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[Press Photos for 21/22 Season](#)

UMS Presents the National Arab Orchestra with Abeer Nehme

Concert Program Features New Commission Exploring the Arab Immigrant Perspective

ANN ARBOR, MI (February 24, 2022) — The **National Arab Orchestra (NAO)** is joined by the remarkable **Abeer Nehme** and the **UMS Choral Union** on **Saturday, March 19** in **Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium**. With a performance that takes audiences on a journey through the Arab world, the NAO finds insightful ways to instill a broader appreciation for Arab music and its heritage across the country.

Founded on the University of Michigan's campus 13 years ago, the National Arab Orchestra grew from a small chamber group to a full orchestra. Consisting of 25 brilliant musicians from across the United States, the NAO preserves and integrates Arab culture through music education, outreach, and performance. Conductor and founder **Michael Ibrahim** has developed a program that showcases the sounds of Andalusian Spain, the Levant, and North Africa in this voyage through the Arab world's diverse 22 nations.

This concert also delves into the Arab experience in Michigan through the premiere of a thrilling new commission that paints a picture of the immigrant experience, inspired by the writings of Arab students in the Metro Detroit area. UMS Choral Union music director **Scott Hanoian** guest conducts the new work, which features the UMS Choral Union and the NAO.

As the program unfolds, audiences are invited to journey through the musical mind of **Abeer Nehme**, one of the most influential voices in Arab music, as she performs her favorite pieces ranging from the traditional to the contemporary. Known for her ability to sing in over 29 languages and a multitude of music genres, Abeer Nehme invokes cultural traditions and artistic dialogues that transcend all boundaries through her performance. This performance marks Abeer Nehme's first appearance in Michigan.

"The National Arab Orchestra held its first concert on the campus of the University of Michigan nearly 13 years ago as a small student group," said Michael Ibrahim, the founder and music

director of the National Arab Orchestra. “I’m so thrilled to see the NAO back in Ann Arbor after such a long journey, and that, at long last, after a pandemic postponement, we are finally able to share this exploration of migration, love, and cultural exchange.”

*This concert is funded in part by the **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan**, the **State of Michigan Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts**.*

*Media Partners: **WEMU 89.1 FM** and **WDET 101.9***

Ticketing Information

Tickets to individual events are available at **734.764.2538** or **ums.org**, or in-person at the League Ticket Office (911 N University Ave) and at Hill Auditorium beginning 90 minutes before the performance.

Student tickets (\$12 and \$20) and Kids Club tickets (up to two \$10 kids' tickets with the purchase of at least one adult ticket at \$20) are also available for all performances. Additional information about UMS's Kids Club and student ticket programs can be found at **ums.org/kids** and **ums.org/students**, respectively.

About UMS and the Creative Team

The National Arab Orchestra

The National Arab Orchestra (NAO) is a nonprofit organization that preserves and integrates Arab culture through music education, outreach, and performance. Founded in 2009, the orchestra, which was originally a small chamber music group, is now made up of 25 stellar musicians from across the country and is composed of musicians from both Arab and non-Arab backgrounds. The NAO works with communities across the country, providing a platform of cultural expression and exchange for the Arab American community while providing opportunities that will bridge social and cultural barriers through music.

Michael Ibrahim

Michael Ibrahim is a dynamic conductor and a recognized innovator in the Arab music circuit. A Metro-Detroit native, he was born into a Syrian immigrant family of humble origins. He earned a Bachelor's degree in music from Eastern Michigan University, and a Master of Music degree in conducting from Wayne State University. Ibrahim’s background and unique approach to composition and improvisation — fusing Western and Arab music idioms — has led to performances in concert halls and venues the world over. His role as an educator on Arab music ultimately brought him to founding the NAO, where he currently serves as music director. Ibrahim hopes that through his performances and educational efforts, he can instill a wider appreciation for Arab music and its heritage.

Abeer Nehme

Abeer Nehme is a Lebanese established international crossover singer and songwriter possessing one of the most influential voices in the Arab world. The first Arab artist signed to Universal Records, she has performed at the most prestigious music venues worldwide and through the most prominent international festivals around the globe. For six years, she traveled around the globe looking for the roots of folk and ethnic music. Through this journey, Abeer observed and participated in the cultural traditions of diverse ethnicities, which made her a messenger of civilizational, cultural, and artistic dialogues that transcend all boundaries.

University Musical Society

A recipient of the National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.