



BAC FOLK ARTS PRESENTS

بروكلين مقام

BROOKLYN MAQAM

ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

مهرجان الموسيقى العربية

Timeless Traditions
from Egypt and Iraq

Thursday, March 20, 9-10:30pm

JOE PUB



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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.

Thursday, March 20, 9-11pm
Joe's Pub at the Public Theater
Timeless Traditions from Egypt and Iraq

Zikrayat, led by Sami Abu Shumays, plays a classical repertoire from the Golden Age of Egyptian cinema, and *Safaafir*, led by Amir ElSaffar, revives the classical urban vocal tradition of Iraqi *maqam*.

Zikrayat

Zikrayat, led by violinist Sami Abu Shumays, is a 12-member ensemble of musicians, vocalists, and dancers based in New York City, that performs traditional repertoires of Arabic music and dance, with a special focus on unknown gems from the Golden Age of Egyptian Cinema (the 1940's 50's and 60's). *Zikrayat* is unique in presenting the classical, dance, and folkloric repertoires side-by-side in an exciting stage show, highlighting the diversity within the Arab performing arts.

Upcoming shows include a variety-show-style performance at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning in Queens, NY, on Saturday, May 3rd, 2008, made possible in part by the Queens Council on the Arts, with public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; and a multi-media performance at the CUNY Graduate center, featuring live performances of music and dance pieces accompanying clips of Egyptian films, on Thursday, May 15th, 2008. For more information, including upcoming performances and artist bios, please visit www.zikrayatmusic.com

At Joe's Pub, *Zikrayat* presents a special classical vocal and instrumental show without our dancers, featuring songs originally sung in Egyptian films by Farid el-Atrash, Abdel-Halim Hafiz, Umm Kulthum, Esmahan, and Hurriya Hassan, an instrumental dance piece from the famous 1957 film *Tamr Hinna*, and an original composition by *Zikrayat* member Tareq Abboushi.

Program

1. Pickles by Tareq Abboushi
2. Gameel Gamal by Farid el-Atrash
originally sung by Farid el-Atrash
3. Ana Lak Ala Tool by Mohammed Abdel-Wahhab
originally sung by Abdel-Halim Hafiz in the film *Layali wu Ayyam*
4. Yasmeen by Mohamed Mogy

an instrumental dance piece from the film *Tamr Hinna*

5. Lughat-iz-Zuhur (“Il-Wardi Gameel”) by Zakaria Ahmed
originally sung by Umm Kulthum in the film *Fatima*
6. Imta Hataaraf by Mohammed Qassabgi
originally sung by Esmahan in the film *Gharam wu Intiqam*
7. Min Hubbi Fiik Ya Gaari by Mohammed Mogy
originally sung by Hurriya Hassan in the film *Ahibbak ya Hassan*

Musicians

Gaida, vocals (5, 6, 7)
Salah Rajab, vocals (2, 3)
Sami Abu Shumays, violin, backup vocals
Tareq Abboushi, buzuq, backup vocals
Dimitri Mikelis, oud, accordion
Johnny Farraj, percussion, backup vocals
Nikolai Ruskin, percussion, backup vocals.

Sami Abu Shumays, Zikrayat Director

Shumays received a bachelor's degree in music composition from Harvard University before turning to Arab music. He first studied Arab violin under Simon Shaheen in New York (1998-2001), then traveled to Egypt on a Fulbright Fellowship. After a year in Egypt, he studied classical muwashahat singing with Mohammad Qassas, and violin with Abdul-Baset Bakkar and Abdul-Min'im Senkary in Syria. Shumays is the director of the ensemble Zikrayat (Memories), a New York-based ensemble dedicated to presenting the traditional repertoire of Arab music and dance. Zikrayat also performs original compositions and specializes in music from the “golden age” of Egyptian cinema. Zikrayat's dancers focus on authentic Egyptian Raqs Sharqi (bellydance), especially as embodied by such legends as Naima Akif and Samia Gamal.

Safaafir

Safaafir is a name that evokes the ancient art of coppersmithing in Iraq. *Soug al-Safaafir*, or the coppersmiths' market, is a well-known market in Baghdad, memorable for the din of hammers on copper and the glowing beauty of each creation. The sound of the Iraqi Maqam has often been likened to the *Soug al-Safaafir* for the metallic timbre of the instruments and the percussive hammering of the ancient rhythms. Amir and Dena ElSaffar, brother and sister, come from a family of Safaafir (sing. Saffar), or coppersmiths, and it is from their ancestors' legacy that the name of the ensemble was born. Since its inception in late 2005, *Safaafir* has performed throughout the US in concert halls, museums, universities, and private parties.

In 2002, Amir set out on a journey to learn the Iraqi Maqam, an intricate and highly developed vocal tradition. In his travels, which took him to Iraq, as well as other countries in the Middle East and Europe, he learned to sing Maqam and to play santoor, a 96-stringed hammered-dulcimer that is used in Maqam performance. When he returned to the U.S. he brought a *djoze* (spike fiddle made from coconut) for Dena, and a pair of *naqaraat* (small kettle drums) for his brother-in-law, Tim Moore. Dena and Tim have performed together for more than a decade with *Salaam*, a Middle Eastern music ensemble which Dena started in 1993. They, too, became inspired by the Maqam of Iraq and began to learn the repertoire from Amir. It is interesting and surprising to many to encounter a group of musicians living in the U.S. who are dedicating themselves to the centuries-old traditions of Iraqi music, particularly because there are few masters

remaining to keep the tradition alive, either in Baghdad or abroad. Fuad Mishu, an esteemed Iraqi musician who lives in the U.S. remarked that Amir and his group were “a miracle.” The gift of this intricate vocal tradition from Iraq is being brought to the ears of Americans, Iraqis, and others, as *Safaafir* continues breathing new life into the music of old, against the backdrop of the 21st century.

Program

Tonight’s program includes a range of Iraqi maqam, including Maqam Hwaizawi, Foug il-Nakhl, Maqam Rashdi, and Talaa'a min Beet Abuha. Amir will provide brief translations from the stage.

Musicians

Amir ElSaffar, lead vocals, *santoor* (hammered dulcimer)

Dena ElSaffar, violin, *joza* (spike fiddle), vocals

Tim Moore, percussion (tabla and riqq), vocals

Amir ElSaffar

One of few in the world who is an expert in the Iraqi maqam, ElSaffar, trumpeter, composer, singer, and santoor player, is garnering an international reputation for his work, both in the traditional Iraqi Maqam and in jazz music. Born in 1977 and raised in an Iraqi-American home in Chicago, he was influenced by an array of musical styles, including classical, rock, jazz, blues, Arab classical and folk music and the Iraqi Maqam. ElSaffar has developed a new approach to playing the trumpet, which utilizes the micro-tuning and ornaments characteristic of Arabic music. His mastery of the Iraqi Maqam, both on the santoor (Iraqi hammered-dulcimer) and as a vocalist, will be featured in Brooklyn Maqam. ElSaffar leads [Safaafir](http://www.safaafir.com), an ensemble dedicated to preserving the centuries-old vocal tradition of the Iraqi Maqam, which is at risk of disappearing due to the few remaining masters keeping the music alive. Since its inception in late 2005, *Safaafir* has performed throughout the US in concert halls, museums, universities, and private parties.

About Iraqi Maqam

Safaafir’s website is a rich resource for learning about Iraqi maqam and the musicology of maqam traditions, generally. We invite you to visit www.safaafir.com from which the following excerpt is taken.

Maqam is the urban classical vocal tradition of Iraq. Found primarily in the cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, the *maqam* repertoire draws upon musical styles of the many populations in Iraq, such as the Bedouins, rural Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen as well as neighboring Persians, Turks, and other populations that have had extensive contact with Iraq throughout history. The use of the word *maqam* in Iraq is distinct from its use in the rest of the Arab world and Turkey, where the term refers to a musical mode on which compositions and improvisations are based. In Iraq, *maqam* refers to the composition itself.

The exact beginning of the *maqam* tradition in Iraq is unknown, and is a subject of debate among *maqam* musicians and connoisseurs. Some believe that the *maqam* is a several hundred years old tradition, brought in by the conquering Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Others postulate that it began during the Abbasid period (8th-13th century A.D.), when Baghdad was the seat of the Islamic caliphate and was a great center of art, learning, and technological achievement. Still others believe that the *maqam* may reach to a much further past, to Iraq’s ancient civilizations, the Babylonian or perhaps the Sumerian.

Until the 20th century, the *maqam* was ubiquitous in the urban centers of modern-day Iraq, its melodies heard in various settings. In religious contexts, *maqam* melodies were used in the call to prayer, during *mawlud* rituals (celebrations of the birth of the prophet Mohammed), as well as in Qur'anic recitation. *Maqam* was also sung in the *zurkhanes* (athletic houses), to energize the participants performing physical activity. It was even sung by street vendors advertising their products. Tradition often dictated which types of vendors would sing what melodies. Formal *maqam* concerts took place in private homes during celebrations and in *gahawi* (coffeehouses), which were the primary venues for *maqam* performance.

There were several coffeehouses in Baghdad that specialized in *maqam*. Among these were *Gahwat Shaabander*, *Gahwat al-Qaysariya*, and *Gahwat 'Azzawi*. These places functioned both as performance spaces as well as institutions wherein the *maqam* was transmitted. During the day, experts, amateurs, and novices, known collectively as *ushshaaq al-maqam*, or lovers of the *maqam*, would sit for hours, philosophizing about the inner meanings of a *maqam* melody, discussing a particular *maqam*'s possibilities, debating who was a more skilled singer, or critiquing a recent performance. Every evening in these *gahawi*, a *maqam* concert would take place that, when performed in its complete sequence, would last about nine hours.

The main performer was the *qari'* (pl. *qurra'*), or reciter. The word *qari'*, which is the same word used for a Qur'an reciter, was used, as opposed to *mughenni*, or singer, to emphasize the spiritual nature of the *maqam* and to elevate the *maqam* to a status higher than other, lighter vocal genres, which were not held in such esteem. These *qurra'* were usually craftsmen or merchants, coming from the lower strata of Baghdadi society, for whom singing was a not a full-time profession. Most did not have a formal education, and some were even illiterate, yet they were masters of a highly intellectual, complex vocal form, which could be perfected only after years of disciplined, concentrated work. They also possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of Arabic poetry, from which they would choose lines to recite to a *maqam*. When performing a *maqam*, the *qari'* would enter a state of deep spiritual exaltation, which would spread to the listeners in the room, who would often let out expressions of joy and ecstasy, engaging in an interplay and exchange of emotion with the performers.

In performance, the *qari'* was accompanied by a four-piece ensemble, known as a *chalghi baghdadi*, which consisted of a *jowza* (a four-stringed spike-fiddle with a coconut shell resonator), a *santur* (a box-zither with steel strings, played with wooden sticks), a *dumbug* (goblet-shaped drum), a *riqq* (tambourine), and *naqqarat* (two small kettle drums played with sticks).

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.

Brooklyn Maqam Arab Music Festival is made possible with major support from American Express, Baisley Powell Elebash Fund, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, New York State Music Fund established by the New York Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and National Endowment for the Arts. BAC Folk Arts is sponsored by Con Edison. Additional support is provided by New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Council and its Brooklyn Delegation.

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BAC Folk Feet Dance Programs are supported by the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, The New York Community Trust, and Rockefeller Brothers Fund.