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These rhythms date back more than 2,000 years

Giving voice to the past

Specialising in traditional Arab singing techniques, singer Ghada Shbeir is on a mission to preserve and revive Arab music culture note by note, before being lost forever

Music

Why did you decide to make it your mission to preserve traditional Arabic music?

When I specialised in musicology I wanted to do something different from what is done nowadays. I realised the treasures in Arabic music history and wanted to revive this music to prevent it from being forgotten.

Is there still an audience for this kind of music?

The only problem is the media,

which only considers pop music because it generates profit. We forgot about traditions and our only concern is to make money. In my kind of music our concern is to educate people and build personalities, unlike pop music, which we consider something cheap. If the media played a significant role it would help evolve traditional music.

You've specialised in Syriac chants, *mouwashahat* singing techniques [a religious genre

of music with lyrics based on poetic texts] and Arabic forms of chants – what draws you to this music?

The first year I went to the university I heard about the 1932 Cairo Conference, which my masters degree was later based around. There were over 90 *mouwashahat* to Darwish Hariri's name. There's mystery hidden within it, and I felt it was pushing me towards working with it. I started trying to revive this music that was almost dying;

I always look for challenges in life. At university I took a course in Syriac music. The teacher realised that I had a good Syriac accent and encouraged me to go further into this field. At first I found the language difficult, but I worked hard and made 800 rhythms that involved Syriac music, having to research every single note.

When you sing this music does it take you into the trance-like state of *tarab*?

If you don't sing a sentence with your full emotions, you won't reach your audience. I feel that I'm praying when I'm singing because Syriac was Jesus' language. This language is no longer used except for some rural places in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and the borders of Turkey.



Is it a challenge tracking down this music?

Finding this music is like searching for a needle in a haystack. The good thing is that I understand the language and I'm able to read it. I've even memorised all the Maronite rhythms by heart. A lot of these rhythms date back more than 2,000 years. Many saints created Syriac music, and you can identify the composer from the way the poem is written. I did the rhythms just so they wouldn't vanish. War has destroyed libraries that preserve our culture and history in the past. I got so worried I gave a copy of them to a Belgian University in Louvain La Neuve.

You won a BBC music award back in 2007. Did that help you reach new audiences?

Everything that is cultural has a stable audience. Here in Lebanon there is a lot of focus on cheap pop music. In the Western world, when a symphonic orchestra performs, people give it importance. One kind of music doesn't outweigh another. After winning the BBC

music award I was able to travel more and people showed appreciation for my work, so it started spreading worldwide. The Western world, unlike in the East, plays a vital role through its media to help promote cultural music.

Can you tell us about your new album?

The album 'Andalucía' was originally meant to be a theatrical feast to remind people of the *samah* dance that goes with *mouwashahat* music. It dates back to the old eras, specifically between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It's called the *samah* dance because the woman used to ask for permission in order to move their body without sexual seduction. They only move to express their souls according to the *mouwashahat*.

'Andalucía' is available at Virgin (01 9996666), at LL21,000
Ghada Shbeir performs at the International Conference for Women USEK Amphitheatre Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) (09 6000000) Kaslik
 Entrance free
 8.30pm, Fri 26
timeoutbeirut.com/music

What's on this month...

FREE Denotes a free event
 ► Before the date denotes end date
 ► After the date denotes starting date

How to be listed

Email events@timeoutbeirut.com details of your event or venue by 5pm on the 15th of the month before publication.
 Listings are free, but inclusion is not guaranteed due to limited space.

Oct 1-7

Patricio Anabalón The gentle guitar and dreamy voice of this Chilean singer-songwriter will steal the entire audience's heart with his poetic and humbly seductive nouveau-Latin songs. He'll be joined by veteran strings-man Angel Guillermo Cárdenas Olea on cello. *Bathish Auditorium* (01 350000 ext. 4430/1) West Hall, American University of Beirut, Bliss Str, Hamra. Free. 8pm, Wed 3.

One Beat One Chance This fundraising night sees the music students of AUB band together. Through the NGO Nawayia Network, profits go towards music lessons for underprivileged youth. *Bathish Auditorium* (01 350000 ext. 4430/1) West Hall, American University of Beirut, Bliss Str, Hamra. LL15,000. 7.30pm, Fri 5.

The Black Lips They're here and there is absolutely no reason for you not to see them. These indie, punkish rockers will be having locals Lazy Lung kick-start the show. *Mojo Crew Club* (70 796279) Rbeiz Bldg, Hamra Str, Hamra. LL30,000 (inc. one beer and pizza). 9pm, Sat 6.

Music on the Beach The summer isn't over yet—especially not when local acts Guess, Meen and Adonis are involved. This lavish beach party includes dancers, a fire show and DJ Joseph Jabbour spinning until late. *Cyan* (09 223323, 03 955085) Kaslik Seaside, Kesruan. LL52,500-LL75,000. 8pm, Sat 6.

Khat Thaleth The third edition of this initiative for innovative rap and hip hop is joining hands with the Share conference. Come for a night of fresh talent from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia. *Metro Al Madina* (01 753021, 76 309363) Saroulla Bldg, L-2, Hamra Str, Hamra. Free with participation in Share Conference or Orient Institute Beirut International Congress or LL10,000 (inc. CD). 9.30pm, Sun 7.

Oct 8-14

Masaa See Preview, Thur 11.
Rock festival A rag-tag group of

local singers, songwriters and bands have gathered together to celebrate widespread creativity in Lebanon. They've pulled Wled El Balad, The Incompetents, Zeid and the Wings, Meen and Adonis to rock your socks off. *Beirut Hippodrome, Abdallah Al Yafi Ave, Horch Tabet*. Tickets (01 9996666). LL30,000. 8pm-2am, Fri 12.
Keane You'll be properly 'Bedshaped' and 'Spiralling' with these lads and their soft piano rock, with Tom's soaring vocals stirring emotions you didn't even know you had. Is it any wonder they've sold millions of albums? We don't think so. *Forum de Beyrouth* (01 584584, 03 501222) Charles Helou Ave, Quarantina. Tickets (01 9996666). LL60,000-LL225,000. 8pm, Sat 13.

Oct 15-21

Dhafer Youssef See Preview, Tue 16.
Two Guitars, No Heroes This double first release party features the talents of Charbel Haber of Scrambled Eggs and Umut Caglar of Konstrukt. Haber will be performing a drone-esque musical dreamscape of experimentation, while Caglar will play his free jazz, reminiscent of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Miles Davis' experiments. *Beirut Art Center* (01 397018, 70 262112) Bldg 13, Str 97, Zone 66 Adieh. LL15,000. 8pm, Wed 17.

Meen This Lebanese five piece smashes together traditional Arabic music with the pounding vibe of rock and roll. Tonight, they'll be belting it out underground with all the glory and cool that befits these self-professed super heroes, their witty lyricism and perpetually mocking attitudes. *EM Chill* (01 565313, 03 871589) Mar Mikhael Str, Mar Mikhael. Price and Time TBC. Wed 17.

Tarab-ic Night Yasmina is joined by a crew of gifted musicians for a night of well crafted tarab. *EM Chill* (01 565313, 03 871589) Mar Mikhael Str, Mar Mikhael. Price and Time TBC. Fri 19.

Oct 22-31

Walkabout Drum Circle The name of this group says it all. Think dreadlocked lovers, tribal beats and dancing like no one is watching for this night of traditional West African drumming. *EM Chill* (01 565313, 03 871589) Mar Mikhael Str, Mar Mikhael. Price TBC. 9pm, Wed 24.

Soul Sister Bringing a fresh feel to Mar Mikhael, this lady's golden vocals and tight rhythms are bang in line with Beirut's love of funk. *EM Chill* (01 565313, 03 871589) Mar Mikhael Str, Mar Mikhael. Price and time TBC. Fri 26.

Third Annual Halloween Madness See Preview, Fri 26.

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Keane