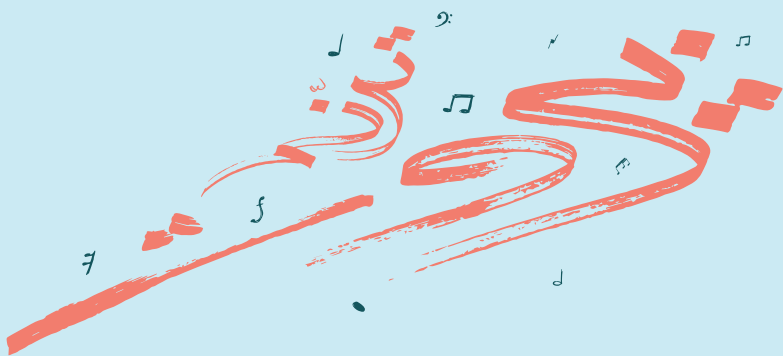


# Beirut Chants Festival

SEASON 16



**30 NOV \_\_\_\_\_**  
**23 DEC 2023**  
**FREE ENTRANCE**

# CAMILE & RHONA SABA

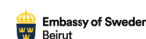


Please refer to our website as the program undergoes frequent changes due to the volatile circumstances.

Full biographies on [beirutchants.com](http://beirutchants.com)



Admission is free & by ticket  
[ticketingboxoffice.com](http://ticketingboxoffice.com)



As we launch the 16th edition of Beirut Chants, our hearts are filled with sorrow, fear, and apprehension. The endeavor to organize this edition was no easy feat amidst the relentless brutality, devastation, and violence that pierce the souls of humanity.

Yet...

What if Beirut withheld its chants in homage to our beloved South? What if the universal language of music fell silent? How could we celebrate the birth of Jesus without sharing love and hope?

Our belief that Christmas embodies the essence of Resurrection stood as our guiding light in facing the challenge of bringing forth the 2023 edition of Beirut Chants. But beyond that beacon, it was the overwhelming love and genuine emotional bond with the community and the festival's friends and supporters.

Today, more than ever, music stands as our refuge, while prayer serves as a poignant reminder of our humanity, our values, our empathy towards others, our acknowledgment of their vulnerabilities, and our commitment to healing their wounds.

Let us pray together as our ancestors did:

Wars fill the earth and we shall not accept the suffering  
We have all become sick and there is no one amidst us but you to heal

To You, Mary, the Roses  
To You, Gaza, the Roses  
To You, Beirut, the Roses

حروبٌ تملأ الأرض وضيق فيه لن نرضى  
غدونا كلنا مرضى وليس فينا سواك من يداوينا  
اليك الورد يا مريم ..  
اليك الورد يا غزّة ..  
اليك الورد يا بيروت ..

**Micheline Abi Samra**  
Founder

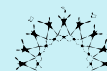


Beirut Chants Festival  
PRESS CONFERENCE

# Beirut Chants Festival



Beirut Chants



el sistema

O n W h e e l s

Main Sponsor

## Camile & Rhona Saba

**Beirut Chants El-Sistema**, launched in 2022 introduced, for the first time in Lebanon, the world-famous El-Sistema music instruction program which targets youth from marginalized communities, originally in the barrios and slum areas of Venezuela in 1975 and has since mushroomed worldwide, for the youth to develop their music skills in the belief that this method leads to “social change” both individually and collectively.

The El-Sistema program in Lebanon offered free music instruction, free transportation and meals and group instruction and became a lifeline for many aspiring students and concerned parents hoping to continue their children’s music development. Highlights of the first year were to perform in concert with the world-famous Black Alley Band in May and a special concert held overlooking Beirut Port in memory of the victims of the August 4th explosion which was broadcast on National Television.

In its second year, Beirut Chants El Sistema is “On Wheels” to take the over 80 member El-Sistema orchestra on the road throughout Lebanon. The traveling orchestra will bring the El-Sistema spirit, method and principles and spread it to the youth in outlying communities by performing concerts in village squares, outlying cities and other places. These events will center on group practices with local schools and conclude with a concert for the community being visited. This project will bring the music and the El-Sistema message to the people instead of bringing people to the music.

Spreading Citizenship, togetherness and unity of purpose through music education are the unifying ideals of this project to integrate all segments of society for the benefit of a common good and to create a better future. After all, the motto of El-Sistema is: “Music for cultural change”.

Please communicate with us at [elsistema@beirutchants.com](mailto:elsistema@beirutchants.com) to include your village or city in our upcoming program.









## Camile & Rhona Saba



Established in Baabda-Lebanon in 1978, the **Antonine University Choir** stands among the foremost choirs in Lebanon, significantly enriching the country's musical landscape with its diverse repertoire since the 1980s. The choir's performances span a multitude of cities and countries, including Rome, Milan, Nice, Lyon, Monaco, St. Étienne, Doha, Dubai, Al Aïn, Jordan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Tbilisi, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Muscat, Naples, Venice, Helsinki, Brazil, and Amman. The Choir has graced the legendary Carnegie Hall in New York in May 2010, April 2013, and May 2015. Its Los Angeles debut at the LA City Hall occurred in April 2014, while in November 2016, it made its inaugural appearance at the San Carlo Opera House. Additionally, the choir proudly represented Lebanon at the opening of the Lebanese Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale in May 2017. Notably, it performed Mozart's Requiem for the Beirut Chants Festival alongside the European Young Orchestra, under the baton of conductor Paolo Olmi.

**The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra**, now celebrated both domestically and internationally, has emerged as a prominent symphony ensemble. Founded by Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Sergey Smbatyan, the orchestra originated from a passionate group of classical music enthusiasts who shared a vision of promoting spiritual excellence through music while honoring the musical traditions of their native Armenia. Known for its distinctive sound quality and emotionally captivating performances, the orchestra has become a highly anticipated presence in prestigious concert halls worldwide. Annually, the orchestra delivers over 50 concerts in Armenia and across the globe, showcasing a rich and diverse repertoire that spans various genres and performance formats. From symphonies to ballet and opera, as well as symphonic adaptations of popular and cinematic pieces or jazz renditions of classical compositions, the orchestra exhibits versatility and depth. In addition to presenting recurring performances of classical masterpieces from the world's heritage, the orchestra prioritizes the exposure of contemporary and young composers, regularly featuring new works in its programming throughout concert seasons.

**Joseph Dahdah**, is a Lebanese Tenor born in Zgharta. He participated in numerous masterclasses with renowned artists such as Richard Barker, Luca Salsi, Eva Mei, Bruno de Simone, and Tatiana Chivarova. Joseph has performed in numerous operas, oratorios, concerts, and festivals in Lebanon, Italy, Germany, Venezuela, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria. He then joined the Academy of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. As a solo tenor, Joseph has performed in the world premiere of Luca Francesconi's "Per lo corpo luce" conducted by Ingo Metzmacher, Beethoven's "Fantasia" conducted by Manfred Honeck, and Liszt's "Faust Symphony" conducted by Marc Albrecht.

**Cesar Naassy**, is renowned for his captivating stage presence and velvety cantabile voice. Cesar excels in the BelCanto repertoire. His exceptional acting skills and innate vocal flexibility bring depth to complex characters, particularly shining in Mozart's operas. Cesar has had the privilege of collaborating with acclaimed directors such as Charles Binamé and has received guidance from international artists like Elisabeth Norberg Schultz, Caterina Dittono, Cinzia Forte, Roberto Frontali, BreN Polegato, and Toufic Maatouk. Holding two Master's degrees in Musicology and Opera Performance, he graduated at the top of his class from the prestigious McGill University in Montreal.

**Toufic Maatouk**, is one of the most compelling conductors of his generation. In the 2012 season, Maatouk began his tenure as Artistic Director of the Beirut Chants Festival in Lebanon. He is also Guest Conductor of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra since 2013 and a Guest Conductor of the Romanian Radio Chamber Orchestra since 2017. Maatouk was appointed Artistic Director and Choir Master of the Antonine University Choir in August 2005 and Head of the vocal department in the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music since October 2015. He has been Head of the Academy of the Saudi Music Hubs in Riyadh (KSA). He is currently the Deputy Executive Director at the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation and the Abu Dhabi Festival (UAE) and an Academic Board member of the Global Leaders Institute in Washington DC (USA).

30 NOV

## G. Puccini Messa di Gloria & L.V. Beethoven Choral Fantasy

ANTONINE UNIVERSITY CHOIR  
NOTRE-DAME UNIVERSITY CHOIR  
LEBANESE ORCHESTRA  
ARMENIAN STATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
JOSEPH DAHDAH, TENOR  
CESAR NAASSY, BARITONE  
KYUBIN CHUNG, PIANO  
TOUFIC MAATOUK, CONDUCTOR



8:00 PM

ST. GEORGE  
MARONITE CATHEDRAL



## PEARL BRANDS

ONLINE

A Lebanese luminary in the realm of music, holds an esteemed position as an international singer renowned for her powerful vocal prowess. She stands as a beacon of cultural exchange and musical dialogue in the Arab world, notably recognized for her exceptional ability to perform in over twenty-nine languages, a feat unparalleled in the region. A lifelong dedication to music defines Abeer's journey, marked by her academic achievements—a bachelor's and master's degree in Musicology, complemented by a Diploma with high distinction in Arabic singing.

Breaking barriers in the music industry, Abeer made history by becoming the first artist to secure an international record deal with Universal Music MENA. She has since released three albums, unleashing multiple chart-topping hits that garnered millions of views across digital platforms. Her musical odyssey spans across the globe, gracing iconic theaters, esteemed opera houses, and renowned venues. Abeer's stage presence extends to the world's most prestigious international festivals, where she captivates audiences, often accompanied by international orchestras.

Beyond her musical exploits, Abeer hosted a weekly variety show in Istanbul for two years, broadcasted on National Turkish Television – TRT, where she mesmerized audiences accompanied by the Turkish Orchestra.

# 01 Abeer Nehme

8:00 PM

BEIRUT SOUKS



BEIRUT SOUKS



# 02 Stories/ Bridging Traditions

ZIAD EL AHMADIE , OUD AND  
COMPOSITION  
MOUNIR MAHMALAT , CELLO  
BAHAA DAOU , PERCUSSION

8:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH



STORIES//Bridging Traditions of oriental and European music. In original compositions, Stories mesmerizes with a unique fusion of genres. Founded in 2018, Stories has played throughout the country to explore how music can bridge between cultures, spaces, and audiences. With "Ibhar", the trio launched their debut album in 2022. Stories, that is three instruments and a plethora of musical worlds.



# 100 Years of Maria Callas

IN COLLABORATION WITH



This December, the world will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Maria Callas' birth, an event we wanted to honor also in Beirut, with the support of the Italian Embassy and the Italian Cultural Institute in Lebanon. This concert aims therefore to commemorate the legendary Diva, paying tribute to her legacy.

"You are born an artist or you are not. And you stay an artist, dear, even if your voice is less of a fireworks. The artist is always there."

Maria Callas



## 03 LE DIV4S / Italian Sopranos Davide Dellisanti /

Piano

8:00 PM

ASSEMBLY HALL  
AUB



**LE DIV4S** is a vocal ensemble born from the meeting of 4 young sopranos, united by a passion for the opera and by the idea of spreading the excellence of Italian music, through the search for an innovative language that could involve a younger and wider public and not just fans of the classic genre. The path starts with the reinterpretation of famous opera pages and it develops in the reworking of highly popular pieces, both Italian and international, where the combination of classical vocals and pop rhythms becomes the focal point that will define the identity of the group.

LE DIV4S debuted in 2008 in Rome alongside Andrea Bocelli - under the direction of Marcello Rota - hence establishing a prestigious and ongoing collaboration which led

them to perform all over the world, while supporting him in his concerts. Since then, with Bocelli's continuous support, they developed their own concert activity, collaborating with important traditional foundations and grand international events, treading prestigious stages both in Italy and abroad and always enjoying great success with both the critics and the public. LE DIV4S are highly appreciated both for the great artistic preparation and for the originality of the project.

**Maestro Davide Dellisanti** is one of Italy's most respected and sought after musician. Equally active as Concert Pianist, Conductor, Vocal Coach, Repetiteur and Musical Director, Maestro Dellisanti has forged a most impressive career.

He studied piano under the guidance of Maestri D. Panaro and Emanuele Arciuli and orchestra conduction with Maestro Mariano Patti. He also undertook vocal operatic training, an experience which led him to work as pianist and assistant to some of the greatest names of the Opera stage such as R. Gimenez, V.Terranova, Ines Salazar, Aprile Millo, S.Bonfadelli, A.Morelli, G.Giacomini, Placido Domingo, Nicola Martinucci, Maria Dragoni, Mariella Devia, Giacomo Aragall, L. Canonici, Vittorio Grigolo and Bruno Praticò. Furthermore, he has collaborated with legendary conductors such as L.Bacalov, M. Arena, Richard Boninge, Ennio Morricone and many others. Career highlights thus far have included: Artistic Director of the Taormina Opera Stars, at the Teatro Antico di Taormina, Vocal Coach and Chorus Director of the Cairo Opera.

He is currently the Vocal Coach for the Cairo Opera House and is Professor of Piano and Accompaniment at the G.Da Venosa Conservatory in Potenza, Italy.



**Marc Reaidy** is a dedicated professional classical singer, having honed his craft at the Ecole des Arts Ghassan Yammine under the tutelage of Russian Professor Galina Khaldeeva. Presently, he continues his vocal refinement under the guidance of Professor Arax Chekidjian. His repertoire spans the rich tapestry of oratorio and opera compositions, showcasing works from diverse composers across various languages, including Italian, French, English, and beyond. Marc Reaidy has garnered recognition as a fixture in numerous entertainment venues, where his captivating performances have graced various music productions and events across Lebanon, the Middle East, and Turkey. Notably, his exceptional talent was recently acknowledged with the prestigious “Altınçilek” or Golden Strawberry Prize for Foreign Music in Turkey.

**Chorale du Collège Notre-Dame de Jamhour** was established in 2010, the choir originated to celebrate prayers at Notre Dame de Jamhour College under the visionary guidance of Father Denis Meyer, and it was initially led by Maestro Hayssam Azzi. Over time, the project gained substantial traction and acquired international recognition. In 2019, the music school formalized a partnership with the regional conservatory in Rouen, France, further enhancing their musical pursuits. In 2022, Hayssam Azzi relocated to France, co-founding the “Jaw’a Choir of Lebanon in Paris” with alumni from the Jamhour Choir. This marked a significant transition, with Mrs. Manal Assaf assuming the role of conductor.

# 04 Notre Dame Jamhour Choir

MARC REAIDY, TENOR  
MANAL ASSAF, SOPRANO  
CECILIA HAGE, ALTO  
MANAL ASSAF, CONDUCTOR

8:00 PM  
ST. GEORGE  
MARONITE CATHEDRAL



# 05 Kyubin Chung Piano

FIRST PRIZE OF TOKYO  
INTERNATIONAL MUSIC  
COMPETITION

8:00 PM  
ASSEMBLY HALL  
AUB



IN COLLABORATION WITH



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
IN LEBANON

**Kyubin Chung** was born in Korea in 1997. He studied at the Korea National University of Arts with Prof. Daejin Kim and completed his bachelor’s degree in 2020. He also studied orchestra conducting as a minor. He has won numerous prizes, including 1st prize at the Isang Yun International Competition, 1st prize at the Tokyo International Competition, 3rd prize at the Ettlingen International Piano Competition and 6th prize at the Vienna International Beethoven Piano Competition.

He has appeared as a soloist with the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, and others. Since October 2020 he has been studying his Master of Music with Prof. Antti Siirala at the University of Music and Theater in Munich.





**Sary Khalife**, Born in Lebanon, Sary Khalife enjoys a diverse career as a soloist, chamber, and orchestral musician, studio artist, and composer. He began his musical journey with the piano at the age of five. By seven, he had switched his focus to the cello, studying under Professor Sarkis Kochkarian at Beirut's National Conservatory. Demonstrating exceptional talent, Sary achieved his baccalaureate at the age of 15 and subsequently performed as a soloist with the Lebanese National Symphonic Orchestra. At an early age, he relocated to France to further his education, starting at the CRR in Boulogne-Billancourt, where he studied under Xavier Gagnepain and achieved unanimously the first prize in 2008. He continued his studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et Danse de Paris in 2011, under the tutelage of renowned cellists such as Rolland Pidoux, Xavier Phillips, Marc Coppey, and Pauline Bartissol. By 2016, he had earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in solo cello performance. Additionally, Sary ventured into the world of improvisation, studying with Alexandros Markeas and Vincent Lequang. Since 2004, Sary has been a member of the prestigious West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, under the world-renowned conductor, Daniel Barenboim. His talent led him to broaden his collaboration by joining

the Divan Ensemble, a chamber music group led by Michael Barenboim.

**Ayad Khalife** began piano lessons at the age of 5 at the National Conservatory of Lebanon under the guidance of Narine ABRILIAN and Angela HADICHIAN, where he brilliantly obtained his Bachelor's degree diploma at the age of 15. From 1998 to 2005, he performed concerts, auditions, and recitals with his twin brother, Sary, a cellist, organized by institutions such as the National Conservatory of Lebanon and the AL-BOUSTAN festival. At the age of 13 and 15, Ayad played as a soloist twice with the Lebanese National Philharmonic Orchestra, consecutively interpreting KABALEVSKI's Second Concerto and MENDELSSOHN's Second Concerto. In 2004, Ayad won the 3rd prize at the 6th International Piano Competition in Morocco (Jury President: France Clidat). A year later, he won the 1st prize at the Margot BABICKIAN Piano Competition in Beirut.

In 2006, Ayad joined the National Conservatory of Boulogne-Billancourt in France, studying piano under Paul-André GAYE and chamber music under Hortense CARTIER-BRESSON, and obtained his chamber music diploma with honors. Four years later, he earned his 1st Prize in piano unanimously with honors and continued his studies at the PSPBB (pôle supérieur Paris-Boulogne-Billancourt) in 2010, brilliantly obtaining his professional national higher diploma (DNSPM) in piano and a Bachelor's degree in Musicology.

During this period, he also studied jazz with Jazzman Damien NEDONCHELLE and chamber music with Jérôme VOISIN, and joined Vincent LÉ QUANG's improvisation class. Ayad is also passionate about teaching and in 2015, he obtained his

state diploma in piano teaching at the CFEDEM of Poitou-Charentes. Since 2015, he has been a full-time piano teacher at the Oliver MESSIAEN and Albéric MAGNARD conservatories in Evry (Grand-Paris-Sud).

**Mario Rahi**, Born in Lebanon in 1983, Mario Rahi started the violin at a very young age. He pursued his diploma studies at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory of Rome with Maestro Claudio Cornoldi. In 2011, Mario Rahi was awarded his master's degree, with the maximum vote from the Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia with Prof. Domenico Nordio and Sonig Tchakerian.

During his studies, Mario attended several master classes for solo, chamber and orchestral music with renowned professors such as Salvatore Accardo at the Accademia Chigiana of Siena. He was appointed concert master at the World Youth Orchestra from 2001 until 2010, and performed with famous and reputed Italian artists such as Bruno Giuranna (chamber music) and Stefano Montanari (Baroque music). Later on, Mario was admitted to the Roma Sinfonietta Orchestra, established by the legendary film-music composer Ennio Morricone.

Back to Lebanon at the age of 28, Mario has been part of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra since 2011. He is currently a violin teacher at the Lebanese National Conservatory of Music. He also contributed to the development of the "Conservatory Youth Orchestra" that he has been coaching with great passion and dedication until today. Mario appeared several times as soloist and concertmaster with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra performing concertos by Mozart, Saint-Saëns and Hakim.

# 06 Lebanese Trio Concert

MARIO RAHI, VIOLIN  
AYAD KHALIFE, PIANO  
SARY KHALIFE, CELLO

8:00 PM

GULBENKIAN  
AMPHITHEATRE  
LAU



IN COLLABORATION WITH



Embassy of the Czech Republic in Lebanon

**Michal Kaňka** was born on 23 May 1960 in Prague. He began to learn the cello at the age of seven with Mirko Škampa. He continued his studies at the Prague Conservatory under Viktor Moučka finished his studies with Prof. Josef Chuchro at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. During his studies, he participated in 32 national and international competitions in cello and chamber music and won numerous prizes, the most important of which included: laureate of the P. I. Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow (1982), first prize at the Prague Spring Competition (1983) and victory at the ARD Radio Competition in Munich (1986).

**JAROMÍR KLEPÁČ** is a prize winner of international piano competitions, f.e. Munich, Paris, Prague, etc...He has recorded for Supraphon, Panton, Bonton, Calliope, Hamonica Mundi and the American company RIAX about forty CDs. As a soloist and highly sought-after chamber partner, he frequently performs in major music centres in Europe, and overseas (USA, Canada, Asia, Africa). He is a prominent figure in Prague, over the last three years he gave stunning performances of Tchaikovsky's Concerto in B flat minor with the CzechRadio Symphony Orchestra, Liszt's Concerto in E flat major with the Prague Symphony and he recently also gave several performances in Germany of Schumann's Concerto in A minor with the Philharmonie Südwestfalen.

# 07

## Michal Kaňka / Cello

## Jaromír Klepáč / Piano

8:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZEH



**africell**

Founded by **Hani Alayli** in 1997, revolves around a dedicated core of Blues enthusiasts. Their primary goal is to authentically perform blues music, keeping the Chicago groove alive for local audiences. Having showcased their talent both internationally and in Lebanon's major venues, they stand as prominent ambassadors of Blues music in the local music scene.

The band's repertoire spans across various facets of Blues, Jazz, and Soul, incorporating original compositions that prioritize dynamics and evoke deep emotions. The RDBB's performances echo the ambiance of classic 50's Blues clubs—intense, intimate, and profoundly musical. Each show serves as a tribute to the collective soul, immersing listeners in a century-old musical journey from Mississippi to Chicago.

# 08

## The Real Deal Blues Band

ELIE ABI FARAH  
VOCALS & GUITARS

NIDAL ABI SAMRA  
KEYBOARDS & SAXOPHONE

ELIO HACHEM , DRUMS  
FAYSAL ITANI , BASS  
FARES SOKHON , HARMONICA  
HANI ALAYLI, GUITARS

8:00 PM

BEIRUT SOUKS



BEIRUT SOUKS



**The Gargatch Children Choir**, established in 1997 by Maestro Zakar Keshishian, boasts a rich history. Under his direction for 22 years, Gargatch has held annual concerts in Lebanon and showcased their talent in Armenia and Cyprus for over 20,000 audience members. With a repertoire enriched by talented poets and composers, the choir has seen over 600 members perform diverse songs, blending classical, folk, and contemporary pieces. Noteworthy among Lebanon's children choirs, Gargatch sings in four parts and has participated in various prestigious events like the Beirut Chants festival for a decade under Maestro Keshishian's guidance. After his tenure, Lucy Krouzian led the choir from 2019 to 2021, and presently, Lebanese Armenian soprano Shoghig Torossian conducts the ensemble, along with teaching vocal training and solfeggio at the Parsegh Ganatchian College of Music. At the upcoming Beirut Chants festival, Gargatch Children's Choir will enchant audiences with a Christmas-themed performance in multiple languages accompanied by piano.

# 09 The Birth of Hope

GARGATCH CHILDREN CHOIR  
OF HAMAZKAYIN  
VERONA ROUSALIAN, PIANO  
KEVIN YOUSIF, PIANO  
SHOGHIG TOROSSIAN,  
CONDUCTOR

6:00 PM

THE NATIONAL  
EVANGELICAL CHURCH



# 09 Matteo El Khodr Countertenor

**IST BML**  
Istisharat

Born in Beirut of Greek-Lebanese origins, Matteo moved to Paris to take singing lessons with several teachers, including David Kaufmann, then joined the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris in the class of Agnès Mellon. He signed a contract with Universal Music France and released two albums followed by European concert tours. In 2007, he introduced baroque music and the non-existent back then countertenor voice to Lebanon and the Middle East and sang in several festivals to then is invited to the Doha Opera House in Qatar with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2020, he represents his country in THE VOICE France where he will dazzle the 4 chairs of the juries.

Holder of several international singing prizes including the Prix du Public du Concours International de Chant Baroque de Froville, he played several title roles in world premieres including Apollo and Hyacinth by Mozart at the Cité de la Musique in Paris with Les Folies Françaises then triumphed in Ormindo by Cavalli in Morocco and Berlin with the Wiesbaden Orchestra.

8:00 PM

BEIRUT SOUKS



BEIRUT SOUKS



IN MEMORY OF  
ABDALLAH TAMARI

Established in 2000, the **Saint Romanos Choir of Beirut** comprises graduates of “The Saint Romanos School of Ecclesiastical Music” in Beirut, where members undergo rigorous training for five years in Byzantine Ecclesiastical music. The choir’s primary mission is to interpret renowned chants, particularly those crafted by the esteemed Antiochian Protopsaltis Mitri Al Murr and the late Protopsaltis of Saint George Cathedral in Beirut, Andraos Mouaikel. Additionally, the choir regularly introduces new compositions by its leader, Fr. Romanos. Fluent in Arabic, Greek, and English, the choir has delivered numerous performances and services. Their repertoire includes published works performed independently or in collaboration with other Orthodox choirs, showcasing their dedication to preserving and sharing this rich musical heritage.

Comprising approximately 50 members, both male and female, the choir has graced various stages and churches within Beirut, and across Lebanon, and extended its reach to Syria, Greece, the United States of America, and Romania. Their resonant voices have reverberated through diverse settings, embodying their commitment to spreading the essence of Byzantine music across borders.

# 10 St. Romanos the Melodist Choir of Beirut

FR. ROMANOS JOUBRAN  
CONDUCTOR

6:00 PM

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX  
CATHEDRAL



# 10 A Tenor's Christmas

Bechara Moufarrej, Tenor

**Bechara Moufarrej**, born in Lebanon, stands among the select few singers who have ventured beyond Lebanon to pursue an operatic career. His musical journey was enriched by invaluable guidance received through masterclasses with distinguished mentors including Badia Haddad, Maestra Michaela Mingheras in France, Simone Alaimo in Palermo, Maestra Sylvana Ferraro in Rome, and, most recently, with Vittorio Terranova.

Collaborating with renowned orchestras such as the Lebanese Orchestra, Filarmonica Romana, Welsh National Orchestra, and Orchestra Giovanile Italiana, Bechara has graced the stage under the direction of eminent conductors such as P. Toufic Maatouk, Gianlucca Marciano, Lubnan Baalbaki, Harout Fazilian, Alberto Maniaci, and Ricardo Muti's assistant, Nicola Pascovski. Following a triumphant performance as Conte d'Almaviva in Beirut, Bechara's talents were further showcased at esteemed theaters including Teatro Giulio di Lucca, Teatro Goldoni in Livorno, Teatro Verdi in Pisa, and Teatro Coccia in Novara.

8:00 PM

ST. ELIE KANTARI  
CHURCH



# 11

## Khalil Chahine/ Organ

# Louisa El Khoury/ Soprano

8:00 PM  
THE NATIONAL  
EVANGELICAL CHURCH

**Khalil Chahine** embarked on his musical journey as a boy soprano, initiating his passion for music. His affiliation with the International College Choir marked the beginning of his musical pursuits. In 2017, he was honored with an AMIS veteran status for his unwavering commitment and outstanding contributions to the AMIS High School Honor Choir. Transitioning to a tenor, Khalil showcased his versatility by performing an extensive repertoire encompassing choral works from baroque, romantic, and contemporary eras. He actively participated in the AUB Choir and Choral Society, as well as Le Choeur de l'USJ.

**Louisa El Khoury** is a renowned Lebanese opera singer and pianist, Louisa's musical odyssey commenced at the age of 8 with piano lessons, delving into the world of opera at 18 under the tutelage of Toufic Maatouk. Louisa's tenure as a soloist with the Lebanese Orchestra from 2013 to 2016 and later with the USJ choir from 2016 to 2019 witnessed her gracing numerous high-profile events and ceremonies, showcasing her exceptional vocal prowess. In recent years, Louisa's star has ascended internationally, as she has been prominently featured in prestigious events and concerts in Italy, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Oman, captivating audiences across borders with her mesmerizing performances.



# 12

## Firas Andary

### Maqams And Rhythms

A multifaceted artist based in Beirut, embodies the roles of a singer, multi-instrumentalist, composer, educator, and actor. His journey in music commenced in Lebanon in 1997 when he discovered his vocal talents at the tender age of 6. Delving deeper into the Levantine musical tradition of Muwashahat and Qudud, Firas began formal studies at age 12 under the tutelage of Dr. Hayyaf Yassine. His pursuit of musical excellence led him to Antonine University, where he undertook professional oud studies guided by Mustafa Said.

Andari's unique learning path involved absorbing a classical repertoire through oral tradition, a legacy passed down from the Sheikhs and masters across the Middle East. This auditory learning approach provides him with a rare insight into a music culture that has dwindled over time. The twentieth-century standard notation of Arabic music inadvertently diluted the intricate microtones inherent in Maqam music, eroding its richness. Drawing from the historical repertoire and canonical origins, he crafts a contemporary musical language that remains authentic and original. Firas' compositions traverse the boundaries of tradition without borrowing from other musical genres, encapsulating the essence of Traditional Maqam music and showcasing his original compositions.

8:00 PM  
BEIRUT SOUKS







## Camile & Rhona Saba

Oratorio “Jesus the Son of Man” stands as Kahlil Gibran’s most extensive book, published in 1928. It presents Jesus’s teachings and actions as narrated and recorded by those who shared a personal connection with him. Within its 79 characters, at the behest of Sister Maestra Marana Saad, poet Henri Zoghaib selected the testimonies of 5 characters and crafted scenarios and dialogues for them, along with those for the chorus. Maestro Iyad Kanaan composed the music for the oratorio, serving as Philokalia’s gift to believers for Christmas 2023.

**Philokalia Choir** was established in 2010 under the guidance of Sr. Marana Saad, the Philokalia Choir has solidified its position as a leading choir in Lebanon and the broader region. Its repertoire is expansive and diverse, encompassing classical, Arabic, and Syro-Maronite music. Their performances have taken place in various cities worldwide, including Virginia and Washington (USA), Frankfurt, Rome, Paris, Limassol, and Krakow, notably participating in World Youth Day alongside Pope Francis.

**Sr. Marana Saad**, the founding president of the Philokalia Institute and Organization, holds a Ph.D. in Theology from Saint Anselm’s University in Rome and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. Beyond her academic pursuits, she has earned an Executive Certificate in Strategic Management and Leadership from George Washington University in the USA. Additionally, she completed training in Sensitization to Music Therapy at the Nantes Music Therapy Institute in France.

# 13 Jesus, The Son of Man

Sr. Marana Saad, Conductor

MUSICAL PIECE FOR CHOIR,  
SOLOISTS AND ORCHESTRA  
BASED ON KAHLIL GIBRAN BOOK  
HENRI ZGHEIB, TEXT ADAPTATION  
IYAD KANAAN, MUSIC  
PHILOKALIA CHOIR

8:00 PM

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH  
MONOT



# 14 Pablo Barragán/ Clarinet

FIRST PRIZE WINNER OF THE  
PRIX CRÉDIT SUISSE JEUNES  
SOLISTES 2013

# Nuron Mukumi/ Piano

8:00 PM

ST. MARON CHURCH  
GEMMAYZE

IN COLLABORATION WITH



The clarinetist, **Pablo Barragán** is recognized for his refined sound paired with a high skill of craftsmanship, stage charisma and boundless curiosity for the programming of his performances. Pablo trained at the Seville Conservatory with Antonio Salguero and with Matthias Glander at the Fundación Barenboim-Said in Seville. He is the winner of the Prix Crédit Suisse Jeunes Solistes in 2013, amongst other competitions. He has worked with orchestras such as the Brucknerhaus Orchestra Linz, the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española, the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra with conductors such as Anja Bihlmaier, Thomas Dausgaard, Daniel Raiskin, and Zsolt Hamar.

The German-Uzbek Pianist **Nuron Mukumi** was born in 1996 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. He began playing the piano at the age of six in the class of Prof. Tamara Popovich in Tashkent. A year later, he began conducting lessons with Prof. Vladimir Neymer. Nuron’s “take-off” from Uzbekistan to Europe was made possibly by a video of a concert in which, as an 8-year-old boy, he conducted the National Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan whilst also playing the piano part of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Piano Concerto in D Minor. As a result of the video, Nuron was offered a scholarship at the Purcell School of Music in London, which he accepted at age eleven. He has performed in the following concert venues in recent years: Alte Oper in Frankfurt, Salle Cortot in Paris, Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, Konzerthaus Berlin, Konzerthaus Bozen.



The **NDU Choir** stands out as a premier choir in Lebanon and the region, known for its extensive concert schedule, recordings, and accolades. With an impressive repertoire, distinct sound, and remarkable interpretations, it collaborates regularly with international festivals, the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, and conductors, serving as a cultural envoy for Beirut on global stages.

Established in 1993 by reverend **Khalil Rahme** o.m.m., who founded both the choir and the School of Music at Notre Dame University after returning from music studies in Rome, the choir has evolved under his guidance. Alongside its symphonic choral core, the choir's annual programming showcases a broad spectrum of Lebanese music. Collaborations with esteemed composers like Iyad Kanaan, Gabriel Yared, and Valentino Miserachs Grau aim to expand the Lebanese choral repertoire. The NDU Choir consistently explores innovative approaches to choral music.

This year marks the choir's three-decade milestone. To celebrate, Alberto Maniaci was commissioned to skillfully craft a cantata by combining memorable motets composed by Fr. Rahme throughout the years. This commissioned work, scored for soloists, choir, and orchestra, commemorates the choir's enduring musical excellence.

# 15

## 30th Anniversary Celebration

### Notre Dame University Choir

Khalil Rahme, Conductor

8:00 PM  
ST. JOSEPH CHURCH  
MONOT



# 16

## Carole Samaha

### Sings Christmas

8:00 PM  
BEIRUT SOUKS



Winner of the "World Music Award" for best performer in the Middle East (Monaco 2014) & "Daf Bama Music Awards" for best Middle Eastern Female Act & Best performer in the Middle East (Hamburg 2016), **Carole Samaha** is one of a kind in the Arab world.

Samaha participated in international festivals and stood on the world's most prestigious stages (Rosemont Theater in Chicago, Detroit Opera House, Las Vegas Casino, Caesars palace Canada, and Le Palais de l'UNESCO, Paris) of which we mention her astonishing performance at the famous Mawazin International Festival in Morocco, the International Carthage Festival in Tunisia and in May 2014 the lifetime opportunity concert at the Koninklijk Concertgebouw stage in Amsterdam along with the Holland Symfonia Orchestra.

She held in April 2018, a remarkable concert in the worldwide acclaimed theater the "Olympia Paris", enchanting a diverse audience of Middle Eastern and Europeans. A few months later, precisely in August 2018, she inaugurated the Saida International Festival with "Voyage Show" a huge concert of international standards with a team of more than 40 persons on stage formed by renowned musicians and dancers. On a tour in August 2023, Carole held two huge concerts in Malmö and Stockholm-Sweden attended by more than 25,000 people.



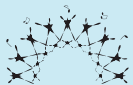
IN COLLABORATION WITH



Choir Conductor: **Zakar Kechishian**  
 Orchestra Conductor: **Fadi Khalil**  
 Piano Accompanist: **Kamila Kechichian**  
 Violin Teacher and Music  
 Arrangement: **Ramzi Kandalaf**  
 Violin Teacher: **Elia Helayel**  
 Violin Teacher: **Lilit Antonyan**  
 Cello Teacher: **Shushan Artinian**

**Beirut Chants El-Sistema** is the youth orchestra started by Beirut Chants in 2022 to instruct, nurture and train over 70 young students in formal classical music in the world renowned El-Sistema method of group instruction and collaboration. The youth who range in age from 6 years to 15 years come from all over Lebanon to practice for four hours every Saturday and have since September been working on a special Christmas concert to perform in the Beirut Chants Festival Season 16.

The pieces to be played are primarily music that the orchestra has been practicing for the past 3 months as well as music performed during the August 4 th Concert this past summer. As the youth further develop their classical music skills through rigorous practice, it is hoped that this initiative will guarantee the availability of new talent and expertise to ensure the continuity of the precious music culture in Lebanon.



**el sistema**  
 Beirut Chants

**6:00 PM**

**FIRST ARMENIAN  
 EVANGELICAL CHURCH**



# 18

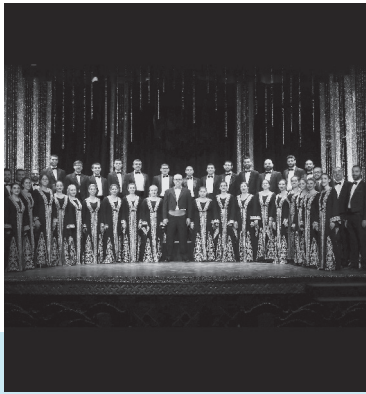
## St. Stephanos the Melodist Choir

Dr. Alain Osta, Conductor

**8:00 PM**

**ST. ELIE GREEK  
 CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL**

Established in 2009 by Father Romanos (Bachir) Osta, the **Saint Stephanos Choir** originates from the Saint Stephanos Patriarchal School of Byzantine Music, spearheaded by Father Romanos. Serving as the first chanter of the see of Antioch, Father Romanos initially brought together a cadre of chanters from the Eparchy of Beirut and Byblos, subsequently expanding to encompass members from all Lebanese Eparchies. Comprising adept chanters steeped in the art of Byzantine music, the Choir's membership includes students from the Saint Stephanos Patriarchal School. Entry into the Choir is gradual, contingent upon acquiring the requisite skills and knowledge. Throughout the year, the Choir undertakes a diverse array of performances, encompassing recitals, masses, prayers, and ceremonial occasions such as the ordination of priests and bishops. Since 2022, collaborative efforts have blossomed between the Saint Stephanos Choir and several allied choirs: Saint Theophanis Choir (founded by Fr. Romanos in the Eparchy of Saida and Deir Al Qamar), Panayia Melkite Choir (under the auspices of the Greek Melkite Patriarch), Saint Romanos School - Zahle (guided by Zahle's First Chanter Georges Riachi), and the Patriarchal Music School in Damascus, Syria (directed by Levon Abajian). Presently, the choir, under the direction of Dr. Alain Osta, the first chanter of the Beirut eparchy, continues its profound dedication, participating in various liturgical and religious events



**Fayha National Choir** is a mixed Lebanese a cappella choir internationally renowned for revolutionizing Arabic choral music. It was founded in 2003 by Maestro Barkev Taslakian, who remains its principal conductor. The choir was originally based in Tripoli and adopted the city's local nickname 'Fayha'. After branching out across Lebanon to Beirut and Chouf, the choir was named the first Lebanese National Choir in 2022.

With many awards to its name, including first place prizes at the Warsaw International Choir Festival and Middle East Choir Festival, Fayha is globally recognized as a standard for Arabic a cappella.

It has a rich and unique repertoire that revives classics from across the region - offering new interpretations that blend Western harmony with Arabic musical tradition. In frequent collaboration with Dr. Edward Torikian, the choir has amassed an extensive archive making it the prime resource worldwide for Arabic choral arrangements.

# 19 Fayha National Choir

Maestro Barkev Taslakian  
Conductor

8:00 PM  
BEIRUT SOUKS



Twenty five years ago **Mrs. Noha Hatem** founded with her artistic director **Mrs. Isabelle Issahakian** the Lebanese Children's choir called La Chanterie de Beyrouth. The objective of the choir is to promote and nurture young musical talent all the while contributing to Lebanese culture.

Open to all children between the ages of 6 to 14 and from different backgrounds, the choir has initiated a love of music of all genres and has contributed to enlivening musical events throughout Lebanon.

Mrs. Noha Hatem studied musicology and pedagogy at the Institute of Musicology in Lyon, France, and has participated in several internships in London, Germany and France. She later specialized in Music Appreciation for Children.

Her dedication as choirmaster of the Chanterie de Beyrouth has merited her the Chevalier des Palmes Academiques from the French government and the Medal of Order of Isabel from the Spanish government.

Mrs. Isabelle Issahakian the artistic director of the choir has a degree in Architecture and Musicology. Since the foundation of the choir she has shared both her talent as a musician and dedicated service to all the children past and present of La Chanterie de Beyrouth.

# 20 La Chanterie de Beyrouth

Noha Hatem, Choir Conductor  
Isabelle Issahakian, Piano

6:00 PM  
ST. ELIAS & ST.  
GREGORY THE  
ILLUMINATOR  
ARMENIAN  
CATHOLIC  
CATHEDRAL





IN COLLABORATION WITH



**Jonathan Fournel** was revealed with brilliance to the top international scene in the spring 2021 as he won the much-coveted International Queen Elisabeth competition Grand Prix-Queen Mathilde Prize at 27. In addition, Jonathan won the Musiq3 Audience prize and the Canvas-Klara prize. «A natural, musical and poetic playing in Mozart's 18th concerto performed with majestic purity and lyricism as well as Brahms' Variations and Fugue on a theme by Haendel led with intensity and an unquestionable sense of story-telling. » Marie-Aude Roux writes in Le Monde. A few years earlier, Jonathan had taken First Prizes at the Scottish International Piano Competition in Glasgow and the International Viotti competition in Vercelli, both at the age of 20.

Although he has already been recognized for his special taste and talent for music by Mozart, Chopin, and Brahms, Fournel already has a wide repertoire and a particular interest in today's music. Notable highlights include world premieres of French composer Nicolas Bacri's 3rd piano sonata and several pieces by the young French composer Pierre-Alain Braye-Weppe. He also often included works by Rory Boyle, Guillaume Connesson, or Thomas Ades. in his recital programs. Fournel signed to the multi Gramophone prize-winning label Alpha. A Brahms album will be released in October 2021.

# 21 Jonathan Fournel

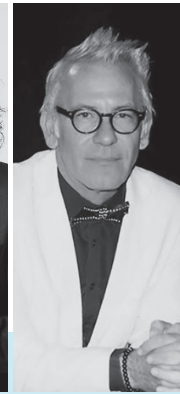
Piano

FIRST PRIZE AT QUEEN ELISABETH  
PIANO COMPETITION  
FIRST PRIZE AT SCOTTISH  
INTERNATIONAL PIANO  
COMPETITION



8:00 PM

ASSEMBLY HALL  
AUB



# 22 Levent Gündüz/ & Metin Kiper/ Tenor Piano

**Levent Gündüz** started his music studies by playing piano and percussion. He began his vocal studies with Maestra Sabahat TEKEBAS at Izmir D.E. University State Conservatory. He began his career with "Nemorino" role (E'lisir D'amore/Donizetti) and "Tamino" role (Die Zauberflöte/Mozart) between 1996- 1999 at Izmir State Opera House. During the second year of his vocal studies, the tenor was chosen to sing "Tamino" role at Istanbul Opera House, and had big success.

Levent Gündüz graduated from the master degree of Vocal Studies in 2000 with the degree of "excellence". He also developed his opera singing as an active participant of master classes with Maestra Leyla GENCER, Maestro William MATEUZZI and Maestro Placido DOMINGO.

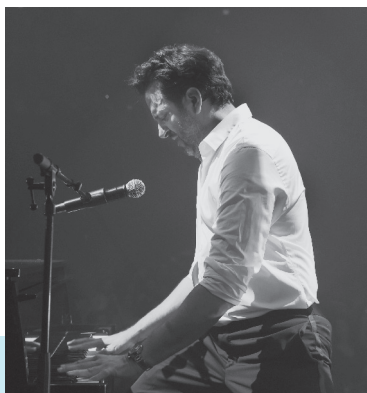
**Metin Kiper** started to work as a piano instructor and correpetitor at Dokuz Eylul University Izmir State Conservatory Piano Departmen GBt and Performing Arts Opera Department in 1996 and successfully carried out this role until 2011. Notably, the artist has given numerous performances of Ludwig van Beethovens 1st Piano Concerto, George Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, and R.Schumanns Piano Concerto in a minor with symphonic orchestras. In 2011, he started to work at the Antalya State Opera and Ballet and has been continuing his role as Chief Correpetitor at the same institution since 2012

8:00 PM

ASSEMBLY HALL  
AUB







# 23 Guy Manoukian

8:00 PM  
BEIRUT SOUKS



**Guy Manoukian's** musical journey commenced at the tender age of four when he began playing the piano. Guided by esteemed classical music mentors, he made his television debut at the age of six, astonishing audiences at the mere age of seven with a performance at the presidential Palace. His venture into composition began a year later, swiftly culminating in his triumph in a music competition. Concurrent with his elementary school studies, Guy enrolled in a music school, actively engaging in various concerts and performances.

The years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 witnessed Guy's consecutive sold-out concerts at the revered Greek National Opera (The Stavros Niarchos) and the spectacular Dubai Opera. Further, his enthralling performances extended to the magnificent Pallas Theater in Athens in April 2022, the renowned Olympia Paris in 2022 and 2023, and a sold-out event at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

In 2021, he played a pivotal role in the establishment of what is now the globally renowned The Theater in Dubai.

2007 — 2023

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