



# Sahra

## An Evening of Performance in Detroit

7:00 (seated)

**Tawil & Khoury: *Zombie Frequencies of the Palestinian Diaspora***

Pause

8:15 (standing)

**Kabareh Cheikhats**

Saturday Evening, April 9, 2022 at 7:00 and 8:15

Spot Lite

Detroit

25th Performance of the 143rd Annual Season

This evening's performance is funded in part by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, and the State of Michigan Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs. This production is presented in partnership with the Arab American National Museum, and ARAB: A Real Arab Blueprint, an exhibition and programmatic series in Detroit that explores the experience of Arab creatives.

Media partnership provided by WRCJ 90.9 FM and WGTE 91.3 FM.

Special thanks to the UMS Arab Advisory Council, a team of artists, scholars, and community leaders from our region who have helped co-curate a portfolio of performances by artists and ensembles from the Arab world and its diaspora. Their insight and expertise have contributed immeasurably to the programming of our Winter 2022 season.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

## ZOMBIE FREQUENCIES OF THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA

*Choreography* / Leyya Mona Tawil

*Music* / Mike Khoury

*Costume Design* / Scott Tallenger

“A person can only be born in one place. However, he may die several times elsewhere...”

—Mahmoud Darwish

*Zombie Frequencies of the Palestinian Diaspora* is a work developed by the duo of Tawil and Khoury. The work is based on impressions of several diaspora out of Palestine: 1948, 1967, and in the 21st century. It explores the short circuiting of the human condition, grief, humiliation, and, ultimately, the resilience of the Palestinian people. The development of this work was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Knight Foundation.

**Mike Khoury** is an Palestinian American composer, improviser, and curator focused on performance and documentation. Khoury has worked to establish an Arab American avant garde and document the movement’s intellectual heritage through presenting his own work, publishing on the topic, and presenting other artists’ work. As a curator, Khoury has engaged in community building through his curation of the Entropy Studios space and the Entropy Stereo record label issuing music from artists such as Faruq Z. Bey, Wendell Harrison, Bobby Bradford, and Griot Galaxy.

Khoury has performed across North America, in Europe, and the Arab world. In 2018, Khoury was awarded a Knight Arts Challenge Grant to create new work. In 2020, Khoury was named a Kresge Arts in Detroit fellow. Today, Khoury conducts both ethnographical, sonic, and historical research from his laboratory and studios in Redford, MI. He has authored a chapter on the composer Halim El-Dabh published in an anthology on the Arab avant garde by

Wesleyan University Press. Khoury also divides his time between his improvisational work and the Redford Civic Symphony Orchestra, of which he is a member of the first violin section. Current active projects include the ensemble Inscribe, a duet with percussionist Ben Hall, a duet with dancer/choreographer Leyya Tawil, and his work as a studio and live musician.

**Leyya Mona Tawil** is an artist working with sound, performance, and hybrid transmissions. Tawil is a Syrian Palestinian American engaged in the world as such. Her work has been presented throughout the US, Europe, and the Arab region. Tawil was the 2020 ISSUE Project Room Suzanne Fiol Curatorial Fellow for her NOMADIC SIGNALS series, which continues into 2022. Her work *Lime Rickey International’s Future Faith*, commissioned by Abrons Arts Center (NYC) and the KONE Foundation (Helsinki) was nominated for a 2019 Bessie Award in Music. Recent residency/exhibitions include Wysing Art Centre/British Council (UK), Arab American National Museum/JAM3A Festival 2021, and the Tarek Atoui Sound Residency at Sharjah Art Foundation (UAE). As a curator/producer, Tawil is on the team of Live In America Festival, Southern Exposure Gallery (SF), Temescal Arts Center (Oakland), and is the founding director of Arab.AMP, a platform for futurist live art and ideas from the SWANA diaspora.

## KABAREH CHEIKHATS

Ghassan El Hakim / *Director, Lead Singer*

Amine Naouni / *Lead Singer*

Mohamed Daye / *Singer*

Taha Benaim / *Singer, Bendir*

Walid Rakik / *Singer, Darbouka*

Hamza Khafif / *Singer, Bendir*

Noureddine Madrir Soubai / *Violin*

Ahmed Rifki / *Violin*

Mokhtar Hsina / *Singer, Oud*

Jaouhar Bourhram / *Dancer*

Fanny Dalmau / *Manager*

The cabaret is the place where people meet, where all is leveled in the red dimmed light, where no one can feel lonely or sad. It is a time for dance and the celebration of life. **Kabareh Cheikhats** is a unique experience that started in 2016, initiated by stage director Ghassan El Hakim. The show had considerable success with audiences, which led the group to perform it again, in a different form, at the Vertigo, a cabaret in Casablanca. Cheikhat girls have long been stigmatized in their society, and Kabaret Cheikhats pays tribute to all the great cheikhat of yore, who helped save the oral tradition of Moroccan popular songs.

Kabareh Cheikhats has unique cultural significance because in a completely novel way, they revisit a performance style belonging to Moroccan popular culture (the Cheikates, traditional popular singers, and the Aytta genre), praise it, and allow it to regain respectability. They do research on the performers of the 20th century from old records, decipher the lyrics in Darija (Moroccan Arabic), and render them on stage or in videos they produced during the pandemic. They have the courage to deal with gender studies in a conservative society. Kabareh Cheikhats uses music both as a celebration of tradition and as a vehicle for cultural

change. Their lead singer, Ghassan El Hakim, believes that music can act as a social lubricant, making it much more likely that attitudes will evolve.

**Ghassan El Hakim** trained at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Art and Cultural Activities in Rabat (ISADAC). In 2007 he joined the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art in Paris for a year-long internship, where he studied with Yann Collin Joel and Nada Strancar. In 2009-10, he performed in a modern opera written by Christian Simeon and directed by Jean Marie Lejude, and in *Baibarss le Memlouk qui deviant sultan* directed by Marcel Bozonnet. In 2011, he won prizes at the Yallah Film Festival ("Best Actor," "Best Fiction") at the Institut du monde arabe in Paris. In 2016 he staged a cabaret featuring 10 men performing famous Moroccan singers called Kabareh Cheikhates, which performed in Paris, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Brussels, Madrid, Marseille, Bordeaux, and London. With Fanny Dalmau, he founded a new art school in Casablanca named La Parallèle, where he also teaches theater.

*UMS welcomes the artists of Sahra as they make their UMS debuts tonight.*

THANK YOU TO SUPPORTERS OF TONIGHT'S  
PERFORMANCE

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Southeast Michigan**

**State of Michigan Commission on  
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Presented in partnership with

**The Arab American National Museum  
ARAB: A Real Arab Blueprint**

## VISUAL EXHIBIT

***To make is to stay*** is a group exhibition in Detroit featuring over 70 artworks by six artists spanning continents in their origins, residences, and subject matter. Featured in this show are Farah Al Qasimi, Tarek Al Ghoussein, Shaima Al Tamami, Zeinab Saab, Yasmine Diaz, and Lara Atallah.

*To make is to stay* invites attendees into the intimate heartscape of the migrant artist. Amidst all the vigorous movement and gyrations of earth and man's cruelty, these artists' works insist on presence, survival, evolution, color, visionings of the timeless present-future tense. They invite you in. Minimal and maximal. Momentary and eternal. These artists catch the inevitably fleeting moment, and in doing so, invite us to stay. Grace Lee Boggs once said, the most radical thing you can do is to stay put. We extend this to a poem, a painting, a photograph. Pay attention. Stay put. What will you do with your staying? What will you make?