

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Please include in your listings/announcements



The Canadian Arabic Orchestra presents second annual **FESTIVAL OF ARABIC MUSIC & ARTS** October 26 to November 11, 2018

Toronto, August 16, 2018 ... Following its overwhelmingly successful debut in 2017, the **Festival of Arabic Music & Arts (FAMA)** returns October 26 to November 11, 2018, with thirteen richly varied events in eleven venues across the GTA. The **Canadian Arabic Orchestra (CAO)** and festival partner **Adonis Group** are proud to announce FAMA's 2018 line-up, which features music, dance, theatre, exhibitions, and film from Arab countries including Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Egypt performed by the CAO and an array of renowned local and international artists. The first of its kind in Ontario, the Festival of Arabic Music & Arts is a celebration of Arabic culture that aims to build bridges between Canada's diverse communities by connecting audiences through music and art.

FAMA 2018 opens on October 26 with a performance by the celebrated Lebanese composer and singer **Marwan Khoury**. Other festival headliners include two world-renowned female singers, the Armenian-Syrian **Lena Chammamyan**, and the Palestinian **Dalal Abu Amneh**; a performance pairing the legendary Moroccan singer **Fouad Zabadi** with the highly acclaimed violinist **Mahmoud Srour**; a trio of concerts featuring **The Canadian Arabic Orchestra**; the award-winning Egyptian film **Photocopy**; and a fully-staged theatrical performance from the United Arab Emirates, **Al Namrood**. The festival wraps up on November 11 with **Julia Domna**, the spectacular dance/theatre production from Syria that wowed Luminato audiences in 2010. Tickets and festival information are available at canadianarabicorchestra.ca

Fueled by their passion for Arabic and Western classical music, **Lamees Audeh** and **Wafa Al Zaghal** founded the CAO in 2014 as a way of building bridges between these two rich cultural worlds. In 2017 they decided to expand upon the orchestra's success by establishing the Festival of Arabic Music & Arts. FAMA's inaugural edition brought together 60 international and local artists for concerts, stand-up comedy, theatre, and more.

"We are thrilled to bring FAMA back this fall for a second year," said Audeh and Al Zaghal. "We look forward to hosting some truly gifted musicians, dancers, and actors and to sharing their artistry with audiences across the GTA —both Arab and non-Arab. The FAMA team is proud to celebrate the freedom and diversity of Canada's cultural landscape, and we truly believe that it's possible to build bridges between communities through the sharing of music and culture."

2018 FESTIVAL OF ARABIC MUSIC & ARTS OVERVIEW:

Marwan Khoury | concert

October 26 at 7:30 PM | Hammerson Hall, Mississauga Living Arts Centre

Marwan Khoury is a superstar of the Arab entertainment world. The chart-topping singer, songwriter, composer, and acclaimed television host is one of Lebanon's most respected artists. Marwan enchants audiences with his modern take on classical Arabic music, which fuses Western influences with Arabic instruments, bringing together the beauty of two worlds.

***El Hob Kullo (All My Love) from Egypt to Morocco* featuring Mahmoud Srour, violin, and Fouad Zabadi, singer | concert**

October 27 at 7:30 PM | Oakville Centre for the Arts

This concert of music from the golden age of Arabic arts and culture brings together two giants, Mahmoud Srour and Fouad Zabadi. Together they transport audiences back to the time of Umm Kalthoum, Abdel Wahab, and Farid El Atrash — trendsetting musicians who transformed Arabic music in early 20th century Egypt and the Arab world. *El Hob Kullo (All My Love)* conveys messages of love from the pan-Arab world to Canadian audiences through carefully selected musical masterpieces.

***Photocopy* | film**

October 28 at 6:00pm | Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, Toronto

Presented with the Toronto Arab Film Festival

This highly acclaimed Egyptian comedy features superstar **Mahmoud Hemaidah** along with co-stars **Sherine Reda** and **Farah Youssef**. Written by Tamer Ashry and directed by Haitham Dabbour, *Photocopy* offers a satirical take on the meaning of life.

A former manual worker in a printing press whose job has become obsolete, Mahmoud becomes obsessed with how dinosaurs became extinct and sees parallels with his own situation. He leads a routine life that revolves around the photocopy shop he owns, his pension, his greedy landlord, and his neighbors, including a widow with whom he begins a complicated romance.

***Nur* | Dalal Abu Amneh | concert**

November 1 at 7:00 PM | 918 Bathurst, Toronto

"Close your eyes. Fall in love. Stay there." —Rumi

Celebrated singer **Dalal Abu Amneh** of Nazareth takes audiences on a holistic spiritual journey that combines Sufi whirling with music set to some of the greatest poetry of Rumi, Ibn Arabi, and Al Hallaj. Joining Dalal are an ensemble including composer and cellist Kinan Abu Afach, along with violin, qanun, and percussion, and Rumi Canada's **Tawhida Tanya Evanson** whose Sufi whirling is a form of active meditation. Performed in a former Buddhist temple infused with the scent of incense, *Nur* draws upon Sufi mysticism to create a unique experience for the audience. A gallery of Sufi and Arabic calligraphy complements this performance.

***Jasmine from Damascus* | Lena Chammamyan | concert**

November 2 at 7:30 PM | Jane Mallet Theatre, Toronto

Syrian-Armenian singer **Lena Chammamyan** is a musical trailblazer who is based in Paris. Promoting the agency of eastern women everywhere to live their passion and achieve their goals as fully independent artists, Lena's music blends traditional eastern songs from the Arab world and Armenia with western

classics. In *Jasmine from Damascus*, Lena revives folkloric songs with modern styles and arrangements, forging a link between oriental classic music and contemporary world music.

***Ya Sitti* | Dalal Abu Amneh | concert**

November 3 at 7:30 PM | Lyric Theatre, North York

Surrounded by a group of Palestinian grandmothers on stage, singer **Dalal Abu Amneh** revives the precious oral traditions passed down from generation to generation throughout the Levant. *Ya Sitti* features traditional songs from Palestine, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo — songs that bear the legacy of a history of migration and displacement.

In the past these women would sing sitting in close circles behind closed doors. *Ya Sitti* proudly brings them out into the open and celebrates their unique and important role as keepers of a treasured vocal tradition, one that reflects the stories of everyday women.

***FlamencoArabia* with guitarist Tarek Ghriri and members of the Canadian Arabic Orchestra | music & dance**

November 4 at 6:30 PM | Aga Khan Museum, North York

FlamencoArabia is a Spanish-Arabic fusion performance that blends flamenco dance, traditional Andalusian sounds, and contemporary Arabic music. The show is the brainchild of Syrian flamenco guitarist and composer **Tarek Ghriri**, who accompanies the breathtaking flamenco dancers Arabic-inflected foot rhythms. Sung in Arabic and Spanish, the songs reflect flamenco's deep Arabic roots dating back to the Middle Ages. *FlamencoArabia* is presented in partnership with the Aga Khan Museum's annual Duende Flamenco Festival.

***Al Namrood (Nimrod)* | Sharjah National Theatre | theatre (with English surtitles)**

November 8 at 7:30 PM | Jane Mallet Theatre, Toronto

What goes around comes around! This satirical play tells the story of Namrood, the despot King of Babylon who pillaged and tortured his people. Namrood is tormented by an insect that has made its way into his head. He commands his subjects to expel the insect by force — a request they are only too willing to oblige.

Written by **His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi**, *Al Namrood* features a cast of Emirati actors who have toured the play across Europe and the Arab world. Performed in Arabic with English surtitles.

Sounds from Iraq with the Canadian Arabic Orchestra and special guest TBA | concert

November 9 | Lyric Theatre, North York

Details to be announced in September

***A Tribute to Sayyed Darwish* | The Canadian Arabic Orchestra & Choir with Charbel Rouhana | concert**
November 10 | Jane Mallet Theatre, Toronto

This special tribute to **Sayyed Darwish** (1892 – 1923), Egyptian cultural hero and the father of modern Arabic music, features the combined forces of twenty instrumentalists, vocal soloists, and choristers from the Canadian Arabic Orchestra, along with world renowned Lebanese star **Charbel Rouhana**. This program honouring Egypt's greatest composer includes songs that gave voice to ideas about social justice, love, and freedom. Award-winning composer, singer, and musician **Charbel Rouhana** is one of

the few masters who shaped the evolution of the Oud (Arabic lute). He made his Toronto debut at the inaugural FAMA in 2017 in a concert that touched the hearts of Torontonians.

Julia Domna by ENANA | dance/theatre

November 11 at 6:30 PM | Bluma Appel Theatre, Toronto

“With its dynamic choreography, larger-than-life scenery and dazzling costumes, ENANA transforms classical Arab dance into a new and magical experience.” —Access Magazine

This opulent dance drama from Syria is about one of the most powerful women in the ancient Roman Empire and has enjoyed sold-out runs around the world. Through dance, music, and spectacular theatrical lighting and sound effects, *Julia Domna* tells the story of the Syrian princess who marries the Roman emperor Septimus Severus. *Julia Domna* is performed by a multi-cultural cast of Canadian artists, including many newcomers to Canada.

Named for the ancient Syrian goddess of beauty, art, and love, ENANA Dance Theatre is the first company of its kind in Syria.

For more information, visit: canadianarabicorchestra.ca/fama/

Social Media: [facebook.com/CanadianArabicOrchestra/](https://www.facebook.com/CanadianArabicOrchestra/) | [@CandianArabOrch](https://twitter.com/CandianArabOrch) | #FAMA

About the Canadian Arabic Orchestra: The CAO is a not-for-profit organization registered in Mississauga with the prime objective of promoting multi-cultural dialogue and understanding through the universal language of music. The CAO performs in cities around Canada and is a proud participant at the Stratford Summer Music Festival, Aga Khan Duende Flamenco Festival, Oakville Summer Festival, and Luminato Festival, among others. With the launch of the Festival of Arabic Music and Arts (FAMA) in Ontario in fall 2017, the CAO has expanded its activities to a wider geographical area and demographic, resulting in an audience base that continues to grow year after year.

FAMA wishes to thank the following for their generous support: Adonis Group, International Professional Group, Mermaid Luxury, Rama & Melad Real Estate, Toronto Cosmetic Clinic, and Long & McQuade.

FAMA continues to grow with the generous support of all three tiers of government in Canada, through the City of Mississauga, The Ontario Arts Council, The Department of Canadian Heritage, The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, The Toronto Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Factor, Socan, and others.

FAMA is proud to collaborate with the following arts and community organizations: Aga Khan Museum, Arab Community Centre of Toronto, AUB Alumni Club, Canadian Coptic Centre, Canadian Iraqi Society, Jordanian Canadian Association, Moroccan Association of Toronto, Palestine House, Pleiades Theatre, Roncesvalles United Church, Toronto Arab Film Festival.

Media contact:

Luisa Trisi, [Big Picture Communications](http://BigPictureCommunications.com), (416) 456-0499 | ltrisi@sympatico.ca