

# Halim El-Dabh's Use of Images to Depict Sound

in

## Sonic No. 7 and No. 10



Halim El-Dabh, photo courtesy of Kent State University

### Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to aid in the interpretation as well as highlight the unique and innovative notational style Halim El-Dabh uses to express desired sound and musical intention in his work *Sonic No. 7 and No. 10*. This original notational system developed by El-Dabh is one of the few written attempts to communicate advanced playing techniques of the derabucca to a classically-trained percussionist. The notation used in this work is the most ornate and visual of El-Dabh's writing for derabucca as symbols are provided to designate five facets of performance. Each facet has additional levels of specificity and instruction provided by the composer, giving a high level of prescription to this work.

### Anticipated Outcomes

- Provide a performance guide for percussionists
- Showcase a unique notational system
- Application of facets to other instruments
- Feature Halim El-Dabh's repertoire/writing style for derabucca.

### Biography / Career Highlights

- Born in Cairo, Egypt (1921) and moved to U.S. (1950) to study music composition
- Field research includes Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, and Zaire.
- University Professor Emeritus at Kent State University
- Works portray a unique synthesis of ancient civilizations and contemporary composition techniques as well as new systems of notation.
- A few of the many awards and honors received include two Rockefeller Foundation fellowships, two Fulbright Awards, and two Guggenheim Fellowships.

### Contextual Example

Excerpt from No. 7 mm 17-18

This example shows the use of El-Dabh's Five Facets in Sonic No. 7. To decode the images and symbols, refer to the Five Facets of Performance on the right side of this poster.



**CONTACT INFO:**  
 Ryan J Frost  
 West Virginia University  
 School of Music  
[www.music.wvu.edu](http://www.music.wvu.edu)  
[rfrost@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:rfrost@mix.wvu.edu)

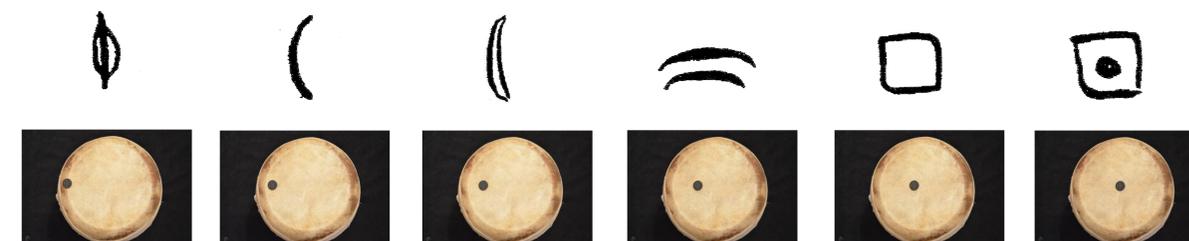
For a copy of this poster including video examples scan here:



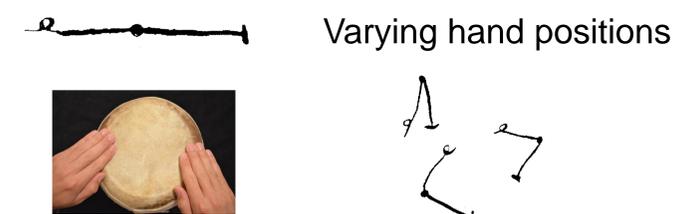
### Five Facets of Performance

The facets serve as a foundation for developing the technique required to perform this work.

**Placement** refers to where the fingers should be located on the drum head



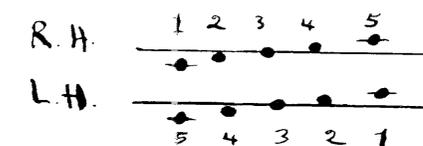
**Position** refers to the relationship of the hands to each other.



**Resonance** refers to overtones and various qualities of sound that can be achieved.



**Fingering** refers to which finger should be engaged in performance.



**Touch** refers to varying degrees of the curvature of the hand.



Illustrations used with permission from C.F. Peters Corporation