



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 15, 2009

The Kennedy Center Presents

Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World

**Unprecedented Three Week Festival highlighting the Arts and
Culture of the 22 Arab Nations
To Take Place February 23-March 15, 2009**

Festival presented in cooperation with the League of Arab States

WASHINGTON, D.C. — From February 23 to March 15, 2008, the Kennedy Center will present *ARABESQUE: Arts of the Arab World*. The unprecedented three-week celebration of Arab arts and culture will include performances in music, dance, and theater, as well as exhibitions featuring art installations, photos, sculpture, cuisine, mosaics, fashion, a souk (market), soundscape, and more. The festival, presented in cooperation with the League of Arab States, will feature more than 800 artists representing 22 Arab countries.

From the Arabian Gulf to the Levant and North Africa, this region of the world is the birthplace of human civilization and features extraordinary diversity in geography, traditions, landscape, religion and contemporary aesthetics. During the festival, the Center will be transformed with exhibits on every floor, festival performances on the nine stages, and even the cuisine in the restaurant and café will offer a taste of Arab culture. The festival offers a number of free performances on the Millennium stage, free access to the exhibit spaces, and low ticket prices on a number of other performances.

While the Kennedy Center has previously presented Arab artists, this is the first time it has launched a festival showcasing Arab arts of this magnitude, marking the largest presentation of the Arab arts ever in the United States.

“I believe the arts create peace and provide a window onto understanding people,” said Kennedy Center President Michael M. Kaiser. “I hope this festival will act as a catalyst towards achieving both between the Arab and Western worlds.” He added, “This festival will showcase the rich heritage and beauty of the Arab world through its extraordinary artists on the Kennedy Center’s stages.”

The League of Arab States is a regional organization with a combined population of 325 million that spans two continents—Africa and Asia—over five million square miles and includes 22 countries and territories: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The festival title was inspired by the word Arabesque, derived from the word Arab, and refers to a calligraphic style developed in the 9th century in Iraq. The arabesque style reflects flowing and intersecting geometric lines and was adopted to define the ballet position. It is used as an evocative description of visual, dance, theater, or musical styles that are Arab or carry a marked Arab influence.

THEATER

Washington, D.C. Premiere

Alive from Palestine: Stories Under Occupation

Al-Kasaba Theater and Cinematheque, Palestine

February 26-27, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets, \$25

Terrace Theater

From beneath a mountain of newspapers, Palestinian characters appear, each with a compelling tale of the truth behind the headlines: from a youth with aspirations for Hollywood, to an old man living under continual occupation, to a son calling home from abroad, to a mother losing a child, and the plight of young lovers. Together, these stories of ordinary life lived in the most extraordinary circumstances put a human face to the Palestinian experience. Created by Palestinian artists as a response to the conflict in their homeland, this production by Al-Kasaba Theater & Cinematheque is brought to the Kennedy Center from Ramallah where they stand as the only professional multi-purpose venue in the Palestinian territories. The piece is performed in Arabic with English surtitles.

United States Premiere

Richard III: an Arab Tragedy

Sulayman Al-Bassam Theatre, Kuwait

March 6-7, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Tickets, \$35

In this world of tribal allegiances, family in-fighting, and absolute power, the questions of leadership, religion, and foreign intervention that are at the heart of Shakespeare's *Richard III* take on powerful new meanings in a modern Arab context. As the play unfolds within the hothouse, feudal atmosphere of desert palaces in an oil-rich Kingdom, the production gives a window into the often misunderstood world of the Arabian Gulf in all its richness: its social customs, musical heritage, and some of its darker mystical rituals. Adapted by Kuwaiti writer/director Sulayman Al-Bassam, this production was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company as part of the Complete Works Festival in 2006. Receiving its U.S. premiere, the piece is performed in Arabic with English surtitles.

The Sounds of Desire

Heather Raffo and Amir El Saffar Iraqi-American

March 6, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets \$18

Family Theater

Heather Raffo, author and actress of the award-winning one woman show *9 Parts of Desire*, teams up with Amir El Saffar, an accomplished jazz trumpeter and Iraqi *santoor* player, for a dramatic evening of spoken word and melodic solos. Together, they present a concert of urban and classical sounds that spring from both their Iraqi and American roots. Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* detailed the lives of nine ordinary and extraordinary Iraqi women. Both mythical and contemporary, the women's words weave in and out of the ancient quarter tone scales of Amir's classical *santoor* and the improvisational heart of jazz, resulting in a melody decidedly Iraqi and American.

Khamsoun (Fifty)

Familia Productions, Tunisia

Written by Jalila Bakar

Directed by Fadhil Jaibi

March 14 2009, 7:30 p.m., March 15, 2009, 2:00pm

Terrace Theater

Tickets \$25

After much controversy in Tunisia, *Khamsoun*, (meaning 50 in Arabic) a creation by Jalila Bakar and Fadhil Jaibi, opened at the Municipal Theatre in Tunis following its critically acclaimed world premiere at the Odeon Theatre in Paris. The play deals with an important period in Tunisia's history, spanning 50 years—from the country's independence up until 2006. The work celebrates Tunisia's independence while also addressing the social challenges Tunisia has faced after 50 years of freedom. The work is performed in Arabic with English surtitles.

DANCE

The Smala B.B

Cie2k_far Dance Company

Khalid Benghrib, Morocco

February 24, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Tickets \$25

Moroccan choreographer Khalid Benghrib leads his all-male contemporary dance company in its American premiere with *The Smala B.B*. Benghrib studies dance in France and since 1999 has been active with various performing arts groups and festivals.

Sufi Trance from Aleppo

Ensemble Al-Kindi with Sheikh Habboush and the Whirling Dervishes of Aleppo, Syria

February 27, 2009, 8 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18-\$35

The Al-Kindi Ensemble, founded in 1983 by the French virtuoso of Arab zither (qânûn) Julien Jâlal Eddine Weiss, resident in Aleppo (capital of northern Syria and a stopping place on the famous Silk Road) is currently rated among the best groups devoted to classical Arab music, owing to the musical qualities displayed by its performers, and to the high standard of its work, steeped in the various musical traditions of the near and middle East.

Knights of the Moon

Caracalla Dance Theatre, Lebanon

February 28, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

March 1, 2009, 1:30 p.m.

Opera House

Tickets \$18-\$100

Founded in 1968 by Abdel-Halim Caracalla, Caracalla Dance Theatre is the first and most prominent dance theater in the Middle East. Their unique language in movement draws on western-style technique fused with Arab traditions. As part of *ARABESQUE*, Caracalla performs *Knights of the Moon*, a theatrical extravaganza based on an epic story. The production is a tale of jealousy, hidden identities, and love. *Songs performed in Arabic with English surtitles.*

Allegoria Stanza

Cie La BARAKA, Algeria

Abou Lagraa, Artistic Director

March 3, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Tickets \$25

Cie La BARAKA makes its Washington, D.C. debut under the artistic direction of French-Algerian choreographer Abou Lagraa, who founded the company in 1997 with fellow dancer Aurelia Picot. Fusing hip hop, contemporary dance, and multimedia visuals to stunning effect, the piece for seven contemporary dancers and three hip hop dancers is set against Charles Picq's videos of water. Born in France of Algerian descent, Lagraa employs a wide variety of movement styles and musical influences that combine his North African roots with French dance conservatory training to create a vision uniquely his own.

Temporament

MA'AT for Contemporary Dance

Karima Mansour, Egypt

March 4, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Family Theater

Tickets \$18

Egyptian dancer and choreographer Karima Mansour makes her North American debut. Mansour's *Temporament* is a duet with percussionist Ahmad Compaore that shows a woman struggling to escape traditional forms of behavior. The piece won first prize in the Egypt-France Dance Festival of 2004. A graduate of the London School of Contemporary Dance and the Cinema Institute in Cairo, Mansour founded her company MA'AT in 1999 as the first independent contemporary dance company based in Cairo.

D'ORIENT

Compagnie Thor, Belgium

March 10 & 11, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Tickets \$25

Belgium-based Compagnie Thor makes its Washington, D.C. debut with Artistic Director and choreographer Thierry Smits's *D'ORIENT*, born out of his passion for the Middle East. Following a number of trips to the Arab world, Smits brought back images flooded with light, filled with sensuality and generosity, beauty and disorder. The piece does not attempt any political analysis; it was inspired by characteristics of a civilization, by its people, traditions, myths, and dreams with the goal of interpreting them through contemporary dance.

OMAN...O Man

Directed by Debbie Allen

Commissioned by the Kennedy Center

Presented in association with the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center

Oman

March 12-14, 2009, 7:30pm

March 14-15, 2009, 1:30pm

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18 - \$35

Emmy winner and Kennedy Center favorite Debbie Allen is back with *OMAN...O Man!*, a world premiere Kennedy Center commission presented in association with the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center of Oman. Created and choreographed by Allen, this ground-breaking, dance-driven extravaganza explores the culture of Oman. It features young Omani performers collaborating with their peers from Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. to original music composed by Grammy®-winning trumpeter Arturo Sandoval. At the center of the work are two young men—one Omani, another American—who are roommates at a military academy. Through music, movement, song, and dance, they take a magical journey together and discover the similarities and the differences between their two cultures, and learn much about each other. For age 9 and up. From *Pepito's Story*, *Brothers of the Knight and Pearl* to *Dancing in the Wings*, *Dreams* and *Alex in Wonderland*, Allen's imaginative productions for the Kennedy Center are always a hit with sold-out audiences.

MUSIC

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra

Marcel Khalifé, Music Director, Qatar

Lorin Maazel, Conductor

February 24, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Opera House

Tickets \$10-\$35

Lorin Maazel, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, conducts the Arab and western musicians of the newly formed orchestra in its international debut program that includes two new works by their Music Director and resident composer Marcel Khalifé and Beethoven's immortal Fifth Symphony.

Bachir Attar & the Master Musicians of Jajouka, Morocco

February 25, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18-\$35

The Master Musicians of Jajouka represent an ancient musical tradition. Led by Bachir Attar, they live in the small village of Jajouka, Morocco and have been recognized by an official proclamation from the government of the Kingdom of Morocco. They play a number of traditional instruments, including the *ghaita* (the Arab version of the oboe), the *lira* (a bamboo flute), and the *gimbri* (a three-stringed lute), along with double-headed Moroccan drums.

Iraq: the Maqams and Songs of Nostalgic and Gamly

Farida and the Iraqi Maqam Ensemble, Iraq

Malouma, Mauritania

March 2, 2009, 8:00pm

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18 - \$35

The Iraqi Maqam Ensemble was founded in 1989 in Baghdad by Mohammad H. Gomar. The group has met its objective to revive the Iraqi *maqam* and other kinds of Iraqi musical heritage via Arab and international festivals and the voice of Farida Mohammad Ali, the *maqam* singer. The Iraqi *maqam* is a musical genre based on the succession of vocal parts, the sequence of modes and the use of rhythms and poetic form according to an order established by old Arab musical traditions.

Malouma's music is a mix of traditional and modern sounds, a melding of western styles to the Moorish music of the Sahara and adding electric guitars to traditional instruments such as the four-stringed, lute-like *tidinit*. She's also known as a spokeswoman for women's rights in a Muslim country.

Simon Shaheen

Aswat- Celebrating the Golden Age of Arab Music

Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Tunisia

March 6, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18-\$35

Simon Shaheen, one of the leading Arab composers and multi-instrumentalists, brings this golden era back to life with an exciting new multimedia project. With a traditional, 12- to 15-piece Arab orchestra and special guest vocalists, Shaheen directs an evening of classic, unforgettable melodies, soul-stirring voices, and lush orchestral arrangements. The period from the 1920s to the 1950s is considered a golden age of song in many parts of the Arab world—in particular, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. Many of these country's greatest singers and composers reached unprecedented heights of artistry and stardom throughout these years.

And We Love Life...Salute to Mahmoud Darwish

Marcel Khalifé and Al Mayadine Ensemble, Lebanon

March 7, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Tickets \$18 - \$35

Since Marcel Khalifé studied the *oud* at the Beirut National Conservatory, he has been injecting a new life into the instrument. Since the early 1970s, Khalifé has been an advocate for Lebanon's musical heritage and the Arab chorale. With his group Al Mayadine Ensemble, he has performed all over the world, showcasing original works that rely not only on the music, but reflect his deep attachment to the lyrics as well. In this concert, his association with great contemporary Palestinian poet the late Mahmoud Darwish comes to the fore.

Sultany

Fathy Salama and Orchestra, Egypt

March 8, 2009, 7:30pm

Terrace Theater

Tickets \$25

Egyptian pianist Fathy Salama was born in Cairo. He grew up listening to the radio, which played artists who influenced him so much that he decided to become a musician. Playing the piano at age six was followed by performing in Cairo clubs at thirteen, followed by visits to Europe and New York to learn jazz. He progressed to making hits in Cairo during the 80s, has been touring the world, and won prizes including a Grammy for the album "Egypt," a collaboration with Youssou N'Dour. His music reflects his tireless efforts to bridge traditional and modern music from the Orient.

Free Performances on The Millennium Stage

When Oud Speaks

Oud Knights with Shayma & Amina, Bahrain

February 23, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Amina and Shayma are traditional *oud* players from Bahrain. Previously members of the Bahrain Music Institute music group, the duo has performed at the Bahrain International Music Festival, Culture of the Arab World in Paris, and the Bahrain National Day Festival in Tokyo.

Damascene Jasmine

Al-Farah Choir, Syria

February 24, 2009, 6 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

FREE

Founded by Fr. Elias Zahlaoui, Al-Farah is the choir of the Lady of Damascus church in Syria that began with 55 children from all Christian sects. They first sang on Christmas Eve of 1977 and since have grown to an ensemble of around 500 people (ranging in age from 7 to 75). The Choir's goal is to revive and maintain the Byzantine church rites and hymns and Arab hymns. The more than 100 children of the choir will perform Byzantine, Muslim and Arab songs.

Chabab Al Andalous Rabat Orchestra with Bajeddoub Mohammed and Ronda Bahae

Morocco

February 25, 2009, 6:00pm

FREE

The orchestra was created by young music lovers from different backgrounds with the goal of preserving the traditions and artistic heritage of Andalusian Music, which is from Al-Andalus, the name given by the Arab or Muslim inhabitants to Spain. The musicians play traditional songs and chants using Arabic with traditional instruments. The orchestra has participated in many international festivals and continues to present its work at Moroccan cultural events throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, and the United States.

Amine & Hamza

Tunisia

February 26, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Award-winning Tunisian brothers, *oud* player Amine and *qanun* player Hamza M'Raihi play classical Middle Eastern music, as well as their own compositions. They have developed a new style of playing that mixes the meditational and improvisational aspects of Arab music while introducing dynamic expressions.

K'NAAN

Somalia

February 27, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

FREE

Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, hip hop artist K'NAAN spent his childhood in the district of Wardhiigleey during the Somali Civil War. His aunt, Magool, was one of Somalia's most famous singers and his grandfather, Haji Mohamed, is a poet. K'NAAN's father, Abdi, left the country along with many other intellectuals to settle in New York City. He mailed money home to his family—and for K'NAAN, hip hop albums by artists like Nas and Rakim. Despite speaking no English, the young K'NAAN taught himself hip hop and rap diction, copying the lyrics and style phonetically. He later immigrated with his family to the United States and eventually settled in Toronto, Canada. Critics have said K'NAAN has "a sound that fuses Bob Marley, conscious American hip hop, and brilliant protest poetry." His voice

and style have been compared to Eminem, but his subject matter is very different. K'NAAN says he makes: "urgent music with a message", talking about the situation in his homeland of Somalia and calling for an end to violence and bloodshed.

Voice of Comoros

Nawal, Comoros

February 28, 2009, 6:00pm

FREE

Born into a family with many musicians, Nawal was exposed to both popular and spiritual music from a young age, growing up in the Comoros islands, located between northern Madagascar and northeastern Mozambique. Nawal sings in Comoran, Arabic, French and English. An acoustic roots-based fusion, her music is rhythmically compelling and beautifully lyrical. Known as the "Voice of Comoros," Nawal is also the first Comoran woman singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist to give performances in public. She has gained international praise as a self-produced artist with her powerful voice and socially progressive commentary. She has performed professionally for 20 years, and as a multi-instrumentalist she plays the *gambusi* (Comoran banjo-like instrument, cousin to the *oud*), the *daf* (Iranian frame drum), and guitar, among others.

Married Man on Vacation

Coopérative Théâtrale Hammou Boutlélis

Performed by Samir Bouanani, Algeria

March 1, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

The humorous one-man show is written by Mourad Senouci and performed by Samir Bouanani. It's the hilarious account of the transformation of a man who doesn't truly appreciate his wife until she goes on vacation. Performed in Arabic with English surtitles.

Remedies for an Injured Iraqi Soul

Tami Meekoo, Iraq

March 2, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Born in 1992 in Iraq, Tami Meekoo began playing the piano at the age of 5 and continued to study music in Baghdad through the 1990s. In 2003, Meekoo moved to Jordan to pursue his musical studies further and performed throughout the region before moving to Canada to further his study of music in North America. His program includes works by Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Chopin, Ravel, and others.

Pop Art – Duo Piano

Rami Khalifé and Francesco Tristano, Lebanon

March 3, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Rami Khalifé exhibited a passion for music at an early age. After a short initiation on the piano, seven-year-old Rami left Lebanon for musical training in France at the Conservatoire National de région de Boulogne-Billancourt. Along with his training at the conservatory, he studied piano with noted Lebanese pianist Abd El Rahman El Bacha. Khalifé creates compositions and improvisations in a variety of styles and genres ranging from classical to contemporary, jazz, and world music. He performs his non-traditional program, an exciting and dynamic production, with his Juilliard colleague, pianist Francesco Tristano.

Voices of Marrakech

Bnet Houariyat, Morocco

March 4, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

B'net Houariyat (meaning "The Daughters of the Houara") is comprised of five women from the region of Marrakech performing traditional Berber songs and dances that reflect the multiple facets of Islam and the female condition. The harmonies, melodies, and rhythms in the songs of these Bedouin women are incomparable. Hauntingly beautiful, this music transports you to another world. The themes explore the cultural traditions and the reality of these extraordinary women.

Kinan Azmeh and Ensemble

Syria

March 5, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Kinan Azmeh is the only Syrian and first Arab to win the first prize at the Nicolay Rubinstein international youth competition in Moscow, Russia, 1997. He completed his Masters degree and graduate diploma in music from the Juilliard School in New York, studying with Charles Neidich. Born in Damascus, Syria, Kinan studied at the Arab conservatory of music in Damascus with Shukry Shawkey and Nicolay Viovanof. He has appeared as a soloist in performances around the world.

From Sudan

Salma El Assal and Ensemble

Sudan

March 6, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

One of the leading Sudanese voices today, Salma El Assal originally comes from western Sudan and presents contemporary arrangements of traditional Sudanese songs. Her voice has been compared to that of Aretha Franklin. She was discovered as a small child and sang at many weddings before moving to Cairo where she has since performed in many cities throughout Europe and the Arab world.

An Evening of Breaking Poems

Suheir Hammad

Palestinian-American

March 7, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

A Palestinian-American poet, author, and political activist, Suheir Hammad was born in Amman, Jordan to Palestinian refugee parents and immigrated with her family to Brooklyn, New York City when she was five years old. As an adolescent, Hammad was heavily influenced by Brooklyn's vibrant hip hop scene. She had also absorbed the stories her parents and grandparents had told her of life in their hometown of Lydda, before the 1948 Palestinian exodus, and of the suffering they endured afterward, first in the Gaza Strip and then in Jordan. From these disparate influences, Hammad was able to weave into her work a common narrative of dispossession, not only in her capacity as an immigrant, a Palestinian, and a Muslim, but as a woman struggling against society's inherent sexism and as a poet in her own right. When hip hop entrepreneur Russell Simmons came across her piece entitled 'First Writing Since,' describing her reaction to the September 11 attacks, he signed her to a deal with HBO's Def Poetry Jam. She recited original works on tour for the next two years. She is now working on her third publication, a book of prose.

Hayha Music

Hoba Hoba Spirit

Morocco

March 8, 2009, 6 p.m.

FREE

Performing reggae, rock, and *gnawa* (a mixture of African, Berber, and Arab religious songs and rhythms), Hoba Hoba Spirit was established in 1998 and is based in Casablanca, Morocco. Making its U.S. debut, the band is composed of Adil Hanine (drums), Anouar Zehouani (guitar), Saâd bouidi (Bass guitar), Reda Allali (vocals and guitar) and Mohamed Laâbidi (percussion).

Country of Origin: Acts I and III

Elmaz Abinader

Lebanon

March 9, 2009, 6:00 pm

Millennium Stage

FREE

The powerful and moving stories of generations of Lebanese-American women are told in this one-woman show featuring Elmaz Abinader. These Storytelling Plays are of migration and identity loss, giving voice to women confronted by the challenges of living in two worlds and trying to fit in one without erasing the other. Musical director Tony Khalifé leads the band.

Tamim Al Barghouti

In Jerusalem

Palestine

March 10, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

Millennium Stage

FREE

Palestinian poet and political scientist Tamim Al Barghouti has four published poetry collections in Arabic. He also wrote a weekly feature on Arab culture, history, and identity for the Lebanese *Daily Star* between 2003 and 2004. He will read from his poetry.

Nathalie Handal

March 11, 2009, 6:00 pm

Millennium Stage

FREE

Part I: A Poetry Reading

Handal tells stories about her dislocations from the Middle East to Latin America to Europe to the US and reads her poems shifting the mood from more serious to humorous.

Part II: Hakawatiyeh

Handal will perform the monologue "Hakawatiyeh," which tells the story of an actress who becomes a storyteller. Traditionally Hakawatis (storytellers) are only men. It is considered daring and scandalous for a women to take on the role of storyteller.

Part III: "Seven Gates"

Seven short films by different international filmmakers. Each of Nathalie Handal's poems takes place inside one of the gates of the old city of Jerusalem. The poems are mostly about a search for love and hope.

Oriental Music Ensemble of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music-Palestine

March 12, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

FREE

Oriental Music Ensemble performs classical and contemporary Arab music for *oud*, *nay*, clarinet, *qanun*, and percussion. The conservatory, with campuses in Bethlehem and Ramallah, was famously endorsed by both Edward Said and conductor Daniel Barenboim for its teaching of Western and Arab music to Palestinian youth.

Contemporary Musical Revelations

Ahmed Fathi, Yemen

March 13, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

FREE

Renowned singer and lute player Ahmed Fathi is one of the symbols of Yemeni song. Born in Hodeida, he was greatly affected by Yemeni traditional music. In the 1970s, he joined the musical institute in Cairo and obtained a diploma in harmonic music and specialized in playing the lute instrument.

Eya

RUM – Tareq Al Nasser Musical Group, Jordan

March 14, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

FREE

Led by Arab musicians Tareq Al Nasser and directed by Russol Al Nasser, this group started with nine professional and amateur musicians that rapidly grew into an entity of more than 20 members. The Festival of Arab Media has honored Tareq Al Nasser with a Golden Award. The group explores Oriental and Western traditions to form a new listening and imaginative experience. Their name stems from Wadi Rum, the lower valley in the southwestern part of Jordan.

3Marabouts

Djamel Laroussi

Algeria

March 15, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

FREE

Djamel Laroussi and his band combine both western and North African rhythms based on traditional desert music from Sahara. Although the emphasis is on traditional Algerian music, there are strong influences of reggae, jazz, hard rock, pop, soul, and funk. Djamel is a master of combining all of these elements into a sound that is uniquely his own—bridging gaps between disparate musical styles—and singing in Algerian, Arabic, and Berber. *3Marabouts* draws listeners into the realm of Djamel's spiritual heritage—dedicated to the native land of his ancestors, the village of 2 Marabouts. (Marabout is a saint who plays a crucial role in Maghreb and sub-Saharan countries.) The group has recently toured Sweden, Holland, Germany, Spain and France.

EXHIBITIONS and INSTALLATIONS

February 23 – March 15, 2009

Open Daily from 10:00am until 10:00pm

Free

Brides of the Arab World

Hall of Nations

Curated especially for this festival, this exhibition brings together more than 40 elaborate and colorful dresses traditionally worn by brides throughout 22 countries in the Arab-speaking world. Some date from the 19th or 20th century and are no longer worn by today's young women; others are contemporary creations whose style has changed little over past decades yet remain popular with modern brides. Many of these outfits show off some of the exquisite textile arts of this region, as well as the skills of gold and silversmiths, who craft the decorative jewelry and headdresses that complete these costumes.

Azza Fahmy: Inspirations

North Gallery

The journey that has led Azza Fahmy to become the most famous name in jewelry in the Middle East began more than 30 years ago, when the college-educated young woman dared to venture into a world entirely dominated by men and signed on as an apprentice to one of the leading jewelers in Cairo. Over the years, she mastered her craft—both design and production—and became known for her iconoclastic combinations of gold and silver (traditional jewelry was either one or the other). But Azza Fahmy's greatest appeal lies in her ability to take cultural elements and symbols—from traditional houses to classical Arabic poetry to camel tassels—and reinterpret them ways that are a respectful nod to tradition yet totally fresh and modern. This exhibition, created exclusively for this festival, will explore the various aspects of Arab culture that have inspired the art of this great jeweler, whose designs have delighted clients from Queen Noor to Catherine Deneuve.

Hassan Massoudy: Desire to Take Wing

South Gallery

This exhibit, created for this festival, highlights the work of Hassan Massoudy an internally renowned Iraqi calligrapher. His work is a subtle mix of present and past, oriental and occidental art, tradition and modernity. He perpetuates tradition while breaking from it. Over the years he has purified and simplified the lines of his drawing. The words and phrases he draws come from poets and writers from all over the world or sometimes simply from popular wisdom.

Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World

North Gallery

Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World brings together the work of female artists from the Arab world and beyond to attempt to break the stereotypes attached to women in the Islamic world. The exhibition spans the paintings and etchings of women artists who live in countries throughout the Arab world that include: Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sudan, Oman, Yemen, U.A.E., Algeria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan. Their subject matter includes issues related to gender, the environment, politics, nationalism, social mores as well as abstract works that carry pure aesthetic values. For *Arabesque*, the Kennedy Center will create an exclusive installation using 29 paintings by the 26 Arab artists participating in the exhibit. The media are as varied as their subjects and include: oils, acrylics, watercolors, inks, gouaches, dry cacti, silkscreen, etching, collage and treated photographic print. The exhibition works come from the permanent collection of the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman.

Lara Baladi: Roba Vecchia

Terrace Gallery

Lebanese artist Lara Baladi recently won the Grand Nile Award at the 2008 Cairo Biennial. The installation presents image-fragments of the artist's work recomposed into a shifting array of kaleidoscopic images or "kalos eidos" - beautiful forms. *Roba Vecchia*, echoes a sound familiar to the Cairene street, a call that also functions as an advertisement for an ongoing process of collecting and recycling. The piece echoes traditions of accumulating and reworking leftovers of the past in a continuous rewriting of a non-narrative history.

Souk

Parking Level A

A centerpiece of the Arabesque festival is the creation of a souk, a vibrant marketplace that will showcase an extraordinary representation of the arts and handicrafts from the Arab world. The souk will feature some of the region's finest examples of traditional weaving, embroidery and basketry; furniture and household accessories; beautiful ceramic pieces and glassware; exquisite jewelry collections; contemporary Arabic calligraphy pieces; olive oil, coffee and other delicacies; designer handbags and contemporary fashion accessories, and much more. These

offerings will reflect the richness and beauty of traditional crafts, as well as the creativity and contemporary stylings of the Arab world. The souk will be open daily over the course of the Arabesque festival.

Multi-Media “Exploratorium”

Atrium

With a 3D film commissioned especially for *Arabesque*, this multimedia exhibition uses cutting edge technology to explore the Arab contributions to society during the Golden Age of Enlightenment. The interactive installation educates visitors to the advances in mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and chemistry that were achieved between the 8th and 15th centuries.

Youssef Nabil

North Atrium Foyer

Born and raised in Cairo, Youssef Nabil drew inspiration from the classic Egyptian cinema – interested in the nostalgia, glamour, ease, elegance and melodrama of this world of black and white film. This exhibition of his work, created especially for the festival, celebrates the characters, celebrities, and themes that run through the shifting scenes of his life’s film.

The Conference of the Birds

South Gallery

The Conference of the Birds is an epic poem by 12th century Persian writer Faridud-Din Attar that relates the flight of 30 birds to a Sufi master’s journey to enlightenment. This exhibit illuminates the Sufi doctrine of the oneness of God and universe through the calligraphy and illustrations of modern Kuwaiti designer Farah Behbehani.

Literary Events

Literary Panels

All Literary Panels Series events are in the Family Theater – FREE (Tickets required)

The *Arabesque* literary series features an unprecedented gathering of Arab writers in the U.S. The series will stretch over three days and will present eight exciting and thought-provoking panels. This groundbreaking gathering brings together novelists, poets, and critics from 13 Arab countries. These critically acclaimed authors will discuss the challenges of producing relevant art that probes the region’s volatile realities, examining its past and imagining its future.

“Women Writing Men, Men Writing Women”

March 5, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

In keeping with global changes, the lives of men and women in the Arab world have intersected in ways unthinkable in the past. Women can now be found working in all sectors of the economy, gaining more visibility and assuming greater responsibilities. In the social realm, however, women and men occupy spheres that do not always overlap. The communication gap between the two genders and the push for equality among them has been an ongoing concern for the region’s authors. Many of these authors have attempted to imagine the lives of members of the opposite gender and have shown genuine empathy and understanding. The invited authors on this panel will discuss the challenge of writing another gender and how they see literature as a way to create a dialogue between men and women in the region.

Panel Moderator: Amal Amireh – Palestine/ USA

Panel Speakers:

Hoda Barakat – Lebanon/ France
Sonallah Ibrahim - Egypt

“Migration, Exile and the Search for Identity”

March 5, 2009, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Beginning with its first modern intellectuals traveling to the West in the mid-19th Century and up to recent migrations in search of economic and political freedom, the Arab world has seen more than its fair share of displacement and exile. This physical and existential trauma is exemplified by the Palestinian experience of diaspora, but can also be witnessed among other Arab populations.

Preoccupied with how Arab individuals and communities have coped with dislocation, the writers on this panel will discuss their various approaches to addressing the changes and transformations brought on by migration and exile.

Panel Moderator: Ahdaf Soueif – Egypt/ UK

Panel Speakers:

Jamal Mahjoub - Sudan
Duna Ghali-Iraq

“Literature and the Real Arab World”

March 7, 2009, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Various generations of Arab authors have employed the novel to depict important historical events or epochs in the region. Increasingly Arab authors are writing out of an urge to unveil prohibited experiences and in doing so are defying social taboos and political considerations. In this conversation some of the Arab world’s noted novelists will address the challenges and opportunities of addressing current political and social concerns.

Panel Moderator:

Khaled Mattawa – Libya/ USA

Panel Speakers:

Adania Shibli - Palestine
Radwa Ashour - Egypt
Ahmed El-Fagih - Libya

“Books and Readers in the Arab World”

March 7, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

With unprecedented sales of books by Arab authors such as Alaa Al-Aswany and Raja Al-Sanea and international authors Paolo Coelho and J K Rowling the Arab World is experiencing a renewed interest in books and in reading. On the other hand, there is a growing concern in the region about the impact that decreasing literacy rates and the increased reliance on television are having on the culture. In this panel discussion, noted authors and critics will share their perspective on the state of books, reading, and publishing in the Arab World.

Panel Moderator:

Adila Laidi-Hanieh – Palestine

Panel Speakers:

Mohammed Bennis - Morocco
Elias Farkouh - Jordan
Ferial J. Ghazoul - Iraq
Saad Albazei – Saudi Arabia

“In Other Words: Expatriate Arab Literature”

March 7, 2009, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Increasingly Arab authors who write in languages other than Arabic are gaining notice. Multilingual dual citizens, they have created a literature that manages to cover vast tracts of time and space and to address multiple audiences in various languages. This panel will include award-winning Arab authors who have found a home in English and French. They will discuss the ways in which they see their role as "world authors" and how their natural attachment to their countries of origin and their native language(s) factor into their creative process.

Panel Moderator: Laila Lalami - Morocco/ USA

Panel Speakers:

Ahdaf Soueif – Egypt/ UK

Anouar Benmalek – Algeria

Abdourahman A. Waberi - Djibouti

“Arab Literature and the World of the Spirit and the Imagination”

March 8, 2009, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

In contemporary Arab literature the reader is likely to encounter the fabled *djinn*s of the Arabian Nights as well as spaceships hailing from the future. Arab authors have highlighted the importance of the imagination as a powerful driving force in enriching individual lives and in providing parallels for the political and social conditions of the Arab World. A panel of novelists and poets will address the role they assign to fantasy and the magical as a means of creating relevant art.

Panel Moderator: Ferial J. Ghazoul - Iraq

Panel Speakers:

Fadhil Al-Azzawi - Iraq

Amel Moussa - Tunisia

Gamal Al-Ghitany - Egypt

“Containing Multitudes: A Conversation with Arab American Writers”

March 8, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Celebrated Arab American writers of different generations and national backgrounds discuss their writing process, their relationship with their audiences, and their role as cultural bridge-builders between their fellow American citizens and the people and cultures of their Arab countries of origin.

Panel Moderator: Khaled Mattawa – Libya/ USA

Panel Speakers:

Elmaz Abinader – Lebanon/ USA

Hayan Charara – Lebanon/USA

Laila Lalami – Morocco/ USA

Pauline Kaldas - USA

“Poetry, the Diwan of the Arabs in its Fourth Millennium: A Tribute to Mahmoud Darwish”

March 8, 2009, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

This gathering of the Arab world's most critically acclaimed poets will address the state and future of poetry; the Arab world's most cherished and venerated art form. The poets will also give tribute to the legacy of the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, one of the world's great modern poets.

Panel Moderator: Fady Joudah - Palestine/ USA

Panel Speakers:

Qassim Haddad - Bahrain

Mohammed Bennis - Morocco

Iman Mersal - Egypt

"A Literary Celebration"

Ahdaf Soueif

March 9, 2009, 11:00a.m. - 12:00 pm.

Ahdaf Soueif, author of the bestselling novel *The Map of Love*, provides insight into how to approach cultural differences and contemporary issues in our world today. The audience will have the opportunity to ask questions of the author.

Ahdaf Soueif - Egypt/ UK

FILM

This series aims to provide a glimpse into the cinema of the Arab world. In the 1920s, Egypt was one of the first countries to embrace cinema, and in its heyday Cairo produced films to rival Hollywood and Bombay. Today, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, with their French connection, are fascinating examples of the energy and originality that cross-cultural co-production can generate. The diverse cultures of these and other Arab countries are explored through titles selected from the past and present.

ADHEN (DERNIER MAQUIS)

Tunisia

US PREMIERE

March 14, 2009 at 7:30pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche (2008, 93 min)

Set in a run-down repair yard, a group of Muslim workers are not entirely happy when their boss establishes an on-site mosque and appoints an Iman for them whilst denying them reasonable wages. A film of wonderfully spare and leisured storytelling which won the Special Jury Prize at the Dubai Film Festival.

THE ONE MAN VILLAGE (SAMAAN BILDAYAA)

Lebanon

US PREMIERE

March 14, 2009 at 4:00pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Simon El Habre (2008, 86 min)

This lyrical film, winner of the Dubai Film Festival Special Jury Documentary prize, is the director's homage to his elderly uncle, the only remaining inhabitant of a village from which everyone fled during the 15 year civil war.

POMEGRANATES AND MYRRH (AL MOR WA AL RUMMAN)

Palestine

EAST COAST PREMIERE

March 13, 2009 at 7:30pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Najwa Najjar (2008, 95 min)

Kamar, a Christian from Jerusalem is now married and living in Ramallah where she enjoys dancing with a local troupe. But then her husband is arrested and in the emptiness that follows she finds herself drawn to the new dance choreographer.

A SUMMER IN LA GOULETTE (UN ETE A LA GOULETTE)

Tunisia

March 11, 2009 at 7:30pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Férid Boughedir (1996, 100 min)

This delightful comedy recalls Tunis of the late 60s. Three teenage girl friends, one Muslim, one Jewish and one Christian, are determined to lose their virginity amidst the excitement of Claudia Cardinale coming to visit her home town.

LE GRAND VOYAGE

Morocco

March 15, 2009 at 4:00pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Ismaël Ferroukhi (2004, 108 min)

In this Arab road movie Reda, a young French Moroccan, is reluctantly forced to drive from France in an old, battered car to take his elderly father on a pilgrimage to Mecca and experience the travails of the road and clash of generations.

WEDDING IN GALILEE (NOCE EN GALILEE)

Palestine

March 15, 2009 at 7:30pm

Tickets \$8

Dir. Michel Khleifi (1987, 100 min; US version 113 min)

This gentle but complex film is a classic of Arab cinema and the first Palestinian film to appear in the Cannes Film Festival. A village elder receives permission for his son to have a traditional Arab wedding but only if the local Israeli commander attends.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets may be purchased at the Kennedy Center Box Office, online at kennedy-center.org, or by calling Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600. Those patrons living outside the Washington metropolitan calling area may dial toll-free at (800) 444-1324.

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For more information on *Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World*, please visit www.kennedy-center.org.

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