



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

# بروكلين مقام

## BROOKLYN MAQAM

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Sha'abi Shake Down

Saturday, March 15, 9pm-Midnight

SULTANA



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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.

**Saturday, March 15, 9:00pm- midnight**  
**Sultana**  
***Sha'abi Shake Down***

#### **Program**

This evening features 4 vocalists and bands performing diverse styles emanating from Morocco, Tunisia, and of course- Brookyn! Party down to Moroccan and Tunisian popular music traditions such as *sha'abi* and *rai* with El Mostafa Jdidi, Salah Rhani, Nouredine, and Reeyad El Tounsi; Jowad Bohsina on org and Hicham on percussion. Then jam with Moroccan Sephadic fusion ensemble *Asefa*.

#### **Salah Rhani and Nouredine**

Rhani and Nouredine start the night off with *sha'abi* from their hometown, Casablanca. Rhani treats us to a special performance of violin in the typical Moroccan fashion – held vertically on his knee. The pair will also perform *berber* (or *barbarie*) songs of the Atlas mountains, part of the rich musical tradition maintained by the indigenous Berber of North Africa. Nourredine will also introduce the classical tradition of Moroccan song.

*Salah Rhani: violin, vocals*

*Nouredine: vocals*

*Jowad Bohsina: org*

*Hicham: tabla*

#### **Reeyad El Tounsi**

El Tounsi presents a range of popular and folkloric songs known as *tounsi*, primarily associated with the Tunisia's capital city, Tunis. One well-known and beloved song that has been standard in the repertoire since the 1960s is *La moulay ili gharour mnili*, which speaks to the popular subject of love and its emotional drama. Another song included in El Tounsi's set is *Sidi Mansour*, a song about a Sufi holy place in Sfax, and a man's pilgrimage for a blessing.

*Reeyad El Tounsi: vocals*

*Jowad Bohsina: org*

*Hicham: tabla*

#### **El Mostafa Jdidi**

Mostafa takes us back to Morocco with a continuation of the most popular and well-loved sha'abi tunes, highlighting styles from the region surrounding his hometown of El Jedida.

*El Mostafa Jdidi: vocals*  
*Jowad Bohsina: org*  
*Hicham: tabla*

### **Asefa**

The Brooklyn-based collective Asefa concludes the night with a distinctive fusion sound drawing from influences that range from North Africa to Brooklyn. Founded in 2001 by bandleader and composer Samuel R. Tomas, Asefa focused primarily on incorporating elements from Moroccan and jazz-based musical traditions. Asefa traverses a wide musical landscape that can include repertoire from Israel, Persia, Poland and America. Tomas' arrangements and original compositions are imbued with contemporary concepts in improvisation and instrumentation; Asefa brings a unique blend of North African grooves, Sefardic sounds and jazz. Soprano sax, nay, oud, drums, and loads of percussion rock the house and get the crowd moving everytime.

*Samuel R. Tomas: reeds, percussion, vocals*  
*Yoshi Fruchter oud, guitar*  
*Noah Jarrett, bass, guembri*  
*Rich Stein: percussion*  
*Eric Platz: drum kit and percussion*

### **Sha'abi by Samuel R. Tomas**

*Ethnomusicologist and musician Samuel R. Tomas has provided the following introduction to maghrebi sha'abi music.*

At times referred to as a specific *Maghrebi* (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) rhythmic groove or as an entire music genre, *sha'abi* (also spelled *cha'abi*) is certainly meant to move your body. The *sha'abi* rhythmic groove juxtaposes accented *taks* or rim shots (beats one and four of a six-beat rhythmic cycle) with a strong *dum* or low sound (beat five of a six-beat rhythmic cycle), creating an incessant reverse-syncopation. More sophisticated versions of the *sha'abi* groove can incorporate variations and are often spread over a 12-beat cycle, never losing sight of the characteristic *dum* on beat five. *Sha'abi* relies upon reverse-syncopation to create a thunderous foundation for clapping, dancing, singing and jamming.

By the mid-1960s, *Sha'abi* had flourished into a self-styled genre of music that reflected the multi-cultural tapestry of Maghrebi ethnicity. While Eastern Arab and Western European musical traditions became more pervasive in the *Maghreb* through radio and recording technology, local pop musicians drew upon folk styles for melodic and thematic fodder. *Sha'abi* rhythmic grooves became the backdrop for these popular musicians to express the heterogeneity of *Maghrebi* ethnicity – Imazighen (Berbers), Arabs, Jews and Gnawa. In the ensuing decades *Sha'abi* has served as a welcome mat for innovative popular music artists to explore and incorporate new instruments and electronics, multiple languages and dance music. One thing remains – *Sha'abi* is meant to be interactive between musicians and audience, ever inspiring dance and emotion.

### **Artist Biographies**

#### **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.

### **El Mostafa Jdidi**

El Mostafa comes from the Atlantic port city of El Jadida, Morocco. He bought his first instrument, a Moroccan wooden flute called *gasbah*, as a boy. He was drawn to its sad, yet sweet sound quality, and as a teenager delved deeper into music as an emotional outlet, teaching himself to sing and play *gasbah* after nightfall on El Jadida's beaches - it was just "me and gasbah" he recalls. He soon began playing a variety of percussive instruments including the *darbukah*, *bendir* and drum set with bands in nightclubs and parties in Morocco's major cities. El Mostafa was most inspired by, and feels deeply indebted to older generations of Moroccan folk singers, with whom he informally apprenticed himself. Through his dedicated observation, playing percussion and singing chorus with traditional folk music groups, he learned styles such as the complex musical genre known as *marsawi*, traditionally performed by *shikhat* (professional female wedding singers) from Esfi and the region surrounding El Jadida. El Mostafa is also well-versed in a variety of *sha'abi* (popular music) styles, classical Moroccan song, known as *maghreebi*, as well as *jabali* (Moroccan mountain style). El Mostafa began performing at clubs in Astoria after immigrating to New York City in 2001 and now, as one of the most in demand *sha'abi* vocalists in the city, performs regularly at private parties such as Moroccan Jewish celebrations along Ocean Parkway and Kings Highway in Brooklyn. Despite his talent for singing standard 6/8 *sha'abi* songs, El Mostafa looks forward to reviving the acoustic sounds and complex rhythmic structures of marsawi here in New York – a difficult task in New York City's keyboard-centric Arab music scene.

### **Nourredine**

Nourredine grew up in Casablanca, Morocco and began playing percussion as a teenager. Surrounded by Moroccan music traditions that are integral to Moroccan social celebrations, and greatly influenced by the songs of Moroccan master Abdelhadi Belkhat, Nourredine was inspired to pursue singing. Nourredine has since had the honor of performing with some of the greatest names in the Arab-world music scene like Ehab Tawfik (Egypt) and Laura Khalil (Lebanon). Since living in Queens, NY, he performs regularly in Arab music venues and social engagements locally and throughout the USA. He also returns to Morocco annually to participate in the summer festivals of Casablanca, Rabat and Agadir. In addition to the mix of Arab music from the Levant, Gulf, Egypt and North Africa that is popular at social occasions, Nourredine also performs a rich repertoire of Moroccan music. He draws on a repertoire that includes classical, popular (*sha'abi*), contemporary and Berber music traditions. Nourredine is grateful for the support from the Arab and Moroccan community, fellow musicians, and his partner and master violin player Salah Rhani.

### **Salah Rhani**

Moroccan violinist Salah Rhani specializes in the popular musical genres of North Africa, *sha'abi* and *Rai*. At the age of 10 he began playing *kamanja* (Arab violin), which he learned from his brothers, and accompanied his uncles and sisters who were trained on *qanoun*, *nay* and *oud* among other instruments. Rhani also studied Western and Arab violin playing for 7 years at the Conservatory of Casablanca. Rhani first came to the US on tour with a Moroccan Jewish sha'abi band in 1997. In addition to Moroccan music, Rhani performs a variety of Arab classics and contemporary music throughout the NYC metro area as an *org* player, violinist and vocalist. Rhani also performs Berber (or

*barbarie*) music, a tradition maintained by the indigenous people of North Africa, with his partner Nourredine. Versed in numerous *sha'abi* styles from regions throughout Morocco, Rhani highlighted the unique sound of his native city, Casablanca at *Brooklyn Maqam*.

### **Samuel R. Thomas (Asefa)**

Samuel Thomas, performer and ethnomusicologist, holds two Bachelor of Music degrees from Berklee College of Music in Jazz Composition and Performance, a Masters of Music from CUNY-Brooklyn College, and is currently finishing a Ph.D in Ethnomusicology at the City University of New York. Thomas is a woodwind specialist (saxophone, *nay*, clarinet, flute), percussionist, composer and vocalist. His work centers on North African musical traditions, Arab music, Jewish music, as well as jazz, rock and American popular music. Thomas is founder and bandleader of Asefa, an ensemble devoted to contemporary approaches to composition, improvisation, and fusion drawn from Sephardic, North African and jazz traditions. Thomas also is executive director of JATM (Jewish Awareness Though Music), an applied ethnomusicology organization focused on cultural exchange through music. [www.asefamusic.com/](http://www.asefamusic.com/)

### **Riyad El Tunsi**

El Tunsi was born in the capital city of Tunis, and began studying *oud* at age 14 at the Salah El Mahdi Musical Club. El Mahdi, a legendary Tunisian music composer, recognized El Tunsi's talent and encouraged him to pursue a musical career. El Tunsi began performing professionally in 1986 when he joined the Tawfik Lingliz Orchestra as an oudist and vocalist. After several years with the orchestra, he moved to Morocco to study sociology, history, law and political science at the University of Oujda. El Tunsi has continued to develop his musical career since immigrating to the U.S. in the mid-90s. He performs a range of Arab music styles, including Tunisian, *Khaleegee* (Gulf), and *Rai*. He has played with such notable artists as the famous Lebanese singers Melhem, Fares Karam, and Wadi Essafi, as well as the Algerian Rai artist Cheb Nasro, and the Moroccan singer Binhass. El Tunsi has recently moved to NYC; based in Bensonhurst, he contributes to Brooklyn's wealth of diverse Arab music traditions and musicians! [www.myspace.com/riad\\_el\\_tunsi](http://www.myspace.com/riad_el_tunsi)

### **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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