



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

# بروكلين مقام

## BROOKLYN MAQAM

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Answering the Call to Prayer:  
Arab-Influenced Song Traditions in  
Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Brooklyn

Sunday, March 30, 1:30-3:30pm

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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.

**Sunday, March 30, 1:30 - 3pm**  
Brooklyn Public Library, Stevan Dweck Center  
*Answering the Call to Prayer*

**Brooklyn Maqam Arab Music Festival** presents a program featuring a range of Arab-influenced song traditions practiced in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Brooklyn. The Great Religions practiced in Brooklyn share Arabic language and cultural roots to a greater or lesser degree and these roots reflect the ancient and still vital relationship among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Maimonides, the great interpreter of Judaism, wrote in Arabic; Damascus, the Christian leader, was given protection by a Sultan. Today, this ancient legacy is perpetuated in the music you will hear in our concluding program for **Brooklyn Maqam**, a festival which demonstrated the richness and diversity of local Arab music to hundreds of appreciative New Yorkers, a number of whom are in our audience today.

**Pizmonim**

*Cantor Yehezkel Zion, introduced by Galeet Dardashti*

For *Brooklyn Maqam*, Cantor Zion is performing in the *pizmonim* song tradition, which comprises liturgical prayers in Hebrew set to popular Arab music that often leads the singer into inspired moments of improvisation. The songs for today's performance are *Sawah (Wanderer)*, popularized by Abdel Halim Hafez and *Ifrah Ya Elbi, (Rejoice, Oh Heart)*, a song made famous by the great Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum. He is accompanied by Zafer Tawil (*oud*) and Ramzi Elidlibi (percussion), who will also play with *Tarab* later in the afternoon.

**The Choir of the Catholic Melkite Byzantine Church of the Virgin Mary, Park Slope**

**Program**

**Hymn of the Akathist**

Sung during the Service of the Akathist on the Fridays of Lent

Ti Hypermakho: Triumphant Leader, to you belong the strains of victory and since you save us from adversity we offer you our thanks. We are your people O Mother of God. So as you have that invincible power, continue to deliver us from danger that we may cry out to you, Hail O Virgin and Bride ever pure.

**Theos Kyrios**

The Lord is God and has appeared to us. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord

Sung on Good Friday

## Lamentations (Selections)

### First Part

In a grave you were placed, O my Christ and my life, and the armies of the angels were much amazed as they sang the praise of your condescension.

O my dear and sweet Jesus, my Salvation and Light, how were you secluded within a gloomy grave. How mysterious is Your forbearance!

We all call You blessed, O blameless Mother of God, and with faith we honor the three-day Burial, endured by Your divine Son and our God.

### Second Part

It is truly right to magnify You O giver of Life, You who have extended Your hands upon the cross, crushing the power of the enemy.

I am the only woman without suffering my Son, I gave you birth, but now at the time of Your Passion divine, I endure the most excruciating pain.

All the Seraphim stood in awe beholding the Savior in heaven fully united with the Father, but on earth numbered among the dead.

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen

Father eternal, and Son co-eternal and Spirit, Strengthen this nation and by Your might protect us, since You are the infinite gracious God.

### Third Part

All the generations offer hymns of praise to your burial, O Christ

Vinegar mixed with gall, those You fed with manna, O Savior.

Joseph and Nicodemus, make ready the Creator for what is fitting the dead.

The myrrh bearing women came at dawn to your tomb to pour the ointment on you.

All the generations offer hymns of praise to Your Burial, O Christ.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

The Great Moses foretold this day when he said:

God blessed the Seventh Day. For this is the blessed Sabbath, the day of rest on which the only-begotten Son of God abstained from bodily works, as He was to do in death. Through His Resurrection He returned to His eternal estate, and in His goodness and love for mankind, bestowed eternal life upon us.

AGHIOS O THEOS, AGHIOS ISKHROS,

AGHIOS ATHANATOS, ELEISON IMAS

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, Have Mercy On Us.

### From the Liturgy:

Quddoson, Quddoson, Quddoson, Rabb os Sabaoth

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth,

Heaven and Earth are full of Your Glory

Osanna in the Highest, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord

Osanna in the Highest

Eyaka Nou Sabbah

We Praise You, We Bless You,

We Give Thanks To You O Lord, and We Pray To You, O Our God.

CHRISTOS ANESTI EK NEK RON THANATO THANATON PATEESAS,  
KE TEES EN DEES MNEE MA SEE ZOEEN KHAREESA MENOS  
Christ is Risen from the dead and by His death,  
He has trampled upon death and has given life to those who are in the tombs.

Christos Anesti Alithos Anesti  
Al Maseeh Qam Haqqan Qam  
Christ Is Risen He Is Truly Risen

**Musicians:**

Barbara Mahfouz Giancola, Choir Director

Inna Laytush, Organist

Naji Youssef, Cantor

Adel Baghdady, Cantor

Maroon Hayek, Cantor

Giselle Awad, Selwa Awad, Gladys Balesh, Elaine Kateb, Jacqueline Lutfey, Mona Karout,  
Sonia Youssef, Rita Youssef, Ronald Bache, Adel Baghdady, Bedros Bedrossian, Nevin Pesa,  
Maroon Hayek, Gregory Lutfey, Kareem Youssef, Naji Youssef

**Tarab**

**A Program of Sufi Music**

**Adhan** (Call for Prayer)

**Tilawa** (Recitation from the *Qur'an*: "Oh people, We have created you from male and female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you get to know each other. The best of you in the eyes of God are those who are most virtuous")

**Du'a Al-khatm** (Blessings Be Upon The Prophet Muhammad)

**Wasla Nabawiyat Bayyat** (Suite of Prophet Praising Songs in Bayyat Mode)

1. *Dhikr* (Sufi Instrumental)
2. *Taqsim* (Instrumental Improvisation)
3. *Qasida Ibn 'Arabi* (Sufi Master who lived in Andalusia 1165-1240)
4. *Ya Imama Arrusli* (O, leader of the prophets. A popular Sufi song from Syria)
5. *Allahumma Salli* (Allah Bless Muhammad. A popular Sufi song from Egypt)
6. *Inzad Innabi* (Birth Of The Prophet song from Tunisia)

**Musicians:**

Tareq Abboushi (Buzuq)

Taoufiq Ben Amor (Vocals, Oud and Percussion)

Ramzi Elidlibi (Tabla, Riq, Daf and Dance)

Johnny Farraj (Percussion)

Zafer Tawil (Violin, Qanun and Percussion)

## Artist Bios

### **Cantor Yehezkel Zion**

Yehezkel Zion, born in Jerusalem, is of Iraqi descent and comes from a very musically talented Baghdad family. His father was a singer and drummer and his siblings, all living in Israel, practice musical traditions, too. In 1990 Mr. Zion moved with his family to become the cantor (*hazan*) at Beth Torah Synagogue, a large Syrian Jewish congregation on Ocean Parkway. Numerous people from the congregation had heard him when they were visiting in Israel and asked him to come here. Cantor Zion has no formal music training but he has a very good "ear," and easily learned in the traditional way by listening to Syrian singers to gain expertise in a range of religious music practices. For example, in Jerusalem it is the custom of Syrians to meet at temple every Saturday morning in winter from 3:00-7:00a.m. to sing praises. Cantor Zion used to attend these sessions, learning more from week to week. Now he is a master singer who has made 30 CD's. His two sons, Eli and David both have beautiful voices and often sing with their father. Cantor Zion has recently founded a placement service for cantors worldwide < [www.IJConnections.com](http://www.IJConnections.com)>.

### **The Choir of the Catholic Melkite Byzantine Church of the Virgin Mary**

The Choir of the Church of the Virgin Mary has made many transitions since its inception, whether it was *a cappella* or accompanied singing. Devoted parishioners have participated in the choir throughout the years. When the present Church in Park Slope was dedicated in 1952, the choir under the guidance of Archimandrite Elias Skaff developed into a dedicated and faithful choral group, whose greatest joy was to sing and praise God. The Choir has been invited on numerous occasions to sing on television and at special events. Singers continue to come from far and wide and enhance our liturgies with their wonderful singing.

**Barbara Mahfouz Giancola, Director**, was trained under the watchful eye of Exarch Elie Skaff and appointed Choir Director at age eighteen. A born and bred New Yorker, she is descended from generations of singers. Ms. Giancola studied with the renowned Mme. Maria Varnay De Angelis, Grace Panvini and Curtis Rice and Santa Aronica. A Dramatic Mezzo Soprano, she has sung at New York City Opera, Brooklyn Lyric Opera, Chamber Opera Theatre, Philadelphia Lyric, along the Eastern Seaboard, in concerts and on radio and television. Ms. Giancola has taught as an Artist-in-Residence in both the private and public schools. Barbara Giancola's involvement in the arts has catapulted her from the life of a singer to that of one perpetuating the noble art form of opera. She is a founder of Opera of the Hamptons and Artistic Director of the Company now entering its seventeenth season, FESTIVAL 2008.

**Selwa Awad, lead soprano**, is a graduate of the Jesuit University of Beirut, Lebanon, and Ms. Awad has obtained three Masters Degrees from Brooklyn College and Adelphi University as well. She is proficient in Arabic, French, English and Latin.

**Adel Baghdady, Cantor and Dramatic Tenor**, was born in Zahle, Lebanon and started singing as a teenager. He came to the United States in 1978 and became Choir Director at Our Lady of Lebanon and then joined the Church of the Virgin Mary Choir in 1991. His career has taken him into the realm of Middle Eastern music as well as classical and contemporary music.

**Kareem Youssef, tenor**, is a student of audio engineering, and he will graduate in August from the Institute of Audio Research.

**Naji Youssef, Cantor**, began singing in church choirs at an early age. He was born in Lebanon and was always active in festivals, school plays and community events in his hometown of Zahle. In 1988 he moved to the United States, continued singing, and joined the Choir of the Byzantine Greek Melkite Catholic Church of the Virgin Mary in Brooklyn. Naji specializes in the Lebanese traditional vocal

repertoire and is singing at community events across the United States. His voice was heard at the opening of the Olympics in Atlanta. Recently, he was ordained as sub-Deacon in the Melkite church.

**Rita Youssef, soprano**, teaches Kindergarten in Carroll Gardens. A dedicated singer, she began singing in the Church of the Virgin Mary Choir when she was ten years old.

**Sonia Youssef, soprano**, has sung in the Church of the Virgin Mary Choir for twenty years. Her knowledge of our traditional music is remarkable. As the Matriarch of her family, her children have had the extraordinary advantage of growing up in a loving home where the church and its music is a part of their lives.

**Inna Leytush, Organist** at the Church of the Virgin Mary for ten years, excels as a pianist, accompanist, voice teacher and vocal coach. Born and raised in Russia, she received her Bachelor in Music from Moscow State Conservatory and her Master in Music from the Gorky State Conservatory. She was Music Director for Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin "Opera at Noon" concert at Trinity Church, New York, as well as "A Concert of Russian Music" at Carnegie – Weill Recital Hall and the Music Director for The Russian American Cultural Heritage Center concerts at Estonian House.

## **Tarab**

Tarab, founded in 1998, is a group of New York-based musicians who focus on studying and performing the classical Arabic repertoire, instrumental (with such genres as samai, lunga, dulab) and vocal, with special emphasis on the Andalusi Muwashah and Sufi repertoire. The ensemble also explores traditional folk music from various regions of the Arab world. Importance is given to improvisation, both vocal and instrumental, to allow each musician to explore the maqamat, or scales. The sets performed are generally in the form of a wasla, which is a suite of several pieces all sharing the same maqam. Since its foundation, Tarab has performed at several venues and festivals, such as Symphony Space, The Great Hall at Cooper Union, The Joseph Papp Theater, Bowery Ballroom, The Balkan Music Festival, Club Passim, York University Toronto and The University of Michigan. Tarab also composed soundtracks for two documentaries and one play.

## **Musicians for Tarab:**

**Tareq Abboushi** (Buzuq) is a graduate from William Paterson University with a B.M. in Jazz Piano Performance. For the past seven years he has been studying the buzuq both in New York City as well as Ramallah, Palestine. Tareq currently performs with a number of groups in the New York area, ranging from dance pop to religious sufi music. Tareq is leading and composing for his own quintet "SHUSMO," playing mostly original compositions of Middle Eastern/Jazz fusion. Since releasing their first album "One" in February 2005, the quintet has taken part in various festivals: Atlantic Antic Festival, Sounds of the City Festival, and the Jerusalem Festival. He also composed and recorded music for the film "West Bank-Brooklyn," and has also appeared on two albums of children's music with Dan Zanes "House Party" and "Night Time!" The latter has won the "Best children's CD of the year (2002)" award by amazon.com.

**Taoufiq Ben Amor** (Vocals, Oud and Percussion) is a Tunisian vocalist, percussionist and oud player. Taoufiq started learning percussion at an early age, then learned the Malouf (Andalusian repertoire) and sang with ensembles and choirs for many years. Fifteen years ago, he began studying the oud and the Arabic maqam system with various teachers such as Mohamed Labbad, Jamal Aslan and Simon Shaheen. For the last decade, Taoufiq has been an active performer in the U.S. and Canada and played in various venues including the Joseph Papp Theater, Symphony Space, Cooper Union, the Knitting Factory as well as several campuses. He is involved in several projects including fusion with

North Indian, Afro-Brazilian and Iranian musicians. Taoufiq is also an educator, who does research and lecture on the subject and conducts workshops. He founded The Columbia Middle Eastern Music Ensemble and he produces the music series at the Alwan Center for The Arts in New York City. Taoufiq is currently Professor of Arabic at Columbia University.

**Ramzi El-Edlibi** (Tabla, Riq, Daf and Dance) El-Edlibi's dance career began in Lebanon as he studied with the renowned choreographer Wadia Garrar and was a principal dancer with the Caracalla Dance Co. With Carracalla and on his own, Ramzi traveled extensively as a much sought-after performer of the Middle Eastern Folk Dance Art Form, performing in Russia, Japan, Spain, France, the U.K, Egypt, Libya, Iraq and more. Each of these locations have offered not only the opportunity to demonstrate his talents, but to extend them—absorbing influences from the various cultures that would continue to add interesting and varied dimensions to the complex tapestry of his art and his life. Ramzi is also an accomplished percussion player and teacher, mastering the tabla, riq (Arab tambourine) and frame drum.

**Johnny Farraj** (Percussion) studied the riq (Egyptian tambourine) and frame drum with Karim Nagi and Fairuz's percussionist Michel Merhej. He also studied the oud with Simon Shaheen and Bassam Saba, and classical Arabic singing with Rima Khcheich and Youssef Kassab. As a percussionist, he has performed with Simon Shaheen/Qantrara (Symphony Space) and Amir El-Saffar, and recorded on the soundtrack of the play "9 Parts of Desire" by Heather Raffo. Johnny has performed and given lecture demonstrations in universities and museums throughout the US and Canada, and has taken part in several fusion collaborations involving classical Indian, Persian and Jazz. Johnny annually attends the Arabic Music Retreat, and has created the [maqamworld.com](http://maqamworld.com) web site to teach classical Arabic music (maqam) theory.

**Zafer Tawil** (Violin, Oud and Percussion) is an accomplished Palestinian musician based in New York City. He is a virtuoso on oud, violin, and qanun, and a master of Arabic percussion. Zafer performs in concerts, clubs, and at private events, and holds workshops in oud technique, and in Arabic music theory – across the US and in the Middle East, including a recent performance at Zankel Hall with Simon Shaheen. Zafer is constantly exploring the boundaries of Arabic music, and has worked on many collaboration concerts involving classical Indian and Persian music and Jazz fusion.

### **Additional Notes on Today's Music**

**Galeet Dardashti, a Brooklyn-based cantor and founder and lead singer of Divahn, has provided additional information on the *pizmonim* tradition, also called *piyyutim*.**

#### ***Pizmonim***

The practice of composing religious poetic songs or *pizmonim* began as early as the sixth century but the golden age for *pizmonim* occurred in Spain during the Middle Ages, when Arabic was the dominant language. Arabic poetry flourished during this period, contributing to a cultural environment that heavily influenced famous Jewish poets such as Moshe Ibn Ezra (1055-1135) and Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141). The religious poems they composed described the faith, longing, love, suffering, and sorrow of the Jews, who were living mostly in the diaspora. The *pizmon* traditions varied from one country to the next but always served to maintain the sense of Jewish community, often strengthening hopes of the eventual return to Zion.

Beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *pizmonim* served to help maintain Jewishness amidst assimilation. Many poets living in the Middle East and North Africa therefore composed their Hebrew poems to the tunes of secular and popular songs (originally in Arabic or Turkish) in order to keep the *pizmonim* relevant to

younger people. *Pizmonim* were also written for special events and holidays or to celebrate a specific person at a Jewish life cycle event.

As Jews in the Middle East began immigrating to the Americas and Europe in the early twentieth century and later to Israel in the 1950s, they brought their *pizmon* traditions with them. Though dispersed communities became disconnected from their Jewish practices, *pizmon* traditions continued to thrive in places such as Brooklyn and Jerusalem where large ethnic groups lived in close-knit communities.

**Barbara Mahfouz Giancola, Choir Director at the Melkite Byzantine Church of the Virgin Mary in Park Slope descends from some of the original Syrian Lebanese Christian families who settled in Manhattan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She provides this personal reminiscence:**

My memories of times gone by generate from the words that came from the lips of my grandparents and parents. They spoke of all that was so precious to them, in the hope that we would keep alive their unique experiences and cherish this extraordinary country as they did.

The Museum of the City of New York had a marvelous exhibit several years ago documenting this period in time from the 19th Century through the early 20th Century. Immigrants from Mount Lebanon and Syria, predominantly Christians, came to the United States searching for a new life. As they embarked from Ellis Island, their eyes fell on lower Manhattan and they liked what they saw and they settled right there by the water in sight of the Statue of Liberty.

My grandfather, George K. Rossie, my grandmother Sadie Shaker Rossie, my father Charles Mahfouz, and my great-uncle Kamel Mahfouz were among those early immigrants. There on Washington Street, the descendants of the Phoenicians, the great merchants of the world, opened their first businesses on American soil. Their integrity, their innate business acumen and innovative ideas now served a new community.

A fifteen cent token could take you to Battery Park to enjoy South Ferry and the Aquarium, all located in the shadow of where the World Trade Center would later stand. From Washington to Greenwich to Rector Streets to Maiden Lane, you could find the gift shops, Awn's, Gorra's, Shuhda Nut & Seed, George K. Rossie Dry Goods, Parisian Lingerie, Sahadi's, the Arabic bakeries and much more.

One could discover the fabulous Mediterranean cuisine at the Son of the Shiek Restaurant. Everyday you would meet Chef Hatem Peters serving members of the financial district at 11:30 A.M. and 12:00 P.M. On weekends, tourists sought out this food that was fresh and prepared by hand. It was a popular meeting place. Among the many Lebanese and Syrians who met there were the poet and philosopher, Khalil Gibran and Murad Ferris Barka, the highly gifted Arabic calligrapher. Mr. Barka, quite renowned for his beautiful calligraphy, was sought after by MGM and Coca-Cola. If you had a sweet tooth, you would find candies from the great candy maker, A. S. Alamy. "*Alamy's Famous Candy Recipes and Cookbook*", was written by the acknowledged "*Expert Candy Instructor*" and influenced many famous candy makers.

All this would not be complete without the building of their churches, St. Joseph's Maronite Church, which used the language of Christ and St. George's Byzantine Melchite Church. The churches brought the solemnity of their faith and the music of their ancestors into the center of their lives. My own father's beautiful voice rang out throughout Lebanon as he traveled with the hierarchy of the Maronite church. All of their traditions were now part of their life in America. Sadly, St. George's Church was sold some years back and St. Joseph's Church was destroyed at 9/11.

The exodus into downtown Brooklyn began in the 30s. In Brooklyn, the Church of the Virgin Mary Byzantine Melchite Church, first on Clinton Street and now in Park Slope, and Our Lady of Lebanon

Maronite Church on Remsen Street, were consecrated. Many immigrants continued to move throughout the boroughs and into the neighboring states. Yet every holiday, the churches fill to capacity as they come home to celebrate together.

Due to the prevailing laws at that time, the esteemed journalists Salloum and Naoum Mokarzel, persisted in presenting the Lebanese Americans, those who had given the alphabet to the world, as worthy of being citizens of this United States. Proud of their heritage and devoted to this country, which they now call home, they are a viable and visible force in medicine, government, law, in the arts, fashion, business and have notably served in the military with distinction. They have assimilated and are part of the life force of this great country.

## **Sufi Music**

**Music producer at Alwan for the Arts, Professor of Arabic at Columbia, and founding musician of Tarab, Taoufiq Ben Amor provided these notes on Sufi music:**

Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam. There are many Sufi *tariqas* (orders), the most prominent of which are the *Mawlawiyya*, *Qadiriyya*, *Naqshabandiyya*, *Shadhiliyya* and *'Issaawiyya*, which have emerged at different times and are spread out geographically.

Despite their disagreement on the use of musical instruments, all Sufi *tariqas* consider music a central part of the *zikr* or *dhikr* ritual. *Zikr*, an Arabic term which means to mention and remember the names of Allah and his prophet Muhammad, is an elaborate process that aims at making the devout reach an ecstatic state, *kashf* (revelation), which allows them to experience *al-haqq*, Truth--one of the attributes of God--directly and in a whole way that does not separate the mind from the body or the spirit.

Sufism has been thriving in New York ever since Muslim immigrants have arrived in the area, and especially since the 1960s when many Americans would turn East for spirituality. Many of the orders mentioned above have *zawiyas*, *tekiyyas*, or centers around the tri-state area and some of these show certain aspects that seem unique to Muslims living in the diaspora. These Sufi communities tend to be diverse and attract Muslims from many parts of the world. They are also not restricted to the practices of the order they belong to: for example the *Jerrahis*, originally from Turkey, or the *Murids*, from Senegal, include practices of other orders in their rituals.

## **Nasheed**

**Our Islamic *nasheed* singer was not able to join us today, but Rachel Ash, our intern from Barnard College, provides the following notes on nasheed and koranic chanting, both of which are practiced by devout Muslims in Brooklyn.**

Although much debate surrounds the prohibition of music by the Qur'an, Muslim religious song (*inshād*) is found throughout the Islamic world. Many Muslims do not take issue with types of *inshād* because, unlike genres of popular music, they are intended to provide spiritual guidance to their listeners. Training in varieties of *inshād*, such as koranic chanting, is commonly thought to be requisite knowledge for singers of secular Arab music. Many of the most popular Arab artists, including Oum Kalthoum, have been trained in religious chanting.

*Nasheed* is a tradition of Islamic music that is sung either a cappella or accompanied by percussion instruments, such as the daf, a large frame drum. The lyrics of *nasheed* reflect Islamic beliefs and history, as well as contemporary world issues. *Nasheed* singers are popular throughout the Islamic world, including among Muslims in the U.S. and U.K.

## Arab music in Sephardic ritual

*Maqam* (synonymous with *maqom* in Hebrew) can be defined as place or melodic foundation, physical or metaphysical. *Maqamat* (pl.) serve a dual function of place in ritual for *Sephardic* Jews in Brooklyn. Originally of Andalusian ancestry, *Sephardic* now commonly refers to Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent. The use of certain *maqamat* can be to conjure up the proper placement of mood or to reference a particular geographic place. These aesthetic and geographic associations signify a shared cultural heritage often described as Arab culture. The performance of music in *Sephardic* ritual has specific parameters. First, the texts are in Hebrew. No doubt familiar with the Arabic songs, the practice of *contrafacta* (in this case replacing Arabic text with Hebrew text) allows the melodic repertoire to transcend the secular and be welcomed into the sacred. In contrast to orthodox Islamic ritual, the role of music in Jewish ritual extends beyond sacred-text cantillation to include a vast popular and art song repertoire. It is not uncommon to hear a favorite Abd al'Wahab or Hakki Obadia composition being used for segments of the liturgical rites or for *pizmonim* (song poems).

Second, instrumental performance is prohibited in synagogue ritual; music is performed vocally. This prohibition towards instrumental performance is derived from a first century C.E. rabbinic decree expressing mourning over the destruction of the holy temple in Jerusalem (today's remnant is the Western Wall). Because of this vocal performance aesthetic, lay and specialist participants in Jewish ritual are inspired to perform together, reflecting their strong, living connections with *maqam*-based musical traditions.

### **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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Use the American Express® Card at Brooklyn Maqam venues.

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