

The Department of Religious Studies Presents

## Notes from the Field

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

# UNDERSTANDING THE ZĀR: AN AFRICAN-IRANIAN HEALING DANCE RITUAL

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The Zār is a ritual healing ceremony as carried out throughout the Persian Gulf. This ceremony is mirrored by similar practices throughout North and East Africa, suggesting that the Zār may have resulted from cultural diffusion along historical trade routes. The Zār practitioners, the *bābā* and the *māmā*, must cultivate extensive skills in musical performance, movement and coordination in order to provide palliative relief for persons affected by spirit 'winds' that inhabit them, causing physical and emotional distress. The Zār ceremony is an important method of non-allopathic treatment for emotional disorders that might elsewhere be treated through psychiatry in clinical settings. Practitioners see it as compatible with Islam, though not a strictly Islamic practice. This talk will explore the ritual, performative and curative aspects of the practice.

**12:00-1:00 PM**

**Sproul 912**

Lunch provided