



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

بروكلين مقام

**BROOKLYN MAQAM**

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Arab-o-rama: New York Bellydance  
Music and Dance Review

Friday, March 14, 7:30-10:30pm

LAFAYETTE GRILL AND BAR



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## BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

### BROOKLYN MAQAM ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

*Ahlan wa Sahlan!* Welcome to **Brooklyn Maqam Arab Music Festival** featuring local musicians, bands, and dancers presenting Arab musical traditions from Egypt, Yemen, Israel, Tunisia, Palestine, Iraq, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, and Sudan. *Maqam* is the Arabic word referring to the patterns of musical notes, based on a quarter note system, that form the building blocks of traditional Arab music. Join **BAC Folk Arts** throughout March 2008 for **Brooklyn Maqam** concerts, symposia, and workshops featuring local musicians specializing in Arab folk traditions, classical forms, and contemporary arrangements. Entry to all events is FREE of charge and all events are open to the public.

**Friday, March 14, 7:30-10:30pm**

Lafayette Grill and Bar

*Arab-o-rama: New York Bellydance Music and Dance Review*

#### **Program**

This evening features Brooklyn's Eddie "The Sheik" Kochak with his band; a reunion of 1980s and 90s Cedars of Lebanon and Ibis Nightclub musicians; and Scott Wilson & Efendi. Each band represents specific styles and times in New York City's bellydance scene, starting in the 1960s, and features dancers associated each band and period.

#### **Eddie "The Sheik" Kochak and Band**

Playing a selection of Eddie's typical "Ameraba" sounds like "Shish Kabab Rock" and other songs he popularized from the late 1940s onwards at Arab-American *haflat* throughout Brooklyn and way beyond!

*Eddie Kochak: Master of Ceremonies and dumbek*

*Amir Naoum: Dumbek*

*Rami Nasser: Org*

*Elias Sarkar: Vocals*

*Maurice Sedacca: Electric Guitar*

*Dancer: Rayhana*

#### **Cedars of Lebanon and Club Ibis Reunion Band**

Led by Maurice Chedid, this band brings together a number of musicians who played at two of the best known Arab dance and music venues during the late 1970s – 90s – the golden age of such nightclubs in Manhattan. Club Ibis owned by the Egyptian Samiha Koura D'Aiuto Manhattan and catered to an international Arab audience, featuring full stage shows and Arab acoustic bands throughout the week. Cedars of Lebanon, which first opened in 1958, to be subsequently purchased and run by Francois Hosry and his nephew Tony. It was a popular mid-town supper club that drew from a Levantine-American crowd until its closing in 2001.

*Maurice Chedid: Oud and Vocals*

*Gamal Shafik: Tabla*

*Rami Nasser: Org*

*Carlo Fakhoury: Guitar*  
*Mohamed Nabawy: Accordion*  
*Said Fahmy: Riqq*

*Dancers: Samara*  
*Jehan*

**Scott Wilson & Efendi**

Scott Wilson and band play a weekly gig at café Le Figaro in the village. Wilson and his band are known for their performances that combine Turkish, Greek, Egyptian, Armenian and Israeli sounds. Updated for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Wilson's repertoire finds its legacy in the Mediterranean mix of the "Greek town" 8<sup>th</sup> avenue nightclub scene of the 1960s and 70s.

*Scott Wilson: Oud and Vocals*  
*George Stathos: Clarinet*  
*Umut Yasmut: kanun*  
*Michael Hess: percussion*  
*Dick Barsamian: darbuka*  
*Maurice Sedacca: bass*

*Dancer: Layla*

***The following contributions were kindly provided to give a general context to the evolution of the dance and music scene of NYC.***

**By Phaedra**

The late 1960's - 1980's was an extraordinary period in the history of Middle Eastern dance in New York City. At least 15 nightclubs featuring dancers and musicians were open five to seven nights a week, seven more on weekends, and a least four, featuring only music, the audience being the "show." At the Darvish, patrons lined the street outside to gain entrance.

The 1960's also witnessed the opening of the first two schools of Oriental Dance, followed by two more in the 1970's.

Ibrahim (Bobby) Farrah was the first to teach Oriental Dance at an accredited school -- the International Dance School at Carnegie Hall. He had to pass an audition for the position!

The seminar circuit began in 1974, offering new outlets for dancers. Ibrahim Farrah published "Arabesque" in 1975 which became the first and most important publication of its kind. He established his unadvertised "Teacher's Course" that same year.

Ibrahim Farrah formed the Near East Dance Group in 1969. When in 1976 the Group appeared in Town Hall's Interlude Series, Middle Eastern Dance became a theatre art for the first time in America. The rave review appeared in "Ballet News"; Mid-East Oriental dance had finally been accepted in the U. S. as a legitimate dance form!

The depth and breadth of his involvement in Middle Eastern dance as a performer, choreographer, teacher, publisher, educator, lecturer, and videotape producer, made Ibrahim Farrah the most influential and important figure in shaping contemporary Middle Eastern dance today. He was an extraordinary artist who changed dance history.

### **By Scott Wilson**

It was the 1950's when my mother, Serena, first took me to another world across town. A place where immigrants brought the dance and music of their culture to our neighborhood. It was Eighth Ave., between 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> streets, but we called it "Greektown."

I was fascinated by the exciting shows that took place in the nightclubs there. I grew up listening to instruments like the Arabic oud, Greek bouzouki, and Turkish saz, and kanun. Sometimes I'd sit at a table at the "Egyptian Gardens" and watch as Serena did her famous candle dance. She and the musicians performed every night of the week, often until 4:00 in morning. An Italian bakery truck would drive her home, after its last delivery.

By the age of five I could recite the names of all the belly dancers. At age 14 I built my first oud out of a cigar box. I was determined to one day to be a part of this exotic scene. A part of the magic of Greektown, where it was the golden age of belly dance, and Serena was the queen.

### **By Samara**

The 1980's was an inspiring decade for Middle Eastern dancers here in New York City. The Music, the Venues, and the Audience for the dancer of Oriental Dance were much more substantial in those years. Night Clubs and Cabarets would hire dancers for a span of time. A Dancer would work with the musicians on an organized rehearsed show. At that time the Oriental Orchestra's consisted of 5 to 10 musicians. Each dancer had her own show and that music would belong to her until she would change her selection. Musicians were constantly rehearsing new music for the dancers who were performing.

It was a much more glamorous era. There was usually a dress code for audience and performer. The audience was there for a night of entertainment. At one club I worked at, there were two and at times three different bands; the Arabic band, The International band and sometimes when they had stars from Iran, they also had a Persian band. All the bands had singers and the dancer would do two shows a night. If there were two dancers there usually would be four shows that night. Dancers were part of this wonderful floor show and their shows had to be as polished as the rest of the entertainers.

At this time there was much more discipline in our dance form. Dancers had to audition for these clubs and the club owners were very selective. Also there were Night Clubs like Club Ibis where 5 dancers worked every night, so you worked together.

Today there are only a few places with live music. They also rotate a lot of dancers so each dancer does not work in the same club all the time. The Music is limited because the musicians do not learn new music for the dancers. There are fewer places with stages or dance floors, so dancers are dancing around tables more. There seems to be more audience participation and less dancing.

I am thankful there are dancers that still work very hard to present the dances of the Middle East in sophisticated and theatrical settings. We all need to take responsibility to make sure our dance is perceived as a dance, not just a form of entertainment, as a creative art form, not just one dimensional. Dancers must work hard on their technique, learn about the culture they are presenting, have a vision, and learn how to express who they are and what they want to say. This is Art...Our dance deserves it!

## **Selected Artists Bios**

### **Eddie “the Sheik” Kochak**

Eddie Soubhi Ibn Farjallah Kochakhi was born and raised in Brooklyn, in a Syrian Catholic family on Atlantic Avenue. His sister brought him his first *dumbek* from Aleppo when he was ten. He came to be known as Eddie “The Sheik” while in the Special Services during WWII. Upon returning from the service, he pioneered in popularizing Middle Eastern “Belly Dance” music and dance in New York. Kochak formed a lasting partnership with Iraqi violinist Hakki Obadia (now deceased), and created a signature sound he named, “Ameraba” – Arab classics and folk songs adapted to New York City’s diverse audiences, dancers and musicians.

### **Maurice Chedid**

Maurice Chedid honed his ‘oud playing at the Lebanese Conservatory of Middle Eastern Music, but comes from a family of musicians. His father was a highly esteemed cantor in the Maronite Church in Lebanon, and his sister, a renowned vocalist. Chedid performed a variety of Arab song traditions including Syrian and Andalusian Muwashahat, regional songs (khaligi and Lebanese) and Egyptian classics in nightclubs and a variety of venues throughout Lebanon. As a member of the National Lebanese Folkloric Group, he toured internationally for four years specializing in Lebanese folksongs or “beladi” traditions, including djebeli, and the repertoire of Lebanon’s national beloved singers Fairouz and Wadi es-Safi. In 1988, the proprietor of Cedars of Lebanon, Tony Hosri, invited Chedid to play at the NYC based restaurant-nightclub, where Chedid played regularly until it’s closing in 2001. Chedid currently plays at Arab social celebrations and venues throughout the metro area.

### **Said Fahmy**

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Said has been playing percussion for more than thirty-five years. As a young boy, he was fascinated by Arab classical music traditions such as *muwashahat* and the vocal genre of *dawr*. Fahmy began playing the riqq as a teenager, primarily self taught, he soon was playing with renowned musicians and orchestras in Alexandria and Cairo. He has played with dancer Aida Nour and with such singers as Mohamed El Helwa, Ali Haggar, and Iman Darwish, the grandson of the great composer Said Darwish. He has toured with Kazem El Saher, and plays in clubs and on stages from Cairo to New York City. In addition to tabla, Fahmy is an expert at riqq, tabl beladi, dof and sagat. Fahmy settled in New York in 1996, and soon was playing in Arab music venues such as Ibis Club, and later Cedars of Lebanon. You can find him playing at New York hot spots for Arab music such as Layaly ([www.layalynyc.com](http://www.layalynyc.com)) and the Nile restaurant and nightclub in North Bergen, NJ.

### **Mohamed Nabawy**

Nabawy grew up immersed in the Egyptian popular and classical music emanating from Mohamed Ali street, the Cairo neighborhood celebrated for its professional musicians, dancers and music stores. As the street’s talented musicians took a liking to Nabawy, he soon learned how to play by ear, the traditional mode for learning and passing down Arab music. His first instrument was the trombone, which Nabawy played in his school band. Nabawy went on to become a highly accomplished accordion player, performing with star Egyptian dancers of the time, including Soheir Zaki, Nagua Fouad, Fifi Abdou and Lucy. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1990, he became a well-known figure in the New York City Arab music scene, performing regularly at such clubs as Cleopatra and Cedars of Lebanon. Nabawy is dedicated to sharing his love of music with younger generations, including his 3 children. On violin, Nabawy’s young son Omar accompanied the Egyptian band at the opening program, *Brooklyn Maqam Begins* at Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts.

### **Gamal Shafik**

Brooklyn-based Shafik grew up in a musical family in Cairo surrounded by Egyptian popular, folk and classical music that made his *Shobra* neighborhood jump. As a young boy, he practiced percussion on household items – like pots and pans and even a similac container! Pushed by his love and talent for percussion, he soon was sneaking out of the house to play *tabla* at local wedding parties. Shafik went on to play with such famous musicians as Ragheb Alame, Najwa Karam, and Sabah Fakhri. Immigrating to the United States in 1979, he immediately became a staple *tabla* player in the golden age of New York's Arab music and dance scene, playing with orchestras at night clubs, concerts, wedding and other illustrious Arab parties of the time. He is featured on a CD of percussion solos designed to teach the rhythm and phrasing of Egyptian drumming called *The Secret Language of Drum Solos*.

### **Rami Nasser**

Nasser comes from the Egyptian city of Tantra, where he started playing classical piano in high school. He later graduated from the teacher's college at the University with a degree in classical western music. In Egypt, he taught piano, violin and performed with traditional Arab music bands and the National Symphony before immigrating to the US in 1975. Nasser was introduced to Eddie Kochak soon after arriving and has been a band member ever since, at Eddie's countless weddings, Arab community haflat and annual events. He also had the pleasure of being a member of Ibrahim Farrah's company band, playing concert hall engagements for many years. Nasser later graduated from Columbia University with a Masters in teaching music, but continued to perform at popular Arab music clubs such as Samiha's Ibis Club, where he played violin, and as the house band keyboardist at Cedars of Lebanon from 1986-1996.

### **Carlo Fakhoury**

Born in Lebanon, Fakhoury studied classical guitar at the Conservatoire of Lebanon. He later picked up electric guitar, inspired by Omar Khoshid, famous for integrating electric guitar into the standard Arab music repertoire, accompanying classical star singers such as Oum Koulthoum and Abdel Halim Hafez.

Fakhoury came the US in 1976 and began playing at Cedars of Lebanon in 1981. Throughout the 1980s, he played every Sunday at Ibis Club.

### **Scott Wilson**

Wilson, the son of the famous Middle Eastern dancer "Serena" of New York City, grew up immersed in the music of Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Armenia and Israel, and played in the New York club scene during the 40s, 50s, and 60s. He found inspiration in mentors George Mgrdichian, John Berberian and Bob Zakian. In 1967 Scott chose the oud as his instrument, and was fortunate enough to study with the famous "Chick" Ganimian. Scott also studied with Joseph Kassab, and learned more on his multiple trips to the Middle East.

## **DANCERS**

### **Layla**

Layla began studying Middle Eastern dance at the age of 19 at Serena Studios in New York City. Her passion for Middle Eastern dance led her to study with such masters of the form as Yousry Sharif, Ramzi El-Edlibi and Elena. Layla has performed internationally and is known for her precision in technique, expert finger cymbals and enthusiastic audience interaction. Currently, Layla is the director of the dance troupe 1001 Pearls and teaches throughout the New

York City area. A graduate of Queensborough School of Nursing, Layla has earned her RN license and incorporates her knowledge and awareness of the importance of movement and activity into her classes and demonstrations. [www.bellydancingbylayla.com](http://www.bellydancingbylayla.com)

### **Samara**

Samara has spent 25 years dedicated to the dances of the Middle East and North Africa. Drawn to the dance because of her Mediterranean heritage (Greek and Turkish), she began dancing professionally in her teens. She was a protégé of the late master dancer/teacher/choreographer Ibrahim Farrah and was a member and principle dancer in his renowned Near East Dance Group. As a soloist, Samara has performed internationally in night clubs and theaters, sharing the stage with some of the most famous singers of the Middle East and the U.S. She is the choreographer and artistic director of the Mosaic Dance Theater Company and a faculty member at The Alvin Ailey Extension. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Samara was one of Club Ibis' house dancers, and performed regularly at Cedars of Lebanon.

<http://www.samaradance.com/>

### **Jehan**

By the age of 3 Jehan was already dreaming of becoming a bellydancer, having been introduced to the art form via the star dancers of Egyptian golden-age cinema. Pursuing the study of *raqs sharqi* or belly dance, with teachers such as Ibrahim Farrah, Serena, Elena, and Anahid Sofiane, she was soon dancing with the hottest Arab music bands on the New York scene. Samiha, the Egyptian proprietor of the Manhattan Al-Sultan, Ibis and Nile clubs (successively) invited Jehan to perform at the Ibis, and she quickly became one of the established house dancers beginning in the early 1980s. Jehan went on to dance at the Darwish, Cedars of Lebanon, and other popular pan-Arab music venues of the time. Today, as a singer, songwriter, choreographer and renowned bellydancer, Jehan has performed and taught worldwide. She is the founder and director of the Temple of Jehan dance school dedicated to sacred bellydance - preserving Middle Eastern dance traditions and exploring evolutionary styles. Jehan showcases her music and dance in a theatrical performance called Goddessdance featuring a splendid cast of bellydancers, singers, musicians and magical performers from around the world. [www.jehanarts.com](http://www.jehanarts.com)

### **Rayhana**

Rayhana's dramatic and sensual style incorporates the influences of all the artists she has studied under. She interprets the subtleties and drama of Middle Eastern music choosing to mix different styles such as Arabic, Turkish, and Gypsy with a Latin flair. Among the numerous dance companies Rayhana has been a member of are Serena's Dance Theater Company, Shoshana's Dance Theater Company, Morocco & the Casbah Experience, and Jehan's Goddessdance. Rayhana danced to Eddie Kochak's recorded music long before she ever met him because his bellydance music albums were very popular among bellydancers and teachers. Rayhana first met Eddie when he was invited to Serena's studio in 1992. She has performed with him since then, and is a regular dancer at Eddie's annual gig "Atlantic Antic" in Brooklyn. Rayhana recounts, "Eddie has taught me so much about entertaining and has enlightened me by the power of example in many ways. He has been a tremendous guidance in my career as a dancer. It is a pleasure and privilege to work with him."

[www.Rayhana.com](http://www.Rayhana.com)

**ABOUT BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL (BAC)**

Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC), an arts and services organization founded in 1966, is the umbrella for Brooklyn's range of cultural groups and individual artists working in the visual, performing, media, and literary arts. BAC helps Brooklyn's artist population—from the experimental to those preserving and evolving traditions of cultural heritage—create and present their work. BAC ensures that thousands of people throughout Brooklyn have access to a variety of free arts programming each year. Our programs are essential to the livelihoods of thousands of artists, creative professionals, and arts organizations across the borough.

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