



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

بروكلين مقام

BROOKLYN MAQAM

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Coffeeshop Hafla

Friday, March 28, 9pm-Midnight

TARBOOSH CAFE



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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 28, 9pm-midnight
Tarboosh Café
Coffeeshop Hafla

Our hafla (party) starts out *Lubnan* style, featuring singers *Bassil Touma* and *Rana Beyruti* performing traditional Lebanese songs, mawwal, jabali and debkah. Meanwhile, Bay Ridge's own Lebanese debkah masters, *Jad Lebbos* and *Salim Ghacham* show off their footwork and teach some too. The evening continues with Brooklyn Tunisian vocalist *Ahlem* singing a cocktail of Arab classics and pop. The program concludes with a special *raqs sharqi* (bellydance) performance by Brooklyn-based dancer *LaUra*. Brooklyn Maqam's superstars *Jawad* and *Hisham* join us on *org* and *tabla*.

Program

Bassil Touma

Touma opens our Lebanese *sahra* with songs made famous by the contemporary beloved Syrian singer, George Wassouf, known as *Sultan al Tarab*, which might be loosely translated as King of Soulful, Goosebump-triggering, Heart-wrenching Arab music. Touma will also sing Lebanese folksongs in the *Jabali* style for which the master Wadi El Safi ("The Voice of Lebanon") and the contemporary Assi el-Hellani are known. Of course, Touma's set will include a variety of floor stomping debkah tunes from the region of Bilad es-Shems (Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine).

Jad Lebbos, Salim Ghacham and friends

Lebbos, Ghacham and Bay Ridge-based debkat aficionados demonstrate the more complex and earth-shaking steps of Lebanese-style debkah. Meanwhile, Lebbos plays the resounding *tabl beladi*, that typically accompanies debkah dancing. The pair will also take a moment to break down the basic Lebanese style 6 and 8 count step so you can carry on into the night.

Rana Beyruti

Beyruti hails from Tripoli, Lebanon, a region known for its cultural heritage of *debkat* music and dance. Tonight, she treats us to a set of Lebanese song known as *jabali*, stemming from the music traditions of the mountainous countryside. Beyruti's soulful voice evokes the rich sound of Lebanese songstress Najwa Karam. She will include songs made famous by Karam and other contemporary women vocalists such as Arab-music pop singer Nancy Ajram and Nawal El Zoghbi. Beyruti's repertoire is wide-ranging and also consists of favorite sung genres from Egypt and the Levant, such as those originally performed by the vocalist beloved by all the Arab-world from the 1950s onward, Warda Al Jaziira.

Ahlem

Ahlem is originally from Tunis, but her repertoire is as varied as the audiences she sings for. To conclude the night, Ahlem takes us out of Lebanon's vocal traditions for a trip around the Arab world. She will perform a range of pop and classical songs – including genres originating in the Gulf, Egypt, the Levant and Tunisia, which are guaranteed-crowd pleasers in Arab-American music venues and parties. Among the women vocalist that have most inspired Ahlem, whose songs are included in tonight's program, is the young and highly acclaimed contemporary Egyptian singer Sherine (Sherine Abdel Wahhab).

LaUra

LaUra is one of the top dancers at live Arab music venues in the area. Having performed in the Middle East and studied with several renowned Egyptian teachers, she embodies an elegant, yet sensual and culturally-appropriate Arab style. LaUra's repertoire also includes modern fusion pieces, but tonight she demonstrates a more characteristic *raqs sharqi* (belly dance) show. The typical belly dance set includes an upbeat opening piece, a slower instrumental improvisation (*taxim*), a modified regional folk dance, such as Egyptian *sa'idi* or Arabian Peninsula *khaligee*, an interactive drum solo with the tabla player, a classical *tarab* piece (such as an *oum koulthoum* song) and finale.

Notes on Dabkeh Dance and Jabali Music

Ethnomusicologist and composer Alexandre Tannous has provided the following basic introduction to some of the dance and music forms in tonight's program.

The Dabkeh

The dabkeh (also, transliterated as dabke, debke and dabka which all mean "stomping of the feet") is the traditional line dance of the mountains villages and towns (*reef*) of Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Jordan (the Levant region). It, also, exists in Iraq under the name *chube*. The dabkeh is danced by women, men, or both and resembles to a certain extent other folkloric line dances of Armenia, Turkey, Greece (the *Hassapiko*), and several countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

What distinguishes the dabkeh from other line dances is the energetic rhythmic stomping produced by the dancers' feet on the ground in rhythm or counter-rhythm with the *iqa'* (the musical rhythmic mode heard in the tune). The leader of the line who dances at the start of the line is called the *raas* (head) or *lawweeh* (waver). He or she twirls a handkerchief or a worry-bead while improvising on the dance-steps with virtuosic and syncopated jumps, kicks, stomps, and squats while the others maintain the rhythm and the steps along with vocalizations that communicate the liveliness and the energy of the rhythm and dance-steps.

The dabkeh could be danced to a song with vocals, or to an instrumental. It is accompanied by a *tabl* (a large, shoulder-strung, double-headed drum played with two sticks), a *mijwiz* (a double clarinet-like instrument), a *mizmar* (shawm), a *buzuq* (a long-necked, metal string instrument), a *nay* (a reed instrument), and a *darbukkah* (a goblet-shaped hand drum).

While a six-beat meter is often used in dabkeh tunes, other meters and rhythmic feels are used such as the *mtanniye* (a double-feel), *mtallate* (a triple-feel), *arjah* (a leaning, skip-feel), and to standard tunes such as the *nadda*, *zayno*, *huwwara*, *dalaounah*, *haykalo*, etc.

According to the famous musicologist, composer and singer Zaki Nassif the dabkeh's origin goes back to old days when tree branches, topped with tightly compacted dirt and mud, were used in the construction of the flat roofing of village houses. Due to the rain, sun, and the changes in the temperature and humidity during the change of seasons, the roof suffered cracks that allowed water to leak in. To repair it the owner of the house would call on friends and neighbors to help. They

would then gather on the roof walk while stomping their feet to compact the dirt which then sealed the cracks. Musical instruments and singing were added later as a way to entertain the helpers while performing their deed. The help was known as *al-Aouneh* (the aiding), and the term became later on *Aladalaouna*--a standard dabkeh song (the term is Aramaic in its origin). The dabkeh became the favorite dance in weddings and celebrations. The founding of the Baalbek Festival of Lebanon in 1957 in the three impressive Roman temples' historical site area helped in popularizing, and modernizing the dabkeh dance which enormously contributed to preserving the dance throughout the Levant. Some of the masters who helped in this preservation are composers Assi and Mansour Rahbani and Zaki Nassif, and singers Wadi al-Safi, Sabah, Nasri Shamseddeen, and the famous Fairuz, as well as master dancers Alain Meraeb, Kigham, and the Caracalla Dance Troupe to name only few.

Jabali Musical Style

The Jabali (from the mountains) style, which of course originated in the countryside, is characterized by ethereal melodies, and a sense of rich simplicity. The lyrics are often about innocent and naive romance and love, the beauty and the charm of the Lebanese countryside, provoking a sense of return or a yearning to the millions of people who have immigrated at different periods and bringing warm memories of days gone by many immigrants linking them to their homeland. To summarize, these topics evoked a sense of pride and love of the country, and the simplicity and the purity of innocent love.

Some of the most famous genres of the Jabali style are the *ataba*, the *mijanah*, the *mawwal*, the *errede*, the *layali*, *abu-el-zelof*, and the *shruqi*.

The same composers and musicians who helped preserve and popularize the dabkeh also have done the same with the jabali style. But most of the credit would go to the Rahbani brothers and Wadi al-Safi. The numerous operettas and songs that these masters have composed included many of the jabali elements. But the extraordinary feat was the extent to which they were able to make the countryside music a part of the cosmopolitan and urban mainstream, but also throughout the Arab world. Such a historic urbanization of Lebanese folk music is phenomenon very rarely experienced in the world.

Singers such as Najwa Karam and Assi el-Hellani still carry this torch in the contemporary Lebanese music scene.

Artists Biographies

Ahlem

Ahlem was born in Tunis, Tunisia and began singing at age 13. She studied at the music conservatory of Tunis and then went on to perform at local parties and weddings, national and international festivals such as the Libya's Eid celebration, and appeared on television. Before immigrating to the United States in 1998, Ahlem sang throughout Europe and the Middle East. She progressively made her way to the East coast via Los Angeles and then Texas, to settle in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn in 2004. Ahlem is one of the few women vocalists to perform a wide repertoire of Middle Eastern and North African classics and pop songs at metro area Arab music venues, such as Layaly (Manhattan) and Shish (NJ), and celebrations up and down the east coast.

Rana Beyruti

Born in Tripoli, Lebanon, Beyruti has been singing and acting since the age of 12, when she began performing at local *hafflat* (parties) and restaurants. Since immigrating to the U.S. in 1996, Beyruti has established herself as a highly sought-after vocalist, specializing in Lebanese *jabali* song. She has performed in concerts all along the east coast, including venues in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Virginia, and New Jersey. Beyruti sings regularly at private parties, weddings, and other celebrations, as well as clubs throughout the New York City area. She performs weekly at Club Aladdin in Hackensack, NJ.

Hisham

Born in Nador, Morocco, to a family that practices music traditions, Hisham began playing percussion at age 13. His first lessons in music came from his cousin and a close friend, both of whom played drums. Eager to deepen his music practice, he learned in the traditional way, by learning to listen: Hisham began by intently listening to a variety of recordings as well as televised concerts and music programs of many different Arab music traditions. In 2002, Hisham immigrated to New York, and after several months in Manhattan, settled in Brooklyn, where he has lived for over 4 years. Hisham has become an accomplished percussionist, both on the *darbuka* and drum set. He has performed at numerous clubs and restaurants throughout the city, including Tagine and Le Souk, and frequently plays at parties up and down the East Coast. Although versed in many styles of Arab percussion, Hisham is especially fond of Moroccan and Algerian *Rai* because it draws on a diverse range of sounds from Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Jawad Bohsina

From Casablanca, Morocco, Bohsina bought his first keyboard at age 12, and – as he recounts – it grew with him. Today he is one of NYC vocalists' most requested and respected keyboardists. By 16, Bohsina was playing at social events throughout Casablanca. His passion was Rai music – both from Algeria (such as Cheb Khaled) and from Northeastern Morocco, like the Oujda-based group Bouchmak, but he expanded his repertoire to encompass his audience's tastes, playing Moroccan sha'abi, rai, khaligi (Arabian gulf music), Egyptian and Levantine classics and hits. Bohsina first came to the US in 1998 on tour with the Moroccan Jewish singer Binhas. Since then, he has played regularly at clubs such as Cedars of Lebanon, until its closing in 2001, and at social events throughout the metro area. Despite his North African origins, Bohsina often plays Arab Levantine and Egyptian classic folk and pop music for New York based Levantine singers, as performance opportunities for Moroccan music are rare. You can hear Bohsina regularly at Layaly Lounge in Manhattan.

Salim Ghacham

Ghacham hails from the village of Yaroun on the southern border of Lebanon, where families and friends dance *debkah* at every social gathering, from weddings to birthdays. Ghacham was particularly influenced by the bravura of his uncle's steps, and would even study his moves on home-video, to challenge him at the next gathering. *Debkah* music at village parties in Yaroun typically included acoustical accompaniment on *mijwiz* (double-pipe, single-reed woodwind instrument), *nay* (single reed flute) and percussive sounds of the *derbekki* and *tabl*. In 2001, Ghacham moved to New York City, and settled in Brooklyn's village of Bay Ridge soon after. When Ghacham stomping (*ma' da'a!*) out *debkah* moves at Brooklyn's Arab music venues, he is busy managing his family's tri-borough clothing business.

LaUra

LaUra was born in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and comes from a family of traditional artists. Her mother, a professional dancer, was a granddaughter of one of the greatest Uzbeki poets of all time, Hamza Hakimzoda Niyazi. LaUra's dance career began with six years of ballet, followed by Russian and Uzbek folklore dancing. She began performing *raqs sharqi*, (known in the U.S. as "bellydance") in Lebanon, with entertainment agent Toros Siranossian, with whom she toured Lebanon (Beirut), UAE (Dubai, Abu Dhabi), Yemen (Aden) as well as in Switzerland and India. LaUra has studied with some of the most prominent teachers of *raqs sharqi* including Samara of Lebanon, Yousry Sharif, Laurel Victoria Gray, Raqia Hassan, Aida Nour, Tito and others. She has performed in stage shows in Las Vegas with Arab pops stars Nawal El Zoghbi and Fadel Chaker, in addition to entertaining celebrities such as Enrique Iglesias and Cameron Diaz. LaUra is founder, choreographer, and director of the company Belly Trance. Based in Brooklyn, LaUra is one of the metro-area's top dancers at Arab parties, clubs, concerts and festivals. www.dancelaura.com

Jad Lebbos

Lebbos comes from Beirut, Lebanon and learned *debkah* – the celebrated social line dance of the Levant- in the rural areas where it has been danced into the earth for generations. Lebbos' debkah practice is inspired by the stunning footwork prowess of his grandfather, whom he visited on trips to the family village of Sara'een. In addition to honing his debkah technique at weddings and other celebrations, Lebbos studied percussion, both *derbekki* and *tabl*, the large two-faced drum used in traditional Lebanese debkah, at Bab el Sharef conservatory in Beirut. Lebbos moved to Bay Ridge, Brooklyn in 2003 and continued his debkah in diaspora with our Lady of Lebanon debkah troupe and as leader of Ft. Hamilton High School's Arab culture and debkah group. You can admire Lebbos' hard-hitting traditional village spirit and innovative fancy-footwork as he leads debka lines at Arab music clubs and hangouts in Brooklyn and Queens.

Bassil Touma

Touma grew up singing traditional Lebanese songs at parties, festivals and with his school choir in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. As a teenager, Touma enrolled in Tripoli's music conservatory to study *oud*, including classical, traditional and folk styles as well as theory. He went on to work with the internationally renowned Syrian "Sultan al Tarab", Georges Wassouf, for several years. In 1993, Touma came to the U.S. to settle in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn in 1993, and currently lives over yonder in Staten Island. Touma's repertoire includes Lebanese *beladi*, traditional mountain folk songs such as the genre referred to as *jabali*, as well as classical *muwashahat*, standards sung by Lebanese master Wadi El Safi and more contemporary Lebanese music such as that of Assi El Helani. Touma regularly performs a range of Egyptian and Levantine favorites at nightclubs, parties and festivals in the metro area.

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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