

left out. Few hear of his [Ibn Surayġ's] melody except for the old women and the masters of singers (al-Iṣfahānī 2000, vl.1, 197).

The remarks of the protagonist in this report, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn, which assert Iṣḥāq's superiority over Ibn Surayġ, present a sharp contrast between this report and that of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm. By including this report alongside the four reports with the recurrent motif, al-Iṣfahānī offsets the effect of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm's polemical account. Or, at least, he potentially makes all the reports less reconcilable and thus prevents his readers from being misguided by Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm's report.

### Conclusion

To sum up the results of the analysis above, although al-Iṣfahānī does not explicitly declare his favouritism towards Iṣḥāq in the article on Ibn Surayġ, it seems likely that he makes an attempt not to leave readers with the impression of Iṣḥāq as ignorant or inferior. This is achieved by the use of repetition and juxtaposition. By placing the first and second reports, which insinuate Iṣḥāq's awareness of the relationship between Ibn Surayġ and Ma'bad, before the propagandistic report from Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm, al-Iṣfahānī causes an inconsistency in the narratives, which, to a certain extent, impugns the validity of the third report. Furthermore, with the account that illustrates Iṣḥāq's supremacy over Ibn Surayġ, who is considered one of the founders of classical Arabic music, al-Iṣfahānī establishes his idol's invincibility, despite Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm's malicious report.

As Kilpatrick remarks on al-Iṣfahānī's editorial hand, "[...] his placing of the material in the *Aġānī* is not necessarily arbitrary" (Kilpatrick 2003, 278). The article analysed in this study confirms that al-Iṣfahānī's building up of narrative is meaningful and far from "arbitrary". As shown above, one underlying *leitmotif* that governs al-Iṣfahānī's editorial concerns - his fandom for the musician, Iṣḥāq — indeed impacts upon his treatment of *aḥbār*. Iṣḥāq's influence can be extrapolated from his compelling presence in the *Aġānī*, whose compilation was initiated partly because of Iṣḥāq and among whose sources Iṣḥāq is a ubiquitous presence. In addition, al-Iṣfahānī explicitly expresses his admiration for this musician and prefers him over his opponent, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī. The impact of his veneration of this singer can be perceived in the article on Ibn Surayġ, where al-Iṣfahānī subtly contextualises the report of the debate that presents Iṣḥāq in a negative light. Disagreeing with the validity of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's denial that Ibn Surayġ ever imitated Ma'bad's style and aware of the tendentiousness of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm's narrations, al-Iṣfahānī, through repetition of a certain element and careful juxtaposition of reports, creates narrative incoherence. Thus, the authenticity of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm's account is tacitly cast into doubt. Furthermore, with the inclusion of the report that accentuates Iṣḥāq's superiority over Ibn Surayġ, one of the founding fathers of Arabic classical music, al-Iṣfahānī not only presents Iṣḥāq in a positive light but also reinforces his unfaltering status in face of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's (via Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm) attempted sabotage.