024). The musical representation of unity, divine love, and inner journey in Graham Hair's Sufi Couplets. *Journal for the Interdisciplinary Art and Education, Special Issue: Mevlana's Philosophy and Art*, 85-95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14593986>

## Introduction

Musical semiotics is a field that examines the ways in which musical elements generate meaning, exploring how a piece acquires significance both through sounds and cultural codes. Studies in this area focus particularly on understanding how music, especially in mystical and religious-themed works, transcends being merely a phenomenon of sound to represent spiritual and philosophical values (Monelle, 2001). The semiotic theories of Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure provide a comprehensive framework for the process of meaning-making in music, while Peirce's concepts of icon, index, and symbol suggest that music can construct layers of meaning on both cultural and spiritual levels (Turino,

1999). In this context, the philosophy of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273) inspires the use of music and art as symbolic narratives carrying profound meanings.

Rumi's philosophy is shaped around the themes of the Unity of Being (Wahdat al-Wujud) and divine love, embracing the belief that all existence is a reflection of God and that humans must undertake an inner journey to reach the Divine (Schimmel, 2011). Rumi employed music, dance, and poetry as mediums to convey this philosophy through art, successfully transmitting spiritual teachings to wider audiences during his time. According to Rumi, "Music is a language that God uses to reach us; this language reveals the hidden emotions and love within the soul" (Rumi, as cited in Chittick, 1983, p. 42). This idea not only led Rumi to centre music as a spiritual ritual, especially in Sufi music and the Sama ceremony, but also inspired numerous modern works that represent his philosophy through art.

From the perspective of musical semiotics, Rumi's philosophy offers a symbolic narrative carrying spiritual and mystical meanings. Translating this narrative into music entails employing symbolic elements to provide the listener with a mystical experience that transcends mere sound (Kramer, 2021). Themes such as divine love, the transformation that love creates in the human soul, and the inner journey, which are central to Rumi's work, are expressed through music. The symbolic and profound structure of this music aims to bring the listener into contact with the divine. For example, Rumi's expression, "Burn with love so that you become ashes; for from those ashes, the soul's liberation arises" (Rumi, as cited in Nicholson, 1978, p. 96), reflects the transformative power of music from a mystical perspective. This notion can be transformed into a symbolic musical narrative through elements such as expansive melodic intervals, pauses, and rhythmic repetitions.

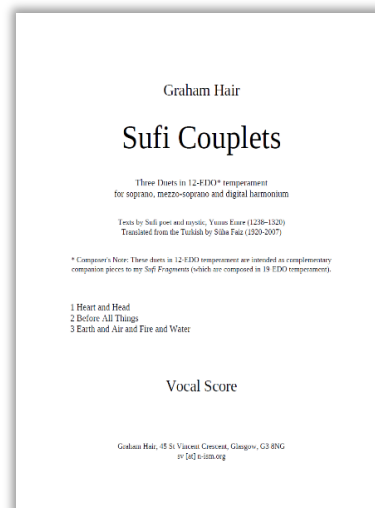
During a period of profound social and political transformations in medieval Anatolia (13th–14th centuries), marked by the Mongol invasions and the weakening of the Seljuk Empire, Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273) and Yunus Emre (1240–1320) emerged as two of the most influential exponents of Islamic mysticism (Sufism). The widespread social and economic uncertainties of this period directed people towards spiritual quests, increasing the popularity of Sufism. Both Rumi and Yunus Emre emphasised divine love, the quest for unification with the Creator, and the importance of the inner journey in their works, serving as responses to the chaotic atmosphere of their times and aiming to strengthen individuals' spirituality. However, they expressed this common goal using different styles. Rumi, in works such as the *Masnawi* and the *Divan-e Kabir*, used rich symbolism and philosophical language to delve deeply into Sufi concepts. In contrast, Yunus Emre reached people from various segments of Anatolia using a simple style close to the vernacular. The intellectual worlds of both poets were shaped around common themes such as unity (Wahdat al-Wujud), divine love, and the inner journey of the individual (Schimmel, 2011; Lewis, 2000). In this context, Franklin Lewis states in his work *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* that "Rumi and Yunus Emre wove the fundamental principles of Sufism into the cultural fabric of Anatolian society and profoundly influenced future generations" (Lewis, 2000, p. 345).

### **Sufi Couplets and Graham Hair**

As a contemporary musical interpretation of this mystical heritage, Graham Hair's work titled *Sufi Couplets* holds significant importance. In this piece, Hair draws inspiration from the poems of Yunus Emre, integrating Western musical instruments such as soprano, mezzo-soprano, and digital harmonium within the framework of 12-tone equal temperament. By doing so, he creates a synthesis between Eastern and Western musical traditions, translating Sufi concepts into a universal language. This approach resonates with William Chittick's assertion in *Sufism: A Short Introduction* that "the universal messages inherent in Sufism can be expressed through different cultures and art forms" (Chittick, 2000, p. 12).



**Photo 1.** Graham Hair



**Photo 2.** Sufi Couplets

Graham Hair is a renowned composer known for his innovative synthesis of Eastern and Western musical traditions. His work, *Sufi Couplets*, exemplifies the integration of spiritual themes with modern compositional techniques.

### **Aim of the Research**

This study aims to analyse, from the perspectives of musical semiotics and hermeneutics, how the musical structure of *Sufi Couplets* reflects the shared thematic thoughts of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre. This analysis will be conducted across the following three dimensions:

#### **First Dimension: Unity and Universal Connection (Wahdat al-Wujud)**

Rumi's philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud* is based on the belief that all beings are manifestations of God and rests upon the notion of the unity of ultimate reality (Chittick, 1983). In Hair's work, this concept is musically expressed through the continuous and steady drone sound of the harmonium, representing God's timeless and unchanging existence. This section will provide a detailed examination of how the concept of unity is concretised through musical language, focusing on the uninterrupted sound of the harmonium and the integration of the vocals into this structure.

#### **Second Dimension: The Transformative Power of Divine Love**

According to Rumi, love is a powerful transformative tool that enables the individual to break away from worldly attachments and ascend towards God. Yunus Emre, on the other hand, depicted divine love in simpler terms, describing it as the longing and closeness a person feels towards God (Barks, 1995). In Hair's composition, this transformative effect of love is reflected through wide intervallic leaps in the vocal melodies, dramatic rises and falls, and points of resolution. This section will analyse how the melodic lines in duets such as "Heart and Mind" and "Earth, Air, Fire, and Water" express the enthusiasm, yearning, and tranquillity of love.

#### **Third Dimension: Inner Journey and Meditation**

In the thoughts of Rumi and Yunus Emre, it is emphasised that a person must embark on an inner journey, disciplining the self and freeing oneself from worldly desires to reach God. Rumi defines this journey as "realising the divine potential inherent within oneself," while Yunus Emre expresses it as the necessity of "knowing oneself" and "finding the Truth" (Schimmel, 2001). In *Sufi Couplets*, Hair underscores the meditative dimension of the inner journey that fosters depth and focus, highlighted through the rhythmic structure of the work and the continuity of the harmonium. This section will examine how rhythmic repetitions, and the constant drone sound invite the listener on an inner journey and provide a transcendental experience.

Analyses conducted within the framework of these three main dimensions will reveal how the musical structure of *Sufi Couplets* is connected with the mystical thoughts of Mevlana and Yunus Emre, and how the work meaningfully expresses Sufi themes through music.

## Method

This study is structured within a framework of musical semiotics and hermeneutics to examine how Graham Hair's work *Sufi Couplets* reflects the Sufi thoughts of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre. The methodological approaches focus on analysing how the main themes in Rumi's philosophy—unity, divine love, and inner journey—are musically represented and how Hair conveys these themes to listeners through his music.

### Research Design

This study is a qualitative study that seeks to identify the musical and semantic aspects of Sufi Couplets based on three major categories. The detailed review is to understand how Rumi's Sufism teachings of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity), *divine love* and *the inner journey* is an important aspect of Hair's music from musical and symbolic analysis. In this regard, a hermeneutic analysis with the purpose of understanding the connection between symbols and sounds has been used and a semiotic approach has been taken in order to understand the meaning of music.

### Data Collection and Analysis Process

#### Musical Analysis

Within the scope of the study, musical elements such as sound, melody, rhythm, and harmony used in Hair's *Sufi Couplets* have been analysed in detail. This analysis was conducted to understand how relationships between the work's tonality, mode, and rhythmic structures are established. Hair's aim to create a balance between Eastern and Western music by using a 12-tone equal temperament (12-EDO) structure in this piece has a significant impact on his musical choices. Structural elements such as the use of drones (continuous steady sounds) and the preference for consonant structures at certain intervals have been examined as musical reflections of the continuous unity symbolised by Rumi's concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud*.

#### Semiotic Examination

This study has been conducted within the framework of musical semiotics to examine the symbolic and semantic layers in Hair's work. Musical signs have been evaluated in line with Charles S. Peirce's concepts of icon, index, and symbol, and the analysis has focused on how the harmony, drone, and rhythmic structures in the work are in meaningful relation with Rumi's Sufi philosophy. The semiotic examination explains how the symbols used in the process of conveying Mevlana's philosophy to the listener through music create meaning. In this context, details have been provided on how philosophical concepts are represented with certain musical elements, such as the drone sound symbolising God's unchanging existence.

#### Hermeneutic Approach

The hermeneutic analysis used in the study conducts a conceptual examination of Hair's compositional language to explore the thematic and symbolic meanings contained in the work. The three main themes of the piece—unity, divine love, and inner journey—have been interpreted in relation to both Mevlana and Yunus Emre's Sufi philosophy and the musical structure. In this context, the hermeneutic analysis facilitates addressing the work within a thematic framework that refers to Mevlana and Yunus Emre's mystical teachings.

Graham Hair's compositional language is characterised by an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates innovative musical aesthetics developed in the second half of the 20th century. In his compositions, Hair often establishes unique transitions between tonal and modal structures, offering the listener a sound that is both familiar and innovative. In this respect, he uses both traditional melodic and harmonic elements and transforms sound materials through new techniques and technologies. In many of his works, Hair operates with a high degree of structural precision, also employing mathematical and geometric modelling in the composition process; this ensures meticulous balance in the timing and sound organisation in his works.

An emphasis on sound density and a tendency to form sound clusters in specific frequency regions are among the characteristic features of Hair's works. This approach, which makes transitions between timbres fluid while maintaining structural harmony in the sound organisation, combines harmonic freedom in contemporary music with the musical roots of the past. Particularly, the polyphonic and polyrhythmic structures observed in his choral works indicate that

Hair has developed a compositional language that integrates traditional Western music with the modernistic sound explorations of the 20th century.

Another important aspect to consider when examining Hair's music is his interest in interdisciplinary research and different cultural music. This diversity allows the composer to create a rich musical language in which he develops new forms of expression by utilising cross-cultural interactions. These features make the examination of Hair's music valuable both in terms of analytical music theory and within the context of contemporary compositional practices.

Consisting of three duets composed by drawing inspiration from the verses of Turkish mystic and poet Yunus Emre (1238–1320), Graham Hair's work *Sufi Couplets* is designed in a 12-tone equal temperament (12-EDO) structure for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and digital harmonium.

In this work, Hair incorporates the conventional tonality with the advanced harmonic language thus providing the audience a music that is classical yet contemporary. The vocal sections in the piece have melodic lines which make the implementation of the texts of Yunus Emre quite mystical and deep. The digital harmonium that is used in the work also gives the work a traditional and a modern touch.

In Hair's compositional language, his interest in microtonal structures and different tuning systems is particularly noteworthy. In *Sufi Couplets*, by using the 12-EDO system, he brings together traditional Western music with the mystical elements of the East. This approach reflects Hair's interest in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural interactions.

When examining the structural analysis of the work, it is evident that Hair meticulously balances melodic and harmonic structures, creating polyphonic and polyrhythmic textures between the vocal parts.

## Analysis

### **Analysis of the First Dimension: Unity and Universal Connection (*Wahdat al-Wujud*)**

#### **Unity and Universal Connection (*Wahdat al-Wujud*)**

The philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (the Unity of Being) is based on the belief that all beings are reflections of God and holds a central place in Rumi's philosophy (Chittick, 1983). In Graham Hair's *Sufi Couplets*, the fundamental musical element reflecting this theme of unity is the harmonium's continuous drone sound. In the piece, the harmonium is metaphorically designed to symbolise unity and God's unchanging existence by providing a foundation upon which both vocal lines are built.

#### **Use of the Harmonium Drone**

The harmonium's drone sound continues uninterrupted in every measure of the work and remains, especially in the first section, within strong harmonic intervals considered consonant in Western music, such as the perfect fifths of A–E, F#–C#, and E–B. This sound persists throughout the piece, creating a continuous structure that represents "unity." In this structure, particularly in the duet "Heart and Head," the harmonium's drone remains fixed in unison with the soprano or mezzo-soprano that represents the theme within the tonal flow, supported by harmonic consonances based on thirds and fifths of the vocal lines. This choice reinforces a sense of universal unity through intervals deemed secure in Western music. In this context, the harmony between the vocal lines and the harmonium represents God's unchangeability and the unity of existence.



**Figure 1.** Use of Harmonium Drone Tonal Axis in Sufi Couplets

The harmonium's continuous drone represents the unity of being, a central concept in Rumi's philosophy. This unchanging tonal foundation underscores the divine presence throughout the piece.

**Vocal Harmony and the Theme of Unity**

The alignment of the vocal lines with the harmonium drone provides a structure allowing both vocals to move together yet independently. In the duet "Heart and Head," it is noteworthy that the soprano and mezzo-soprano lines often converge at intervals of thirds, fifths, and sixths. Selecting these intervals enables the vocals to support each other while possessing unique lines, forming a structure that represents unity. Specifically, in measure 10, there are parallel movements based on intervals of thirds and fifths, and the repetition of these figures six times gives the listener a sense of wholeness. Moreover, to create a similar perception of unity, Harmonium One and Harmonium Two employ similar figures containing different intervals rhythmically from the beginning of the piece. Here, it can be said that the theme of unity is not only in the dichotomy of the two registers (outer voices) but also in their complementary nature as a whole.



**Figure 2.** Emphasis on Uniqueness and Unity in Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano Parts in the Duet "Heart and Head" in Sufi Couplets

In the duet "Heart and Head," the interplay of the soprano and mezzo-soprano parts symbolises unity. Their converging harmonic intervals create a sense of spiritual cohesion within the composition.

**Analysis of the Second Dimension: The Transformative Power of Divine Love**

**The Transformative Power of Divine Love**

According to Rumi, divine love is a transformative process that enables an individual to free themselves from worldly attachments and ascend towards God (Lewis, 2000). In *Sufi Couplets*, this transformation is expressed through wide intervallic leaps in melodic lines, sudden changes, and tonal consonant intervals.

### Representation of Transformation in Melodic Intervals

Hair musically articulates the essence of transformation by preferring wide melodic intervals between the soprano and mezzo-soprano, especially in the duet "Earth, Air, Fire, and Water," to emphasise the ascending and transformative effect of divine love. In this duet, the mezzo-soprano line features sixth and fifth intervals in measures 2 and 3, respectively. With these intervals, the composer musically conveys the human longing for God and the uplifting effect of divine love. Following each of these wide intervals, a sense of arrival and harmony is often created with thirds and fourths—considered secure intervals in traditional tonality—between both lines. Subsequently, this harmony employs a fourth interval, musically expressing the completion of love's transformative process and the attainment of tranquillity.



**Figure 3.** Representation of melodic transformation in soprano and mezzo-soprano parts in the duet "Earth, Air, Fire, and Water" in Sufi Couplets

The duet highlights the transformative power of divine love through wide melodic leaps and harmonic resolutions. These elements reflect the spiritual ascent described in Rumi's teachings.

### Cadential Resolutions and Divine Tranquillity

Hair uses cadential resolutions to reflect the serenity achieved at the culmination of love. Although the absence of a specific tonal centre in atonal music prevents cadential structures from forming in traditional ways, Graham Hair's approach to cadence focuses not on a tonal centre but on metric, rhythmic, and motivic changes to create a sense of pause or "conclusion" in the listener.

In Hair's music, cadential-like points are generally achieved through the expansion, intensification, or termination of certain motifs. This is particularly evident in his works adopting a spectral approach—that is, structures based on the acoustic properties of sound, emphasising specific frequency spectra or timbres. He creates a sense of cadence not by returning to the tonic but by "settling" on a particular timbre or frequency range.

Additionally, Hair employs techniques such as rhythmic displacement or sudden changes in metric patterns to create the impression of a turning point. This produces a feeling of closure or rest in a freer structure, reminiscent of the function of traditional cadences. Hair's approach offers a creative structure that adapts the concept of cadence to an atonal and spectral framework.



The image displays a musical score for a duet titled "Heart and Head" from the work "Sufi Couplets". The score is presented in three systems, each beginning with a measure number: 22, 25, and 28. The vocal parts are for Soprano (Sop) and Mezzo-Soprano (Mezzo). The instrumental parts include Harmonium One (harmOne), Harmonium Two (harm2), and Drones. The lyrics "in that is my de - light" are written under the vocal lines. The score shows a cadential ending and rhythmic displacement, particularly in the mezzo-soprano line at measure 22.

**Figure 4.** Cadential ending and rhythmic displacement in the duet "Heart and Head" in Sufi Couplets

In the duet "Heart and Head," there is a noticeable slowing of rhythmic displacement in the mezzo-soprano line at measure 22. Here, it can be said that the composer begins the preparation for arrival or, metaphorically, tranquillity. This preparation can be considered the musical counterpart of the divine tranquillity that follows intense emotional accumulations. Furthermore, the composer reinforces the sense of ending that begins in measure 22 through motivic variation by restructuring in measure 28 the motif based on thirds and fifths, which emphasises unity in the soprano and mezzo-soprano lines at measure 10—rhythmically the same but melodically different. Following this, from measure 29 onwards, the composer sharpens the sense of conclusion by again slowing down the perceived rhythmic displacement and emphasising the first and third notes of the F major triadic chord in both outer voices. Thus, Hair's choices in cadential structures provide a musical expression aligning with Rumi's philosophy of viewing divine love as a source of tranquillity.

**Analysis of the Third Dimension: Inner Journey and Meditation**

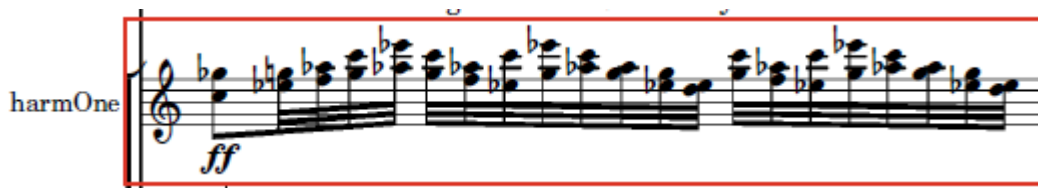
In the thoughts of Rumi and Yunus Emre, reaching God is seen as a process of inner transformation. In *Sufi Couplets*, this theme is represented through rhythmic cycles and the stability of the harmonium drone.

**Rhythmic Structure and Meditative Effect**

Hair supports the theme of the inner journey through rhythmic cycles and regular repetitions. In the duet "Before All Things" (measures 1–16), a meditative structure is created by making transitions every three measures. These transitions provide the listener with a macro-level rhythmic repetition, creating a mental environment of tranquillity. Furthermore,



Harmonium One contributes to the meditative structure by continuously repeating a motif consisting of eighth notes and thirty-second notes within a 3/4 time signature, incorporating several variations without disrupting the main structure (for example, moving the initial eighth note to the end, as shown in Figure 2).



**Figure 5.** Repeating rhythmic phrase character in harmonium one in the duet "Before All Things" in Sufi Couplets



**Figure 6.** Variation of repeating rhythmic phrase character in harmonium one in the duet "Before All Things" in Sufi Couplets

Subtle rhythmic shifts in the harmonium maintain continuity while enhancing the piece's meditative quality. These variations reflect the dynamic yet stable nature of the inner journey.

### Stability of the Harmonium Drone and Continuity of the Inner Journey

Another significant structure supporting the inner journey is the stability provided by the harmonium's continuous drone sound. Drones One and Two reference the tonal axis appropriately to the necessity of stable pitch orientation from the beginning to the end of the piece, varying among rhythmic cycles. For example, in the first three measures, the reference tonality is C minor. These stable tones of the drone serve to continuously establish the individual's connection with the divine while also representing God's unchangeability. The stability created by Hair strengthens the meditative effect of the piece, inviting the listener on a spiritual journey. The uninterrupted continuation of this stability for 16 measures represents the continuity of the meditation process and the inner journey.

## Discussion

This study aimed to analyse how Graham Hair's work *Sufi Couplets* transforms the Sufi teachings of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre into a universal narrative through Western music. By drawing upon the poems of Yunus Emre, Hair's piece brings together the Sufi themes of inner unity, divine love, and spiritual journey with the aesthetic tools of Western music. The findings of the analysis demonstrate that these three fundamental themes of Sufism can be successfully expressed through music.

### Unity and Universal Connection (*Wahdat al-Wujud*)

The theme of unity created by the harmonium's continuous drone sound in the piece can be considered a powerful musical reflection of Rumi's belief in *Wahdat al-Wujud*. This concept is based on the philosophy that all beings are reflections of God and unite in the oneness of ultimate reality (Chittick, 1983). The continuous drone sound used by Hair in the harmonium forms the fundamental basis for both vocal lines of the piece and symbolises God's unchanging, timeless existence. While Schimmel (2011) and Nasr (1987) note that Rumi's philosophy emphasises the theme of the unity of all beings by offering a universal connection, Hair's musical choice embodies the unifying effect of Sufism through music.

Specifically, building the harmonic structure of *Sufi Couplets* upon traditional Western musical consonances (intervals of thirds and fifths) facilitates the creation of a universal sense of unity (Lewis, 2000). The use of these consonant intervals forms a bridge between Eastern and Western musical traditions, emphasising the cross-cultural validity of the philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud*. As researchers like Sells (1996) and Keshavarz (1998) have noted, Rumi's

philosophy is based on the unity of all beings. The musical expression of this theme through Hair's work brings the universal nature of Sufism to Western music audiences.

### **The Transformative Power of Divine Love**

Hair's work expresses Rumi and Yunus Emre's belief in the transformative power of divine love through wide melodic leaps and dramatic resolutions. In Rumi's philosophy, divine love is considered the most important means by which an individual breaks away from worldly attachments and reaches God (Lewis, 2000). The melodic structure in Hair's piece, filled with wide intervals and fluctuations, reflects the liberating and elevating effect of love on the human soul. Specifically, in the duet "Earth, Air, Fire, and Water," wide intervallic leaps and cadential resolutions express the transformative power of love and the peace attained at its culmination. Ernst (1997) and Barks (1995) emphasise that Rumi portrays divine love as a figure that brings about profound change in the individual's soul; Hair's musical narration powerfully reflects this transformation process.

By focusing on rhythmic and motivic changes in his cadential structures to create pauses, Hair departs from traditional Western cadences, presenting an original structure that reflects the tranquillity achieved at the end of divine love. This approach supports Ernst's (1997) assertion that "In Rumi's philosophy, love is the fundamental basis of the process of reaching God." Thus, Hair has been able to express Rumi's concept of divine love as a source of peace by pushing the boundaries of Western music.

### **Inner Journey and Meditation**

Hair's rhythmic cycles and the continuity of the harmonium drone represent, through music, the inner journey deemed necessary to reach God in the works of Rumi and Yunus Emre. In Sufi teachings, this inner journey involves the process of self-discovery and reaching God by shedding worldly desires (Schimmel, 2001). By using rhythmic cycles and a continuous drone, Hair creates a meditative effect on the listener, thereby inviting them on a spiritual journey. Chittick (2000) and Keshavarz (1998) state that Sufism is a teaching that emphasises the individual's inner transformation; the fixed drone and rhythmic structures in Hair's work musically express this transformation.

Hair's concretisation of this inner journey theme in musical language aligns with Rumi's thought that "Reaching God is possible through finding oneself" (Sells, 1996). In this context, the meditative rhythmic structures and the fixed drone used in the piece offer the listener the opportunity to experience Rumi and Yunus Emre's concept of the inner journey, transforming this concept into a universal narrative.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Graham Hair's work *Sufi Couplets* presents an impressive example of how the Sufi thoughts of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre can be reinterpreted within the framework of Western music. By combining Western and Eastern musical traditions in his music, Hair has transformed fundamental Sufi themes such as divine love, unity, and inner journey into a universal narrative (Ernst, 1997). This study offers new perspectives on cross-cultural music research and the artistic reflections of Sufi themes, while also posing important questions about music's capacity to create meaning.

This research demonstrates how Sufi thoughts can be represented within the aesthetics of Western music and contributes to cross-cultural music studies. Future research could examine how different composers have approached Sufi themes and how these themes have influenced cultural interactions (Chittick, 2000). Additionally, studies that experimentally investigate the psychological and emotional effects of Sufi music on listeners could further contribute to this field. While Schimmel (2011) and Sells (1996) argue that expressing Sufi thought through music leaves a profound spiritual impact on the listener, such studies could more intricately examine the effects of Sufi musical representations on audiences.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study provides an important framework for how Sufi themes can be expressed in a universal language through music. The musical techniques used in Hair's work facilitate the blending of Rumi and Yunus Emre's mystical teachings with Western music, transcending cultural boundaries. Hair's ability to express Sufi themes with musical symbols offers

a new layer of meaning for Western music listeners and places a strong emphasis on the universality of Sufism (Nasr, 1987). However, this study has limitations. The analysis focuses solely on the work *Sufi Couplets* and does not examine how Sufi themes are treated in the works of other composers. Additionally, due to the analytical methods containing subjective interpretations, it becomes challenging to generalise the findings to a broader musical context (Lewis, 2000).

### Disclosure

This study was conducted meticulously adhering to scientific research ethics and principles of academic integrity. In this analysis, which examines the relationship of Graham Hair's *Sufi Couplets* with the mystical philosophies of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Yunus Emre, respect was shown to the philosophical depth of the mentioned thoughts and cultural values. All stages of the research were carried out independently, and no external funding or institutional support was provided for the execution of the study. Ethical standards were fully observed by carefully respecting the copyright and confidentiality rights of third parties.

### Biodata od Author



Asst. Prof. Dr., **Firat Altun**, was born in Diyarbakır, Türkiye, and began his formal musical education at the Diyarbakır Anatolian Fine Arts High School, where he cultivated his foundational skills in music. His academic journey continued with a Bachelor's degree in Music Education, during which he engaged deeply with the polyphonic traditions of Turkish music, advanced his technical and performance skills on the cello, and developed a rigorous understanding of choral conducting and aural skills. After completing his undergraduate studies, Firat Altun furthered his academic pursuits with a Master's degree in Music Education. His scholarly path then led him to the University of York at the United Kingdom, where he was awarded a competitive scholarship to undertake doctoral research at a leading institution in Music. His doctoral studies encompassed interdisciplinary research in music cognition and affective response, advanced compositional techniques, and ear training. In addition to his academic endeavors, he actively contributed as a cellist to various performances with symphony and chamber orchestras. Firat Altun's research interests lie at the intersection of music perception and cognition, composition, and performance, with a particular focus on the cognitive and cultural dynamics of musical structure. His work contributes to a deeper understanding of how music is perceived, composed, and performed across different cultural contexts.

**Affiliation:** Harran University, Education Faculty, Fine Art Department, Şanlıurfa, Türkiye. **Email:** firaltun@harran.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0002-2435-4909

**ResearchGate:** <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Firat-Altun>

**Academiaedu:** <https://york.academia.edu/FiratALTUN>

**GoogleScholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=eAhY16YAAAAJ&hl=tr>

### References

- Barks, C. (1995). *The Essential Rumi*. HarperCollins.
- Chittick, W. (1983). *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. State University of New York Press.
- Chittick, W. (2000). *Sufism: A Short Introduction*. Oneworld Publications.
- Ernst, C. (1997). *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. Shambhala.
- Keshavarz, F. (1998). *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalal al-Din Rumi*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Kramer, L. (2021). *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History*. University of California Press.
- Lewis, F. (2000). *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*. Oneworld Publications.
- Monelle, R. (2001). *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*. Princeton University Press.
- Nasr, S. H. (1987). *Islamic Art and Spirituality*. State University of New York Press.
- Nicholson, R. A. (1978). *Rumi: Poet and Mystic*. Unwin Hyman.
- Schimmel, A. (2011). *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Schimmel, A. (2001). *Rumi's World: The Life and Works of the Greatest Sufi Poet*. Shambhala Publications.
- Sells, M. (1996). *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Quran, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. Paulist Press.
- Turino, T. (1999). *Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircian Semiotic Theory for Music*. *Ethnomusicology*, 43(2), 221-255. <https://doi.org/10.2307/852734>

