



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

بروكلين مقام

BROOKLYN MAQAM

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Brooklyn Maqam Begins
Sunday, March 2, 2 - 5pm

BROOKLYN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING
ARTS AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE (BCBC)



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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.

March 2, 2008
Brooklyn Maqam Begins

Program

Welcome Ella J. Weiss, President, Brooklyn Arts Council
Honorable Marty Markowitz, Brooklyn Borough President
Domenic M. Recchia Jr., Councilman and Chair, NYC Council Cultural Affairs Committee
Frank Sonntag, Managing Director, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts

Introduction Kay Turner, Folk Arts Director
Nicole Macotsis, Folk Arts Associate

Folk Feet Arab Traditional Dance Showcase

This year's 5th annual Folk Feet Traditional Dance Showcase is part of Brooklyn Maqam. Both music and dance are integral to everyday life throughout the Arab world. Enjoy this special program dedicated to traditional Arab dances as performed in Brooklyn.

Egyptian Zeffa (wedding procession)

Dancers: Yasser Darwish and Company, Azza Amon, Ranya Renee Asfour

Musicians: Mohamed Nabawy (accordion), Gamal Shafik (tabla), Said Fahmy (dof), Mohamed Yhya (dof)

Sa'idi (stick dance from Upper Egypt)

Dancers: Yasser Darwish and Company

Musicians: Mohamed Nabawy (accordion), Gamal Shafik (tabla), Said Fahmy (sagat), Mohamed Yhya (tabl), Nikolai Ruskin (mizmar)

Bara'a (Yemeni men's dance)

The Alnomiri Brothers (dance)

Red Sea Yemeni Ensemble: Ahmed Alrodini (snare/marfa' (kettledrum), Isaac Gutwilik (marfa'/hajir (metal double-headed drum), Yitzhak Levy-Awami (rahmani tawil/sahn (silver tray))

Gnawa (Moroccan ceremonial music and dance)

Nas Marrakesh : Mohamed Bechar (sentir), Mohsine Bechar (qraqeb), Abdelrahim Hakmoun (qraqeb), Hassan Hakmoun, (qraqeb)

Debkah (Levantine line dance)

Al Nujoom: Ramzi Zdouq, leader; troupe members include Montaser Abdel Ganni, Ra'id Bustami, Rami Bustami, Walid Drabeya Rabieh, Osama Hussein, Bilal
Song: Mustafa Hatif Al Khatib and Brahim Isbihati

Palestinian Zeffa and Hahawy (wedding processional, welcoming and blessing)

Members of *Salaam Debkah*; Linda and Maha Sarsour (Hahawy vocals)

Musicians: Samer Tabari (vocals); Jowad Bohsina (keyboard), Joseph Ibrahim (darbuka)

Debka with Audience

Salaam Debkah

Musicians: Samer Tabari (vocals); Jowad Bohsina (keyboard), Joseph Ibrahim (darbukah), George, tabl

Intermission

Simon Shaheen—Solo Performance on 'Ud and Violin

Brooklyn Maqam is pleased to welcome the world renowned Brooklyn-based musician, Simon Shaheen, as he ends our day together with a special program. Shaheen's notes for his compositions follow.

Sama'i Nahawand

Composed by Shaheen as a tribute to the Turkish master musician Jamil Bey Tanburi. A traditional four-part dance form and a recurring refrain in a moderate 10/8 beat.

Dance Mediterranea

This piece evokes the sunny villages on either side of the Mediterranean and the glinting waters that connect them. The flute and violin weave around each other on the themes, while the improvisations are firmly rooted in the Arabic tradition, but still daring to venture into new territories of musical expression.

Taqasim on the 'ud

Improvisation is creativity at the moment of performance bringing musicality, virtuosity and depth while it reflects the synergy between the performer and the audience.

The Wall

A solemn composition that was written in 2006 by Shaheen during a music residency for children in Bethlehem in the West Bank. "From the top hill monastery I could see the erection of a terrifying and dividing wall," recalls Shaheen. The picturesque and melancholic feel is evident in the slow tempo and the soaring melodies and harmonies throughout the composition.

Al-Qantara

"Al-Qantara was among the first pieces of this kind that I wrote, in 1989," remembers Shaheen. Recording in Madrid, he visited the old town of Alcantara - whose name came from the Arabic al-Qantara, meaning "arch," which gives the band its name. The heavily rhythmic, Flamenco, Andalusian feel has its roots across the Mediterranean in North Africa, where the style originated before traveling to Spain. The drama and passion of the melody are purely Arabic, and Shaheen takes the oud to new horizons on some technically complex passages.

Introduction to Arab Dance by Najwa Adra

Dance scholar Najwa Adra has provided the following basic introduction to the kinds of dances you will see in today's program.

The Arab region, including Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and others represented by artists in **Brooklyn Maqam**, is home to an array of dances. These are folk dances that, along with poetry and music, celebrate weddings, religious holidays and parties among friends. *Zeffa*, the procession that accompanies the bride and groom, is central to all wedding celebrations. In addition to dancing, it involves poetry in praise of the two families and religious chants offering blessing and protection to the bride and groom. *Debka* is a traditional line dance performed in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as well as Israel. Debka's different styles are seen in Brooklyn at coffee houses such as Tarboosh in Bay Ridge. The Yemeni *bara'a* is performed only by men and symbolizes tribal society. This contrasts with the *lahjy*, also known as *shihr*, which is performed all over Yemen by women as well as men. Typically, Yemen weddings in Brooklyn inspire a round of *Bara'a*; it's the type of folk dance that many Yemeni men have grown up with. Egypt is known for its dramatic dances, such as *shamadan*, in which the dancer carries a heavy candelabra, and the *tannoura* which has its roots in Sufi rituals. *Gnawa* are religious brotherhoods in Morocco and Algeria; their music and dancing are connected with healing ceremonies. Hobby horse dances, performed in several countries, are among the few dances in the region with narrative content.

For immigrant Arab communities in New York, traditional dances are resources they can share with other New Yorkers. Performing their heritage promotes self esteem and facilitates adaptation to their adopted country. These arts, in turn, enrich New York's repertoire and foster inter-ethnic understanding.

Artist Biographies

Simon Shaheen – 'ud and violin

An 'ud and violin virtuoso, Simon Shaheen is considered one of the world's leading Arab and Middle Eastern musicians. As a composer and performer, his work incorporates a legacy of Arabic music, while it forges ahead to new frontiers, embracing many different styles in the process. Born in Palestine, Shaheen's childhood was steeped in music. He began playing the 'ud at age five and the violin at age six, continuing his studies at the Academy of Music in Jerusalem in 1978. Shaheen moved to New York in 1980 to complete his graduate studies at the Manhattan School of Music and Columbia University. In 1982, he formed the **Near Eastern Music Ensemble**, a group that performs traditional Arab music. In 1996, he established **Qantara**, a band that brings to life Shaheen's vision for the unbridled fusion of Arab, jazz, classical, and Latin American music. Shaheen tours internationally with his bands and as a lecturer throughout the academic world. Since 1994, Shaheen has produced the Arab Arts Festival in New York City, and in 1997 he founded the Annual Arabic Music Retreat at Mount Holyoke College. www.simonshaheen.com

Ahmed Alrodini – Yemeni percussion

Singer, percussionist (*dumbek* and frame drum) and *oud* player, Alrodini was born in Bakat Al Hoddeidah on the Red Sea coast of Yemen. Learning music informally from the time he was a small boy, Alrodini once made himself an *oud* from found objects including parts of a gas tank from an abandoned truck. He first came to the United States in 1988 on a tour with Fouad Al Kibsi and Haifa Omar, prominent Yemeni musicians. Alrodini is one of only a few Brooklyn artists who come from the South/Red Sea area and his expertise in that region's music is a rarity in New York.

Mohamed Bechar- *sentir*, *qraqeb*, vocals

Born in Marrakesh, Morocco, Bechar moved to Brooklyn with his wife and children in 1997. He first learned Gnawa traditions as a young boy from his mother's family; his cousin was *ma'alem* or master Gnawi and his aunt hosted all-night Gnawa trance ceremonies (*lila*) twice a year. Bechar has worked as a Gnawi in Marrakesh's Djemaa el Fna square and other settings, and is well versed in traditional chants and instruments such as *qraqeb*, *tbel* and *sentir*. He is performing in *Brooklyn Maqam* alongside his son Mohsine, and his brother-in-laws Abdel Rahim Hakmoun and Hassan Hakmoun, the world-renowned Gnawa musician. Since moving to the U.S. 1987, Hassan has become an

influential voice in the world music scene, fusing North African musical traditions such as Gnawa with pop, rock, jazz, and other contemporary genres. www.hassanhakmoun.com

Yasser Darwish – Egyptian zeffa, sa'idi, tannoura

Darwish, a performer and teacher of Egyptian folkloric dance, was born in Alexandria, Egypt. At the age of 18, Darwish became a member of the Alexandria Folk Dance Group and several years later moved to Cairo, where he danced with the National Folk Dance Company. In 2001, Darwish immigrated to Brooklyn, where he adapted group choreographies to solo shows and learned styles that appeal to his diverse New York City public. He is a popular performer of *sa'idi tahtib*, a stick dance from Upper Egypt, *tannoura* – a captivating secular Sufi spinning dance – and genres like the Arabian horse dance, which is performed at festivals, theatrical performances and weddings. He is director of his own Egyptian Celebration Company. www.egyptiancelebration.com

Said Fahmy – riqq, tabl, dof, sagat

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Said has been playing music for more than thirty-five years. He has played with dancer Aida Nour and with such singers as Mohamed El Helwa, Ali Haggag, 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.

Isaac Gutwilik – Yemeni percussion

Canadian-born Gutwilik's interest in music began at a young age when his aunt gave him a Perez Prado album and his own transistor radio. School offered him an immersion into the world of traditional Jewish and Hebrew chanting. While living in Jerusalem, Gutwilik began serious conga studies and became a member of the percussion ensemble at the Rubin Academy of Music. At the same time (1978-80), Isaac became a percussionist for Yemeni choreographer/singer **Yitzhak Levy-Awami**, with whom he performed Yemeni folk music. Since moving to New York in 1989, Gutwilik has specialized in the traditional Jewish folk music of Yemen. He performs regularly with fellow **Brooklyn Maqam** artist Ahmed Alrodini, a locally-based expert in music from Yemen's Red Sea coast. Today, he is also joined by his old friend and teacher, and Yemen music scholar, Yitzhak Levy-Awami, who now lives in Brooklyn.

Mohamed Nabawy – accordion

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 -, and then went on to study the trombone 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.

Al Nujoom – debkah dance

Al Nujoom is a New Jersey-based Palestinian folkloric *debkah* troupe founded in 2005 and led by Ramzi Zdouq, who has called Patterson his home for nearly 3 years. Many of Nujoom's members are originally from the same village near Ramallah, and trained in their school-based debkah troupe before migrating to the Garden State. Nujoom's debkah is Palestinian in style and intimately related to the music; the group often has music produced for their dances in the Middle East. Typically the leader (*lawiH*) of the *debkah* line calls out steps and patterns such as *leffe* or *wahed ou-nus* that correspond exactly to the song style, feeling and distinct parts of each *debkah*.

Nikolai Ruskin – mizmar

Ruskin is a composer and multi-instrumentalist with expertise in Arab, Turkish, and Persian music. Specializing in percussion, *oud*, and *nay*, Ruskin also performs and records on *qanun*, violin, *rababa*, *mizmar*, saz and many more. Although he is mainly self-taught, he has studied with Omar Faruk Tekbilek, Bassam Saba, Georges Lammam, and Professor Ali Jihad Racy. Ruskin is Music Director of the Cornell Middle Eastern Music Ensemble, which he co-founded in 2002. nikolairuskin.com

Gamal Shafik – *tabla*

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 simulac 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 immediately became a staple *tabla* player in the golden age of New York 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*.

Salaam Debkah – Palestinian zeffa, debkah

Founded at Bay Ridge's Arab American Association in 2001, Salaam Debkah promotes youth development and Arab cultural forms. Practicing weekly, under the direction of Sheren Attal, Salaam Debkah is now a core component of Attal's emerging *Yallah Youth of Arts* organization. The troupe performs social line *debkah* (pl.) and narrative choreographies (known as *folklor*) relating to Arab and Arab American social and cultural issues. They enliven events throughout Brooklyn, performing at Arab American Association's annual Heritage Week celebration, and have taught debkah workshops through BAC's Folk Feet traditional dance project. www.arabamericanny.org,

Samer Tabari – vocalist

Tabari is a Palestinian singer who came from a family of musicians and singers. He began to learn and play keyboard at age 11 and by age 14 was performing at weddings and parties. At age 18, Tabari moved to the U.S. and formed his own band. He sings at special events and has performed with such famous artists and Hakeem, Ehab Towfeek, Waleed Towfeek, Nour Mhana, Melhem Barakat, and Khaled Ali. In addition to being a vocalist and musician, Tabari is also a producer and composer. www.samertabari.net

Mohamed Yhya – *tabla*

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Yhya started playing the *tabla* at age 5. He grew up performing with local bands at weddings and festivals and was later hired to play at one of the biggest nightclubs in Cairo. After establishing himself as a sought-after performer, Yhya began playing for top Egyptian singers as well as performing internationally with famous jazz singers and *Raqs Sharqi* (bellydance) dancers. Now residing in Brooklyn, Yhya is a member of the Pharaohs Band and performs throughout the metropolitan area. www.pharaohsentertainment.com/theband.html

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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